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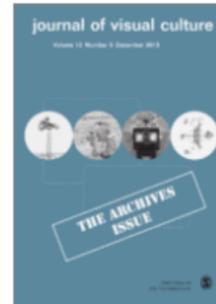
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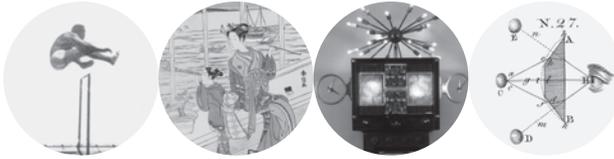
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The Archival Multitude

Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme
(in conversation with Tom Holert)

Abstract

Previously ascribed the position of meta-archivist in a culture marked by remembrance and retro-vision, the contemporary artist has been relocated arguably by today's radical distribution of archival activity in and by the practices and technologies of social media. This conversation with Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, two young audiovisual practitioners from Palestine, reveals some of the reasons behind this reconfiguration of the archival in its relation to the arts. Reflecting upon the emergence of an 'archival multitude' in North Africa and the Middle East during the past few years, Abbas and Abou-Rahme discuss the necessity of actively assessing the networked archives of the digital realm, thereby entailing significant shifts of their own artistic methodology.

Keywords

Arab Spring • the archival • contemporary art • Palestine • social media

Contemporary art practices have been marked significantly by the impact of an ever-expanding notion of the archival that tends to favour and prioritize modes of operation such as collecting, curating, compiling, editing, ethnographizing, etc. Most of these practices engage in revisionary, often imaginative, sometimes utopian projects. Interrogating existing archives, investigating their infrastructural tasks and (in)accessibility, proposing alternate usages or constructing new (counter-) archives range among the strategies deployed regularly in exhibitions and performances. Hence, the re-contextualizing, re-arranging, re-organizing, re-enacting, re-evaluating or

re-introducing of documents, the archive's content, and the critical reflection on the archive's ontology, the archival, have proven to be cornerstones of artistic practices in different places of the present.

This general tendency becomes probably even more palpable in the face of a digital culture of search engines and social media whose architecture is imminently structured by archival logics (and the increasingly personalized 'algorithms' of data storage and retrieval). As Jacques Derrida (1995: 17) put it in his 1995 essay 'Archive fever', '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', hence 'archivization produces as much as it records the event'.

Event and archive thus cannot be separated but have to be interrelationally positioned (Roberts, 2009: 296), something that is particularly evident in the current age of new archival monopolies such as Google, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, or Tumblr which, in contradistinction to traditional archives, seem to operate less in a gate-keeping, exclusionary fashion, but exert the 'archival violence' on which Derrida has so much to say, through archiving itself as a default mode. The effects of such always already archived eventfulness on concepts and experiences of the self and subjecthood cannot be underestimated. As one anonymous blogger put it in somewhat broken English: 'Facebook as an archive ... stifles privacy, transports socializing into space from place and time, and changes our notions about conception of the self and others and the relationships between' (The Cunning Linguists, 2012).

While social media conglomerates such as Facebook, the rapidly growing archives undergirding the Google empire or, on the other side of the spectrum, the sharing and pirating practices of peer-to-peer networks are regularly being described in terms of expansion and growth of available information, the pay-walls and other access-blocking devices, often deployed by the internet giants themselves that prevent the public from using large areas of cultural goods (texts, images, music, etc.) appear to be scandalously directed against the communal ethics and politics of sharing. Aaron Swartz's (2008) 'Guerilla Open Access Manifesto', his subsequent massive downloading of the JSTOR digital repository of scholarly journals and books in 2010 and 2011, and his suicide in January 2013 (caused, arguably, by his indictment and prosecution) are the most visible and tragic response to the gatekeeping and commercialization of data and knowledge. 'We need to take information, wherever it is stored, make our copies and share them with the world', Swartz wrote in 2008.

We need to take stuff that's out of copyright and add it to the archive.
We need to buy secret databases and put them on the Web. We need to
download scientific journals and upload them to file sharing networks.
We need to fight for Guerilla Open Access.

Keenly aware of (and concerned by) the realities of an environment saturated by massively distributed and controlled archives, yet at the same time speculating on and with the utopian powers of the instant networked archival activity of social media and mobile phones, two young Palestinian artists, Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, have directed their practice towards an intense reflection on the archival as mode of operation. The events of the Arab uprisings since 2011 in particular have informed Abbas and Abou-Rahme's latest project-in-process *Future Archivist(s)*, turning it into a meditation on the shifting scene of the 'archival impulse' (Foster, 2004) where the assumed role of the artist as archivist 'in the indeterminate zone between event and image, document and monument' (Enwezor, 2008: 47) needs to be reassessed. The following email exchange took place in February and March 2013 and marks the beginning of upcoming collaborations on the questions it raised.

Tom Holert (TH): The *Future Archivist(s)* project that you are planning to realize in cooperation with Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (TBA21) in Vienna seems to reflect on and address a significant recomposition of the field of political activism, media practices, socio-technical infrastructures and contemporary art. You're claiming that the distributed, expanded archive of the social media sites is haunted by the absence of a central archivist, whose very absence is compensated for (and overcome) by a becoming-archivist of everyone. To start our conversation I'd be interested to know where you would posit yourself or, more generally speaking, the profession of the contemporary (audiovisual) artist in this situation of an alleged omnipresence of archival activity?

Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme (BA/RA-R): Somehow that is a difficult question, as our position and relation toward the archive has gone through several transformations across the last 10 years. Aaron Swartz's call, like the calls of so many others, has had a deep impact on us realizing that the fight for access to knowledge and information is one of the critical struggles within global capitalism today and that the internet has emerged as a site for this struggle between control and resistance. These realizations turned our gaze toward the online users and activists who were involved in all forms of creative resistance against the logic of capitalism. This was the impetus for our latest project, provisionally titled *Future Archivist(s)*. Perhaps *Future Archivist(s)* is one way in which we are trying to re-think our practice and re-situate ourselves in relation to the omnipresence of archival activity in the internet age.

TH: Maybe you could render a little bit the geopolitical and aesthetic background of the project? What is your basic approach to image-making and the visual, to what extent is it located in a particular political and cultural environment, and how does it connect to your interest in the archival activity you mention?

BA/RA-R: Formally, as audiovisual artists engaged with the idea of malleability and the methodologies of 'sampling', we have always been



Figure 1 Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, *Lost Objects of Desire* (2010). © Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme.



Figure 2 Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, *Lost Objects of Desire* (2010) installation view as exhibited at S:in/festival of Video Art and Performance, Ramallah. © Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme.

interested in material on the fringe; poor images, mutated copies and re-inscriptions. In the beginning of our collaborative work, over six years ago now, we found ourselves unable to produce new images. Faced with so many representations of Palestine from the media and artists engaged in the ‘Palestine Industry’ we felt that the images coming out of Palestine began to stagnate, to deactivate rather than activate. We also rejected the ghettoization and the constructed singularity of the Palestinian issue. For us the unbearable living conditions in Palestine were always to be seen in relation to precarious living conditions all over the world. That is largely why we chose to work with a wide repertoire of existing material – from found footage, films, ‘archival videos’, music samples – and we sourced this material from different places and periods. In several installations such as *Lost Objects of Desire* (2010) (Figures 1 and 2), and in our performance group Tashweesh, our intention was to make these seemingly disconnected images speak for the absence of images and the present moment. In many ways we have tried to develop a sonic and visual language that makes the connection between different times, spaces and imaginaries visible.

TH: The short video welcoming the visitor on the Tashweesh website, a mash-up ‘take’ on the format of the music video clip introducing your collaboration with MC and composer Boikutt, was made (in 2010) from footage of black and white feature films and documentaries showing images of a secular Arab world of leisure and entertainment presumably of the 1950s

or 1960s, playfully cut onto Boikutt and Basel Abbas' music. The clip and Tashweesh's subsequent live sets (Figure 3)¹ display an archival sensibility that appears to activate quite different, even contradictory emotions and affects, ranging from a slight nostalgic melancholia to a certain joyful fierceness in the capturing and recontextualizing of the material.

BA/RA-R: Increasingly in the last few years we have been engaged with archives to the extent that they can be a way for us to read the potential of the moment, to navigate the unsettling sense of being simultaneously in the midst of not-yet-material and the already determined; a temporal tension between what seems 'permanent' – a repetition of capitalist-colonial present – and what could be 'impermanent' both believing and dis-believing in the *present* possibility of a future of our own making, though not in a retrograde sense but as a way of finding a new imaginary and language. Faced with the onslaught of the neo-liberal regime in Palestine, the violent transformation of the Palestinian liberation movement into a technocratic security apparatus pre any sort of actual liberation and in the midst of an intensifying colonial expansion, the archive has been one means by which we have been looking at the current crisis of the imaginary and the production of new subjectivities, most specifically in our work *The Zone* (2011).

TH: Please elaborate on the particularities of this archive of the Palestinian situation and the position you were trying to inhabit with *The Zone*, reading, regarding and entering the archive.



Figure 3 Tashweesh live at 'The Cave', Beirut (2011). © Photo by Tanya Traboulsi.

BA/RA-R: By relooking at the visual archive of the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization), mostly posters, pamphlets and murals against the current visual archive being produced, advertisements, campaigns and new commercial and housing developments, we were able to chart the birth of new political discourses/desires. We began to critically read the emergence of a consumerist regime out of the debris of an aborted Palestinian struggle seemingly 'beyond' but always brushing up against the occupation, the dystopian outer limit of this newly emerged neo-liberal 'dreamworld'. Presented at the beginning of 2011, this was the first project where we recorded our own images, with a sudden urgency to do so. During this period we became aware that we were in the midst of a new potential not just politically but in our own work. Our act of documentation and then critical 'destabilization' of the material, rendering the everyday visual language of this new regime strange, had in that moment gained a degree of political and aesthetic potency (Figures 4 and 5). The need for a subjective, critical archive of the now, this moment as it unfolds as a defiant gesture, became evident for us and put us in a direct confrontation with the neo-liberal project in the West Bank. This was a period marked by the increasing repression of the Palestinian Authority and the ensuing silence of previously critical voices. Our intention was to create an archive of the moment to challenge the 'archive' being produced by the Palestinian Authority. By the time we finished the first part of the work (the project is still ongoing) the revolts had taken place in Tunisia and Egypt.



Figure 4 Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, *The Zone* (2011). © Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme.



Figure 5 Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, *The Zone* (2011) installation view as exhibited at New Art Exchange, Nottingham.

© Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme.

TH: How did the media practices of the Arab uprisings inform your notion of the archive and ultimately your own archival practice?

BA/RA-R: Critically for us, a fundamental change in our understanding of the archive solidified when the revolutions began to take place in the Arab world. We experienced and engaged with these movements through the real time material that was being uploaded on such sites as YouTube and Twitter. Living in Palestine,² a place that culturally and geographically is close to the Arab world but, subjected to a colonial regime, is cut off from it and the rest of the world for that matter. The sudden ability to be connected at any moment to a continual stream coming from people involved in the revolution was phenomenal. Through streams and live feeds of people's textual and visual accounts, the distance between here and there was suspended for that period. We woke and slept in Tunisia and then Egypt. This was an electric moment for us. Suddenly the potential of the people to subvert the representations of the state was palpable. We came face to face with a living archive, and it felt precisely as just that when the people in Tahrira³ were bearing witness in real time and uploading their testimonials onto servers to be simultaneously heard, read, watched and experienced by us –there was no mediator between us and them apart from the platforms where the material appeared unfiltered.

TH: The notion of 'living archive' seems crucial here. The concept is currently travelling the art world circuit, ripe with sympathetic resonances with Marx's concept of 'living labour'. But how does an archive attain the kind of vividness or vitality that turns it into something 'living'? What are the biopolitical implications of this discourse of the 'living archive' and what might be problematic about them?

BA/RA-R: What makes an archive 'living' is an important question, because what we are interested in is the possibility of not only questioning the archive but perhaps more importantly transforming it. The archive has for the longest time been central to how power is both productive and repressive of life itself. An archive that is only written through and by power is a closed, static, even a dead archive. For the last 30 years or more, artists (and writers before them) have been engaged in reactivating and questioning the archive; much of our own work involves a process of reactivating forgotten, insignificant material, fragments and traces in order to speak about the here and now. Ultimately these gestures are not enough to create a living archive (perhaps they lay the foundation). For us the vitality that turns the archive into something living is fundamentally connected to a moment of political becoming, when the individual through a subjective gesture or act becomes part of a common moment and articulates the potential of the multitude. Here the very act of producing and sharing subjective, horizontal archives is precisely about the instance on and the fight for a living common archive, from the ground up. These subjective archives, as expression of the new archival multitude and as (part of) common archives have a liberatory potential, they are full of a creative vitality that expresses the desire for an outside of the hegemony of power.

For us the most illuminating moment of this was during the revolutions in the Arab world, although it is significant to note that this liberatory potential is articulated in multiple ways and moments and not just in the moment of revolt (this being the more obvious). Its first expression is in the very possibility of creating horizontal archives. When experiencing the 2011 revolution we saw how every minute people were recording the event and producing a politically radical and unofficial archive of the moment. The archival activity of this insurgency was an integral part of people reclaiming the right to speak, assuming agency over their political lives and future. Amazingly the regime, while narrating the event and producing the archive, had been challenged in the very moment of its production and on a mass scale.

TH: The counter archive of the insurgents may also be seen as a utopian archive of non-expert archivists, as part of a vast project of de-skilled (and de-skilling) archival and documentary work that happens everywhere, thanks to the digital infrastructures of the contemporary mode of production. The largely 'immaterial' labour of capturing sounds and images of the street and placing and sharing them on commercial internet platforms is displacing political action increasingly into the realm of content provision and actualized archiving. Where does the artist or cultural practitioner figure here?

BA/RA-R: As we started to work on the *Future Archivist(s)* project we found ourselves in a radical contradiction. While the intersection between the digital and the virtual opens the possibilities of new democratized forms of bearing witness and spontaneously constituted archives, the excess of information, perpetually being replaced by newer information, produces an amnesia, an incomprehensibility where everything is in danger of being doomed to be lost and forgotten in the black hole of the web. At moments this excess results in a total overflow of online streams rendering them no longer decipherable, as in the case of Twitter where at certain points during the revolution the amount of tweets using a specific hashtag (i.e #Tahrir, #Jan25, #Tunis) produced such an accelerated speed in the stream that made it impossible to read any of the tweets. Online material is constantly shifting in a stream; the trace is unstable and sometimes lost. Even when you can relocate the material, for example in the case of YouTube, it often may have been taken down by the user (especially if it is politically subversive), or, when it is found to 'infringe copyright', taken down by the site. We started to amass another collection, but we began to see it as problematic. Were we not at risk of reproducing the very same problems of traditionally constituted archives? Due to our position as artists we were building a selective collection of this proliferated archive and somehow failed to see that at the heart of these archives were the new archivists. What excited us was how this becoming-an-archivist of anyone challenged the hierarchical archive. (Of course that is not to say that we are not very much engaged in the battle over the internet, and aware of the other aspects of the virtual as a site of surveillance and profiling.) We realized that our reflexive impulse *to archive this archive* was one of the means by which people were already trying to navigate the expansions of the archive into our daily experiences. This became a turning point for us. Suddenly the artist as an archivist did not seem as significant. In fact it had never been more evident to us that everyone was an archivist. That's when we became interested more in the archivists than in the archive, in the sense that we feel that the possibility for everyone to be an archivist is actively reshaping the archives to come. It is also as you mentioned profoundly reshaping concepts of the self. We want to critically reflect on how these transformations, where people find themselves archiving everything from the seminal to the mundane as an event, inform new ways of being. Maybe then for us as artists it is most important to reflect and think through the implications of this omnipresence of archival activity itself. The question is how will these new forms of the archive continue to reshape the 'archivable'? How is our very sense of self, our imaginary impacted and intrinsically connected to this archival activity?

TH: Clearly, the relationship to the archive as a trope within contemporary art's practices has changed (or moved) since the heyday of post-structuralist critiques of the archive as power *archi*-tecture and the discovery of the archival as a particularly artistic mode of operation of contesting the exclusionary and hegemonic functions of archives. From what you're saying about the shift of your own interests away from the archive and the figure

of the artist-as-archivist to the net-based ubiquitous archivists and the 'new forms' of archiving they engender (which should be put in relation to new life-forms and a global reconfiguration of subjectivity), I glean a certain concern about the very 'omnipresence of archival activity', but likewise a sort of enthusiasm in the face of the increased dissemination and immanence of the archival. What is it that seems to make you worry, and where do you expect or hope the archival multitude to go? Could you exemplify your notion of 'new forms for the archive'? And how such new forms shape the political and cultural imaginaries in the Arab world?

BA/RA-R: What worries us most is the possibility that the radical potential of the moment will be lost, in the sense that our initial interest in the surge of archival activity online is directly connected to the surge in people's political activity on the ground. For us the potential for archival activity, or the 'archival multitude' to produce subversive discourses, in terms of both content and form, is only one current that is shaping the field of possibilities for the archives to come. Another current is in many ways connected to the logic of contemporary capital, the speed of the feed as we have mentioned creates an incomprehensible overflow at points. Significantly it re-produces contemporary capitalism's obsession with the 'now', the immediate, producing a vast amount of material only to render it obsolete the very next moment in a continuous stream of information. As you indicated, many of the platforms or social media sites that open the possibility for anyone and everyone to publicly bear witness to their lives are now owned by or have ballooned into mega companies. We can clearly see how in an information economy these archival activities, the radical potential of these forms are instrumentalized by capital. Maybe we should give a clearer sense of what we mean by these new forms. They are not just a matter of 'poor images' (see Steyerl, 2009), i.e. images that are small in size, malleable and able to travel quickly such as a lo-fi video that by the time it reaches you has been uploaded, downloaded and re-uploaded several times. They are also comments on and re-contextualizations of these videos through other video responses, through the stream of tweets, re-tweets, memes, not to mention the endless blog sites. An event on the ground, once it is documented, uploaded and shared online is able to trigger a series of ephemeral streams of responses and articulations through these various different forms. Consider a recent hash tag we came across on twitter: #LoveInTimeOfApartheid was connected to a staged protest, a performance of a mock wedding highlighting that Palestinians with West Bank IDs (67' Palestinians) are not able to 'legally' move in the same parts of the territory as Palestinians with Israeli IDs (48' Palestinians). It started with a physical act, a staging of a wedding for a 'couple' with those different IDs at one of the many checkpoints. Inevitably, the action resulted in a physical confrontation with the Israeli military as the protestors from either side of the checkpoint tried to cross over to the other end. While this was happening, people reported from the site, tweeting, uploading pictures and videos, others in turn were re-tweeting, commenting and adding their own interventions either through commenting or taking a photo from the event and adding a certain text

on the photo and then re-uploading it and tweeting it, this then again gets re-tweeted and so forth. What interests us here are the multiple inscriptions, performed by various different individuals, to the archive-in-the-making of that event. In many ways ephemeral political actions of this kind are staged precisely to be reproduced in all these forms. We could even read these forms as informing new kinds of activism.

TH: But don't these new forms of political performativity have to be considered in terms of their entrenchment in digital networks and therefore as subject to all sorts of capture?

BA/RA-R: Of course, the malleability and speed of information are also very much on a par with neo-liberal globalization. What's even more, the very site of open exchange is also a site of surveillance, tracking and profiling. Our lives are documented like never before and turned against us in case of any dissidence. Facebook posts, shares and even 'likes', tweets, videos are used as evidence against political agitators, dissidents and 'security threats'. There is a decisive struggle being waged over the future of these archives: over the future of these very forms. After all the culture and politics of publicly sharing information, texts, images, films, music, the very possibility for people's uses of the digital/virtual to subvert capital's insistence on the production of knowledge as commodity is under persistent threat and pressure. There are intensifying struggles over legislation that is trying to control the flows of information and exchanges between people. By that same logic, anything can be removed, erased not only for infringing copyright but also for simply being dissonant. It is this struggle that will be decisive in shaping what is archivable.

Perhaps much of this clarifies where we hope the archival multitude will go. Ultimately, we are engaged in this struggle. Most of all we are invested in the archival multitude in the sense that it is at times constitutive of a heterogeneous political body that calls for and performs various forms of daily and small resistances. We hope these acts, the likes of which we mentioned earlier with #LoveintheTimeofApartheid, continue to be viable and able to open the possibility for a different political imaginary by discerning, using and fighting to maintain the radical potential of these new forms.

If we return to the Arab world, and to the moment of revolution, it is evident that people's archival activity, their bearing witness to the moment on the ground and the possibility of sharing this testimony *en masse* was a critical means of destabilizing power. Not only were insurgent citizens⁴ shaping the event on the ground, they were at the same moment producing and circulating counter-narratives through images, videos, sound and text. In one video from the period when protesters are leaving Tahrir Square someone tellingly reminds them: 'Don't forget to upload online everything you filmed before you sleep, before you sleep – so we can wake up to a new Egypt without Hosni Mubarak.'⁵ In a highly palpable way this dynamic archive-of-the-moment ruptured the symbolic power of the state, 'the very control of appearances – so central to the state's edifice of symbolic power

in the age of Spectacle – was fatally jeopardized’ (Abou-Rahme and Jayyusi, 2011: 627).

TH: What happened in this moment of the collective re-appropriation of the image of the people? How did the availability of an uncensored and post-spectacular representation of the events change the power relations?

BA/RA-R: The dispersed ‘public’ of the Arab world – at least those not aligned with the regime – experienced in *that* moment through *that* archival activity the electric pulse of people’s will for change: the not-yet-imaginable was becoming the-not-yet-material. Having spent decades under a repressive weight of fear and control (something felt across the Arab world), unable to speak publicly against the abuse of power, there was great difficulty in imagining or projecting the moment of such a regime’s collapse, let alone a collapse brought on by the political actions and insurgency of ordinary citizens. There can be no doubt that the moment where the un-imaginable almost miraculously materialized has profoundly impacted the political and cultural imaginary in the Arab world. Fundamentally, it began to thaw out the crisis of the imaginary that we have felt for a very long time. For our ability to even imagine a different political horizon, a different way of being politically, culturally and socially is what has been at stake for so long. A feeling that we could take hold of our political lives and realize the not-yet-material will towards social justice was palpable even if not entirely sustainable.

TH: The instant archivalization of the major and minor events of the struggle, the protest, the resistance of the newly discovered agents of change in the Arab world (who discovered themselves in action) has different dimensions and is addressed at various publics, as the archive of the moment was used as a tool of mobilization among the insurgent citizens and as a medium of (counter-) information for a local and a global audience following the events on the screens of computers and smartphones. At the same time the activity of constant archivalization and distribution of scenes from the lives of those lingering in a state of exception, between the excitement of suddenly attained political agency and the utter risk of bodily harm or death, doesn’t necessarily close the gap between the non-representational and non-mediated impulse of refusing to obey, emphasized by Nasser Abourahme and May Jayyusi (2011: 627), and the moment of recording, uploading and further dissemination of images, sounds and texts. Or would you contend that the archival operations facilitated by digital media and the internet are not only imminent to the rupture of the symbolic hegemony of the regime but also constitutive of the protest and dissidence themselves, nurturing the people’s will to realize the not-yet-material?

BA/RA-R: Much of what we have discussed expresses a certain excitement and hesitation towards this very question. In many ways, we would argue that yes the archival activity of insurgent citizens is in itself constitutive of protest and dissidence, in so far as it is an ‘act by’ protestors and a ‘performing of’ protest. To explain, the very act of producing dissonant proliferated archives was understood by the insurgent citizens to be a fundamental way of rupturing the spectacle of power, not of simply sharing

information – this is what is critical for us. In that moment it becomes a conscious act of doing, constitutive of a dissident political force in itself. For it is not only that they defy power through splintering the archive. It is equally through the very archival act that this defiance is being performed. Still we tread carefully here, because this archival activity is constitutive of the protest only as one of the iterations of a material, bodily insurgence. But if we keep this interrelatedness in mind, we can simultaneously affirm that this archival activity is one of the articulations of a politically radical imaginary – an expression of the will toward a new political becoming and in that way a concrete gesture toward the not-yet-material.

TH: Since subcultural and subaltern politics have become more and more centered on questions of the conditions of historical and theoretical accounts, the necessity of elaborated and nuanced theories of archive and archiving has been widely acknowledged in the past two decades. For example, the authority of the disinterested archivist has become deconstructed in the field of queer studies and queer activism where ‘the terms by which the archive is constrained’ are interrogated ‘in order to open up possibilities for new modes of archives and archival relations’ (Danbolt, 2009: 34). Judith Halberstam, a leading queer cultural theorist, claims the ‘archive is not only a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity’ (in Danbolt, 2009: 35). Wresting away, de-colonizing and re-distributing archival power thus can result in an empowerment of infringed groups, reframing archivalism as activism (and vice versa; see Danbolt, 2010). I’d be curious to know how you experience and analyze these intersections of archival activity and political/counter/subcultural activism. What would be your definition of a militant archive?

BA/RA-R: We feel the idea of common archives that we have been discussing is a very militant idea in itself. If we see ‘the archive’ as intrinsically connected to regimes of power and its control over the production of truth and knowledge, then the very notion that anyone can be an archivist is incredibly militant. Perhaps what a militant third cinema strived to realize is only coming to fruition now through this radical reconfiguring of the archive (Steyerl, 2009: 7). We would agree that the contemporary moment is defined by the intersection between archivalism and activism since people’s reclamation of power is partially articulated through reclaiming the archive as a site for their own, self-determined testimony to their lives and the lives of others. The politics and power of the record as testimony, whether as image, sound or text, has perhaps never been as publicly grasped or contested. Only a few days ago we watched multiple videos of a physical confrontation between Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and the Israeli military in the Dome of the Rock. Large numbers of the Palestinians protesting were running towards the Israeli soldiers with their smart phones and flip cameras in hand. It was an intrinsic part of the protest. Precisely because archiving in the sense that we have spoken about is not simply an act of *recording* but also an act of *performing*. And for these reasons the intersection between archival activity and political activity has perhaps never been as endowed with the ability to demystify the productive discourse of

power as in the case of Egypt, where the people's archive was producing images of the uprising not outside of but in direct opposition to spectacle. It was through these images that the symbolic order of power was unhinged.

Equally, the archival activism, in making available and accessible knowledge that otherwise is privatized, is a struggle for the very notion of a common archive, for the possibility of different ways of being and relating in disjuncture with the culture of capitalism that captures every aspect of life through the logic of valorization.⁶ For us these are all militant archives in the making to the extent that they are fundamentally connected to the awakening of a dissonant imaginary – particularly when political imaginary has been in crisis for so long. It is evident through all the recent legislation to control and monitor the flows of information and exchange between people (whether under the pretence of security or copyright) that the central nodes of power recognize this only too well.⁷

TH: Reflecting on the eminent role that practices of archiving have played in the work of contemporary artists from the Middle East such as Walid Raad or Akram Zaatari, often through deploying strategies of fictionalization and historical speculation, your turn towards the issue of the archival and the performance of the archivists in times of revolutionary change entails the question: to what extent do these recent archival activisms become the object of an (your) artistic gaze, a gaze that is quite likely informed by such 'parafictional' (Lambert-Beatty, 2009) archivist practices? In what way do the smartphone-carrying activist-archivists from Tahrir Square and elsewhere necessitate a reconfiguration of the 'archival impulse' still beating so strongly within contemporary artistic practices?

BA/RA-R: Our position and practice have been profoundly impacted by the work of contemporary artists that came before us. Without the immense work Walid Raad, Akram Zaatari and others did in questioning the very notion and authenticity of the archive and the 'document' we would not be liberated to engage with archives as we do. Clearly their 'parafictional' archivist practices have informed our interest in the relation between the 'actual' and the 'imagined', the spoken and the unsaid, the visualized and the non-visualized. At the same time we have been influenced by music pioneers who sampled and remixed anything and everything in the world of sound and music, by the early video artists such as Nam June Paik and Dara Birnbaum, and by jockeys who re-activated everything from found footage to infomercials – breathing a second life into otherwise forgotten material and influencing sound and video artists to come. And of course there is the influence of political and experimental filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard and Adam Curtis who in their later work sampled, re-cut and spliced archive material to question the production of discourse and image. The intersections between these various practices led us to where we find ourselves now, turning our gaze toward this new archival multitude, rethinking our position as artists. *Future Archivist(s)* directly reflects on this becoming-archivist of everyone, and its still unfolding affects.



Figure 6 Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, *The Incidental Insurgents* (2012), video still. © Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme.



Figure 7 Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, *The Incidental Insurgents* (2012), installation view as exhibited at Al Maamal Foundation for Contemporary Art, Jerusalem. © Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme.

Our last finished work, *The Incidental Insurgents* (2012), is precisely about the political becoming that expresses our own and the common search for a language of the moment. In it we explore the figure of the bandit, delving into the possibilities and inadequacies of the anarchist, the artist and the rebel as bandit (Figure 6). Culminating in what seems to be an obsessive

search for what we cannot yet see but that we feel is possible – a coming insurrection with a new political imaginary and language. So our looking back does not indicate an archival impulse in the sense of questioning or even reactivating suppressed archives but about tracing the not-yet-material potential of our moment and the one to come. One part of the installation is a heightened version of our own studio (Figure 7), probably our most personal work to date, where through turning the work inside out we express the intersections between the subjective/actual/material and the common/imagined/not-yet-material.

For us the activist–archivists certainly demanded a reconfiguration of our own archival practice, they illuminated something that we had somehow failed to see. We felt strongly that we were in the midst of a new becoming for the archives. The position that the artist as archivist used to occupy is now being taken up by the activist as archivist, and not only the activist but also all the individuals who are amassing and uploading records of their daily life, the mundane and the everyday. Such archival ambitions are everywhere; they are proliferating, and wittingly or unwittingly producing a living archive. The interrogation of the archive that artists and writers had been dedicated to, through counter-narratives and images, is now coming alive through the practices of this new archival multitude. We read the artist as archivist as a precursor for this moment. Now that we have arrived here it has meant a shift in our gaze beyond ourselves as artist–archivists and towards the possibilities of this overwhelming archival activity. That is certainly why we have undertaken this project, *Future Archivist(s)*, and while we are clearly involved in our own inscriptions/readings of and on this archival activity, what is compelling us are the inscriptions of the expanded archivists. Perhaps what we feel now is that we are one small part of this immense archival multitude.

Notes

1. See for instance ‘Live in Beirut’, recorded in ‘The Cave’, Beirut, 5 October 2011 (<https://vimeo.com/30768897>) and ‘Live in Ramallah’, recorded at ‘Beit Aneeseh’, Ramallah, 21 May 2012 (<https://vimeo.com/44609871>).
2. Here we are speaking of the experience of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza under Israeli military rule and inside Israel ‘proper’, in Jerusalem, Haifa and Nazareth for example, areas that fall under direct Israeli jurisdiction.
3. Tahrir Square in Cairo was the focal point of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution.
4. Such a broad term is used here because the revolution was incredibly decentralized, heterogeneous and at times anonymous, resulting in us not knowing the details of individual users’ political affiliations apart from their insurgence against the current regime.
5. The video is titled ‘Egyptian Revolution: “See you tomorrow!”’ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2Akb1V4oMI>.
6. Clearly, thinking about these aspects, we are indebted to the writings of Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno and other post-operaist thinkers stressing the potential of resistance and insurgency constituted by the role of the ‘general

intellect' and linguistic capabilities play in the formation and existence of post-Fordism and cognitive capitalism.

7. Here we are thinking of the failed SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act), which attempted to grant copyright holders rights to shutdown entire websites (as opposed to only removing the material that was allegedly infringing copyrights) without even allowing the alleged infringer a right of defence. The act was brought to a halt by a huge mobilization against it, most prominently the SOPA blackout that included sites such as Wikipedia shutting down for a day. Then of course there is its international variation of sorts, ACTA (The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement), an agreement that was rejected by the European Union, again due to a huge mobilization, but that has been passed by Japan and the United States, who drafted the treaty, along with Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and Mexico. We have yet to feel the full impact of ACTA, as it is not clear if it will move forward despite the EU rejection. Now there is a new bill in the American Congress CISPA (the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act) which if passed would allow companies to look at your private information in order to 'identify' threats, effectively allowing all people's online activities to be used against them without a warrant. Of course already in some court cases in the United States, Facebook 'likes' and posts have been used as evidence, setting a legal precedent. As for parts of the Arab world, apart from the countries that have clear state/monarchy censorship like Saudi Arabia, while there is little by way of legislation, things function in an arbitrary fashion. To give only a few examples: numerous people have been arrested in Palestine over Facebook posts, comments and 'likes' that are deemed to be critical of the Palestinian Authority, and recently two Tunisian rappers were arrested for an anti-police music video posted on YouTube.

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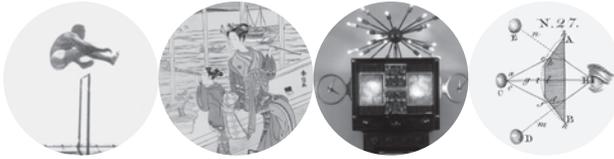
Basel Abbas and **Ruanne Abou-Rahme** work together across a range of sound, text, image, installation and performance practices. Their work explores issues to do with the politics of desire and disaster, spatial politics, subjectivity and the absurdities of contemporary practices of power, often finding themselves investigating spatio-temporal resonances in the relation between the actual, imagined and remembered. Increasingly their practice examines the immersive, experiential possibilities of sound, image and site, taking on the form of interdisciplinary installations and live audio-visual performances. They have exhibited and performed internationally and most recently founded the sound and image performance collective Tashweesh. They are fellows at Akademie der Künste der Welt in Cologne for 2013.

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journal of visual culture



RoCH Fans and Legends (Entries)

susan pui san lok

射鵬三部曲 / 射雕三部曲 / Shè Diāo Sān Bù Qǔ / Se6 Diu1 Saam3 Bou6 Kuk1 / *The Condor Trilogy* (1957–1963)¹

射鵬英雄傳 / 射雕英雄傳 / Shè Diāo Yīng Xióng Zhuàn / Se6 Diu1 Jing1 Hung4 Zyun6 / *The Eagle-Shooting Heroes / Story of the Vulture Conqueror / The Brave Archer / The Legend of the Condor Heroes / Ashes of Time ...*² (1958, 1977, 1978, 1981, 1993, 1994; 1976, 1983, 1988, 1992, 1993, 1994, 2003, 2008 ...)³

神鵬俠侶 / 神雕俠侶 / Shén Diāo Xiá Lǚ / San4 Diu1 Haap6 Lei5 / San Diu Hap Lui / Sun Diu Hap Lui / Sin Tiau Hap Lui / Shin Chou Kyou Ryo / Shin Cho Kyo Ryo: Kondoru Hiro / Than Dieu Hiep Lu / *Kembalinya Sang Pendakar Rajawali / The Giant Eagle and its Companion / Divine Eagle, Gallant Knight / The Story of the Great Heroes / The Brave Archer and his Mate / Little Dragon Maiden / The Legendary Couple / Return of The Condor Heroes ...* (1960, 1982, 1983; 1976, 1983, 1984, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2006 ...)

倚天屠龍記 / 倚天屠龙记 / Yǐ Tiān Tú Lóng Jì (Hanyu Pinyin) / Ji2 Tin1 Tou4 Lung4 Gei3 (Jyutping) / *Story of the Sword and the Sabre / Heaven Sword and Dragon Sabre / The Hidden Power of the Dragon Sabre / Kung Fu Cult Master / New Heavenly Sword and Sabre ...* (1963/1965, 1978, 1984, 1993; 1978, 1984, 1986, 1993, 2000, 2003, 2009 ...)

神鵰俠侶



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Shen Diao Xia Lu

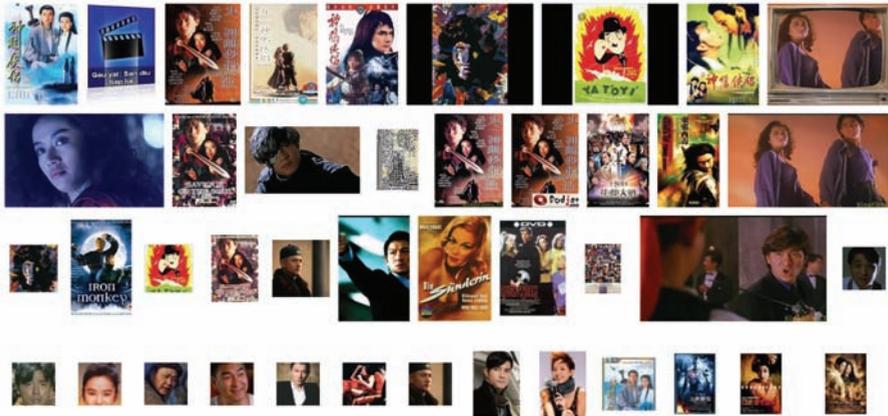


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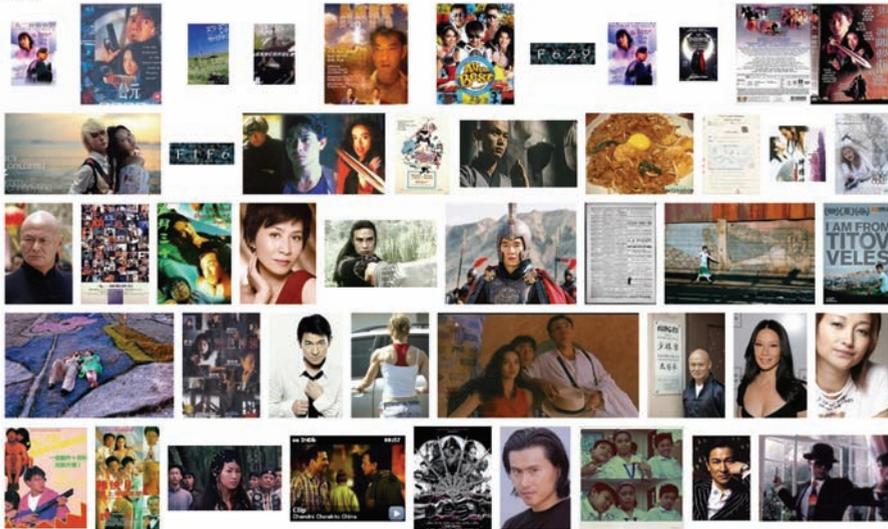


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San Diu Hap Lui



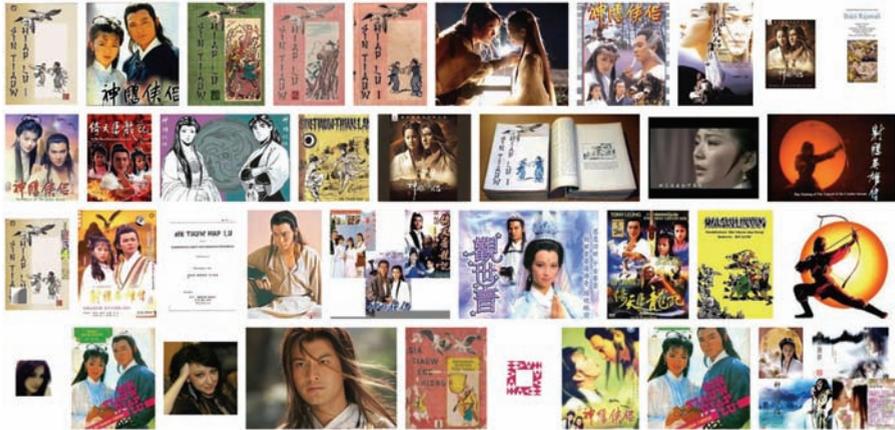
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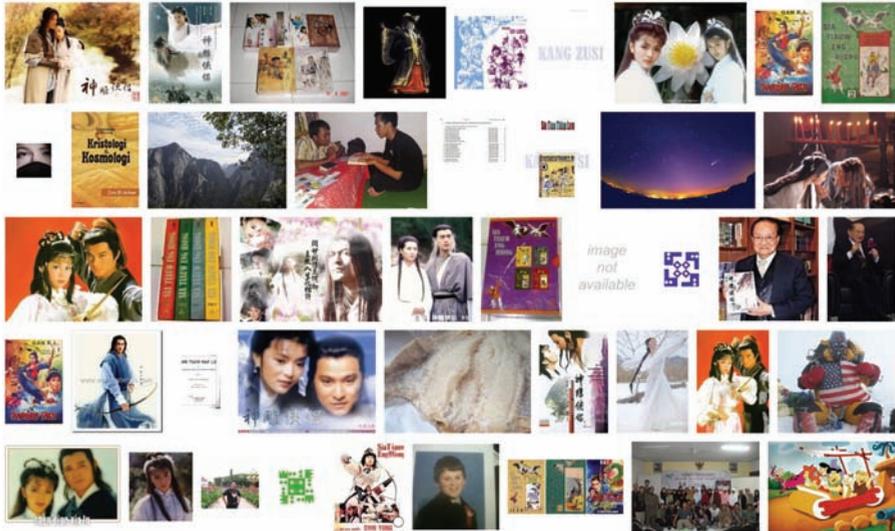
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Sin Tiauw Hiap Lui



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Return of The Condor Heroes



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Divine Eagle, Gallant Knight



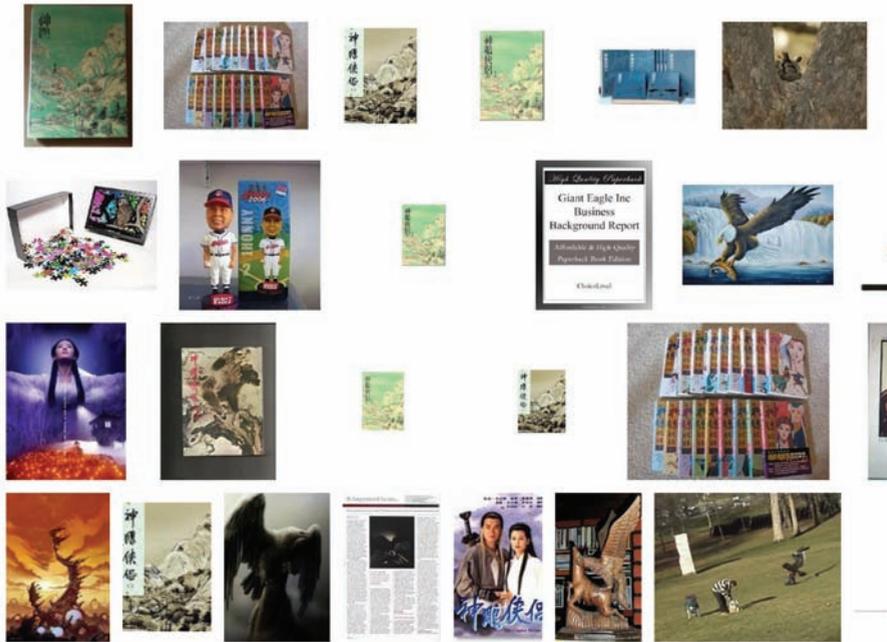
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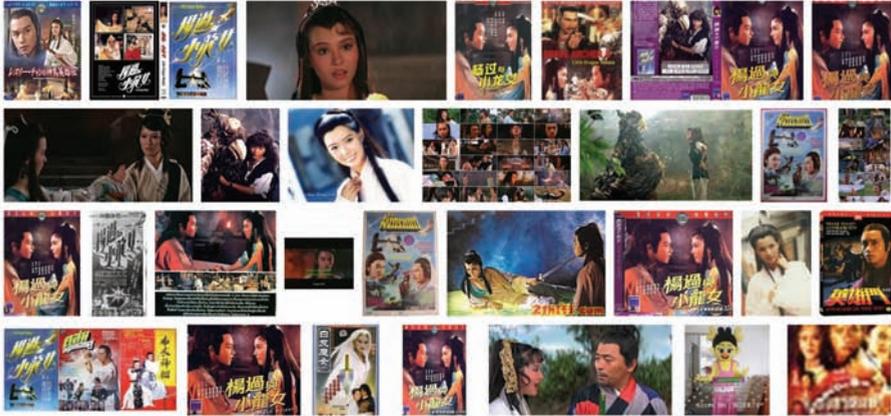
The Giant Eagle and its Companion



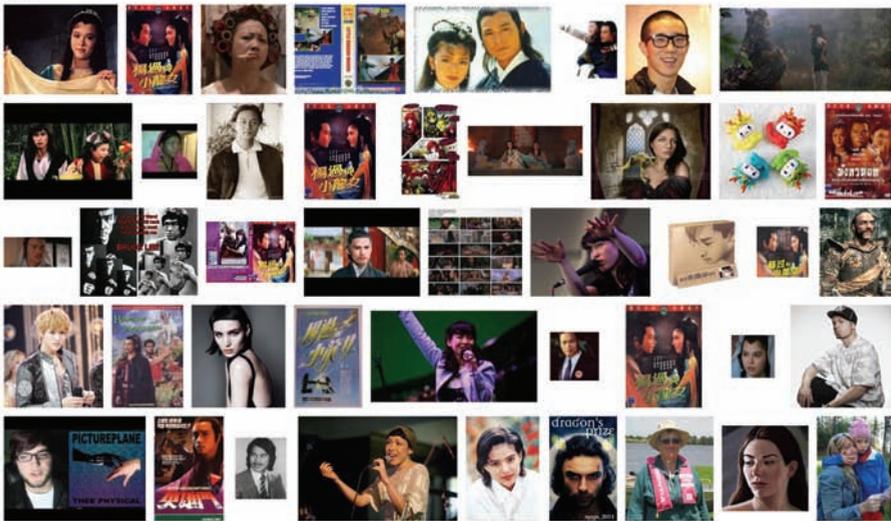
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Little Dragon Maiden⁴



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Notes

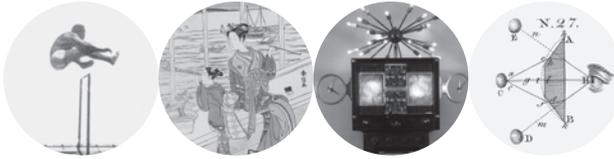
1. Written by JIN Yong, the pen name of Louis CHA Leung-yung/ZHA Liangyong, the trilogy comprises *Shendiao yingxiong zhuan* (*The Eagle-Shooting Heroes*), originally serialized in *Xianggang shangbao*, 1 January 1957–19 May 1959; *Shendiao xialü* (*The Giant Eagle and its Companion*), originally serialized in *Ming Pao*, 20 May 1959–5 July 1961; and *Yitian tulong ji* (*The Heaven Sword and the Dragon Sabre*), originally serialized in *Ming Pao*, 6 July 1961–2 September 1963. Revised editions, with the aforementioned English titles provided by the publisher, appeared in Jin Yong (1975–981) *Jin Yong zuopin ji* (*The Collected Works of Jin Yong*). Hong Kong: Ming Ho Publications, volumes 5–8, 9–12, and 16–19.
2. Various translations and transliterations of parts of the trilogy, generated by licensed versions and fan-activity, including in Traditional and Simplified Chinese characters; Hanyu pinyin (Mandarin) and Jyutping (Cantonese) systems of romanization (the former published by the Chinese government in 1958 and since revised, the latter developed by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong in 1993); Japanese, Singaporean and Indonesian subtitles and dubs.
3. Dates refer to the release of film adaptations and terrestrial broadcasts of television serializations respectively.
4. Images are based on screen shots of the first page of results returned by Google using the search terms shown here as subheadings, on 11 January 2013.

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journal of visual culture



Theses on the Philosophy of History: The Work of Research in the Age of Digital Searchability and Distributability

Marquard Smith

Abstract

What is it to conduct research in the second decade of the 21st century? What is the nature (or what are the modalities) of the work that we as researchers do? What is research as a praxis? And how have recent shifts in paradigms of knowledge generation and distribution – especially around the archive and the Internet, and the Internet as archival – transformed profoundly what we as researchers do, how we do it, and in fact even our very capacity to do it?

In this article, I begin from the idea of research as a praxis, and from the figure of the researcher as a locus for the discovery of knowledges by way of acts of searching and gathering. In 15 theses I engage critically with challenges raised recently for the idea of ‘history’ as a form of knowledge by our own *épistémè* of re-search; one whose conditions and conditions of possibility are delineated by the emergence of our late capitalist global algorithmic knowledge economy, and the Internet with its distinct operations of searchability and distributability. Because this is our present moment’s *épistémè* of re-search, I argue that our being in thrall of the archive has dangerous future consequences: in fact it is perilous for the very idea of the future itself as a category of historical time. Concerned by this situation and thus responding forcefully to it, in offering a few grains of dissent I will ‘look with care’ at how we might navigate our way fractiously and thus productively through such a predicament.

Keywords

the archival • the archive • curiosity • history • hope • the Internet • knowledge • metadata • research

Interpol und Deutsche Bank, FBI und Scotland Yard
 Interpol und Deutsche Bank, FBI und Scotland Yard
 Flensburg und das BKA, Haben unsere Daten da
 Flensburg und das BKA, Haben unsere Daten da
 Kraftwerk, 'Computerwelt', 1981

I

[I]t is the questions that we ask that produce ... and not some body of materials which determines what questions need to be posed to it.¹

What is it to conduct research in the second decade of the 21st century? What is the nature (or what are the modalities) of the work that we as researchers do? What is research as a praxis? And how have recent shifts in paradigms of knowledge generation and distribution – especially around the archive and the Internet, and the Internet as archival – transformed profoundly what we as researchers do, how we do it, and in fact even our very capacity to do it?²

II

To research, which by definition is 'to look for with care', is an act of not only interpreting the world but changing it.

I engage with the pressing questions above by beginning from the etymology of the word 'research' that, from the Old French, *recercer*, in its verb form is both 'to search' and 'to search again'. It is thus bursting with all of the instigating and reiterating that this implies. As a verb, research is 'to roam while digging' and 'to look for with care'. Both are acts well worth keeping in mind, especially in the context of archives, the archive, and the archival, as well as cultural practices themselves, and methodology in Visual Culture Studies.³ As a verb, then, what is stressed etymologically is the *act* of searching and researching.

Research is discovery, by way of a searching for knowledge and a gathering of data. It is as well an attending to the ever-changing acts or practices or protocols of such searching and gathering. There are four principal reasons for these activities. The first is to investigate, to experiment, and to test. This is the rhetoric of conjecture and speculation. The second is so that what is being searched for and gathered can be increased, used, and utilized, or better, exploited. This is the rhetoric of a different kind of speculation: that of economic accumulation, capitalization, and monetization. Third is the advancement of knowledge per se. This is the rhetoric of knowledge for knowledge's sake. Fourth, and ultimately, the purpose of research as a searching, a gathering, *and a distributing* by way of solving problems and raising new challenges is conducted in order, to re-purpose Karl Marx's 11th Thesis of his 'Theses on Feuerbach' (Marx,

1969[1845, 1888]), not only to interpret the world, in various ways, but to change it.

III

The researcher's desire is what makes knowledge, and what makes it differently.

Raising the question of *why* such researching and gathering and distributing is carried out, why it is done, creates a need to profile the researcher. I foreground this figure because the researcher (whether scientist, academic, scholar, artist, curator, etc.) is an *ur*-form. The researcher is a 'type' (and there are many types of this type) whose desire drives the conditions, limitations, and possibilities of knowledge and thus epistemology. It is the multiplicity and dissimilarity of these desires that makes the patterning of theories of knowledge such a permanent revolution. This patterning and indeed re-patterning – moulded to such an extent by the intensity and eccentricity of the researcher and our research practices (our decision-making vis-a-vis what we're going to research, how we're going to research it, and to what end) – is what generates knowledge differently. As a locus for the discovery of knowledges through acts of searching and gathering, the researcher's *ways of doing* research – of for instance 'doing' history, of the practice of history as a form of knowledge, *why* and *how* the researcher 'roams while digging' and 'looks for with care' – is what *makes* knowledge, and what makes knowledge *differently*.⁴ As a figure caught up in making knowledge differently, the researcher is of course a subject of and subject to such knowledge, as well as being constituted by the very drives and desires (including the bitter-sweet double binds of curiosity and hope) that compel us to search and re-search, and by the drives and desires that shape *those* drives and desires. At the end of this article I will return to these double binds.

IV

Each historical moment has its own *épistémè* of re-search.⁵

The persistence of the figure of the researcher, albeit its necessarily variegated persistence, constitutes the history of humankind as an epistemology of re-search. That said, each historical moment has its own *épistémè* of re-search. This is determined by and determining of its scientific, technological, medical, legal and juridical, cultural, and aesthetic parameters; as it simultaneously integrates elements from previous paradigms and imagines the forms of a barely legible imminent future.

The post-Enlightenment period has produced an admixture of paradigm shifts in epistemology; and each *épistémè* of re-search makes its own idea of history. Each of these has its own rendering of the dynamics between the idea of the past, the present, and the future as categories of historical time,

as such dynamics are generated by and circulate through these knowledge systems. Such shifts are sanctioned by philosophical markers, historical convergences, and dates including (in roughly chronological order): Diderot's *Encyclopédie*; Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*; Kant's universal history; 1789; Hegel's *reines Zusehen*; 1830; Marx's historical materialism; Alexandre Kojève and his legacies; Benjamin's principle of montage into history; 1945; 1968; Post-Historie; Situated Knowers; the Subaltern; Postmodernism's incredulity towards meta-narratives; New Historicism; 1989; the End of History and the Last Man; the events of September 11th 2001; the 'Arab Spring'. There are others.

Each of these events and historical processes as palimpsests, social hieroglyphs, as proxies even, is a challenge that, because of our own *épistémè* of re-search, makes us ask again in new ways: What is the practice of history as a form of knowledge (with its multiplicities of duration and time such as for instance its *longue durée* or its micro-temporalities), and where is it? What (because of these shifts) is the future of and for knowledge? What does the future hold for the generating and circulating of knowledge (given that knowledge is now expressly a capitalized and monetized commodity in our 'knowledge economy'), and what are the implications of this for the archive and the archival, not least because of the Internet (and the Internet as archival) with its distinct operations of searchability and distributability?⁶ And finally, how might our praxis as researchers – our labour, our sensibilities, our choices and decisions, our curiosity, our hopes, our desires – be both challenged by these shifts and, despite this, also perhaps facilitate research's capacity for criticality?

V

Who controls the past ... controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.⁷

At the same time as Jean-François Lyotard was publishing *The Postmodern Condition*, his 'report on knowledge' (as the book is subtitled) in the post-Enlightenment period in which he identifies the contemporary's incredulity towards (the legitimacy of) its meta-narratives, in post-industrial society, certainly in the UK as the home of the industrial revolution, the idea of 'history' began to enter a new phase: that of heritage. In the UK, because of the consequences of a mix of Margaret Thatcher's devastation of 'unproductive' industries (the primary sector of the economy), the collapse of manufacturing (the secondary sector), the deregulation of financial markets, privatization, and the promotion of a political ideology of 'the past' as an ahistorical and bucolic idyll of benign Empire, all over the country changes ensued in its industrial landscape. Much as raw materials 'proved' themselves to be no longer economically viable, so History, which is to say (raw) material history, ground to a halt. Sites of former industrial production became sites for post-industrial reproduction for the dark tourism of the Heritage Industry. The precarity of everyday life gave way to the performance (by those in the

service industry or tertiary sector) of industrial production in the form of themed 'living museums'. Here, what is called 'living history' replaced what is presumably its opposite, 'dead history', or what we call history. History became heritage as its modes of production, labour practices, and the intrinsic value of fossil fuels or precious minerals and metals as materials and commodities were made over for the purposes of edu-tainment. (There are few things more dispiriting than speaking to a costumed actor role-playing a chipper miner in a former pit village turned living museum.) This is an industry that neither produces nor manufactures, and whose currency is alienated affective labour. This is true for its own precariat workers, and for us. As a response to and precipitate of de-industrialization, the Heritage Industry was surely a functioning of that discourse of the End of History and the victory of neo-liberal (democratic) capitalism.

Any present-day effort to engage with the question of history as a form of knowledge must do so, I think, through a critical alertness to the kind of model of history that the Heritage Industry operates: i.e. that *épistémè* of re-search in which the present invents (the idea of) 'the past' as a category of timeless historical time to populate that present in order to colonize or take possession of the future. (And the future is certainly a possession that can be taken, and taken from us, as I will go on to discuss.) To do otherwise is to replicate it; and thus to ourselves inhabit the eternally recurring plastinated ruins of a de-commissioned, post-industrial wasteland.⁸

Such an attentiveness to this model of history is often observed by epistemologists, historiographers, theorists, and not least practitioners utilizing archives or 'the archive'. In fact, our recent archive fever and our archival, an-archival, anomic, genealogical, and archaeological impulses – which as spatio-temporal processes figure the past as a site of radical potentialities – may well emerge directly out of (and as a critical response to) such a 'crisis of history'. They may well be a taking up of Fredric Jameson's 1981 instruction to 'always historicize' (1989[1981]: 9) At the same time, after Warburg, Benjamin, Richter, the Beckers, and Boltanski, and even more so after the end of the Cold War, and the European revolutions of 1989 and their legacies of independence, nation imagining, ethnic and sectarian violence, and remembering, employing archives and 'the archive' as repository, inventory, source and resource, and as places of authority and power, and to do so *as provocations* (as transformations, fictions, fabrications, re-enactments, and re-stagings) is a form of remobilizing enacted in order to produce (the question of) history differently. Such re-activating practices are 'institutive'.⁹

VI

In our late capitalist global algorithmic knowledge economy, knowledge has become confused with or misconstrued as data.

If the question of history as a form of knowledge in and after Postmodernity is articulated by way of both an incredulity towards meta-narratives and

a hollowing out of history into heritage, today history's predicament is knowledge's instrumentalization as 'mere' data. As that thoughtful critic of the university Thomas Docherty writes, 'the demand for ... data to operate as a kind of substitute for knowledge ... is part of a culture of "immediacy" [which is] anathema to knowledge, and to education, both of which require time, delay, and the mediations of thinking'.¹⁰

Yet in the age of Big Data no archive is too extensive, no archive project too grand or too foolhardy to be imagined. As I write, the Library of Congress is compiling Twitter's public tweet archive, with over 170 billion tweets, and which continues to grow with well over half a billion tweets each day. Unsurprisingly, this archive is still inaccessible, as the Library of Congress Information Bulletin states: 'It is clear that technology to allow for scholarship access to large data sets is not nearly as advanced as the technology for creating and distributing that data.'¹¹ And this is not a new phenomenon: since 2004, the British Library, responding as their website says to 'the challenge of a potential "digital black hole"', has been archiving (via what's called the UK Web Archive) all UK websites in order to 'preserve and give permanent access' for future generations.¹² Exemplary of this preservationist impulse is the Internet Archive, the digital library of Internet sites founded in 1996, which is likewise 'working to preserve a record [of the Internet] for generations to come'.¹³ Its ambition is such that as it archives the extant world, it will culminate inevitably in a real-time Internet archive that will be coextensive with, and eventually, surpass it.

Many years ago, Jorge Luis Borges (1998[1946]: 325) in his one-paragraph short story 'On Exactitude in Science' warned us against such hubristic folly:

... In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.

– Suarez Miranda, *Viajes de varones prudentes*,
Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lerida, 1658.

In the age of Big Data, and also the digitally cartographic with its geo-spatial technologies and applications – such as for instance Google Earth, Google Maps, and Google Street View with their use of satellite imagery, aerial photography, and image-stitching panoramas, and their navigation features such as zoom-ability and pan-ability – it is patent that Borges' warning has gone unheeded.¹⁴

VII

The revolution will not be televised, but it will be archived live.

Activists in the 1960s protest movements knew that the revolution would not be televised. It would take place live. You had to be there, on the ground, on site. As Gill Scott-Heron put it, discussing his track of 1970 'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised', the change in people's minds, that *coming into political consciousness*, couldn't come from television, and neither could it be captured on film and played back to them via television.¹⁵ The revolution will be live. Its liveness was its very condition of possibility.

Scott-Heron did not foresee Web 2.0 Culture, that culture of social media through which individuals, protesters, citizen-journalists, citizens, the multitude with hand-held screenic devices instigate a vernacular documenting and recording of events as they unfold. He did not foresee the dissemination simultaneously of still and moving footage, the live-ness of live streaming, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube into distributive platforms orchestrating a revolution. As one protester during the Arab insurrections put it: 'We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world!'¹⁶

This is a glimpse into the fractious geo-politics of the Internet as a globalizing network of networks, where the digital public (albeit highly corporate) sphere marks a turn or a return to the civic. There is something wondrous about the immediacy (albeit the mediated and re-mediated immediacy) of the present as it is archived live. Although, we will do well to remember that while it might be wondrous *to be able* to see, *what* we see isn't always so wonderful. This is 21st century witnessing, with the self-archiving document as testimony. This is to live through the civil disobedience of the global village. Men and women make their own history. We make history under existing *and* self-selected circumstances, literally, as it takes place. On this, we might recall Derrida (1996: 13) writing almost 20 years ago in *Archive Fever* that 'archivization produces as much as it records the event.'

That said, most of us are of course *not* there, live, but we experience such acts *as* live, albeit always and already mediated by technology. So we watch on our screens – our tablet touchscreens, our iPhone screens, our computer screens, and yes, even our television screens – as Al Jazeera (and any and every other network) plays, re-plays, and plays out the revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria; and more recently protests in Turkey and Brazil, and more recently still the military coup in Egypt and its ensuing massacres. And we see, framed by our screens, the live-streaming present archived as it takes place.

Despite its efficacy, there is an element of the spectacle in such access, produced and distributed as it is by the voyeuristic digital infrastructure of a mediated and thus distancing surveillance culture. It's live, the network is live, but it's not a 'being there'.¹⁷ Accordingly one has to wonder, following on from Derrida's observation above, what it means and what is the cost

for 'history' when live archiving itself creates the event; especially if, in a culture of immediacy, knowledge is being misconstrued as data.

To vanquish the spectre of the spectacle in general, my feeling is that this civic needs to be particularized. That there's an absolute specificity to these events that makes them significant and consequential in exceptional ways was brought home to me by a recent conversation with a mature student from Syria, exiled with his wife and children in London. He told me that every night he watches 30 minutes of footage streamed live via a surveillance camera trained on the front door of his parents' home in Damascus. He must watch, but every second is more than he can bear. Such compulsory torment is a true rendering of the 'intense proximity' of distance and 'the terrible nearness of distant places', phrases coined by curator Okwui Enwezor (2002, 2012) to characterize in an analogous context the mediated and remediated frontiers of our globalized communicational relations.¹⁸ Getting a sense of the exceptionality of this gap, this remove, this *not being there* but it still being live, is where the researcher's efforts at empathy (without inanity or contrivance) becomes the spur for producing differently history as a form of knowledge.

VIII

Data in the age of digital searchability and distributability is transforming, and being transformed by, archives, the archival, and the archive.

Ours is a late capitalist global algorithmic knowledge economy. In this economy, the question of history as a form of knowledge disappears, and is replaced with the processual operations of the searchable and the distributable. Here Big Data tools and processes facilitate the intelligence-industrial complex: a government, a company (Internet service provider, search engine, etc.), or the intelligence community's ability to establish, handle, and manipulate huge data sets, discerning patterns of activity (every act by phone, text, search, chat, or email, etc.) that enable them to improve their decision-making which in turn better envisages future activities. This is not unconnected to the 'vernacular datasets of the digital age', as media theorist Tara McPherson (2013: 7) has characterized social media 'archives' such as Facebook, YouTube, Tumblr, and Instagram which, as they accumulate and self-archive, are generative through the capitalization and monetization of their data. In all of this, value does not reside in searching, gathering, and distributing in order to, for instance, investigate, interpret, and change the world. Rather, it resides in *searchability* (the extent to which and the ease with which a thing is 'susceptibl[e] to being found', as art historian David Joselit has put it recently) and *distributability* (its susceptibility to being dispersed, given out, or delivered, we might say). Searchability and distributability become the two most critically significant terms in our épistémè of re-search.¹⁹

This economy raises three pressing challenges. The first is to the *politics of knowledge*, which is also the politics of knowledge in the future, and of future knowledges: what are and what will be the conditions for knowledge's production, dissemination, and utilization (not least in a climate of analyst interceptors, military redactors, and publisher expungers), and what does it mean for us to contribute to, and be complicit with, the activities of this *épistémè* of re-search? The second challenge is to the *politics of ownership*: who owns and thus controls data? Asking this question raises a whole series of further reservations about governance, the disparity between privacy and security (that in our permanent state of exception we are monitored to protect us), intellectual property, and chronic breaches of data protection law (since the act of giving away is in no way identical to it being taken or captured) as vital legal safeguards, oversight, and accountability limp far behind.²⁰ The third challenge is to the *politics of the human*: it is our labour as activities that are producing the data (handed over by us willingly) and metadata. It is our data and metadata that are monitor-able, search-able, analyse-able, exploit-able. Our rights that are being revoked gradually. Our privacy that is being violated. Our identities that are being compromised or perhaps constituted even, as I later contend, through searchability and distributability as operations of this global algorithmic knowledge economy.

This is today where the future of the archival is being fought out, and how our current *épistémè* of re-search is transforming, as well as being transformed by, archives, the archival, and the archive. I raise this because of concern for the extent to which the contemporary continues to be in the thrall of the archival, and its impulses, as a particular version of history as a form of knowledge, and indeed of knowledge as a particular kind of form. Undoubtedly these re-configurings of knowledge, ownership, and the human will have damaging consequences – partly because such re-arrangements are proceeding largely unacknowledged in debates on archives and the archive, history, historiography, and epistemology²¹ – for the future of research in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, as well as for visual cultural practices, and more profoundly I venture for the very idea of the future itself as a category of historical time.

IX

The Internet is a living archive governed by (and governing) the operations of the searchable and the distributable.²²

There are archives on the Internet. There are archives of archives on the Internet. There are archives of the Internet. And then there is the Internet itself as an archive and as archival. The Internet as an archive and as archival is figured as a network, a network of networks, an organizing principle of global dimensions whose arrangement (whilst incredibly uneven) is worldwide and planetary. Much like the archive, with its etymological roots in the Greek *arkheion* (the dwelling of the *archon* under whose authority

archival documents were filed and interpreted), the Internet is a repository, an inventory, a source, and a resource, a home of storage, generation, transmission, and distribution. As such, it raises questions for the archive, the archival, and storage and retrieval systems; all the more so because its modularity threatens an almost limitless re-arrange-ability of things ad infinitum.²³ It is significant *that* these networks connect and inter-connect with one another, like a pulsating, self-perpetuating and self-preserving, non-organic sentient celestial being. But what is more critical is *how* they do so by way of the dynamic operations of the searchable and the distributable that govern actively, and that are in turn governed actively by, gathering, accumulating, storing, aggregating, arranging and managing, mediating and remediating, retrieving and presenting, disseminating and transmitting information and knowledge of the historical and the geographical.

X

As a living archive, the Internet mutates the stuff of memory.

History and memory, and history *as* memory, previously inscribed in the physical space of the archive as a place of storage, organization, and access have been transformed by computing-based storage and retrieval systems or apparatuses such as the personal computer, the iPhone, the portable memory stick, and that meteorological digital media *Gesamtkunstwerk*, The Cloud.²⁴ Such mobile and cloud storage is an outsourcing. Whether as open, closed, or semi-closed systems, by way of these apparatuses, memory as transitional is an externalization, as well as an extension. It is a mnemonic device. Artificial memory machines as repositories of knowledge are nothing new. Think alphabets, writing systems, movable-type printing, and the phonograph and the cinematograph as storage systems with their capacity to 'record and reproduce the temporal flow of acoustic and optical data', and thus to 'store time', as Friedrich Kittler (1997[1986]: 34) put it so well. What is new is the unprecedented speed at which and the extent to which the stuff of memory – this information, data, and knowledge as a source and a resource – is searchable, retrievable, and infinitely reproducible and thus distributable by such calculating and processual systems.²⁵

If this is new, what is profound is that in this ecology such systems, or mnemotechnologies as Bernard Stiegler (nd) calls them, become both 'the object of a control of knowledge' and actually constitute the basis of control societies as such, as defined by Deleuze in his late writings. This is disturbing because of how cultural memory is now articulated through, as media archaeologist Jussi Parikka (in Ernst, 2013: 9) writes, 'the calculation- and number logic-based ontology of technical (and especially computational) media'. In such an all-encompassing programming ontology of software-based cultural memory, the stuff of memory is changed irreparably as it comes to be characterized by processes, *as* process: storing content or time or content as time for instance gives way to the distributive dynamics of the

processual per se. Search technology figuring personal history, for example, as no more or less than search history, the data patterns of traces of activity that we leave in our wake, along with the concomitant capitalization of memory, are testament to this. Indeed Internet archives, and I would add the Internet as archival is, as another media archaeologist Wolfgang Ernst (2009: 84) proposes, 'a function of their software and transmission protocols rather than content'. If then the Internet mutates the stuff of memory to the extent that searchability and distributability as operations are in no way *about* memory *as* content (and the same must thus be said for data, information, and knowledge itself), what motivates their functioning?

XI

The Internet as a living archive is self-generating.

The content of archives, in fact *all* content, has become largely irrelevant. What matters is not *what* is gathered, arranged, and transmitted, but *how* such gathering, arranging, and transmitting works.²⁶ 'What' is supplanted by 'how'. This 'how' is tied to the specifics of web-born and web-based searchability and distributability; both those digital tools that, in navigating actively map the web itself, and the data that flows in a motivated way through it, likewise carving out its topographic contours. Rather than the content, then, it is these dynamics, along with the processes, the processuality, and the operability of the system and its protocols (such as archiving software) that make the Internet a living archive. In fact as an autopoietic machine – an integrated and self-governing system that produces, maintains, and recreates itself – it is these protocols, and such programming and operations that make the Internet not just a living archive, but also a self-generating one.

Getting to grips with this has a bearing for two reasons. First, it is pressing because our ongoing obsession with archives, the archival, and the archive almost entirely has content at the centre of its attention. To continue to focus on content – the ambition to archive Twitter, but also to transform and animate anew 'history' as a form of knowledge by way of archives – is to miss the present location, nature, and terms of the dispute.²⁷ Second, it confirms that archives continue to be infused with authority and power but that, rather than being embodied as Derrida tells us in the figure and form of the *archon*, today it is embedded in 'architectures of software' (Parikka, 2012: 115).²⁸ Such authority and power are exercised by way of a 'mathematics of software' (Chun, 2004; Parikka, 2012) (calculability, programmability, coding, cryptanalysis computation, protocols, executable algorithms, bits, pixels, the quantifiable, etc.) where processuality, operability, and functionality shape and facilitate data's searchability and distributability. Getting this is crucial because we need to begin to grasp, even just conceptually, what it means in a post-content condition for IP addresses and web browsers to be communicating with other computers and with one another, and for these

semi-autonomous ‘intelligent agents’ – operating on our behalf but without our knowledge or consent – to be engaging in ‘incessant and non-volitional dialog’, as Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (2011b) has put it so well.²⁹

XII

The Web 2.0 culture of ‘user generated content’ has given way to the Web 3.0 culture of the ‘content generated user’: Metadata Я Us³⁰

The collaborative peer-to-peer sociality and conviviality of the Internet as a participatory platform (by way of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Instagram, etc.) was only ever a distractive Trojan Horse. That is to say, Web 2.0 culture, as a collective fantasy of democratic participation, was only ever a coercive apparatus (*dispositif*) whose function is to smuggle Web 3.0 culture into our very marrow. For as we archive ourselves, so it archives us. It was only ever a prelude to the great data harvest. Indeed Web 2.0 culture distracts us from a most serious concern in our contemporary environment; one that is largely invisible and thus all the more in need of careful attention: metadata.

Metadata as data about data, information about information, is figured as an archiving protocol that facilitates the retrieval, structuring, use, and mis-use of data, information, and knowledge. It is at the heart of our age: it underpins, drives, and shapes information economies, societal networks, search engines, communication technologies, websites, online images, maps, catalogues indexes, and stock markets. It is the structure, the organizing principle, the ecology that governs us.

It governs us and constitutes us. For in all this *we* are metadata. More obviously, by way of metadata the ‘content generated user’ is a marker of the human as product. That is to say, we are enmeshed in a culture of life-tracking. Metadata trawls through our searches, monitors our buying habits, its GPS systems tracking us, its cookies shadowing us, tagging us, remembering us, accumulating data and information along the way, for its own sake, for purposes ominous or as yet undetermined or unanticipated. As it collects, stores, mines, and analyses, it earns capital by, as cultural and media theorist Gary Hall (2010: 16) writes, ‘extract[ing] economic value’ from our labour as we produce free data via Amazon, Facebook, and so on which is then monetized by these private companies for demographically targeted advertising, sold on to further companies, or given to government.³¹ All the while it accumulates, number-crunches, and processes, identifying the discernible patterns of our activities as individual profiles that are then offered back to us as desire.³² But this is more than life-tracking, it is life-*constituting*. More insidiously then, metadata doesn’t just offer our desire back to us: mobilized as a predictor envisaging future activities and thus the future as such, by way of, for instance, the NSA conducting so-called ‘pattern of life’ analyses, it constitutes the latest iteration of the human’s subjectivation. Comprehended in this way, it shapes experience, our sense of privacy, identity, security, civic-ness, labour, sharing,

peer to peer-ness, being together, and life itself. In shaping what we are as a cognitive and psycho-social system, it changes the human condition itself. If the Internet as a living and self-generating archive is autopoietic, metadata as an archiving protocol is perhaps an allopoietic machine that produces things other than itself.

Perhaps it was always thus. We were always already calculating (and calculable) machines: the human as (and productive of) data resource: genetic, cellular, molecular, bio-informational, encoded, archival. The 19th century for instance gave us Adolphe Quetelet's codification of statistics, and later Frederick Winslow Taylor's scientific management, and the data gathering and archival practices of biometrics, psychometrics, inheritance, and proto-eugenics as enacted by the likes of Alphonse Bertillon and Francis Galton – the first to individuate, the second to visualize – as part of a wider efficiency drive to manage the human as a productive and re-productive citizen of mechanized industrial capitalism.³³ The fin-de-millennium gave us a draft of the fully sequenced human genome, the 'book of life' as archival, stored in databases and accessible on the Internet, whose generative capacity seems inexhaustible; with patentable entities (including biological products, genetically modified organisms, and genetic material), and anticipated developments in medicine, biotechnology, and treatment and disease management that will keep Big Pharma busy for years to come. Today the human is recoded as forever-productive bio-computational searchable data storing, data generating, data distributing machinery. Now we will be always already metadata.

A recent example will suffice: with regards to the revelations about the US National Security Agency's Internet monitoring program and the UK Government Communications Headquarters' Mastering of the Internet and Global Telecoms Exploitation programs, what should send tremors through the collective bio-techno-archivo-body politic is not per se this violating of privacy, the revoking of rights, the compromising of identities via the detailing of intimacy, and ultimately the mastery of the individual *by* surveillance. It may well be the 'largest programme of suspicionless surveillance in human history', as Edward Snowden has put it, but this point is banal. More challengingly, this episode exposes and confirms the extent to which the latest iteration of the human, constituted (as an advanced information management system) by these power-knowledge regimes of data and metadata, is functioning within (and as part of) the post-content condition. As the NSA and the White House keep telling us, they are 'not looking at content'. We (as human, all too human) do not believe them, but we should because this is the point: what we *say* doesn't actually matter; it's only what we (as calculable bio-informational data patterns) *do* that does. Any phone call makes this clear: de-territorialized yet all the more tethered because of it, by way of geo-location (network-based or device-based) finding and tracking aids, we are indexed dynamically in time (the 'when'), durationally (the 'how long'), locationally (the 'where'), and relationally (the 'from where to where', and the 'from whom to whom').³⁴ It is this 'doing'

which marks our archivable selves as tag-able, locate-able, map-able, track-able, search-able, reach-able, recover-able, rank-able, transaction-able, and distribute-able.³⁵ With always more metadata to come, as software-generated programmable and calculable media objects vulnerable to the whims of the algorithm, the human is simply a constellation of almost infinitely ever-changing coordinates.

That the human comes into being as a subject of data and metadata, and is subject to it, has consequences for the figure of the researcher whose very cognitive, psycho-social, and affective desires to search, to research, to roam while digging and look for with care, to be curious, to doubt, to interpret, to act, and perhaps even to change the world are thus themselves being constituted through searchability and distributability as the critically significant operations of our *épistémè* of re-search. These operations are composing our desire to know and to be curious: in fact our very *capacity* to desire-to-know and to be curious. This is an ultimate victory of late capitalism's global algorithmic knowledge economy.

XIII

We do not know what the future wants from us.

If this all sounds a little dystopian, that's because it is meant to. This is the case because it is not just the past but also the future that is at stake here. Our late capitalist global algorithmic knowledge economy utilizes archives, the archival, and the archive to overwhelm the (idea of the) future. This then becomes a danger of the Internet and the archive, and the Internet as archival. In such instances we are future-proofing the future. And we are future-proofing the future to the detriment of the future.

The Internet and the archive, and the Internet as archival, are saturating and thereby overwhelming the future as a category of historical time. This is due to our economy's intensified convergence of the calculable, the quantitative, and the predictive whereby the future is discovered (pre-emptively) as a time and place ripe for exploitation (research as speculation) that, by filling it with the interests of 'the now' masquerading as sharing-for-tomorrow, brings it both closer to us and strips it of its potentialities. From the ground up, every minute 72 hours of video is uploaded onto YouTube's servers. From the top down, in the context of the NSA and GCHQ's Internet monitoring programs whose ambition is to scoop up online and telephone traffic by tapping into, storing, and analysing huge volumes of data drawn from fibre-optic cables, the *Guardian* newspaper reported on June 2013 that '[e]ach of the cables carries data at a rate of 10 gigabits per second, so the tapped cables had the capacity, in theory, to deliver more than 21 petabytes a day – equivalent to sending all the information in all the books in the British Library 192 times every 24 hours'.³⁶

Do the maths, and imagine the sheer volume and velocity of data and metadata engulfing and devastating the future's topographies.

The predictive in the age of digital searchability and distributability is at the heart of the struggle over the politics of knowledge, ownership, and the human. Computers trawling huge data sets (as the raw material of knowledge) search for patterns in these troves of data in order to monitor and measure and manage (and profit from) that data, information, and knowledge in what has become a post-nation state monopoly of privately regulated governance in our late capitalist global algorithmic knowledge economy.³⁷ Such predictors, statistical modelling, and data analysis as search technologies in discerning patterns envisage future activities that envisage the future itself. Economically, this includes financial trading models, and speculating on debt's (including default's) future earning capacity (government debt, a bankrupt city's 'legacy' costs on previous debts, student loans, mortgage owners' negative equity, consumer debt in general) and managing indebtedness. Environmentally, this includes climate change models forecasting global warming, and rampant resource depletion, as well as process optimizing weather, space, geophysical, and Pharma data. In terms of the pharmaceutical, genomics, and bio-informatics industries, this includes personal genome sequencing which in revealing pre-disposition precipitates preparedness, discrimination (by health insurers), and the development of specific treatments; which is not unconnected to the Pharma industry's opposition (as they patent and market drugs) to the full disclosure of clinical trials data. As regards security, defence science and technology labs promote 'integrated futures thinking' through 'horizon scanning capability' in order to produce new protection systems and battle-winning technology, and predictive policing is upon us; *Minority Report* was a documentary.³⁸ Vis-a-vis retail, it includes the decades-old practice of market research, especially when in league with neurology and psychology, of targeting customers by not just guessing at but also provoking behaviours; Google Now is already predicting (by way of search habits and location) what you want to know before you ask. Such envisaging future activities that in doing so envisage the future itself includes all estimating and managing risk. It includes all forecasting, whether statistical, visionary, futurological, utopian, apocalyptic, or necromantic. It even includes archival projects committed to the past's radical potentialities that inadvertently litter the future with the debris of the past; where the future becomes the dumping ground for the past. In all cases, the predictive is anticipatory. In this it is though absolutely unlike Orwell's *1984* in which Winston Smith works as a clerk in the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth re-writing historical documents in order to change the past for the future. For us, the predictive as anticipatory populates the future in order, almost like a prediction *from* the future, a regressive *nachträglichkeit*, for searchability and distributability as operations to dictate its terms and conditions. In all this, the danger ultimately here is in the fact that, much like the illusion of storage's limitless capacity, so too the future is not inexhaustible.

Against this, we need to attend to both the future as a category of historical time, and to what was for VI Lenin the burning futural question of his moment; and to ask it again (albeit to different ends): what is to be done?³⁹ Doing so orients us more towards the future's radical potentialities. For even if the future is no longer contingency par excellence, such orientation makes it possible to revisit the challenge of how we relate to and conceptualize the future; our openness or our opening ourselves to it; how it functions as a most productive 'space' for projection, imagination, and fantasy; how we can harness our capacity to desire to speculate on the not-yet and the yet-to-come; and ultimately to celebrate un-knowability itself. In this, much as it is for Benjamin's notion of the charged energies of the outmoded that short-circuit the present with the anachronistic and enchanted splinters of the past's potentialities, so it is for the future whose 'fragments of utopian potential' (Leslie, nd) as a source of revolutionary energy vibrates, interrupting the present, but doing so only to demand that we concede it is unknown to us.

If the future is a category of historical time, much like the archive and the Internet as a home or dwelling, like them it is also one of geographical space and place; albeit a 'no place' or 'not a place' of utopia. As always and already spatio-temporal, the future's utopian impulse – both in its utopian form and its utopian wish – comprises a sense of a place, a negation of bounded topographies, and as its own condition of possibility the future's radical potentialities. The future is, as Russian futurist Velimir Khlebnikov wrote, 'creation's homeland'. The future-oriented, governed by this utopian impulse thus looks to create 'outlines of a better world', as Ernst Bloch put it in *The Principle of Hope*. Which is why I need to return urgently to the figure of the researcher, for surely the absolute specificity yet planetarity of our acts of 'roaming while digging' and our 'look[ing] for with care', our searching and re-searching as praxis, the eccentricity of our desirous *ways of doing* research, necessitate and provoke motivating driving forces that render possible worlds imaginable and, in so doing, can bring about meaningful change? There is much to do. I propose three institutive driving forces: cutting, curiosity, and hope.

XIV

Knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.

I find the possible means to craft productive (which is to say hopefully fractious) counter-dynamics through the flows of our épistémè of re-search's late capitalist global algorithmic knowledge economy with its distinct operations of searchability and distributability by turning to the genealogical thinking of Foucault's Nietzsche.

Foucault's genealogical thinking (Foucault, 1977) rages against the 'dialectic of memory'. For Foucault, genealogy's 'duty' is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, [and] that it continues secretly to

animate the present' (p. 146). For him, 'knowledge, even under the banner of history, does not depend on "rediscovery"' (pp. 153–154). In saying this, Foucault means to oppose 'history as reminiscence or recognition', history 'as continuity', and history 'as knowledge' (p. 160). This implies instead, as he goes on, 'a use of history that severs its connection to memory' (p. 160).

The historical consciousness of what Foucault calls such an 'effective' history enacts such severing by way of the 'instinct for knowledge' which is itself 'malicious' because it destroys (pp. 162–163): it destroys the pursuit of origins, it destroys that which was already there, the search for total knowledge, faith in universals, confidence in the unity of the knowing subject, and so on. Thus it is also against the demand that we must return to the past, that we are answerable to what has come before, and, accordingly, against the logic that because of this our futures, the future itself, the yet-to-come, is both pre-determined and over-determined by it. For Foucault, this is all so because ultimately, as he makes clear (pp. 153–154), 'knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting'. It is by way of history severing its connection to memory that it is possible for it to 'encourage ... the dangers of research and [why it] delights in disturbing discoveries' (pp. 162–163). This is how for him the formation of counter-memories take shape, which in their very forming transform history into a 'totally different form of time' (p. 160).

As a way 'to *make* difference', as Foucault puts it in his discussion of genealogical thinking, such counter-memory, such a severing of history from memory and by extension the future from its own predictive inevitability, becomes a driving force for *making knowledges differently*. This is the means by which to do some of the work of research in the age of digital searchability and distributability. For it does still matter *that* we search and search again, and *how* we do it. It is these *acts* of doing research – and there are a hundred and one ways to 'roam while digging' and to 'look for with care' – that hold the promise for making knowledges differently. And this is despite, or perhaps even because we are researchers labouring in (and thus subjects of and subject to) the conditions of our own *épistémè* of re-search.

There is all the more reason then to ask what is to be done, and to question in ways that just might change the world, even a little. Questioning, whether inquisitive, interrogative, impassioned, bellicose, or simply born of perplexity or unreasonableness, is itself always a driving force of dissent. Acts of questioning confront and arrest arrangements, putting pressure on them in ways that compel them to reveal their own inadequacies. Such questioning might take a number of forms – some older, some newer – by which to enact a dissensus: a very particular kind of act of political disagreement, a difference of opinion, a dissenting opinion in which the very possibility of the political subject to demonstrate, as Jacques Rancière has it (2004: 304), that they are 'deprived of the rights that they ha[ve]' as well as the rights that they did not have, demonstrates, through their action that 'they ha[ve] the rights that the constitution denied to them', and in so doing they enact these very rights.

Foucault for his own part proposes jolts, surprises, the debris of disparity, error, accidents, ruptures, discontinuities, short-circuits, and recursions. Such propositions are today still workable. We could add: the outmoded, redundancy, anomalies, contingency, disorganization, interference, undoing, failure, and there are others. With further attention to the specifics of the operations of searchability and distributability in our late capitalist global algorithmic knowledge economy, we might also put forward:

- Interrogating critically and to disruptive ends the means by which (and why) data is gathered, accumulated, aggregated, and distributed.
- Utilising archives as sources and resources, and the archival as a tactic to locate and challenge the logic, the structure, and the nature/status of data, information, and knowledge in ways that might undermine from within the ambitions and operations of such systems.
- Picking away at data and metadata – interrupting their logic, their rhythm, their ubiquity – as they create, shape, and pervade the informational, the communicable, the environmental, the bio-cultural, the historical, the archival, the knowable, the searchable, and the distributable.
- Imagining how the structure and properties of datasets, as well as their content (such as climate data, space data, energy data and pharma data) can be pressured, troubled, and interrupted.
- Admitting that quantitative data visualization in and of itself is absolutely not interesting. It's nothing more than the proof of the victory of data over knowledge in the post-content condition.
- Employing the material operations of editing, montage, and assemblage.
- Grasping how datasets might function beyond their original location and purpose, and how their transformation by the utilization of languages visually and poetically might articulate an aesthetics of system-ness as criticality.
- Conducting research that is made up entirely of the Internet as a living archive – of blog fragments, GPS locations, online photosharing communities, and so on – to render differently the creation, organization, and presentation of data and metadata.
- Pointing out that the map *is not* the territory, much like the human genome is not the human.
- Hacking
- Whistleblowing
- Glitches
- Going for a walk.
- Going for a walkie-talkie with Zello.
- Joining The Free University 'movement' as an alternative knowledge economy 'free' of the market.
- Reading Aaron Swart's 'Guerilla Open Access Manifesto'.
- Instituting "'counter-institutional" platforms, tools, databases and other media experiments', as Hall (2010: 18) has proposed, that are 'capable of maintaining a much needed level of opacity, noise, error, feedback, delay, antagonism and dissensus within the system'.

- Re-engineering the Internet.
- Grasping that we do not know what the future wants from us.
- Keeping in mind that searchability is something's *susceptibility* to being found, and distributability is something's *susceptibility* to being dispersed or delivered, and thus that the condition of susceptibility (which is a pre-condition) is itself a *vulnerability*.

XV

Curiosity and hope are bittersweet double binds, but they're all we have.

Such questioning acts are driven by curiosity and by hope, and the desires that drive such desires. Both curiosity and hope find their earliest discursive protocols in Book 18 of Homer's *Illiad* (700 BCE) in the figure of Haphaestus. The much-derided 'crippled' son of Zeus and Hera, Haphaestus is the smithing god; the god of blacksmiths, craftsmen, artisans, sculptors, metals, and metallurgy. He is the mechanical alchemist responsible for crafting Hermes' winged helmet and sandals, Aphrodite's girdle, Achilles' armour, and Eros' bow and arrows. He also crafts from water and earth Pandora, the first woman, endowed with the gifts of the gods. It is Pandora's curiosity that leads her to release from her jar all humankind's evils, retaining for them hope. While apparently affirmative, even hope proves itself, as Nietzsche (1994[1878]: # 71) was to write in *Human, All Too Human*, 'the most evil of evils because it prolongs man's torment'. Such is the nature of both curiosity and hope as bittersweet double binds.

Nonetheless, perhaps because of this, we must harness curiosity and hope not just because they are all we have, which is true, but also because they are the fuel that drives our desires to research, to make knowledge and to make knowledge differently, that drives our searching and searching again, our 'roaming while digging', and our 'look[ing] for with care'. Curiosity is such a practice, a will, a desire. It is at the root of inquiry, the desire to learn and to know. It is the quality of being eager to learn and know. It is the state of being curious itself. Curiosity is also a thing of interest, a curiosity, and thus reinforces both the nature of our interest in such things, and the things themselves as such: these documents, images, and objects, as well as the environments, situations, and relations by which encounters ensue between persons and things. Curiosity is a modality of encounter driven by a will-to-learning and a will-to-knowing which also indicates the reasoning behind our very desire to be curious, linked as it is to a sense of wonder, the excitement of discovery and the pleasures and dangers therein. Such coming-to-know becomes an invitation to further curiosity, wonder, thinking, and change. This is why curiosity, as Foucault (1996[1980]: 305) writes, 'evokes "concern" ... the care one takes for what exists and could exist'.

As hopeful as I am about curiosity's promise though, I have to wonder if this sensibility that drives learning and coming to know, inquisitiveness itself, as a form of knowledge production, of making knowledge differently, has in

its very fibre been damaged irreparably. My disquiet articulated throughout this article is a concern then also for curiosity, and for its future: what are the consequences for curiosity of our *épistémè* of re-search composed through our late capitalist global algorithmic knowledge economy's operations of digital searchability and distributability? What are the effects on curiosity if, as I have claimed, history is a 'living museum'? When knowledge is wholly capitalized? When the politics of knowledge, ownership, and the human are re-configured by the predictive envisioning of how their futures will unfold? When content has become protocol, 'what' has become 'how'? When we are in a post-content condition? When we are metadata, constituted as a constellation of coordinates, and machines indulge in chatter that is anything but idle? When the future as a category of historical time is overwhelmed by predictive analytics (and even by institutive archival projects re-activating the past's radical potentialities)? What, I also have to wonder, does it mean for curiosity and what it has the capacity to do when the lexicon of processes like 'data mining' – a semi-autonomous computational process which discerns in large data sets patterns of activity and extracts that information which is then put to further use predicting the future – is itself designated by way of the vocabulary of epistemology, archaeology, geology, and industrial production? And what about our supposedly sacred acts or activities or behaviours or protocols (even) of research, of research as a praxis, of a researcher's desire for searching, gathering, investigating, speculating, conjecturing, detecting, doubting, questioning obsessively and compulsively? What furthermore about flitting, serendipity, hunches, browsing, and cruising, those ways of doing research in which you're never sure what you're looking for, or if or where you might find it; that potential to come across something you didn't know you wanted or even knew existed? What about the unexpected, the unknown, the unknowable? What about those 'unproductive' practices of procrastinating, floundering, and incompleteness, are these too now all subjects of and subject to (the operations of) searchability and distributability? When our very capacity to desire-to-know is susceptible to, now even composed, infused with, replaced by the operations of data analysis, statistical modelling, and predictors, what ultimately are the effects of all this on curiosity's capacity for criticality?

Which is why we have to have hope.⁴⁰ We are in the grip of hope despite ourselves; even and especially in the face of despair, doubt, uncertainty, hopelessness. We have to be. For if curiosity is the desire, hope (in its resolutely atheistic, non-theological, non-messianic form) is the drive that fuels searching and searching again, roaming while digging in a hundred and one different ways, looking for with care, and questioning in ways that in fact might just change the world, even a little. '[I]t is the questions that we ask', stresses cultural critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'that produce ... and not some body of materials which determines what questions need to be posed to it'. In this spirit it is time to turn away from a question left over (although very much still with us) from a more Enlightenment-couched *épistémè* of re-search: 'What can I know?' Today we must turn to one of a more communitarian utopianism: What may we hope?⁴¹

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Notes

1. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, comment at a lecture at Harvard University’s Center for Literary and Cultural Studies, 1987, paraphrased in Irit Rogoff (2000: fn 39).
2. If in this article I am recognising The Research Turn, it is not unconnected to ongoing discussions of other recent turns – the educational turn, the pedagogical turn, the historiographic turn, the archaeological turn etc. – and of ‘turning’ itself in the discourse of art, art criticism, and curating. See for instance Holert (2009), O’Neil and Wilson (2010), Rogoff (2008), and Slager (2012). It is tied intimately to debates over the last two decades on practice-led research and artistic research. On this, see also the activities of EARN (European Art Research Network: <http://www.artresearch.eu/>).
3. For the purposes of this article, at this point I define simply archives, the archival, and ‘the archive’. In its noun form, an archive is the physical environment/repository/storage area housing documents, records, etc., and refers also to an archive itself. In its adjectival form, ‘archival’ is of or relating to the archive. The term ‘the archive’ characterizes the way in which historical knowledges (and the conditions of knowledge) embedded in and embodied

by archives and the archival have come to be re-mobilized to political and aesthetic ends.

4. I take the phrase 'practice of history as a form of knowledge' from Green and Seddon (2000).
5. My use of the phrase 'épistémè of re-search' is taken, in modified form, from David Joselit's (2013: 58) use of the phrase 'epistemology of search'. Thanks to David for exchanges on this, the first of which took place I remember fondly a few years ago in a restaurant somewhere on the outskirts of Seoul.
6. I put the phrase 'knowledge economy' in scare quotes because for me it is so insidious. Certainly within the university 'sector', knowledge (its production as research, its distribution via print and electronic media, and its availability and accessibility, or otherwise) is rarely figured in terms other than those of economy: that knowledge as raw material is shaped by the hard work of the researcher whose cultural capital legitimates its value, and thus its cost and price. Knowledge as capital is then 'transferred' or 'exchanged' in order to maximize its economic and societal 'impact'. It is no surprise to find that this idea originates in the 'scientific management' of Frederick Winslow Taylor.
7. George Orwell, *1984* (http://archaeology.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ&zTi=1&sdn=archaeology&cdn=education&tm=28&f=10&su=p284.13.342.ip_&tt=13&bt=1&bts=20&zu=http%3A/www.george-orwell.org/1984/index.html, n.p.).
8. If the Heritage Industry gave way to the Memory or Memorialisation Industry, this is today giving way to the Forgetting Industry. Two examples will suffice: on the legislative side is the European Commission's proposal to create a new privacy right (really a consumer data protection plan): the 'right to be forgotten' (http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/document/review2012/com_2012_11_en.pdf, accessed 5 June 2013); on the more obviously commercial side is the burgeoning industry of online reputation management: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2013/may/24/search-me-online-reputation-management> (accessed 5 June 2013)
9. See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever* (1996: 7) where he writes about archives as 'institutive' and 'conservative'.
10. Thomas Docherty, 4 April 2013, quoted in *Times Higher Education* (<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/are-universities-as-open-as-they-should-be/2002888.article>).
11. <http://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2013/01/update-on-the-twitter-archive-at-the-library-of-congress/> (accessed 5 April 2013).
12. <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/ukwa/> (accessed 5 April 2013).
13. To be kinder to such archiving projects, one does need to distinguish their ambitions for preservation from, say, Google's archiving activities which are driven by ownership (control) of and utilization (monetization) from data and metadata; although I'd still contend that both types of archiving – the preservationist and the predictive – do impinge adversely on the idea of the future as a category of historical time.
14. No mention of Google Street View would be complete without noting that for years Street View cars have illegally been collecting/pulling out and storing data (including personal emails and financial details) from unsecured public Wi-Fi networks. At the time of writing (August 2013) Google is being threatened with criminal proceedings if they fail to delete this data.
15. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=fvwp&NR=1&v=kZvWt29OG0s> (accessed 5 June 2013) The last verse of 'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised' reads: '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.'

16. See Kris Sangani, 'Arab Spring – Revolution 2.0', *E & T Magazine* 6(7), 11 July 2011 (<http://eandt.theiet.org/magazine/2011/07/revolution-2-0.cfm>), accessed 1 May 2013). I would want to make a strong claim for a distinction between this specific use of social media in the context of protest, and social media in general as a form of 'digital narcissism'.
17. See Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011). Mirzoeff uses the phrase 'the network is live'. See also Anna Everett (2002).
18. See the writings and curatorial projects of Okwui Enwezor, from for instance *Documenta 11* (2002) to *La Triennale* in Paris (2012).
19. In *After Art* (2013: 58), Joselit wrote that Google's success at the Epistemology of Search is because 'in informational economies of over-production, value is derived not merely from the intrinsic qualities of a commodity (or other object), but from its searchability – its susceptibility to being found, or recognized (or profiled).'
20. The final draft of this article was being written as the Prism scandal was in full swing. The US National Security Agency (NSA) Internet communication monitoring bulk capture and collection program, known as Prism, has been busy eavesdropping on Americans' phone records and Internet connections. This 'Internet intelligence system' has been giving the US government access to Google, Apple, Facebook, YouTube, Skype, Yahoo, and Microsoft's customers' data, having secured these private/commercial Internet companies' co-operation. If Prism collects data, it is Boundless Informant, the NSA's internal analytics tool that organizes and indexes metadata which is stored for up to a year in a repository codenamed Marina.
 As with Google Street View noted previously, likewise for the NSA and GCHQ breaches, what seems to be at issue with their Internet monitoring programs is not whether the organizations per se but rather the programs themselves knew they were capturing, collecting, and storing data illegally. The use of adverbs in phrases such as 'did not wittingly collect data', 'inadvertently collecting data', and 'indiscriminately vacuuming up data' bears this out. As an aside, on the perceived sheer scale and complexity of the Internet, and the Internet as an archive, it is well worth noting the following: given the ongoing urgency of heated debates around privacy, surveillance, transparency, availability, access (granting or restricting it), and the politics and ethics of ownership and control, it is significant that much less than 5 per cent of the Internet is searchable by commercial search engines. The rest, known as the darkweb or the deep web, which comprises anything from troves of consumer data to illegal marketplaces such as the drugstore Silk Road (now shut down) and child pornography, is largely non-searchable (see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2009/nov/26/dark-side-internet-freenet>). It is the actual scale and complexity of the darkweb that should both put the urgency of current debates into perspective and emphasize how inadequate they are. It is almost impossible to imagine the spatio-temporal dimensions of the darkweb; and this is in part interesting, I think, because it is largely not susceptible to (or refuses) searchability, retrievability, and distributability.
21. For sure this is truer in Art History, art criticism, curating, and visual arts practice, as well as in History, Cultural Studies, and Film and Media Studies than it is in Media Archaeology and Software Studies.
 Such an unwillingness to acknowledge this is in part because of the reactionary obsession with archives harboured by arts and humanities research

councils internationally, integral to a broader commitment to heritage and preservation, which in turn has a profound effect on what universities are capable of imagining themselves doing. In the UK this is tied to the bullying of the arts and especially humanities by the Higher Education Funding Council for England via its Research Excellence Framework's instrumentalization in our knowledge economy of research's production of knowledge as 'useful' in particular kinds of ways, and its dissemination as 'impactful'.

22. The idea of the Internet as a living archive is not a million miles from Eivind Røssaak's (2010: 12) consideration of 'archives in motion', an idea central, as Parikka has put it, to our 'new archival situation' and our 'new forms of archives in technical media culture' in which archives 'themselves are dynamic, changing forms' (p. 120).
23. This still important (although by now perhaps overly familiar) point is made also by Parikka (2012: 134.) This point needs to be supplemented by the fact that the Internet is of course nowhere near as open, limitless, and re-arrange-able as we often suppose. As Gary Hall has pointed out (in conversation) this is the case even more so today (and tomorrow) as more people access the Internet with tethered mobile devices – phones and tablets – which are controlled either by their manufacturers, who provide their operating systems, or the telecommunications companies that operate the mobile networks.
I am all too aware of the dangers of making an analogy between the Internet and the archive, of the Internet as archive and as archival, and that the Internet can more straightforwardly be likened to a database, a collection, or an assembly. See, for instance, Ernst (2013: 84–86, 129, 138–139).
24. I found Coley and Lockwood's *Cloud Time* (2012) after this article's completion. In the book they utilize a number of the same ideas, terms, and tropes as I do in this article, which is nice.
25. Note, in all this it is not possible to say that digital memory storage is the equivalent of (or can be conflated with) human memory, nor incidentally that such memory's preservation is permanent; one should not forget that digital memory has its own versions of material deterioration. See Chun (2008, 2011a) and Parikka (2012: 119).
Velocity and scale aside, such memory machines remind us of what we have known formerly: that organic or species-memory was always assembled, infused with, and orchestrated by the (*techné* of the) artificial.
26. For an interesting recent event on this topic see 'Critical Ways of Seeing: Visualising Knowledge in a Digital Age', held at Goldsmiths, University of London, 21–22 March 2013 (<http://www.gold.ac.uk/calendar/?id=6243>, accessed 12 May 2013).
27. There are exceptions here, of course, of artists interested in engaging critically with the structure, infrastructure, mechanisms, and the operability, processuality, and functionality of archives. Sometimes this is done by way of the Internet – see for instance the work of Tom Corby, Martin John Callanan, and Thomson and Craighead – and sometimes by other means – see, for instance, contributors to this issue: Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, Shehzad Dawood, Susan Pui San Lok, and Uriel Orlow.
28. It is not by accident that Google algorithms favour established and authoritative sites.
29. On packet sniffers, software packages that monitor/analyse local-area network traffic, and much else besides see Chun (2005, 2011b).

30. Media theorist Chris Horrocks must take credit for introducing me in 2010 to the phrase 'content generated user' during a Whitechapel Salon at which he spoke.
31. We might want to recall, as Derrida (1996) writes, that the archive was always originally evidence of transaction; albeit not necessarily a monetized one.
32. Amazon's 'Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought ...' aggregating recommendation system/predictor feature is a stunning because so simple instance of this. This is the virtuous circle of metadata's efficiency: search results are improved by adding metadata; intelligent search algorithms (Ernst, 2013: 86) update to make calculability more effective; our daily searches modify these algorithms; search results are improved by adding metadata. Ad infinitum.
Will we ever read the Terms and Conditions before clicking the 'I Agree' button, even after the disclosure of the NSA and GCHQ security surveillance programs?
33. See for instance Sekula (1986).
34. This is why GCHQ has said it wants to be able to 'exploit any phone, anywhere, any time'. See <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/aug/01/nsa-paid-gchq-spying-edward-snowden> (accessed 1 August 2013).
35. This marks a shift from a constitutional right to know to a purely pragmatic predictive ability to know; a know-ability. This is a point made also by Battelle (2006:193).
36. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/jun/21/gchq-cables-secret-world-communications-nsa> (accessed 24 June 2013)
37. This must be set against, it has to be said, the importance of energy (gas, water, etc.) and its infrastructures as key sites for geo-politics, trade, and the post-nation privatization of state-owned organizations.
38. See, for instance, <https://www.dstl.gov.uk/>
39. Thanks to David Cunningham for knowing everything about the future as a category of historical time, and letting me pinch it. See Cunningham (2003, and Cunningham and Smith, in preparation).
Archives and the archival have driven the production of a number of significant projects that look at and to the future's radical potentialities. Notable examples include the work of the Otolith Group, Afrofuturism, Utopia Station (curated by Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Rikrit Tiravanija, ongoing), and Obrist's 'The Future will be ...' (<http://umagmag.com/2012/12/the-future-will-be-by-hans-ulrich-obrist/>).
There is a sense, within some discussions of modernism, that the idea of the future is somehow intrinsically proto-fascistic. We can blame this on the Italian Futurists. Yet the idea of a 'progressive future' drives the avant-garde commitment to the future of both the Italian and the Russian Futurists. It is, then, not the idea of the future per se that's the problem so much as narratives of 'progress' as future-oriented. More often than not Benjamin's 'angel of history' from Thesis IX of his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1968) is called upon to make this or a similar point. For sure his angel of history (although for me not Paul Klee's 'Angelus Novus' which prompts it) is a compelling image, with its face turned towards the past, where it sees a catastrophe (History), but who, with its back to the future, is propelled irresistibly by a storm (Progress) into it. For two recent invocations of Benjamin's 'angel', see The International Necronautical Society, 'Declaration on the Notion of "The Future"', November/December, 2010 (http://www.believermag.com/issues/201011/?read=article_necronautical), and curator

- Nicolas Bourriaud's 'The Angel of History' (2013) at the exhibition galleries of the Beaux-Arts de Paris (ENSBA). That said, having recourse to Benjamin's 'angel of history' in the second decade of the 21st century is, I think, banal, but worse, it is out of kilter with how to make sense of the question of History (and the past, the future, and the contemporary) in our own épistémè of re-search. Benjamin's 'angel of history' is unsuitable for this task.
40. In 2009, Gayatri Spivak, Richard Sennett, Chantal Mouffe, and Peter Osborne led a quartet of exhilarating conversations on the subject of hope, organized at Whitechapel Gallery in London by my colleague David Cunningham and myself. These conversations are available as podcasts at: <http://culturemachinepodcasts.podbean.com/> Also in 2009, David and I programmed a series of roundtables at the David Roberts Art Foundation on the topic of the future, and I thank the numerous contributors for their insights.
41. Kant's *Critique of Reason* asks three questions: What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope? During his Whitechapel Salon, Peter Osborne modified the third of these questions, and here I follow his lead. In ending my article thus, I note with unease Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's (2011: 26) point that '[t]he communitarian utopia gave birth to the reality of nationalism and fascism.'

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Archives of Stone, Archives of Air

Uriel Orlow

There is an entire archive of the future, containing documents not yet known, but already recorded, images not yet seen but already evoked. It is a latent archive of records stored in the world, inscribed in landscapes and embedded in the fabric of buildings.

The job of the archivist of the future is not like the vertical work of an enthusiastic archaeologist, unearthing ever more pieces of the past in order to bring them to light in the present. Instead the archivist of the future engages in the horizontal work of a melancholy cinema projectionist who is watching the same film night after night. The archivist of the future is not trying to know or understand history but simply to meditate on its associations and become ever more absorbed in a contemplative devotion to its images.



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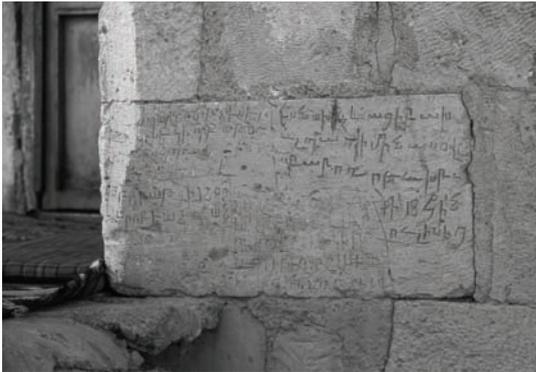
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The monastery of Surb Karapet in Eastern Anatolia (Turkey) near the town of Muş was one of the most important sites of Armenian pilgrimage and was among the richest and most revered institutions in Ottoman Armenia.

État des Lieux

Sometimes traces are not just an imprint of a former presence but also an index of the attempt at obliterating the future of history itself.



The monastery was founded in the 4th century by Saint Gregory the Illuminator at the location of a pagan temple. It is named after Saint John the Baptist, whose body was moved there from Caesarea, taking the place of Demeter, the Greek mother-goddess of harvest, who presides over the fertility of the earth, the seasons and the cycle of life and death.

The monastery was partially destroyed during the Armenian genocide in 1915, but was only reduced to rubble by the Turkish military in the 1960s as part of an ongoing practice aimed at erasing all signs of Armenian cultural heritage in Turkey.

A Kurdish village was built on the same site using the stones of the blown-up remains of the monastery.





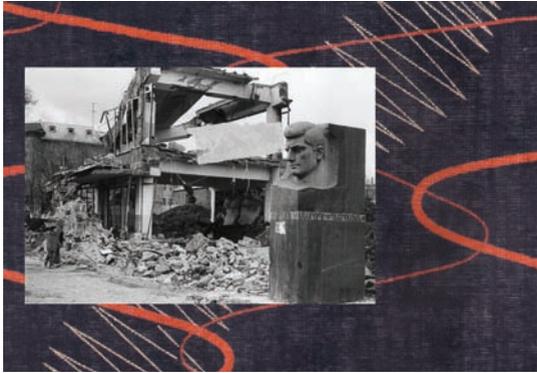
Still Aftershock

Can we imagine a history that does not consist of noteworthy events strung together like pearls? A history of events in space and the images they leave behind. A history, where 'nothing will have taken place apart from the place' (Mallarmé).



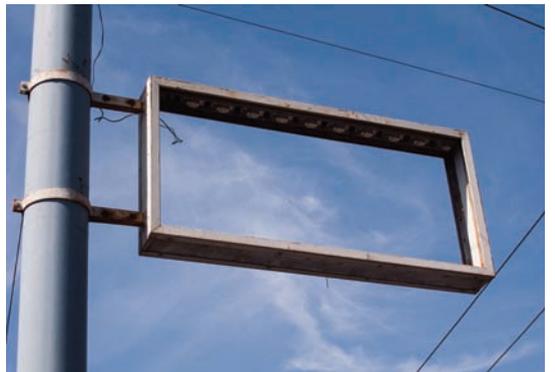
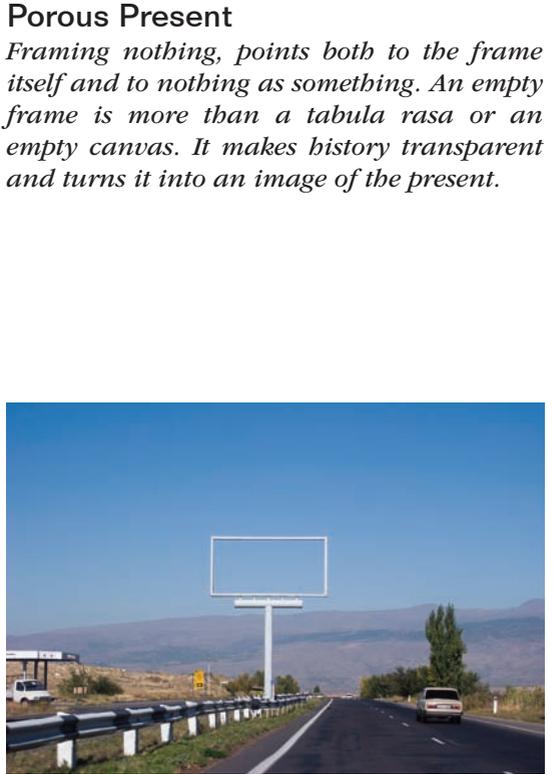
In December 1988, the so-called Spitak earthquake hit the northern Armenian town of Leninakan, today called Gyumri and formerly called Alexandropol. The earthquake killed 45,000 and left over half a million homeless.





The earthquake also destroyed Leninakan's famous textile factory, which at one point produced over 50 per cent of the Soviet Union's textiles. On 10 December 1988, 3 days after the earthquake, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev toured the devastated region. Despite Cold War tensions, he appealed to the United States for humanitarian help – the first such request since World War II. Western countries, including Great Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland, also promised support.





Porous Present

Framing nothing, points both to the frame itself and to nothing as something. An empty frame is more than a tabula rasa or an empty canvas. It makes history transparent and turns it into an image of the present.



How could we imagine a framing device for the future? A catalogue for an archive of what hasn't happened yet. An archive of possible outcomes and alternative histories. Where the posters on the billboards tell us the story of the land they are in, where the roads criss-crossing the land, become decipherable like the lines on a very old face.



Travelling on the road between Gyumri and Yerevan, the journey is suspended between two systems; a future that has not yet caught up with the present and a past that has become the invisible lining of the future.



Soviet Sleep

Would an archive of the face enable us to sketch in advance the features that we will have in the future? This archive would deprive us of our continuities; it would dissipate the temporal identity in which we see ourselves when we wish to exorcise the discontinuities of history. It would establish that we are difference – that our history is the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks. Finally we would have an image that is nothing else but a ghost of its own memory, the look which sees the unlooking face of someone who can no longer see; the face without sight.





Between 1907 and his death in 1952, Sergey Merkurov the Gyumri-born Greek–Armenian sculptor who became a People’s Artist of the USSR made over 60 death masks, including those of Leo Tolstoy, Lenin and his wife Krupskaya, Maxim Gorky, Vladimir Mayakovsky and many others (mostly men). The practice of post-mortem masks in the 20th century can be seen as an anachronism, since from the late 19th century photography had replaced it as the premier thanatographic medium. Walter Benjamin pointed to the release of a medium’s potential at the moment of its obsolescence. In his diary, Merkurov recounts that once, after removing the poured plaster from the deceased’s head, he suddenly saw that his eyes had opened.

Uriel Orlow is an artist and Senior Research Fellow at University of Westminster, London. Orlow is known for his modular, multi-media installations that focus on specific locations and micro-histories, and bring different image-regimes and narrative modes into correspondence. His research is concerned with spatial manifestations of memory, blind spots of representation and forms of haunting. Recent exhibitions include Aichi Triennial (2013), Bergen Assembly (2013), Manifesta 9 (2012), 54th Venice Biennale (2011), 8th Mercosul Biennial (2011) and 3rd Guangzhou Triennial (2008) as well as numerous solo and group shows internationally. Orlow's essays have been published in journals and edited books including *Moving Image Review & Art Journal (MIRAJ)* and the Whitechapel/MIT series. More information at www.urielorlow.net

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Disinterring the Present: Science Fiction, Media Technology and the Ends of the Archive

Chris Horrocks

Abstract

This article examines the relationship between the actual and fictional archive and science fiction. It highlights the role of technological obsolescence and anachronism as it appears in the writing of JG Ballard and Jacques Derrida in order to argue that the process of media transition, destruction and disinterment are integral to representations of the imaginary archive. The author examines Derrida's deconstruction of Freud's archive in order to identify his use of 'retrospective science fiction' and underline the term's importance in addressing media transition in relation to the archive. It then takes the archived remains of Ballard's unfinished short story in the *Vermilion Sands* collection to link the phenomenology of writing technology with processes of collecting, construction, disinterment and destruction. It concludes that Derrida's retrospective science-fiction model might be reversed to consider the archive in terms of its post-archival function.

Keywords

archaeology • architecture • Ballard • Derrida • Freud • science fiction • *Vermilion Sands*

A correspondent recently pointed out to me that the poetry-writing computers in *Vermilion Sands* are powered by valves. And why don't all those sleek people living in the future have PCs and pagers? I could only reply that *Vermilion Sands* isn't set in the future at all, but in a kind of visionary present ... But oh for a steam-powered computer and a wind-driven television set. Now, there's an idea for a short story. (Ballard, 2011: viii)

‘Tell, me, Caldwell, have you ever given any thought to the subject of time?’

I gestured with my glass. ‘Only in the everyday sense.’ Hoping to help him reach his point, I added: ‘Of course, the role of time in architecture is a central one.’ (Ballard, nd: 5)

One can dream or speculate about the geo-techno-logical 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. (Derrida, 1995: 17)

For some writers on the archive the problem of time and memory and their passing, and the attempts to defend the archive from its decay while preserving its authority in the present, make the archive a tensional location. The potential ruin of the archive is not merely a physical one:

Archives might be in perfect condition, searchable, and administered. Nevertheless, the materials contained in all of them, in one way or another, already have been subject to ‘ruination’ through selection, classification, or in the worst case decay and destruction. (Ladwig et al., 2012: 5)

The burden on the archive as memory, forgetting, destruction, preservation and disinterment is arguably most recognisable in those moments when writers set up an encounter where technology and medium make radical transitions from one form to another. It may invite them to consider how archives would have differed had other technologies been available. At these ruptures, the distinction between the archive as internal remembering and externalised, prosthetic memory becomes the subject matter of science fiction. Where memory and its technologies fail, writers speculate on alternative possibilities in order to consider how anachronism relates to media technologies: as media forms that do not subscribe to contemporaneous technology. Ballard’s steam-driven computer and Derrida’s notion of Freud’s access to e-mail are examples.

In writing, the increasingly rapid technological transition in media communication and the emergence of the idea of its obsolescence have given rise to a form of archival representation that posits the archive’s destruction, not only physically but also through information failure. Archives today are subject to physical decay and destruction, yet they are also one step away from data oblivion through corrupted hard disks and viral attack. Where the book and the computer meet in the indexes and retrieval systems of libraries and other archives the pact between material and digital planes of

knowledge is a fragile one, for losing the index is to forget where the book is housed, and to lose the book is to make the index useless.

In science fiction, the dynamics of preservation and access to the archive involve entropy and amnesia. The question of the archive's legibility arises when processes of obsolescence, which amount to a technological 'forgetting', ensure new media technologies are unable to retrieve the information of the obsolesced forerunner. The archive becomes unreadable. In terms of science fiction, once the archive is illegible, existing in a state that permits no access to accessible meaning through lived human memory, it swiftly ends up being no archive at all. Time passed renders the archive not only incomprehensible in terms of its content, but *a priori* unfathomable *qua* archive. In science fiction the corollary of this is the immanence of the archive. In the context of the science fiction narrative, when an archive becomes post-archival (in the sense that it is no longer connected to the now-vanished culture that had assigned to it the meaning of 'an archive'), it assumes its new existence as an anomalous amalgamation of things or images (assuming the category of objects known as 'images' pertains in the science fiction universe in question). At this point the typology of the archive is not an issue, as its formal qualities, features and structure could be instantiated in any way. At this stage, in a post-archival world, nothing and everything can be an archive depending not on its properties but its place in the science fiction text: a point which changes, reveals and to some extent recovers a lost world.

Anachronism: Archives as Time Machines

I would like to consider both literary approaches to time and the archive in the context of those tropes in science fiction where archives themselves are time capsules awaiting discovery and reactivation, but prey to ruin and loss. In the first part I consider the archive from Derrida's sci-fi perspective: the archive as future ruin, and the present as future archive. Literature and visual culture have become more temporally elastic, enabling writers to imagine and visualise in present media pasts burdened with anachronous advanced machines. In science fiction nomads often stumble upon a hidden information system, and somehow reactivate it in order to access a message from the past or future. The encounter is revelatory, destroying the recipient's assumptions and upsetting the *axis mundi*. In its literature, travellers, outcasts and explorers often encounter lost or ignored archives that hold the key to revealing the past world and providing a revelation about their current one. Until this moment the silence of such archives is counterpart to ignorance of it. Often in these stories the archive's secrets are not only undiscoverable by whatever subsequent, possibly 'uncivilised' or barbarous culture inherits it and lives with its remains, but also doomed not even to aspire to the status of a secret. No amount of deciphering of lost languages and technologies has a purpose if such archives are not comprehensible as containers of a hidden knowledge that reason and understanding would otherwise access.

The Accidental Archive

In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. (Benjamin, 1990[1925]: 217)

In the imagined future of classical science fiction the archive had a different symbolic value, as a point of personal revelation of one artefact or a collection of mysterious elements. In the science fiction world, archives in the future or alternative present need only be one document and one clue, as a semantic fragment 'out of time', such as a single monument surviving from a previous culture. Crashed astronaut George Taylor (Charlton Heston) encounters in *Planet of the Apes* (1970) the Statue of Liberty half-buried in the sand of a world he had previously considered not Earth. There, the whole world and its failure appeared as a ruin and hubristic message, an Ozymandias for a destroyed USA. One relic turns the world on its head: an inadvertent archive condensed in a single message from a statue, its once-proud gesture now an arm raised as if to fend off the waves. However, those grand icons are often countered by a banal and insistent form of such accidental archiving – forgotten and aleatory evidences of long-gone worlds, chaotically and randomly preserved by the incidence of natural catastrophe and man-made destruction. In the film *Zardoz* (1974) Zed (Sean Connery) reveals Zardoz's secret locked in Zed's memory of a book in a library from his childhood: *The Wizard of Oz*; in *Logan's Run* (1976) Peter Ustinov plays a custodian of an entire library that no-one in that fascist future can access.

This 'end' of the archive is also telescoped into our present in the literature of JG Ballard, as if any future apocalypse had already taken place. Swimming pools and abandoned nuclear-test atolls become cautionary architecture as well as habitats for future refugees. Each site becomes the eidetic and too-quickly-archaeological evidence of a recent civilization. This is technology's failure and the death of reason: both are linked, and often only the last visitor – at least in fiction – can see this awful complicity.

Burying the Archive to Save It: Derrida and Freud's 'E-mail'

Jacques Derrida's essay 'Archive fever' (1995) takes Freud's house/museum to pieces. In Derrida's museum of words we occasionally glimpse a connection between archaeology and psychoanalysis, as a disinterment of the present which, in terms of the latter, can only mean that whatever has been uncovered attests to the abiding authority of the past over the present and its problems with cohering in the future. Derrida recognised, despite his detour into deconstruction and the openness of the term 'archive' to its sense of establishing a place of permanence while unleashing its instability, the destructive aspect of the term.

Derrida's deconstruction of Freud's archive/museum and Freud's own writing as archiving emerges from his typical interrogation of the roots of the word,

which has the double meaning of commencement and commandment. Derrida's etymology is also the definition of a secure foundation with this sense of *arche*: the secure gathering together of signs in a place, as a consignment. His attention to the archive as writing permits his characteristic slippage and linkage between the archive as a collection of documents, a place (the Freud museum), a home, a law, a 'school' and an institution. This poststructuralist positing of the archive as unstable text is clear enough. However, another narrative percolates through this grammatology: viewed from a certain angle, the archive of the psychoanalyst exists at the intersection of media technology, archaeology and science fiction.

Themes of destruction, loss and discovery emerge at this meeting point. In Derrida's discourse the threat of the archive's dissolution is never far away. His recognition that archaeology is close to psychoanalysis in its work (and closer to Freud still) enables him to make a bridge between the two by drawing on Freud's death drive and its destructive capacity. Despite Freud's laborious investment of paper, ink and printing in his archive, the death instinct – the very issue he commits to paper – has a silent vocation 'aiming to ruin the archive as accumulation and capitalization of memory on some substrate and in an exterior place' (p. 14). The death drive destroys even its own archive, its own principle. The archive as memory (anamnesis) is threatened by its existence as hypomnesis (its extension in media as weakened memory – books and other prostheses for storing memory): 'There is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside' (p. 14). Further: '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' (p. 14).

Derrida's scene of writing segues into a version of fiction: the archive as a time capsule, reconfiguring a reconstitution of Freud's archive of psychoanalysis, and the archiving of Freud's house. The archive, as printing, writing, prosthesis, or hypomnesic technique in general is not only the place for stockpiling and conserving an archivable content of the past, but a technical determination of the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and relationship to the future. The archivization produces the event as much as it records it.

Only when lost or buried are archives truly safe. As Derrida recognises, with reference to Freud, such hidden archives are like the unconscious. Once dug up, they begin to disintegrate. Freud states:

I then made some short observations upon *the psychological differences between the conscious and the unconscious*, and upon the fact that everything conscious was subject to a process of wearing-away, while what was unconscious was relatively unchangeable; and I illustrated my remarks by pointing to the antiques standing about in my room. They were, in fact, I said, only objects found in a tomb, and their burial had been their preservation; the destruction of Pompeii was

only beginning now that it had been dug up. (Freud, 1974[1953]: 176, emphasis in original)

Less explicit is Derrida's turn to technology and its impact on the archive. This obvious metaphorical device links the archive, the archaeologist and psychoanalysis. Oddly and surprisingly, science fiction is at the centre (or margin) of Derrida's strange essay and his attempts to wrest from the doctor's life and work an unsettlingly discursive account of the work of the archive, and its porous character. Derrida (1995: 17) asks the reader or listener to permit him an excursus:

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 'apres-coups' of its aftershocks.

This aspect of Derrida's text momentarily casts the moment of the archive into an anachronistic context, where technology is sent back to suggest another parallel world for Freud. Derrida asks what Freud's past and future would be like if he had been able to use later media technologies. Derrida considered Freud as speculative fiction and alternative history. His excursus puts forward an impossible question, implanting recent and current media technologies post-Freud into his time: setting up a form of destruction of the archive no less effective than Freud's sense of the death drive at the heart of his work.

Derrida did not act on his idea of treating the archive like technological time-travel, choosing instead to bury himself in his deconstruction of Freud's museum, amongst the collapsed remains of material, writing, discourse and the 'school' of Freud to invoke in a poststructuralist form of 'archive fever'. So instead, his text asks 'what is an archive?'

However, he admits frustration in not being allowed more latitude to introduce at least three times the amount of material he was constrained to speak about in the paper. Here, Derrida is aware of how one medium, the spoken word, and another, the written paper, conflict with each other:

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. (p. 17)

There are moments when Derrida puts aside his tools to make a few excursive remarks. For instance, he thinks of the archive as a kind of machine that drove Freudian science forward (the archive inventing or demarcating the concepts rather than the other way round – classic post-structuralism). He reverts to a language befitting Foucault or Kittler, the discourse as network or regime.

Here, our interest in the archive lies in the collapse of the technological present with an archived past, suggesting another phantom history, and leading to an alternative world. Following Derrida's throwback sci-fi, he states at the outset that he does not want to 'begin at the beginning' nor even start with the archive, but embark from the word 'archive'. Putting the lexical aspect aside, and leaving behind those consignations of the archive as law and place, we can also consider the end of the archive, and establish it as homeless and lawless not within its language, but in its history. Derrida chose not to consider the implications of transposing alien media technology onto the scene of Freud's writing. While his digression enabled him to consider how different the archive of Freud would have been he does not dwell on the other outcome: the contradiction of one media technology by another. New media put older ones to death. Derrida signals the destructive character of the archive through Freud's comment that the overwhelming factuality and obviousness of the death drive means it is scarcely worth archiving it as a hypothesis in ink and paper (yet he does so anyway). For Derrida, the archive cannot accommodate the destruction drive: the death drive is above all *archivic*, or *archiviolithic*. It will always have been archive-destroying. Archives are susceptible to destruction. This drama is the province of archaeology, which does its reconstructive job, and cultural production, which is a doubling of the archive, in which depictions of the past are projected into the future through science fiction and its media.

How might this connect with a cultural and visual, rather than literary and scientific way of apprehension; a gathering together of signs not constitutive of an archive in themselves, but available as a means of sensing the archive through other media? The archive might be secured through its mobilisation in visual culture in order to capture its movement as a chiasmus between past and future. Our present history is split between the archive as restitution of the past and construction of the future: the archive as a destiny, or destination, rather than law or origin.

Ballard Unfinished: The Archive between Technology and Memory

In Ballard's technological life-world, and in the evidence of his material traces now housed in his archive at the British Library, there is a prevailing

sense of anachronism and suspended animation, such that the remains of previous cultural advances persist in an inertial present, or as sedimentation of obsolescent technologies inhering in a culture that has surpassed them. Time and technology, and their connection and recollection, infuse Ballard's literature. Prior to its archived remains, Ballard's technology of writing was already mis-registered with its own time, lagging behind the media technology it sometimes addressed. It is notable in his stories and novels that technologies of the future, and indeed the future itself, became less present, as it were, in the writing as his work progressed. The positing of future technologies is rare in Ballard's writing. One example is in the short story *The Time Tombs*, the titular structure housing the electronic remains of a long-deceased alien civilization:

The cyber-architectonic ghosts which haunted them were embalmed in the metallic codes of memory tapes, three-dimensional molecular transcriptions of their living originals, stored among the dunes as a stupendous act of faith, in the hope that one day the physical re-creation of the coded personalities would be possible ... Later the tomb-robbers had arrived, as the historians of the new epochs realized the enormous archives that lay waiting for them in this antique limbo. (Ballard, 2006: 627)

In his later writing, Ballard did not concern himself with the future, choosing instead to intensify the imposition of current inner worlds on outer environments. Baudrillard (1994: 119) labelled Ballard's *Crash* 'the first great novel of the universe of simulation: a science fiction not of a projected imaginary future but the hyper-real present'. Ballard's own attitude to the role of the archive and his use of media technology were also indicative of a desire to amplify the contemporary world and leave the future to take care of itself.

In terms of media technology and his writing practice, Ballard remained faithful to his Olympia typewriter until the Tokyo Stationery Company's invention of the modern fibre-tipped pen ('less effort than a typewriter') liberated him from typing his first drafts (Ballard, 1984a). His writing was led by the nib rather than metal keys. The latter provided an initial means to jot down odd ideas and notes and complete the final draft, rather than write the story. Ballard's writing practice was conducted with his recognition that new media technologies rendered the text less visible and intelligible on the screen than its immediacy on paper. This phenomenology extended beyond the production of the text to the consumption of information. Where once Ballard received documents from friends (including the contents of his psychologist friend's waste basket of the week's scientific papers and hand-outs), new media forms dematerialised content:

Already, I've received the first videocassettes in the place of the old envelopes crammed with odd magazines and cuttings. As I don't own a video recorder, the cassettes sit unseen on my bookshelves – the first volumes of the invisible library.

Later, he eschewed the supposed benefits of word processing:

... but apart from the eye-aching glimmer, I found that the editing functions are terribly laborious. I'm told that already one can see the difference between fiction composed on the word processor and that on the typewriter. The word processor lends itself to a text that has great polish and clarity on a sentence-by-sentence and paragraph level, but has haywire overall chapter-by-chapter construction, because it's almost impossible to rifle through and do a quick scan of, say, twenty pages. Or so they say. (Ballard, 1984a)

He matched his refusal of new media technology with his resistance to his inclusion in an archive. Ballard was averse to archive culture, stating that he had declined to contribute his papers to universities internationally: 'I hate that instant memorialising - your used beer mats and used typewriter ribbons and tax returns' (Ballard, 1984b: 34). He claimed he had disposed of his manuscripts, refusing to become enshrined in the sepulchral rituals of archiving:

I'm not very good on the archival side of things. I throw away my manuscripts. You've got to understand, I can't take all that stuff ... frankly it's of no interest to me whatever. All those things that obsess archivists, like different variants of a paperback published in 1963 (on the first run something is deleted from the artwork, or the Berkeley medallion is not on the spine) ...it leaves me cold! (Ballard, 1984b)

However, towards the end of his life he organised his manuscripts, notebooks and related material so that they could be given to the British Library to settle death duties. Before becoming available to readers at the British Library, this bequeathed archive was opened to journalists and academics, and immediately became an environment that construed itself as a Ballardian visual and spatial scene:

The late JG Ballard's archive now occupies a stack of bland cardboard boxes in the basement of the British Library, a warren of strip-lit shelves beneath the vast irregular plaza that separates the building from the teeming Euston Road. It seems fitting to be here to look at Ballard stuff because the library itself, with its odd angles, its improbable scale and its weird mix of grandiosity and the downbeat - equal parts Kubrick, Milton Keynes and Welcome Break - seems so faithful to the kind of spaces that Ballard made his own. (Martin, 2010)

Chris Beckett, the archivist of the Ballard collection, warned anyone expecting an archive replete with the jumbled evidence of a writer's life that the 'sparkle and clutter of everyday ephemera that will often swell collections of personal papers in enlightening ways is entirely absent from Ballard's archive' (Beckett, 2011).

However, biographical treasures being absent, there remain some traces whose value lies in revealing process rather than person. We might approach Ballard's archive as a vessel that construes stories as texts that not only demonstrate a high degree of thematic continuity and textual cross-referencing, but also a sense of the patient construction, dismantling and reconstruction of the text as material worked on and through with the media technologies described above, in an accretion of technologies in the service of a narrative. Close attention to this architecture of the text, the building of which is an edifice as visual as it is textual, might enable us to open up other paths between material and word, and between image and text. The theme of the unpublished short story, part of the *Vermilion Sands* collection, is itself architecture. The construction of Ballard's text runs parallel with its story content, in which a character sets himself the project, ultimately destructively, of continual architectural construction. The story is one about gathering an impossible archive, owing to its incompleteness.

Construction Work: Rebuilding Vermilion Sands

Where is Vermilion Sands? I suppose its spiritual home lies somewhere between Arizona and Ipanema Beach, but in recent years I have been delighted to see it popping up elsewhere – above all, in sections of the 3,000-mile-long linear city that stretches from Gibraltar to Glyfada Beach along the northern shores of the Mediterranean, and where each summer Europe lies on its back in the sun. That posture, of course, is the hallmark of Vermilion Sands and, I hope, of the future – not merely that no-one has to work, but that work is the ultimate play, and play the ultimate work. (Ballard, 2001: 7)

Ballard's short stories set in the fictional desert resort of Vermilion Sands were published from 1956 to 1970 and first appeared as a collection in 1971. They spanned a period of his writing that witnessed a shift from his earlier interest in classical themes of post-war science fiction to the arrival of his new style of literature, most notable in his novel *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970) and, later, *Crash* (1973). *Vermilion Sands* is set somewhere between locations in the USA, as Ballard stated, but also resides in a period between the real history of the Cold War and the path from the Korean to the Vietnam Wars, and the transition from Britain's post-Second World War embrace of US culture to Ballard's awareness of its more nightmarish attributes. The desert resort of Vermilion Sands is itself detached from those conflicts, appearing instead as a version of post-war Europe of the wealthy and idle transplanted to another place, one detached from Ballard's own life in Surrey, England in the 1950s. However, traces of the class structure, Ballard's background of upheaval, internment and migration, and the beginnings of an integration of technology, art and social life appear in this series of stories. The preserved lethargy of the wealthy European elite, the emerging 'beat' 'counter-culture' of the States, and the resting professional classes encounter one another in this decayed resort. Here, Ballard draws on the emerging sciences of the

computer, and new multi-media arts and social stratifications projected from a Europe 'lying on its back in the sun' to a decadent future leisure/work community built on cybernetic feedback between biology and technology, human and machine, where art and its artefacts are the most significant projects and commodities. *Vermilion Sands* features a set of episodes involving recurrence of figures and stories that rehearse and reconfigure a persistent narrative: a purposeless male encounters a wilful female against a unique aesthetic background and strange technological project leading to the former's demise and the latter's mysterious departure.

Vermilion Sands is the most sustained engagement by Ballard with a developed and coherent cultural environment in which bio-technology, automation, cybernetics and art combine. Paralleling developments in art, design and architecture of the 1960s, at their most radically theorised and imagined, the collection includes plots involving singing plants, mood-sensitive houses, light-responsive pigments in paintings, poetry machines, cloud sculpture, bio-fashion and 'screen games'. Ballard's engagement with the London-based British art scene provided coordinates to establish the role of art, design and techno-culture within the seemingly alien, Americanised vision of *Vermilion Sands*.

Architecture's Remains

The unpublished and undated short story in the British Library is part of this *Vermilion Sands* collection. Its survival 'seems to have been accidental', having been found split between two boxes, with two of the 17 annotated typescript pages folded around unrelated papers (Beckett, 2011). The story takes place from the perspective of a character named Max Caldwell, who resides in the resort where sand, its reefs and wildlife ('sand-rays') replace sea and water as reference points. Encouraged by Beatrice, a young woman with whom he is having a casual affair, he applies for a job working for a reclusive millionaire, Samuel Hardoon: 'for two months during the summer, I was private secretary to a madman' (Ballard, nd: 1). Caldwell's interview is conducted at the municipal library, and his first sense of his employer is later garnered from his arrival at Hardoon's own library in his mansion. The story shifts from one scene of collection to another. The guiding logic of the story is the link between collecting and obsession.

Ballard's manuscript is annotated in the text and its margins. The story derives from at least two small pages of notes in which Ballard sketches out characters and locations; the detail of it is generated as Ballard types, with the occasional word struck out with repeated x's. Ballard then used red ink to make corrections and additions, and later blue ink to change further the text. The story is itself an incomplete project, and in some ways its content echoes the layering and abandonment involved in the story. Some clues to the cultural context of the story lie in the passing reference to the introduction of the character Caldwell. Unlike other personae in *Vermilion*

Sands and elsewhere, Caldwell appears to have no profession: 'But Beatrice, I don't want a job. I gave up working years ago' (p. 1). Yet we can infer from the male characters populating Ballard's worlds that he might have an interest in arts and culture, given that the population of Vermilion Sands consists of a combination of the rich and the bohemian, and their hangers-on. Artists, fading movie stars and other renegades from success inhabit this resort. Over this cultural swathe hover the usual, more localised professions that resurge in Ballard's literature: his middle-class professions appear as archaeologists, doctors, psychologists, advertising executives, architects and television producers. In Vermilion Sands, however, these professionals are at the end of their tether. In this story we can only establish Caldwell's profession or at least his interests from an opening description: 'One day, I was staring out over my Burckhardt ...' (p. 1).

The name 'Burckhardt' might date the reference to Jacob Christoph Burckhardt, Swiss author of *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860). Burckhardt's seminal book on the period was published as a new edition in 1958, and Ballard might have been aware of it or read it. This might also suggest the year that Ballard wrote the story. It is possible that the name also refers to Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, who discovered the ancient city of Petra, in modern Jordan (Burckhardt, 1822: 431). The figures of the archaeologist and art historian, linked by last name and to Caldwell's reading, make sense when considering the latter's role in discovering Hardoon's architectural project and bringing art and architectural history to bear on it. The discovery of lost cities and the scholarly connection to the built environment have relevance to the role of architecture and history in the story.

Claude, the librarian who hired Caldwell, orientates him to his job location and duties. He will work for a man called Hardoon: 'He has a huge estate about twenty miles from Vermilion Sands, an elaborate architectural folly. You'll probably catalogue his porcelain and dust the Rembrandts.' Here, Ballard substituted 'folly' for 'nightmare'. Initially it was thought that owing to the name of one of its central characters, Hardoon, the sheets were notes for Ballard's first novel, *The Wind from Nowhere* (1962). This 'megalomaniac', described as a shipping and hotel magnate, controls a private army from a bunker in the Guildford area (Beckett, 2011). Hardoon has his origins in a person Ballard recalls from his childhood in Shanghai:

an Iraqi property tycoon who was told by a fortune-teller that if he ever stopped building he would die, and who then went on constructing elaborate pavilions all over Shanghai, many of them structures with no doors or interiors. (Ballard, 2008: 9)

On Caldwell's arrival at the mansion aerial photographs on display in the library indicate extensive building work in the ground. From his bedroom window he encounters a vista of bizarre architectural variety and scale. Before him lie the simulacra of St Mark's Place in Venice with the Campanile

and a half-scale Doge's Palace, juxtaposed with copies of Copacabana beach hotels. Modernity and Renaissance exist in confusion in this project designed to offset mortality through obsessive construction of a collection without completion.

In his second edit Ballard cuts a significant part of this description, omitting:

Behind the Doge's Palace was a 19th century chinese [sic] temple, furnished with a fifteen-foot high lotus-sitting Buddha, beyond that a trim baroque palace with delicate rococo embellishment, in turn surrounded by a huge tudor [sic] farmhouse with black oak beams and a pseudo-Frank Lloyd Wright abstract chapel.

These constructs are backed by arrayed pylons, minarets, cupolas and flying buttresses, 'crude one-dimensional pastiches that might have been copied directly from an encyclopaedia of architecture' (p. 3). Ballard was documenting an imaginary postmodern amalgamation of architectural styles, predating some of the now recognisable motifs of postmodern theory and design: simulacra of history, aesthetic eclecticism and a pluralistic recycling of signs shorn from their origins. However, and in keeping with Ballard's interest in the connection of culture to psychology – a bridge constructed from his early recognition of the connection of art (Surrealism), psychoanalysis (Freud) and society (the professional and upper classes who populate his worlds) – Caldwell sees this labour as the work of a delusional person with money to spend on an obsession.

He reacts to this collection of miscellaneous structures as one would when encountering an abandoned city: 'The whole place in fact reminded me of Angkor Wat, temple city with its solid buildings and shrines mouldering away in the middle of the Cambodian jungle (p. 3).'

In Ballard's second annotated additions, he combines this encounter with a baffling architectural collection with the central female character, Emerelda, whom he meets by the pool at the centre of this architectural melange: 'a young woman in yellow beach slacks and an alligator skin jacket walked through a colonnade on my left'. In the second addition Ballard sketches in her role: 'She carried an architect's sketch pad in one hand, and I guessed that Emerelda helped her father in his designs (p. 3).'

Emerelda welcomes him 'to Disneyland', to which he replies by observing that the place seems to be where the last 10 centuries 'have come to die'. Historically, Disney later becomes part of the postmodern lexicon, echoing the depthless synchronicity that applies to Hardoon's project. The millionaire's experiment is an antecedent of the processes Baudrillard later observed in his book *Simulations* (1983), and after:

[Disneyworld Company] wins at yet another level. It is not only interested in erasing the real by turning it into a three-dimensional virtual image with no depth, but it also seeks to erase time by synchronizing all the

periods, all the cultures, in a single traveling motion, by juxtaposing them in a single scenario. Thus, it marks the beginning of real, punctual and unidimensional time, which is also without depth. No present, no past, no future, but an immediate synchronism of all the places and all the periods in a single atemporal virtuality. Lapse or collapse of time: that's properly speaking what the fourth dimension [*la quatrième dimension*] is about. It is the dimension of the virtual, of real time; a dimension which, far from adding to the others, erases them all. (Baudrillard, 1996)

Emerelda introduces him to Hugo, whom Hardoon has employed to construct an insoluble maze, a 'neuro-architectonic structure' used in laboratories to 'induce nervous exhaustion in rats' (p. 4). Thus Ballard sets up the link between the inner and outer scenarios of the psychological and architectural environments in which the construction and dismantling of obsession, desire and history are both mental and material processes.

Caldwell becomes aware of Hardoon's obsession with time in a critical conversation relating to the architectural constructs he experienced. In an excised passage Ballard reveals Hardoon's project. Hardoon:

Well, for some years now I've been carrying out a series of experiments ... to measure this time sense we all possess, the extent to which it can be trained, modified, obliterated altogether and so on. For example, can two parallel time streams coexist in our minds simultaneously? A fascinating question, don't you agree. [sic]

'Absolutely,' I agreed, still rather puzzled. 'Do you mean to say that your city is a sort of experimental model.' [sic] (Ballard, p. 5)

Hardoon has been employing people internationally to conduct experiments in sensory and time deprivation. Caldwell concludes Hardoon's obsession with time is just a disguise for his real obsession, 'the insane world behind the house'. Hugo drives him to visit the construction of a maze, based on the bull-maze at Knossos:

You remember the Theseus and Minos legend. Like that one this maze is deliberately insoluble, but a number of optical devices are built into it which give the subject the impression that he is able to escape. (p. 7)

Later, Hardoon's sister reveals his compulsion for construction: a fortune-teller in Alexandria told him that if he ever stopped building he would expire. He ignored her and his wife Julia died. Since then he has continued to build. After a night out with Emerelda at a nightclub and Hugo's beach house Caldwell returns to the labyrinth to find Hardoon dead within it. Hugo has him placed within it and he has been unable to escape. Caldwell then witnesses Hugo and Emerelda driving away, leaving him alone in the vast architectural folly.

The Inconclusive Archive

The themes of time and the control of time by means of psychological experimentation, and the repetition–compulsion that impels Hardoon to construct and compile his own useless archive of empty buildings, also suggest the close proximity between preservation and destruction, survival and death. Architecture is his time machine. The archive, whether it is a library or architecture-filled lot, fictional conceit or real space, is the dialectical scene of these tensions. Ballard's unfinished but preserved story and its content are arguably approachable through psychoanalysis not only of its characters but perhaps of the writer himself, who like Freud was aware of the implications of the connection of pen, paper with the archive's capacity to stand itself for destruction, not least of its authorial subject. Ballard's initial disavowal of an archive devoted to him and his later reconciliation to its creation suggest a similar concern to Hardoon's: to control one's own time and to produce a symbolic and practical response to the death instinct, in which the archive's purpose is to prevent decay by burying content so as to preserve the unconscious.

As Ballard and Derrida indicate in different ways, in psychoanalysis and science fiction the relationship of technology to time is central to the meaning and existence of the archive. Derrida suggests how the legibility, impact and reach of Freud's work and 'school' would have been entirely altered when posited from the perspective of a retrospective science fiction. Ballard negates the anachronisms besetting the predictive sci-fi writer, who would construct the future from the perspective of current technology, so that valves might still exist 100 years hence. Ballard instead proposes the opposite scenario to Derrida's: in place of the imposition of current technology and media onto the past he welcomes the persistence of obsolete technology in the future or a parallel present. The technologies mentioned (television, computers), and the magnetic tapes featured in Ballard stories, are means to store and communicate information. As Derrida observes, such storage and dissemination have dramatic implications for the authority of the archive. He proposes that it is compromised by its contradictory impulse to store and disseminate. In both cases technology and media are represented as time-travelling. The means of information storage holds the promise and possibility both of the archive's endurance or its recovery in the futures and pasts Derrida posited through recourse to science fiction. Here, in conclusion, lies the strength of Derrida's analysis, in his orientation to the future of the archive:

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. (Derrida, 1995: 45)

Derrida's deconstruction of the 'archive' points to the endlessness of the archive, as the archivist keeps archiving. The archive is inconclusive. One could conclude that Derrida's own deconstruction of Freud's archive is itself unfinished, as he would have liked to find the space and time to include his notion of anachronistic technology in science fiction in its undertaking: an endeavour thwarted by his confinement to one medium (the voice) rather than another (writing). Ballard's archive nearly ended before it began, judging by his reluctance to associate himself with his symbolic and real death in the face of his archiving; however, he relented. Certainly, the archive is predicated on this form of destruction, as much as those consonant with Freud's psychoanalysis, and other forms of decay, technical failure and obsolescence. Yet, the academic archaeology performed on the archived subject's physical traces and textual clues, as though it were disinterring and restoring history to itself, is also the event conducted in the archive's technological present and future. Perhaps this is what Ballard, and even Freud himself, resisted: a form of destruction less to do with the death of the author-subject than the continuous semiosis of their texts in their absence. Yet for Ballard and Freud, the solace of burial, which preserves the archive, may be the missing part of Derrida's analysis. Rather than retrofitting present technology into Freud's 'archive', we should consider the other option: to project the archive anachronistically into a science-fiction future, where the archive is nothing other than a place of refuge for exiles and wanderers, its archive-function itself an anachronism in a present yet to come.

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journal of visual culture



Piercing Brightness as an Exploration of the An-archic Imaginary (in conversation with Mark Bartlett)

Shezad Dawood

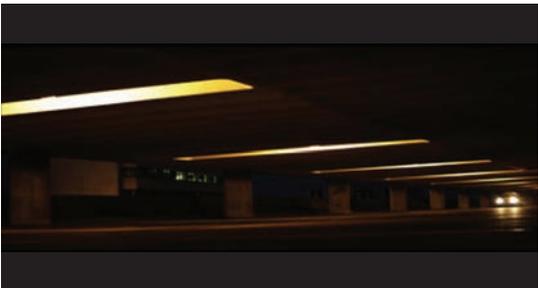
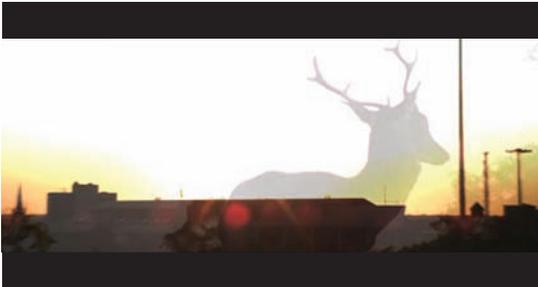
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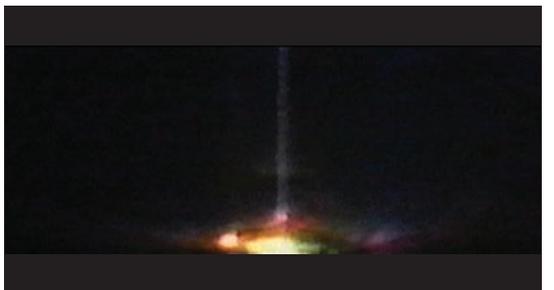
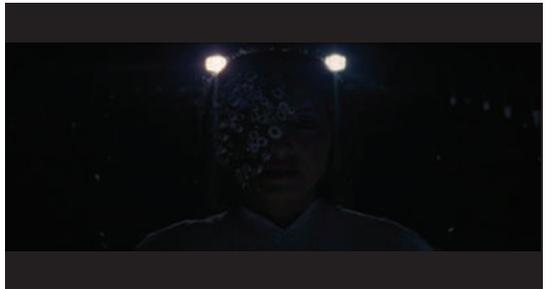
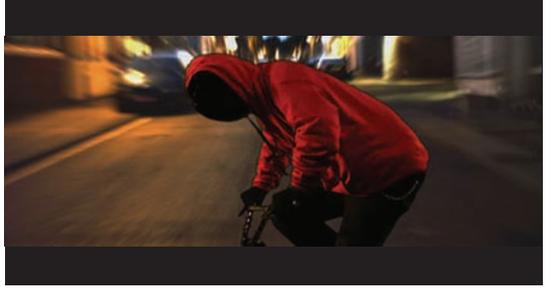
Over the summer of 2011, Shezad Dawood went into production on his first feature film: *Piercing Brightness*, in Preston, Lancashire, in the North-West of England, after two years of research in the city, and in wider networks and archives suggested by this initial research. Interested in any case in the interplay between existing and self-created archives, for the artist the project became a way to explore the hybrid and allegorical potential of overlapping different film and video formats and different sets of meanings. As an additional layer, and based on Dawood's interest in how artist's film was and might be read between cinema and gallery, Dawood also made two additional 'cuts' of *Piercing Brightness: Trailer*, a 15-minute version for gallery installation (that plays with the semantics of cinema, yet altering and transferring them to the gallery), and a special 40-minute version, only to be performed with a live score by Acid Mothers Temple, or Alexander Tucker's Decompressed Orchestra (playing with Dawood's interest in both expanded cinema and improvised music).

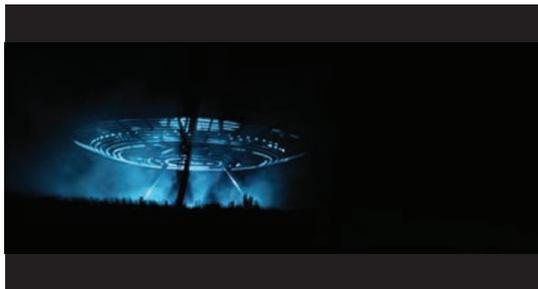
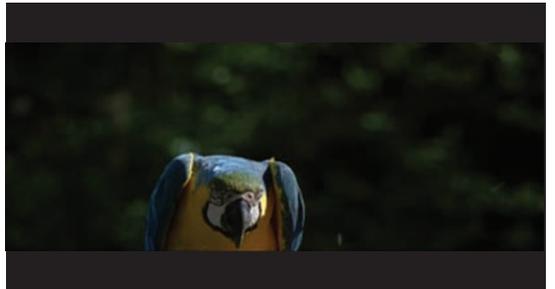
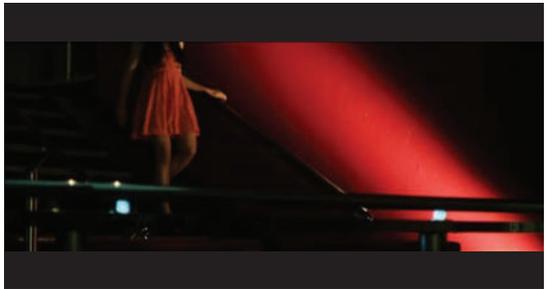
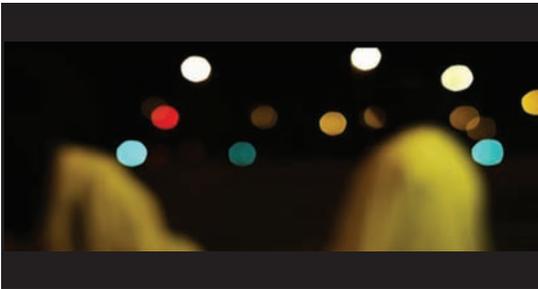
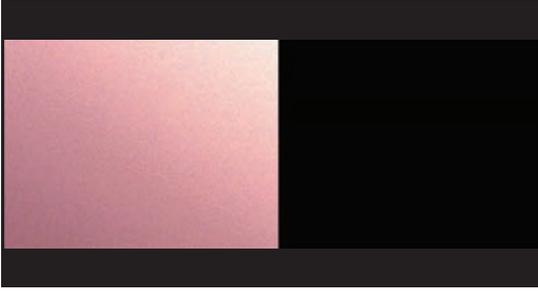
These approaches are further interrogated and discussed in the following dialogue between Dawood, and academic and art/film historian Mark Bartlett, who became a regular interlocutor of Dawood's in the lead-up to and over the course of the production. Their ongoing conversation looks at the concept of an an-archive, in relation to Foucault's citation of Borges: 'alter-taxonomy' in relation to the overarching schemata of *Piercing Brightness*, presented here as a series of image grids.

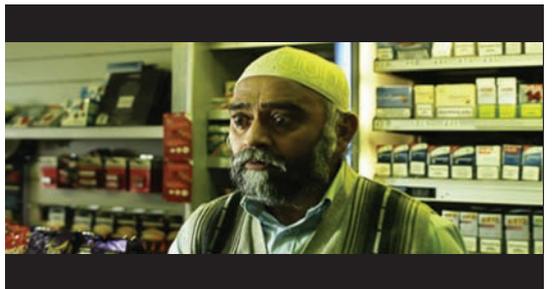
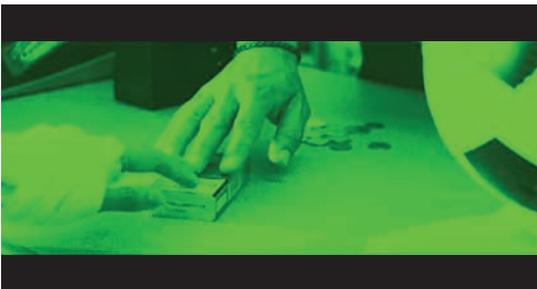
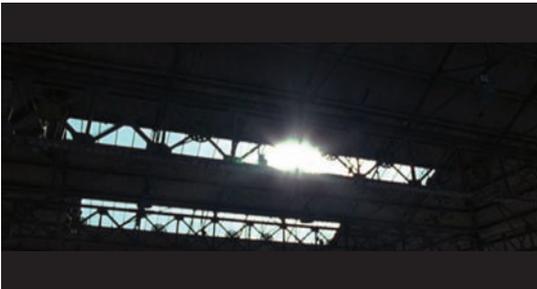
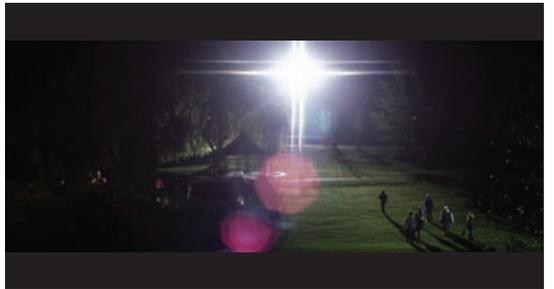
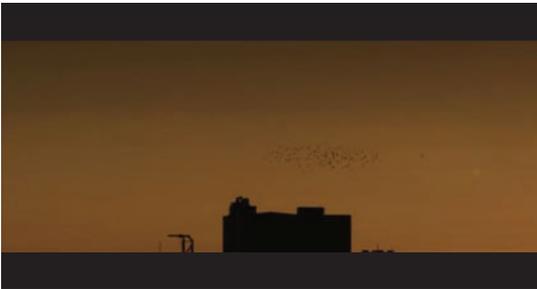
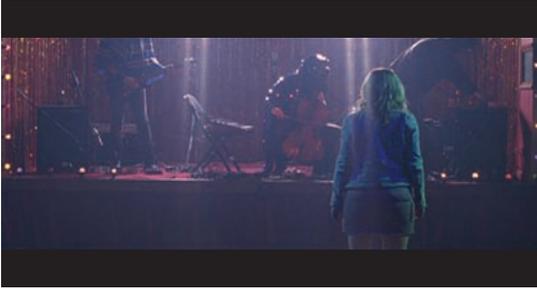
Keywords

archive • construction of meaning • expanded cinema • hybridity • taxonomy







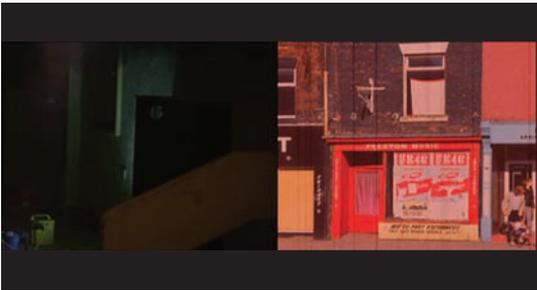


Mark Bartlett (MB): Archives are mostly specialised, meaning that they are devoted to one topic, author, subject and the like. They are in some way branded by specialisms or authorship. For example, I have a close artist friend, Mark Thompson, whose artwork has focused on working with live honey bees. Not unlike you, he is, in the best sense of the term, an obsessive. Not only did he become a beekeeper, a hive archivist, but he has become an apiary expert in scientific terms, and has by now collected one of the world's most complete libraries on bee history, science, and general lore. His archive is generated by the principle of completion and wholeness of the literature on a single subject. Your archival work is driven by, as we've discussed before, your synthesist imaginary. In comparison to Thompson's archival obsession, you seem to operate quite differently. Am I correct in saying that your 'archive' is an-archic in the sense that, perhaps like Foucault's citation of Borges' alter-taxonomy, you want to shake down the conventions of archivalism in order to reveal equally cogent alliances in the interstices of canonised archives? If so, when, then, or how, does your rethreading of connective neurons become an archive, and not simply a 'collection'?

Shezad Dawood (SD): If we are to see archives in their traditional sense as devoted to a single topic, or field, for the construction of meaning, then I am interested in the intersections and mapping that might take place across archive 'positions'. Rather like in comparative religion or literature, the consideration of one body of knowledge in light of another might be suggested to shed additional and reciprocal light, creating a new space of understanding, or gnosis. And perhaps in this way one might move from a fragmented consciousness to a more composite one, that in turn reflects the world more accurately through poetry, or poetically.

If traditional archives could be said to equate fixed bodies of knowledge, an intuitive or poetic activation of these fixed bodies of knowledge starts to open up the possibility of generating new knowledge. Rather than proposing a major leap, what I am suggesting is something more akin to cross-referencing methodologies in order to arrive at a more rigorous, comparative process, and necessarily a hybridised one.

For example, in the analysis of place that informed the research and text for my recent series of film projects in Preston, Lancashire (that exist under the umbrella title of *Piercing Brightness*), although I was interested in the historical photographic archive of the city (held by the Harris Museum & Art Gallery), that came much later. I was in the first instance drawn to Preston's rich textile history, and in particular a set of historic fabric samples called 'The Textile Manufactures of India'. Given to Preston in 1866, and containing over 700 fabrics, the 18-volume set acts as an archive of textile production in 19th-century India, but, perhaps more importantly, as a lexicon for cultural appropriation and assimilation of Indian patterns into the mills of the north of England. This act of appropriation and transformation into local production is what I am interested in: not just what an archive professes to



be, but what it also reveals about the imperatives, historical or otherwise, that informed its creation.

Equally my interest in the level of UFO sightings in the wider county of Lancashire led to time spent with UFO groups and enthusiasts and attendance at specific conferences, which in turn led me to Michael Hesemann in Germany, who holds one of the world's most authoritative archives of UFO sighting footage. For me, attempting to relate these two archives related to 'travel' and belief in a certain paradigm, whether the historical imperative of Empire or the cataloguing of speculative phenomena – both essentially ephemeral – was a curious process, but one that started to bear fruit in terms of trying to reveal something of the hidden layers of 'place' across different times, and hypothetical encounters.

In an unexpected parallel, the UFO archive, which contains material roughly from the 1950s to the present day, also doubles as an archive of hand-held film and video media, containing everything from 8mm film to Hi8 and even HD formats. Which in turn fed back into the patina of the final film I made. So yes, I would subscribe to the notion of an an-archive, rather than a collection. Not that the syntax is that important to me, but I feel a collection is a looser grouping, and what I am trying to do is to activate certain archives in relation to each other, to try to provide a fresh way of looking, not just at place, but at the alternate geographies that emerge from any reading of place.

MB: As a way to begin to prise open the network of the several convergent–divergent threads you've just introduced, and because your synthetic imaginary, as you say, is a 'poetic' one, would you say that your principle of delineating the field of your archive, and of selecting its 'elements', derives more from 'poesis' than 'aesthesis'? Your archive is constructed, and not simply acquired or predetermined. Similarly, your imaginary is not grounded in 'aesthetics' or in the organic, compositional strategies so ingrained in modernist and postmodernist romantic pastiche. They, it seems to me, are both forms of the bankrupt cult of, dare I suggest, individualism, and its concomitant form of the art market's devotion to the signature. What I'm trying to get at is that 'aesthetics' is not aisthesis, just as poetics is not poesis and though I'm tempted to equate your 'synthesis' with 'poesis', and your 'imaginary' with aisthesis, that would only land us back in the same old problems of traditional 'aesthetic judgment', wouldn't it? Thus, your 'imaginary' is neither 'aesthetic' nor 'poetic,' but an artistic/epistemology meant to defy that schism?

SD: I think the term 'hybrid' is often used in a multitude of ways that don't incarnate its full potential as both a methodology and a way of inhabiting the world(s). It's interesting that the well-worn science-fiction trope of multiple parallel universes is a very precise illustration of a key principle in quantum mechanics. And I guess what I am building towards is the utopian proposition that if we slag off the problematic 'individualism' as you term it, of late capitalism, would it be possible to see late capitalism as an

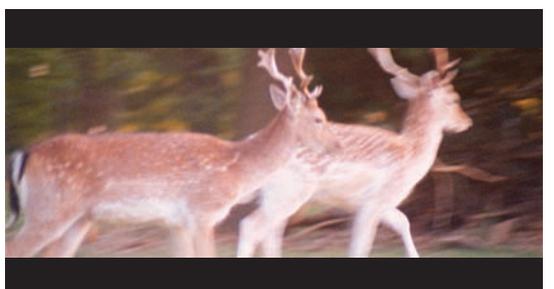
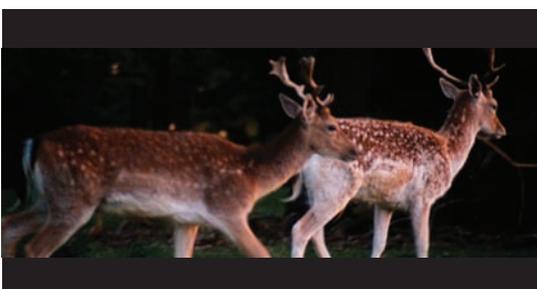
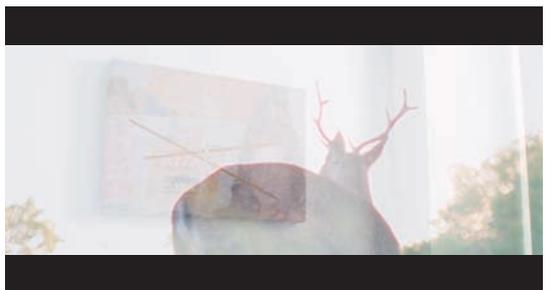
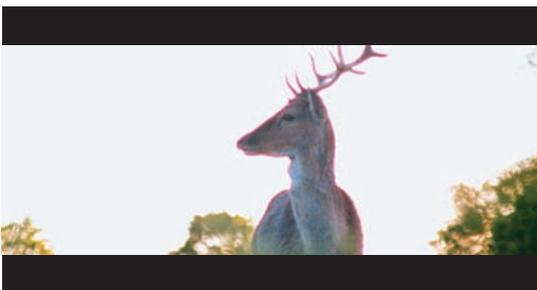
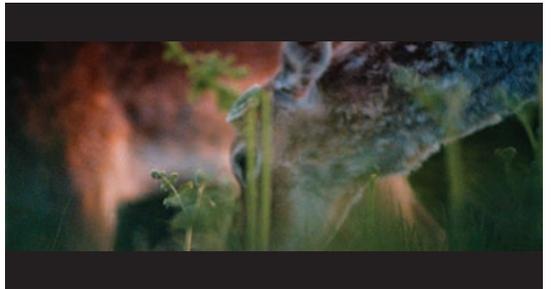
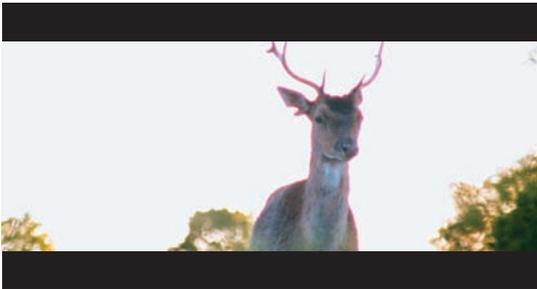
incubation phase in humanity's development? That the butterfly embodies a proposition so far beyond the humble caterpillar, that in relation to it, it could be called a multidimensional being?

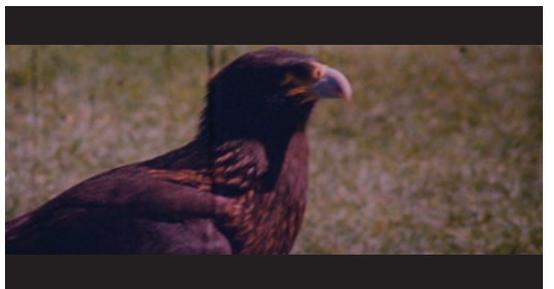
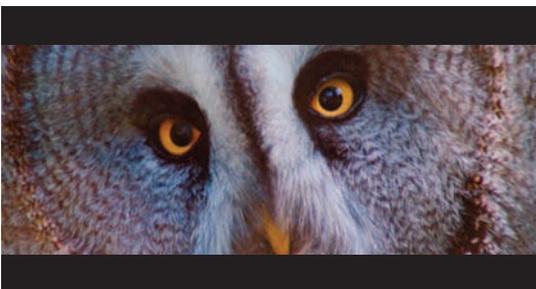
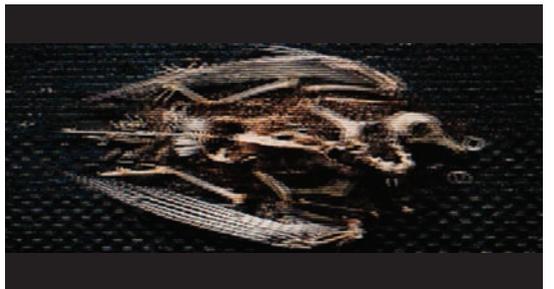
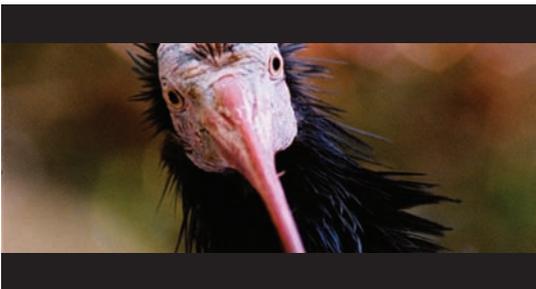
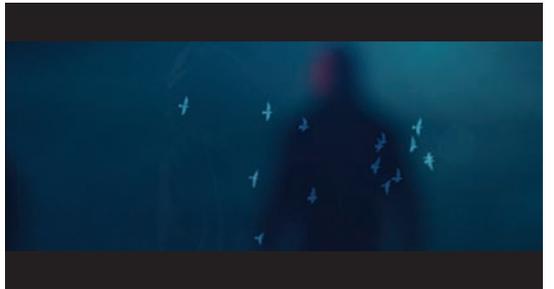
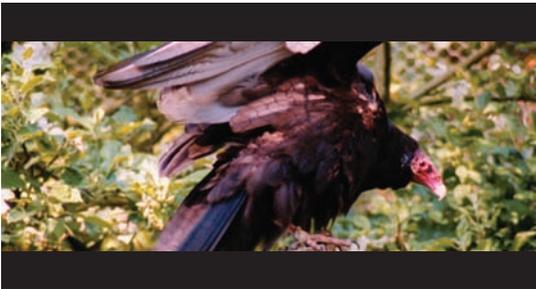
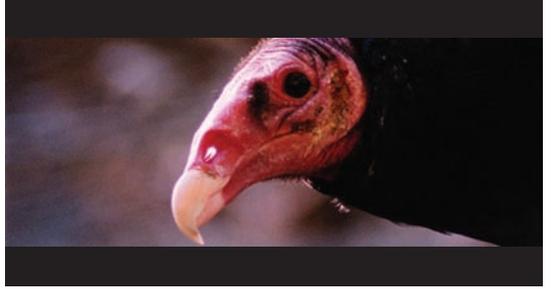
What if the call to arms you are proposing is a movement from narrow subject positions to bridging the 'schism' of either aesthesis or poesis (which I'm not sure if you can entirely separate, especially if dealing in metaphor, which is a hybrid form par excellence)? Or, perhaps more urgently, bridging the self-limiting belief in atomised fields of knowledge as fields generally border and overlap already. So perhaps that is what I would propose as an art archive or an-archive ... one that starts to see the poetics in how different collections, or systems of knowledge, image or archetype begin to speak to each other in a lively and well-considered way. I am thinking of this in terms of both the eclectic archive, and someone like John Latham, who bridged science, art and philosophy through his 'Flat Time Theory' (which saw the entropy generated by the fragmentation of bodies of knowledge as fundamentally detrimental to the functioning of society), and the adoption of the term 'an-archive' by many open-source software designers and sharers, as well as proposing an alternative cosmology of related and unified understanding of various bodies of knowledge in relation to each other, and the increased understanding that is generated as a result.

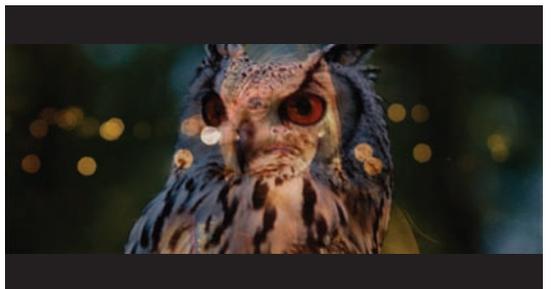
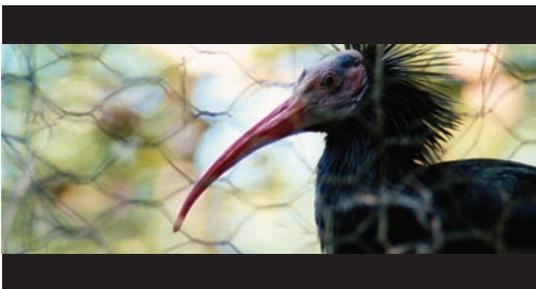
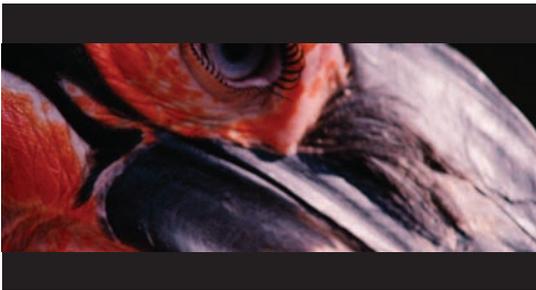
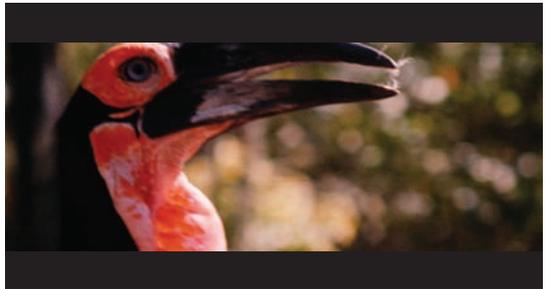
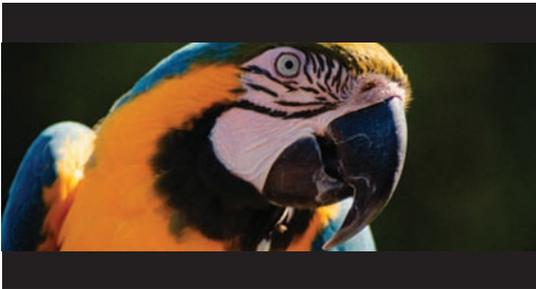
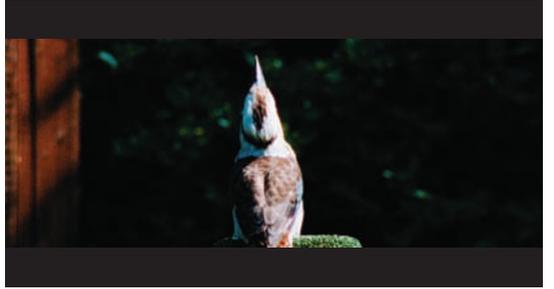
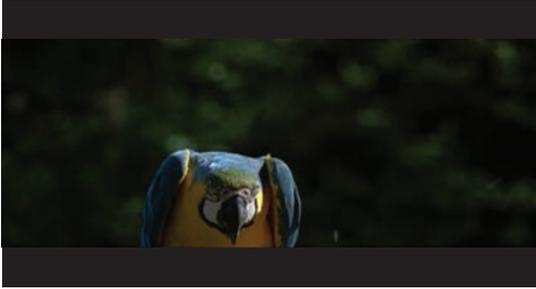
In relation to *Piercing Brightness*, there are a series of metaphors, which connected as such (in series), start to generate assonance and consonance (I tend to think musically about the process of editing). For example, the various 16mm studies of Muntjac deer are based on my interest in them being so generic as to appear indigenous. They actually originate from South East Asia and are one of the most ancient species of deer on the planet. They were only brought to England in 1900, to decorate the grounds of Woburn Abbey, the Duke of Bedford's estate.

Then there are my various studies of exotic birds, which in relation to the pigeons (and their skeletons) appearing at various junctures throughout the film, actually privilege the exotic, or foreign, over the scrappy hybrids that the pigeons represent – while bemoaning the fate of the hooded alien-human hybrids that they represent, as being ultimately without place. The Muntjac and the various bird species are then put into relation with imagery from Michael Hesemann's archive of UFO sighting material. Which places all these various genera – deer, birds and flying saucers – as visitors, or migrants, while at the same time questioning the veracity of both the images, their source archives (in terms of who authored their selection), and how they work in counterpoint to one another, in order to pull the viewer in two or more directions at once. Which brings us back again to metaphor in its truest sense: as a type of analogy closely related to other rhetorical figures of speech that achieve their effects via association, comparison or resemblance.

MB: But I wonder if your emphasis on rhetorical figures and their effects doesn't undercut one of the most powerful aesthetic/poetic strategies







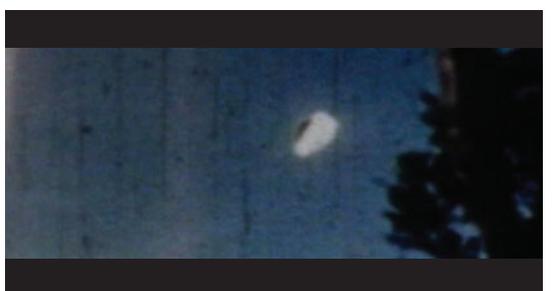
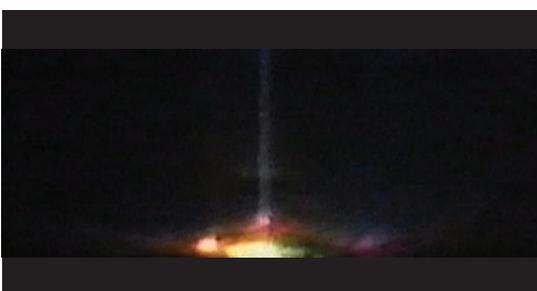
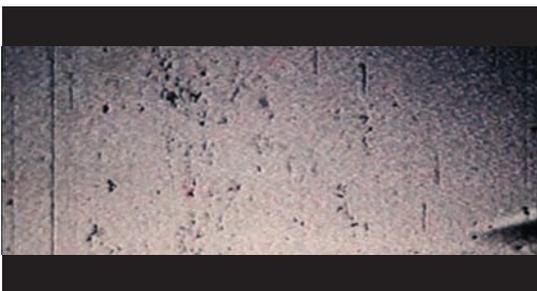
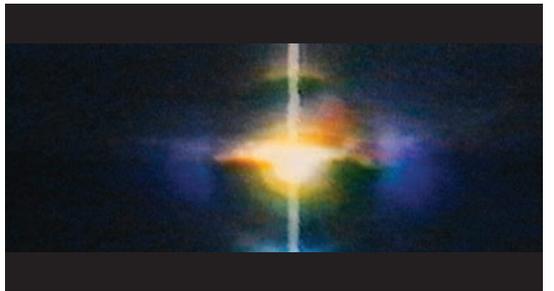
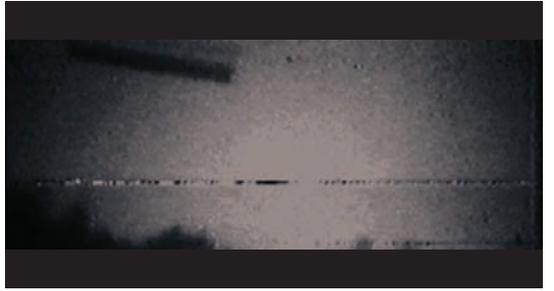
of *Piercing Brightness*, and your work generally. Language has been a long-standing obsession of western philosophy, and arguably the dominant paradigm of and for epistemology since Plato. Theory, since Saussure's foundational work, in almost every field – from anthropology to film studies – has been so thoroughly prescribed by it that I think it's necessary to use the term 'semiocentrism', a type of epistemological ethnocentrism. This is why Foucault's work is so important to understanding the concept of the archive. He used the terms 'visibilities' and 'proximities' (or statements) for the main categorical elements that constitute all archives, and equally apply to all an-archives. It's still not well understood just how much epistemological importance he gave to the visual, and how much his work aimed to limit the hegemony of semiocentrism. This is why Deleuze described Foucault's conception of the archive as specifically an audiovisual one, co-constituted by the parity of the linguistic and the visual. So, in addition to the linguistic forms of metaphorical association, comparison, and resemblance, shouldn't we also talk about the visual relations between the Muntjac, birds and UFOs completely independently of language?

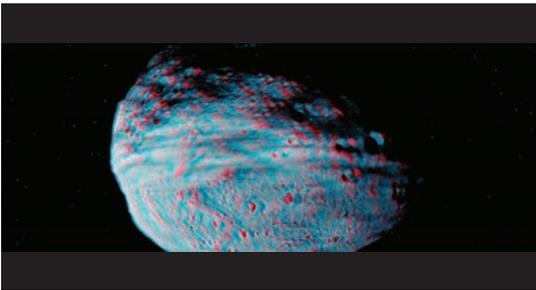
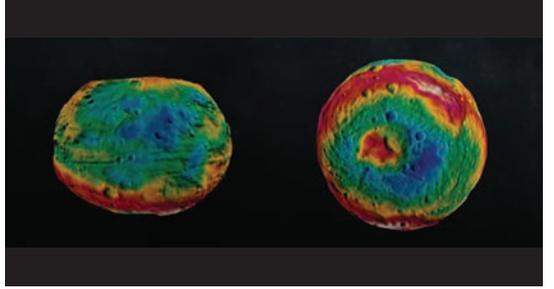
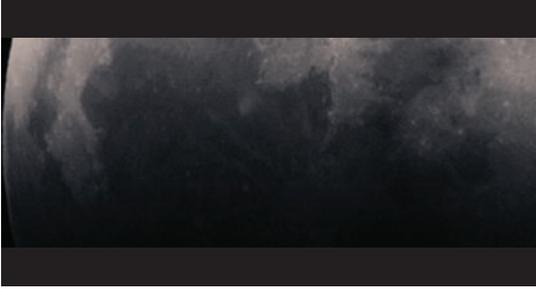
Would you agree with Foucault that:

Observation is logic at the level of perceptual contents; and the art of observing seems to be a logic for those meanings which, more particularly, teach their operations and usages. In a word, it is the art of being in relation with relevant circumstances, of receiving impressions from objects as they are offered to us, and of deriving inductions from them that are their correct consequences. Logic is the basis of the art of observing, but this art might be regarded as one of the parts of logic whose object is more dependent on meanings. [Foucault, (1994 [1966] : 108)

SD: I have always liked and appreciated Foucault's struggle to get to grip with this interplay between various dichotomies, whether visibilities and proximities, or observation and meanings. What I most appreciate is his understanding of the need to resist resolving the question, and the need to keep it in play – whatever the precise syntax. Equally I'm not sure how we would talk about the visual relations between my various images independently of language, save by merely observing them – which to my mind would undermine what we are doing here. And perhaps this is the operative space of poetics as existing in an active and shifting interplay between the visceral and the discursive. The visceral, which for me is that space of observation, intuition, incorporation and expression that engenders leaps in my process, that I then begin to talk about with friends and interlocutors like yourself (which is the discursive). I like the archive as well as I like any fiction, maybe that's the secret pleasure I get in being a maker, and then having the added benefit of getting to talk about it.

To go back to your earlier question, that need for community I think becomes ever more important at this moment. Individualism is looking rather tired,





and the individualised gesture, 'free' from the corruption of interlocutors, is a poor man's product, artificially set apart from a wider sea of sharing and interaction. The interplay of different formats, mediums and histories is a rich playing field in which archives are being generated endlessly, so perhaps the visceral is always one step ahead of the discursive? And yet the discursive is needed, I would say; more as a method of transcribing of the ephemeral, than the more commonplace idea of the need to proscribe frameworks and context. And of course the visual is already a text, even if one is evolving an 'an-archive' as one goes, it is always grounded in sets of codes (from multiple contexts) if not particular codes (from a more semiocentric position), and so a certain rhetorical awareness is required to try and push the juxtaposition of images in new directions, and to create new or revealed meanings. And maybe this is the link between the visceral and theological? But to go back to the beginning of my response, I think it is best to avoid a categorical answer: the tension between observation and meaning for me is the fault-line for poesis. And perhaps as Deleuze says of Foucault's conception of the archive, this fault-line, at least in the present moment, is an audio-visual one. Which I think bears a nice relationship with the construction of perceptual fields in the passage from book to film of a number of Philip K Dick novels, not least the Richard Linklater 'translation' of *A Scanner Darkly* (2006). Adaptation is as much an act of translation, as migration, where for me hybridisation becomes the fictionalisation of oneself (in the person of the individual migrant), or of narrative (the movement of a work of fiction from idea to object), and then to another 'author's' interpretation in audio-visual form. What interests me particularly about the Linklater adaptation of Dick is that the hinge of animation (the technical tour-de-force that it represents) is such a specific, and yet oddball vision of the shifting states of awareness and paranoia that encapsulate the original novel. In some ways it is the most faithful Dick adaptation, and yet the most radical translation (whereby the assertion of the director/translator/author's rights to be named author in turn are most in evidence). In my case I was heavily influenced in the early stages of development of *Piercing Brightness* by the *Canopus in Argos* series of novels by Doris Lessing. This prefigures three galactic empires, each for their own reasons observing and manipulating the development of humanity over millennia. And given the time in which it was written, it both critiques and becomes an apology for colonialism, while imagining a future in which China is the dominant world power. While moving away from the grand scale of this 'space opera' to something more low-key and playful (in the use of the city of Preston as the epicentre), I still hinted at a broader scope in *Piercing Brightness*, which might cause us to think differently about issues such as migration, belonging, time and memory. So is Doris Lessing's set of novels another archive from which I am drawing? Just because they are works of fiction (or announce themselves as such), does this discount them from being viewed as an archive? With many of the archives I have looked at and spent time researching, you quickly realize that they are usually archives of more than one thing, and that they are intensely subjective, which always calls to mind the layers necessary for good fiction.

MB: While I agree that visual relations are very difficult to represent in language, I think it's possible to 'point' to them independently of the various schools of semiotic structuralism. Bakhtin's work for example is a superb model for that. When I think about both the visual strategies and the temporal structure of *Piercing Brightness*, the mix of different generations of video technologies, still photographic images, with digital media, etc. and the way you've woven narrative threads with reversed time sequences, the chronotopic cutup of Preston and narrative continuity, I think of Bakhtin's highly productive terms 'heteroglossia' and 'reaccentuation'. Not only in your use of several languages, or aural responses in Arabic to a Chinese interlocutor, but also the genre hybridity. But perhaps the better analogue is Professor Canterel in Raymond Roussel's novel, *Locus Solus*, a decidedly science fictional character. I'm thinking of Canterel's extraordinary sculptural invention that Roussel called the 'punner', an elaborate, solar and wind-powered machine devised to sow teeth in the form of a mosaic that illustrates a Scandinavian morality tale. Roussel describes it as 'a device capable of creating a work of aesthetic merit solely due to the combined efforts of the sun and wind', by which he means, through the combined forces of determinism (the sun), and indeterminism (the wind). Isn't this strange, science fictional machine an analogue of your film? Would you say that it's a paradigm of both your own archaeological and genealogical processes? Don't you mine science fiction archives or Sufism in order to both uncover lost or forgotten or misunderstood traditions and simultaneously reaccentuate them through translation or migration, as you've described your artistic practice, in ways as radically dichotomous as Canterel's punner? And in what way are the revelations of such unhinged associations specifically theological? Would you describe yourself as a Dickian, science fictional Sufi?

SD: Haha, a Dickian science fictional Sufi? I guess that's as good as any of a variety of possible analogues. And precisely what interests me in the use of hybridity, both philosophically and formally (in terms of the precise use of various formats, and archival or even theological structures), is not so much the specificity of the elements, but the fact that they point to a myriad of possible divergent analogues. Like your Dickian science fictional Sufi, we are free to concoct our own spiralling variants. I like the comparison to Canterel's punner as I've always liked this idea of a process generator, and perhaps one that's somewhat less of a memento mori than the 'Invention of Morel'. Although Adolfo Bioy Casares' early science fiction novel does play with memory and time in a similar way to my use of temporal dislocation and multiple subjectivity in *Piercing Brightness*. In a further parallel, Bakhtin's terms 'heteroglossia' and 'reaccentuation' could be very useful in thinking of my approach to the structure of *Piercing Brightness*. I think there's something in the shifts in language, time and protagonists that work together to fragment conventional linear structure. Memory and experience, in and of themselves, are far more of a fragmented and plural terrain than conventional (read commercial) cinematic structure would have us believe. Indeed, something of the pathology of our times is reflected in the narrowing conventions of contemporary commercial cinema. What indeed

do we lose by always trying to pack our consciousness into a 'neat' and compartmentalized framework? Bakhtin's heteroglossia and reaccentuation point in some ways to a kind of glossolalia, or multiplicity and simultaneity coexisting, a transgression of the limits set by the old testament Demiurge, and like Babel (and its magical counterpart Barbelith), punishable by a scattering to the winds. But what if the scattering (diversity) was reward rather than punishment, and glossolalia and Barbelith were coefficients of the same binary continuum? I'm sorry to run away on a theological tangent, but I believe you brought it up earlier. And perhaps this is my way out of semiotic structuralism, or at least another analogue for poesis/poetics (I'll choose playfully not to separate them). The two key texts that particularly informed the structure of *Piercing Brightness* were firstly: *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which details the journey of the soul post-mortem, particularly as it moves through various levels of understanding of its loosening of the mortal coil and letting go of attachment to the material world. I used this as a way of thinking of migration and return, a priori, without the need to die first to experience a similar sense of dislocation and destabilization. The second was Philip K Dick's final interviews, collected under the title: 'What If Our World Is Their Heaven'. These very gentle and insightful dialogues, which speak of our world from the point of view of another civilisation, for whom it embodies not just an earthly, but a speculative paradise, neatly over-turn our central dogma, both ecclesiastical and Darwinian, of evolution towards either God or man. And point out the potentially liberating doctrine that everything we might dream of already exists – and that perhaps all it is, is a point of view.

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Between Pandora and Diogenes: Fox Talbot and the Gender of Archives

Sas Mays

Abstract

Critical attention to Talbot has as yet failed to account with methodological consistency for a specific and significant way in which the archive figures as a symbolic object in his work and thought – for the way in which his understanding of visual and textual media acquires a kind of unity determined by the association of a series of terms: archiving, endlessness, and femininity. This article reconsiders key images and texts in Talbot's work in order to re-contextualise his practices within the symbolic logic of the archive, and thus within a number of long-term transitions that concern the political, cultural, and technological spheres of later 19th-century British culture. Through this attention, and in the context of the rise of cultural and academic interest in technology and memory, the argument redefines existing historical and theoretical understanding of the gender politics of archive.

Keywords

19th-century photography • archives • gender politics • media • WHF Talbot

Opening Contexts: Media, Capitalism, and the Archive

In his discussion of the relationship between written language and the spatial arts, including photography, Jacques Derrida emphasised that just as deconstruction understands writing partly as a visual form, in its 'spatial visibility', so photography must be understood to 'correspond to the linguistic scene' (Derrida, 1994: 20). While the condition of the photographic as 'light writing', has been taken up by numbers of writers and photographers (see, for

example, Cadava, 1997: xviii–xix, 5), my interest here is in this ‘correspondence’ between the two media: the textual and the visual. Such a correspondence could also be seen to operate in contemporary digital multi-media modes of visual presentation. In this context, it might be argued that contemporary digital media have rubbed away at the boundaries between traditional media – printing, photography, painting, etc. – and that they have thus become part of the ‘post-medium condition’ as defined by Rosalind Krauss in *A Voyage on the North Sea* (2000[1999]: 56). Importantly here, we should recognise Krauss’s distinction between the ‘postmodern’ form of this condition, and what she refers to, through Derrida, as ‘differential specificity’. The postmodern form, for Krauss, merely capitulates to capitalism. We might think here of the way in which the commercial sphere puts multi-media toward profit, by collaging, synthesising, or ‘synergising’ media forms in a way that may be arresting or hypnotising, but which is directed by and toward quantitative economic gain. Whatever the affects involved, as canonical Marxist critiques of consumption have of course argued, the final feeling invoked is one of lack: the void that the consumer–subject feels will at least temporarily be filled by the plenitude of the product and its cultural connotations (see, for example, Berger et al., 1972: 142–143).

There are, however, three issues that need to be raised in development of this canonical discussion of post-mediumism. Firstly, in Krauss’s argument, the increasing heterogeneity of media has exceeded claims to media specificity, yet if, as Derrida argues, writing has *always* had an element of ‘spatial visibility’, and the photographic has *always* corresponded to written language, this suggests that there never was a time in which medium specificity operated. Thus we would have to understand media as essentially impure; and if writing should be about the sound of speech, but also correspond to the sight of the image, and the photographic corresponds to the visual form of spoken language – their very opposites, in terms of media specificity – we would also have to understand media as essentially characterised by internal and external inter-relations that may be mutually conflicted. Hence, while Krauss’s teleological–historical sense of media dissolution must surely be suspect, this sense of inter-media and intra-media conflict takes the place of what she refers to as ‘differential specificity’ in opposition to postmodern post-mediumism. We might thus think of media as being disruptive of the apparently seamless, consistent, and synthetic flow of text and image in the contemporary commercial multi-media context. Indeed, the relation between media forms may rather be thought as *supplementation*, in the sense given in Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (1997[1967]: 186–200) – that is, as an addition (to an existing lack) that is both excessive and lacking, and that therefore requires further supplementation that must itself be supplemented, in an endless process. Secondly, and in conjunction with this attention to the problematic relations between media in this article, I also want to emphasise that such media are of course not only technologies of communication, but technologies of memory that point toward the accumulation, ordering, and dissemination of their material forms of inscription – that is, they are archival forms.

Thirdly, such forms concern matters of gender. As Derrida has argued, for example in *Archive Fever* (1996[1995]: 2–3), the archive in its Classical sense is inherently defined by the voice of paternal law. Nevertheless, as Derrida also insists, the archive, considered as a complex and unstable form that cannot achieve finality or closure (p. 68), also undermines such claims to masculine authority. If this indicates emasculation or feminisation, it is an issue that also involves the supplementary relations of media.

Indeed, the problematic and gendered inter-relation of written and photographic technologies of memory can be seen in one of the key moments in the development of photographics, specifically in its British manifestation in the work of William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877).¹ While Talbot is generally remembered, at least by a great deal of photography criticism and theory, as primarily a photographic inventor, such an image is singularising of his diverse endeavours. Talbot should rather be seen as being historically located in the role of the ‘natural philosopher’ for whom visual experimentation was part of a wider matrix of practices that significantly include textual analyses. Given Talbot’s experimental images, key examples of which this article will analyse in detail, we should also recognise that photographics in Britain began at a point where the scientific and aesthetic, amateur and professional, were not separated as they have tended to be through much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Nevertheless, Talbot’s practices were deeply bound up in attempts at capitalisation and mass production, which were hampered by problems that significantly involve the problematic relation between the photographic and the written, and the instability of photographic processes as archival techniques.

In its argument, this article has four main sections. Having suggested above that media issues are matters of technological memory and of the gender of such archives in terms of their symbolic import, the second section of this article sets the scene of the origin of photographics in Talbot’s work, and its formation through a deconstructive and gendered relationship to textuality, in order to indicate that the technical limitations on Talbot’s processes gesture toward his mythical and philosophical milieu. This milieu will be shown to be significantly influenced by the discourse of etymology, which will allow for a reconsideration of the archival and gendered meaning of Talbot’s photographic practice. Thirdly, then, I will analyse two key images from Talbot’s repertoire in order to argue that both text and image are bound by a shared sense of the gender of knowledge and the archive. Lastly, the article concludes by placing Talbot’s gendered relation to written and visual memory within the context of long-scale historical shifts within Western culture, and its relation to the development of the archival technologies that define the situation of contemporary culture.

The Gender of Epistemology and the Archive

The complex relation between writing and photographic techniques indicated by Derrida can be seen to operate in the historical context of

the origin of the desire for photography that is described by Talbot in his retrospective essay 'A brief historical sketch of the invention of the art' (1992[1844]: 76–77):²

One of the first days of the month of October 1833, I was amusing myself on the lovely shores of Lake Como, in Italy, taking sketches with Wollaston's Camera Lucida, or rather I should say, attempting to take them: but with the smallest possible amount of success. For when the eye was removed from the prism – in which all looked beautiful – I found that the faithless pencil had only left traces on the paper melancholy to behold ... I had tried this simple method during former visits to Italy in 1823 and 1824, but found this practice somewhat difficult to manage, because the pressure of the hand and pencil upon the paper tends to shake and displace the instrument ... Beside which, there is another objection, namely, that it baffles the skill and patience of the amateur to trace all the minute details visible on the paper.

The ensuing image, indeed, appears characterised by an imprecise mechanicity, as the crude tracing of an outline (see Figure 1). Yet what Talbot withholds from this description is that the failure contrasted to the accomplished sketching of his female relations, including his wife,

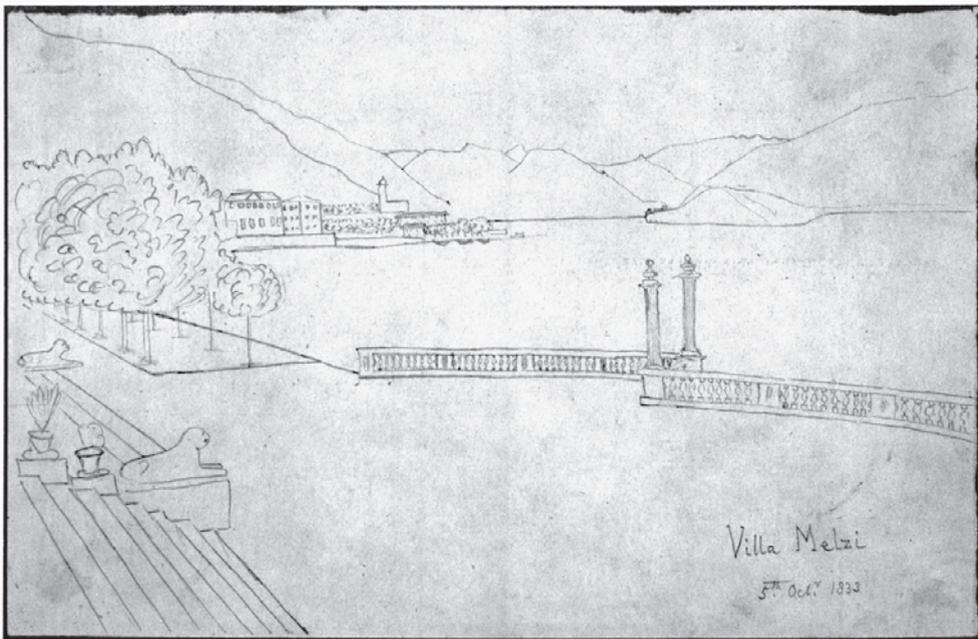


Figure 1 WHF Talbot, *The Villa Melzi*, 1833, camera lucida drawing, pencil on paper, 21.8 x 14.2 cm. © National Museum of Photography, Film & Television/Science & Society Picture Library.

Constance (see Roberts, 2000: 8). The image offers an inversion of traditional Western associations – of masculinity with technical precision and rigour, and femininity with imprecision – just as much as it continues a traditional association of femininity and creativity lodged, at one point at least in this culture’s history, in the myth of the muses. But, if the muses were an aid to masculine artistic creation, a ‘good’, amenable form of femininity, the ‘faithless pencil’ suggests a resistance to or retraction from masculinity, and an emasculation that Talbot (1992[1877]: 48) effectively claimed to overcome through the ‘fidelity’ of photographic reproduction.

Against this troubled rhetoric of familial relations, Talbot attempted to develop photographic processes and to establish paternity over their birth, and in doing so to effectively claim mastery over feminine abilities and feminine nature. Talbot’s discussion of Lake Como can be seen then to emerge from and open onto the gendered cultural matrix that – as much as photographic techniques generated their own specific transformations – pre-existed and determined Talbot’s visual practices. Significantly, in this regard, Talbot not only refers to his early photographic technique as ‘photogenic drawing’, but pervasively describes his photographic images as ‘sketches’. Indeed, we might say that photographic fidelity appears in order to shore up a faltering masculinity, or to act as a supplement to it, in the Derridean sense. Hence, photographic technique will not only appear as the supplement to the emasculation implied by feminine drawing, but it will appear as a figure of emasculation that will need itself to be bolstered through masculine writing. Such would be indicated by Talbot’s account of Lake Como: this piece of writing, included in *The Pencil of Nature*, Talbot’s catalogue or archive of the uses of his invention, suggests that the photographic images within its pages are in need of supplementation by their accompanying written narratives.

But for Talbot, attempts to supersede feminine dexterity were dogged by technical constraints: images produced by Talbot’s photographic experiments were, in 1834, able to mark outlines, ‘but the details of the architecture were feeble’ (Talbot, 1992[1844]: 80). Such was certainly the historical reception of the photo-chemical technique of photogenic drawing (Brewster, 1840, correspondence: 04147).³ Thus, we would need to contend with Krauss’s claim, in ‘Tracing Nadar’ (1996[1978]: 45), that the image entitled *The Haystack* (1844) stands as ‘visual proof of Talbot’s contention that the mechanical image can suspend an infinitude of detail in a single visual plenum, where natural vision tends to summarize or simplify in terms of mass’. Such a description is a rough approximation to the text accompanying the image in *The Pencil of Nature*, yet in addition the problems of detail recognised by Talbot himself, even the historical reception of the image found its definition wanting – ‘the foliage, however, is very indistinctly made out’ (Talbot, 1992[1844–1846]: 109). Since detail is, in the Western philosophy of art from Plato to Hegel and beyond, a feminine attribute in opposition to the paternal virtues of unity and totality, this signals the emasculation of paternal vision (see Schor, 1987).⁴ Even with the advances made by the calotype process in 1840, Talbot’s own associates are thought

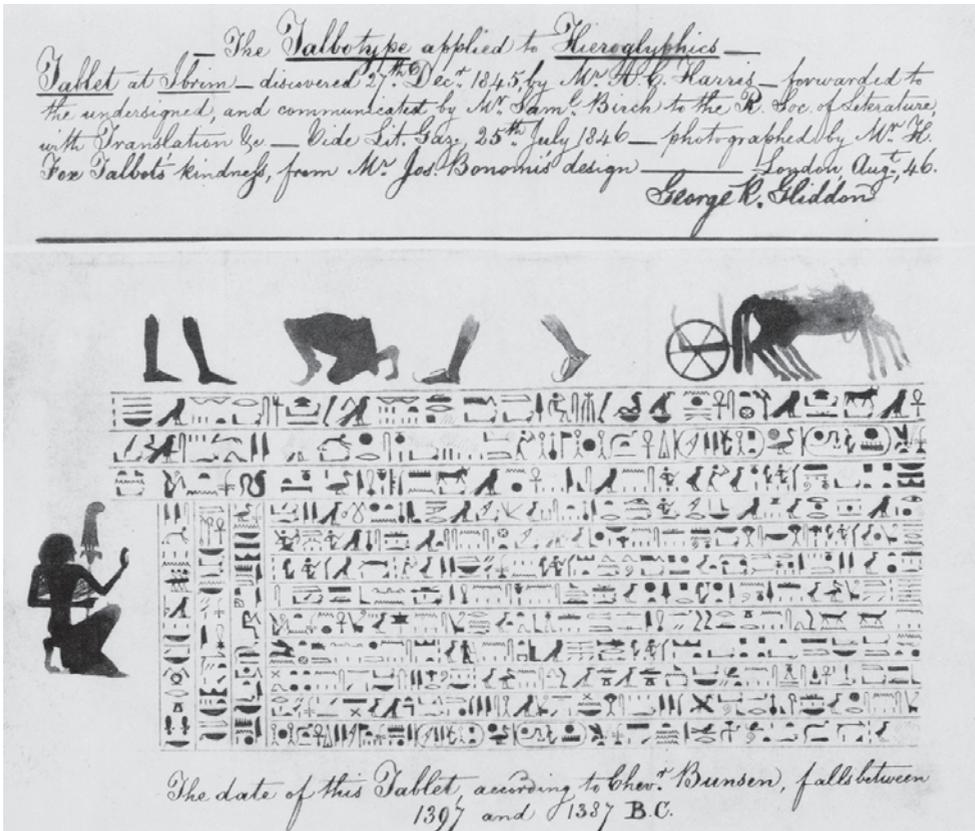


Figure 2 WHF Talbot, copy of a translation of a hieroglyphic tablet, ca. 1845, salt paper print from a calotype negative, 22.5 x 18.8 cm. © National Museum of Photography, Film & Television/Science & Society Picture Library.

to have been using the sharper, faster collodion process by 1852, if not earlier.⁵ Talbot recognised the superiority of the Daguerreotype ‘in some respects’ – implicitly in terms of its ability to reproduce the kind of ‘minute details’ of the natural scene referred to in the description of Lake Como. The superiority of his own processes was asserted in terms of ‘multiplication of copies’ and hence ‘publishing’ (Talbot, 1839, correspondence: 03987).

Indeed, photogenic drawing and the calotype were presented by Talbot for the production of precise textual facsimiles, and the photoglyphic engraving process was also thought sharp enough for accurate reproductions of cuneiform and hieroglyphic texts (see Figure 2).⁶ In this sense, photography appears as a supplemental form for the archiving of texts against the finitude of originals and the imprecision of manual copies. Thus, photographic images offered the possibility of a mediated accumulation, dissemination and taxonomisation of textual copies of historical and ancient texts, which

were directed at specific archives of the kind represented by the British Museum, with which Talbot was involved.

Talbot's photographic techniques, as much as his writings, thus gesture toward ideas associated with archives and archiving: recording, collection, and dissemination; memory, knowledge, and truth – but, also, as Talbot's work will attest in this article: erasure, dispersal, and secrecy; and forgetting, mystification, and error. It is in this sense that 'the archive' is invoked here: as the *image* of the archive generated by the relation of Talbot's practices to the orders and disorders of technological memory; an image that will be characterised by conflicts and interlappings between its opposing terms, such as textual writing and photographics. In this sense, also, the archive will be understood as imaged by conflicts and differences that endlessly defer resolution and finality – as Derrida defines it for example in *Archive Fever* (1996[1995]: 68). By extension, the argument will follow that, in Talbot's thought, such unending complexity is consistently associated with feminine attributes and feminine figures that, in the effectively patriarchal logic of Talbot's cultural and epistemological matrix, require delimitation and control.

Talbot's attempts to overcome the limitations of graphic reproduction, via optical and chemical experimentation, should thus be understood in terms of their discursive context. As Talbot (1992[1844]: 82) put it, initial difficulties in establishing light sensitive chemicals, and protracted problems in establishing permanent images, encountered a 'labyrinth of facts' for which the totalising 'clue' was wanting. In correspondence of 1839, he appears to have encountered a chaotic field of apparently infinite complexity, and hence rhetorically asked:

what *is* Nature, but one great field of wonders past our comprehension? Those, indeed, which are of every-day occurrence, do not habitually strike us, on account of their familiarity, but they are not the less on that account essential portions of the same wonderful Whole (Talbot, 1839, correspondence: 03782, emphasis in original).

The primacy of this feminine nature is only superficially endorsed where Talbot refers to 'her laws' in the 'Introductory Remarks' to *The Pencil of Nature* (1992[1844–1846]: 75). In a scribble plundering romanticism's heritage by quoting Pope's 'Essay on Man' (1732), Talbot notes 'Look through Nature to Nature's God' – her laws are not her own.⁷ The strategy by which Talbot attempted to show the godly determination of nature was through scientific experiments that indicate the philosophical character of his practice: Baconian induction is employed toward universal laws by 'noticing the occurrence of unusual circumstances (which accident perhaps first manifests in some small degree)' (cited in Nickel, 2002: 138). That is, in terms of the gendering of philosophical logic: the masculine attributes of the universal and necessary are located through the mastery of the feminine attributes of the contingent and particular. If in Talbot's thought the endless complexity of feminine nature is secondary to the masculine absolute, this

hierarchy is reiterated in his thoughts on the originary dualism of pagan deity: the feminine earth is, he argues, secondary to the paternal sun (Talbot, 1992[1839]: 43).

The gendered dimension of Talbot's thought of epistemology and nature can be developed through Michael Gray's essay 'Towards photography', which argues that Talbot's combing for terminology for the name of the process indicates knowledge of Orphic lore. The term 'photography', as a replacement offered by William Herschel for that of photogenic drawing (Newhall, 1982: 21), was suggested by Talbot to be etymologically associated with the name of 'Phaëtheon Protogenus' (Phanes), in reference to a myth in which 'black-winged night was courted by the wind and laid an egg in the womb of darkness' and in which 'Eros, whom some call Phanes was hatched from this egg and set the universe in motion' (Gray, 2000: 350). This penetrative, inseminatory, luminous metaphoric, of the 'silver egg embedded within the womb of darkness' – at once the silver of photosensitive grains of photographic images and the immanent possibility of the light of reason – will be played out not only at a level of photographic process and visual rhetoric, but also at an epistemological and discursive level. As Gray's analysis of these connections between names and terms indicates, Talbot's drive through feminine contingency toward the masculine absolute in photographic terms must be understood to be conditioned by, and linked to, a specifically textual practice in Talbot's work: etymology. Nevertheless, etymology is complexly linked to the visual, for example: the immanence of the idea for the calotype's latent photographic image in the 'secret writing' of invisible ink connects to the sense that etymology illuminates 'latent thoughts' in words (Weaver, 1992: 11). Indeed, such secrecy will be seen in this article as a recurrent trope; one that will be seen to operate not only in terms of photographic latency, but in terms of secret knowledge, philosophical, commercial, and domestic.

In his text *English Etymologies*, Talbot images the discourse of etymology both as a visual illumination, a process of Enlightenment, and as the construction of an edifice through the accumulation and ordering of texts – an archive:

Etymology is the history of the languages of nations ... it explains their manners and customs ... It is the lamp by which much that is obscure in the primitive history of the world will one day be cleared up. At present much that passes for early history is mere vague speculation: but in order to build a durable edifice upon a firm foundation, materials must be carefully brought together from all quarters and submitted to the impartial and intelligent judgement of those who are engaged in similar enquiries. (cited in Roberts, 2000: 60)

The keystone of this practice, like the secret 'clue' to photography, must be sought through a 'tortuous labyrinth', and it is an origin, or *arché*: the pre-Babelian transparency of communication. In the terms of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, within which milieu Talbot's studies were enmeshed, such linguistic ethnology supported 'the hypothesis



Figure 3 WHF Talbot, *The open door*, ca. 1844, salt paper print from calotype negative, 23.1 x 18.9 cm. The British Library, shelf mark: Talbot Photo 2 (22). © The British Library Board.

of the original unity of mankind and of a common original of all languages of the globe' (cited in Weaver, 1992: 17). Etymology is thus directed against the unknown and obscure and the heterogeneity of linguistic differences that occlude the singularity of divine, masculine origin. Indeed, the issue control, as against endless complexity, is distinct in Talbot's approval of the work of another etymologist, where a clear opposition is constructed between endlessness and its totalisation – between 'indeterminate problem' or 'indefinite number of solutions' and the hope that etymology will eventually 'master the language' (Talbot, 1855, correspondence: 00786).

The figure of the etymological lamp in *English Etymologies* may be linked to Talbot's photographic practices through Mike Weaver's original analysis of visual references to non-photographic images (paintings and woodcuts, for example) in Talbot's photographs, and the compositional deployment of symbolic objects, which we might see as a response to the problems of photographic visual precision. The lamp appears in Weaver's discussion of

Talbot's image of a statue of Diogenes, and another retrospectively entitled *The open door* (see Figure 3):

By the late eighteenth century, Diogenes had become a hero of the French Revolution, with light as a metaphor for all kinds of truth – political, religious, and scientific – symbolized by his magic lantern ... Just as Sir Humphry Davy as inventor of the miner's safety lamp expressed this idea at the operative level, so Talbot's lantern in *The open door* evoked it speculatively. If the lantern illuminates (even at midday) all that lies in darkness, the bridle of Stoicism checks the passions that threaten pure reason, and the broom sweeps the threshold of the dark chamber clean. (Weaver, 1992: 2)

Although Weaver's attention to the figure of Diogenes is surely correct in its indication of Talbot's philosophical matrix, it needs to be developed by an acknowledgement of the gendered duality of Talbot's thought: the light of the lamp represents a masculine force directed against the feminine traits of darkness and multiplicity whose figure is Pandora. She appears in Talbot's 'The Antiquity of the Book of Genesis', a text that equates the sun with the father, and the earth with the mother, gendering and hierarchising the light that discursively illuminates meaning and literally illuminates the objects within his images. In his discussion of Hesiod's version of the Pandora myth as a 'later' version of Eve's original sin, Talbot remarks that:

The very ancient and beautiful fable of Pandora ... is the story of the woman, *the wife of the first-created man*, upon whom the gods had showered every blessing which it is possible to imagine; but had laid upon her one injunction, had hid from her one secret which she was never to attempt to discover. But, alas! Her curiosity tempts her to violate this fatal command! Immediately all happiness flies away from earth; and in its place sorrow, misery, and all manner of evils invade the abode. (Talbot, 1992[1839]: 44, emphasis in original)

Since Eve's sin causes the loss of the divine state, like the multiplication of peoples and tongues at Babel, these myths are precisely manifestations of a transgression of paternal authority, the displacement of purity, and a proliferative opening of differences. In Talbot's musings on the ensuing condition of religion, the written account 'shews us the spectacle of a world from which the true light was withheld, wandering in the maze of interminable error, yet not altogether or at all times destitute of noble feelings and of sublime conceptions' (p. 43). Thus, Talbot envisages the lapsarian condition as one characterised not only by error but also by *endless* error (despite containing the immanent possibility of some form of redress) – an association, against the paternity of divine, absolute knowledge, of femininity and the endless deferral of truth.

The excess of the lapsarian condition and the possibility of its totalisation is underlined by the terms which Talbot utilises in a section of correspondence

entitled 'On the confusion of tongues in the district of Babel': given the 'astonishing' or 'extraordinary variety of language' and the 'remarkable diversity of tongues', 'languages or dialects abounded in such profusion, that he [Mithridates] having acquired a knowledge of them all (so it is said), thence deservedly became the protector, or *hero eponymous*, of all future linguists'. The association between this linguistic condition and the lapsarian religious condition is indicated in the proximity of terms relating to proliferation:

the whole nation was fast sinking into idolatry ... and idolatrous rites were performed 'upon every hill and under every green tree' ... Idols were seen everywhere, and in the utmost profusion: 'for according to the multitude of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah'. (Talbot, 1856, correspondence: 01220)

Etymology is thus the discourse of a total knowledge that is directed toward the absolute and that is opposed to feminine endlessness. Given the figuration of the former through Diogenes and the latter through Pandora, there is thus an association not only of absolute deity, paternity and the light of reason directed toward the singular origin, but of endlessness, femininity, and a darkness which itself figures complexity, contradiction, and difference. Etymological labour hence has an archival dimension directed against such impurity – it mediates and is mediated by the collection and taxonomic ordering of texts that may be facilitated by photographic facsimiles, like those of the photoglyph. It is consequent that within the thought of total knowledge there is also the spectre of a masculine archive that synthesises image and text, and that would be directed against the lapsarian proliferation of erroneous texts, interpretations and discourses – an endless, feminine archive. The latter form, as I have argued, is contiguous with that image of feminine nature as an endless accumulation of particular details which resist the attempt on the part of paternal knowledge to comprehend the universal laws of god secreted within them.

Domesticity, Femininity and the Archive

The role of the photographic in curtailing the secrecy of feminine endlessness, toward archival ends, is implicated in Talbot's supposedly aesthetic and domestic photographic experiments: an analogue of the etymological attempt to contain the endlessness of the feminine is readable in *Sunlit objects on a window ledge* (see Figure 4). Here, if the centrally placed candle indicates Diogenes' lamp, the open jewellery box to the right refers to the lapsarian condition resulting from Pandora's violation of secrecy. Each object is transparent, opened, or objectified – arranged to be isolated within the specific perspective of the image. Should the position of the camera change, the objects would overlap, and, given the lack of detail, merge into indeterminacy. These objects, that in cultural terms represent feminine vanity, have thus been oriented toward and regulated by the photographic.

These objects are part of a wider classification of the domestic environment of Talbot's country house, Lacock Abbey, that indicate the circulation of objects

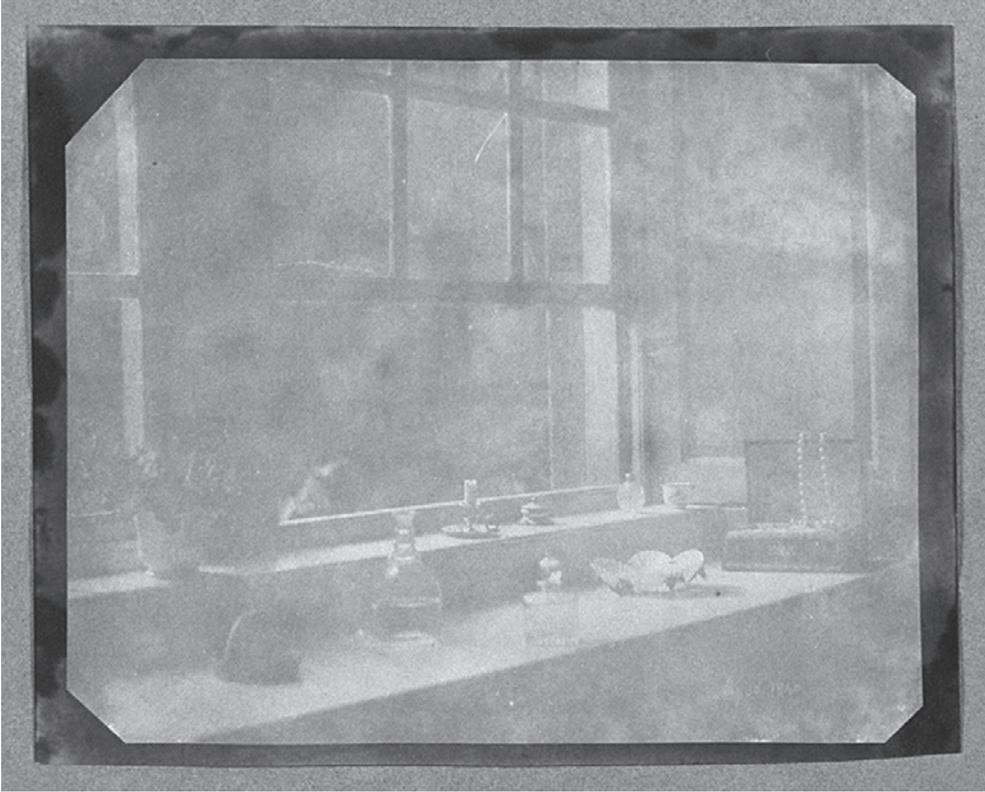


Figure 4 WHF Talbot, *Sunlit objects on a window ledge*, ca. 1840, salt paper print from photogenic drawing negative, 22.7 x 18.1 cm. © National Museum of Photography, Film & Television/ Science & Society Picture Library.

within the domestic sphere, and, given the images of social occasions, the circulation of the members of the house and their guests. Such images can be read as the sign of a partial taxonomy of domestic routine. In a much discussed text in *The Pencil of Nature* that accompanies the image referred to as *Articles of china*, Talbot remarks on its status as a legal document of ownership in the contingent event of theft: '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' (Talbot, 1992[1844–1846]: 86–87). In Derrida's terms, the documentary function of the photograph has a petitionary function toward the legal figures (*archons*) of state law (Derrida, 1996[1995]: 2–3) that is directed at preparing for and amending contingent events. The discrete isolation of objects in such images thus gestures toward the archiving of property, and might also remind us of the legal status of women and their property within bourgeois sociality at this time.

As Allan Sekula (1992[1986]: 345) notes in this context, the development of surveillance through photographics involves the dichotomy between

the 'denotative univocality of the legal image and the multiplicity and presumed duplicity of the criminal voice', in which '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' (emphases in original). The gender implication of this resistance to contingency is recognised in Sekula's following comments upon the dichotomies of the 'shadow archive' in its Foucauldian sense:

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. (p. 347)

Hence, *Sunlit objects* indicates not only the filtration of the everyday through traditional, indeed, even misogynistic images, but also the partial slippage of archival concepts into the sphere of the domestic. Therefore, *Sunlit objects* may be viewed as overlapping with a desire to homogenize and reduce the equivocality of femininity to delimited and transparent aesthetic objects of adornment, within a compositional aesthetic unity that is simultaneously the sign of an archival order – taxonomic, legal, and petitionary.

Here then, I would like to make a series of connections: the way in which Pandora's association with the endless multiplicity of linguistic differences may be associated to the equivocality and contingency of the feminine in the 19th-century Western imaginary, and the opposition between graphic 'faithlessness' and photographic 'fidelity' implied by the scenario of Lake Como. Significantly, such ideas of feminine resistance to paternal control may be argued to be analogous to the opening of what Lyotard refers to as the 'complex domicile': a force which disrupts the pastoral unity of the paternal house, the *domus*. This latter edifice is characterised by the cyclicity of birth, life, and death of figures of paternal authority. Its bucolic domesticity is contrasted to the city (*megalopolis*), which binds the population

to another memory, the public archive, which is written, mechanographically operated, electronic. It does surveys of the estates and disperses their order. It breaks up god-nature ... the bucolic regime is perceived as a melancholic survival. (Lyotard, 1991[1987]: 193–194)

The megalopolis is characterised by *pleonexia*, 'the delirium of growth with no return, a story with no pause for breath' – plethora, profit, the excesses of urban capital. Capitalist rationalisation 'hands over the care for memory to the anonymity of archives. No-one's memory, without custom, or story, or rhythm. A memory controlled by the principle of reason' (p. 192).⁸ Yet, in the description of the *complex domicile*, which subverts both bucolia and technicity, 'the female servant with the heart of gold is impure ... The domestic monad is torn, full of stories and scenes, haunted by secrets' (p. 195). Here, the feminine disrupts the totality of paternal circularity, implying endless linear extent, just as Pandora's transgression threatens paternal unity with a linear and unending displacement. Hence, I will now come to argue



Figure 5 WHF Talbot, *Scene in a library*, ca. 1844, salt paper print from calotype negative, 23.0 x 18.7 cm. The British Library, shelf mark: Talbot Photo 2 (28). © The British Library Board.

that Talbot's musings on the future of photography in *The Pencil of Nature* will imply a desire to totalise such feminine disturbances; a desire that will be played out through the photographic and imaginative penetration of the domestic scene, and that will bear witness to the secretive economy of the complex domicile. Nevertheless, I will also argue that this attempt at masculine penetration will inadvertently undo itself through its own excess.

If the archival gaze of the camera is turned inward upon the domestic scene, it is, conversely, almost always turned from the darkness of the interior and toward the light of the exterior. The repetition and proximity of windows in Talbot's interior images mark a particular restraint upon photography, a weakness or submission to natural contingency:

There is not light enough for interiors at this season of the year, however I intend to try a few more. I find that a *bookcase* makes a very curious & characteristic picture: the different bindings of the books come out, & produce considerable illusion even with imperfect execution. (Talbot, 1839, correspondence: 0398, emphasis in original)

Because of this dependency on natural light, objects were taken outside for exposures and arranged in a simulation of the interior. Talbot's complaint here indicates the limit placed on photographic surveillance, in its colonisation and taxonomisation. What the photograph cannot archive, regulate, and determine is darkness – the interiority of the domestic scene.

In comparison to the strangely aesthetic and forensic arrangement of discrete items in *Sunlit objects*, the books of *Scene in a library* are arranged in mediate disorder, regulated by picturesque composition (see Figure 5). The image represents Talbot's diverse studies, and in terms of his etymological work, the texts represent masculine endeavour toward the surety of knowledge in comparison to the feminine diversions of the sunlit objects. Elsewhere, responding to an avatar of the very feminine babble that etymology sought to singularise, Talbot contrasts the 'hubbub' of public opinion on the publication of his *English Etymologies* to 'the noiseless tenor of its way towards that sure and quiet asylum, the Library shelf' (Talbot, 1848, correspondence: 06078). Comparably, the library is not imaged here as a site of dangerous excess, but as one of paternal order, and in this sense, the library and the photograph represents an attempt to curtail the feminising proliferation of contradictory texts, languages and differences.

The text that accompanies *Scene in a library* in *The Pencil of Nature* (1992[1844–1846]) famously muses on the future of prismatic optics – light in both its literal, scientific form, and its metaphorical sense – and exhibits a penetrative attitude toward the domestic scene. Talbot hypothesises whether light from the invisible spectrum could be directed into a dark room, so that a photograph might be taken of its occupants: 'For, to use a metaphor we have already employed, the eye of the camera would see plainly where the human eye would find nothing but darkness' (p. 91). Given the assertion that it must 'inevitably succeed', Talbot's prognosis is of a future unknitting of complications toward a final illumination – it attempts to pierce the future, just as it is analogous to the penetration of a darkness which is attached to the past, in terms of etymological labour. Here, unable to resist attempting to open the secret recess, the box (or jar) of the darkened room, Talbot imaginatively reiterates Pandora's temptation, and thus *enacts* feminine transgression. Diogenes, then, becomes Pandora. In the attempt to supplement the existing limitations of the photographic medium, the text in its excessive character exposes the emasculation of paternal technique, and indicates a fear of feminine opacity in the domestic sphere that destabilises any placid aesthetic quality that might be connoted by the darkness between the books in the image.

Carol Armstrong (2002: 94) suggests that the text indicates 'a meeting between the mostly masculine world of scientific experimentation and the feminine domain of the "romance"'. Such an idea allows for a sense of parity with the denigration of the feminine in *Sunlit objects*: both images would thus represent the relation between feminine diversions and the lapsarian diversions of knowledge. Furthermore, in this connection, *Scene in a library* and its text would indicate an alternate accumulation of feminine texts

which, in deferring, displacing or opposing masculine knowledge, would fall under the remit of Talbot's desire to finitise the endlessness of the feminine, and to illuminate the absolute paternal origin recessed behind its darkness. Indeed, Armstrong suggests that the image is a partial indication of a library that carries on beyond the edge of the photographic frame (pp. 91–94).⁹ Although this is in no sense the object of Armstrong's analysis, the library image would thus intimate a specific association of terms – against the masculine archive of finite knowledge associated with the figure of Diogenes, the endless epistemological indeterminacy of femininity associated with the figure of Pandora and its archival accumulations.

In order to develop the gendered connotations of this moment, and in order to re-mark the occluded denigration of the feminine at the origins of the photographic, the fear of darkness implicated in the text accompanying the library image may be contextualised through Talbot's correspondence with William Herschel regarding the construction of the universe, in which Talbot states that:

if the material universe be finite, then is it but as a mere speck in illimitable space. Everywhere else extends darkness without end – The mind finds it difficult to acquiesce in this belief, and though I know not what, I think there must be a fallacy in the passage I have quoted. (Talbot, 1841, correspondence: 04214)

Given Talbot's aesthetic heritage, this image of the universe might gesture toward the sublime, but Talbot's impetus is to reject the notion entirely: it appears too excessive to be amenable to the second, transcendent moment of that experiential concept. We might then think, as Julia Kristeva (1982[1980]: 11) indicates in *Powers of Horror*, that the sublime here 'edges' the abject – that maternal figure which resists fixity or finality. In this sense, Talbot's thought intersects with abjection as the 'degree zero of spatialization' in Victor Burgin's (1990: 122 n. 39, 118) reading of Kristeva. The *horror vacui* of classical cosmologies – such as that indicated in Talbot's 'darkness without end' – posits a replete space in which 'God's creation was fullness without gap', an abjection of the void which is maintained in Renaissance theories of perspective, through which Talbot's sense of the visual was formed. Talbot's thought not only resists the infinite extension of cosmic darkness, marking the desire for the penetration of godly and epistemological light: in this context, *Scene in a library* and its text would also mark an occluded attempt to abject the secrecy of maternal darkness. The limit placed on the archival activities of the camera, what emasculates photography, is not only the dark in its optical sense, but the indeterminate darkness of the complex domicile associated with feminine secrecy and complexity.

If this analysis offers something of a key to understanding the library image and its text, it also maintains that their ensemble is finally unsolvable, because feminine secrecy only appears as the implicit inverse of masculine epistemological insecurity: it cannot be an object of positive knowledge. Yet,

as that which requires the visual and taxonomic curtailment of its differences, the complexity of the feminine may be seen as a very motor of archival ideation and material accumulation. But in its difference, its borderline fluidity, the feminine qua abject cannot be thought of simply as a figure of femininity, since it resists being defined by binary opposition, and thus encroaches on the masculine: a condition of complexity that might be linked to the equivocality opened by Pandora. Such complexity is mirrored by the incoherence of masculinity; as Talbot's desire in the library text indicates, paternal discourse reiterates the very feminine curiosity it seeks to redress. Or, rather, neither figure nor either gender can exist as simple identities: everything, including the reproductive media of writing and photographic processes, takes place at the site of contradiction, complexity, and unending collapse. Talbot's practices thus reside (in an emphatically nonsynthetic, problematic sense) not only between the textual and photographic, but between the feminine and masculine – between Pandora and Diogenes.

Concluding Contexts: Archival and Technological Transitions

The gendered ambivalence of the archive as thus far discussed is also effectively played out at a level of institutional and archival politics, and in a manner that will allow for an understanding of the position of Talbot's practices in relation to the historical relations of writing and photographic processes. This position gestures in two directions. On the one hand it gestures toward a future condition: Lyotard's description of the disruption of the organic image of the body-politic in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984[1979]), in which the commoditisation of information 'will begin to perceive the State as a factor of opacity and "noise"' (p. 5), has its nascence in Talbot's conflicted relation to the Royal Society. In this, the institution's requirements for the secrecy, property and arrest of information – its archival control – conflicted with Talbot's desire to circulate and exchange. From Talbot's epistemological position, then, the secrecy of the state positions it in the place of the feminine. But Talbot's desire for circulation was mediated: his protracted legal entanglements over ownership of patents, requiring petition to the law (and thus its archives), indicate a desire to regulate exchange between free circulation and institutional arrest (see, for example, Wood, 1971). Similarly, Hershel described Talbot's processes in relation to Daguerre's 'secret' process (Newhall, 1982: 20). And, on the other hand, Talbot's own forms of secrecy – in withholding knowledges of photographic processes – also gesture toward the genesis of this conflict in natural philosophy. Bacon's antipathy to unmediated circulation is, for example, manifest in *The New Atlantis*: 'we ... take all an oath of secrecy for the concealing of those [inventions] which we think fit to keep secret' (Bacon, 1973[1627]: 962). Whatever might be said in biographical terms concerning Talbot's difficult relations to patent law and capitalisation, his institutional relations indicate the complex relations between secrecy and publicity that inhere in the capitalisation of intellectual property.

Talbot's technical and financial failures in the attempt to commercialise photographic production are part of the awkward transition from agrarian aristocracy to industrial capitalism, just as his photographic practices combine craft-based domesticity and mass production. This kind of liminality is evidenced in Talbot's attempts to industrialise and commercialise his processes: the 'Reading Establishment', as it was known, positioned between Talbot's country pile and London, between country and city, was where multiple copies of images were made, as well as the production of *The Pencil of Nature* – images that were themselves located in a borderland between craft and industry, detail and blur, permanence and decay. The text accompanying *Scene in a library* would resolve, from this perspective, as an attempt to obliterate the differential darkness of the complex domestic origin through the prognoses of a pastoralising but nevertheless scientific abstraction, and to shift the place of memory from the psychic and domestic to the technological and institutional – that is, given the paternal character of Talbot's science, to shift the place of memory to the masculine archive. Likewise, given that images of the domestic scene of Talbot's home at Lacock Abbey were circulated within commercial spheres, this represents the opening of the interior, the private, toward the exterior and public: Talbot's practice marks the extension of a domestic practice into the sphere of the commercial, but only as much as it represents the extension of nascent industrial technics of vision into the domestic sphere, and thus foreshadows the development of contemporary surveillance technologies.

However, to describe Talbot's ambivalence merely in these general terms of surveillance and control would be to provide something of a limited account: Kittler for instance argues that, despite Foucault's attention to the optics of the scopic regime, his attention to writing and written archives fails to recognise shifts in specific technologies of recording. The displacement of reciprocity between Talbot and the institutional archives of scientific knowledge might also be argued to register an early moment of conflict, in Kittler's (1999[1986]: 4–8) terms, in the undermining of the hegemony of the textual archive by the developing technologies of the visual. As Talbot's photographic images of writing particularly attest, such transitions do not pertain to the ruptural simplicity of pure epistemic breakage. Indeed, because of the failure to solve the problem of the long-term fixity of the calotype, Talbot made recourse to the archival permanence of a hybrid form of imaging – the photoglyph – that used photographic processes in combination with lithographic printing. Hence, we would also have to entertain the sense that technological transitions are not simply linear, and that supposedly obsolete forms may continue to find their place despite their supposed anachronism. Likewise, the application of Talbot's processes has been argued to have 'revolutionised the craft of wood engraving' in the 1860s (Newhall, 1982: 21). In this sense, Talbot's work exists at a point of conflict between the past and the future, a chiasmic moment where opposites cross over into each other.

Situated problematically between the textual and the visual in terms of media and the archive, Talbot's practices underline the way in which such media

relations are enmeshed within complex economic, cultural and political forces. We might then think here of the mutually necessary yet destructive imbrication of the photographic and the written at the origins of the photographic, and the supplementation of other media forms in the contemporary digital world, in terms of a difference to the supposedly placid harmony of media or of the apparently seamless syntheses of the commercial image-sphere. Hence, this argument designates one of the key tasks of historical and contemporary visual critique: to recognise intra-media and inter-media complexity as a resistance to the commercial tendency to erase the problematic, differential relations of and between media, and to analyse the gendered logic of such differences. Indeed, this kind of attention to the specificity of media forms has characterised much recent work in literary digital humanities (see Drucker, 2009; Hayles, 2010[2008]; McGann, 2001: 63–67). In this context, it has also been recognised that rather than simple, linear or teleological supersession of existing forms, the contemporary situation is one of a mixed media economy in which historical forms of communication and memory complexly co-exist and conflict (Striphas, 2009: xix, 15–16).

In a comparable sense of complex temporality, Talbot's work does not merely gesture toward our own time from an anachronistic anteriority: its association of totality and masculinity as against endlessness and femininity provides terms by which the current situation for archives might be thought. To some extent, the apparent shift toward digital forms of technological communication and memory appears to involve the democratisation of visual and textual publishing, yet, as Derrida discussed with Stiegler in *Echographies* (2002[1996]: 32–33, 42–55), the exfoliation of private images in the public spheres of the internet also comes at the risk of further surveillance and capitalisation. Such control and commodification include the appropriation of social energies invested in corporate communication and memory platforms, which reiterates the conflict, as registered in Talbot's work, between the domestic and the industrial, and between proliferating differences and totalising control. Indeed, the corporate appropriation of attempted autonomous digital communication and counter-archiving activities should remind us that, culturally and economically speaking, the masculine desire for determinate control remains a significant issue of our time.

Lastly, and as an example of the way in which the archive may be gendered not only in cultural analyses but in the culture of neo-liberalism, I might turn to Mike Davis's book *Dead Cities and Other Tales* (2002), which associates maternity and sublime apocalypse in describing the traumatic image of 9/11's burning towers as 'the womb of all terror' (p. 3). Indeed, in the ecopolitics of Davis's thought, 9/11 is an image of the uncanny return of a feminine nature that has been suppressed by capitalism and industrialisation. In his account, Davis also discusses the state's demands for determinate knowledge, including, in archival terms, Colin Powell's plan 'for a vast centralized data warehouse that would store "every derogatory piece of information" on visitors and would-be immigrants' (p. 17). We would need here to think through the gendered representation of the terroristic other, not only in the rhetoric of

right-wing politics, but in terms of the visual cultures variously archived and disseminated in ensuing wars, like those of Abu Ghraib. In general terms that would need be qualified by further analysis, we might see here the symbolic emasculation of American neo-liberal imperialism being responded to in terms that no less involve emasculation and feminisation.¹⁰ Where such acts have been conducted in the name of 'freedom', let us remember that, just as Talbot's practices underscore the sense that there never was a pure origin, a universal language or an Edenic plenitude, and as Lyotard argued in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984[1979]), there is no future plenitude either: the idea that capital could provide global wealth and well-being through equality of opportunity is a mythic lie that mirrors the myth of origin.

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Notes

1. The term *photographics* is employed here and elsewhere in this article to mark distance from the traditional medium specificity of the term 'photography'.
2. This deconstructive approach to photographic origins clearly intersects with Geoffrey Batchen's *Burning with Desire* (1999[1997]); yet the purpose of the following argument is to emphasise that the complexity of origins cannot be disentracted from issues of gender.
3. As with all further references of this type, the final number refers to the document ID where Talbot's correspondence is digitally archived, at <http://foxtalbot.dmu.ac.uk/>
4. Beyond Schor's remit, the photographic discourse of infinite detail must be seen as an extension of this aesthetic tradition – for an analysis of this in the modern American context, see Mays (2005).
5. Talbot also appears to have referred to calotypes as 'photogenic drawings' (Roberts, 2000: 40). I skirt around much of the complexity of such technical aspects, and of the archival material such as Talbot's notebooks, in this article, in order to concentrate on the symbolic dimension of Talbot's practices. For an introductory discussion of the multiple techniques and terms that Talbot used for his processes at different times, see, for example, Schaaf (1990[1989]) and Newhall (1982: 19-25).
6. Indeed, it has been argued that 'Talbot spent more time and energy on printing in ink than he did on printing in silver' (Schaaf, 1990[1989]: 44).
7. The shift from the classical figure of veiled Isis through the scientific revelation of nature's secrets, and its specifically masculine rhetoric of penetration, appropriation and occupation may be read through Bacon, Descartes, Newton, and Davy – Talbot's precursors (see Elsea, 1983: 19–28).
8. For a more detailed account of Talbot's problematic relation to industrialisation and capitalism, see Keeler (2002), and for an analysis of the symbolic condition of the sexual division of labour associated to Talbot's sense of mechanisation, see Edwards (2002).

9. A comparable sense of extension is implied by Batchen (2002: 105-106) where Talbot's image, *The Milliner's Window* (1843), suggests 'the possibility of an endless supply of feminine consumer goods ... that caters explicitly to a newly kindled, bourgeois, female desire'.
10. For a discussion of the complex use of gender and sex in interrogation techniques, and the appropriation of femininity in the name of patriarchal capitalism, see Fusco (2013), as well as discussion of the complex image-repertoire emerging in this context in the collection that the essay appears in.

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Ordering, Searching, Finding

Nina Lager Vestberg

Abstract

The functions of an archive depend on the medium in which its holdings are recorded; the material on which they are inscribed; the location in which the materials are stored, and the system of order in which all of these elements are configured. Digital technology enables archives to be organized in new and multiple ways, according to the principles of what Weinberger calls a ‘new digital disorder’ in his 2007 book, *Everything Is Miscellaneous: The Power of the New Digital Disorder*. This article asks how different archival orders affect the work of research by examining experiences of searching both the analogue and digital incarnations of two important art historical collections: the Photographic Collection of the Warburg Library and the Conway Library at the Courtauld Institute of Art. It questions the idea that particular ways of ordering an archive are necessarily tied to specific media or forms of materiality.

Keywords

archival order • art historical archives • Conway Library • digital disorder • digital technology • Warburg Library

Archives are cultural products, the organization and maintenance of which contribute to the validation of knowledge and the management of meaning. These processes are to a large extent determined by the mutual dependencies of medium, materiality and locality. In other words, the medium through which we encounter archival documents, the material support on which they are inscribed, and the physical premises in which the documents are located, all influence the ways in which an archive fulfils its tasks and exerts its power. Yet it is only once these three basic features are configured in the

form of a system, producing a distinct and distinctive order, that the archive proper comes into being. How does archival order affect the production of knowledge and meaning? How do new technologies affect the work of ordering archives, and that of searching them? I will confine my exploration of these issues to one small area of knowledge, and to one specific aspect of archival work. To be precise, I will be considering two photographic collections supporting studies and research in art and cultural history, and I will focus particularly on the various kinds of order into which these collections are, or may yet be, organized.

Researchers are always looking for a new object. Within art history, for instance, such an object can be anything from the ‘unknown masterpiece’ of newspaper cliché to the revisionist interpretations or recently discovered documents which constitute the more regular findings of what Kuhnians would call ‘normal’ research. Digital technology enables such new objects to be found in new ways – chiefly, as the writer David Weinberger (2007) would argue, because it allows searching for them in a different order, which is to say a disorder. In his 2007 book *Everything Is Miscellaneous: The Power of the New Digital Disorder*, Weinberger posits a tripartite system of orders, in which ‘the first order of order’ is that of ‘the things themselves’ (for instance a collection of photographs), while the second order is that of a catalogue or index giving information (metadata) about those things (pp. 17–18). The third order, meanwhile, is the digital disorder of the book’s title, which refers to the breakdown of data and metadata into bits that may be searched and combined in potentially infinite ways. The most obvious example of this third, ‘miscellaneous’ order of order would be the search engine Google. I am enlisting Weinberger in this context as a means by which to conceptualize, as well as problematize, how different ways of ordering archives privilege different kinds of search modes, which in turn produce different types of findings. In particular, I want to challenge the notion that the three kinds of order are necessarily tied to specific media or forms of materiality.

Analogue archives

The two archives explored in this article were chosen in part because they represent the crucial function of photography in visual cultural scholarship. One is the Photographic Collection of the Warburg Library, which forms part of the University of London’s Warburg Institute, and the other is the Conway Library at the Courtauld Institute of Art. Both collections belong to specialist university institutes and are located within a 20-minute walk of each other. Their respective host institutions have enjoyed a ‘special relationship’ going back to the 1930s, which includes co-publishing the highly regarded *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, as well as the frequent migration of students and staff between the two institutes. It is safe to assume that the photographic collections have catered for many of the same researchers; yet the two archives differ profoundly in their approaches to the orders of archival order, not least in their digital incarnations.

The Photographic Collection of the Warburg Library is an iconographic collection of approximately 350,000 items, which primarily supports study and research in cultural history, art history and the history of ideas, with a particular emphasis on the Renaissance. The collection, like the book library, has its origins in the material collected by Aby Warburg (1866–1929) in connection with his research into the afterlife (*Nachleben*) of Antiquity in Western civilisation. Warburg organized his library according to four main categories – Image, Word, Orientation and Action – to reflect his ideas on the development of human consciousness and culture:

In other words the Library was to lead from the visual image, as the first stage in human's awareness (Image), to language (Word) and then to religion, science and philosophy, all of them products of humanity's search for Orientation which influences patterns of behaviour and actions, the subject matter of history (Action). (The Warburg Institute, 2012a: np)

The open-stack library is furthermore specifically designed to facilitate the making of intuitive connections. As Carlo Ginzburg (2012: 84–85) explains, in a recent essay on the Warburg Library: 'Only a short walk separates the section on «Magic» from the section on «Science»: a contiguity that played a central role in Warburg's approach.' This approach is famously crystallized in the principle of 'the good neighbour', which dictates that the book you will really find useful is often sitting next to the one you are looking for (Saxl, 1970: 327; Steinberg, 2012: 128). In order to encounter these good neighbours, readers must by necessity be able to browse the holdings by themselves, rather than rely on ordering material from closed storage via the intermediary of a librarian. The Photographic Collection at the Warburg is organized on the same principle, although its thematic classification system differs somewhat from the categories of the book library. The 'unique filing system' was developed by Rudolf Wittkower in the 1930s and, according to the Warburg website, it was designed especially to enable researchers to: 'identify the subjects of obscure works'; 'locate images whose artist is unknown'; 'understand the frequency with which stories were depicted'; 'analyze the relationship of images to textual sources'; 'trace iconographic developments through time', and 'test theories about the social functions of images' (Warburg Institute, 2012c). The main subject headings include 'Secular iconography', 'Antiquities', 'Ritual', 'Gods and Myths', 'Magic and Science', 'Social Life' and 'Religious Iconography', and items classified into each category are stored in folders which in turn are kept in banks of filing cabinets labelled with the relevant keywords. Just as the Warburg Library has remained true to Aby Warburg's ideas, and retained its peculiar classification system even as vast numbers of the world's libraries have adopted universal standards (such as the Dewey system), so the photographic collection has kept Wittkower's system despite the emergence of similar international standards in image collections (such as Iconclass).

The Conway Library, for its part, has been located within the Courtauld Institute of Art since the latter's inception in 1932. Like the Warburg, it is named after its originator, Sir Martin Conway (1856–1937), who in addition to being an explorer and adventurer in the Victorian mould, was also holder of the first Chair in Art History at a British university, notably at Liverpool. A contemporary of Aby Warburg, Conway was fascinated by the opportunity afforded by photographic technology to map the global territories of art in an unprecedented way, allowing comparative studies of practically any artefact *vis-à-vis* another (Vestberg, 2009: 129). In many ways, he embodies the oft-quoted observation by Donald Preziosi (1989: 72), that 'art history as we know it today is the child of photography', in the sense that the medium has enabled 'taxonomic ordering, and the creation of historical and genealogical narratives' within the discipline. The collection of photographs Conway began assembling forms the core of what was to become the one-million-item-strong Conway Library, which specializes in photographic reproductions of architecture, sculpture and manuscripts. In contrast to the conceptual categories of the Warburg Collection, the Conway follows established ordering practices within the discipline of art history, as they have traditionally been enacted from museums to textbooks. This means that its items are organized first according to medium of original item (e.g. Architecture, Sculpture or Manuscripts) and subsequently by century, then either by location (in the case of buildings), or school and artist (in the case of sculpture), or school and book type (in the case of manuscripts). Unlike the Warburg Collection, which stores items in filing cabinets, the Conway stores its photographic material in red boxes which have rounded spines and sit on shelves, giving the appearance of outsize books, nicely in keeping with the collection's designation as a 'library'.

The photographic collections at both the Warburg and the Conway constitute archives of what Weinberger calls 'the first order of order' (Weinberger, 2007: 17). That is to say, they are collections made up of physical objects: objects which can only be in one location at any one time and which are therefore fixed in their place, as it were. Give or take the occasional duplicate or mislaid print, any given photographic reproduction is always found in the same folder or box, located in one specific drawer or on one particular shelf, and will not be found by anybody looking for it anywhere else. The traditional way to counteract this limitation on archives – whether they be libraries of books or collections of images – is to create a so-called 'second order of order' (p. 18) in the shape of various finding aids, typically catalogues or indexes, which contain information about the first-order objects. This information is usually recorded and stored in a different medium and separate from the objects themselves. Although these kinds of finding aids exist in both the Warburg and the Conway, in common with a number of image collections, neither collection has an exhaustive catalogue or index of all its items, in the way that a book library will have a complete catalogue of its volumes. Instead, the available metadata about each image tend to be recorded either on the back of the physical print or on the piece of card on which it has been mounted. So already we see that

Weinberger's distinct orders of order in the physical world are disrupted by archival practice: the filing cabinets and boxes are, at one and the same time, repositories for the 'things themselves' and catalogues explaining what those things are. This is not the only feature of the Warburg and Conway collections to mark them out as composite archives of both the first and the second order. By virtue of being photographic collections, the very things of which they are made up are always already indexical references to other, pre-existing objects-in-the-world. In addition to being an archival object in its own right, every photograph is in this respect also a mini-archive within the archive. The third aspect of these two collections which endows their first-order manifestations with second-order properties is a result of what we might call their originating discourses. That is to say, aside from providing visual documentation for studies in art and cultural history, each archive is also a resource for studying what Kelley Wilder (2009: 127) has called 'photography's relationship with art history, or with archiving in general'.

In the case of the Conway, the genealogical and geographical bias of art history as a discipline requires researchers to anchor their inquiries to certain periods and places in order to know where to start looking in the vast collection. In the case of the Warburg, a different approach is needed. Since it is explicitly an *iconographic* collection, it is an archive where the classification of each image is based not so much on a denotative description of its contents or its time and place of origin, as on a connotative interpretation of its motif. To give an example, a picture showing a naked man's body pierced by arrows is likely to be classified under 'Religious Iconography – Saints A–Z – Sebastian – Martyred' because to an art or cultural historian the visual elements of such an image will virtually always add up to a representation of the martyrdom of St Sebastian. Somebody attempting to search the Warburg Collection equipped only with what Erwin Panofsky (1970[1939]: 54) would have called a 'pre-iconographical' conception of their subject – someone wanting illustrations of people shot by arrows, for example – would have no idea of where to start looking. On the other hand, a researcher going to the Conway looking specifically for representations of St Sebastian would not get far without having first some idea of either what kinds of churches, in which part of the world, would be likely to incorporate images of this saint, or of which sculptors, working in which period, might conceivably have treated this subject. In both respects, the ability to navigate collections such as the Warburg and the Conway requires that researchers come already equipped with a certain amount of metadata – a kind of mental index, if you like. The more detailed the metadata – the more in-depth the iconographic or historical knowledge of the researchers, in other words – the better their chances of finding what they are looking for.

Clearly both the physical organization and conceptual classification of the Warburg Collection's contents are designed to enable the answering of questions arising from iconographical concerns, questions asked by people with some specialist knowledge of cultural history. Similarly, the layout

and classification system of the Conway are first and foremost designed to be of use to trained historians of art. What is more, anybody with a question to which they think that either of these collections might have the answer would have to take themselves in person to the archives and rifle through drawers and boxes – a fact which in itself will severely limit the kind of person likely to consult the archives and the kind of inquiry they might be pursuing. This is all in keeping with Weinberger's postulations on the limitations of first- and second-order archives. But what would happen if the Warburg Photographic Collection and the Conway Library went online? Might they attract different kinds of researchers, and find new potential uses for their images, in the virtual world of the third, so-called miscellaneous order?

Digital avatars

The Warburg has begun building an iconographic database on the basis of its holdings, which it characterizes as 'a work-in-progress' (Warburg Institute, 2012b). Images are being digitized section by section, with just over 20,000 out of a total 350,000 images having been made available by late 2012, and a further 40,000 added in the course of 2013, following allocation of extra funding. On the website page through which the database is entered, the Institute very politely understates the discrepancy between the Photographic Collection and the Iconographic Database by pointing out that 'the database is not the digital equivalent of the Photographic Collection'. The database offers three ways of searching its content. Two of these involve clicking on pre-defined keywords whilst the third allows entering self-chosen words as free text. The fixed search options are the 'subject search', which is performed by clicking on keywords corresponding to modified versions of the analogue collection categories, and the 'index of iconography', which works on the same principle only with different categories. In the 'advanced search', it is possible to search using only self-chosen terms and/or choosing a selection of pre-entered keywords from drop-down menus relating to specific fields such as date, author, manuscript, location, auction date, etc. The returned results of any of these searches appear on the screen as chronologically ordered thumbnails, with the oldest image on top – a marked difference from the content of the physical files, which have no imposed order at image level. It is the iconographic database which seemingly provides the third-order interface of the Warburg Collection, on account of how it allows freely chosen keywords to be entered into the search engine. Yet the returned results are hardly miscellaneous, dependent as they are on researchers entering keywords that correspond to the metadata which have been attached to each image file in the database. Since the keywording system for digital files closely follows the iconographic categories of the analogue files, there are a number of elements in any image that may not be included in the metadata because they have not, for whatever reason, been considered iconographically significant in the process of keywording.

In order to illustrate what I mean, let us return to the figure of the naked man's body pierced by arrows, which the average researcher consulting

the Warburg would tend to identify as St Sebastian. It would be logical to assume that if any images of the saint had been chosen for digitization, they would show up among the results of a search using the keyword 'arrows'. Yet of the 371 images returned from such a search during a test run in August 2011, none showed the martyrdom of St Sebastian (Figure 1). In fact, the majority showed one or more Cupids shooting arrows or stringing bows, and a similar result was achieved when clicking on the term 'arrow' in the index of iconography. Inputting the word 'Sebastian', however, turned up a total of nine images, all of which showed the saint during or just after his martyrdom, his body clearly pierced by one or more arrows. Upon closer inspection, it turned out that these images had defining keywords such as 'with bowmen', 'crowned with angels', or 'pierced and tied to a tree'. Based on this admittedly limited test search, it was tempting to conclude that the presence of arrows in an image of St Sebastian should go without saying to any researcher for whom the Warburg cared to cater. Indeed, contrary to what one would expect of a digital resource, it appeared to require *more* in-depth knowledge of iconography to use the database than the physical archive.

Consequently, a new test search carried out in Spring 2013 using the same keywords suddenly returned 8 St Sebastians among the now 416 images retrieved using the search term 'arrows' (Figure 2). This appeared to suggest not only an expansion of the total number of images in the database, but equally a change to the keywording system, bringing it more in line with standard vocabulary-based search engines. Yet an inquiry to Rembrandt Duits, the Deputy Curator of the Warburg Photographic Collection whose responsibilities include the Warburg's iconographic database, revealed that the iconographic classification system was still the same, although there had been a restructuring of 'the internal classification of the category "St Sebastian"' (Duits, 2013). During this process, more images of the saint had been filed in the sub-category 'Martyred with arrows', which in turn is activated by the search term 'arrows' (as are all other sub-categories containing the same word).

My two small test runs of the Warburg Iconographic Database illustrate one of the major challenges in conducting research on (as opposed to in) digital resources, which is that, unlike their analogue counterparts, they are subject to rapid change. As research objects, websites are notoriously fast-moving targets. Nevertheless, the same test searches also exemplify three constantly recurring problems encountered in the digitization of photographic archives. First, they demonstrate the utter dependency of the digital visual archive on the textual properties of its metadata, since the only way to retrieve an image from the database is through a description in words (whether self-chosen or pre-defined). Second, they highlight the constant problem of adequately attending to the different levels of content in any picture. Whether we choose to call these levels denotation, connotation and myth (Barthes, 1993[1957]), or pre-iconography, iconography and iconology (Panofsky, 1970[1939]), they amount to much the same thing: accounting for what a picture shows is never the same as describing what it depicts.

Safari Arkiv Rediger Vis Logg Bokmerker Vindu Hjelp

Wi-ID Basic Search Results

http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/vpc/vpc_search/results_basic_search.php?var_1=arrows&var_2=avar_3=

BBC - Radio 4 BBC News Google Facebook NTNU's Intranett-portal NTNU Webmail Gmail Apple Google Maps yr.no YouTube Hotmail Yahoo! AIB - Startside Nyheter

INSTITUTE: Photographic Collection INSTITUTE: Iconographic Database

Subject keyword(s): → arrows

browse results one by one →

image not available

Fantid 1526

Albanai 1st half 17th century

Carnacci 4th quarter 16th century

Bocchi, p. 188 1574

Bocchi, p. 28 1574

Bocchi, p. 48 1574

Marolles, p. 1 1655

Ovidi, p. 170 1702

Cartari, p. 452 1615

Figure 1 Search results for 'arrows', August 2011. Screenshot from The Warburg Institute Iconographic Database, <http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/photographic-collection/iconographic-database/> © The Warburg Institute, University of London. Reproduced with kind permission.

Wi-ID Basic Search Results

http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/vpc/vpc_search/results_basic_search.php?p=1&var_1=arrows

Underskog BBC Radio 4 BBC News Google Scholar Google NTNU Innside NTNU Webmail Gmail Apple Google Maps yr.no YouTube Hotmail Yahoo! AT&T Startside Nyheter

Agostino di Duccio 1449-1457

Altdorf 1450-1460

Italian 1450-1500

Piero della Francesca mid 15th century

Florence mid 15th century

Donatello mid 15th century

Florence mid 15th century

Florence 1465-1480

Boccaccio, fol. 25r 1460-1480

Florence 1460-1480

Florence 1465-1480

Florence 1465-1480

Merling circa 1490

Ovid, fol. 13v 1484

Giorgione late 15th century

Zoppo circa 1480

Rome III 1480-1490

Florence 1465-1480

Figure 2 Search results for 'arrows', April 2013. Screenshot from The Warburg Institute Iconographic Database, <http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/photo-graphic-collection/iconographic-database/> © The Warburg Institute, University of London. Reproduced with kind permission.

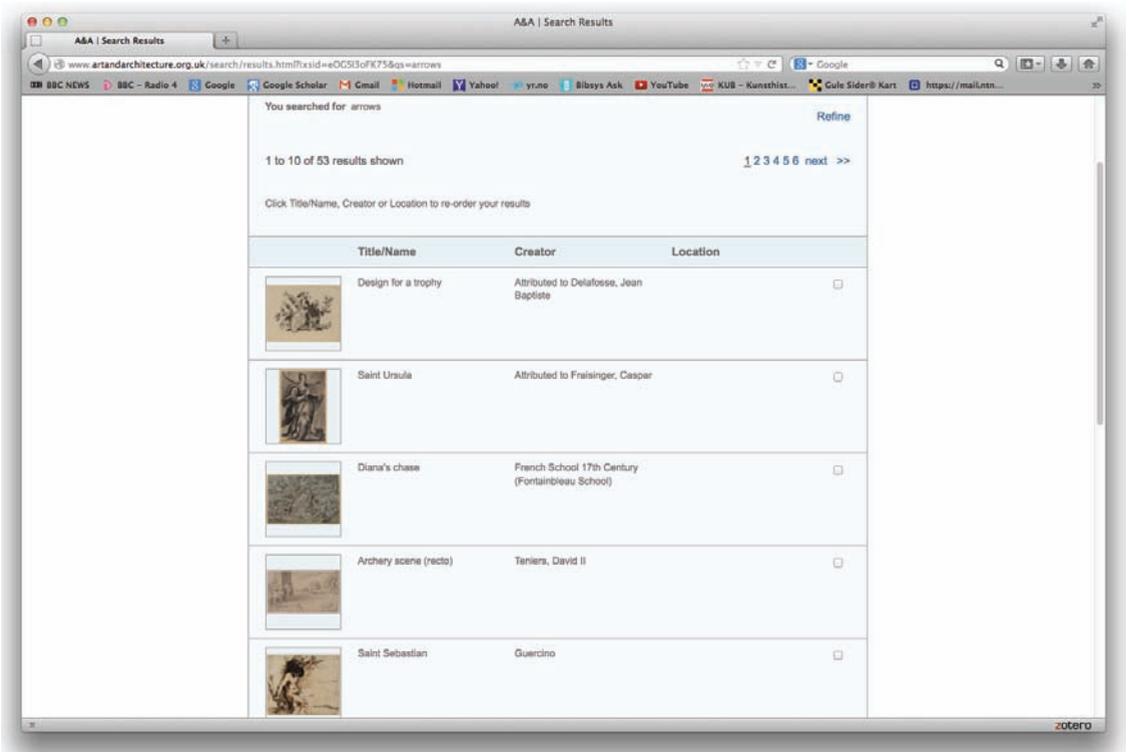


Figure 3 Search results for 'arrows', August 2011. Screenshot of www.artandarchitecture.org.uk © The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. Reproduced with kind permission.

The third typical problem in creating a digitized archive is determining *for whom* it is intended: the same people, often specialists, who made use of the analogue archive, or a new and expanded audience, perhaps largely made up of amateurs?

In the case of the Warburg, it was clearly decided to stick to the existing target group of knowledgeable researchers. The online version of the Conway Library, however, could not be more different in design, layout and approach. This is partly to do with the process leading up to its creation: unlike the Warburg Iconographic Database, which appears aimed at bona fide iconographers who do not have time or occasion to consult the archive in situ, the Conway digitization programme formed part of a National Lottery-funded project across the Courtauld to make its collections more accessible to the general public.¹ Again, as with the Warburg, only a small fraction of the collection has been digitized so far – around 30,000 of its roughly one million items. In addition to material from the Conway, the website *Art & Architecture* (www.artandarchitecture.org.uk), whose name was chosen to come top in Google searches, brings together reproductions from the Courtauld Gallery collection and the collection of the Witt Library (the Conway's sister archive, specializing in reproductions of paintings). Searches are made across all three collections and image files are furnished

with the kind of pre-iconographical metadata that will enable even someone with no previous knowledge of art history to search and find something relevant. Here, a search using the term 'arrows' throws up a variety of motifs, ranging within the top five results from trophy design and archery scenes to representations of the goddess Diana, St Ursula – and, of course, St Sebastian (Figure 3). The *Art & Architecture* website also allows registered users to comment on individual images and discuss them with other users in forums – thus potentially providing additional metadata which the site managers may want to make searchable.

I have previously written about the relationship between the Conway Library and the *Art & Architecture* website (Vestberg, 2009: 142–144), suggesting that the website in many respects represents a dumbing-down of the collection; a reduction of its accumulated knowledge and scholarly significance to a source of digital 'edutainment'. At the same time, I argued that this may not be entirely a bad thing, since the user-friendly website in this way is able to cater to a general audience that the analogue Conway Library would never have been able to serve. And as long as the digital avatar is not confused with the real-life library, but properly seen as a digital sample collection of its contents, then the website may also function as a third-order finding aid to the analogue collection, providing the initial, so-called miscellaneous point of entry that in turn can lead on to more focused and determined searching. This is largely due to the comprehensive metadata with which each file is furnished. In addition to a thumbnail of each image, the search result screen includes columns for 'creator' and 'location', thus providing the key information which would help someone unfamiliar with the analogue collection to find a starting point for a subsequent search of the physical archive.

Disorders (analogue and digital)

Paradoxically, in the case of the Warburg Collection it is the first-order archive which demonstrates the power of 'miscellaneous' ordering to a much greater extent than its supposedly third-order digital version. Searching in the Warburg Photographic Collection is above all a visual and tactile experience: one pulls open a drawer, scans the folder headings (in the original meaning of the word scan), and rifles through the files using one's hands and eyes. At thematic folder level, there is no specific order or hierarchy, so a folder may contain reproductions from books, paintings and engravings showing the same motif from ancient times until the 20th century, in no particular order.² Sifting through all this might be an inconvenience, but it can also give rise to discoveries you would not have made otherwise. Each folder is, in the Warburgian sense, a mixed neighbourhood. The same concept of the mixed neighbourhood applies to the physical layout of the filing cabinets within the library space. Under the main heading 'Social Life', for instance, one will find the following topics clustered together in adjoining filing cabinets: Triumphs; Festivals; Theatre; Dance; Music; Court Life; Pastoral; Resorts; Beggars, Fools, Jugglers, Gypsies; Games; Toys; Sports; Hunting; Costume; Administration; Justice and Punishment; News, Communication and Travel; Trade; Professions and Trade; Domestic Life;

Domestic Objects; Still Life; Drinking; Eating; Pastimes; Ships; Warfare; Art; Libraries; Caricature; Political; Popular Imagery; Love (after which begins the new main category of Religious Iconography).

Looking at this sequence of sub-headings, one is struck by the very miscellaneousness of the topography of the Warburg Collection. What is more, the physical arrangement of the filing cabinets, lined up facing one another on either side of a window, has implications for that 'fictive conversation among the holdings' (Steinberg, 2012: 128) to which the Warburg ordering principles famously give rise. Consider the last seven sub-headings on the list above, which in the physical collection correspond to the filing cabinets sitting on the right-hand side when facing the window. Here, Warfare is next to Art, and Libraries are sandwiched between Art and Caricature, whereas Popular Imagery leads on to Love. It may well be an arbitrary sequence; yet it is still possible to discern a cultural logic to the arrangement. Many art collections were started on the basis of loot captured in warfare; librarianship is (however much one might regret it) a profession frequently prone to being caricatured, while love and the many troubles associated with it are an inexhaustable source of mirth and merriment in popular imagery. The fact that these sub-categories are clustered together within the researcher's field of vision when working in the physical collection, may prompt connections such as the above to be made more easily than connections to other parts of the Social Life category, which are located in the opposite row of filing cabinets. To take just one example, one is less encouraged to make the (perhaps otherwise obvious) connection between Love and Domestic Life when Domestic Life is topographically associated with a subject like Professions and Trade, and is moreover located physically out of view if one is searching through the filing cabinets of Love.

What makes sense in the context of a filing cabinet may not always do so when translated to the interface of the computer screen. Early on in the development of the Warburg Iconographic Database, for instance, when the digitized holdings were still less than 1 per cent of the total collection, it was deemed necessary to modify certain categories and search terms compared to the analogue archive, and to present search results as thumbnails in a chronologically ordered grid. This additional ordering mechanism, which does not exist in the physical folders, was imposed because users find it harder to browse grids of small digital images on a screen than to rifle through stacks of individual prints in a folder.³ For some reason, the researcher is more quickly overwhelmed by digital content than by analogue material, and so needs help from the system to navigate straight to the relevant image. It is difficult to say whether this is a cause or a consequence of having to go via the text-based search engine in order to access the images. A computer screen has no way of warning the researcher beforehand about the likely scale of the haul returned from the files, whereas in an analogue archive a physical indication like the thickness of a folder will give an immediate impression of the browsing task ahead. Or perhaps it is the digital search convention of giving the number of entries matching a search term which produces that daunting feeling? Ginzburg (2012: 84) compares browsing the

open stacks of the Warburg Library and locating that vital good neighbour with inputting the relevant search term in a current online catalogue and finding a reference to the same volume there: 'a precious (although, at first sight, not especially promising) needle buried in a haystack amounting to 1,463 entries'.

I have so far suggested some ways in which a comparison between differently organized archives, in their analogue as well as digital incarnations, may throw critical light on some of the processes by which archives structure the production of meaning. Through the example of the Warburg Collection and its iconographic database, I wanted to show two things. On the one hand, that a miscellaneous order may manifest itself just as well in a three-dimensional physical archive as in a virtual, digital one. And on the other hand, that miscellaneousness is not an inherent feature of a digital archive. In order for there to be randomized bits of metadata for search engine algorithms to combine, those bits need to be put there in the first place, by the real-life people designing the database. Accordingly, it should come as no surprise that an image resource designed by iconographers will tend to be of use chiefly to other iconographers. By contrast, the example of the Conway Library and its digital avatar, *Art & Architecture*, shows how an art historical resource designed by web designers will also be of use to the general public. In its case, the miscellanizing features of the internet have been quite successfully harnessed to produce a new kind of photographic archive, for new kinds of researchers. In the case of the Warburg, however, an analogue archive originally designed for intuitive searching has acquired a digital avatar which, counter-intuitively, is unable to handle queries originating from outside its own conceptual framework. The challenge of the Warburg database boils down to the dilemma of distinguishing between 'what a picture is *of* and what it is *about*', as the information scientist Peter Enser (1995: 141, original emphasis) has put it. Attending too diligently to either the *of-ness* or the *about-ness* of a photograph will always risk losing sight of other active ingredients in the picture. This dilemma is unlikely ever to be completely resolved, whether by technology or hermeneutics, because in the final analysis what activates meaning in any given image, as in any given archive, is the work of looking, searching and finding.

The two digital image resources I have discussed here are far from representative of the whole range of methods that currently exist for web-based image searching. My comments regarding the importance of keywording would not, for instance, be applicable to databases that use so-called content-based search technology. Exemplified by Google's image search facility, this enables the user to upload an image file into the search field in order to retrieve pictures similar to it, at least according to the software's algorithmic equivalent of an eye. Regardless of whether the search engine is fed with data in the shape of words or images, however, the process of searching and finding still takes place via the same flat interface of the screen. For most users, the more 'transparent' this screen becomes, and the more 'intuitive' our ways of interacting with it (for instance using the drag-and-drop facilities of touchscreens), the more opaque appear the material

and technological processes that produce and sustain it. There is progressively less need to engage with the logic upon which digital systems rely, since it is increasingly part of this logic to hide its working. Analogue systems, by contrast, tend to show their working openly and while it may take a day or two to understand, for instance, the iconographic ordering principles of the Warburg Photographic Collection or the geo-historical layout of the Conway Library, this understanding is acquired through direct interaction with the 'data', i.e. the holdings, themselves. This difference has important implications for the questions raised at the start of this article, namely, how archival order affects the production of knowledge and meaning, and how new technologies affect the work of ordering and searching archives. For, in fact, the notion that analogue archival logic is openly on display and immediately graspable is in itself anything but obvious. As Wilder (2009: 118) notes: 'by stripping away some of the "photographic" traits of the photographs (author, type, origin, date)' in favour of information pertaining to the objects they depict, photographic archives have relied precisely on the same illusion of a transparent medium, the technicalities of which are (presumed to be) irrelevant to the users of its products. It is worth recalling that both the Warburg Photographic Collection and the Conway Library are old analogue photographic collections that have acquired some form of new digital avatar. It would hardly be controversial to assert that their physical, analogue quiddity emerges first and foremost when contrasted with these virtual, digital versions. The reproduction, or 'remediation' (Bolter and Grusin, 1999) of one medium through another has a tendency to imbue the former with the significance of authenticity, since it is through the act of making copies that the very concept of the original is born. In the way that the photographic reproduction of artworks was instrumental in producing an art-historical canon, so the digitization of photographic archives may bring about a canonization of reproductions.

Implications for research

The advent of digital technology may have brought about transformations in art historical photo archives like the Warburg Photographic Collection and the Conway Library, but the most crucial of these changes is not manifested in websites or downsized storage facilities. Rather, it is to be perceived in the new kinds of research that are being conducted in and on the collections as they are. In the past, one kind of typical researcher consulting the Warburg or the Conway would have been studying the historical development or distribution of particular motifs or phenomena in visual cultural production, such as mythological figures or architectural styles. Another might have been trying to track down the whereabouts of a particular picture, and considered it likely that a reproduction of it would be held by the Warburg, perhaps with useful information about location, auction date, or owner. A third kind of researcher may have wished to establish the earlier appearance of a building that had either been pulled down or restored beyond recognition, and would have thought

the Conway a likely place to find it represented in photographs. All these researchers would have approached the Warburg and the Conway as archives of 'images', in WJT Mitchell's (2008: 16) sense of the word, that is to say, as collections of representations which just happen to be materially instantiated in paper prints and kept at a certain address in London. In this respect, the collections' initial function as providers of secondary source material for art historians may appear to have been irrevocably superseded by new technology. It is after all an uncontroversial observation that Google Images is often both the first and last port of call for the majority of image searchers these days, whether professional or amateur. It is nevertheless thanks to this technological shift that the Conway, the Warburg and other collections of their kind are now emerging as primary sources in their own right. Certainly, the curators of the Warburg have noticed a rise in visiting researchers who view the collection itself as their object of study. In the particular case of the Warburg, this is no doubt partly due to the ascendancy of Aby Warburg as a kind of patron saint of contemporary visual culture studies, the cult of whom has tended to centre on his famous *Mnemosyne-Atlas*. Researchers are now coming to the Warburg Collection in search of *the actual prints* that were mounted on those well-known black felt boards, whether eager to reconstruct the exact sequence of the *Atlas* itself, to examine the 'originals' for material traces of the great man's interpretation of them, or perhaps just to hold in their hands an object that was once handled by Aby Warburg. In addition to the *Atlas* 'originals', the Warburg Photographic Collection also houses a set of drawers containing the 35mm photographic slides used in lectures by its long-time director, EH Gombrich. Organized according to subject matter or lecture title, these holdings have yet to be systematically mined by scholars. If anyone were to set out writing, say, an intellectual biography of Gombrich, in the manner of his own influential volume on Warburg (Gombrich, 1970), then these slides would be an invaluable source of information on how the legendary art historian constructed and developed a visual argument. The Conway Library's holdings of architectural photographs by its former director, Anthony Blunt, would likewise add a crucial dimension to any biography which aimed to take a full account of his involvement with the foremost teaching institution for art history in the UK (as opposed to his well-publicized activities as a Soviet spy).⁴ The fact that a good portion of Blunt's photographic oeuvre is now readily identifiable as such is mainly due to the comprehensive mapping and inputting of metadata in connection with the development of the *Art & Architecture* website. Unlike the analogue collection, which only accounts for location and 'school' or author of a depicted building or sculpture, the search engine also allows for the retrieval of images grouped by photographer, since the digitized files have been furnished with the sort of 'photographic' information that, as often as not, was ignored when the photographs were primarily used as visual documentation. Thanks to digitization, then, what used to be boxes and filing cabinets stuffed with secondary-source images have been transformed into repositories of primary-source 'pictures', those singular material objects in which images are manifested (Mitchell, 2008: 16).

Archives are shaped not simply by the character of their contents and the organizational preferences of their custodians, but also by the nature of the inquiries directed at them. This applies to archives in any medium, but is most clearly detectable in truly vast digital archives like the world wide web, where the Google search engine's predictive search term facility completes words before one has finished typing them, suggesting likely search terms on the basis of a few letters entered in the search field. The fact that these pre-programmed search terms do not necessarily reflect the most frequent queries but instead may consist of paid-for preferential phrases, is a matter for a different discussion. It is nevertheless a point worth noting because it illustrates how all processes of searching and finding in any archive are susceptible to manipulation or re-direction (to use a less loaded term) by whichever system or authority that powers it. This fact is obvious in traditional, analogue archives where direct access to the holdings is the preserve of archivists or librarians. It is, however, obscured – we might even say screened off – by the interactive interface of the digital archive, since users have come to assume that the internet practically by default imposes Weinberger's (2007: 233) 'miscellanized' order on any information that is uploaded to it, and thus automatically enables intuitive, randomized searching. Yet, as we have seen, a web-hosted resource like the Warburg database is in practice a less flexible system than the physical archive, more rigidly ordered, and with fewer access options for any given image. This suggests how an online database may just as easily close off avenues of inquiry as open them up, thereby limiting rather than expanding the number of potential questions to be asked of the archive.

For Ginzburg (2012: 79) the Warburg Library is 'an engine that helps you to think; an engine to think with, to think about'. He extends this characterization to research libraries in general and, to my mind, it could just as appropriately be applied to photographic research collections like the two discussed here. In both kinds of archive, 'the interaction, both conscious and unconscious, with its arrangement' is a key feature of the process by which users discover new knowledge and develop new understanding (p. 85). Yet if an analogue archive amounts to a machine for thinking, a computer provides an engine that helps you to *search*. In this capacity it is unsurpassable, so long as you know, more or less precisely, what you are hoping to find. Computerized searching helps you rapidly to *locate* the whereabouts of an object, be it a text or a picture. Whereas looking around and thinking with a physical archive can help you in a different sense to *find* it – that is, to realize and contextualize its significance in and as a broader set of findings.

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Notes

1. Detailed information on the funding and creation of the digital archive can be found as part of the Photo Library Survey carried out by the Courtauld in collaboration with Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz, see Courtauld Institute of Art (2009).
2. The experience is simulated in a slideshow animation on the page of the Warburg Institute website which explains the Photographic Collection's subject index, where the viewer is given a virtual leaf-through of a folder carrying the title 'Fortuna with veil/sail + globe' (Warburg Institute, 2012d).
3. This was explained by Rembrandt Duits in conversation with the author in The Warburg Photographic Collection, London, June 2011.
4. For an overview of Blunt's time at the helm of the Courtauld, see Courtauld Institute of Art (2012).

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journal of visual culture



The Unbound Book: Academic Publishing in the Age of the Infinite Archive

Gary Hall

Abstract

Thanks to open access and the likes of Blurb, Issuu, Scribd, Kindle Direct Publishing, iBooks Author and AAAAARG.org, publishing a book is something nearly everyone can do today in a matter of minutes. Yet what is most interesting about electronic publishing is not so much that bringing out a book is becoming more like blogging or vanity publication, with authority and certification provided as much by an author's reputation or readership, or the number of times a text is visited, downloaded, cited, referenced, linked to, blogged about, tagged, bookmarked, ranked, rated or 'liked', as it is by conventional peer-review or the prestige of the press. All of those criteria still rest upon and retain fairly conventional notions of the book, the author, publication and so on. Far more interesting is the way certain developments in electronic publishing contain at least the potential for us to perceive the book as something that is not completely fixed, stable and unified, with definite limits and clear material edges, but as liquid and living, open to being continually and collaboratively written, edited, annotated, critiqued, updated, shared, supplemented, revised, re-ordered, reiterated and reimagined. So much so that, as some have indeed suggested, perhaps soon we will no longer call such things books at all, e- or otherwise. On the other hand, perhaps 'book' is as good a name as any since – as examples as apparently different as the Bible and Shakespeare's First Folio show – books, historically, have always been liquid and living: electronic publishing has simply helped make us more aware of the fact.

Keywords

author • book • copyright • gift • liquid • living • open

It is often said that the book today is being dramatically disrupted: that in the era of online authorship, comment sections, personal blogs, RSS feeds, embeddable videos, interactive information visualisations, and texts being generally connected to a network of other information, data and mobile media environments in what amounts (for some) to an infinite archive, the book is in the process of being diluted, dislocated, dispersed, displaced. So much so that if the book is to have any future at all in the context of these other modes of reading, writing and forms of material occurrence it will be in unbound form – a form which, while radically transforming the book may yet serve to save it and keep it alive.¹ Yet what is the unbound book? Can the book be unbound?

The *Oxford Dictionary Online* (2011) defines the term ‘bound’ as follows:

bound *in* bind ... tie or fasten (something) tightly together... ; ... walk or run with leaping strides... ; ... a territorial limit; a boundary ... ; ... going or ready to go towards a specified place ... ; past and past participle of bind ...

In which case the unbound book would be one that:

- *had* been gathered together and firmly secured, as a pile of pages can be to form a print-on-paper codex volume;
- *had* a certain destiny or destination or had been prepared, going, or ready to go towards a specific place (as in ‘homeward bound’), such as perhaps an intended addressee, known reader or identifiable and controllable audience;
- and *had* been springing forward or progressing towards that place or destiny in leaps and bounds.

Had because the use of the past participle suggests such binding is history as far as the book is concerned; that after centuries of print such conventional notions of the book have become outdated.

As we know from Ulises Carrión, however, *there is no such thing as an unbound book*. ‘A writer ... does not write books’, he declares in 1975 in ‘The new art of making books’ (Carrión, 2010: np):

A writer writes texts.

The fact, that a text is contained in a book, comes only from the dimensions of such a text; or, in the case of a series of short texts (poems, for instance), from their number.

The book is just a container for text. The idea of binding is thus essential to the book.

Tempting though it may be, then, we can’t say that whereas in the past the book *had* been bound it isn’t anymore; that it has now become unglued,

unstuck. We can't say this not just because e-book readers and iPad apps, although offering different types of binding to printed books and different ways of securing pages together, reinforce rather conservative, papercentric notions of bookishness that make their identities as closed, fixed, stable, stuck-down and certain in their own ways as those of the scroll and codex book (for authors and publishers, but also readers). That is one reason, to be sure. However, the main reason we can't say this is because an unbound book is quite simply no longer a book. Without a binding, without being tied, fastened or stuck together, a writer's text is not a book at all: it is just a text or collection of texts. *A text is only a book when it is bound.*²

Carrión's primary concern was with the conception of the book as an object, as a series of pages both divided and gathered together in a coherent, and usually numbered, sequence; and with its material forms of support and fabrication, its cloth, paper, binding, printing, ink, typography, design, layout and so forth. However, rather than on ontological terms, could the idea of the unbound book be addressed more productively from the perspective of one of the other ways in which books can be said to be tied? I am thinking specifically of legal publishing contracts, which function to establish territorial boundaries that mark when certain ideas and actions relating to the book are 'out of bounds', forbidden, limited by restrictions and regulations concerning copyright, intellectual property, notions of authorship, originality, attribution, integrity, disclosure and so on.³

McKenzie Wark's article 'Copyright, Copyleft, Copygift' (2007) offers an interesting starting point for thinking about this aspect of the book. In it Wark addresses the contradiction involved in his having on the one hand written a book against the idea of intellectual property, *A Hacker Manifesto* (2004), and on the other published it with an established academic press, Harvard, which refused to allow him to release it under a Creative Commons licence as part of the new, emergent, digital gift economy. Wark's solution was to "Live the contradictions!" between commodity and gift culture, and also to carry a memory stick to speaking events so anyone who wanted a post-print copy of *A Hacker Manifesto* could get one for free from him personally, in the form of a text file they could even alter if they so wished (Wark, 2007: 27). Nevertheless, disseminating *A Hacker Manifesto* by sneakernet – or pink Roos, in Wark's case – does little to resolve the problem he identifies: how to meet an author's desire to have their work distributed to, respected and read by as many people as possible – something a 'brand name' print press like Harvard can deliver – while also being part of the academic gift economy (p. 26). Quite simply, books made available on a free 'offline' access basis circulate more slowly and far less widely than those made available for free online.⁴ They also tend to carry less authority.

Wark does not appear to have been aware of the possibility of self-archiving his research open access, thus making a copy of it available online for free without the need on the part of readers to pay a cover price, library subscription charge or publisher's fee. Yet even if he had been, open access self-archiving would not have provided a straightforward solution to Wark's dilemma, since there is an important difference between publishing

scholarly journal articles open access and publishing books open access. As is made clear in the *Self-Archiving FAQ* written for the Budapest Open Access Initiative:

Where exclusive copyright has been assigned by the author to a journal publisher for a peer reviewed draft, copy-edited and accepted for publication by that journal, then *that draft* may not be self-archived [on the author's own website, or in a central, subject or institutional repository] by the author (without the publisher's permission).

The pre-refereeing preprint, however, [may have] already been (legally) self-archived. (No copyright transfer agreement existed at that time, for that draft.)

This is how open access self-archiving is able to elude many of the problems associated with copyright or licensing restrictions with regard to articles in peer reviewed journals (assuming the journals in question are not themselves already online and open access). However, 'where exclusive copyright ... has been transferred ... to a publisher' – for example, 'where the author has been paid ... in exchange for the text', as is generally the case in book publishing, but not with journal articles – it may be that the author is not legally allowed to self-archive a copy of their book or any future editions derived from it open access at all. This is because, although the 'text is still the author's "intellectual property"... the exclusive right to sell or give away copies of it has been transferred to the publisher' (Budapest Open Access Initiative, 2013).

So what options are available to book authors if, like Wark, they wish to have their work read beyond a certain 'underground' level – in Wark's case that associated with net art and net theory (Wark, 2007: 24) – while at the same time being part of the academic gift economy?

1. Authors can publish with an open access press such as Australian National University's ANU E Press, Athabasca University's AU Press, or Open Book Publishers. Graham Harman published *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (2009a) with re.press, for instance, while John Carlos Rowe brought out *The Cultural Politics of the New American Studies* (2012) with Open Humanities Press, both of which are open access publishers.⁵ Still, with the best will in the world, few open access book publishers are established and prestigious enough *as yet* to have the kind of 'brand name' equivalence to Harvard, especially when it comes to impressing prospective employers and getting work reviewed – although it is hopefully just a matter of time before this situation changes.
2. Authors can insist on only signing a contract with a press that *would* allow them to self-archive a peer-reviewed and perhaps even copy-edited version of their book. The difficulty, of course, is in finding a 'brand name' publisher willing to agree to this.

3. Authors can endeavour to negotiate with such a press – as Wark did with Harvard – to see if they would be willing to make the published version of their book available for free online, with *only* the printed version available for sale. Examples of authors who have published in this way include Ted Striphas with his book *The Late Age of Print* (2009) from Columbia University Press, and Gabriella Coleman with her book *Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking* (2013) from Princeton University Press. However, such instances seem to be regarded by many publishers as little more than occasional experiments, as the publishing equivalent of dipping a toe in the (OA) water.
4. Authors can adopt a variation of the strategy advocated in Budapest Open Access Initiative's *Self-Archiving FAQ* for scholarly journal articles: “‘don't-ask/don't-tell’”. This strategy suggests authors should publish with whichever publisher they wish, self-archive the full text and ‘wait to see whether the publisher ever requests removal’.
5. If all else fails, authors can wait for someone to publish a ‘pirate’ copy of their book on a text sharing network such as Aaaaarg.org or libgen.info.⁶

Noticeably, all these strategies in effect fasten what are identified – conceptually, economically, temporally, materially and morally – as finished, complete, unified and bound books in legal binds; they are just different ways of *negotiating such binds*. But what if book authors were to pursue ways of openly publishing their research *before* it is tied up quite so tightly?

To test this, in 2011 I began experimenting with an Open Humanities Notebook, taking as a model the Open Notebook Science of the organic chemist Jean-Claude Bradley.⁷ As noted in an interview with the journalist Richard Poynder on the impact of open notebook science, Bradley is making the ‘details of every experiment done in his lab’ – i.e. the whole research process, not just the findings – freely available to the public on the web, including ‘all the data generated from these experiments too, even the failed experiments’. What is more, he is doing so in ‘real time’, ‘within hours of production, not after the months or years involved in peer review’ (Poynder, 2010).

As one of my books-in-progress deals with a series of projects that use digital media to actualise, or creatively perform, critical theory, I decided to make the research for this volume freely available online in such an open notebook.⁸ This notebook is being constructed more or less as the research emerges, and includes not just draft and pre-print versions of journal articles, book chapters, catalogue essays and so on, but contributions to email discussions, conference papers and lectures made available so long *before* any of these texts are collected together and given to a publisher to be bound as a book, then – although the process of making this research freely available online can continue afterwards too, post print or e-publication.

As is the case with Bradley's Notebook, this Open Humanities Notebook offers a space where the research for my book-in-progress, provisionally titled *Media Gifts*, can be disseminated quickly and easily in a manner that allows it to be openly shared and discussed. More than that, the notebook provides an opportunity to experiment critically with loosening at least some of the ties used to bind books once a text has been contracted by a professional press.

For instance, it is common for most book contracts to allow authors to retain the right to reuse material that has previously appeared elsewhere (e.g. scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals) in their own written or edited publications, provided the necessary permissions have been granted. What, though, if draft or pre-print versions of the chapters that make up my book are initially gathered together in this open notebook? When it comes to eventually publishing this research as a bound book, are brand name presses likely to reject it on the grounds of potential reduced sales as a version of this material will already be available online?

One possibility is that I will be required to remove any draft or pre-print versions of these chapters from my Open Humanities Notebook to ensure the publisher has the exclusive right to sell or give away copies. This is what happened to Ted Striphas with an article he wrote called 'Performing scholarly communication' that was published in the Taylor & Francis journal *Text and Performance Quarterly* in January 2012. Taylor & Francis' publication embargo apparently stipulated Striphas could not make the piece available on a public website, in any form, for 18 months from the date of publication. So Striphas had to take down the pre-print version of the article that was available on his *Differences and Repetitions* wiki, a site where he publishes drafts of his writings-in-progress on what he terms an 'open-source' and 'partially open source' basis (Striphas, 2010).

Another possibility is that making at least some draft or pre-print versions of this research available in my Open Humanities Notebook will be seen by the press as a form of valuable advance exposure, marketing and promotion. If so, the question then will be how much of the book I can gather together in this way before it becomes an issue for the publisher. At what point does the material that goes to make up a book become bound tightly enough for it to be understood as actually making up a book? Where in practice is the line going to be drawn?

What if some of this work is disseminated out of sequence, under different titles, in other versions, forms, times and places where it is not quite so easy to bind, legally, economically, temporally or conceptually, as a book? Let us take as an example the chapter in *Media Gifts* that explores the idea of Liquid Books. A version of this material appears as part of an actual 'liquid book', published through a wiki and free for users to read, comment upon, rewrite, remix and reinvent (Hall and Birchall, 2008). Meanwhile, another 'gift' in the series, a text on pirate philosophy, is currently only available on 'pirate' peer-to-peer systems; there is no original or master copy of this text in the conventional sense. 'Pirate Philosophy' exists only to the extent *it is part of 'pirate networks'* and is 'pirated'.⁹

Indeed, while each of the media gifts the book is concerned with – at the moment there are more than 10 – constitutes a distinct project in its own right, they can also be seen as forming an extended network or meshwork (Ingold, 2011) of dynamic relations that pass between and give rise to a number of different texts, websites, archives, wikis, internet TV programmes and other online traces.¹⁰ Consequently, if *Media Gifts* is to be thought of as a book, it should be understood as an open, decentred, distributed, multi-location, multi-medium, multiple-identity book: while a version maybe indeed appear at some point in print-on-paper or e-book form, some parts and versions of it are also to be found on a blog, others on wikis, others again on p2p systems.¹¹ To adapt a phrase of Maurice Blanchot's from *The Book to Come* (for whom Stéphane Mallarmé's '*Un Coup de dés*' orients the future of the book both in the direction of the greatest dispersion and in the direction of a tension capable of *gathering* infinite diversity, by the discovery of more complex structures'), *Media Gifts* is a book 'gathered through dispersion' (Blanchot, 2003: 234–235).¹²

That said, we don't need to go quite this far in dispersing our books if we want to establish a publishing strategy others can adopt and follow. Prior to publication, Wark had already disseminated versions of *The Hacker Manifesto* on the internet as work-in-progress. It is an authorial practice that is increasingly common today, down to the level of blog posts, emails and tweets; and most presses are willing to republish material that has appeared previously in these forms. Still, what if authors provide interested readers with something as simple as a set of guidelines and links showing how such distributed constellations of texts can be bound together in a coherent, sequential form (perhaps using a collection and organisation tool such as Anthologize that employs WordPress to turn distributed online content into an electronic book)?¹³ Just how dispersed, loosely gathered and structured *does* a free, open, online version of a book have to be, both spatially and temporally, for brand name presses to be prepared to publish a bound version?

In the essay 'The book to come', Jacques Derrida (2005: 5) asks:

What then do we have the right to call a 'book' and in what way is the question of *right*, far from being preliminary or accessory, here lodged at the very heart of the question of the book? This question is governed by the question of right, not only in its particular juridical form, but also in its semantic, political, social, and economic form – in short, in its total form.

My question is: What do we have the right *not* to call a 'book'?

Dispersing our current work-in-progress will not only provide us with a way of loosening some of the legal ties that bind books but may also help us to think differently about the idea of the book itself. As Graham Harman (2009b) writes in reference to philosophy:

In not too many years we will have reached the point where literally anyone can publish a philosophy book in electronic form in a matter of

minutes, even without the least trace of official academic credentials. I don't bemoan this at all – the great era of 17th century philosophy was dominated by non-professors, and the same thing could easily happen again. As far as publishing is concerned, what it means is that all publishing is destined to become vanity publishing. (Alberto Toscano recently pointed this out to me.) You'll just post a homemade book on line, and maybe people will download it and read it, and maybe you'll pick up some influence.

Yet what is so interesting about recent developments in electronic publishing is not that producing and distributing a book, and even selling it, is something nearly everyone can do today in a matter of minutes. It is not even that book publishing may, as a result, be becoming steadily more like blogging or vanity publication, with authority and certification provided as much by an author's reputation or readership, or the number of times a text is visited, downloaded, cited, referenced, linked to, blogged about, tagged, bookmarked, ranked, rated or 'liked', as it is by conventional peer review or the prestige of the press. All of those criteria still rest upon and retain fairly conventional notions of the book, the author, publication and so on. What seems much more interesting is the way certain developments in electronic publishing contain at least the potential for us to perceive the book as something that is not fixed, stable and unified, with definite limits and clear material edges, but as liquid and living, open to being continually and collaboratively written, edited, annotated, critiqued, updated, shared, supplemented, revised, re-ordered, reiterated and reimagined. Here, what we think of as 'publication' – whether it occurs in 'real time' or after a long period of reflection and editorial review, 'all' at once or in fits and starts, in print-on-paper or electronic form – is no longer an end point. Publication is rather just a stage in an ongoing process of temporal unfolding.

What I have been describing in terms of work-in-progress is very much part of a new strategy for academic writing and publishing that I and more than a few others are *critically* experimenting with at the moment. One of the aims of this strategy is to move away from thinking of open access primarily in terms of scholarly journals, books and even central, subject and institutionally-based self-archiving repositories. Instead, the focus is on developing a (pre- and post-) publishing economy characterized by a multiplicity of models and modes of creating, writing, binding, collecting, archiving, grouping, storing, depositing, labelling, reading, searching and interacting with academic research and publications.

This new publishing strategy has its basis in a number of speculative gambles with the future. It challenges some long-held assumptions by suggesting, among other things:

- that the *correct, proper* and most effective form for creating, publishing, disseminating and archiving academic research will be progressively difficult to determine and control. Scholars will continue to write and publish paper and papercentric texts. More and more, however, they

will also generate, distribute and circulate their research in forms that are specific to image and internet-based media cultures, and which make use of video, film, sound, music, photography, data, graphics, animation, augmented reality, 3-D technology, geolocation search capabilities and combinations thereof. (The Article of the Future project from the academic publisher Elsevier is already pointing in this direction, as are PLoS Hubs.)¹⁴

- that scholars will be far less likely to publish a piece of academic research in just one place, such as a tightly bound book or edition of a peer-reviewed journal produced by a brand name press. Again, they will no doubt still place their work in such venues. Nevertheless, their publishing strategies are likely to become more pluralistic, decentred, distributed, multifaceted and liquid, with researchers – motivated in some cases by a desire to increase the size of their ‘academic footprint’ – making simultaneous use of such online spaces and media forms as WordPress, MediaWiki, Aaaaarg.org, YouTube, Vimeo, Vine, iTunesU and whatever their future equivalents are, to disseminate and circulate their research in a wide variety of different places, contexts and media. It is even possible that with the further development of open access, open data, open education, the cloud and internet of things, we will move to a situation where the same material will be reiterated as part of a number of different, interoperable texts and groupings; or, as Derrida (2005: 7–8) speculates, where research will no longer be grouped according to the ‘corpus or opus – not finite and separable oeuvres; groupings no longer forming texts, even, but open textual processes offered on boundless national and international networks, for the active or interactive intervention of readers turned authors, and so on’.
- that increasing numbers of scholars will create, publish and circulate their written research not just as long or even medium-length forms of shared attention along the lines of Amazon’s Kindle Singles, Ted Books (part of the Kindle Singles imprint), The Atavist and Stanford Literary Lab pamphlets, but in modular or ‘chunked’ forms too – from the “‘middle state”, between a blog and a journal’ posts of The New Everyday section of Media Commons through to the level of passages, paragraphs and at times even (perhaps) sentences (i.e. nanopublishing).¹⁵ Scholars will do so to facilitate the flow of their research and the associated data and metadata between different platforms and other means of support: books, journals, websites and archives, but also emails, blogs, tweets, wikis, RSS feeds, discussion forums, chatstreams, podcasts, text messages, p2p file-sharing networks, e-book readers and tablets – places where, depending on the platform, it can be commented and reflected upon, responded to, debated, critiqued, compiled, changed, updated, annotated, navigated, mapped, searched, shared, mined, aggregated, visualised, preserved, linked to, ripped, remixed, reimagined, re-combined, reversioned, and reiterated. As Johanna Drucker (2013) notes with regard to how these new, often micro, formats and genres will be accounted for within the

metrics of scholarly communities when it comes to ranking an academic's achievement at moments of promotion or tenure:

the possibilities are rapidly becoming probabilities with every sign that we will soon be tracking the memes and tropes of individual authors through some combination of attribute tags, link-back trails, and other identifiers that can generate quantitative data and map a scholar's active life.

- that scholars will also publish, disseminate and circulate their research in beta, pre-print and grey literature form, as both PressForward and the Public Library of Science are already doing, the latter to a limited extent with Currents: Influenza.¹⁶ In other words, academics will publish and archive the pieces of paper, website or blog posts, emails or tweets on which the idea was first recorded, and any drafts, working papers or reports that were circulated to garner comments from peers and interested parties, as well as the finished, peer-reviewed and copyedited texts.
- that many scholars and scholarly journals will publish the data generated in the course of research, with a view to making this source material openly and rapidly available for others to forage through, shape and bind into an interpretation, narrative, argument, thesis, article or book (see both FigShare and the Journal of Open Archaeology Data for examples).¹⁷
- that much of the emphasis in institutional publishing, archiving and dissemination strategies will switch from primarily capturing, selecting, gathering together and preserving the research and data produced by scholars and making it openly accessible, to actively and creatively 'doing things' with the research and data that are being continually selected, gathered and made openly accessible. This will be achieved not least by both institutions and scholars offering users new ways to acquire, read, write, interpret and engage with their research, references and data, both individually and collaboratively, pre- and post-publication; and, in the process, create new texts, objects, artefacts, activities and performances from this source material (as in the case of CampusROAR at the University of Southampton, or the Larkin Press, which aims to provide 'a web interface for authors and editors to create, manage and disseminate multi-format academic output (eBook and Print) from The University of Hull, combining existing University activities into a publishing whole').¹⁸ It is even conceivable that the process of creating new texts, objects, artefacts, activities and performances from this source material – including bringing groups of people together, organising, educating, training and supporting them, providing the appropriate platforms, applications and tools and so on – will become the main driver of research, with the production of papercentric texts such as books and journal articles merely being a by-product of this process rather than one of its end goals.

Since we are thinking about decentred and multiple publishing networks, the question that needs to be raised at this point concerns the agency of both publishers and authors. Who exactly is experimenting with this new economy?

I am aware of saying 'I' a lot here – as if, despite everything, I am still operating according to the model whereby the work of a writer or theorist is regarded as being conceived created and indeed signed by a unique, centred, stable and individualized human author, and presented for the attention of a reader who, even for Derrida (2005: 142), can 'interrogate, contradict, attack, or simply deconstruct' its logic, but who 'cannot and must not change it'.¹⁹ In actual fact, the series of projects I have outlined as my work-in-progress arose out of collaborative relationships with a number of different authors, groups, institutions and actors, including those currently operating under the names of *Culture Machine*, Open Humanities Press, the Open Media Group and Centre for Disruptive Media.²⁰

In this list, Mark Amerika must be included, as an earlier version of this text was written as a contribution to his *remixthebook* project.²¹ This was a remix of Amerika's 'Sentences on Remixology 1.0' (2011b), which is itself a remix of Sol Lewitt's 'Sentences on conceptual art' (1969). So when I say 'I' here, this also means at least all of the above.

Yet it means even more than that, since some of the projects with which I am involved and that also feature in *Media Gifts* are also open to being produced collaboratively and even anonymously (e.g. Liquid Books, 2008). Remixing Amerika remixing Alfred North Whitehead this time, it is what might be thought of as stimulating "the production of novel togetherness" (Amerika, 2009) – a togetherness made up of neither singularities, pluralities, nor collectivities.²² In this sense it is not possible to say exactly who, *or what*, 'we' are.

'What does it mean to go out of oneself?' Am 'I' unbound? Out of bounds? Is all this unbound?

Channelling Mark Amerika again, we should think of any contemporary writer or theorist as a medium, sampling from the vocabulary of critical thought. In fact if you pay close attention to what I am doing in *this performance* you will see I am mutating myself – this pseudo-autobiographical self I am performatively constructing here – into a kind of post-production processual medium. Just think of *me* as a post-production of presence.

This article began by suggesting the word 'book' should not be applied to a text generated in such a way, as without being tied or fastened tightly together – by the concept of an identifiable human author, for example – such a text is not a book at all: it is 'only' a text or collection of texts.

To sample Sol Lewitt, we could say that the texts of the present are usually understood by applying the conventions of the past, thus misunderstanding the texts of the present. That, indeed, is one of the problems with a word such as 'book'. When it is used – even in the form of e-book, 'unbound book', or 'the book to come' – it connotes a whole tradition and implies

a consequent acceptance of that tradition, thus placing limitations on the author who would be reluctant to create anything that goes beyond it.

Then again 'book' is perhaps as good a name as any, since historically books have always been more or less loosely bound. For example, the Codex Sinaiticus, created around 350 AD, is one of the two oldest surviving Bibles in the world. As it currently exists, the Codex Sinaiticus, which contains the earliest surviving copy of the Christian New Testament and is the antecedent of all modern Christian Bibles, is incomplete. Nevertheless, it still includes the complete New Testament, half of the Old Testament, and two early Christian texts not featured in modern Bibles, all gathered into a single unit. This particular gathering makes it one of the first Bibles as we understand it. But more than that, it is arguably the first large bound book, gathering texts together that had previously existed only as scrolled documents, a process that required a fundamental advancement in binding technology resulting eventually in the scroll or role giving way to the codex book (Codex Sinaiticus Project, 2009; British Library, nd).

Just as interesting is the fact that the Codex is also the most altered early biblical manuscript, containing approximately 30 corrections per page, roughly 23,000 in all. And these are not just minor corrections. For example, at the beginning of Mark's Gospel, Jesus is *not* described as being the son of God; this was a later revision. In the Codex Sinaiticus version, Jesus becomes divine only after he has been baptised by John the Baptist. Nor is Jesus resurrected; Mark's Gospel simply ends with the discovery of the empty tomb. The resurrection only takes place in competing versions of the story found in other manuscripts.²³ Other examples of corrections are evidenced in the Codex Sinaiticus: the Codex does not contain the stoning of the adulterous woman, 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone'; nor does it contain Jesus's words on the cross, 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do.'

So the Bible – often dubbed 'the Book of Books' – cannot be read as that most fixed, standard, permanent and reliable of texts, the unaltered word of God. On the contrary, when the Codex Sinaiticus was created in the middle of the 4th century, the text of the Bible was already understood as collaborative, multi-authored, fluid, evolving, emergent.

Another example of the history of fluid books is provided by Shakespeare's First Folio. As Adrian Johns (1998: 31) has shown, this volume includes 'some six hundred different typefaces, along with nonuniform spelling and punctuation, erratic divisions and arrangement, mispaging, and irregular proofing. No two copies were identical. It is impossible to decide even that one is "typical"'. In fact, according to Johns, it was not until 1790 that the first book regarded as having no mistakes was published.

We could therefore say that books have always been liquid and living to some extent; digital technology and the internet has simply helped to make us more aware of the fact.²⁴

Indeed, if I am interested in the domains of electronic books and publishing at all, it is because the defamiliarization effect produced by the change in material occurrence from print-on-paper to those associated with digital media offers us a chance to raise the kind of questions regarding our ideas of the book we should have been raising all along. As I have endeavoured to show at length elsewhere, such questions were already present with regard to print and other media. However, as a result of modernity and the 'development and spread of the concept of the author, along with mass printing techniques, uniform multiple-copy editions, copyright, established publishing houses, editors' and so on, they have 'tended to be taken for granted, overlooked, marginalised, excluded or otherwise repressed' (Hall, 2008: 161). Consequently, books have taken on the impression of being much more fixed, stable, static, reliable, permanent, authoritative, standardized and tightly bound than they actually are, or have ever been. For even if a book is produced in a multiple copy print edition, each copy *is* different, having its own singular life, history, old-age, death, even *agency* – which is why we can form affective and symbolic attachments to them.²⁵

This is not to say *we have never been modern*, that books have never been tightly fastened or bound; just that *this force of binding is what modernity, and the book, is...* or was, perhaps.

Notes

1. See The Unbound Book conference, held at Amsterdam Central Library and the Royal Library in Den Haag, May 2011, and where version 1.0 of this material was presented; and also the AHRC Digital Transformations Project: The Book Unbound, at Stirling University (<http://www.bookunbound.stir.ac.uk/>). For a somewhat different example, see the crowd-funded book publisher, Unbound (<http://unbound.co.uk/books>).
2. As Florian Cramer (2011) has pointed out, this also applies to those artists' books that draw attention to the binding in their form, even if they may be playing with that binding, such as when an artist's book is made up of a collection of papers gathered in a folder or envelope, as with Isidore Isou's *Le Grande Désordre*. Other examples of my own include an experimental author placing either the loose pages or chapters of their novel randomly inside a box, as in the case of Marc Saporta's *Composition No1* (2011), and BS Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1999), from 1962 and 1968 respectively (Cramer, 2011; see also Drucker, 2004: 126–127).
3. For more on copyright and its relation to notions of authorship, originality, attribution, integrity and disclosure, see Hall (2012).
4. For some of the advantages of free offline access – what is termed Open Access Prime – see Suber (2011).
5. An extensive list of open access book publishers is available at 'Publishers of Open Access Books', The Open Access Directory. URL: http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Publishers_of_OA_books
6. For more on so-called piracy, as well as radical or guerrilla approaches to open access, see: Adema and Hall (2013); Hall (2012); Swartz (2008); and the Open Access Guerrilla Cookbook (2013).
7. <http://usefulchem.wikispaces.com>

8. <http://www.garyhall.info/journal>
9. Gary Hall, 'Pirate Philosophy Version 2.0', is currently available from URL (consulted 4 May 2013): <http://www.torrenthound.com/hash/94bfd0a095f6bc76d6c3862fdc550011d1702814/torrent-info/Pirate-Philosophy-2-0-doc>; and <http://aaaaarg.org/text/4160/pirate-philosophy-20>. 'Pirate Philosophy Version 1.0' appeared in *Culture Machine* 10, 2009. URL: <http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/344/426> For the contents of Media Gifts, including chapter titles and summaries, see <http://www.garyhall.info/open-book>
10. Although I find the theory of the meshwork of Ingold's SPIDER more convincing than the Latourian actor-network theory of his ANT, I have for the most part retained the language of networks here, not least because of its association with computer networks, file-sharing networks, pirate networks and so on.
11. In *Protocol* (2004: 11), Alexander Galloway distinguishes between decentred and distributed networks as follows:

A decentralized network ... has multiple central hosts, each with its own set of satellite nodes. A satellite node may have connectivity with one or more hosts, but not with other hosts. Communication generally travels unidirectionally within both central and decentralized networks: from the central trunks to the radial leaves. The distributed network in an entirely different matter ... Each point in a distributed network is neither a central hub nor a satellite node – there are neither trunks nor leaves.

Far from these two kinds of networks being opposed, however, I would suggest that Media Gifts is, in these senses, both decentred and distributed.

12. 'Gathered through dispersion' is a subheading used in 'A new understanding of literary space', the second section of the chapter 'The book to come', in Blanchot's (2003) book of the same name. As we have seen, for all that Media Gifts is not tightly bound, such diversity nevertheless has to be gatherable otherwise it would not be capable of constituting a book. This is what Derrida (2005: 14) refers to as the 'insoluble' nature of Blanchot's tension: for how can 'infinite diversity' be gathered?

I want to stress three points here. Firstly, it is important that any such print or e-book version of Media Gifts is regarded as merely being part of the constantly changing constellation of projects, texts, websites, archives, wikis, internet TV programmes and other traces I have described. In other words, the book version should not be positioned as providing the over-arching, final, definitive, most significant or authentic version of any material that also appears in other versions, forms and places; nor should it be taken as designating a special or privileged means of understanding the media projects with which it is concerned. It is rather just one knot or nodal point in this extended network or meshwork, one possible means of access to or engagement with it. There are others, including the Liquid Books and Pirate Philosophy projects I have referred to, and they should be no less privileged than the print or e-book. Secondly, I also want to draw attention to the way the Media Gifts project emphasizes the violence inherent in any such 'cut' that publishing this material as a book represents – while at the same time acknowledging that this violence is inescapable since, as we have seen, a book has to be gathered and bound, otherwise it is not a book. Thirdly, and adapting an idea of Kenneth Goldsmith's, difficulty can thus be defined in relation to Media Gifts as much in terms of 'quantity (too much to read)' as it is by 'fragmentation (too shattered to read)' – thus perhaps 'moving away from modernist notions of disjunction and deconstruction' somewhat (Goldsmith, 2011: 12).

13. <http://anthologize.org>
14. The Article of the Future project is available from URL: <http://www.articleofthefuture.com/project> For more on PLoS Hubs, see URL: <http://hubs.plos.org/web/biodiversity/about;jsessionid=97C4923247B71A5DA083B50CAB39F8FB>
15. <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/tne/how-it-works>; <http://nanopub.org/wordpress>
16. <http://www.plos.org/cms/node/481>; <http://pressforward.org>
17. <http://figshare.com>; <http://openarchaeologydata.metajnl.com>
18. <http://www.campus-roar.ecs.soton.ac.uk> - work on this project was completed in 2012; <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/inf11/inf11scholcomm/larkinpress.aspx>

For a further example of a move in this direction see the 'Active Archives' project of the Brussels-based feminist collective Constant. This is a research project (ongoing since 2006) devoted to the development of experimental online archives with the aim of:

creating a free software platform to connect practices of library, media library, publications on paper (as magazines, books, catalogues), productions of audio-visual objects, events, workshops, discursive productions, etc. Practices which can take place online or in various geographical places, and which can be at various stages of visibility for reasons of rights of access or for reasons of research and privacy conditions ... regular workshops will be organised to stimulate dialog between future users, developers and cultural workers and researchers. (Constant, 2009)

19. As Derrida (2005: 142) puts it, in this case with regard to literary, poetic and legal texts:

No critic, no translator, no teacher has, in principle, the right to touch the literary text once it is published, legitimated, and authorized by copyright: this is a sacred inheritance, even if it occurs in an atheistic and so-called secular milieu. You don't touch a poem! Or a legal text, and the law is sacred – like the social contract, says Rousseau.
20. <http://www.culturemachine.net>; <http://openhumanitiespress.org>; <http://disruptivemedia.org.uk/portfolio/comc>; <http://disruptivemedia.org.uk/>
21. See www.remixthebook.com, the online hub for the digital remixes of many of the ideas and theories in Amerika's *remixthebook* (2011a).
22. Even the title of this essay and its topic were generated at least in part by others: Mark Amerika, and also the organisers of The Unbound Book conference, which was held at Amsterdam Central Library and the Royal Library in Den Haag in 2011, and where version 1.0 of this material was first presented. This is not to suggest that such a 'togetherness' is without difference and antagonism. There is not the space here to go through each of the projects featured in *Media Gifts* and detail the different kinds of authorship that are at play. Suffice it to say, some of the forms of multiple authorship I am referring to here on occasion do indeed manifest themselves as an expanded or enlarged authorship which works collaboratively to produce more or less agreed upon projects, texts and/or theoretical interpretations of them. However, they also include forms of multiple authorship that involve numerous authors and groups developing different projects, texts and theoretical interpretations that are not agreed upon and which are in fact often in conflict with one other.

23. For one suitably 'unbound' (tele)visual account of the liquid, living nature of the Codex Sinaiticus, see 'The Beauty of Books (BBC) – Ancient Bibles, the Codex Sinaiticus', YouTube, 30 April 2011, extracted from BBC, The Beauty of Books, Episode 1, Ancient Bibles, 2011. TV BBC 4, 7 February 2011, 20.30. URL (consulted 4 May 2013): http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=kCkyakphoKE
24. In 'The book to come' Derrida (2005: 6) notes that before it meant 'book' the Latin word *liber* originally designated the living part of the papyrus bark, and thus the paper, that was used as a support for writing. Ben Fry (2009) provides an animated visualization of the living nature of the book with regard to Darwin's *The Origin of the Species*. For more contemporary examples of how even print-on-paper texts are not fixed, stable, reliable or permanent, see The Piracy Project (2012).
25. As Paul Duguid (1996: 69) writes:

Books are part of a social system that includes authors, readers, publishers, booksellers, libraries, and so forth. Books produce and are reciprocally produced by the system as a whole. They are not, then, simply 'dead things' carrying pre-formed information from authors to readers. They are crucial agents in the cycle of production, distribution, and consumption.

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journal of visual culture



The Last Pictures

Trevor Paglen

On 20 November 2012, at 18:31 local time, the EchoStar XVI communications satellite was launched into a geostationary orbit from Site 200/39, Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan (see Figure 2). As it orbits the Earth in the Clarke Belt, 35,786 km above sea level, it will broadcast 10 trillion images to hundreds of television channels over its 15-year life span, before moving into a slightly higher orbit where it will power down and die. Its ‘graveyard’ orbit is so far from earth that the derelict spacecraft will never decay.

Attached to this technology is a gold-plated disc, five inches in diameter, housing a silicon wafer etched with 100 images (see Figures 1 and 3) designed to be atomically stable, archival for billions of years.

Four billion years from now, the Sun will have burnt its hydrogen and will expand to become a red giant, consuming earth and any remaining derelict spacecraft that surround it.

The Last Pictures are:

1. Back of Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* Drawing
2. Soyuz FG Rocket Launch, Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan
3. Typhoon, Japan, Early Twentieth Century
4. Greek and Armenian Orphan Refugees Experience the Sea for the First Time, Marathon, Greece
5. Earthrise
6. Old Operating Theater, St Thomas Church, Southwark, London
7. Glimpses of America, American National Exhibition, Moscow World’s Fair
8. Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado Springs, Colorado
9. Migrants seen by Predator Drone, US–Mexico Border

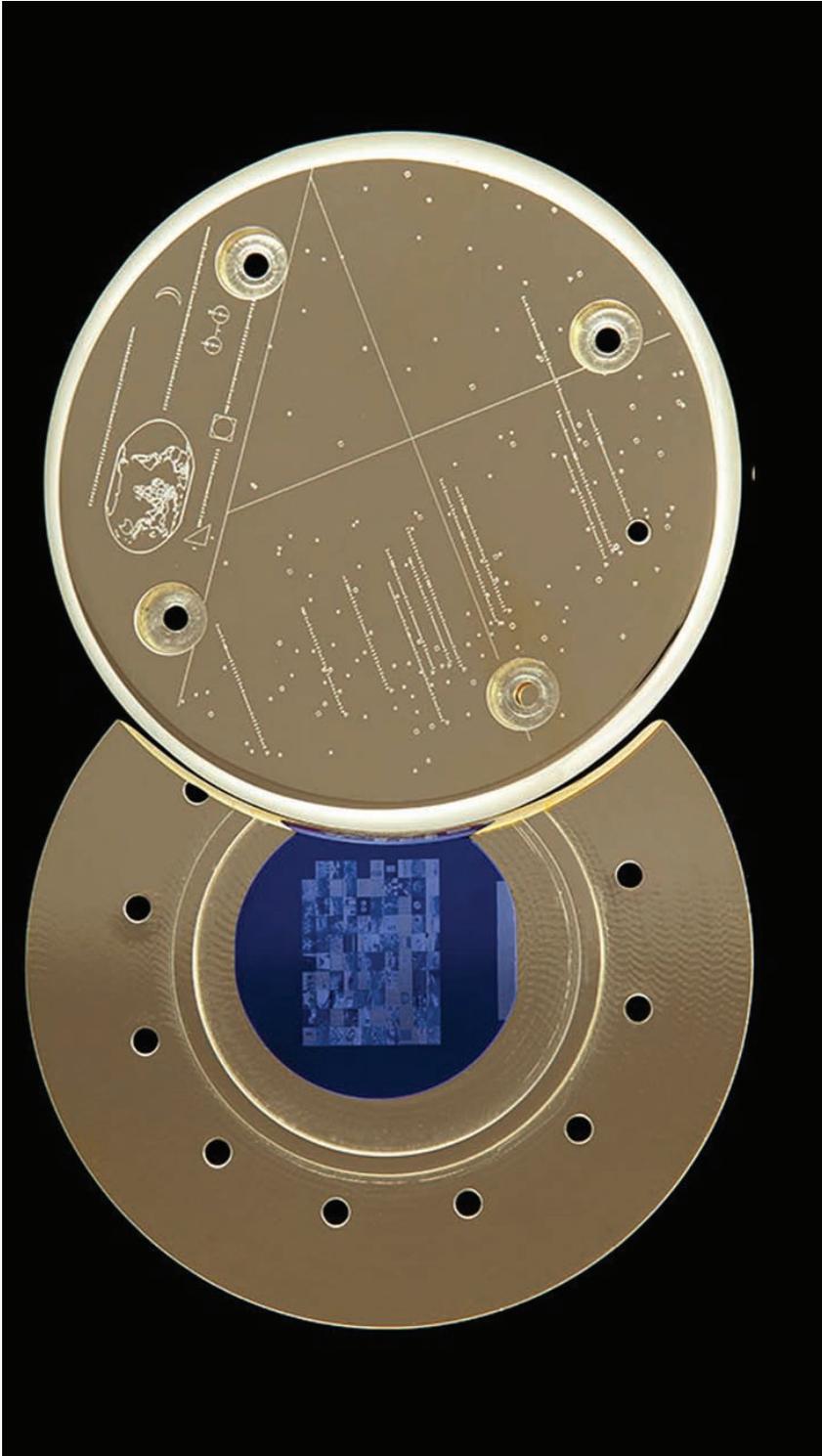


Figure 1 Gold-plated disk containing silicon wafer on which are etched The Last Pictures. Courtesy of Trevor Paglen.

10. Zork
11. Entangled Bank
12. Electron Microscopic Photograph, Martian Meteorite
13. Hela Cells, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
14. Transmission Electron Micrograph, Ebola Virus
15. Leon Trotsky's Brain, Mexico City
16. Dr Edward J Triplett Taping Picture (Television)
17. Whale Shark, Georgia Aquarium
18. Shop Window and Tailor's Dummies
19. Filming *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (Production Still), University of California
20. Gas Masks, World War I
21. Stealthy Insect Sensor Project, Los Alamos, New Mexico
22. Moth Found in Mark II Aiken Relay Calculator, Harvard University
23. Warning from Space, Daiei Films
24. Hall of Bulls, Lascaux Cave
25. Dictionary of Volapuk
26. *Tower of Babel* (Detail), Pieter Bruegel The Elder
27. Demonstration of Eating, Licking, and Drinking
28. The Great Wall of China
29. *An Essay Towards A Real Character And A Philosophical Language*, John Wilkins
30. Ai Weiwei, *Study of Perspective – Eiffel Tower*, 1995–2010
31. Nagoya Public Aquarium
32. Occupy Hong Kong
33. Cristina Llanos, Bolonia Beach
34. Carlos Burle, Mavericks
35. Clatskanie, Oregon
36. 'Crop Circles' in Financial Market Formed by High-Frequency Trading Algorithms
37. Hydraulic Mining, Nevada County, California
38. CCTV Tower, Beijing
39. Bead Fields, Seabrook Farm, Bridgeton, New Jersey
40. Hen Farm, South Auckland
41. The Union Stockyard and Transit Company, Chicago
42. Cat Piano, Athanasius Kircher
43. Industrial Fishing of Orange Roughy (Deep Sea Perch)
44. Lernaean Hydra, Albertus Seba's *Thesaurus*



Figure 2 EchoStar XVI at the Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan. Courtesy of Trevor Paglen.

45. Dinosaur Footprints, Paluxy Riverbed, Glen Rose, Texas
46. Cloned Texas Longhorns
47. Goldstone Deep Space Communications Complex, Deep Space Network, Goldstone, California
48. Percival Lowell, Martian Canals
49. Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, Weightlessness
50. Hubble Ultra Deep Field Photograph
51. Last Futurist Exhibition, St. Petersburg
52. 'WOW!' Signal, Big Ear Observatory, Ohio
53. Construction of Hoover Dam, Arizona
54. Nikolaev Shipyard, Black Sea
55. Levittown, New York
56. The Great Wave off Kanagawa, Katsushika Hokusai
57. Separation Wall, Jerusalem
58. Illinois State Penitentiary at Stateville, Joliet, Illinois
59. Fingerprints
60. Inked Handprint and Contract, Colonial India
61. Operation Crossroads Baker, Bikini Atoll
62. Nguyen Huu An, Phan Ti Cuc, and Nguyen Thi Thanh, Hue
63. Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein's Application for a British Certificate of Naturalization
64. Japanese Internment Camp, Heart Mountain Relocation Center, Wyoming
65. Cairo, Egypt
66. Captain America
67. Ahmad Said Mohammed Bseisy, Passport
68. Yvonne Chevallier
69. Policeman, Nepal
70. Babylonian Math Tablet, YBC 4713
71. Early IBM Computer
72. Monster Function, Rafael Nunez
73. Rorschach Test
74. Cybernetic Diagram of Papua New Guinea, HT Odum
75. Nuclear Bomb Effects Computer
76. Division by Zero
77. 'Ontological Proof', Kurt Gödel
78. *A Million Random Digits with 100,000 Normal Deviates*, Rand Corporation
79. Spacewalk, Alexey Leonov



Figure 3 The Last Pictures on board EchoStar XVI 36,000 km from Earth.
Courtesy of Trevor Paglen.

80. Air France Concorde
81. Sand Dunes, Carson Desert, Nevada
82. Computers on Parade, East Berlin
83. Sky Sport 24, Italy
84. Tokyo
85. The Black Hole, Los Alamos, New Mexico
86. Watusi High Explosive Experiment, Nevada Test Site
87. 'Bringing Science to India', Union Carbide Advertisement
88. Dandelion
89. Genetically Modified Fruit Fly with Legs instead of Antennae
90. Stone Medallion Carl Jung, Bollingen, Switzerland
91. Cherry Blossoms
92. The Pit Scene, Lascaux Cave
93. Grinnell Glacier, Glacier National Park, Montana, 1940
94. Grinnell Glacier, Glacier National Park, Montana, 2006
95. Narbona Panel, Canyon De Chelly, Navajo Nation
96. Waterspout, Florida Keys
97. Suez Canal, Egypt
98. Dust Storm, Stratford, Texas
99. Predator Drone, North Waziristan
100. Flowery Steppes between Barnaoul and Tomsk in Siberia, Russia

Reference

Paglen T (2012) *The Last Pictures*. Berkeley/New York: University of California Press/Creative Time Books.

Trevor Paglen is an artist, writer, and experimental geographer. His work deliberately blurs lines between science, contemporary art, journalism, and other disciplines to construct unfamiliar, yet meticulously researched ways to see and interpret the world around us. He has exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Tate Modern, London; The Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the 2008 Taipei Biennial; the 2009 Istanbul Biennial; the 2012 Liverpool Biennial, and numerous other solo and group exhibitions. He has received grants and awards from the Smithsonian, Art Matters, Artadia, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the LUMA foundation, the Eyebeam Center for Art and Technology, and the Aperture Foundation. Author of five books and numerous articles on subjects including experimental geography, state secrecy, military symbology, photography, and visibility, Paglen's most recent book, *The Last Pictures* (University of California Press/Creative Time Books, 2012) is a meditation on the intersections of deep-time, politics, and art. He lives and works in New York.

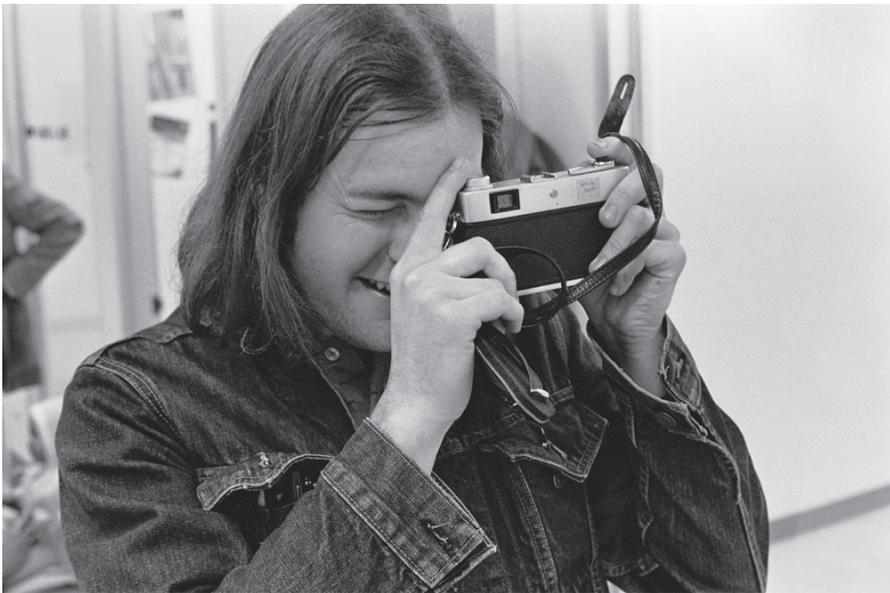
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journal of visual culture



Event

Allan Sekula 1951–2013



Allan Sekula at the Vacation Village Trade Show: A Raw Material Piece, exhibition at the University of California at San Diego, winter 1973, a collaboration between two faculty and students (Steve Buck, Louise Kirtland, Fred Lonidier, Allan Sekula, Phil Steinmetz, Barbara Greenlee and Ruth Krimmel). Photograph courtesy of Fred Lonidier.

It is impossible to imagine key directions taken in recent art and photographic practices without the formative impact of Allan Sekula. It is not so much that he has produced a raft of imitators – his has been a singular intervention – but rather that growing numbers came to understand his distinctive way of combining aesthetics and politics. Yet, despite the opening up of modern art institutions to photography (and also to documentary), his work defied established genres and the expected modalities of art, and refused the simple stand-offs between modernism and realism so often preferred by cultural theory.

While his criticism of claims to documentary transparency chimed with the rise of political modernism in the 1970s, Sekula remained committed to developing a realist project, setting him apart from the dominant trends in critical art practice in the next decades. He criticised the preoccupation with the play of signs, quotations, appropriations and staging – approaches whose model of reflexivity he found too internalised and anti-materialist. Instead, Sekula aspired to develop an externally directed conception of reflexive practice; to interrogate the connections – however troubled or problematic – between representation and reality. He sought a realism not ‘of appearances or social facts’, but instead a critical realism ‘of everyday experience in and against the grip of advanced capitalism’, a ‘hybrid paraliterary revision of social documentary’. Accordingly, Sekula’s high degree of consciousness of the power relations generated by the camera did not lead him to conclude that the photographer should withdraw from the public domain; rather it presented the obligation to rethink the institutionalization of the medium’s techniques and protocols. His critique of photojournalism – his insistence on the photographer’s positioning as partisan – was fulfilled strikingly with *Waiting For Tear Gas*, which recorded the 1999 Seattle protests against the WTO. In his earlier *Untitled Slide Sequence* of the end-of-shift exit of workers and managers leaving an aerospace plant, Sekula overturns the position of photographer-flaneur, the relations established between viewpoint and subjects akin to those that might be provoked by a militant paper-seller trespassing on private corporate space.

Sekula interpreted the open artwork in its strongest, social and politicized sense, drawing on Bakhtin and Vološinov. As he outlined in *Photography Against the Grain* in 1984, the photographic act is inescapably enmeshed in a dialogical and performative politics. Less authoring artist (or ‘neutral’ photojournalist), the photographer was conceived as one social actor beckoned by the world and working within the web of interpellations formed by other social agents and situations. All aspects of the photographic encounter were conceived as enunciatory moments staked within a field of social and political contestations – that is, as a social practice.

There is much in Sekula’s approach that has attracted those younger artists who find it pressing to struggle against capitalism: his dedication to the critique of capitalism and radical internationalism; his strong emphasis on the role of social relations for his work, anticipating relational practice; his standing with the protestors, as a protestor (*Waiting for Tear Gas*), or with campaigners for the rights of workers (*Ship of Fools*), or with the Galician fishing communities and environmental volunteers attempting to clear an oil spill (*Marea Negra*); his sustained project to explore the labour-capital relation (from *Aerospace Folktales* and *Performance Under Working Conditions* to the present); the historical global interconnections of maritime labour and the transformations wrought to it by containerization and the system of ‘flag of convenience’ (*Fish Story*, *Titanic’s Wake*, *Lottery of the Sea*, *The Dockers’ Museum*, and, with Noël Burch, *The Forgotten Space*); his non-precious aesthetic; his detailed research and precise pictorial intelligence (as exemplified by his essay for *Fish Story* or

his outstanding analysis of the Leslie Shedden archive in *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures, 1948–1968*).

Sekula has been criticized by some for sacrificing the aesthetic to the political. This could not be more wrong-placed. On the contrary, he operated on the very testing ground of the aesthetic-political. Sekula's was an approach that understood the power of heteronomy (both in itself and for a critical model of autonomy), and that understood how the aesthetic will be deadened the moment one stops wagering on efforts to change the world. Above all, it is important to grasp the praxial dimensions of his dialectic. This is a question of his partisanship and commitment, of course, but it also concerns the temporality embraced by his imagination, found in his sense of time and timing, and how this imagination is gauged to social struggle as transformational and potentially transitive practice. Sekula emphasized the poetic and lyrical aspects of his realism, insisting on prose's distinctive poetic: Constantin Meunier's sculptures of labourers, Walker Evans's 'documentary style', Flaherty's or Grierson's documentaries, the work of Joris Ivens, the poetic realism of French film in the 1930s, and Italian neo-realism. Sekula knew such works intimately, appreciated and yet was also critical of their limitations. Prose's poetic had to be found without mutating documentary into a site of creative genius (the liberal-humanist treatment of Lewis Hine); without the privileged, romanticised or condescending middle-class perspectives on peasant or working-class lives; without the Proletkult or Zhdanovist positivity of labour and instrumentalization of culture; and without the political fatalism that shadowed 'poetic realist' film. What form might a properly critical-realist poetic take? It would not be achieved by overlaying naturalism with symbolism, and not by providing some arty flourishes or requisite 'art read-out' codes to satisfy the guardians of the institutional aesthetic.

Sekula's sense of the poetic, much influenced by his engagement with David Antin, also, I think, comes close to Georg Lukács's speculations on the 'poetry of life'. To our ears, Lukács's formulation sounds limply humanist (and is not without Popular Frontist residues), but it was coined primarily to signal what counters the 'stilling of life', what resists capital's reification of social forms. Central to Sekula's project was the recovery of concealed social process between capital and labour, with his feet firmly planted in the latter's camp. The issue was how to salvage the social dialogic from a medium (photography) that suppresses its own 'dialogical social origins'. Another was how to reconstruct the metonymic links between labour and its products, between human activity and the world it creates, the connections elided by capital's social relations and production methods. These Sekula navigated variously through his explorations of montage, picture sequencing and panorama, through the combination of images with words, through essays, wall texts, sound, and through video- and film-essays. He recently underscored his aim: not an exploration of labour as a 'positivity' (a mode he associated with both socialist realism and Steichen's *The Family of Man*), but in its fundamental negativity, its shaping by unemployment and the extraction of surplus-value. His poetic too proceeded by negation.

The difficulty Sekula confronted unflinchingly – and which remains before us – is that the ‘stopping’ occurs twice over: as a problem for photography and film (as for all representation), and also as the metabolism of capital’s social economy. This calls for a double poetic: to recover the social dialogic for counter-representations and counter-relationalities, and also for the militant life ‘in and against the grip of advanced capitalism’.

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