

Encyclopedics, Archiviolithics and Technologies of Theory

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I. The (Dis)order of Things

The Encyclopedia and the archive, as technologies of writing, are equivocal concepts which share the Enlightenment project's desire to be at once systematic and complete – an ambition towards the accumulation, conservation and transmission of the totality of human knowledge without remainder. However, if the encyclopedia and the archive express a desire for a universal system of order and full transmission of knowledge between the past, present and future, each technology embodies a counterforce which not only interrupts the possibility of a completed system of knowledge, but also contains an impulse towards self-destruction. As technologies responsible for the documentation and preservation of the intellectual history of ideas, the history of each technology is both a history of conservation and a history of loss. The Encyclopedic text, as Daniel Brewer suggests, seeks “to compile and condense knowledge, to systematize it and display the interconnections of all its branches;” however, once this organization of knowledge is put into practice for the purposes of “reordering institutions and social practices according to the light of reason, Enlightenment begins to self-destruct.”¹ The result of the encyclopedic project's attempt to reveal the order of all orders is an inaugural violence, a destructive and aggressive attempt to reduce the heterogeneity of the encyclopedia's content to a single order, which, paradoxically, acts to demystify the ideological motivations of the encyclopedia: “the ‘encyclopedists’ work reveals that all orders of knowledge – including their own – to be arbitrary and motivated, mediated through and through by the power deployed and channeled by discourses of order.”² The violence of the encyclopedic order recalls Walter Benjamin's insight in *The Critique of Violence* that any order or system is founded upon the conditions of a “lawmaking and law-preserving violence,”³ a violence that both posits and maintains the law. The imposition of an arbitrary and ideologically motivated order of knowledge also resonates with Foucault's order-shattering laughter in *The Order of Things*, occasioned by a reading of Borges' descriptions of a Chinese encyclopedia which organizes the animal world according to a complex and foreign system of criteria. For Foucault, if it seems impossible to derive such an absurd and inconsistent classificatory system of animals – one that distinguishes between animals that are “(i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush”⁴ – then it is necessarily impossible to

¹ David Brewer. *The Discourse of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France: Diderot and the Art of Philosophizing*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. p. 4.

² David Brewer. “1751: Ordering Knowledge,” in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier. Massachusetts, Cambridge UP, 1989. p. 454.

³ Walter Benjamin. “The Critique of Violence,” *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Vol. 2*. Ed. Jennings and Eiland. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999. p. 242

⁴ Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage, 1971. p. xvi-xx.

derive any such “common locus” regardless of how familiar or seemingly congruous the order may appear. The disorder revealed by Foucault’s laughter, then, illustrates that “order” is not an ontological category to be uncovered by the “light of reason,” but rather functions according to the performative force of language. Foucault denies any possible homogenization of the “world of things” into a single “utopian” order; instead, he suggests that there is a multiplicity of possible orders existing simultaneously, a “heterotopia” that rejects any single order.⁵

If the concept of the encyclopedia embodies the Enlightenment desire for “universal or total knowledge,”⁶ recent theoretical formulations of the archive in the humanities and social sciences have incited an interdisciplinary debate over the organization, conservation and reliability of knowledge stored and ordered in archival technology. Irving Velody suggests, “as the backdrop to all scholarly research stands the archive. Appeals to ultimate truth, adequacy and plausibility in the work of the humanities and social sciences rest on archival presuppositions.”⁷ If this is the case, Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever* has troubling consequences not just for the humanities and social sciences; his critique of archival technologies also extends to the reliability of modern information technology, its storage, retrieval and communication: “Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word “archive” ... Nothing is more troubled and troubling.”⁸ *Archive Fever* illustrates the mnemonic unreliability of the archive, the feverish and excited archive, which at once preserves and saves, but also institutes the proper interpretation, the traditional reception of the material it houses. Just as the encyclopedic drive to an originary and universal order is contaminated by difference and dissonance, gaps and spaces in the order of things, the archive, as Derrida suggests, is infected by a *mal d’archive*, a sickness and “irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement.”⁹ Derrida’s *mal d’archive* offers a radical deconstruction of that archival site and, more importantly, of the inheritance of a feverish desire for a universal system of classification characteristic of the encyclopedic visions of Leibniz, Chambers, Diderot and D’Alembert and Hegel, to name only a few, which would make possible the construction of a “totalized archive.” This deconstructive examination of the archive draws attention to the contingencies and ideological forces that initiate and preserve the archive; in this sense, Derrida’s re-theorization of the archive dispels the myth of an objective and impartial archival collection of information by emphasizing the social, political and technological forces that continually reinterpret or even reinvent the archive. Therefore, what is at stake in the concept of the archive is nothing less than the organization, production and

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Richard Yeo. *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Discourses and Enlightenment Culture*. Massachusetts, Cambridge UP, 2001. p. 1.

⁷ Irving Velody, “The Archive and the Human Sciences: Notes Towards a Theory of the Archive,” *The History of the Human Sciences*. Vol. 11, 4. November 1998. p. 1.

⁸ Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Trans. Eric Prenowitz. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. 1997. p. 90.

⁹ Ibid. p. 91.

dissemination of knowledge; more than this, this writing technology, as I will suggest, is an ever-changing and ever-increasing site that makes possible the intellectual history of ideas.

The archive, as Michael O’Driscoll has argued, “is not only *constructed by* theoretical discourse, but also *constructs* theoretical discourse. Indeed, the archive serves as the very *technology of theory*, in the sense that discursive technologies are assemblages that perform further intellectual work in the same manner that any technology ... is caught up in a cycle of (re)production without origin or end.”¹⁰ The ever expanding archive has sparked a contemporary and global anxiety over the continued proliferation of information, which, as I will suggest, is reminiscent of the anxieties that compelled Diderot and D’Alembert to look for an originary structure of knowledge in their *Encyclopédie*; however, just as dissonance and difference contaminated the *Encyclopédie*, the archive is always already a site of profound indeterminacy and heterogeneity which interrupts any desire to “return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement.”¹¹ While Derrida’s archive fever finds an exemplary moment in Freudian psychoanalysis, this interminable sickness would seem to be an inherited dis-order passed down from the fevered encyclopedic visions – or classificatory hallucinations – of the Enlightenment project. This discussion, looking to the encyclopedia as well as the archive, will suggest that both technologies of writing disrupt any ahistorical or universal theory of knowledge. Not only contaminated and indeterminate, the encyclopedia and the archive are without origin and without end, which resists any possibility of closure or totalization. By looking at the encyclopedia and the archive as technologies of theory, I will suggest that both technologies incorporate strategies capable of resisting the ideological forces that traditionally regulate the archive; in doing so, these strategies produce a discursive space in which to recover what Benjamin refers to as the “repressed histories” that have either been excluded from or repressed within the archive.

II. Archiviolithics

In *Archive Fever*, Derrida is concerned not just with the mnemonic unreliability of the concept of the archive, he is concerned with the repressions and suppressions of the archive, the “superrepressions”¹² that seek to exclude the traumatic phantoms that threaten to return from the archive. The archive conceals the concealment of secrets hidden in the archive. It conceals the (attempted) murder of Moses by the Jews, as Freud points out in his *Moses and Monotheism*. The trauma in the archive, and the traumas that result from the archive, take the form of a *mal d’archive*, an interminable sickness and irrepressible desire for an impossible origin and “absolute commencement”: “It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there’s too

¹⁰ Michael O’Driscoll and Tilottama Rajan (eds). *After Poststructuralism: Writing the Intellectual History of Theory*. Toronto. University of Toronto Press, 2002. p. 285.

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*. p. 91.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

much of it, right where something in it anarchives itself.”¹³ For Derrida, Freudian psychoanalysis offers a theory of the archive conditioned by two fundamental, but conflicting forces. The first of these two forces, Derrida suggests, takes the form of an interminable desire he associates with the death drive, which explains why “there is archivization and why anarchiving destruction belongs to the process of archivization and produces the very thing it reduces, on occasion to ashes, and beyond.”¹⁴ The death drive, in *Archive Fever*, works in silence and under concealment to destroy the archive: it is “anarchivic” or “archiviolithic.”¹⁵ It is the death drive that is responsible for the burning of the *hypomnema*, that is, the technology of the archive, which induces amnesia and forgetfulness: this is the example of the burning of the library at Alexandria, the Nazi burning of Jewish books during World War II, or in the wake of the U.S. led “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” this is the force responsible for the recent lootings and burnings in Iraq’s National Museum, National Library, National Archives, and other repositories that might provide the basis for rebuilding a common culture amongst Iraq’s disparate ethnic groups.¹⁶ Derrida’s mnemonically unreliable archive contrasts with Foucault’s more reliable archive of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, which proposes that archives are textual schematizations that forcibly produce knowledge according to the archive’s institutional power structures.¹⁷ The mnemonic reliability of Foucault’s archive, however, does coincide with the violent archontic force of the archive of Derrida, who links the archive drive, responsible for the conservation and unification of the archive, to the pleasure principle.

This second force conditioning the archive, the terminable force countering the interminability of the death drive, is the archontic principle which determines both how the technical structure of the archive will be housed as well as how it will be interpreted. The archontic principle also holds the power of consignation, a power that “aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration. In an archive, there should not be any absolute dissolution, any heterogeneity or secret which could separate, or partition, in an absolute manner.”¹⁸ The archontic principle of the archive is also the means by which the corpus is programmed for its “proper” or “traditional” reception, so that it repeats a prescribed citation, a performative repetition, acting according to the law. Thus archiviology, the science of the archive, must have this sort of institutional history, a juridical history, a history that is – says Derrida – a “deconstructable history.”¹⁹

¹³ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁶ Martin Gottlieb. “Ashcroft Says U.S. Will Aid Effort to Save Iraq Treasures,” *New York Times*, May 7, 2003: A14. (See also Marlene Manoff’s “Theories of the Archive Across the Disciplines,” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*. Vol. 4. Issue 1. Jan. 2004. p. 4.)

¹⁷ Michel Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Routledge, 1972. P. 89-142

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever*. p. 3.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

This is also the archontic intention of Yerushalmi in interpreting psychoanalysis to be a “Jewish science.” In *Freud’s Moses*, Yerushalmi would bring Freud’s corpus back into the archival history of Judaism through a renewed circumcision. Derrida suggests that Yerushalmi’s treatment of Freud can only “read, interpret, establish its object, namely a given inheritance by inscribing itself into it,” and by doing so, “it belongs to the Freudian corpus, whose name it also carries ... the archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed.”²⁰ However, this is where Derrida locates the double function of archive in relation to Yerushalmi’s text: the archive preserves, but it also disciplines. Between Yerushalmi’s *Freud’s Moses* and his previous text *Zakhor*, Derrida finds reason to tremble at the force of law, the force of the archive, the force of Yerushalmi’s text. He trembles at Yerushalmi’s use of the One and the Unique to describe “unique vision,” “specific hope,” or the phrase “only in Israel and nowhere else.”²¹ The One is an effect of the archive: it is the inaugural violence necessary for an archival tradition which continues to repeat itself. However, if tradition is the promise of repetition, it also brings the death drive: “the violence of forgetting, superrepression, the anarchive, in short, the possibility of putting to death the very thing, whatever its name, which *carries the law in its tradition* ...”²² In other words, the law carries its own death. The death drive functions silently within the subject of the law, within the archive as an archiviolithics, taking the form of an aggressive or destructive force which simultaneously institutes and destroys the archive. As Paul Voss suggests, “the archive’s dream of perfect order is disturbed by the nightmare of its random, heterogeneous, and often unruly contents.”²³ What is routinely censored in the institutional bureaucracies, in the university library, or other archives of the Foucaultian variety, is precisely this recognition of a *mal d’archive*, a “malice in the archive,” which works to repress the traumas, monstrosities and threatening specters that have not been properly addressed or sufficiently mourned.

III. Encyclopedics

One of the most important contributions of Derrida’s treatment of the concept of the archive is the notion that the structure of the archive determines what can be stored such that history and memory are determined by the material conditions and technological methods used in this ever-developing “project of general archiviology.” Using the example of Freud’s correspondence with his contemporaries, Derrida suggests that the institution of psychoanalysis was determined by the state of communication and archival technology; with the use of “MCI or AT&T telephonic credit cards, portable tape recorders, computers, printers, faxes, televisions, teleconferences, and above all E-mail,” Derrida speculates that these “geo-techno-logical shocks” would have radically altered

²⁰ Ibid., p. 67, 68.

²¹ Ibid., p. 77.

²² Ibid., p. 78.

²³ Paul Voss and Marta L. Werner, “Towards a Poetics of the Archive: Introduction. *Studies in the Literary Imagination*. 32, 1. Spring 1999. p. ii.

the theoretical and practical dimensions of Freudian psychoanalysis.²⁴ Communication and archival technology, in this sense, determined not just the nature of the knowledge produced, but the material information that is left over for subsequent research at the Freud archives. This is also to recall Derrida's emphasis on Freud's formulation of the mystic writing pad as the "technical model" used to "represent outside memory as internal archivization."²⁵ The model of the mystic writing pad, which incorporates the larger body of psychoanalytic concepts and thematics, becomes, then, "a theory of the archive and not only a theory of memory."²⁶

This concern for a theory of the archive coincides with Derrida's concern to account for the structure and materiality of archival technology as it has progressed through a series of historical changes. Linking the "unlimited upheaval in archival technology" to the historical changes in "biblical philology," the "translations of the bible," or the "establishing of the hypomnesic writings of Plato or of Aristotle by the medieval copyists," Derrida traces – however briefly – the historical and material changes in the technologies of writing that have come to constitute the current archival history of interpretation and interpretation of archival history.²⁷ In this sense, Derrida is outlining what Kittler refers to as the shift in the Discourse Network of 1800 from the philological concerns of the Republic of Scholars to the hermeneutic tradition via the figure of Faust, a transitional figure who takes on the tradition "and great archive"²⁸ of the Republic of Scholars. Kittler's concern for the "mediality of all discourse" frees him from the written word that has been the concern for traditional historiography in order to consider the fundamental changes in history as a consequence of or effect of the "material technology of writing."²⁹

Alongside his concern to trace the development of the historical archive, particularly where "classical philology" becomes "so much more than philology," Derrida's interest in the materiality and technicality of writing practices has contributed to the recognition that archival technology determines the very "institution of the archivable event."³⁰ And if archival technology determines both what can be archived as well as the entire structure of the archive itself, it would seem that technology acts to determine the very idea of history and memory: this is to recall Nietzsche's recognition that "Our writing materials help write our thoughts."³¹ This concern for the historical shifts in archival techniques, particularly around the time of the Republic of Scholars, in part stems from the techno-scientific advances of the encyclopedists and their desire to discover a principle or order as the grounds for the construction of a totalized archive of

²⁴ Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever*. p. 16.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁸ Kittler, Friedrich A. *Discourse Networks: 1800/1900*. Trans. Michael Metteer with Chris Culleens. Stanford. Stanford UP, 1990. p. 8.

²⁹ Michael O'Driscoll and Tilottama Rajan (eds). *After Poststructuralism: Writing the Intellectual History of Theory*. p. 304.

³⁰ Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever*. p. 19.

³¹ Quoted in Friedrich Kittler's *Discourse Networks: 1800/1900*.

human knowledge. As Richard Yeo suggests, one of the first systematic attempts to construct an encyclopedia, the work of Ephraim Chambers, “could not have happened without both the ideals associated with the Republic of Letters, and the commercial market of eighteenth-century publishing.”³² These ideals, as Yeo explains, were to construct a “far-flung community” of scholars across Europe in which the free distribution of information amongst a diasporic intellectual community could occur.³³ However, in contrast to the encyclopedists of the Republic of Letters, Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* did not wish to offer an organization of existing knowledge, like previous encyclopedias; rather, Diderot and D’Alembert wanted the *Encyclopédie* to be at the forefront of creating new knowledge and legitimizing new subjects of knowledge. The *Encyclopédie* wanted to be part of shaping, and not just organizing knowledge, and in this way took up a critical position from which existing forms of knowledge and discourses of order could be contested. Attempting to establish a total archive that would both house and legislate knowledge, Diderot and D’Alembert assume archontic authority over the “principle of consignment” or the “gathering together”³⁴ of a particular order of knowledge. As editor-archons, Diderot and D’Alembert assume the authority to impose a new law, a new ordering principle underlying any form of knowledge from which they decided not only what would constitute an archivable piece of knowledge, but how this “single corpus” would constitute “a system or synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration.”³⁵ Reaching fifty contributing members, as a footnote in the *Preliminary Discourse* to the Encyclopedia tells us, “with each new volume until the final official suppression of the *Encyclopédie* in 1759, the number of contributors grew in proportion to the enthusiasm for the project among the members of the republic of letters.”³⁶ In the spirit of the death drive, all copies of the *Encyclopédie* were to be burned by the church, a traditional archontic authority, in order to protect the body politic from the possibility of a revolutionary act of “archival violence”³⁷ which would attempt to posit and maintain a new law over the production and organization of knowledge. Just as the archive is constructed according to the contingencies of social, political and technological forces, as Daniel Brewer points out, the *Encyclopédie*’s apparently universal order of knowledge reveals itself to have “always been mediated by specific desires, political motivations, and ideological imperatives.”³⁸

The *Encyclopédie* itself, in all the complexity of its system of cross-references to other articles, was to constitute not just a unified principle for the order of things, but also a topographical representation of the human understanding. Topography, as a type of cartographic writing, combines *topos*,

³² Richard Yeo. *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Discourses and Enlightenment Culture*. p. 40.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁴ Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever*. p. 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Jean Le Rond D’Alembert. *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*. Trans. Richard N. Schwab. New York. Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc. 1963. p. 3.

³⁷ Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever*. p. 7.

³⁸ Daniel Brewer. *The Discourse of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France: Diderot and the Art of Philosophizing*. p. 55.

place, with *graphein*, to write; etymologically it means the writing of a place. The act of mapping, then, is a virtual writing or topography that works according to the performative force of language to bring into existence the terrain or place named. Mapping is to give order or configuration by way of assigning a particular place a name that becomes intrinsic to its existence. By constructing a map that would account for the genealogical and encyclopedic arrangement of knowledge, Diderot and D'Alembert, as philosophic cartographers, suggest that their *Encyclopédie* would “expose the order and linkage of human knowledge” but also “go back to the origin and generation of our ideas.”³⁹ Following Bacon’s attempt to organize his encyclopedic project as an organic tree of knowledge, Diderot and D'Alembert reorganize their encyclopedia as a “Tree or Systematic Chart” in the form of a “world map” of knowledge. For Diderot and D'Alembert, Bacon’s “tree of knowledge” overexcited the intellect by taking it through a “tortuous labyrinth” in which the intellect is bound to “retrace its footsteps” until the utter repetition and disorder leads the encyclopedic tree to be “disfigured” and “utterly destroyed.”⁴⁰ This uncannily sounds like Freud’s death drive. In fact, the encyclopedia of Diderot and D'Alembert is a prototype for the twentieth-century archivic technologies outlined by Derrida. Like the over-excitation caused by the death drive, and supposedly moderated by the pleasure principle, Diderot suggests that “Too much communication can sometimes benumb the mind and prejudice the efforts of which it is capable.”⁴¹ Thus, to pleasure the senses and “protect our own bodies from pain and destruction,”⁴² the encyclopedic text is to gather knowledge of pleasures and displeasures under one project. To do so, in the *Preliminary Discourse* D'Alembert proposes that the *Encyclopédie* would take the form of a “world map” of knowledge which the philosopher is capable of viewing from a privileged critical perspective:

[The encyclopedic project] consists of collective knowledge into the smallest possible area possible and of placing the philosopher at a vantage point, so to speak, high above this vast labyrinth, whence he can perceive the principal sciences and the arts simultaneously. From there he can see at a glance the objects of their speculations and the operations which can be made of these objects; he can discern the general branches of human knowledge, the points that separate or unite them; and sometimes he can ever glimpse the secrets that relate them to one another. It is a kind of world map which is to show the principle countries, their position and their mutual dependence, the road that leads directly from one to the other. This road is often cut by a thousand obstacles, which are known in each country only to the inhabitants or to travelers, and which cannot be represented except in individual, highly detailed maps. These individual maps will be the different articles of the *Encyclopedia* and the Tree or Systematic Chart will be its world map.⁴³

This world map, drawn in the true “systematic spirit”⁴⁴ of the Enlightenment project, is a topographical technology of writing which gathers the *topos* and the

³⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*. p. 72.

⁴⁰ Jean Le Rond D'Alembert.. *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*. p. 46.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

nomos together, a gathering that allows D'Alembert's philosopher to assume the "topo-nomological" authority of the "archon."⁴⁵ And if the archontic power, as Derrida suggests, "also gathers the functions of unification, of identification, [and] of classification,"⁴⁶ the philosopher from his or her privileged vantage point gathers together the encyclopedic text under a single and coherent order of things. The encyclopedia, like the archive, is conditioned by Freud's dueling principles of Eros and Thanatos, a terminable force of consignment that offers the encyclopedia an organizing principle to account for the totality of knowledge, and an interminable *mal d'archive* which threatens to "disfigure" or "utterly destroy" the encyclopedic tree. In this sense, if the archive is susceptible to or threatened by "any absolute dissociation, any heterogeneity or secret which could separate, or partition, in an absolute manner," so too is the encyclopedic project of Diderot and D'Alembert.

In his article "Deconstructing the map," J.B. Harley suggests that every map is necessarily an abstraction from the place or landscape from which it is produced, and this abstraction is always a violent process.⁴⁷ The map, as a topographic writing tool, is susceptible to the distortions and exclusions that create a dissonance and disconnection between the thing named and the map produced. David Bates, in his article of Diderot's and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, suggests that this dissonance in the mapmaking process amounts to "cartographic aberrations" which resemble the "selective omission, simplification, combination, exaggeration, and displacement" that appear in the techniques of "Freud's dreamwork."⁴⁸ Not only dissimulated and distorted, the map for Diderot and D'Alembert risks becoming a fetish object that bears no resemblance to the things or reality they supposedly order according to a unifying principle of knowledge. In this way, contemporary scholars who assume that the archive either provides direct access to the past or objective and impartial rendering of the knowledge that is stored also run the risk of fetishizing the archive. The knowledge contained in the archive, like the knowledge contained the encyclopedic text, runs the risk of taking the place of the reality it is meant to represent. As Marlene Manoff suggests, "whatever the archive contains is already a reconstruction – a recording of history from a particular perspective; it thus cannot provide transparent access to the events themselves."⁴⁹

By fixing reality according to a topographical tree diagram, Diderot's and D'Alembert's map offers neither a systematic nor a universal representation of the order of things, but rather introduces an element of profound indeterminacy and incommensurability into their entire encyclopedic project. The *Encyclopédie* itself is as carefully ordered body of knowledge, contains referential slippages, a complex system of cross-references to other articles or independent texts that

⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*. p. 3.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Quoted through, David Bates "Cartographic Aberrations: Epistemology and Order in the Encyclopedic Map," in *Using the Encyclopédie: Ways of Knowing, ways of Reading*. Ed. David Brewer and Julie Candler Hayes. Voltaire Foundation Oxford. 2002: 05. p. 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁹ Marlene Manoff, "Theories of Archives Across the Disciplines."

may or may not exist, numerous irresolvable gaps in its structure, and a self-admittedly arbitrary system of ordering the contents of encyclopedic text.

The encyclopedic text, in this sense, is constituted on the basis of an irreducible difference that prevents any totalizing archive or universal mastery of knowledge. Suffering from a *mal d'archive*, in his own article "*Encyclopédie*," Diderot laments the explosion of information that threatens to capsize any attempt at systematic or universal organization of knowledge.⁵⁰ This anxiety or even terror surrounding the sheer volume of information and textual production recalls D'Alembert's sublime analogy of the universe of knowledge to a "vast ocean."⁵¹ This image of a vast ocean, one that Kant employs in the *Critique of Judgement* to evoke the sublime, rivals the philosopher's mastering gaze over the world map of knowledge such that it threatens to interrupt the operations of the *Encyclopédie's* organization principle. For Jean-Francois Lyotard, this would indicate the sublime's ability to resist the totalizing expansion by which a technological monad synthesizes everything into its system.⁵² This sublime resistance towards the systematic intentions of the encyclopedic project mirrors, uncannily, the sublime indeterminacies that increasingly resist totalization in the postmodern information age. The encyclopedic drive, like the archive drive, desires an originary and universal order; however, just as the archive is infected with a *mal d'archive*, the encyclopedic text is also contaminated by difference and dissonance, gaps and spaces in the order of things, which resist any attempt for a systematic and universal principle of knowledge.

IV. Technologies of Theory

If the encyclopedic text contains gaps, slippages and distortions that interrupt its universal and systematic intentions, and if the archive contains a burning fever that threatens to destroy its entire structure, this does not mean that either technology is obsolete and should be left behind; rather this is to affirm the productive potential in the impossibilities and indeterminacies found in both technologies. As Derrida points out, there is nothing more "troubled and more troubling" than the archive, precisely because we are always "in need of archives."⁵³ Similarly, Brewer points out that Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* challenged the very orders of knowledge existing in its time: "the encyclopedists' work helped undermine an old order ... the *Encyclopédie méthodique*, helped establish new orders, serving equally well the interests of the monarchy, revolution, and republic."⁵⁴ In fact, both the encyclopedic text and the archive are technologies of theory which offer a powerful *teknē* or technique in the production of knowledge, regardless of their ideological motivations or political imperatives. These technologies, by bringing into being the thing named,

⁵⁰ See Michael O'Driscoll and Tilottama Rajan (eds). *After Poststructuralism: Writing the Intellectual History of Theory*.

⁵¹ Jean Le Rond D'Alembert.. *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*. p. 50.

⁵² Jean-Francois Lyotard. *The Inhuman*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Stanford, Stanford UP, 1991. p. 84.

⁵³ Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever*. p. 91.

⁵⁴ Daniel Brewer. *The Discourse of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France: Diderot and the Art of Philosophizing*. p. 55.

contain a performative force capable of creating new orders of knowledge and legitimizing new subjects of study. As Derrida suggests in *Archive Fever*, “there is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by these essential criteria: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.”⁵⁵

The theoretical consequences of Derrida’s reformulation of the archive cannot be understated. At stake in the archive and the encyclopedic text is the very organization of knowledge, which has powerful implications on notions of democracy, justice and truth. The very notion, for example, of a United Nations Truth Council over the genocide in Rwanda or apartheid in South Africa, assumes access to an archive of information which threatens to be suppressed, repressed or even to disappear “without remains and without knowledge.”⁵⁶ In 1992, during the war between Abkhazia and Georgia, four Georgian members of the National Guard threw incendiary grenades into the Abkhazian State Archives resulting in the destruction of the history and memory of an entire region.⁵⁷ These particular incidents are sites of archive trauma, sites that are protected and preserved by the archontic function over the archive; from the suppression and destruction of the archive, each incident produces specters that threaten to return, or traumas that stigmatize an entire community. Indeed, Freud suggests in *Moses and Monotheism* that there exists an unacknowledged and inaugural violence against Moses by the Jews which has come to constitute the founding traumatic experience for the archivic history of the Jewish community.

Archivology, as a general science of the archive, in this sense, could constitute a science of archivic trauma, a *de facto* science that reaches into the depths of the archive to reveal secrets that have remained hidden but now have the opportunity to come to light. Benjamin’s “historical materialist” approach, outlined in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, points to the possibility of “blasting open the continuum of history” for a “revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past.”⁵⁸ As technologies of theory, the archive and the encyclopedic text are knowledge machines engaged in the continuous reproduction and preservation of material knowledge without order and without end. However, as technologies that contain numerous gaps, fissures and indeterminacies there are discursive spaces produced which offer the possibility of resistance. The performative reproduction of knowledge occurring continuously by way of the archive and the encyclopedic text, as Derrida suggests in *Limited Inc.*, “are from their very inception on, parasited, harbouring and haunted by the possibility of being repeated in all kinds of ways.”⁵⁹ The repetitions necessary for the performative process to re-materialize, for the machines of knowledge to reproduce the proper citation or traditional orders knowledge, carry within them the silent workings of the death drive. The archive

⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*. p. 4, n.1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵⁷ (See also Marlene Manoff’s “Theories of the Archive Across the Disciplines,” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*. Vol. 4. Issue 1. Jan. 2004. p. 4.

⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin. “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” from *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York : Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968. p. 265.

⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida. *Limited Inc.* Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1988. p. 59.

drive to produce and conserve the material of the archive, in the same stroke, holds the “possibility of putting to death the very thing, whatever its name, which carries the *law in its tradition*.”⁶⁰ The law of the archive carries its own death in the form of an archiviolithic force, an aggressive or destructive force which simultaneously institutes and destroys the archive. Diderot himself, as Brewer suggests, likens the *Encyclopédie* to a machine, a “knowledge machine”⁶¹ capable of turning against the intentions of its makers in an excessive production of information that explodes its confines and gives rise to what Foucault referred to as a “heterotopia:” a heteroclite space that destroys the myths and metanarratives of any single order of knowledge. Viewed as a knowledge machine producing information in a particular way, the emergence of this technique of encyclopedic representation marks the beginnings of an “uncannily familiar technologization of values,” which has produced the current “techno-humanism” or inhumanism of the postindustrial information age.⁶² This “technologization of knowledge” arising from the encyclopedic project, says Brewer, stems from the “increased importance the encyclopedists attribute to what is now called technology and then the ‘arts and trades.’”⁶³

The emphasis on the techniques of knowledge, on a sort of encyclopedic *teknē*, also mirrors the recent reformulations of archival technologies occurring across the humanities and the social sciences. If the encyclopedic text was viewed by the practitioners of the “arts and sciences” as a writing technology capable of organizing and producing universal knowledge, there is still the lingering hope within the humanities and social sciences that archival technology can yield objective, impartial and complete results. The archive, as Harriet Bradley writes, “even in an age of postmodern skepticism ... continues to hold its alluring seductions and intoxications. There is the promise (or illusion?) that all time lost can become time regained. In the archive, there lingers an assurance of concreteness, objectivity, recovery and wholeness.”⁶⁴

This symptom of a *mal d’archive* points to the feverish desire to find within the archive an origin and end, the promise of closure to an inaugural trauma by uncovering a secret that has been hidden or to recover a fact that has been lost.

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever*. p. 79.

⁶¹ Daniel Brewer. *The Discourse of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France: Diderot and the Art of Philosophizing*. p. 24.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶⁴ Harriet Bradley. “The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found,” *History of the Human Sciences*. Vol. 12, 2. May 1993. p. 118.

However, if the archive holds traumatic phantoms, is subject to historic exclusions, or suffered destruction without return, these contingencies prevent any feverish desire to return to “absolute commencement.” This sickness or *mal d’archive* is an unavoidable condition which Derrida himself suffers from, a desire that has profound impact upon the way in which we conceive of archival technology and its determinative relation with history and memory. Perhaps the task ahead is to re-theorize not just the changing methods of interpreting the archive, but also the ways in which archival technology has determined and continues to determine the ways in which information is structured, organized and stored within the archive. Perhaps, as I have suggested, a genealogical study of the encyclopedic project – and all the contingent factors that went into its construction as a technology of writing – will demonstrate to scholars across the disciplines just what is at stake in contemporary archival technology. If the gaps and spaces in the encyclopedic project – so apparent to us now – foiled the enlightenment ambition to be at once systematic and complete, this must necessarily be the case with the most advanced information technology. If science seems to pursue rational and objective methods of inquiring with a feverish desire, perhaps the ideological forces, political imperatives or chance exclusions that affected and infected the encyclopedic project will be a necessary corrective for the lingering remnants of totalizing drive for universal knowledge.

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