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Guest Editors' Introduction

Archive Time

BEN HUTCHINSON AND SHANE WELLER

I

Since the early 1990s, it has become common practice in the humanities to refer to the 'archival turn'. As theorized by the anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler, this expression is generally taken to indicate a shift in focus from 'archive-as-source' to 'archive-as-subject'.¹ In the Anglophone world, the 1996 publication of Jacques Derrida's *Mal d'archive* in English translation was arguably the high-water mark of this shift,² which was certainly not restricted to literary theorists. Indeed, it is striking just how widespread the archival turn has been: from post-colonialists to digital theorists, from historians and sociologists to literary and art critics, scholars from across the humanities have hailed the emergence of a new episteme. Almost three decades after Michel de Certeau suggested that 'the transformation of archival activity is the point of departure and the condition of a new history',³ it is now possible to construct an archive of archive studies.

In his 1967 essay 'Des espaces autres', Michel Foucault established the archive as one of the dominant paradigms of modernity. According to Foucault:

l'idée de tout accumuler, l'idée de constituer une sorte d'archive générale, la volonté d'enfermer dans un lieu tous les temps, toutes les époques, toutes les formes, tous les goûts, l'idée de constituer un lieu de tous les temps qui soit lui-même hors du temps, et inaccessible à sa morsure, le projet d'organiser ainsi une sorte d'accumulation perpétuelle et indéfinie du temps dans un lieu qui ne bougerait pas, eh bien, tout cela appartient à notre modernité.

(the idea of accumulating everything, the idea of constituting a sort of general archive, the desire to contain all times, all ages, all forms, all tastes in one place, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside time and protected

from its erosion, the project of thus organizing a kind of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in a place that will not move – well, in fact, all of this belongs to our modernity.)⁴

Foucault suggests that whereas history was ‘la grande hantise’ (‘the great obsession’) of the nineteenth century, ‘L’époque actuelle serait peut-être plutôt l’époque de l’espace’ (‘The present age may be the age of space instead’).⁵ The archive is seen to be the emblematic space of modernity precisely because it would enclose ‘dans un lieu tous les temps’ (‘all times in one place’). Foucault describes this Borgesian space as an ‘hétérotopie’ (‘heterotopia’), that is, a place ‘hors de tous les lieux’ (‘outside all places’).⁶ Two years later, in *L’Archéologie du savoir* (1969), he makes clear that the archive as he conceives it is a deeply political construction, and that it is not to be mistaken (the literalist fallacy) for an institution housing documents, of which researchers from various disciplines would simply make use:

L’archive, c’est d’abord la loi de ce qui peut être dit, le système qui régit l’apparition des énoncés comme événements singuliers. [...] L’archive, ce n’est pas ce qui sauvegarde, malgré sa fuite immédiate, l’événement de l’énoncé et conserve, pour les mémoires futures, son état civil d’évadé; c’est ce qui, à la racine même de l’énoncé-événement, et dans le corps où il se donne, définit d’entrée de jeu *le système de son énonçabilité*.

(The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. [...] The archive is not that which, despite its immediate escape, safeguards the event of the statement, and preserves, for future memories, its status as an escapee; it is that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset *the system of its enunciability*.)⁷

A brief look at the historical development of European archives suggests that while archives may be ‘outside all places’, they are very much *inside* the body politic. Writing in Pierre Nora’s *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984–1986), Krzysztof Pomian notes that ‘les archives publiques françaises, sous la forme qu’elles gardent jusqu’à aujourd’hui, se présentent dans leur loi fondamentale comme un legs de la Révolution’ (French public archives, in the form that they have retained up to the present day, manifest themselves in their fundamental law as a legacy of the Revolution).⁸ Pomian’s reference to the ‘loi’ of the archive recalls Foucault’s insistence on ‘la loi de ce qui peut être dit’ (‘the law of what can be said’), and suggests the archive’s role as the regulator not just of discourses, but of the very rules of discourse. Crucially, the political legacy of the French Revolution determines not

only the present view, but also the future view of the past: Pomian concludes his history of modern archives by stating that 'le lien qu'elles maintiennent avec le passé est subordonné à leur orientation vers l'avenir. Contrairement aux apparences, les archives modernes sont, comme les musées, une institution futurocentrique' (the link that they maintain with the past is subordinated to their orientation towards the future. Contrary to appearances, modern archives are, like museums, a futurocentric institution).⁹ Turned towards the future, the archive projects its political origins into 'l'image que l'avenir aura du passé' (the image that the future will have of the past).¹⁰ As Foucault remarks in his 1967 essay, this image is essentially one conceived in the nineteenth century.¹¹ In France, the *École Nationale des Chartes* was established in 1821 with the express purpose of training the nation's archivists. Sonia Combe notes:

nul ne comprit mieux que Bonaparte le pouvoir, tout autant symbolique que réel, que conférait la possession d'archives. [...] Il conçut le projet de construction d'un vaste palais des archives, situé en bordure de la Seine (à l'emplacement actuel de la tour Eiffel), où devaient être conservées les archives de l'Europe, emblèmes de sa puissance.

(no one understood better than Napoleon the power, as much symbolic as real, conferred by the possession of archives. [...] He conceived the project of constructing a vast palace of archives, situated beside the Seine (at the site where the Eiffel Tower now stands), where the archives of Europe were to be conserved, as emblems of his power.)¹²

Elsewhere in Europe, the era of nation-building brought with it a comparable need for historical and cultural self-justification. As a record of the past, the archive could help to determine the future; in Lord Acton's famous phrase, not to cultivate one's archives was tantamount to 'leaving one's history to one's enemies'.¹³ No document testifies more eloquently to this historico-political view than Wilhelm Dilthey's essay 'Archive für Literatur'. Published in 1889, less than twenty years after German unification in 1871, the essay opens with an unapologetic attempt to place literary self-determination at the heart of the nation-building fervour of the *Gründerzeit*:

Nachdem die deutsche Nation zur politischen Einheit gelangt ist, erscheint von diesem nun gewonnenen Abschluß aus die ganze deutsche Vergangenheit in einer neuen Beleuchtung. [...] So sehen wir jetzt auch unsere Literatur mit anderen Augen an. Unser Volk ist zum Gefühl seines eigenthümlichen Werthes gelangt.

(Now that the German nation has achieved political unity, the entire German past appears, viewed from the perspective of this accomplishment, in a new light. [...])

Thus we now also look upon our literature differently. Our people has attained a sense of its own particular worth.)¹⁴

Key to this new-found national self-worth is the literary archive, for which Dilthey sketches out a model: '[Es] scheinen mir aus der Pietät gegen unsere Schriftsteller und aus dem Bedürfniß unserer Forschung neue Anforderungen zu entstehen, die sich auf Erhaltung, Sammlung und zweckentsprechende Eröffnung der Quellen beziehen' (New demands seem to me to arise out of respect for our writers and out of the requirements of our research, demands which relate to the conservation, collection and appropriate accessibility of sources).¹⁵ Not only does Dilthey outline the standard model for all subsequent literary archives, he also makes a strikingly modern plea for financial support: 'So wollen wir uns einmal der von den Regierungen den Geisteswissenschaften anerzogenen Bescheidenheit entäussern' (So we wish for once to free ourselves from the frugality imposed by government on the humanities).¹⁶

If Dilthey's vision of archival work must thus resonate with modern scholars in the humanities, his conception of the literary archive is nonetheless couched in the language of his time. This applies not only to his political conception of the archive as a nation-building tool, but also to his view of the archive as an extension of his hermeneutical school of history. Dilthey views the archive first and foremost as the guardian of manuscripts and unpublished letters, which, he insists, 'gehören neben dem Gedruckten zum geistigen Besitztum unseres Volkes' (belong with printed matter to the spiritual property of our people).¹⁷ With this in mind, the archive becomes a way out of the hermeneutic circle:

Wir verstehen ein Werk aus dem Zusammenhang, in welchem es in der Seele seines Verfassers entstand, und wir verstehen diesen lebendigen seelischen Zusammenhang aus den einzelnen Werken. Diesem Zirkel in der hermeneutischen Operation entrinnen wir völlig nur da, wo Entwürfe und Briefe zwischen den vereinzelt und kühl dastehenden Druckwerken einen inneren lebensvollen Zusammenhang herstellen.

(We understand a work in its relationship to its coming into being in the spirit of its creator, and we understand this living, spiritual relationship through individual works. We fully escape the circle of this hermeneutic operation only where drafts and letters produce an inner, fully living relationship between isolated and cold printed works.)¹⁸

Dilthey's concern is thus to establish the archive as a place of synthesis – the word 'Zusammenhang' (relationship) recurs three times in the short passage quoted above – where published texts are confronted with the

conditions of their genesis. His language suggests that he views genetic, archival-based criticism as the way to revivify tired scholarship: where printed works are 'vereinzelt und kühl' (isolated and cold), it is the manuscripts and letters which can establish the 'lebendigen seelischen' (living, spiritual) or 'inneren lebensvollen Zusammenhang' (inner, fully living relationship). The subtext is clear: where the published work withers into canonical death, the unpublished manuscripts can bring it back to life. Dilthey's essay accordingly concludes with a vision of the literary archive as 'eine andere Westminsterabtei, in welcher wir nicht die sterblichen Körper, sondern den unsterblichen Gehalt unserer großen Schriftsteller versammeln würden' (another Westminster Abbey, in which we would gather not the mortal remains but the immortal substance of our great writers).¹⁹

Dilthey's view of the literary archive emanates the spirit of the *Gründerzeit*, the 'heyday of "scientific" history, full of optimism'.²⁰ His biological, medical language reflects this faith in scientific progress: 'Was wir Ästhetiker nun erstreben, ist doch auch, gleichsam den Körper der Literaturhistorie zu zergliedern, die Structur der menschlichen Einbildungskraft, ihre Formen und ihre Entwicklung in der Technik zu ergreifen' (Yet that for which we aestheticians now strive is also, as it were, to dissect the body of literary history, to grasp the structure of the human imagination, its forms and its technical development).²¹ That said, Dilthey's essay also represents a watershed in the instrumentalization of archives. It is not just that he evokes the political exploitation of archives for the purposes of nation-building; this, we have seen, is a staple of modern European history. More interestingly, he argues for the creation of a purpose-built archive, determined from the outset by the nature of its contents: 'Neben die Staatsarchive, auf deren Verwerthung jetzt alle politische Historie beruht, müssen Archive für Literatur treten' (Literary archives must appear alongside state archives, on the use of which all political history now relies).²² In a paper delivered at the 1994 conference where Derrida coined the phrase 'mal d'archive' ('archive fever'),²³ Yosef Yerushalmi claimed that 'ideally an archive should be naïve, that is – it should have been created and maintained for purposes other than those which we, as historians, seek. Copies of contracts and deeds of property were preserved in archives in case any future disputes should arise, not so that we might write economic history'.²⁴ Dilthey's literary archive is the exact opposite of this. Following Yerushalmi's appropriation of Schiller's celebrated distinction between the naïve and the sentimental, one could say that

Dilthey calls for the creation of a 'sentimental' literary archive, fully aware of its own motives and *raison d'être*; such an archive would exist precisely so that we might write literary history.

After the rush to the archives in the nineteenth century, epitomized so powerfully by the French historian Jules Michelet, the twentieth century, and in particular the post-Second World War period, saw a pronounced shift from the old model of a 'naïve' archive, gradually accrued through the contingencies of history, to that of a new kind of 'sentimental' archive, established with an acute awareness of its archival status, and, in some cases, as a place of testimony, of reckoning, even of catharsis. Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, is a pre-eminent example of such an archive. Yad Vashem's database contains the names of almost four million victims of the Holocaust, and its archive holds well over a hundred million documents, almost 400,000 photographs, plus over two million 'pages of testimony' relating to the Holocaust. This archive is far more than a resource; its holdings are there to give those who were murdered – those who, in the words of the poet Paul Celan, were originally granted only 'ein Grab in den Lüften' ('a grave in the air')²⁵ – not only an identifiable resting-place, but also a voice, to counter forgetting and, perhaps above all, to help ensure that such a crime is never repeated.

Within the narrower sphere of literary scholarship, the foundation of institutions such as the Deutsches Literaturarchiv (DLA) in Germany, L'Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine (IMEC) in France, or the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (HRHRC) in Austin, Texas, attests to the modern professionalization of the literary archive. One of the more interesting side-effects of 'sentimental' archives such as the DLA, the IMEC and the HRHRC is the self-consciousness towards posterity that they seem to encourage: established authors can now make considerable sums of money from selling their *Vorlaß*, let alone their *Nachlaß*. The modern author has good reason to cultivate his or her papers: for every page sent to the editor, there should be one for the archive. As Yerushalmi writes: 'It is the difference, if you wish, between the diaries of Franz Kafka, who never dreamed that they would be published, and André Gide's journals, where one senses that as he writes one eye is gazing at posterity.'²⁶

This new kind of archival awareness on the part of writers can take on interesting, and even creative, forms. One sees this awareness in a writer such as Walter Benjamin. His 'last archive' – the briefcase that he carried with him on his doomed flight over the Pyrenees in

September 1940 – may have been lost, but, as Erdmut Wizisla observes, '[d]aß sein Archiv heute in einer Dichte vorliegt, [...] verdankt sich dem strategischen Kalkül, mit dem er Manuskripte, Notizbücher und Druckbelege in die Obhut von Freunden in verschiedenen Ländern gab' ('The fact that [Benjamin's] archive is so bristling with contents today [...] is due to the strategic calculation with which he deposited his manuscripts, notebooks, and printed papers in the custody of friends and acquaintances in various countries').²⁷ Among the many post-Second World War writers with an eye to their own archival futures, the cases of Samuel Beckett and W. G. Sebald are particularly instructive.

With the publication of James Knowlson's biography of Beckett in 1996, scholars were alerted to the existence of a trunk full of material dating back to the 1930s, including extensive notes taken by Beckett when he was seeking to extend his knowledge in the fields of philosophy, psychology and literature.²⁸ This material, which was finally made available in 1999, ten years after Beckett's death, has arguably transformed Beckett studies, encouraging a new spirit of empirically based analysis. For instance, while it was once thought that Beckett was a highly philosophical novelist who had read extremely widely in the field of Western philosophy, the archival material reveals him to have relied quite heavily on late-nineteenth-century synoptic histories of philosophy such as those by Wilhelm Windelband and Archibald Alexander.²⁹ And yet, long before this material came to light, Beckett was passing on manuscript drafts of his own works to friends, collectors and archives; the rich holdings at the Beckett International Foundation in Reading, Trinity College Dublin, and the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center in Texas testify to this. The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, currently being directed by researchers at the universities of Antwerp and Reading, is possible only because Beckett saved his drafts and in due course passed them on to others. The existence of this archival material has enabled researchers not only to enhance their sense of Beckett's creative process, but also to reflect upon the archival impulse within his *œuvre*.

As for W. G. Sebald, the holdings which began to arrive at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in 2004 include not only manuscripts but also the writer's annotated personal library: this archival material has enabled researchers to trace Sebald's intellectual development and to demonstrate with empirical evidence the deeply allusive nature of his works. In Sebald's case, the self-archiving impulse is arguably more complex than it is in Beckett's, since Sebald's archives testify as much to the lives of his characters as they do to his own life, blurring the distinction between real

and imaginary archives.³⁰ The very nature of Sebald's literary 'attempt at restitution'³¹ depends upon the exploration of archives as potential sites of disclosure and redress.

The motivation for an author's cultivating his or her archive can initially be simply financial. Relatively early in his career, the poet Ted Hughes wrote to the London manuscript dealer Winifred Myers:

I am gradually being forced to realize that in time to come my manuscripts are going to be worth quite a lot. In the past, I've sold manuscripts for next to nothing – for less than I was paid merely for the publication of the poems. But now there seems to be a growing general opinion, here and in America and on the continent, that my work is permanent, and some of it possibly major. I would be very foolish, and so would you, if we were to go on almost giving these things away.³²

The financial value of material from the archives of living writers grew enormously in the post-war era, above all on account of the creation of literary archives at American universities, and it is very understandable that writers – especially poets, the majority of whom cannot expect a substantial income from the publication of their works – should look to benefit from this. That said, a preoccupation with his or her own archive can also impact directly on a writer's work. While Ted Hughes may have been driven initially by financial concerns, his preparations for the sale of his archive in the last years of his life led him to go through his papers at the time he was writing many of the poems that would be published in the collection *Birthday Letters* (1998), and, as Stephen Enniss observes, 'that collection can, in fact, be read as an account of Hughes's reading of his own archive'.³³

Beyond the archives of individual writers, entire publishers' archives have begun to find their way into national archives. Among the most important of these is that of the major post-war German publisher, Suhrkamp (founded in 1950), acquired in 2009 by the Deutsches Literaturarchiv. Nearly 2,100 boxes full of manuscripts, photographs, correspondence and publication records attest to Suhrkamp's central role in the literary culture not only of West Germany, but also of post-war Europe more broadly: letters from writers such as Beckett, T. S. Eliot and Octavio Paz lie alongside documents chronicling internal power struggles between Jürgen Habermas and various other committee members of the Taschenbuch Wissenschaft series over the Frankfurt School's legacy. The astonishing range of material gathered in the Siegfried Unseld Archive was only made possible by what was termed, at a 2011 conference in Marbach, Suhrkamp's 'hohe Ablagemoral' (conscientious self-archiving): Unseld kept meticulous records of his

daily dealings with authors in his legendary *Chronik*, and every branch of the publishing house followed his lead.³⁴ If posterity can reconstruct the steps that led to the creation of the 'Suhrkamp culture', it is because such steps have been carefully documented. The literary scholar's past tense is the archivist's future perfect.

A similar degree of self-consciousness was evident at a recent exhibition at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, celebrating the centenary of one of France's pre-eminent modern publishing houses, Gallimard.³⁵ Founded in 1911, Gallimard recognized early on both the significance and the economic value of its archive. Indeed, sometime in the 1930s, the general secretary of Gallimard's editorial committee, Jean Paulhan, drafted the following remarkable request to Gallimard authors:

Ne Jetez pas
Ne Déchirez pas
Ne Brûlez pas

les manuscrits, journaux intimes, lettres, essais et poèmes de jeunesse qui encombrant votre grenier, mais envoyez-les plutôt à la N.R.F. 5 rue Sébastien-Bottin, Paris (VII)

(Don't Throw away
Don't Tear up
Don't Burn

the manuscripts, diaries, letters, essays and juvenile poems that clutter up your attic, but rather send them to the NRF, 5 rue Sébastien-Bottin, Paris (VII))³⁶

If writers have shown an increasingly acute sense of their own archival futures since the emergence of literary archives in the late nineteenth century, they have also engaged explicitly with matters archival in their work. In recent years, commentators have begun to propose analyses of what has come to be known as 'archive fiction', of which the foremost examples over the past few decades have included Umberto Eco's *Il Nome della rosa* (1980), A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990), José Saramago's *Todes os nomes* (1997), and W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001). A similar phenomenon is to be observed in other artistic media. In film, *Das Leben der Anderen* (2006), which focuses on the East German Stasi's archive and its impact on the lives of those responsible for creating it as well as those who were its object, is an outstanding example. In the visual arts, the work of Christian Boltanski has taken the archival impulse to new extremes. The best works of archive fiction question the dominant aesthetic, political and hermeneutic clichés regarding archives, including the idea that archival material can serve unproblematically – which is to

say, without certain hermeneutic protocols – as hard evidence to support the writing of history, and the belief that archives can ever be all-encompassing. Indeed, to return to our starting-point, it is becoming increasingly clear that the archival impulse and an archival culture are in fact not unique to what Foucault terms ‘notre modernité’, but are fundamental to human activity across the ages.

2

The essays in the present volume were selected from papers delivered at the XIIth International Conference of the British Comparative Literature Association, ‘Archive’, held at the University of Kent in July 2010. The aim of both the conference and this collection was to engage with the art, politics, history and hermeneutics of the literary archive from a wide range of perspectives, hence the inclusion of essays by directors of archives, literary scholars, an historian and a creative writer. Rather than seeking any kind of total image of the literary archive – an aim that would be palpably absurd in so limited a space – the twelve essays included here constitute interventions in the field of archive studies that encourage further reflection on the so-called ‘archival turn’ – that is to say, on its history, its implications and its limits.

In the opening essay, Ulrich Raulff, Director of the Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach, argues that all thinking about the modern literary archive has been shaped by two key concepts: that of the archive as an institution of national commemoration, orientated not only towards the past but also towards the future, and centred for the most part on the figure of the author; and that of the archive as the locus of a plurality of discourses, which are by definition to be understood as authorless. As Raulff observes, the first of these conceptions finds its primary spokesman in Wilhelm Dilthey, the second in French structuralism and post-structuralism, above all Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Whereas Dilthey calls for the creation of material institutions to house documents in which the author’s presence is captured in the auratic form of the handwritten, in Foucault’s conception of the archive as ‘*le système général de la formation et de la transformation des énoncés*’ (‘*the general system of the formation and transformation of statements*’) the archive becomes a metaphor.³⁷ Both conceptions of the archive are deeply political. Raulff argues, however, that neither Dilthey’s author-centred nor Foucault’s discourse-centred conception

reaches to the heart of what he terms the 'real archive', and he proceeds to outline his own idea of what a modern literary archive should aim to be, namely the locus of a 'fertile contamination' of discourses and disciplines, where absence and contingency (in the form of unique documents that have been lost or destroyed) play as decisive a role as preservation and planning.

Towards the end of his essay, Raulff touches on the widespread engagement with the idea of the archive in twentieth-century art and literature—Saramago's *Todos os nomes*, Sebald's *Austerlitz* and the work of Christian Boltanski being notable examples. In 'Archive Fiction', Max Saunders reveals that what might seem to be a distinctively twentieth-century—and even post-Second World War or post-Holocaust preoccupation—is in fact already present in late-nineteenth-century literature, in works falling into the hybrid genre of 'autobiografiction'. Indeed, Saunders argues that certain cases of *fin-de-siècle* autobiografiction anticipate not only the kind of scepticism towards the archive as an empirically stable source of truth about the past that is to be found in the more sophisticated forms of recent archive fiction, but also Derrida's deconstructive conception of the archive as always working against itself, governed not only by a principle of preservation but also by a *mal d'archive* that 'menace même toute principauté, toute primauté archontique, tout désir d'archive' ('threatens every principality, every archontic primary, every archival desire').³⁸ Through an analysis of the archival impulse in autobiografictions by writers such as A. C. Benson, William Hale White and Daniel Wright Kittredge, Saunders proposes a new way of understanding the works of a number of major twentieth-century writers (including James Joyce, Thomas Mann and Vladimir Nabokov) as forms of archive fiction.

Both Raulff and Saunders not only challenge the fantasy of the archive as the locus of unmediated facts about the past, but also emphasize its non-totality. The archive is never what Foucault describes as modernity's fantasmatic place where 'everything' would be accumulated, since it is determined as much by what it does not contain as by its holdings, however rich those holdings might be. In short, the archive is always a place marked by absence, by the traces of a history that is at once individual and collective, personal and impersonal. In 'War Damage', Richard Price expands upon this idea in close readings of works by four First World War poets: Guillaume Apollinaire, Wilfred Owen, Edward Thomas and David Bomberg. As Price demonstrates, archival holdings can lead one to question the status of published works as fixed

and stable entities, and also sharpen one's sense of the vulnerability of archival material. Although Dilthey's call for the establishment of literary archives was prompted in part by a desire to preserve that which might otherwise be lost, the archive can ironically itself become the place where damage and loss occur.

Price's essay addresses the question of damage both *within* the text (as its subject-matter) and *to* the text (as an archivable object). To this can be added the damage that may be done *by* the archive, or, more precisely, by the *mal d'archive* which can befall an individual or an entire community. In part, archive fever involves the assumption that the archive constitutes the locus of truth, of documents that bear unmediated witness to a past that can be mastered through the resurrection of the dead letter in *anamnesis* (or 'living' memory), as distinct from *hypomnesis* (or mechanical, external forms of recollection). One of the contentions to emerge from the above essays is that 'archive fiction' can help to counter this particular *mal d'archive* by alerting us to the constructedness and even the necessary fictionality entailed in any experience of the archive. In his comparative analysis of the Israeli writer David Grossman's 1986 novel *'Ayen 'erekh: ahavah* (translated by Betsy Rosenberg as *See Under: Love*) and Alain Resnais' 1955 Holocaust documentary film *Nuit et brouillard*, Axel Stähler considers the ways in which Grossman's novel offers both a vivid depiction of 'archive fever' in relation to the Holocaust and a way of combating that malady through a recognition of the fictionality entailed in discursive ventures based upon archival material. In post-traumatic times, it is only with the recognition of this fictionality that archival narratives can become redemptive. At the heart of this redemptive undertaking is a break with what have become archival clichés, including not only the belief that the archive is the locus of truth, and indeed of *all* the truth, but also the very idea of what constitutes archival material.

This is one of the key questions to be addressed in a number of recent literary works, especially those which engage either explicitly or indirectly with the catastrophes of twentieth-century history. In her essay on the novels of the Austrian writer Christoph Ransmayr (b. 1954) and their relation to works by the poets Paul Celan and Ingeborg Bachmann, and by the visual artist Anselm Kiefer, Dora Osborne assesses the ways in which various forms of what she terms 'anti-material' – dust, ash, sand, snow – come to function as intertextual archival traces, recalling (not necessarily intentionally on the author's part) the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi regime. Osborne suggests that the genre of archive fiction

includes works such as Ransmayr's most recent novel, *Der fliegende Berg* (2006), in which the violence of twentieth-century history is inscribed into the text through archival traces that are at once (inter)textual and terribly real: the ash produced by the Nazi crematoria settles on works of fiction that never engage directly with, or even name, that past. The archive is to be understood, then, as extending beyond the discursive; put slightly differently, non-discursive matter can become archival.

On the one hand, the archive is a public institution with an explicitly political complexion. On the other hand, it is the depository of the most personal material. In his analysis of the history of Michel Foucault's engagement with the concept of the archive, Michael Sheringham charts the shift in Foucault's thinking from a theoretical-textual model of the archive in the 1960s, which finds its most extended methodological treatment in Part Three ('L'énoncé et l'archive' – 'The Statement and the Archive') of *L'Archéologie du savoir* (1969), to a more experiential or existential model in the early 1970s. Sheringham demonstrates that the publication in 1973 of the memoir of the nineteenth-century murderer Pierre Rivière is a key moment in Foucault's development, opening as it does onto a sense of the archive as the repository of the traces of obscure lives that flash out of the archives as 'poèmes-vies' (poem-lives). The personal and the political, the private and the public, the experiential and the theoretical are drawn into a nexus that is to be grasped not only synchronically but also diachronically: the archival can return in surprising forms. As Sheringham observes, in the case of the Pierre Rivière archive it returns after Foucault's intervention in the form of two films based on the 1973 book: the first, with the same title as Foucault's volume, directed by René Allio (1976); the second, entitled *Retour en Normandie*, directed by Nicolas Philibert (2006).

If, as some works of archive fiction suggest, there is a necessary co-implication of fictionality and the archival, this fictionality is not to be mistaken for either falsification or unreliability, and it is not a licence to undermine the authority of personal and collective histories. In his essay on the work of the French writer-photographer Denis Roche (b. 1937), Fabien Arribert-Narce addresses the question of the relation between the archival and the fabricated in terms of the genre of 'photobiography'. According to Arribert-Narce, Roche seeks in his photobiographical work, which began in the 1970s, to archive his life and that of those closest to him in a manner that breaks with the autobiographical norms outlined by Philippe Lejeune, one of the most influential theorists of the genre.³⁹ Roche's archival practice is to be seen, Arribert-Narce argues, as an

attempt to capture lived experience in a non-narrative, non-rhetorical manner. It might seem natural to assume that the photobiographical archive records that which was present—Roland Barthes’ ‘Ça-a-été’ (*That-has-been*),⁴⁰ the past tense being important here, since it returns us to a thinking of the archive as the locus of absence. Arribert-Narce places the emphasis, however, on Roche’s attempts to remind the reader/viewer of something that is passed over in Barthes’ seminal *La Chambre claire* (1980), namely that photographs are always taken by someone, this taking (this fabrication) itself being rendered visible in Roche’s photobiographic archive.

In his analysis of Walid Raad’s ‘Atlas Project’, Jeffrey Wallen also focuses on a photographic archive, although in this instance the archive acts as a form of political counter-archive, its subject being the Lebanese civil wars of 1975–1991. Raad’s aim is to encourage the viewer to think again about the truth value of the archival and the extent to which the fictional can offer a different kind of archival truth. In Raad’s archival project, Wallen finds a spirit that is at once playful and politically engaged. Raad’s work is important both because it proposes an alternative, non-official archive of political violence, and because it raises questions in an original and imaginative way about the nature and function of archives as institutions, and how they might be approached differently. Crucially, the ludic quality of Raad’s archival work is not to be mistaken for a lack of political seriousness; indeed, as Wallen shows, it is precisely through his apparent playfulness that Raad manages to provoke a rethinking—and a reimagining—of one of the bloodiest recent conflicts, and thereby to offer hope of a break with the kind of cyclical violence that engulfed Lebanon for almost two decades. For anyone who needs reminding that the archival is not reducible to dusty scholarship, Raad’s work is, as Wallen demonstrates, a good place to start.

The idea of the counter-archive is also at the heart of Stijn Vervae’s reading of *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* (2002), by the Croatian writer Dubravka Ugrešić (b. 1949). In this work, the photograph album (described rather than presented) becomes a private archive with a political function, challenging the official state record produced after the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Central to this conflict between private and public, individual and state archive, is the question of value: what is worth saving for the archive, and what is to be considered ‘rubbish’ (*sméće*)? Comparing Ugrešić’s approach with that of the twentieth-century Russian novelist Konstantin Vaginov, and the visual artists Richard Wentworth and Ilya Kabakov, all of whom

address the question of the value of everyday objects, Vervaeke argues that Ugrešić's work, not only in its content but also in its fragmentary form, counters nationalist ideology, and stands as a counter-archive that challenges the official archive and the history constructed upon it.

The impact of new media, above all digitization and the internet, on the nature and accessibility of archives has received considerable attention in recent years,⁴¹ and is a topic touched upon in a number of the essays included in the present volume. One of the defining features of the digital age is the sheer quantity of data that can be accessed at any given moment, and in her contribution to the present collection Kristin Veel assesses the way in which 'information overload' has been treated in recent works of fiction, especially the novel *Teil der Lösung* (2007) by the German writer Ulrich Peltzer (b. 1956). Veel argues that this novel, along with works such as *Den Stille Pige* (2006) by the Danish writer Peter Høeg (b. 1957), may be understood in terms of a 'database aesthetics' in which, in contrast to traditional narrative forms (where information is generally linked causally or temporally), all information is presented to the reader at the same level and thus calls for a new kind of attention, no longer simply opposed to distraction. According to Veel, the database is a radically new archival form, in which material is no longer organized hierarchically. This insight can be conjoined with Derrida's claim that that which is no longer archived in the same way is no longer experienced in the same way.⁴² The archive is not simply a repository of experience, but also an institution that shapes experience. Whether new archival forms and media are necessarily more democratic, however, remains open to question.

The impact of the digital revolution is also at the heart of Carolyn Steedman's reflections on the history of the archive from the point of view of the user, in particular the historian. As Steedman argues, digitization changes our temporal relation to archival material, and thus alters the experience of those working in the archive. Steedman distinguishes carefully between the practice of the historian and that of the archivist, arguing that a novel such as Saramago's *Todos os nomes*, which is often seen as a classic work of archive fiction, is in fact concerned less with the archivist than with the historian, who aims, in the tradition of Jules Michelet, to exhume the dead and to grant them 'une seconde vie' (a second life).⁴³ On the one hand, as Steedman argues, what comes *after* the archive is the work – the discursive production of history – that grants the archived an afterlife. On the other hand, there is a belatedness here that connects archival studies to what Steedman terms 'death studies'.

Although Derrida insists in *Mal d'archive* upon the connection between archivization and the death drive, Steedman maintains that much work remains to be done by historians both to reflect upon the so-called 'archival turn' as an historical phenomenon and to consider what Derrida terms the 'archivolithique' ('archivolithic') drive.⁴⁴

The connection between the archival impulse and death also lies at the heart of the final essay in the collection, Dubravka Ugrešić's meditation on her own relation to the archive in the wake of the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. As in a number of the essays included here, Ugrešić's take on this relation between the archive and death reveals an essential doubleness: on the one hand, archival matter (photographs, for instance) serves a key role in the maintenance (if only in memory) of a lost world and, above all, of lost loved ones. This is the side of archival work on which Michelet places the emphasis in his 1869 preface to his *Histoire de France* (1833–1867), to which Steedman refers us. On the other hand, Ugrešić diagnoses an archive mania that she sees as leading inexorably to the erosion of authentic experience, as our lives become ever more fully archivable. In our archival passion, she argues, we struggle to ward off a death that will cast us all into the 'Great Archive', where we too will await the possibility of an afterlife being granted to us by those who enter the archive in the hope of waking the dead.

3

In Heinrich Böll's short story 'Dr. Murkes gesammeltes Schweigen' (first published in 1955), the title character collects snippets of radio silence as a way of protecting himself from the flood of information, from the facile garrulosity of broadcasters.⁴⁵ Have we reached a stage where such measures will become necessary to safeguard the archive from its own proliferation? Has the archive become a victim of its own success? Whilst the notion of an archive of (for instance) Beckettian silence may be a pleasing conceit, the empirical archive still has much to offer – provided that it maintains critical vigilance as to its own practices. At the heart of this vigilance must be the relationship between the archive and history, whether literary or any other kind. How are archives used to determine history, as well as to store it? How are they used to (re)interpret the past? Nietzsche's distinction between three types of history – monumental, antiquarian and critical – in his 1874 essay on the uses and disadvantages of history for life can arguably be applied to the archive, substituting the term accordingly:

Wenn der Mensch, der Grosses schaffen will, überhaupt die Vergangenheit braucht, so bemächtigt er sich ihrer vermittelt de[s] monumentalischen [Archivs]; wer dagegen im Gewohnten und Altverehrten beharren mag, pflegt das Vergangne als antiquarischer [Archivar]; und nur der, dem eine gegenwärtige Noth die Brust beklemmt und der um jeden Preis die Last von sich abwerfen will, hat ein Bedürfniss zu[m] kritischen, das heisst richtenden und verurtheilenden [Archiv].

(If a man who wants to do something great has need of the past at all, he appropriates it by means of monumental [archives]; he, on the other hand, who likes to persist in the familiar and the revered of old, tends the past as an antiquarian [archivist]; and only he who is oppressed by a present need, and who wants to throw off this burden at any cost, has need of [the] critical [archive], that is to say a[n] [archive] that judges and condemns.)⁴⁶

As we have seen, Napoleon could be cited as an example of the monumental archivist, with his dream of assembling all the archives of Europe into one big status symbol beside the Seine. The professional archivist, meanwhile, is arguably by definition antiquarian, inasmuch as s/he is trained to conserve. Yet it is demonstrably the third, critical sense of the archive that has gained ever greater ground in recent years.

Foucault's vision of modernity as a 'general archive' has its dialectical counterpart in Derrida's *mal d'archive*: if everything is included in the archive, then, in a sense, nothing is, since the archive is defined as much by what it does not include as by what it does. In *Quel che resta di Auschwitz* (1998), Giorgio Agamben seeks to limit the Foucauldian archive by setting it against testimony:

In opposizione all'*archivio*, che designa il sistema delle relazioni fra il non-detto e il detto, chiamiamo *testimonianza* il sistema delle relazioni fra il dentro e il fuori della *langue*, fra il dicibile e il non dicibile in ogni lingua – cioè fra una potenza di dire e la sua esistenza, fra una possibilità e una impossibilità di dire. [...] la costituzione dell'archivio presupponeva la messa fuori gioco del soggetto, ridotto a una semplice funzione o a una posizione vuota, e il suo scomparire nel brusio anonimo degli enunciati, nella testimonianza il posto vuoto del soggetto diventa la questione decisiva.

(In opposition to the *archive*, which designates the system of relations between the unsaid and the said, we give the name *testimony* to the system of relations between the inside and the outside of *langue*, between the sayable and the unsayable in every language – that is, between a potentiality of speech and its existence, between a possibility and an impossibility of speech. [...] The archive's constitution presupposed the bracketing of the subject, who was reduced to a simple function or an empty position; it was founded on the subject's disappearance into the anonymous murmur of statements. In testimony, by contrast, the empty place of the subject becomes the decisive question.)⁴⁷

To be sure, the notion of the archive as a kind of Borgesian infinity can only make us dizzy. Finite human beings can only bear finite archives – and this means that we need to know what to exclude as much as what to include. If this is the role of the archivist, it must also be the role of the archival critic. Of course, the question then becomes: how are we to decide what to include and what to exclude? To what principles or values might we appeal? These, too, are decisive questions, with no easy answers. They are part of the burden of finitude, to which each and every archive testifies.

The burden of finitude is to be seen, of course, in the present volume, which can serve only as a partial archive of the British Comparative Literature Association ‘Archive’ conference in July 2010. As noted above, a collection of twelve essays can scarcely pretend to cover the ever-expanding field of archive studies. What such a collection can hope to achieve, however, is to offer critical reflections on the ‘archival turn’ and to consider possible futures for it. One of the most striking features of the essays collected here is their attention to the temporality of the archive as that space in which the past is gathered in such a way that it remains open, in principle, to the future: not simply because an archive can grow through the accumulation of new material, but also, and perhaps above all, because an engagement with archival material shapes our understanding of the possible. At the simplest level, in the case of a literary archive this means that archival research can generate new ways of reading a given author or movement: the work of T. S. Eliot, for instance, will surely be understood differently when the archive of his correspondence with Emily Hale, held at Princeton University Library and already the subject of an archive fiction – Martha Cooley’s *The Archivist* (1998) – is finally made available to scholars in 2020. At another level, an archive is in principle designed as much for those who will enter it in search of documents as it is to house those documents. An archive is not simply a random accumulation of material; its holdings are organized (if not always successfully) according to a particular principle – principles of organization have their history, too – generally with the figure of the potential user in mind. And beyond that, in accordance with the essential doubleness of the archive and the archival impulse, those who enter the archive do so in search of traces of what *has been* in order to enable the archived to intervene in the shaping of what *will have been*. While Walter Benjamin’s Angel of History is blown backwards into the future, the Angel of the Archive is blown forwards into the past. If there is a time of the archive as heterotopia, then it is arguably the future perfect.

NOTES

- 1 Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 44.
- 2 Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive. Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995); translated by Eric Prenowitz as *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- 3 Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, translated by Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 75.
- 4 Michel Foucault, 'Des espaces autres', in *Dits et écrits 1954-1988*, edited by Daniel Defert and François Ewald, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), vol. 4, pp. 752-762, this quotation p. 759; translated by Robert Hurley as 'Different Spaces', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, vol. 2, edited by James D. Faubion (London: Allen Lane, 1998), pp. 175-185, this quotation p. 182.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 752; p. 175.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 755; p. 178.
- 7 Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard 'Tel', 2008 [1969]), pp. 177-178; translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith as *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1972), p. 129 (Foucault's emphasis).
- 8 Krzysztof Pomian, 'Les Archives, du Trésor des chartes au CARAN', in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, edited by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-1986), vol. 3, pp. 162-233, this quotation p. 179 (our translation).
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 225.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.
- 11 'La grande hantise qui a obsédé le XIX^e siècle a été, on le sait, l'histoire [...]. Le musée et la bibliothèque sont des hétérotopies qui sont propres à la culture occidentale du XIX^e siècle' ('As we know, the great obsession of the nineteenth century was history [...]. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are characteristic of Western culture in the nineteenth century') (Foucault, 'Des espaces autres', pp. 752, 759; pp. 175, 182). See also Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, 'Series Z: An Archival Fantasy', *Journal of European Psychoanalysis* 3:4 (Spring 1996-Winter 1997), n.p., <http://www.psychomedia.it/jep/pages/number3-4.htm>: 'this cult of the archive can be traced back to the nineteenth century'.
- 12 Sonia Combe, *Archives interdites. L'histoire confisquée* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001), p. 52 (our translation).
- 13 Cited in Yerushalmi, 'Series Z', n.p.
- 14 Wilhelm Dilthey, 'Archive für Literatur', *Deutsche Rundschau* 58 (1889), 360-375, this quotation p. 360 (our translation).
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 362.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 363.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 364.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 375.
- 20 Yerushalmi, 'Series Z', n.p.
- 21 Dilthey, 'Archive für Literatur', p. 366.
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 'Memory: The Question of Archives', Freud Museum, London, 3-5 June 1994.

- 24 Yerushalmi, 'Series Z', n.p.
- 25 Paul Celan, 'Todesfuge', in *Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bänden*, edited by Beda Allemann and Stefan Reichert (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 39–42, this quotation p. 41; translated by John Felstiner as 'Deathfugue', in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2001), pp. 31–33, this quotation p. 31.
- 26 Yerushalmi, 'Series Z', n.p.
- 27 Erdmut Wizisla, 'Vorwort', in *Walter Benjamins Archive. Bilder, Texte und Zeichen*, edited by the Walter Benjamin Archiv (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), pp. 8–13, this quotation p. 8; translated by Esther Leslie as 'Preface', in *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs*, edited by Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz and Erdmut Wizisla (London and New York: Verso, 2007), pp. 1–6, this quotation p. 1.
- 28 See James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996).
- 29 See Matthew Feldman, *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006).
- 30 For a selection of extracts from Sebald's own archive, see the catalogue to the 2008 Marbach exhibition, *Wandernde Schatten. W. G. Sebalds Unterwelt*, edited by Ulrich von Bülow, Heike Gfriereis and Ellen Strittmatter (Marbach am Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 2008). See also Ulrich von Bülow, 'The Disappearance of the Author in the Work: Some Reflections on W. G. Sebald's *Nachlass* in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach', translated by Jo Catling and Richard Sheppard, in *Saturn's Moons: W. G. Sebald—A Handbook*, edited by Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt (Oxford: Legenda, 2011), pp. 247–263.
- 31 In one of his last speeches (held in November 2001 at the Literaturhaus in Stuttgart), Sebald defined literature as 'ein Versuch der Restitution' ('an attempt at restitution'). See W. G. Sebald, *Campo Santo*, edited by Sven Meyer (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2003), pp. 240–248; translated by Anthea Bell as *Campo Santo*, edited by Sven Meyer (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 206–215. For critical views, see *A Literature of Restitution: Critical Essays on W. G. Sebald*, edited by Jeannette Baxter, Valerie Henitiuk and Ben Hutchinson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming in 2012).
- 32 Cited in Stephen Enniss, 'Paper Money: Libraries, Archives, and the Modern Writer', *Times Literary Supplement* 5639 (29 April 2011), pp. 14–15, this quotation p. 14.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 34 For more on the Siegfried Unseld archive, see Ben Hutchinson, 'Unseld's Archive', *Times Literary Supplement* 5586 (23 April 2010), pp. 14–15.
- 35 'Gallimard 1911–2011. Un siècle d'édition', Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, 22 March–3 July 2011.
- 36 Jean Paulhan, 'Prospectus autographe, années 1930s', Archives Éditions Gallimard, Paris; partially quoted in Stephen Romer, 'Le Rouge et le Noir', *Guardian*, 'Review' section, 26 March 2011, p. 18 (our translation).
- 37 Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 178–179; p. 130 (Foucault's emphasis).
- 38 Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, p. 27; p. 12.

- 39 See, for instance, Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975); translated by Katherine Leary as *On Autobiography*, edited by Paul John Eakin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
- 40 Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire. Note sur la photographie* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), p. 120; translated by Richard Howard as *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 77.
- 41 See, for example, Jerome McGann, 'Database, Interface and Archival Fever', *PMLA* 122:5 (October 2007), 1588–1592.
- 42 As Derrida puts it: 'on ne vit plus de la même façon ce qui ne s'archive plus de la même façon' ('what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way'); Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, p. 37; p. 18.
- 43 Jules Michelet, 'Jusqu'au 18 Brumaire', in *Œuvres complètes*, edited by Paul Viallaneix, 21 vols (Paris: Flammarion, 1971–1987), vol. XXI, p. 268 (our translation).
- 44 'la pulsion de mort est d'abord *anarchivique*, pourrait-on dire, *archiviolithique*. Destructrice d'archive, elle l'aura toujours été, par vocation silencieuse' ('the death drive is above all *anarchivic*, one could say, or *archiviolithic*. It will always have been archive-destroying, by silent vocation') (Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, p. 25; p. 10 (Derrida's emphasis)).
- 45 See Heinrich Böll, *Dr. Murkes gesammeltes Schweigen* (Cologne: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 2000); translated by Leila Vennewitz as 'Murke's Collected Silences', in *The Stories of Heinrich Böll* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), pp. 495–513.
- 46 Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben', *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen II*, in *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 243–334, this quotation p. 264; translated by R. J. Hollingdale as 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations*, edited by Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 57–123, this quotation p. 72.
- 47 Giorgio Agamben, *Quel che resta di Auschwitz. L'archivio e il testimone (Homo sacer III)* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998), p. 135; translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen as *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Archive and the Witness (Homo Sacer III)* (New York: Zone, 2002), p. 145 (Agamben's emphasis).