The Politics of Exclusion, or, Reanimating the Archive

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ABSTRACT The notion of the archive covers two kinds of knowledge: knowledge and memories that can be articulated and objectified by convergent discursive rules, and knowledge that remains overlooked because of the same discursive rules, now working as rules of exclusion. Many contemporary art practices foreground these exclusions from the archive by presenting them as yet another archive. Artists highlight this residue of the archive by collecting images that were until then not considered to be archivable, that is, of any value or importance. In this article I will discuss work of Santu Mofokeng, Akram Zataari, Walid Raad, and Darius Jablonski as examples of such archival artistic practices.

KEYWORDS Archive, Exclusion, Classification, Archival organization, Artistic archiving

Since the 1990s, an archival boom has been spreading through the academic as well as artistic domain. At first it is difficult to assess this interest in the archive, because the notion of the archive is used literally as well as figuratively. Literally it refers to the institution or material site, in short a building filled with documents and objects. Figuratively, it concerns a much more general and ungraspable notion of knowledge and memory practices not bound by or located in an institutional organization. Especially Michel Foucault's notion of the archive seems to be responsible for this figurative use of 'archive'. He used the term archive for 'the law of what can be said', or a set of discursive rules. Such a set of discursive rules consists of specific conceptual distinctions that determine what can be said and what cannot be said. In that sense, discursive rules imply always at the same time exclusions. Those exclusions concern memories, documents, practices of knowledge production that are overlooked, not taken seriously, considered as unimportant or without any value. Exclusions from the archive are inherent to any archival organization. This explains why memories and knowledge 'outside the archive', are also part of the archive, in the sense of produced by archival rules of exclusion. As a consequence an archival organization has by definition an inside as well as an outside.

This implies that archival organizations are by definition selective. French philosopher Jacques Derrida has shown how this selectivity comes

about. In his book *Archive Fever* he argues that he archive marks an institutional passage from the private to the public. Even private archives, like family archives, demonstrate this, not in being publicly accessible, but in what they store. Even private archives usually store that which is storable and worth storing in the eyes of the public or the culture at large.[1] It is in the archive that the singularity of stored objects and documents is, or better: becomes, at the same time representative for the category under which the objects have been classified. The status of the archive as a place of transition of private to public, and a place where the general (the rules or laws of classification) and the singular intersect, has fundamental consequences for the nature of that place. It implies that not everything can be sheltered in such an archive. The archive is a selective place. It should be more than a storage place of heterogeneous items or objects.

Because it intersects with the public and with the law, the archive is ruled by the functions of unification, consignation, and classification. The acts of unification and consignation imply that the archive is not passive; it is not a place that stores uncritically. These acts imply the distinction between archivable content and non-archivable content, and on the basis of that distinction one can even say that the archive produces its own content. It is not just a passive receiver of content but an active producer of it.

This active, regulatory force is implied in the functions of unification as well as consignation. That implication explains why according to Derrida consignation is a power. In his words:

> By consignation, we do not only mean, in the ordinary sense of the word, the act of assigning residence or of entrusting so as to put into reserve (to consign, to deposit), in a place and on a substrate, but here the act of *con*signing through gathering together signs. [...] *Consignation* aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration.[2]

The storing and gathering together in an archive pursues the formation of a unity, a planned unity that decides what is archivable and what is not. The objects stored are the result of 'gathering together signs' which means that each object is not just stored because of its singularity, but because of what it means and does in relation to the other stored objects.

The Politics of Classification

One fundamental way of establishing the distinction between what is archivable and what is non-archivable is by means of classification. It is not Derrida but Michel Foucault who in his *The Order of Things: An*

Archaeology of the Human Sciences addresses the issue of the coherence of the established classifications. This coherence (or lack thereof), is the result of grouping and isolating, of analysing, of matching and pigeon-holing concrete contents, in other words of establishing an order among things. But this grouping and isolating is not the result of a 'spontaneous' ordering:

> In fact, there is no similitude and no distinction, even for the wholly untrained perception, that is not the result of a precise operation and of the application of a preliminary criterion. A 'system of elements' – a definition of the segments by which the resemblances and differences can be shown, the types of variation by which those segments can be affected, and lastly, the threshold above which there is a difference below which there is a similitude – is indispensible for the establishment of even the simplest form of order.[3]

This simplest form of order can be recognized in the fundamental codes of a culture, according to Foucault. He mentions the codes governing a culture's language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices, as examples of such codes that harbour an order.

On the deepest level, Foucault's entire oeuvre is devoted to the critical analysis of the idea of order and the practices it inspires. This focus explains the wide range of his disciplinary frameworks as well as his enormous historical scope. In *The Order of Things*, but in fact also in his other works, Foucault attempts to analyse the experience of order and its modes of being. He analyzes which modalities of order have been posited and recognized 'in order to create the positive basis of knowledge as we find it employed in grammar and philology, in natural history and biology, in the study of wealth and political economy'.[4] He is bringing to light the epistemological field, or what he calls the 'episteme', in which knowledge grounds its positivity. His 'archaeological inquiry' has revealed that the 'episteme' or system of positivities was transformed radically at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. An earlier discontinuity had inaugurated the Classical age; the second discontinuity, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, marks the beginning of the Modern age. These transformations of episteme were not a matter of gradual development or progress; it was 'simply that the mode of being of things, and of the order that divided them up before presenting them to the understanding, was profoundly altered'.[5] In his bringing to light of a specific episteme, either the Classical or the Modern one, he is concerned with a history of resemblance, that is, with the conditions on the basis of which

such an episteme was able to reflect relations of similarity or equivalence between things; relations that provide a foundation and justification for the episteme's words, classifications and systems of exchange.

When Foucault writes about the episteme (the order of things), or heterotopia as a subversive variation on an episteme, he is not referring to archival organizations in the literal sense. An episteme is a more fundamental or 'simpler' form of order than an archival organization. But archives are examples of 'techniques' or 'practices' in which the operations of an episteme can be recognized easily. The episteme governs the principles according to which archival organizations are structured in such a way that archives can be seen as emblematic examples of the nature of an episteme. Also, archival organization is structured on the basis of resemblance and distinction, on categories to which items belong because they resemble the other items in their category, or they do not because they are different.

But because of the increasing importance of the archive in the Modern age, Foucault has also written extensively on the role of archives in that period. For, what changed radically then is the so-called 'threshold of description', the minimum of importance a piece of information must have to be worthy of archiving. This threshold was lowered dramatically in order to include common people. In the words of Foucault:

> For a long time ordinary individuality – the everyday individuality of everybody – remained below the threshold of description. To be looked at, observed, described in detail, followed from day to day by an interrupted writing was a privilege [...] The disciplinary methods reserved this relation, lowered the threshold of describable individuality and made of this description a means of control and a method of domination. [What is archived] is no longer a monument for future memory, but a document for possible use. And this new describability is all the more marked in that the disciplinary framework is a strict one: the child, the patient, the madman, the prisoner, were to become [...] the object of individual descriptions and biographical accounts.[6]

Foucault argues that a variety of new ways of examining and describing individuals was developed. The question, which then emerges is in which sense this accumulation and processing of the new data differed from the knowledge production of earlier centuries. For, scientists from earlier centuries also had had an obsession with classifying objects and archiving the results of these classifications.[7]

Foucault's answer is that while it is true that plants, animals and even human beings had been the subject of study before the examination

regime was in place, they entered a field of knowledge as general categories, as a species for example, and not as singular individuals.

> What was innovative about the new archives was precisely that they objectified individuals not as members of a pre-existing category, but in all their uniqueness and singularity. Far from being archivable in terms of their shared properties, human beings became linked to all the unique series of events (medical, military, educational, penal events) which made them who they are as historical individuals – a history which could now take the form of a file while the individual became a case.[8]

In other words, whereas in the old archives individuals were used to build or substantiate categories, in the new archive, categories are being used to build or substantiate the individual. This leads to a situation in which human bodies, events and archives interact, and it is this interaction, which brings about individual identity. This identity is then not seen as a subjective interiority, but as an objective exteriority. All the facts about people accumulated in the files and dossiers of databases and archives, extracted from us via a variety of examinations, provide people with an identity. This identity is not a matter of interiorized representation, like an ideology, but of an external body of archives within which we are caught and that compulsorily fabricate an objective identity for us. This 'archival identity' may perhaps have little to do with our sense of identity, but this may not be the case for an insurance company, for example, for whom archived medical facts are the key to our identity, whether we like it or not.[9]

One of the radical implications of this new archive is that what, or who, is not in the records does not really exist. This drastic consequence is understandable when we realise that archival administrators do not observe, describe and classify reality, but the other way around: they shape people and events into entities that fit the categorizations and that are recordable. This kind of reification entails that there are virtually no other facts than those that are contained in records and archives.[10]

Reanimation

The notion of the archive covers then two kinds of knowledge: knowledge and memories that can be articulated and objectified by convergent discursive rules, and knowledge that remains overlooked because of the same discursive rules, now working as rules of exclusion. As a consequence any archival organization has by definition an inside as well as an outside.

Many contemporary art practices foreground these exclusions from the archive by presenting them 'as yet' another archive. Artists highlight this residue of the archive by collecting images that were until then not considered to be 'archivable', that is, of any value or importance. These images excluded form the archive are still there but cannot be looked at because according to the accepted discursive rules they do not show or articulate anything worth knowing. An example of such an artistic practice transforming exclusions from the archive into an archive in its own right is the *Black Photo Album* by South African photographer Santu Mofokeng. The *Black Photo Album* is the result of an investigation of images that were commissioned by black working and middle-class families in South Africa in the period between 1890–1950. It was in this period that South Africa developed and implemented a racist political system. In this period it was still common practice to depict African people in the same visual language as animals, as part of the fauna in their own natural habitat. In the ideologies of authorative knowledge, they were considered as 'natives' and the official, 'archivable' images had to confirm such a notion of African people. The photographs commissioned by black people and representing them as bourgeois families did not fit this ideology and were excluded from the archives of official knowledge.

Santu Mofokeng, *Black Photo Album / Look at Me 1890–1950*, c. 2011. Copyright Santu Mofokeng. Images courtesy Lunetta Bartz.

These images remain scattered in the private domain and are largely invisible. In the words of Santu Mofokeng:

> They have been left behind by dead relatives, where they sometimes hang on obscure parlour walls in the townships. In some families they are coveted as treasures, displacing totems in discursive narratives about identity, lineage and personality. And because, to some people, photographs contain the 'shadow' of the subject, they are carefully guarded from the ill-will of witches and enemies. In other families they are being destroyed as rubbish during spring-cleans because of interruptions in continuity or disaffection with the encapsulated meanings and history of the images. Most often they lie hidden to rot through neglect in kists, cupboards, cardboard boxes and plastic bags.[11]

Mofokeng's *Black Photo Album* reverses the exclusion of these images from the authorative public domain. He collects these images and the stories about the subjects of the photographs. Within the context of the gallery and the museum he presents them in a new format in combination with the stories. By doing this the neglected memories and images are inserted into the public domain, and form the archive from which until now they had been excluded. This reanimation of the invisible exclusions from the archive implies much more than bringing to life almost forgotten memories. By making these images into archival objects the ideology that subjected African people to the lower orders in the 'family of men', is rewritten.

Another example of an artistic practice compensating earlier exclusions is the work of Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari. In 1997 he co-founded the Arab Image Foundation (AIF). Based in Beirut, this archival foundation has collected thousands of photographs and negatives from countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Zaatari himself has conducted research in photographic practices in Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria and collected also images from those countries. Zaatari envisions his collecting of images not as appropriation of overlooked material but 'as an intervention in the social life of waning photographic images'.[12] Because of civil and other kinds of wars in the Middle East it is urgent to preserve these images from destruction. In Beirut for instance, most commercial photo studies, which were located in the downtown area, were destroyed in the civil war. The only remnants of the production of these studies are prints collected from Beirut families. The collections of commercial studios, not only in Beirut but throughout the Middle East, have faced their peril in their commercial decline. Many studios have sold off their negatives because of the value of the silver content. But as destructive as wars and commercial decline is the

fact that until AIF started to collect these images and negatives the photographic practices of these commercial studies was largely invisible because not included in the public register of archivable knowledge.

Zaatari's effort to preserve the photographic heritage of the Middle East has resulted in a variety of projects. He made a documentary about the studio photographer Van Leo from Cairo, titled *Her + Him: Van Leo* (2001). Van Leo was professionally active in the fifties and sixties of the last century. He had an eroticised relationship with his amateur models who would make secret appointments at the studio to explore different identities, also in the form of pornographic images. Zaatari also published a book about Hashem El Madani, a studio photographer from Beirot, who also used the studio as a site where clients explore new identities through portraiture. Cross-dressing, dressing up and dressing down, and pornographic self-images belonged to an almost standard repertoire of imaginary identities. His archival research resulted also in another book titled *The Vehicle* (1999). In this book Zaatari has collected images of studio clients who pose with their recently acquired automobile. In new modern lifestyles identity is also constructed by means of the portrayal of the ownership of a car.

Yet another strategy to reanimate forgotten images was chosen by Zaatari by pursuing the history of a set of images back to the people photographed.[13] He interviewed the people about the context and situation in which the photo was taken but also asked them to pose again in exactly the same pose as they were in in the photos taken so many years earlier. A variation of this strategy was deployed for the series of images titled *Another Resolution* (1998). For these photos he asked Lebanese artists to pose in the same way that photographers had asked children to pose a generation earlier. The original photograph and the re-enacted photograph were installed together. The re-enactments were not made by Zaatari in order to recreate an original moment but 'to measure the limits of accepted behaviour in age and gender'.[14] It is through the comparison of original and re-enacted images that this social dimension of the images is revealed. When the re-enacting adult artists stick out their tongues, recline in the nude or drop their pants, one becomes aware of the fact that this kind of behaviour in front of the camera is acceptable when it concerns children, but not for adults. Also this social knowledge was so far invisible.

It is yet another Lebanese artist who has had great impact on the rethinking and of the archive and its impact: Walid Raad and his fictional collaborators of 'the Atlas Group'. These collaborators donated work to the Archive of the Atlas Group. To give an example, *Missing Lebanese*

DJENANE BALADI. Beirut. 1966
Fotógrafo / Photographer: anónimo / anonymous
© AIF. Beirut / J. Farina

ANOTHER RESOLUTION. LARA BALADI. 1998, fotografía / photograph

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Akram Zaatari, *Another Resolution*, 1998, Lara Baladi, photograph. Copyright Akram Zaatari and the Arab Image Foundation. Image Courtesy Sfeir-Semeler Gallery, Beirut.

Wars, consisting of plates and a notebook, was deposited in *The Atlas Group Archive* by a well known (but fictional) Lebanese historian, named Dr. Fadl Fakhouri. Other fictive legatees of the archive are Asma Taffan (*Let's Be Honest, the Weather Helped*, 1992), Habib Fathallah (*I Might Die Before I Get a Rifle*, 1993). Walid Raad himself also donated work to the archive (*We Decided to Let Them Say, 'We are Convinced', Twice*). The project of the Atlas Group unfolded between 1989 and 2004. In the 2004 Raad decided to end this 'collaborative' project. In 2006 a retrospective exhibition was organized that showed the complete Atlas Group Archive in one single place, the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin.[15]

By means of the works in *The Atlas Group Archive* Raad questions the mediation and archiving of information. The artistic, fictional archive enables the exploration of new epistemic and cognitive models. This new knowledge challenges the kind of knowledge that is disseminated by the dominant mass media and by Western discourses about terrorism, colonialism and orientalism. The presentation of artistic works as belonging to an archive directs the attention to the cognitive conflicts and problems thematized by these works. Walid Raad explains why the archive as place is the necessary framework for his cognitive project:

> I like to think that I always work from facts. But I always proceed from the understanding that there are different kinds of facts; some facts are historical, some are sociological, some are emotional, some are economic, and some are aesthetic. And some of these facts can sometimes only be experienced in a place we call fiction. I tend to think in terms of different kinds of facts and the places that permit their emergence.[16]

Besides fiction, the other place in the work of Walid Raad that permits these facts to emerge and become visible and knowable is the archive.

The documents and images presented by the Atlas Group are not inherently fake or fictional. The texts and photographs were not manipulated. But it is their montage and assembling into a narrative or specific historical situation that propels them into fiction. The montage of image and text, or of different images is a specific mode of producing knowledge. The texts and images are never presented at face value, but they always 'trouble each other'.[17] A good example of this use of montage of the *Notebook Volume 38: Already Been in a Lake of Fire* donated to the *Atlas Group Archive* by the already mentioned Dr. Fadl Fakhouri. This file contains 145 photographic images of cars. These cars are of the same brand, model and colour as those used in car-bomb attacks during the Lebanese wars of 1975 to 1991. Notes and annotations made by Fakhouri are attached to
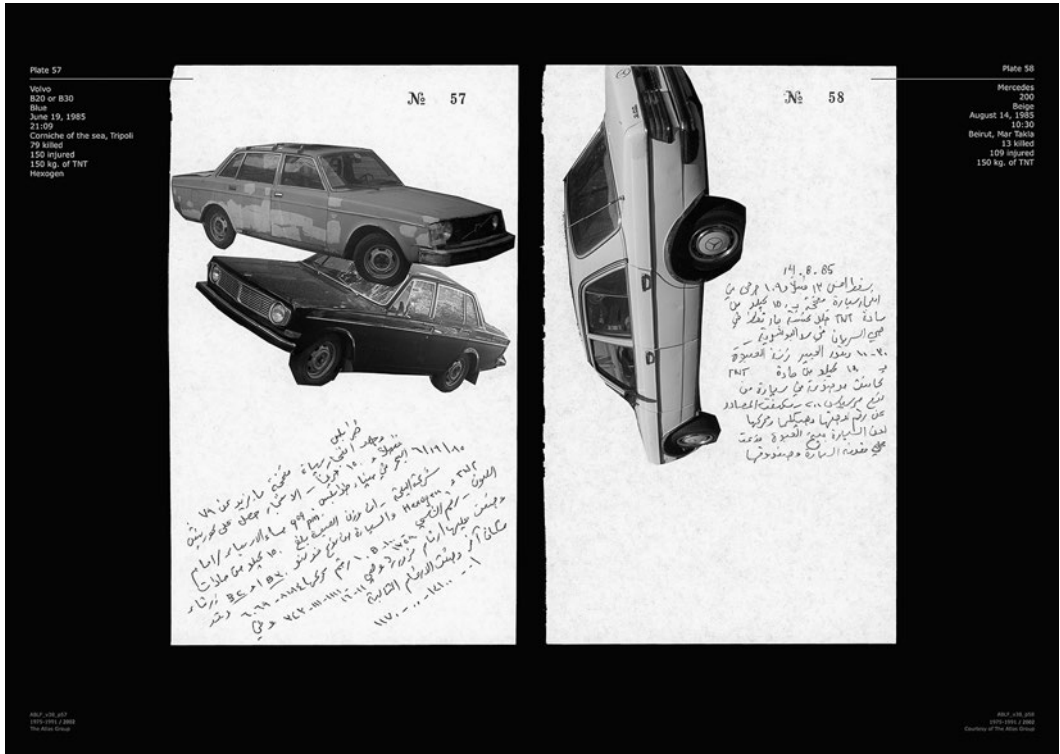
Walid Raad, *Notebook Volume 38: Already Been in a Lake of Fire*, plate 57 and 58, 2003.

the images. They specify information such as the number of casualties, the location and time of the explosion, the type of explosives used. The documentary information is all real and true. What is fictional however, is the bringing together of these different elements in the notebook of the imaginary character of Dr. F. Fakhouri. And of course, the notebook is an archival genre. By using the notebook as the framework where factual images and notes are presented, a cognitive status is assigned to them. It is thanks to this archival genre that the images and notes are no longer disparate elements without any cognitive value. They become knowable and visible objects through the newly acquired status as archivable objects. The fictional archive of the Atlas Group present, in the words of Chouteau, 'latency, lapse, and speculation as vectors for historical truth equal to those of verification, authenticity and proof'.[18]

But in the case of *Notebook Volume 38: Already Been in a Lake of Fire*, the ultimate goal of this artistic project is not conveying knowledge about the kind of cars that were used in car-bomb attacks during the Libanese

wars. What is much more important are the layers of transmission due to which this kind of knowledge was lost; and subsequently, the archival framework thanks to which this knowledge can be retrieved. What is important is that the documents in the *Atlas Group Archive*, whether they are photographs, texts or videos, are never authentic or original, but always digital reproductions. They are always scanned, increased but often also decreased in size, and multiplied. The point is that 'their original state is lost in the layers of transmissions, exhibitions and repetitions, and metaphorically in the *rumours* of history'.[19] After the cognitive impulse has been installed by means of these inauthentic reproductions, what should be verified is not the materiality of these artefacts, but the structures through which knowledge is lost or transmitted.

The works of Santu Mofokeng, Akram Zaatari and Walid Raad are examples of artistic archival practices that pertain to a larger category of memory practices, meant to reanimate excised histories. Since the 90s of the last century the spread of memory practices in art and literature has been enormous. These memory practices manifest themselves around issues such as trauma, war, Holocaust and other genocides, migration, but also in the increasing use of archival organisations combined with media and genres like photography, documentary film and video. The primary question raised by this flourishing of memory practices, which intend to reanimate lost or invisible knowledge and memories, is if we should see this as a celebration of memory, as a fin de siècle, and in the meantime debut de siècle, as an expression of the desire to look backwards, or, in contrast, as a symptom of a severe memory crisis or a fear of forgetting? The answer will depend on how these memory practices are articulated. As we have seen, these memory practices converge also in a specific aesthetics. It is on the basis of this aesthetics that we can evaluate the nature but also the effectivity of these memory practices.

Reanimating Still Images

Either way, the contemporary art practices I just discussed, like other memory practices so typical of our moment, may point to the meaning of the present itself. In order to approach an answer to this question of the meaning of the present through art practices, I will wind up by focusing in the rest of this article on the work of Polish filmmaker Dariusz Jablonski. He uses old, almost forgotten archival images for the making of his film *Fotoamator* (1998) (Photographer). Jablonski based his film on a collection of colour slides of the Jewish ghetto of Lodz which were found in 1987 in a Viennese antique shop.

The fact that this filmmaker uses presumably authentic material for his films does not, however, guarantee the effectivity of his work as reanimation. He had to frame and even manipulate the material profoundly in order to convey the historical dimension of this material effectively. In this respect his work is congenial to that of the three artists discussed above, especially to Zaatari and Walid Raad's. Zaatari's re-enactments and Raad's montage of authentic material and facts within fictional archival frameworks were necessary devices in order to foreground the imaginary structures responsible for loosing as well as transmitting historical knowledge. But, I contend, it is precisely their explicit work on this authentic material that safeguards this historical material from oblivion. Jablonski highlights his manipulative work on the authentic material even more than Zaatari and Raad. But it is in the tension between the authenticity and manipulation of material that the political life of the knowledge it contains becomes prominently visible.

Jablonski made his film on the basis of a collection of several hundreds of colour slides of the Jewish ghetto of Lodz in Poland. These slides made during the Second World War belong to the first generation of colour photographs. So, they are exceptional in a double respect: because of their subject matter and because of the fact that they have colour. They were made by the Austrian chief accountant of the ghetto, Walter Genewein. Jablonski's film consists for the major part of close-ups, zooms and pans of Genewein's slides. These images are accompanied by a voice-over that reads from letters written by Genewein and from his administrative records. He was not only recording life in the ghetto by means of his camera, but also, as accountant, by making endless lists. It is on the basis of these lists that we learn that the inhabitants of the ghetto produced in the factories in which they were employed 59.000 tooth brushes, 321.262 bras and 426.744 braces. But we also learn about the number of people who died in the ghetto, subdivided in victims of tuberculosis, of heart diseases, of malnutrition. The different deportations are mentioned and the number of vans that were needed to transport the belongings of the new inhabitants of the ghetto. These numbers alternate with information about Genewein's career, the promotions he made and the raises of his salary. We get an image of him as a perfectionist administrator and archivist. His records are utterly impersonal and distant and detailed in the most surprising ways. In his correspondence he also tells his addressee that he has decided not to use carbon paper anymore and to change to a semi-automatic administration device.

The voice-over of the impersonal administrator is in sharp contrast

with the vividness of the colour slides we see at the same time. This vividness is even enhanced by the addition of realistic background noise, such as that of traffic and the buzz of voices. The scenes showing the colour slides accompanied by the voice-over of the administrator/ archivist alternate, however, with moving images showing the surviving doctor of the ghetto, Arnold Mostowics. He is being interviewed about his memories of the ghetto. In fact, the film opens with footage that shows the doctor in an old archive, probably the archive which houses the former administration of the ghetto. These images are in colour, like the slides, which are only later introduced into the film.

Before we get to see the slides, the doctor gives his reaction to these slides and what they convey:

> It was a shock, it was a shock, it was a shock that they existed. Please under-
> stand, this was some 45 years after the war had ended. Suddenly I find out
> about the existence of several hundreds of photographs taken by Germans.
> And these were not ordinary photographs. Immediately these photos pro-
> voked a feeling of unease in me. Unease at the fact that although they showed
> the ghetto, it was not the ghetto. Although they were real, they did not show
> the truth.

The nature of the doctor's unease is not further explained at this moment. A self-evident explanation is that his memories of his past ghetto experiences are not reconfirmed by the slides. The slides show something different, less horrific than we later hear him tell. But the unease also seems to be caused by the colour and vividness of the slides. The way the slides are framed in the film suggests that the doctor responds to the fact that these images are too vivid to belong to the past, whereas his own memories of the ghetto do.

Immediately after this introduction of the doctor the moving images transform from colour into black and white. From then on, each time the doctor is interviewed, we see him in black and white. Also other footage that shows present Lodz is in black and white. This results in a rather confusing, but also penetrating situation: black and white connotes the present, whereas colour footage connotes the past. This is so confusing, because out of convention we associate colour or the lack thereof, with the opposite. Black and white has an aura of pastness, whereas colour refers to the present. Watching *Fotoamator* we constantly have to readjust our expectations of the significance of colour.

But there is more to it: the colour slides showing the ghetto are accompanied by the voice-over of chief accountant Genewein. His sentences

are in the present tense. He is not talking about the past but from the past. The doctor, however, describing or recalling the situation in the ghetto talks in the past tense. He is clearly talking from another temporal dimension than the time he is talking about. One would think that the vividness of the colour slides and the presentness of the accountant's voice-over is countered by the fact that the slides are stills and that time in it is frozen. But this effect is not achieved because of the zooming and panning movement of the animation. Although the slides show frozen moments of time, what we as get to see as viewers is always moving.

In this film, the movement of time is in all respects the reverse of what the ontology of time prescribes. This is, of course, first of all because of the fact that the images contemporaneous to the ghetto are in colour. Film director Jablonski is not responsible for this. But a variety of devices he employed intensify the effect of the colour slides, bring past time more definitely into the present, and distance the present from the past. When, in the literal sense of the word, memory is a form of re-calling, the film *Fotoamator* succeeds most effectively in bringing this past back into our present. It does it so effectively that this past looks even more present than do moments that are contemporaneous to the viewer's time.

It may be clear by now that Jablonski's film is highly self-reflexive about colour, the lack thereof, and its effects. There is a recurring motif in the film that foregrounds this issue of colour in unexpected ways. Chief accountant Genewein is quoted three times from letters he wrote to photography company AGFA. He complains about a red-brownish shade that covers all his slides. He asks for an explanation for this shade and for a solution to prevent it from happening again. The moments that his complaints about the quality of the colour are quoted are far from neutral. It happens at moments that the most horrifying slides are being shown: slides of famished inmates of the ghetto, or of the deportations. The contrast between what the images show and what the chief accountant comments on is enormous. He is literally blind to the horror that he documents and archives. Although the colour has now the effect on us that it makes the images vivid in unusual ways, for Genewein, the colour was not vivid enough. He could not see what he had registered. In this film colour separates times.

Understanding the Memory Crisis

The archive boom since the 1990s but also the spread of memory practices in the artistic domain, of which I presented some examples, raise the following question: are these symptoms of a memory crisis or are they the opposite of that, rather a celebration of memory. I contend

that they seem to be the expression of a situation in which memory is under siege. This conclusion concords with that of other cultural critics. Scholars such as Benjamin Buchloh and Andreas Huyssen have argued that this memory crisis is first of all historical and specific. According to Buchloh mnemonic desire is activated especially in those moments of extreme duress in which the traditional bonds between subjects, between subjects and objects, and between objects and their representation appear to be on the verge of displacement if not outright disappearance.[20] In the 1990s especially massive migration due to economical reasons or political wars resulting in genocides, have caused such moments of extreme duress. But the memory crisis is not only historically specific in the socio-political sense. I contend that it is also caused by media culture, by its overwhelming presence since the 90s and by the specific forms this culture develops. The enormous impact of photographic and filmic media culture has not worked in the service of memory, but on the contrary, threatens to destroy historical memory and the mnemonic image.

Already in the 1920s, German sociologist and cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer explained how media culture can have this devastating effect. In his essay simply titled 'Photography', he makes a diagnosis of his own times that seems to be at the same time a prophetic diagnosis of our time:

> Never before has any age been so informed about itself, if being informed means having an image of objects that resembles them in a photographic sense [...] In reality however, the weekly photographic ration does not all mean to refer to these objects or 'ur-mages'. If it were offering itself as an aid to memory, then memory would have to make the selection. But the Hood of photos sweeps away the dams of memory. The assault of this mass of images is so powerful that it threatens to destroy the potential existing awareness of crucial traits. Artworks suffer this fate through their reproductions. [...] In the illustrated magazines people see the very world that the illustrated magazines prevent them from perceiving. [...] Never before has a period known so little about itself.[21]

Relevantly for our discussion, Kracauer sees historicism, the scholarly practice that emerged more or less at the same moment as modern photographic technology, as the temporal equivalent of the spatial mediations that take place in photography. In Kracauer's words:

> On the whole, advocates of such historicist thinking believe they can explain any phenomenon purely in terms of its genesis. That is, they believe in any case that they can grasp historical reality by reconstructing the course of events in

their temporal succession without any gaps. Photography presents a spatial continuum; historicism seeks to provide the temporal continuum. According to historicism, the complete mirroring of an intertemporal sequence simultaneously contains the meaning of all that occurred within that time. [...] Historicism is concerned with the photography of time.[22]

How can we consider a medium and a scientific discourse as parallel? Photography and historicism regulate spatial and temporal elements according to laws that belong to the economic laws of nature rather than to mnemonic principles. In contrast, Kracauer argues, memory encompasses neither the entire spatial appearance of a state of affairs nor its entire temporal course. Nor does memory pay much attention to dates; it skips years or stretches temporal distance. Kracauer writes in this respect:

> An individual retains memories because they are personally significant. Thus they are organized according to a principle which is essentially different from the organizing principle of photography: memory images retain what is given only in so far as it has significance. Since what is significant is not reducible to either merely spatial or merely temporal terms, memory images are at odds with photographic representations.[23]

Memory images are also at odds with the principles of historicism, concludes Kracauer later in his essay.

Historicism's temporal inventory corresponds to the spatial inventory of photography. Instead of preserving the 'history' that consciousness reads out of the temporal succession of events, historicism records the temporal succession of events whose linkage does not contain the transparency of history.[24] It is in the daily newspapers that photography and historicism join forces and intensify each other in their destruction of memory. In the 1920s daily papers are illustrating their texts more and more and the numbers of illustrated newspapers increased. For Kracauer those illustrated journals embody in a nutshell the devastating effects of the representation of spatial and temporal continuities, mistaken for the meaning of history.

Clearly, Kracauer's diagnosis of a memory crisis as caused by the phenomena of photography and historicism, relatively new in his day, seems also highly relevant for an understanding of the position of memory in the 1990s and after. His bleak prophecy seems to have come true.[25] For Huyssen, the spread of memory practices especially in the visual arts, is symptomatic of a crisis, not of a flourishing of memory. The memory crisis that started at the beginning of the twentieth century seems to have ac-

celerated and intensified at the end of that century. The reasons for this are again twofold. First of all, there is a historical and specific reason; second, this acceleration is a result of the impact of developments in media culture.

I will focus, here, on the second reason. The principles of mediating historical reality introduced by photography and historicism are intensified through film, advanced electronic technologies such as computers and internet, mass media, by the explosion of historical scholarship and an ever more voracious museum culture. It is the abundance of information that explains the memory crisis of the 1990s. Huyssen writes:

> For the more we are asked to remember in the wake of the information explosion and the marketing of memory, the more we seem to be in danger of forgetting and the stronger the need to forget. At issue is the distinction between usable pasts and disposable data.[26]

Yet, it is not only this very specific mediation of (historical) reality that has its devastating effects on memory; it is also the nature of the historical and political reality of the 1990s itself. Historical memory used to give coherence and legitimacy to families, communities, nations and states. But in the 1990s these links that were more or less stable have weakened drastically. In the processes of globalization and massive migration, national traditions and historical pasts are increasingly deprived of their geographic and political groundings. Whereas older sociological approaches to collective memory, most famously represented in the work of Maurice Halbwachs, presuppose relatively stable communities and formations of their memories, these approaches are no longer adequate to grasp the current dynamic of the fragmented memory politics of different social and ethnic groups.

It is against this background of a century-old, but now accelerated memory crisis that the memory practices in the visual arts, archival or not, should be understood. It is in these practices that memory becomes an issue of transforming aesthetics. To assess the political value of such transformations in the aesthetics of memory, the question that remains is how effective these practices are in countering the threat of oblivion.

Mofokeng's, Zaatari's, Raad's, as well as Jablonski's work are strong examples of what I called the spread of archival memory practices that have become so prevalent since the early 1990s. Of course, it is impossible and undesirable to generalize about this art and the cultural practices that are performed in it. It is more important to distinguish productive from unproductive memory practices, and try to understand in what respect memory practices are productive or unproductive. Because some

and perhaps even most of these practices show a kind of naïve, nostalgic and sentimental celebration of the past, usually limited to a personal past, without actively engaging this past in our political present, it is imperative to stop at attempts such as Jablonski's to overcome these distancing practices. My reading of Jablonski's *Photographer*, suggests, however, that the media and genres used for these memory practices are themselves deeply implicated in the crisis of memory they appear to counter.

If used conventionally and uncritically the archive, but also media such as photography and film and genres like documentary, the family album, or home movies, lead to a memory crisis. They embody the principles of traditional historicism Kracauer criticized, for they are based on the kind of temporal or spatial continuities that are easily mistaken for the meaning of political situations or of personal lives. It is only when the use of these media and genres is performed critically and self-reflexively that they are transformed from embodiments and implements of that crisis to alternative practices that counter the very same crisis. It is only then, in the words of Jill Bennett, 'that art does not represent what already occurred, but that art sets up conditions for relating to the event'.[27]

Notes

1. See for a discussion of how and why archival records are socially constructed and maintained entities, Ciaran Trace, 'What is Recorded is Never Simply "What Happened": Record Keeping in Modern Organizational Culture', *Archival Science* 2, no. 1 (2002), 137–59.

2. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3.

3. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), xx.

4. Ibid., xxii.

5. Ibid.

6. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 191–92.

7. For clear descriptions of the history of archival science, see Fernanda Ribeiro, 'Archival Science and Changes in the Paradigm', *Archival Science* 1, no. 3 (2001), 295–310 and Hermann Rumschöttel, 'The Development of Archival Science as a Scholarly Discipline', *Archival Science* 1, no. 2 (2001), 143–55.

8. Manuel DeLanda, 'The Archive before and after Foucault', in *Information is Alive*, eds. Joke Brouwer and Arjen Mulder (Rotterdam: V2 Publishing and NAi publishers, 2003), 11.

9. Manuel DeLanda, 'The Archive before and after Foucault', 12.

10. In archives interfaces function as the critical nodes through which archivists enable and constrain the interpretation of the past. The interface is a site where power in the Foucauldian sense is negotiated and exercised. It is power exercised over documents and their representation, over the access to them and over the uses of archives. See for archival interfaces, Margaret Hedstrom, 'Archives, Memory, and Interfaces with the Past', *Archival Science* 2, no. 1 (2002), 21–43.

11. Santu Mofokeng, 'The Black Photo Album / Look at Me: 1890–1900', in *Chasing Shadows*, ed. C. Diserens (Munich: Haus der Kunst, 2011), 230.

12. Mark Westmoreland, 'You Cannot Partition Desire: Akram Zaatari's Creative Motivations', in *Akram Zaatari: El molesto asunto / The Uneasy Subject*, ed. Juan Vicente Aliaga (Mexico City: León, 2011), 43.

13. Ibid., 43.

14. Akram Zaatari, 'Interview', in *Indicated by Signs*, eds. Aleya Hamza and Edit Molnár (Bonn: Bonner Kunstverein, 2010), 120.

15. The complete contents of the archive are published in the following book: *The Atlas Group (1989–2004): A Project by Walid Raad* (Köln: Walther König, 2006).

16. Quoted in Gunilla Knape, 'Afterword', in *Walid Raad: I Might Die before I Get a Rifle* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2011), 99.

17. Hélène Chouteau-Matikan, 'War, There, Over There', in *Walid Raad: I Might Die Before I Get a Rifle*, 104.

18. Ibid., 105.

19. Ibid.

20. Benjamin Buchloh, 'Gerhard Richter's Atlas: The Anomic Archive', in *Atlas: The Reader* (London: Whitechapel, 2003), 109.

21. Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography', in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, translated and edited by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 58.

22. Ibid., 49.

23. Ibid., 50.

24. Ibid., 61.

25. Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1.

26. Ibid., 18.

27. Jill Bennett, Lecture at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, 18 July 2005.

The Coming Together of Times

Jean-Luc Godard's Aesthetics of Contemporaneity
and the Remembering of the Holocaust

Jacob Lund

ABSTRACT This article reads Jean-Luc Godard's film essay *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–1998) as a contemporary artistic endeavour to resist the synchronising, standardising time of global capital, the pervasive uniformity of the global super-present, brought about by today's televisual and digital communications, which threatens to trivialise the different processes of memory and history, as well as art and culture in general. Taking its point of departure in Bernard Stiegler's observation that the final stage of capitalism is the control and synchronisation of "available brain time," the article argues that Godard's work opposes this control and synchronisation of our minds through an aesthetics of contemporaneity. The argument is based on the development of a theoretical framework that combines recent theories of contemporaneity with reflections on the politics of images. Focusing on the ways in which the Holocaust is remembered in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, the article deals with Godard's image-political creation of temporal contemporaneity through a montage of clips of old films and newsreels, photographs, stills, images of paintings, new footage, advertisements, music, sound and voice recordings, textual citation, narration and commentary.
KEYWORDS Jean-Luc Godard, Contemporaneity, Holocaust, Image-politics, Time-experience

Towards the end of his grand film essay *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Jean-Luc Godard declares himself an 'enemy of our times', an enemy of 'the totalitarianism of the present as applied mechanically every day more oppressive on a planetary scale', and of the 'faceless tyranny that effaces all faces for the systematic organization of the unified time of the moment. This global, abstract tyranny, which I try to oppose from my fleeting point of view'.[1] The aim of this article is to argue that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* can be seen as what Godard calls 'a thinking form' that tries to resist the synchronising, standardising time of global capital, the pervasive uniformity of the global super-present, brought about by today's televisual and digital communications, which threatens to trivialise the different processes of memory and history, as well as art and culture in general – instead of allowing for a contemporaneity of difference.[2] According to philosopher Bernard Stiegler, the final stage of capitalism is the control and synchronisation of what the former CEO of the major French TV channel TF1, Patrick le Lay, called 'available brain time':