Introduction

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Although it has never been an uncontroversial critical issue, the term "archive" is arguably among the most contested and visible in the contemporary humanities. Jacques Derrida, during a lecture delivered at the Freud Museum in London in 1994, refocused attention on the term's inherent ambiguity by exerting a certain amount of critical pressure upon the boundaries pertaining between conceptual, lexical and semantic notions of "the archive". Provocative in its historical scope and theoretical boldness, the piece quickly crossed both the Channel and the Atlantic the following year, appearing in book form as *Mal d'archive, une impression freudienne*, and in *Diacritics* as "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression" (in Eric Prenowitz's collaborative translation). There followed fiery debates entailing, among other issues, the question of authenticity, the trace of origins, and the inherent ambiguity of archives, which Derrida located in their contradictory status as a site of "*commencement*" permeated by the practice of "*commandement*" (Derrida 1995; Assman 2002: 301).

Derrida remains today an inevitable (if perhaps rather predictable) interlocutor because of two insights offered in that piece: firstly, the affective pull of archival material (or what he calls the "desire and disorder of the archive", 1995: 52), which has now become central to so many theoretical and political debates on the topic; and the archive's paradoxical investment in forgetfulness, which is in *Archive Fever* linked to the law, the death drive, and violence. Insofar as Freud's archive becomes, in Derrida, an exemplary way to question how "example" and "concept" work in

criticism, "the concept of the archive" also "*shelters* itself from this memory which it shelters: which comes down to saying also that it forgets it" (Derrida 1995: 9; emphasis original).

Mal d'archive is central to a cluster of seminal archive and memory-related contributions, which have themselves tended to be somewhat distant from deconstructive preoccupations, and among which we would like to single out here Harald Weinrich's important exploration of forgetfulness in *Lethe* (1997) and Aleida Assmann's analysis of remembrance and cultural memory, a volume whose translation into English was delayed for over ten years (1999 and 2011). Both Weinrich and Assman are interested in the interrelatedness of oblivion and memory, and elaborate on the distinction between personal recollection – *Errinnerung* – and collective remembrance – *Gedächtnis*. The authors deploy quite different conceptual and lexical tools, but share the conviction that the past reconstituted in archives and museums is utterly different from the one we individually mourn or miss.

Archives, tangible and metaphorical, thus exist at the uneasy intersection of personal and public spaces, authenticity and artifice, conservation and erasure. After Hans Magnus Enzensberger's memorable line, "gespeichert, d.h. vergessen"/ "To store, that is, to forget" (which Harald Weinrich uses as a title for the last chapter in his book; see 1997: 290), there has been a growing consensus that, far from protecting from forgetfulness, archives, like acts of monumentalising, may exacerbate its effects.

Another dominant feature of the debate revolves around the tensions generated by borders, taxonomies, and power as constitutive forces of the archival process, a preoccupation at the heart of Michel Foucault's *Archéologie du savoir* (1969). Focused more closely on nineteenth-century archival practices, British historian Carolyn Steedman's *Dust: the Archive and Cultural History* (2001) discusses the contestatory nature of the authority which archives were granted, while also revisiting Jules Michelet's claim that, thanks to the archive, history could resuscitate the dead. The combined myths of archival completeness and authenticity have now been fractured, deeply and ineluctably, leaving room for an increased awareness of both the ideological and fragmentary (at times even haphazard) quality of "stored knowledge", and an intensified perception that silence and absences – either as a result of trauma or of destruction and censorship – are some of the archive's defining characters. Increasingly seen as representations and textual constructs,

archives are now habitually recognised by their transient and partisan quality (Loewental in Blouin 2006: 203).

Although these debates have questioned archives' capacity to legitimise and authenticate, they also seem to retain and even increase their appeal in other ways: for instance, both critical and literary discourses now tend to evoke them less as repositories – of knowledge, manuscripts, and memorialising documents – than as figures of a broader cultural preoccupation around issues of nostalgia, memory, and materiality. On the one hand, in literary criticism we witness an ever-expanding use of the term "archive" to loosely refer to primary and secondary sources. This Foucauldian treatment intends to flag up the inherently political quality of any critical selection, but has the niggling side effect of doubling the archive's own tendency to shelter itself from what it is supposed to shelter, to borrow again from Derrida: to make us all forget the inherent political act which any bibliography necessarily is by proclaiming it rather than working through it. On the other hand, in contemporary fiction the archive instils new life in themes of desire and death, while paradoxically rematerialising the lost aura of the object in an age of simulacra, as Helen Freshwater explains (2003: 732). This shift in mode and quality resulted in the rise of what Suzanne Keen calls the "romance of the archive": fictions that eroticise the archive and, in the steps of Jorge Luis Borges and Italo Calvino, "remake the idealized and metafictional labyrinth into a tangible site – the library or private collection" (Keen 2001: 31). This happens in exemplary fashion in *The Archivist* by Martha Cooley, published in 1998, in which the fictional plot revolves around the actual archivisation, and suppression, of T. S. Eliot's letters to Emily Hale (held at the Firestone Library at Princeton University and out of public sight and consultation until 2020).

While archives offer contemporary novelists useful temporal and narrative devices, the rapid progress of digitisation presents another set of critical challenges entirely. Although still very much an open-ended process, the project of digital archivisation is effectively redesigning the modes and methodologies of literary criticism, often stimulating alternative perceptions of authors and their works. As shown by the two well-known instances of ITEM (Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes) and NINES (Network Infrastructure for Nineteenth Century Scholarship), the benefits of digital genetic approaches to texts, and of linking material archives to digital

scholarship, often prove considerable. In Lisa Stead's words (in Smith and Stead 2013: 8), digital collections often help to reframe or reclaim the work and reputation of literary figures, while enabling readers and critics to access the complex archaeology of manuscripts in their "inchoate, embryonic state" (Van Mierlo in Smith and Stead 2013: 19) – a factor which has already started to yield fascinating new insights into textual composition. Digital archives can also work to intensify the merit of collaboration, both interdisciplinary and intra-disciplinary, by allowing for more cooperative forms of scholarship and even questioning the divide between academic and non-academic approaches through crowdsourcing, as Cornell University's emergent *Freedom on the Move* project indicates (Price 2011: 9; Spahr et al. 2016; Konkol 2015; http://freedomonthemove.org).

As our contributors make clear, however, there are important political questions revolving around the relation between archive and digitalisation. In a recent polemical exchange on the (virtual) pages of the *Los Angeles Review of Books* (2016) Daniel Alligton, Sarah Brouillette and David Golumbia pull no punches in their "Neoliberal Tools (and Archives): A Political History of Digital Humanities", claiming that:

Advocates position Digital Humanities as a corrective to the "traditional" and outmoded approaches to literary study that supposedly plague English departments. Like much of the rhetoric surrounding Silicon Valley today, this discourse sees technological innovation as an end in itself and equates the development of disruptive business models with political progress. Yet despite the aggressive promotion of Digital Humanities as a radical insurgency, its institutional success has for the most part involved the displacement of politically progressive humanities scholarship and activism in favour of the manufacture of digital tool and archives.

In their response piece, tellingly entitled "Beyond Resistance: Towards a Future History of Digital Humanities", Juliana Spahr, Richard So and Andrew Piper concede to a number of the arguments made by Alligton et al., but refuse the tenet that "any method can be a priori politically determined" (Spahr 2016: 4). Although such an open-minded stance seems hard to contest, it also shows that what Alligton et al. mean by "critique" is quite different from Spahr et al.'s sensible co-operative spirit. The political potential that Spahr and her co-authors see in the digital humanities is based on the notion

of visibility: concerns about the "over-representation of white men or the disproportionate lack of politically progressive scholarship in the digital humanities regard inequality and have a strong empirical basis". But, they claim, "these concerns are potentially measurable, and in measuring them, the full immensity of their impact becomes increasingly discernible, and thus, answerable" (Spahr et al. 2016: 6). The problem is not so much of how a "full immensity" can logically be measured (although this does remain a problem for such vocal advocates of empiricism). Rather, the problem is already intrinsic to the liberal (if perhaps not quite neo-liberal in their cases) assumption that transparency will lead to accountability. On the contrary, the link between transparency and accountability is at the core of the neoliberal university, which sees scholarship as measurable according to its ability to attract funding on the basis of its impact and monetisation potential, teaching as quantifiable according to students' satisfaction surveys, and administrative practices as being so transparent that the decisions need to be taken before the meeting even takes place.

Derrida can help us to understand why this logic of transparency works against a progressive politics rather than, as it nominally claims to, in its favour. In Derrida the archive is closely linked to psychoanalysis because this is the discourse that examines how the silent investments in discovery, measuring, and mastery serve, counter-intuitively, to maintain psychic, but also political, repression. This is why Lars von Trier's *The Boss of It All*, as Alenka Zupančič has recently argued, shows how a

realistic knowledge of "how things really are" and general "disillusionment" work perfectly well with the maintaining of the status quo. We could even say: the political and economic game of late capitalism works not in spite of our "disillusionment" concerning it, but precisely because of it, and with its help. [...] The new formula of fetishist disavowal thus becomes: "I know very well, *and this is why* I can go on ignoring it" (Zupančič 2016; emphasis original).

It might appear churlish to sing the praises of self-doubt while devoting so much time and space in our issue to the ability to make rigorous critical decisions, but these two pieces at least help to clarify what is at stake today when we discuss the archive, on the one

hand, as the guarantor of knowledge and fetishized site of material presence and, on the other hand, as a set of cultural practices which are entirely dependent on a dominant economic model. This of course has much wider reverberations if we think about the more general "postcritical moment" in literary studies (Felski 2015). Although, as Dirk Van Hulle argues in these pages, archival scholarship has always been an essential component of philological practices, today the volume of public and private investment in the digitisation of archival material makes clear that those practices are increasingly bound up with a range of other, perhaps less explicit investments – in mastery, usefulness, and applicability.

The idea of a "total literature online" informs very different projects, spanning from Jerome McGann's "hypermedia archive" of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Franco Moretti's Stanford lab-generated "distant readings", which seem capable of repackaging Marxist principles into helpful critical products. This is literature as "big data", and we all know that "big data" is where the money will be (and is already being) made: our humanities research is a little cog in a big machine. Huge data repositories which make available at one's grateful fingertips, in an almost magical way, previously hard to come by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts (ECCO, 26 million pages and 136,291 titles, and NECCO) are owned by huge corporations, in this case Gale Cengace, which sells its "packages" to University libraries. As NECCO puts it:

The *Nineteenth Century Collections Online* publishing programme allows libraries to customize and scale their selections to meet their specific collection needs. Modular, subject -specific "archives" will explore the themes and movements most requested by scholars and researchers. For example, the first archive, *British Politics and Society*, focusses on documents that reveal the story of social and political change in Britain. Future archives will focus on the story of science, technology/industry, the arts, empire and more. ("Nineteenth Century Collections Online", *Gale Cengage Learning*)

Pointing this out does not equate to predicting a hopelessly dystopian future; however, it does show how the current centrality of the notion of the archive to the project of the digital humanities has considerably altered the power dynamics that connect the archive with curators, archivists, scholars, and corporations. The

project has also left unaddressed, at least until very recently, the problem of digital pedagogy, as exemplarily argued by Margaret Konkol (Konkol 2015). What have always been necessarily ideologically-informed curatorial and selection processes are now not so much the result of individual scholarly choices as of decisions made by both private and state funding bodies, or even corporations that base their strategies on perceived "customer's needs" and "modularity". We have moved from the notorious controversy caused by Stephen Joyce's public announcement that he had destroyed letters written to Lucia Joyce by Samuel Beckett (Hodson in Smith and Stead 2013: 163) to anonymous and investment-driven assessments of the benefits of customisation and scaling.

In the light of the opposite and symmetrical dangers of the too much and the too little, and in the face of a culture which questions heavily the notion of truth and the consistency of history, the suggestion that archives shape the past and cast the archivist as its "author or at least [a] severe editor" (Blouin and Rosenberg 2006: 86) needs revisiting. Have we entered an age, as Blouin and Rosenberg seem to suggest, "of archival intervention, one that can be described as beyond *postcustodial*, in which the processes of selection, access and even description are increasingly structured by particular cultural values, social biases and political inclinations"? (Blouin and Rosenberg 2006: 86; emphasis original) Here, we argue that even though approaching a pre-modern archive in terms of mere custodial practices is part of the very archival nostalgia that this volume is so interested to explore, we are nevertheless witnessing a historical moment in which increasingly complex practices of selection, rejection, and classification work to transform the archive into a site where knowledge is *produced*, as both Bolchi and Sullam's contributions demonstrate. Crucially, however, these practices are now frequently in the hands of funding bodies and/or corporations, rather than individual scholars or archivists. If the custodial function will always be beset by doubts around the question of "what will this have meant?", it becomes increasingly difficult to see who exactly is entitled to ask that question today. This is precisely why, when claiming that archival research is at the centre of the future of the discipline, we also want to acknowledge that the archive "capitalises everything" (Derrida 1995).

However, we are not interested in equating new digital technologies with an anti-Foucauldian paranoid history of corporate power, but to advocate for the power of the humble, painstaking, and precise work of interpreting archives. The opening up of archives through digital technology has also led to radical revisions of their roles, especially in the fields of race and sexuality studies. For a long time, the social and literary memory of once colonised countries was heavily stifled or tampered with, when not silenced altogether (Walters 2013: 4). If we think just of the last century, wars, diasporas and forced migrations have led to "splintered memories" (Burds in Blouin 2006: 470) and to the loss or at least radical instability of collective records. To this we can also add the many denials regarding the importance of certain records, objects, and artefacts, which, as soon as they are judged to be unreadable or meaningless, become disposable (Stoler 2002).

This is why the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) in Park Slope, Brooklyn, is such a radical intervention in archival practice and ideology. The archives hold historical artefacts relating to lesbians and lesbian organisations and have grown to include around 11,000 books and 1,300 periodical titles, as well as an unknown number of photographs. Co-founders Joan Nestle, Deborah Edel, Sahli Cavallo, Pamela Oline, and Julia Stanley were lesbian members of the Gay Academic Union who, in 1974, founded a group to discuss sexism within that organisation; that same year they established the LHA in the hope that stories about lesbian individuals and communities could be protected for future generations. Edel is anecdotally reported to have joked that "if an object was touched by a lesbian, they would collect it", a claim that wittily goes to the heart of the challenges and joys of archiving in the name of a radical political agenda (see http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org).

It is not a coincidence that today some of the most intellectually stimulating debates on the functions of the archive are taking place in postcolonial and LGBT/queer studies, as the work of Ann Laura Stoler and Ann Cvetkovich demonstrate. Work presented at the recent LGBT+ALMS (Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections) conference in London (June 2016) demonstrates that some of the most pressing current questions concern the destruction of archives with the explicit purpose of erasing transgender lives; the use of transnational meta-databases to bring together lesbian

and feminist archives around the world; the roles of outreach and public history in relation to LGBT archives; the intersectionality of blackness and LGBT in heritage and community projects, refugee narratives, civic engagement, and LGBT communities; and the relation between ordinariness and exceptionality in LGBT curatorial practices.

Our special issue on the archive in modern literature aims at entering this multifaceted debate by seeing archives as "opportunities for making meaning" (Ferguson 2008: 1). Perhaps because its dawn coincided with the end of a century which entrusted much of its identity to archival memory, literary modernism occupies a space of its own in the context of the archival concerns we have mapped above, not least for its vocal but ambivalent relation to the authoritarian and taxonomic regime of knowledge, whether embodied in national libraries, museums, or collections. Modernism, with the rest of the twentieth century, works now as a recognised historical category, sanctioned by a chronological distance able to promise a more serene perspective. And yet, "modernity and the modern are terms that refer both to historical eras and to certain modes of inhabiting a perpetual present, certain notions of the perpetually new, themselves bound up with commitment to formalism and abstraction, aesthetics and textuality" (Randall and Goldman, 2012: xi).

One of the challenges that our volume takes up is that of discussing modernism as a historical period while working through the problem of reading the archive in modernist terms; conversely, it also wants to assess how archival practices can alter or amend our received perceptions of modernist aesthetics and authorship. These issues are at the heart of Bryony Randall's essay, which focuses on the controversial definition of textual "correctness". Discussing the drawbacks of emendation and "banalisation" and using the work of Virginia Woolf as her field of investigation, Randall shows how the use of the archive may help us to recapture the complexities and instabilities which define a modernist textuality resistant to crystallised readings. A vivid and dynamic authorial presence begins to emerge thanks to Randall's careful reading of the "slips" and "errors" found within Woolf's manuscripts and typescripts. Indeed, by shedding new light on consolidated critical frameworks and beliefs, archival scholarship can allow us to address the whole question of authorship in a number of more or less radical ways.

In Margaret Konkol's essay, as indeed in Margery McCulloch's, the erased voices of women in literary partnerships – Laura Riding and Robert Graves, Willa and Edwin Muir – resurface in a series of archived correspondences and establish, finally, a clearer picture of the critical dynamics of aesthetic collaboration and shared authorial responsibility. By tracing Lytton Strachey and Virginia Woolf's own biographical ventures into the archive, Federico Sabatini also interrogates the diverse modulations of modernist writing, and the affinity between "scattered" archival documentation and the fragmentary the "life" writing. In many ways, therefore, the archive holds a mirror to modernist writing: its inclination to revise, inability to complete, and desire for multiplicity and open-endedness.

Taking a cue from a recent study of "encyclopaedic" fictions, which explores the "Bouvard and Pécuchet effect" on French literature (Demanze 2015: 19), we also want to draw parallels between encyclopaedias and the nineteenth-century notion of the archive, which share an ambition to both classify and embrace totality. It is well-known that Flaubert's 1881 novel haunts the great foundational texts of modernism – the libraries and lists of *Ulysses*, for example, can be seen as an eminently Irish answer to the inventorial obsession of the two retired French clerks, who, in their categorisation of knowledge, explode the forms and possibilities of the archive in ways which persist in the early twentieth century. In this light, it is especially intriguing – and ironic – to notice how genetic approaches aimed at producing increasingly meticulous taxonomies of his work are now at the centre of Joyce studies. In a different context, as Roberta Gefter explains in the present issue, the pleasure of the archival trope informs much recent fiction keen to revisit – critically, but not altogether without nostalgia – a plethora of the nineteenth-century's own mysterious and potentially revelatory archival depositories.

Modernist and late modernist texts can be seen to engage in a contradictory relation with the archive, on the one hand celebrating its demise (one might think here of Woolf's persistently ambivalent jokes about her father's "mausoleum book") and, on the other, perpetuating its existence as a site of contestation, a collection of frequently disjointed or incongruous objects and meanings. Jeremy Braddock suggests, in the steps of André Topia, that "the archive is the principal referent for the writing of T. S. Eliot, James Joyce

and Gustave Flaubert. The archetypes of the collage and the archive would each find a correspondence in Walter Benjamin's well-known claim that he wished to compose a manuscript entirely out of quotations" (Braddock 2012: 1). As Prudente, Sabatini, Konkol, and McCulloch's pieces demonstrate, modernists and late modernists display a preoccupation with the archive as epistemology, while also engaging in archival practices such as collecting and anthologising: "Privileging the cultural authority of painting and poetry, these collective forms nevertheless stood in contrast to the grandly narrativizing institutions of the nineteenth century such as the civic museum or the historical anthology" (Braddock 2012: 4). Modernist anthologies, such as Ezra Pound's *Des Imagistes*, attempted to create a patrimony without treading well-known institutional paths. What was presented initially as a counter-cultural space was nevertheless often dependent on private patronage and soon became institutionalised in its own right (Rainey, 1998). The outstanding quality and size of the art and manuscript collection of John Quinn, the Irish-American corporate lawyer, exemplifies the glory of the modernist archive together with its fragility. Regarding the destiny of this collection, dispersed after Quinn's death in 1925, Braddock argues that the failure of patronage, art collecting, and anthologies to secure a shared home for modernist art and writing "eventually led to another form of institutional collecting: the university archive" (Braddock 2012: 4).

Looking at what will probably be the final epoch in which the archive is predominantly paper-based rather than digital, the pieces here by Van Hulle, Randall, Sullam, Bolchi, and Prudente interrogate the multifaceted implications of reading paper and digital archives side-by-side. On the one hand, the great American university collections of rare books and manuscripts enshrine the quasi-sacred value of first editions and manuscripts in the study of modernism, while these rare documents in turn add to the value and prestige of the institution which possesses them (Braddock 2012: 214). The ongoing and wide-ranging processes of digitisation (which are nonetheless beset with unprecedented levels of dispute around copyright and the rights of the literary estate) is proving able at the same time to increase the circulation of lesser known texts (Mina Loy is a good case in question) and to increase the reliability and searchability of large and genetically complex oeuvres

(as in the Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project). Perhaps ironically, the original modernist battle waged against the great nineteenth-century archival and taxonomic practices was destined to end in other archival material and virtual structures, which today simultaneously cater for a living community of readers and writers while participating, no doubt worryingly, in a contemporary culture of critical monumentalisation and neoliberal capitalisation.

Paradox continues to beset the archive.

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