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Is the archivist a "radical atheist" now? Deconstruction, its *new wave*, and archival activism

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Abstract Hägglund's "radical atheism"—innovative thinking within the philosophical current of "speculative materialism"—revitalizes deconstruction and provides an important basis to define parameters for the archivist's role as activist for social justice. This paper argues postmodern archival theory gets deconstruction wrong by misreading Derrida's "Archive fever" as a theory of "archontic power"; this misleads archivists on the call for justice. Properly understanding that justice is *undecidable*, radical atheism explodes the tension between postmodernists' appreciation of all views and perspectives and their commitment to right unjust relations of power. This paper first advances the *negative* argument that "Archive fever" is not about power and injustice. It then advances the *positive* argument that "Archive fever" is Derrida's effort to look at actual archives to resolve Freud's problematic theorizing of a "death drive." In a close and comprehensive reading of "Archive fever," this paper explores the notion of "archive fever" as a death drive and suggests Derrida's efforts are inconclusive. Viewed through the lens of radical atheism, the archive's "traces"—the material of actual archives writ large in the manner of Derrida's thinking about a universal archive—serve to mark the flow of time. Understanding the structure of the trace reveals the source of internal contradictions, discontinuities, and instabilities in the meaning of all things. It explains why justice is *undecidable*. In face of the unconditional condition of this undecidability, we as archivists and humans are compelled to make decisions and to act. Deconstruction politicizes our actions and evokes a responsibility that cannot be absolved.

Keywords Archival activism · Social justice · Power · Postmodern theory · Archive fever · Deconstruction · Speculative materialism

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I. [T]he 'law of finitude' is not something that one can accept or refuse, since it precedes every decision and exceeds all mastery. There can be no taking of responsibility and no making of decisions without the temporal finitude of survival, which always entails a violent discrimination. […] If life were fully present to itself, if it were not haunted by what has been lost in the past and what may be lost in the future, there would be nothing that could cause the concern for justice. […] [S]truggles for justice are not concerned with transcending the world but rather with survival. […] [T]he logic of radical atheism seeks to articulate *why* everything remains to be done, […] recalling to us the material base of time, desire, and politics (Hägglund 2011a, pp. 128–129).

II. The structure of the trace follows from the constitutive division of time. Given that every moment of life passes away as soon as it comes to be, it must be inscribed as a trace in order to be at all. The tracing of time enables the past to be retained and thus to resist death in the movement of survival. […] [T]he finitude of survival opens the possibility of everything we desire *and* the peril of everything we fear. The affirmation of survival is thus not a value in itself; it is rather the unconditional condition for all values (Hägglund 2008a, p. 164).

III. Because any performative commitment (for example, [an action or decision] undertaken "in the name" of democracy to come) is exceeded from within by a nonperformative exposure [–by the indeterminacy in outcome owing to the structure of the trace and the constitutive division of time –] it is never simply given as legitimate but can always be interrogated with regard to its presuppositions and its context. […] The logic of the hyperpolitical does not appeal to something "above" politics. On the contrary, it seeks to demonstrate that no value has an inherent value but must remain open to contestation and that no act or decision can be immune from critique. Accordingly, it is precisely by *not* providing an ethical or political principle that deconstruction politicizes our actions and insists on a responsibility from which one cannot be absolved (Hägglund 2013, p. 107).

Answer

Three message slips on the call for justice: The epigraphs taken from Martin Hägglund's writings reflect deconstruction's *new wave* called "radical atheism" (or, in this paper, "new wave deconstruction"). Hägglund carries forward the work of Jacques Derrida, founder of deconstruction, whose writings have inspired much of postmodern archival theory, especially the foundations for archival activism. Hägglund's book, "Radical atheism: Derrida and the time of life" (2008a), has ignited new thinking about deconstruction within university philosophy departments worldwide. The enumerated "message slips" quoted in the epigraphs contain some of the main tropes and logical formulations of new wave deconstruction; three additional "message slips" quoted below add to the authoritative enunciation of radical atheism. As blocks of Hägglund's very own words—together a highly

concentrated response to the call for justice—these "message slips" balance my paraphrases and interpretations.

New wave deconstruction revives Derridean thought within the wider philosophical current of "speculative materialism." Hägglund is counted among several new philosophers who cite Derrida as an important source for current "materialist" and "realist" directions in continental philosophy (see Bryant et al. 2011; see generally Elliott and Attridge 2011).[1] New wave deconstruction represents an important shift in perspective affecting postmodern archival theory and its role supporting the archivist's response to the call for justice, the principal subject of this paper. I address the precise meaning of Hägglund's "message slips" below.

To appreciate new wave deconstruction's shift in perspective, I will briefly take account of deconstruction and its contributions to thinking about archives and record keeping, presupposing to some extent the reader's familiarity with postmodern developments in archival theory over the past several decades (see Cook 2001a, b; Cook and Schwartz 2002). As helpful guidance, Hardiman (2009, p. 28) examines "the principal ideas animating the postmodernist impact on recordkeeping theory and practice." She reviews the relevant background literature and is particularly sensitive to the debt postmodern archival theory owes to Derrida. Postmodernism is said to have arisen in the late twentieth century world "riven by globalized conflicts and by revolutions in many spheres that have called existing categories and certainties into question" (2009, p. 27). While postmodernism is sometimes regarded as a rejection or overthrow of enlightenment rationality, "some 'postmodernists,'" Hardiman writes, "did not so much overthrow as build on or transform existing traditions of thought—Derrida not only rejected the label but also entered through his deconstructive philosophy into a deep engagement with the whole Western intellectual tradition in an attempt not to dismiss but to transcend it" (2009, p. 28).

Postmodern archival theory joins in the earliest reception of deconstruction in literary theory and criticism. The predominant understanding of postmodern archival theorists is deconstruction represents a form of careful reading. Barbara Johnson, literary studies scholar and sometime Derrida translator, captures the meaning of deconstructive reading in her observation:

> As a critique of a certain Western conception of the nature of signification, deconstruction focuses on the functioning of claim-making and claim-subverting structures within texts. A deconstructive reading is an attempt to show how the conspicuously foregrounded statements in a text are systemically related to discordant signifying elements that the text has thrown into its shadows or margins, an attempt both to recover what is lost and to analyze what happens when a text is read solely in function of intentionality, meaningfulness, and representativity. Deconstruction thus confers a new kind of readability on those elements in a text that readers have traditionally been

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[1] Hägglund is a Swedish-born Professor of Comparative Literature and Humanities at Yale University. See Wikipedia (n.d.) Martin Hägglund. In addition to my presentation of his thought, see Hägglund's own short and penetrating summary of radical atheism in the interview, Hägglund and King (2011), currently available at http://www.martinhagglund.se/files/InterviewHagglund.pdf.

trained to disregard, overcome, explain away, or edit out – contradictions, obscurities, ambiguities, incoherences, discontinuities, ellipses, interruptions, repetitions, and plays on the signifier (Johnson 1987, pp. 17–18).

As in reading literature, so in reading archives, and managing them. Hardiman (2009, p. 29), considering the context of record keeping, observes that language and text are "simultaneously multivalent and unstable enough to allow a point of entry to inspect and rearrange its building-blocks." According to Hardiman, "Derrida recognizes the human need [or, perhaps more accurately, the human *proclivity*] to construct enduring and non-transient systems of meaning." Both the construction and the deconstructive undercutting of such systems are necessary and useful. Archivists and records managers "have traditionally been key players in the process of stabilization, seeking to preserve the one permissible meaning of a record by ensuring that it can only be contextualized in one way, to 'prevent records . . . from unravelling into promiscuous textuality'" (Hardiman 2009, p. 29, citing Brothman 1999, p. 78). Postmodern archival theory advances the deconstructive undercutting of attempts to close meaning, particularly where injustice may result. Hence the archival call for justice. The contradictions, discontinuities, and instabilities in meaning affecting the signification of records condition postmodern professional responsibilities, as discussed widely in the literature (see, e.g., Eastwood and MacNeil 2010; Hill 2011, showing the reach of postmodern archival theory impacting all areas of archival science). This paper addresses in detail the work of Verne Harris in this regard.

Deutscher's (2006) study guide introduction to deconstructive reading provides yet another avenue for understanding postmodern archival theory and the consequences of new wave deconstruction's shift in perspective. Her insightful work establishes something of a baseline for appreciating how the "material" and "real" orientation of new wave deconstruction is different. "Much of Derrida's work," Deutscher notes, "refers to ideals of purity in religion, philosophy, public policy and genetics, and many other domains." Derrida is suspicious of such ideals (Deutscher 2006, pp. 1–2). "[W]e repeatedly elevate phantom ideals of origin and purity," Deutscher writes (2006, p. 3). "In the 'war on drugs', Derrida claims that 'we find a desire to reconstitute … the "ideal body", the "perfect body." A pure body would be a drug-free body.' Derrida encourages us to interrogate and scrutinize the coherence of this ideal" (Deutscher 2006, p. 2, citing Derrida 1995). All bodies are nonnatural or contaminated in one way or another; elevating an ideal of purity is a "lazy shortcut" (Deutscher 2006, p. 3). If the relevant ideal is questionable, as Derrida suggests here, we must grapple with responsibilities we may prefer to avoid. Deutscher continues:

We start to read like Derrida when we notice that something is deemed potentially pure […]. Perhaps a speaker or writer evokes an ideal of purity or perhaps we sense it only indirectly, through the speed with which some terms or individuals are deemed unnatural or threatening. Derrida names this threat the 'other'. Typically, we are told both that the other is no threat at all to the ideal in question, and that it is. Drugs are sometimes seen as threatening to the natural body, but if so, this would call into question the coherence of the

'natural body' in the name of which drugs are denounced. In other words, if the idea of the natural body is fluid, perhaps there is no natural body? Sometimes this produces an unstable, ambivalent argument, one that both decries and denies the threat that the 'other' is said to pose (Deutscher 2006, p. 4).

I leave it to readers to decide for themselves whether this approach to understanding the concept of "natural body" is enlightening. It is a good, if somewhat simplified, example of what may or may not be convincing about the form of deconstructive reading and analysis that underpins postmodern archival theory. As with other approaches discussed in Deutscher's book, the basis for this deconstructive reading of concepts is an analysis of language and discourse. It is premised on Derrida's deeper concern to detect the foundational instabilities of metaphysics disclosed within the relationships among the words of any text whose internal construction reflects a permanent state of instability in meaning. Ultimately, deconstructive reading is a form of "intervention" (Deutscher 2006, pp. 23–24), which postmodern archival theory regards—or has tended to regard—as the essential answer to the archival call for justice. Notwithstanding its sensitivity to the internal contradictions, discontinuities, and instabilities in the meaning of concepts, postmodern archival theory has hewed to interpretations of deconstruction supporting a concept of justice that displaces the fundamental uncertainty of justice. This paper argues new wave deconstruction, offering a distinctive style of argumentation reflecting Derrida's direct engagement with metaphysics, draws from Derrida's body of work a satisfying and coherent account of justice that is true to Derrida, reckoning with the internal contradictions, discontinuities, and instabilities of meaning of all concepts, not displacing justice's fundamental uncertainty.

Hägglund's radical atheism casts new light on matters of language and discourse that have preoccupied postmodern archival theory. As suggested in Hägglund's "message slips," new wave deconstruction is concerned to emphasize deconstruction's foundation in the constitution of time, independent from the linguistic perspective informing postmodern archival theory. As discussed fully below, apprehending the "real" structure of the "material" trace has significant consequences for understanding deconstruction and archival activism. The new wave clarifies Derrida's confusing discussion of the "undecidability" of justice and the meaning of "justice to come." Calling himself a "speculative materialist," seeking "to 'inherit' Derrida" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 12), Hägglund's "main approach is analytical rather than exegetical." He has aimed "to develop [Derrida's] arguments, fortify his logic, and pursue its implications" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 11). In so doing, Hägglund may be said to read and understand Derrida—albeit with a logician's eye—more accurately and comprehensively than the postmodern archival theorists who have looked to Derrida's work to ground the archivist's role as activist for social justice. At the same time, Hägglund's work may be said, with minor reservations, both to improve and to extend Derrida's work.

Pressing is the issue of whether Derrida himself was a radical atheist. Baring (2011) confronts the question of Hägglund's interface with Derrida. Baring reports Hägglund, who advised Baring on his doctoral work, unequivocally claims Derrida

was "radically atheist" (Baring 2011, p. 8). Baring claims Derrida was not. Unfortunately, on some issues impacting my critique of postmodern archival theory, we may never resolve fully the ambiguities stemming from Derrida's difficult relationship with religion. Quite possibly, at some level, radical atheism simply departs from Derrida. On Baring's account, religious themes had played an important role in Derrida's early thought. Caputo (1997a) and de Vries (1999) have emphasized various links between deconstruction and religion, finding in Derrida a certain religiosity. According to Baring (2011, p. 9 and 7), a "detailed archival and contextual study of Derrida's philosophy" removes questions as to the source of Derrida's "religious" or ethical turn in the 1980s. "Religious thought," Baring (2011, p. 5) writes, "was not a new interest for the middle-aged Derrida, but rather the milieu in which deconstruction first developed." Baring baldly states "Hägglund cannot be right about Derrida's radical atheism. But in recognizing the essential role of spacing," which is discussed below, along with other features of radical atheism found in Derrida's "*Of grammatology*" (1976) and his two other key texts from 1967, originally published in France, "Hägglund does draw attention to the reformulation of Derrida's thought that complicated his appeal to religion." Baring concludes—somehow too highhandedly—this "makes the misreading of his [Derrida's] atheism understandable" (Baring 2011, p. 8). Baring is as certain of his stance on the issue of radical atheism as Hägglund is on his. Realistically, only a small part Derrida's vast output may be said to fall somewhere on a theistic–atheistic spectrum; similarly, there is much more to Hägglund's radical atheism than his thoughts on God and immortality, as this paper fully attests. More than anything else, Hägglund has discovered *an* essence—if not *the* essence—of deconstruction, leaving aside whatever inconsistences Derrida's expansive thought failed to exclude, sustaining the efforts of the lifelong outsider to elude any pat formulation of his writings.

I strive to show the material and real concerns of new wave deconstruction potentially help refocus archival theory generally, beyond issues of the archivist's role as activist for social justice… perhaps beyond postmodernism itself. The material and real concerns of radical atheism may refocus conventional archival problems of preservation and time—namely, permanence, persistence, curation, the records continuum, records migration and conversion.[2]

Fundamental to radical atheism is the notion we may desire only what ultimately may be lost; without the possibility of a thing's loss, there is no reason to care about it in the first place. New technologies fundamentally affect not only our frameworks for tracing time, but also our understanding of archival permanence, and our objectives regarding preservation and the very concept of a records lifecycle. Conceivably, new wave archival theory would, at the very least, mark a shift in the archivist's overall responsibilities and in societal and professional concerns regarding archival permanence in light of new technologies.

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[2] Seeking new wave perspectives on these matters of praxis was suggested by an anonymous reviewer of this paper, whom I thank for this valuable input. An extended exploration of archival concepts is beyond the scope of this paper.

Hägglund's work most significantly impacts archivists' reading of Derrida's "Archive fever: a Freudian impression" (1996), the oracle of postmodern archival theory. "Archive fever" is the source most frequently cited in bibliographies of postmodern archival theories and philosophies (see, e.g., Hardiman 2009, p. 29). Radical atheism timely affects archivists' thinking about activism. Indeed, a growing literature investigates archival activism (see Duff et al. 2013; Greene 2013). I show fully how Hägglund's ideas supplant archival activists' misplaced confrontations with "archontic power" and their misapprehension of Derrida's commitment to postmodern theories of power derived from Michel Foucault and others (see, e.g., Harris 2011a, pp. 108–109). Filling a gap in the foundations of archival theory, I show new wave deconstruction affords a new clarion response to the archival call for justice. I spell out new wave deconstruction's answer to the archival call for justice, show how current postmodern archival theory's predominant response seriously misunderstands its own foundations in Derrida's picture of the world, and demonstrate why new wave deconstruction's specific response is fitting.

Hägglund is concerned to ground radical atheism in Derrida's work. "[R]adical atheism," Hägglund (2008a, p. 1) writes, "informs his [Derrida's] writing from beginning to end." In contrast to Derrida's writing, however, Hägglund's exposition is linear, running along narrow rails of deconstructive logic. Hägglund's exacting language superimposes a mathematical grid on Derrida's poetry. The small number of tropes and logical formulations of new wave deconstruction appear again and again, plotting out—almost as analytic geometry—Derrida's sometimes submerged logic. The approach of radical atheism has a clearly articulated deductive *éclat*.

"Archive fever" represents Derrida's refocus on what I will label a heuristic approach in probing and seeking to settle, with the notion of *le mal d'archive* or "archive fever," the problematic psychoanalytic theory "beyond" Freud's pleasure principle. "Archive fever" is about actual archives, especially the Freud House archives and, writ large, "the archive," the universal notion Derrida refers to throughout his work. "Archive fever" takes a heuristic approach in the sense it asks, more than any method of logical deduction: How does the theory or model work when applied to actual situations? Does the working of the model resolve the theory?

The difference between Hägglund's approach in "Radical atheism" and Derrida's approach in "Archive fever" is striking. I argue Derrida turns to a heuristic approach to refigure his efforts in "The post card: from Socrates to Freud and beyond" (1987), where he sought to resolve, using deconstructive logic alone, the problematic psychoanalytic theory "beyond" Freud's pleasure principle. Derrida's theses in "Archive fever" are, as he explains, fundamentally experimental hypotheses, "[s]ubmitted to the test" of the original lecture audience's "discussion" on 5 June 1994, in the laboratory of the Freud House archives or an auditorium nearby (Derrida 1996, p. 5).

Derrida cannot be said to demonstrate conclusively the hypotheses concerning archive fever. Derrida's lengthy deconstructive reading of Yerushalmi's "Freud's Moses: Judaism terminable and interminable" (1991) highlights archival material from the Freud House archives. More important, Derrida's reading of Yerushalmi

provides salient deconstructive insights into "the archive," and archive fever involved in "the injunction to remember" characterizing "the archive" of the Jewish people. But in the final analysis, Derrida's efforts to illuminate the desire for the archive, for producing the archive, feverishly, repetitively, as a compulsion indissociable from the death drive are not fully convincing. Derrida's (2002b) follow-up reflections in his subsequent "Archive fever (in South Africa)" seminar are, if not more convincing, more satisfactory for being straightforward.

Radical atheism shows deconstruction is an intricate, elaborate, and logically coherent "ultratranscendental" restatement of the ordinary. To answer the archival call for justice, in accord with Hägglund's gloss on Derrida's writing, I urge deconstruction provides no specific guidance. No ethical or political stance can be derived from the logic of deconstruction; "the former requires a performative commitment that cannot be justified by or grounded in the latter." At stake is elucidating "the *hyperpolitical* logic of deconstruction." According to such logic, no set of values, no demand, no political struggle "can be posited as good in itself. Rather, everything is liable to corruption and to appropriation for other ends"; "no instance can have an *a priori* immunity against interrogation and critique" (Hägglund 2013, pp. 105–106).

Foregrounding key ideas of radical atheism, deconstruction's role is not, strictly speaking, "to ground anything [in particular] but to think through the implications of the unconditional exposition to time" (Hägglund 2009b, p. 237). As fully explored in "Radical atheism (deconstruction's new wave)" section below, the internal contradictions, discontinuities, and instabilities in meaning characteristic of all things are the chief consequence of time's constitutive division. Hägglund borrows from Derrida the "law of finitude," referred to in the epigraphs opening this paper, Hägglund's "message slips" on the call for justice. The law of finitude recognizes the "finitude of survival" (message slips I and II) and, in turn, the "affirmation of survival" (message slip III). The finitude of survival and its correlate the affirmation of survival are key to radical atheism. "Whatever one may want or whatever one may do, one has to affirm the time of survival, since it opens the possibility to live on—and thus to want something or to do something—in the first place" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 2). Survival is logically bound up with finitude; it implies temporal limitation, living on in spite of that inevitable limitation. A signal insight, the unconditional affirmation of survival allows one "to read the [religionist's] purported desire for immortality against itself" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 2). Advancing radical atheism as an improvement on conventional atheism, Hägglund stresses the so-called desire for immortality contains an internal contradiction (it is thus impossible for immortality to be "present in itself," that is without this contradiction) inasmuch as the desire to live on logically implies the temporal limitation. The desire for life is ineluctably a desire not for a time-transcending immortality but for living on within the finitude of life. "If one were not attached to mortal life, there would be no fear of death and no desire to live on" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 2). Radical atheism unconditionally affirms survival, recognizing the given time is the only chance for survival, living within the time of mortal life.

It is the unconditional exposition to time—not the anti-religionist's concern to critique the inconsistency of the religionist's purported desire to transcend time—that concerns this paper. The unconditional exposition to time and the affirmation of survival account for why we care in our "struggles for justice" (message slip I). They are the "unconditional condition for all values" (including justice); they underpin the indeterminacy involved in the "possibility of everything we desire *and* the peril of everything we fear" (message slip II). The unconditional exposition to time accounts for the "nonperformative exposure" to which our "performative commitments" (regarding all values including justice) are subject; it explains why our commitments are political and accounts for our responsibility in taking action (message slip III).

Three more "message slips" on the call for justice help show even more clearly deconstruction affords no certainty in political and ethical matters. "We necessarily commit ourselves to values through performative acts of language" (Hägglund 2009b, p. 237). Hägglund writes… continuing my enumeration of "message slips":

> IV. Derrida maintains that these [performative] acts are exceeded from within by the [unconditional structure of the] event that makes them possible. [That is, the indeterminacy that impels one's commitment to act also is responsible for the unpredictable outcome.] […] "What happens, by definition, what comes about in an unforeseeable and singular manner, could not care less about the performative" (Derrida 2002a, p. 146). Derrida's point is that even the most stable commitment can betray itself or turn out to be misguided because of the exposition to unpredictable events. This does not mean that commitments or values are "arbitrary in their justification" […]; it only means that they are based on reasons and considerations that are not grounded in deconstruction (Hägglund 2009b, p. 237).

"[T]he unconditional is for Derrida the co[-]implication of time and space that he calls *spacing*" (Hägglund 2009b, p. 237). In Hägglund's words, this irreducible account of reality, explored fully in "Radical atheism (deconstruction's new wave)" section below, recognizes:

> V (part a). The classical distinction between space and time is the distinction between simultaneity and succession. The spatial can remain the same, since the simultaneity of space allows one point to coexist with another. In contrast, the temporal can never remain the same, since the succession of time entails that every moment ceases to be as soon as it comes to be […]. By the same token, however, it is clear that time is impossible without space. […] There is no "flow" of time that is independent of spatialization, since time has to be spatialized in order to flow in the first place (Hägglund 2011a, p. 118).

> V (part b). The deconstructive argument, then, is that empirical inscription [that is, "the trace," in the model of the archive] is transcendentally necessary. If this were not the case, we would be back to a traditional distinction between the transcendental and the empirical, where the former has an integrity that is immune from mutations of the latter. The transcendental structure of spacing, however, explains that there is no such integrity. If experience (transcendentally)

is a form of inscription, it follows that every experience must be (empirically) inscribed somewhere (Hägglund 2009b, p. 239).

"The 'pincer movement' of deconstruction is thus […] to establish the transcendental necessity of empirically contingent inscriptions" (Hägglund 2009b, p. 239). The logic of succession in time demands empirical inscription bound up with the construction of the archive. In this context—as elsewhere in Derrida's writing and in this paper—the notion of "the archive" signifies a more or less deliberate conflation of (1) actual, particular archives (held up as a *model* both for the totality of traces and for the functioning of the psyche, the unconscious) and (2) the totality of traces representing the universal, reality itself. The functioning of the psyche and the unconscious is in turn a model for the functioning of archives and, writ large, for the functioning of the universal, in particular human behavior, and the temporally divided nature of all things. Continuing his discussion of the transcendental necessity of "archival" inscriptions, Hägglund writes:

> VI. [O]ne cannot explain the trace structure of the now by merely appealing to its constitutive relation to past and future nows. This appeal is insufficient, since it does not explain why the now *is not* past, present, or future. […] [T]he now never *is* because of the structure of succession that constitutes the now itself. And it is precisely because the now never *is* – because it passes away as soon as it comes to be – that it must be inscribed as a trace in order to be at all. Hence, the necessity of inscription follows from the structure of succession. […] [T]he structure of the trace […] is an "ultratranscendental" condition for everything that is temporal (Hägglund 2009b, pp. 239–240, excerpts joined together from two consecutive paragraphs).

Condensed into these three additional "message slips" on the call for justice is an account of the logical sweep of deconstruction and its new wave *ending with* the indeterminacy of ethical and political values (message slip IV), *starting from* the constitution of time and its logical implications [message slip V (parts a–b)], *traversing* the construction of the archive [message slips V (parts a–b) and VI]. Reading all of Hägglund's "message slips" together shows deconstruction emphatically underlines our ordinary understanding that responding to the call for justice is a political response, for which no acts or decisions by the archivist are ethically certain but always open to critique and contestation. I show such notions relieve us of no responsibility to act and decide, nor are they blind to justice. Such notions, finally, assure us of our stance on archival praxis and postmodern archival theory.

In preparing this paper, I set out to understand the well-regarded archival theorists who "have carried out a sustained engagement with Derrida's work"— namely, Terry Cook, Brien Brothman, and, most of all, Verne Harris (Hardiman 2009, p. 29). I was concerned to understand exactly how "Archive fever" justifies the archivist's role as activist. Hardiman asks a provocative research question: How can the postmodernists resolve the tension "between a logic which does indeed permit—at times almost demand—equal validity for all perspectives and viewpoints, and the refusal in practice by most postmodernist thinkers to embrace this logic, most notably in their harking to the 'call of and for justice … a calling more

important than any archival calling'"? (Hardiman 2009, p. 36, citing Harris 2005, pp. 139, 134–135). Radical atheism confronts this tension head on.

New wave deconstruction clarifies misconceptions of archival theory, helps rethink the foundations of that theory, and provides an account of deconstruction that may align the profession with current thought in philosophy. It does not seek to *resolve* the tension Hardiman sees between the postmodernist appreciation of all views and perspectives and its activist stance; rather, it *overthrows* Hardiman's question entirely. Radical atheism is fundamentally a new orientation. It is not preoccupied with the subject's perspectives and viewpoints; instead, it foregrounds the materially constitutive and unconditional contradictions, discontinuities, and instabilities in the meaning of all things. This includes the notion of justice (and other abstractions, hospitality and democracy). Radical atheism shows undecidability enfolds the notion of justice; at the same time, new wave deconstruction does not renounce the continuing struggle for justice. The engine of radical atheism is the logic of the constitution of time (or the logic of sequencing itself, as a material or real matter), not—as with postmodernism—power and the dynamics of language or discourse.

In light of its recognition of the undecidability of justice, radical atheism provides a coherent basis for understanding the archivist's role as social justice activist. Hägglund's account has an intuitive appeal and builds on the profession's accepted, fundamental understanding of archives: New wave deconstruction does not invalidate any perspective or viewpoint, and consistent with one's practical sense, it identifies social justice issues as political questions, unavoidably subject to critique and contestation. New wave deconstruction defines a flexible mentality appropriate for archival praxis, actions, and decisions.

Thinking ahead, in the final pages of this "Answer" section, I answer up front the question of the proper archival response to the call for justice. I spell out in detail the proper role of archivists as activists for social justice. In "Power" section, I argue unclear thinking currently grips the foundation for the archivist's role as activist. Archivists base the activist role on postmodern theories of power and a mistaken understanding of deconstruction's engagement with power. They misread "Archive fever" and its notion of "archontic power." Closely reading "Archons, aliens and angels" (Harris 2011a), I identify two problems with that paper's attempt to fuse Foucauldian and Derridean thinking. Harris misattributes to Derrida a theory of power: It is logically impossible to do so, and it is incompatible with Derrida's philosophical orientation. The section concludes with my *negative* argument (i.e., this is *not x*) that Derrida's concern with "archontic power" is not about the power of the archive but something else (namely, psychoanalytic theory).

In subsequent sections, my arguments are *positive* (i.e., this *is y*, and this *is z*), addressing Derrida's concern to illuminate Freudian psychoanalysis with deconstruction and *vice versa*. In "Archive fever (deconstruction)" section, I provide an extended analysis of "Archive fever" as the basis for Derrida's heuristic approach in understanding the problematic psychoanalytic theory "beyond" Freud's pleasure principle and the notion of archive fever. I examine Derrida's efforts in "Archive fever," as well as in "Archive fever (in South Africa)," to illustrate archive fever,

the notion of a desire for the archive, for producing the archive, feverishly, repetitively, as a compulsion indissociable from the death drive.

In "Radical atheism (deconstruction's new wave)" section, I examine the definition of "the trace" and explore the basic argument for deconstruction. The impossibility of a self-present identity owing to the nature of time constitutes the deep foundation for deconstructive logic. I further examine the basis for Hägglund's conclusion deconstruction affords no determinate notion of justice. In the conclusion, "Commitments to social justice and contestation" section, I urge the very indeterminacy of justice makes archivists responsible for their professional actions and decisions. No value has an inherent value; the archival response to the call for justice is unavoidably a political response and a responsibility from which no one can be absolved.

My answer as to the proper archival response to the call for justice and the proper role of archivists as activists is: Deconstruction has no ethico-political commitments. A proper theory recognizes the call for justice involves ethical and political commitments that must be justified but cannot be justified by deconstruction. Archivists' principal work is making records accessible to patrons. Archivists confront many issues, often including apparent issues of justice, the call for justice. Actions and decisions are political. In justifying their actions and decisions, archivists ought to be sensitive to all perspectives and viewpoints, adept at deconstructive logic, and capable of recognizing the political nature of activism, subject to critique and contestation. Archivists who hew to a proper theory of archival activism possess a questioning mentality. That mentality serves archivists in their role *per se* as *archivists* (conditional and limited) and in their role *per quod* as *activists* (unavoidably conditional and unavoidably limited), in which archivists engage, taking actions and making decisions—as deconstruction shows they must— all the while recognizing their actions and decisions are subject to critique and contestation. I believe Derrida embodied that mentality and, as a public intellectual, professed many political commitments (see, e.g., Rosen-Carole 2010, pp. 281–282, fn. 5). All this is the most anyone can say, consistent with the overall orientation and picture of reality to which postmodern archival theory is substantially committed.

Power

The call for archival activism addresses "injustice" in society at large. More urgently, it addresses injustice brought about by archives or archivists themselves, at their own or, sometimes, an outside power's instance. Archival activism is an outgrowth of postmodern archival theory, which discovers new meaning and significance in the power possessed by archives and archivists. Ethnographic research shows the archive reflects 'the power relationships and social values of the society that produced it" (McKemmish 2005, p. 18, citing Stoler 2002, pp. 89, 91–92; see also Stoler 2009). The call for activism asks archivists to deploy archives in new ways to correct "injustice" and "unjust" relations of power (e.g., Jimerson 2009; Harris 2007b). Postmodern archival theory thus overturns the positivist model, which calls for archivists to be impartial, neutral, and objective custodians of

records, the model presupposing archival records represent objective truth (see, e.g., Cook 2006, p. 170).

Verne Harris is a model archivist for social justice (Greene 2013, p. 304). Harris, who is widely published, made substantial archival contributions in the struggle against South African apartheid and continues to make similar contributions in the struggles involved in the postapartheid transition to democracy (Harris 2007a, 2011a, b together providing a comprehensive account of Harris' current thought and practical achievements). Harris has written several articles and essays—essentially versions of the same theory—specifically addressing the foundation for the archival profession's call for social justice (e.g., Harris 1998, 2011a see generally Harris 2007b). I examine closely the latest version of Harris' theory, published as "Archons, aliens and angels" (2011a). I conclude Harris misreads Derrida on the meaning and significance of archival power. Derrida's deconstructive analysis of archives is not premised on an ethical concern to right unjust relations of power.

Harris generally places power at the center of his concept of the archive. Viewing the archive as a contested realm, his argument, in its barest essentials, is that the archive reifies unjust power relations. On a close reading of "Archive fever" it appears Derrida sometimes has in mind some notion of "archives of evil" or, to be sure, archives involving "*mal*" (as in the "Mal d'archive" of the untranslated title). Further, it appears Derrida sometimes has in mind concerns about anti-Semitism and the holocaust (and their personal effects on Freud). These undercurrents in Derrida's writing surely speak to Harris and his lifelong confrontation with apartheid; they speak to Harris' concerns about the role of archives in sustaining and, afterward, in rectifying that twentieth-century evil. "Archive fever," however, is a multilayered work; Harris' highly personal reading often mistakes the core meaning of Derrida's difficult writing.

Misreading "Archive fever" as an account of archival power, Harris seeks to align Derrida directly with Foucault, the latter with his definite preoccupations with power and, in particular, the power of the archive (see Manoff 2004; Merewether 2006, pp. 26–30 and 76–79). In "Archons, aliens and angels," specifically "Power and the Archive" section (2011a, pp. 104–110), Harris attributes disproportionate significance to footnote 1 of "Archive fever," which states, "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation" (Derrida 1996, p. 4, fn. 1). The footnote cites a contemporary French work whose translated title "Forbidden archives," serves as the metonymy, Derrida claims, for "all that is important" in his account of archives and their role securing or subverting democracy (Derrida 1996, p. 4, fn. 1). This is meaningful, but it is solely a footnote.

Harris asserts Derrida's "essential criterion"—that democratization is measured by participation in and access to archives—"finds [archives] wanting in greater or lesser measure," when that criterion is applied globally. Harris writes:

Always the indelible imprint of power either marginalizes or excludes (in terms of both 'content' and 'access') the weak, the poor and the outcast –

society's aliens. [Harris contends], following Derrida, that this has to do with the reality that 'there is no political power without control of the archive' (Derrida 1996, p. 4, fn. 1). So that democratization – always a 'process' imperfectly realized and always drawing on powers, formations and energies which Derrida names 'archontic' (1996, p. 3) – can never fully remove the *arkhon* [or "archon," ruler, superior magistrate] from the *arkheion* [superior magistrate's residence, location of "the archive"]. Consequently the call of justice in relation to the archive is a call to activism – a call to open the archive in a fundamental way to those alienated, or estranged, in it or by it; to open the archive to the alien, the stranger, the *xenos*. In the memorable words of Nelson Mandela, at the inauguration of his Centre of Memory and Dialogue: 'we want it to dedicate itself to the recovery of memories and stories suppressed by power. That is the call of justice'. The activists – those who heed the call, who hear the message, disseminate it and act on it – are […] 'angels', from the Greek *aggelos*, meaning messenger (Harris 2011a, p. 104, citation eliminated).

In "Power and the Archive" section of his paper, Harris' weaves together writings by Derrida and the explicit theories of power by Foucault, by Bruno Latour, and others, each theory representative of postmodernism. On a close reading I am concerned to understand the role Derrida's thought plays in Harris' argument. I acknowledge the power of archives and archivists. What is the foundation in theory for the archivist's response to the call for justice? Does Harris, as champion of Derrida's work, understand the foundation in theory fully or correctly?

Harris quotes Latour's account of "the stuff of daily life," not Derrida's well-developed and evocative notion of the trace, in describing the archive, and thus brings in Latour's conceptualization of the archive—namely, what "is all around us," what "is on us and inside us"—as the source of "an essential power" (Harris 2011a, p. 105, citing Latour 1986, generally). Latour "foregrounds" the archive's structuring of cognition. "Power flows from merely 'looking at files' precisely because looking is preceded by a whole range of interventions—from the structuring of information in documents to the gathering of documents into files, from the classification of files in terms of a system to the preparation of finding aids—and because every act of looking becomes an intervention more or less structurally determined but at the same time carrying restructuring potential" (Harris 2011a, p. 107, citing Latour 1986, generally). Harris then turns to contextualization. "It is in understanding the role of contextualization […] that the nature and the contours of power—any power—begin to emerge." Harris asserts the power at play in the creation and use of classification systems is even more obvious when we consider the "layers of context within which information is embedded." These layers include "the idioms, languages and psychologies of those generating information"; "the contingencies of place and time informing information retrieval"; "the biographies of information managers" (Harris 2011a, p. 108).

Then Harris brings Derrida back in. "Indeed, in principle," Harris writes, "there can be no limit to this form of layering. *In the words of Derrida*," Harris continues, "'the finiteness of a context is never secured or simple, there is an indefinite opening of every context, an essential nontotalization'" (Harris 2011a, p. 108, with emphasis

added, quoting Derrida 1988, p. 137). Harris then weaves Derrida's thinking with Foucault's in an extended discussion of power and control of information. Harris states,

> it is Derrida and Michel Foucault who offer the most convincing readings of the logic, even law, underlying these phenomena [control of information]. And they do so precisely by insisting on the contexts within which information discloses meaning and significance. In Foucault 'the archive' is the assemblage of all discursive formations existing in a given society. It is discourse as system: 'The archive is first the law of what can be said' (Foucault 1972, p. 129). And *when* it can be said, *how*, and *by whom*. In Derrida 'the archive' is a tracing—the consigning of information, of text, to a substrate, an exterior surface, a place (and it can be a virtual place) of consignation (Derrida 1996, generally). Structurally, tracing, or consignation, is all about contextualization, in relation to the process and to the place. As Derrida (1988, p. 136) has put it, there is nothing outside context. And contextualization, in turn, cannot avoid the exercise of (archontic) power. The archive, in short, is the law determining contexts. For both Foucault and Derrida, then, the archive is a construction, one which issues from and expresses relations of power, and which is the condition for any engagement with information and any exercise of power. It is here, beneath the whirl and clatter of information, that the instruments of power are forged. Instruments which in their most fundamental of operations create and destroy, promote and discourage, co-opt and discredit, *contexts*. Archivists have conceptualized what they do around their special expertise in context. But it is the archon, the one who exercises political power, who is the purveyor of context and who is the archetypal archivist. In this reading politics is archival, and the archive is the very possibility of politics (Harris 2011a, pp. 108–109).

When Derrida's line of thought is unwoven from the warp and weft of this excerpt, at least two significant problems are immediately evident. The first is an immanent logical problem attaching to any attempt by Harris and, perhaps, postmodernists generally, to fuse Derridean and Foucauldian thinking, and attribute to deconstruction an explicit theory (or even deep concerns) about power. To do so is at root logically impossible. Harris contends the archon's "consignation" is equivalent to the process of archival appraisal and description. Harris seeks to establish a parallel between the Derridean "archontic power" of consignation and the Foucauldian notion of the archive "as the law of what can be said"—all the while upholding a notion of "contextualization" as infinite and shifting contexts. If contexts infinitely shift, where then is the archon's power and domination? There is no power and domination where archival records possess no stable meaning or significance. Harris recognized the contradiction himself, in "Postmodernism and archival appraisal: seven theses" (1998) where he expressed the logical problem thus:

> In retrospect, I would have included as a separate thesis the logical impossibility of appraisal. If the meanings and significances of a record are

located in its contexts, and if those contexts are both infinite and shifting, then logically it is impossible to determine the value [meaning and significance] of a record at any particular moment in time (Harris 1998, p. 106 fn. 4).

The second problem with Harris' efforts to fuse Derridean thinking and Foucault's concept of power is the sheer incompatibility of their philosophical orientations. The overt "archontic power" described by Harris (and not, I urge, a concept of power integral to deconstruction) has little to do with Foucault's concept of subtle, often invisible power. It is well understood the genealogy of power and power relations is one of the primary axes for interpreting Foucault's works during his "middle period" up to several years before his death in 1984 (Gutting 2005, p. 2; see Foucault 1980, 1995; Foucault et al. 1980; Foucault 1990; see also Foucault 1983, as core original sources of Foucault's theory of power). Foucault's "early period" work addressed historical reconfigurations of knowledge (e.g., madness to mental illness) in the human sciences. Foucault was concerned to find "the epistemic context within which those bodies of knowledge became intelligible and authoritative" (Rouse 2005, p. 96). He discovered "discursive formations" in archival records and their arrangement. Such formations may be said to capture "which concepts and statements [are or were] intelligible together, how those statements were organized thematically, [and] which of those statements counted as 'serious'" (Rouse 2005, p. 96). It was but a small step, which Foucault took in the 1970s, to explore how the historical reconfigurations of knowledge he studied were also intertwined with new forms of power and domination (Rouse 2005, p. 95). As a useful generalization, Foucault's concept of power does not equate to "status, position or formal authority" (Hardiman 2014, p. 204). Rather, "[p]ower flows through and activates" or sometimes "disrupt[s] and divert[s]" normative structures and other discursive formations (Hardiman 2014, p. 203). It is Foucauldian power that determines what may be said (compare Harris 2011a, pp. 108–109, quoted above); it determines what may be accounted true (Hardiman 2014, pp. 203–204). Foucault's concept of power evolved over time, as detailed by Rouse (2005); recent work by Agamben (1998 and multiple additional titles within the "Homo sacer" series) purportedly completes Foucault's larger project regarding power (see generally Prozorov 2014). Derrida, the founding spirit of deconstruction, does not have an explicit theory of power. To be sure, he discusses "archontic power" and consignation of the trace. However, as fully discussed momentarily, the notion of consignation is significant as an exteriorization in the psychoanalytic context of Freud's concept of the death drive and Derrida's related notion of archive fever (Derrida 1996, pp. 11–12).

Finally, the bitter falling out between Derrida and Foucault over Derrida's critique, in "Cogito and the history of madness" (1978a), of Foucault's first major publication, "Folie et déraison" (see Foucault and Khalfa 2006) emphatically demonstrates the two thinkers' differences. Derrida's attack, based on a deconstructive reading of Descartes, claims Foucault had unjustifiably read out of the Cartesian cogito ("I think, therefore I am") the "mad" person as a thinking subject. The upshot is Foucault's stinging retort. Foucault declares Derrida's errors are the result of a system,

of which Derrida is the most decisive modern representative, in its final glory: the reduction of discursive practices to textual traces: the elision of the events produced therein and the retention only of marks for a reading; the invention of voices behind texts to avoid having to analyze the modes of implication[.] […] I will not say it is a metaphysics […] hiding in this 'textualization' of discursive practices. […] I shall say that what can be seen here so visibly is a historically well-determined little pedagogy […] [that gives] to the master's voice the limitless sovereignty which allows it to restate the text indefinitely (Foucault 1979, p. 27, excerpts joined from separate paragraphs).

Where Derrida insists texts must be deconstructed, "Foucault takes the position that a text can best be read against its context, that is, as part of a larger set of discursive practices." Their "differences appear to be fundamental and basic, perhaps admitting no 'middle way' between them" (Flaherty 1986, p. 165).

Notwithstanding the incompatibility of any theory of power, Derrida is not without *impressions* as to the power of archives. I use "impressions" in the sense Derrida defines the word in "Archive fever," where he announces neither Freud nor he has a concept of the archive, only *impressions* (Derrida 1996, p. 29). Undoubtedly footnote 1 of "Archive fever" regarding the "essential criterion" for democratization (Derrida 1996, p. 4, fn. 1) is one of Derrida's impressions as to the power of archives. If Derrida's impressions represent any commitment to postmodern theories of power, it is fleeting and falls outside strict deductive logic. Derrida *does* state in strikingly Foucauldian language,

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*. It is not only the traditional *consignatio*, that is, the written proof, but what all *consignatio* begins by presupposing. *Consignation* 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 dissociation, any heterogeneity or *secret* which could separate (*secernere*), or partition, in an absolute manner. The archontic principle of the archive is also a principle of consignation, that is, of gathering together (Derrida 1996, p. 3).

These words are nearly panoptic, disciplinary, or even punitive (cf. Foucault 1995). But this passage can—indeed must—be read as the point where Derrida can now begin to discuss the archiving of the trace. Derrida locates in the *arkhē* [archive] an instituted place: centralized as the point of the *commencement* and as the source of the *commandment* (the intersection of the topological and the nomological) for the *gathering together* of inscribed traces. Having shown how the "archontic becomes instituted" (Derrida 1996, p. 3), the archive can now be put in service of psychoanalysis and deconstruction, as a model for a mechanism of the psyche involving Derrida's notion of the trace.

Curiously, from the range of three related ancient Greek concepts—namely, *arkhē* [archive], *arkhon* [ruler, superior magistrate], and *arkheion* [superior

magistrate's residence, location of "the archive"]—Harris conceptualizes his foundation for archival activism on the latter two concepts. In "Archons, aliens and angels," specifically "Power and the Archive" section (Harris 2011a, pp. 104–110), Harris scarcely discusses the *arkhē* [archive]. His central metaphor is removing the *arkhon* [ruler] from the *arkheion* [residence]. Derrida's central metaphor is clearly the *arkhē* [archive], employed as a psychoanalytic notion. The opening pages of "Archive fever" introduce the *arkhē* and its cognates, *arkhon* and *arkheion*. Derrida thereafter discusses the *arkhē* [archive] almost exclusively. In those opening pages, Derrida establishes the context for illuminating the "processes of 'archiving' with Freudian psychoanalysis and *vice versa*" (Hardiman 2009, p. 29).

Harris concludes "Power and the Archive" section of his paper (2011a, pp. 104–110) with a discussion of Freud and human memory. He seeks to situate the concept of the unconscious within a discourse of archival power. He writes: "So, the unconscious—a world of dreams; of forgotten or repressed memories, narratives and images; of languages and idioms difficult or impossible to grasp; of aliens—is a 'space outside' bearing traces; a form, therefore, of archive; and therefore, the source of an essential power" (Harris 2011a, p. 110). But Harris' message is garbled. Is the *arkhon* the *arkhē*? a mechanism of the *arkhē*? What is the *psychoanalytic* significance of "archontic power"?

In the "Archive fever (in South Africa)" seminar Derrida targets misconceptions of "Archive fever"; he reacts to papers presented by Verne Harris (2002a) and Susan van Zyl (2002) and takes pains to elucidate the psychoanalytic significance of "archontic power." In Derrida's words, the archive consists "in consigning, in inscribing a trace in some external location" (2002b, p. 42). It is

> a location – that's why the political power of the *archons* is so essential in the definition of the archive. […] [Y]ou need the exteriority of the place in order to get something archived. […] [B]ecause of this exteriority, what is kept in the archive […] can be lost[;] [what is kept] is always, and from the beginning, threatened by the possibility of destruction (Derrida 2002b, p. 42).

The risk of destruction, Derrida continues, "has to do with what Freud defines as a death drive—that is, a drive to […] destroy the trace without any remainder, without any trace, without any ashes." The structure or device of the archive represents an economy of repression (where "[w]hat is forgotten or repressed […] can of course come back," which we can confirm "through a number of historical and political examples"). This economy of repression is "threatened or in conflict with the aneconomic death drive" (Derrida 2002b, p. 42). "[I]t is because this radical drive to destruction is always at work […] that the desire for archive is a burning one." If we knew it was simply material limitations—"because of the limitations in time and space, […] that we cannot keep this or this – there would not be such a fever, a passion" (Derrida 2002b, p. 44). Further:

> If there is a passion, it is because we know that not only the traces can be lost by accident or because the space is finite or the time is finite, but because we know that something in us, so to speak, something in the psychic apparatus, is

driven to destroy the trace without any remainder. *And that's where the archive fever comes from* (Derrida 2002b, p. 44, emphasis added).

Derrida's most significant point, for present purposes, is that concerning the role of archontic power. The archival model couples the archon's power with exteriority. Archontic power is thus central to the archive in a rather limited sense. The archon is a mechanism that oversees certain processes responsible for the archive's exteriority, for which exposure the archive is at risk of total annihilation. Harris is undoubtedly aware of the psychoanalytic meaning and significance of the archive and its processes (and he transcribed Derrida's seminar). "Archive fever" does not theorize or situate the archive within a discourse of power.

Derrida's brief and impromptu responses in "Archive fever (in South Africa)" to misconceptions about "Archive fever" express in less polished words some of the tropes and logical formulations of radical atheism. His notion of the threat of total annihilation and the concomitant fueling of passion for the archive find references in the notion of radical finitude and the affirmation of survival. Radical finitude—that is, death, the threat of total annihilation—is the unconditional condition of all we desire. The affirmation of survival is our orientation ever to live on in our mortal lives, ever to build the archive. Without the threat of death we would have no desire to live on, since mortality is the only reason we care about life in the first place.

In the next "Archive fever (deconstruction)" section, I consider more fully Derrida's heuristic approach in understanding archive fever, as well as Hägglund's critique. The deductive approach of new wave deconstruction provides a more satisfactory account.

"Archive fever" (deconstruction)

Two short readings of "Archive fever"—Steedman (2002) and Rapaport (2003)—come closest, I believe, to Derrida's real *thoughts* and *feelings* about archives. Both acknowledge Derrida's references to the desire or passion for the archive, juxtaposing the archival ills and darker concerns of "Archive fever." According to Steedman, "Derrida had long seen in Freudian psycho-analysis a desire to recover moments of inception, beginnings and origins which […] we think might be some kind of truth, and in 'Archive Fever', desire for the archive is presented as part of the desire to find, or locate, or possess that moment of origin, as the beginning of things" (Steedman 2002, p. 3). Steedman captures Derrida's more dreamlike impressions of the archive, including the fever that "is to do with its very establishment […] of state power and authority" and "the now" of unchanneled powers (Steedman 2002, p. 1). "And then," Steedman shifts abruptly, there is "a kind of sickness unto death" Derrida indicated "*for* the archive: the fever not so much to enter it and use it, as to *have* it, or just for it to be there, in the first place" (Steedman 2002, pp. 1–2). Rapaport, an academic philosopher, approaches "Archive fever" with a similar sensibility.

Rapaport chimes with Steedman in reading the "sickness unto death" of "Archive fever." This metaphor is an important point of departure for exploring the

psychoanalytic content of the book. To Rapaport the sickness or madness is a "*rampant* death wish" (2003, p. 76, emphasis added), a reading that ties together "Archive fever" and Derrida's earlier epistolary "novel," "The post card: from Socrates to Freud and beyond" (1987, first "book" titled "Envois"). "The post card" is said to be the "displaced main act" or "phantom limb" of "Archive fever" (Rapaport 2003, p. 76). The "Envois" shows the evil of the archive—the fascicle of fictional postcard-length messages—where the beloved addressee(s) remains a mystery, portrays a profound personal sickness and is therefore an evil writ small. Derrida's fantasy envois dated September 7, 1977 reads, in part:

> Our delinquency, my love, we are the worst criminals and the first victims. I would like not to kill anyone, and everything I send you goes through *meurtrières* [vertical slots in the wall of a fortification for projecting weapons; murderesses]. As for the children, the last ones I might touch, the holocaust has already begun (Derrida 1987, pp. 67–68, block quoted by Rapaport 2003, p. 75, without the note, included here, inserted by the editor of Derrida's work regarding "vertical slots").

Freely floating desires *regarding* death are expressed by the writer of the postcard; "a death wish that cannot decide whether to act or be acted upon, hence the wish not to kill and yet the wish to shoot something through the *meurtrière*" (Rapaport 2003, p. 76). Overall creepiness here is self-evident.

Talk of variations on personal archive sickness is crucial, Rapaport writes, "If we are to understand why it is Derrida decided to address the historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and his book" on Freud and his relationship with Judaism. In "Freud's Moses," "Yerushalmi asks the "*interminable* question of whether psychoanalysis is a Jewish science" (Rapaport 2003, p. 77). A repeated question with so many unsettling associations evinces a repetition compulsion, Derrida demonstrates, returning to it himself so many times; among its associations is "the interminable instantiation of a death drive coupled with the desire to inherit a terminal unitary trait from Freud that will bind one to a community that is, in essence, Jewish" (Rapaport 2003, pp. 77–78). I do not consider these aspects of "Archive fever" here. They represent some of the heuristic investigations Derrida undertakes in "Archive fever," and of particular interest is Rappaport's observation that an aspect of the evil or malice of archives is "the feverish hunt to find something in an archive that has presumably been lost or that has been kept secret" (Rapaport 2003, p. 77). Instead, I will pick up a thread Rapaport suggests in his image of "The post card" as a phantom limb of "Archive fever." Rapaport hints at, but does not explore, Derrida's unsatisfactory efforts to illuminate through the logic of deconstruction Freud's understanding of the repetition compulsion and its communication with the death drive at work in the *fort/da* [gone/there] game played by Freud's grandson. The game is the central focus of "Beyond the pleasure principle" (Freud 1955). To explain the game, a repetition compulsion and the death drive are problematically conceptualized as articulating with the pleasure principle and the reality principle, which themselves have a conceptually problematic communication. The pleasure principle and the reality principle represent a tension between immediate satisfaction and deferred gratification. In the *fort/da* game the small child repeatedly

throws a spool with an attached cord out of sight behind a curtained cot, only to retrieve and throw it again. According to Freud, the game displaces the child's feelings of attachment to his mother and abandonment by her whenever his mother leaves him. Freud's psychoanalytical account is famously inconclusive.

A full account of Derrida's efforts in "The post card" to develop the appropriate deconstructive logic to explain the *fort/da* game and the "beyond" of the pleasure principle is not possible here. In the second "book" of "The post card" titled "To speculate—on 'Freud,'" Derrida deconstructs "Beyond the pleasure principle," section by section; this deconstruction comes from a seminar Derrida refers to as "*life death*" [*la vie la mort*] (Derrida 1987, p. 259). To account for the *fort/da* Derrida posits a single hypothesis involving a three-term psychic structure. The "pure pleasure" of the pleasure principle and the "pure reality" of the reality principle are, he begins, ideal limits,

> which is as much to say fictions. The one is as destructive and mortal as the other. Between the two the *différant* detour […] forms the very actuality of the process [articulating the "beyond" repetition compulsion and death drive], of the "psychic" process as a "living" process. Such an "actuality," then, is never present or given. It "is" that which in the gift is never presently giving or given [namely, the pure generosity without any expectation whatsoever of any benefit]. There is (*es gibt*)—it gives, *différance*. […] The three terms— two principles plus or minus différance—are but one, the same divided, since the second (reality) principle and *différance*—are but one, the same divided, since the second (reality) principle and *différance* are only the "effects" of the modifiable pleasure principle (Derrida 1987, pp. 284–285).

His depiction of this structure is not entirely satisfactory, and the remaining pages of the book constitute—parallel to Freud's compulsive efforts—a compulsively repetitive (cf. Rapaport 2003, pp. 77–78) deconstructive analysis that does not return to the three-term structure or elucidate the role or operation of the reality principle and *différance* within that structure. To be sure, Hägglund finds in "The post card" a foundation—or the suggestion of a foundation—for a radical atheist account of the "beyond" of the pleasure principle. The foundation involves the "pure pleasure" and the "pure reality" poles of the three-term structure. Hägglund's (2012) brief account of the "beyond" in "Dying for time" "rejects Freud's notion of the death drive and advances a different explanation. Hägglund draws on resources—the psychoanalytic notion of "binding"—within Freud's own text and develops the notion of a "bindinal economy" (Hägglund 2012, pp. 125, 129). Hägglund argues both the pleasure principle and the death drive seek release from the unpleasurable tensions of life. Since "the pleasure principle and the death drive are based on the same axiom, […] the death drive cannot account for what is 'beyond the pleasure principle'" (Hägglund 2012, p. 125). Rather, it must be explained by something else. Hägglund turns to "the temporal process of *binding*" (Hägglund 2012, p. 122; see pp. 122–135 for the full alternative explanation for the "beyond" of the pleasure principle).

In this instance, very little evidence shows Derrida is committed to or, much less, satisfied by a philosophical move such as Hägglund suggests. And in the run of

pages referenced in Hägglund's account, where Derrida touches on the notion of "binding" within a "bindinal economy" (see Derrida 1987, pp. 389–390, 399–402, referenced in Hägglund 2012, pp. 183–184, fn. 12), Derrida makes clear his dissatisfaction. Is binding within a bindinal economy a *deus ex machina* in the "trauma at the core of psychoanalytic theory"? (cf. Hägglund 2012, pp. 183–184, fn. 12, citing Lear 2000, p. 62). Is it a *pis aller*… Freud's "seventh step" (i.e., Section VII) of "Beyond the pleasure principle"? Derrida, writing as if responding to these very questions, states:

> Insolvency and irresolution—perhaps these words also call upon what might be called *bindinal economy*. […] The German *Binden*, concept or metaphor, plays, as we know, a formidable role in this text ["Beyond the pleasure principle"] and this problematic. Everything seems to be played out, or rather knotted, in the more or less loose stricture of energy, in the more or less dissolved, detached, resolved, absolved (*aufgelöst*) ties or bonds.

> Unbinding, unknotting, detachment, resolution of a problem […] all these regimes of the *lösen* govern the text we are reading, and that we are reading as an interminable narrative. At the seventh step it has not yet reached its denouement. Binding continues to dominate the scene[.] […] What is going to happen now? Are we to know the denouement? No, of course. But will we be able to say that nothing has happened? No, of course (Derrida 1987, pp. 389–390, with second block quote consisting of excerpts joined together from four paragraphs in sequence).

The deep difficulties in the logic of the death drive concern this paper only to the extent Derrida returns to the death drive in "Archive fever," where Derrida considers the death drive heuristically, rather than deductively. A full account of Derrida's deductive efforts would require an extended review of "The post card." Ultimately, Derrida's indirect statement of his own hesitations (or lack of resolution with Freud each step of the way) prevails. Referring to "Beyond the pleasure principle" as well as, obliquely, his own writing before him, Derrida concludes in the penultimate chapter of "To speculate—on 'Freud'":

> These are the last words of the chapter. To every chagrined, anxious or pressing objection, to every attempt at scientistic or philosophizing intimidation, this is how I hear Freud's answer resonate, at my own risk and peril, and I translate it: "go look for yourself, as for me I like it, the beyond of the [pleasure principle] is my rightful pleasure. […] Well – I cannot deny that some of the analogies, correlations and connections which it contains *seemed* to *me* to deserve consideration" [(Freud 1955, p. 60), translation modified]. […] Period, the end. This is the final point, the last words of the chapter. […] (Derrida 1987, p. 385).

In the final chapter of "To speculate—on 'Freud,'" Derrida continues the speculations, some of which I have already considered. His last line: "This is to be continued" (Derrida 1987, p. 409).

"Archive fever" is that continuation. The book is another attempt beyond "The post card" to use deconstructive logic to resolve the "beyond" and other issues of psychoanalytic theory. But "Archive fever" gets little farther than "The post card" in developing that logic. Derrida devotes "Archive fever" to exploring heuristically the notion of archive fever, and compulsive repetition in communication with the death drive, examining particular archives and archiving behavior. Through Derrida's seminar, "Archive fever (in South Africa)," he continues to investigate the explanatory power of archive fever. Unfortunately, it must be said, Derrida's analysis is still wanting.

"Archive fever" *consists of* impressions; it is substantially *about* impressions (many times *about* the impressions of which the text consists). Derrida sets forth three meanings of impression, that is, of impression as in "Freudian impression," the topic announced in the subtitle of "Archive fever: a Freudian impression." The first meaning is the inscription that "leaves a mark at the surface or in the thickness of a substrate" (Derrida 1996, p. 26). The second is the "impression or series of impressions associated with a word" where a definite concept—as in the Freudian and Derridean understanding of the archive—is not within full reach, as in a concept in formation. Significantly, the disjointedness of concepts in the process of being formed, Derrida notes, "has a necessary relationship with the structure of archivization" (Derrida 1996, p. 29). The third meaning of impression—unless it is identical, Derrida opines, to the first (i.e., it is simply an instantiation or, more likely, it is one and the same as the first)—is the impression *left* by Sigmund Freud (Derrida 1996, p. 30). It is the sum of the succession of traces constituting the temporally divided self-identity of everything. And, as Derrida states, it begins with

> the impression *left* in him, inscribed in him, from his birth and his covenant, from his circumcision, through all the manifest or secret history of psychoanalysis, of the institution and of the works, by way of the public and private correspondence, including this letter from […] [his father, signed Freid] in memory of the signs or tokens of the covenant and to accompany the "new skin" of the Bible. […] [T]he *impression left* by Freud, by the event […and so on, unending, perhaps] (Derrida 1996, p. 30).

The predominant metaphor of "Archive fever" is the mystic writing pad (see 1996, pp. 13–14). The image presented is the same as that in "Freud and the scene of writing" (Derrida 1978b), which addressed "the technical model of the machine tool, intended, in Freud's eyes, *to represent on the outside* memory as *internal* archivization"; this model of the psychic apparatus is conditioned by Freud's description, in "Beyond the pleasure principle," of the structure of the psyche (Derrida 1996, p. 13). To the extent the mystic writing pad is included in Freud's work representing traditional metaphysics—a theme explored in "Freud and the scene of writing" (Derrida 1978b)—it is at odds with rigorous deconstructive logic, the "logic of hypomnesis." The mystic writing pad otherwise integrates a necessary "*domestic outside*" and "*internal* substrate, surface or space without which there is neither consignation, registration, impression nor suppression, censorship, repression" (Derrida 1996, p. 19). The pad consists of a wax tablet with a celluloid covering sheet. The stylus for the pad presses the celluloid against the wax,

inscribing words on the covering sheet that disappear when the celluloid is lifted, ultimately leaving invisible traces behind in the wax block. Freud was dissatisfied with the mystic writing pad as a model for memory and the unconscious. In "Archive fever" the mystic writing pad's traces represent Derrida's model for the trace, whose structure follows from the constitution of time, addressed in Hägglund's "message slips" on the call for justice opening this paper (message slip II). As I will show, the trace is the link to the logic of deconstruction rigorously represented in radical atheism. These notions are fully explored in "Radical atheism (deconstruction's new wave)" section below.

"Archive fever" is concerned with the relationship between the origin of memory and inscription (see Howells 1999, p. 112). Psychoanalysis illuminates that origin; deconstruction concerns memory and inscription to the extent both are bound up with the ultratranscendental notion of the trace. Thinking about actual archives (the Freud House archives and, later, the archival institutions of South Africa), as models and heuristic tools, assists psychoanalysis and deconstruction in understanding memory and inscription; such thinking assists deconstruction in its notion of the ultratranscendental archive, the universal archive, reality. Such thinking about actual archives and the ultratranscendental archive (and empirical archival traces and the trace, for that matter) more or less intentionally conflates their operations. "Archive fever" thus illuminates these notions by psychoanalysis and *vice versa*.

"The problematics of 'origins' and their inscription are suggested by the elliptical title ["Mal d'archive"], which refers not merely to the 'ills' of the archive but more significantly to the desire or *passion* [in its double sense, with the trace of morbidity] for the archive" (Howells 1999, p. 112, emphasis added). The *arkhē*, once again, names both the *commencement*—beginning—and the *commandment*. And this connection to law prompts Derrida's explorations concerning the archive and politics, as does his fleeting advertence to the historical "patriarchive" and gendered archival repression (Howells 1999, p. 112). The pervasive stirring and movement of the postulated death drive—awareness of death (or the death drive itself) and its destructive power—runs beneath "the desire to construct an archive, a desire which thus manifests radical finitude." And "the death drive works to destroy its own traces, and is indeed not readily detectible except in eroticized form" (Howells 1999, p. 113). That form, Derrida indicates, is in the nature of an "interior desire" (Derrida 1996, p. 11). The desire to produce an archive is related to the repetition compulsion, itself indissociable from the death drive (Howells 1999, p. 113).

Derrida treats the death drive largely as a given. "For Sigmund Freud himself," Derrida notes, "the destruction drive is no longer a debatable hypothesis"; rather, even understood as a Freudian speculation, it is an "invincible necessity" (Derrida 1996, p. 10). Derrida continues:

> It is as if Freud could no longer resist, henceforth, the irreducible and originary perversity of this drive which he names here sometimes death drive, sometimes aggression drive, sometimes destruction drive, as if these three words were in this case synonymous. […] It is at work, but since it always operates in silence, it never leaves any archives of its own. It destroys in

advance its own archive, as if that were in truth the very motivation of its most proper movement. It works *to destroy the archive: on the condition of effacing* but also *with a view to effacing* its own "proper" traces […]. This drive, from then on, seems not only to be anarchic, anarchontic (we must not forget that the death drive, originary though it may be, is not a principle, as are the pleasure and reality principles): the death drive is above all *anarchivic* [counter-archival], one could say, or *archiviolithic* [constitutively violent]. It will always be archive-destroying, by silent vocation (Derrida 1996, p. 10).

On Derrida's account, the pleasure principle overlays this dramatic bundle of impulses implicated by the archive. That principle and the "beyond" impulses of the pleasure principle purport to explain the dynamic involved in Freud's somewhat theatrical worry that his well-known work, "Civilization and its discontents," was unworthy of the expense of its publication. That worry instantly dissolves, negated by Freud's untroubled inference that "in the retrospective logic of a future perfect […] *he will have to have invented* an original proposition which will make the [production] investment profitable" (Derrida 1996, pp. 8–9). As Derrida explains, the pleasure principle involves an internal contradiction where a destruction drive balances against an impulse that turns the destruction drive itself into a useless expenditure, negating the destruction drive (1996, p. 9).

Derrida translates the generalized death or aggression or destruction drive and its negating impulse into archival terms, as features of archivization. Incorporating distinctions derived from ancient Greek, Derrida states:

As the death drive is also, according to the most striking words of Freud himself, an aggression and a destruction (*Destruktion*) drive, it not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory, as *mnēmē* or *anamnēsis* [active human memory], but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication, of that which can never be reduced to *mnēmē* or *anamnēsis*, that is, the archive, consignation, the documentary or monumental apparatus as *hypomnēma* [cf. inscribed trace], mnemotechnical supplement or representative, auxiliary or memorandum (Derrida 1996, p. 11).

The archive is never active memory—*mnēmē* or *anamnēsis*—"spontaneous, alive and internal experience"; the archive is the counterpart to living human memories and "takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown" of such memories (Derrida 1996, p. 11). The paradox, which Derrida notes merely in passing but acknowledges as central to his remarks, is this: Insofar as "there is no archive without consignation in an *external place*," then "repetition itself, the logic of repetition, indeed the repetition compulsion, remains […] indissociable from the death drive" and, thus, from destruction (1996, pp. 11–12). What "permits and conditions archivization" also menaces the archives, "introducing, *a priori*, forgetfulness and the archiviolithic [constitutive violence] […] [i]nto the 'by heart' itself. The archive always works, and *a priori*, against itself" (Derrida 1996, p. 12).

In even more difficult language, lacking self-evident referents, Derrida explains:

The death drive tends thus to destroy the hypomnesic archive [apparatus of *hypomnēma*], except if it can be disguised, made up, painted, printed, represented as the idol of its truth in painting. Another economy is thus at work, the transaction between this death drive and the pleasure principle, between Thanatos and Eros, but also between the death drive and this apparent dual opposition of principles, of *arkhai* [plural of arkhon, ruler], for example the reality principle and the pleasure principle. The death drive is not a principle. It even threatens every principality, every archontic primacy, every archival desire (Derrida 1996, p. 12).

Note Harris (2011a, p. 104) names the *arkhon* as the counterforce to democratization in "Archons, aliens and angels"; this is incompatible with Derrida's naming the *arkhon* as an equivalent to the pleasure principle and the reality principle. The death drive and impulses indissociable from it, including the repetition compulsion, are "what we [Derrida] will call, later on, *le mal d'archive*, 'archive fever'" (Derrida 1996, p. 12).

According to Derrida (1996, pp. 18–19), the mystic writing pad, the "model of the *psychic* recording and memorization apparatus," incorporates "what we could call here the *archive drive*." This reiterates Derrida's central concept: "what I [Derrida] called earlier, and in view of this internal contradiction, *archive fever*." Derrida writes:

There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression. Above all, and this is the most serious, beyond or within this simple limit called finiteness or finitude, there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive. This threat is *in-finite*, it sweeps away the logic of finitude and the simple factual limits, the transcendental aesthetics, one might say, the spatio-temporal conditions of conservation. Let us say that it abuses them. Such an abuse opens the ethico-political dimension of the problem. There is not one archive fever, one limit or one suffering of memory among others: enlisting the in-finite, archive fever verges on radical evil (Derrida 1996, pp. 19–20).

This passage is among the most difficult in "Archive fever." One might be tempted to suppose the words return to Harris' central focus—namely, the evil of the archive—but the evil here is definitely not the operation of archontic power (i.e., the pleasure principle and the reality principle)—although, it must be remembered, to Derrida the death drive—and, assuming for the sake of argument, any associated "evil"—is indissociable from those principles. I elaborate Derrida's passage as follows: Radical finitude—the threat of total annihilation—accounts for the conflicting impulses of archive fever, as discussed fully in a moment when I turn to Hägglund's critique of "Archive fever" and the death drive. According to deconstructive logic, death sweeps away everything, life, its traces, and the very logic of life and death. In Derrida's most difficult passage, the very threat of death, so immediate in the official process of the archive, "sweeps away the logic of finitude" itself. "[T]he threat of this death drive"—equal to the heightened frenzy

of archive fever and so near the verge—"opens the ethico-political dimension" and overloads "the problem" with hatreds, irrational extremes. The threat of death "abuses," in fact, brings to the verge and aggravates, the appointed rule of the pleasure principle and its regulative reality principle ("the spatio-temporal [unconditional] conditions of conservation"). Archive fever thus "verges on" but is *not*—and *can never be*—unalloyed "radical evil," undivided evil demonstrably or conclusively so.

Significantly, in having introduced "radical evil" into the discourse on the archive, nowhere does Derrida refer to power. He refers to the "logic of finitude," which is the logic of deconstruction. Unfortunately, he barely provides a single expository thread guiding the reader back to the foundations of deconstruction he evidently has in mind. This is unhelpful to most readers.

I have touched on basics of deconstructive logic by considering, in "Answer" section above, some messages from Hägglund's radical atheism on the call for justice. Those several messages incorporate the tropes and logical formulations of new wave deconstruction; they show how the logic of radical atheism works. Hägglund's only commentary directly addressing "Archive fever" critiques Derrida's most difficult passage concerning radical evil. Targeting Derrida's notion of the death drive, Hägglund writes:

> The logic of survival that emerges from [Derrida's wider deconstructive project] in fact is incompatible with the logic of the death drive. [In "Archive fever," for example, Derrida] analyzes how the desire to archive presupposes the possibility of a radical destruction that may eradicate what one is trying to preserve. The desire to archive is thus an effect of the desire for finite life. Indeed, Derrida argues that there would be "no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression," namely, the possibility of a "radical destruction without which no archive desire or fever would happen" (Derrida 1996, pp. 19, 94). Derrida's mistake, however, is to align the possibility of radical destruction with the death drive (Derrida 1996, p. 29) (Hägglund 2009a, pp. 20–21).

Thus Hägglund shows archiving follows the logic of survival; we care about archiving because of the possibility of the radical destruction of our memories and ourselves. But positing a specific death drive is unnecessary. Hägglund argues:

> [R]adical destructibility does not stem from a death drive, for at least two reasons. First, radical destructibility is inherent to finitude in general, so the archive would be threatened by destruction even if there were no drive to destroy it: any number of random events can destroy it. Second, even the most destructive drive must be driven to survive *as* a destructive force, since without surviving it would not have the time to destroy anything at all. Insofar as there is a drive to destroy the archive it does not stem from a death drive but from the drive for survival, which accounts for *both* acts of preservation *and* acts of destruction (Hägglund 2009a, p. 21).

As we have seen, in time, archival forgetting is an eradication of memory "which can never be reduced to [living memory]" (Derrida 1996, p. 11). Thus ancient

records preserving a trace beyond the possibility of its transformation to living memory represents a form of radical destruction (see Derrida 1996, p 11). This stance militates in favor of Hägglund's view that a specific drive for destruction is unnecessary. Note here and other places Hägglund recognized a drive for survival. He subsequently revised his approach (see Hägglund and King 2011, pp. 64–65). Writing in 2012, Hägglund explains, "In challenging Freud's notion of the death drive [...] I [Hägglund] do not seek to replace it with another drive that would play the same constitutive role" (Hägglund 2012, p. 128). The affirmation of survival is Hägglund's operative notion.

Central to new wave deconstruction is the affirmation of survival unconditionally operative even within a desire for self-destruction. It "can lead me to attack myself just as well as it can lead me to defend myself. Even the act of suicide presupposes the affirmation of survival." To commit suicide one affirms the time needed to commit the very act; further, without the affirmation of survival "one would not experience any suffering that could motivate suicide," "one would not care about what happened to oneself" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 165). The affirmation of survival is comprehensive, as well as fundamental, and not precisely a drive. Archive fever—a label and a separate notion Hägglund probably thinks unneeded—is understood to involve indissociable impulses for death and destruction explained in terms of the unconditional affirmation of survival. Hägglund writes:

> Without the drive for survival [substitute "affirmation of survival"] there would be no drive [substitute "motivation"] to institute or maintain archives, but the drive for survival ["movement of survival"] also precipitates the drive to destroy archives, since the movement of survival always entails the eradication of what does *not* survive. To institute and maintain a certain archive is necessarily to violate other archives, whether the violence consists in ignoring, subordinating, or destroying those archives. Archive fever – as the co-implication of being passionate for and being sick of the archive – should thus be explained in terms of the drive for survival ["affirmation of survival"] rather than in terms of the death drive (Hägglund 2009a, p. 21).

It will be clear in "Radical atheism (deconstruction's new wave)" section below the most difficult passage quoted above (Derrida 1996, pp. 19–20)—where Derrida off-handedly brings in concepts such as "radical finitude," "spatio-temporal conditions," and "transcendental aesthetics"—refers to the fundamentals of deconstruction (also operative, of course, in radical atheism). The passage is the modulating bridge within "Archive fever," transitioning from a deductive approach in understanding archive fever to a heuristic one.

Does Derrida's exploration of the archives related to Freud—the archives of "Sigmund Freud" or the archives of "the invention of psychoanalysis" (Derrida 1996, p. 5)—provide the heuristic material to decipher archive fever, the repetition compulsion and the death drive? I might start, as Derrida himself does, with the Philippson Bible passed down from Sigmund Freud's grandfather. Writing playfully, Derrida notes the bible was inscribed and presented (a new leather binding, under "a cover of new skin") as a memorial—not to any dated event of a circumcision—but to a covenant or renewed covenant "in its *typical* moment" (i.e.,

the circumcision) regularly renewed (Derrida 1996, p. 22). The bible as inscribed is a memorial, Derrida opines, representing "the whole of archival law: *anamnēsis*, *mnēmē*, *hypomnēma*" (Derrida 1996, p. 23). These are Derrida's *impressions* (and curious uncoverings).

Exploring all aspects of Derrida's investigation of the Freud House archives—undertaken vicariously through Yerushalmi's "Freud's Moses," the "archival book on the archive" (Derrida 1996, p. 58)—is beyond the scope of this paper. The archives and the collection of Derrida's impressions warrant a separate comprehensive study. The crux of my argument that "Archive fever" represents Derrida's refocus on a heuristic approach is Derrida's deconstructive reading of "the injunction to remember"—or *better*, as Derrida (1996, p. 75) phrases it, "*the obligation of the archive*"—discussed in "Freud's Moses." Derrida's investigation of the figurative *archive of the Jewish people* brings to light an important, if somewhat abstract, instance of archive fever, the symptoms of a sickness unto death from which Derrida himself is pointedly not immune.

Before turning to "the obligation of the archive" of the Jewish people and its connection to an instance of archive fever, I cite Sloterdijk's (2009) evocative "recontextualization" of deconstruction to help make sense of Derrida's notion of the archive of a people. According to Sloterdijk, an innovation beyond the Egyptians' heavy stone gods, a weight impeding travel, "the people of Israel were able to change into a theophoric entity […], *omnia sua secum portans* [carrying all their possessions with them] in a literal sense, because it [the theophoric entity] had succeeded in recoding God from the medium of stone to that of the scroll" (Sloterdijk 2009, p. 47). Where "the Jewish textualization of God involved his translation into transportable registries, […] the Jewish people also achieved a translation of the archetype of the pyramid into a portable format" (Sloterdijk 2009, p. 49). The burial chamber of the pyramid is a sort of transportable archive, Sloterdijk muses. "For Derrida," he continues, "the archive governs the infinite within the finite; it equals a building with fluid walls […]—in fact, a house without any walls" (2009, p. 70). The archive of the Jewish people is a metonymy of the theophoric entity, bearing the name of god.

Derrida emphasizes that Yerushalmi in "Freud's Moses" accords to "the injunction to remember"—"the obligation of the archive" of the Jewish people—the status of a religious imperative:

> Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people" (Derrida 1996, p. 76, formatted as a block quote in original, Derrida quoting Yerushalmi 1991, p. 9).

Derrida describes his reaction: "I would have loved to spend hours, in truth an eternity, meditating while *trembling* [as in the sickness unto death?] before this sentence" (Derrida 1996, p. 76, emphasis added). Derrida asks, is justice the opposite of forgetting? Derrida is "dumbfounded"; "the reason for which one can be dumbfounded with dread before the virtual injustice one risks committing in the name of justice" is the "violence in the very constitution of the *One* and of the *Unique*" implied in this injunction (Derrida 1996, p. 77). Derrida continues:

The gathering into itself of the One is never without violence, nor is the self-affirmation of the Unique, the law of the archontic, the law of *consignation* which orders the archive. […] As soon as there is the One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism. *L'Un se garde de l'autre.* The One guards against/-keeps some of the other. It protects *itself* from the other, but, in the movement of this jealous violence, it comprises in itself, thus guarding it, the self-otherness […] (the difference from within oneself) which makes it One. The "One differing, deferring from itself." The One as the Other. […] [T]he One forgets to remember itself to itself, it keeps and erases the archive of this injustice that it is. […] *L'Un se fait violence.* The One makes itself violence. It violates and does violence to itself but it also institutes itself as violence (Derrida 1996, pp. 77–78, excerpts joined from separate paragraphs).

What should we make of the 'gathering itself into the One," the One that "makes itself violence"? Ofrat (2001) states Judaism "has two conflicting avocations: hope for the future and memory of the past. One rests upon the other" (Ofrat 2001, p. 39, citing the original French of Derrida 1996, p. 75). Ofrat pauses at Derrida's comment about meditating for hours on "the injunction to remember" attributed to Israel. According to Ofrat (2001, p. 39), "Derrida wishes to remind us that archival memory is not confined to one people."

The imperative of archival memory swearing fealty to a supreme "justice" is liable to guarantee injustice when it removes the Other from its domain. Injustice will be perpetrated in the name of justice, if and when justice is not based upon the principle of Otherness. Derrida recoils from singularity select and arrogant, of the kind in that definition of Judaism which appropriates demands of past-and-future. Wound, violence, those are his terms for a singularity that forgets the Other and those archives do not include the Other. That is an archive (memory) that contradicts itself, for it enfolds forgetfulness. That is an evil archive, the archive of the death instinct, the urge toward patterned repetition of both memory and forgetfulness (Ofrat 2001, p. 39).

And later Ofrat resumes:

The Judaism of 'the chosen people' guarantees violence. The Judaism of opening up to the Other guarantees the moral imperative (identified, we recall, with the religious experience). This will be Judaism transcending itself, denying itself, putting itself to death. The Judaism of *l'autre kippa* (Ofrat 2001, p. 40).

Ofrat tellingly substitutes "kippa" ("the Hebrew equivalent of the Yiddish 'yarmulke,'" Ofrat 2001, p. 30) for "cap" in his reference to Derrida's *L'Autre cap.* Derrida's "*l'autre cap*" [the other heading or head] is not a religious object. Is this evidence of Ofrat's own religious or moral overlay on Derrida's thought? Such a question requires further exploration beyond the scope of this paper.

Derrida's passage on "the gathering into itself of the One"—the archive of the Jewish people—and, in Derrida's words, that gathering's coincident "murder, wounding, traumatism," accords with the destruction and potential violence

Hägglund contemplates in the affirmation of survival—namely, the consequence, the zero-sum spoils of such an affirmation. The passage on "the One forgets to remember itself to itself, it keeps and erases the archive of this injustice that it is" accords with Derrida's observations in "Archive fever (in South Africa)" about the TRC, which I discuss fully in a moment. Conflicting impulses at the core of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's activities involve a systematic forgetting of the violence of apartheid, a violence to living memory that "keeps and erases the archive of this injustice." The very *poetry* of Derrida's response to "the injunction to remember" evokes a fever of conflicting archival impulses.

Derrida connects justice with its indissociable opposite, injustice, as two sides representing the indeterminacy and undecidability of justice and all values. He recognizes as a *necessity* "that this repeat itself. It is Necessity itself, *Anankē* [the goddess of fate]. The One, as self-repetition, can only repeat and recall this instituting violence. It can only affirm itself and engage itself in this repetition" (Derrida 1996, p. 79). Derrida writes:

> If repetition is thus inscribed at the heart of the future to come, one must also import there, *in the same stroke*, the death drive, the violence of forgetting, *superrepression* (suppression and repression), the anarchive, in short, the possibility of putting to death the very thing, whatever its name, which *carries the law in its tradition*: the archon of the archive, the table, *what* carries the table and *who* carries the table, the subjectile, the substrate, and the subject of the law (Derrida 1996, p. 79).

This is an argument, Derrida writes, formulated "*dryly* in a mode which in a certain sense crosses psychoanalysis and deconstruction, a *certain* 'psychoanalysis' and a *certain* 'deconstruction'" (Derrida 1996, p. 77, emphasis added). In his exploration of the archive of the Jewish people and, especially, in his deconstruction of "the injunction to remember," Derrida finds an instantiation of the self-divided elements of archive fever.

Derrida's heuristic approach is not entirely satisfactory, even considering his further elaborations in "Archive fever (in South Africa)." Moreover, given his remark in "Archive fever" about the "dryness" of his argument, Derrida's own commitment is indefinite—as it surely must be, given his self-attributed, redoubling *trouble d'archive* at the conclusion of "Archive fever."

Derrida's commentary in "Archive fever (in South Africa)," set against the momentous developments in the postapartheid transitions, provides further material for Derrida's heuristic approach. Derrida makes clear his notion that the *exteriority* of the archive is a key to understanding archive fever; the archive, on the exterior, is exposed to the risk of destruction and is thus bound up with the death drive (2002b, p. 42). What are Derrida's examples? He considers at length the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a public archives gathering testimony and other evidence of apartheid's atrocities. The TRC is controversial because it is limited for reasons of efficiency ("not everyone can testify"; "there is active and passive selection") but also because mourning must at some point come to an end (Derrida 2002b, p. 48). In addition, there is the "uncalculable limitation" that archives have been destroyed. "The disappearance, the death or killing or the forgetting or simply

the impossibility just to testify to what happened. So, there was a radical destruction at the centre of the experience to be recorded" (Derrida 2002b, p. 50).

Derrida explains the death drive figures into the work of the TRC in two ways: The first way "is the drive to destroy the very memory, the very trace and the very testimony, of the violence, of the murder. The perpetrator tries not only to kill, but to erase the memory of the killing […] in such a way no archive is left" (Derrida 2002b, p. 66). In committing mass murder, as experienced in South Africa and in Europe, perpetrators kill not simply their victims but the names and the memory of the victims. The second way the death drive is at work "appears on the opposite side. […] [W]hen in order to oppose the destruction, you want to keep safe, to accumulate, the archive, [not rely] simply [on] living memory" (Derrida 2002b, p. 66). Derrida points out the archive facilitates forgetting in the same way as "when I handwrite something on a piece of paper"; "I put it in my pocket or in a safe […] in order to forget it" (2002b, p. 54):

> [E]ven if you really succeed in gathering everything you need in reference to the past, […] what will have been granted is not memory, is not a true memory. It will be forgetting. […] That is why, for all these reasons, the work of the archivist is not simply a work of memory. It's a work of mourning. […] So suppose that one day South Africa would have accomplished a perfect, full archive of its whole history – […] everyone in this country, who is interested in this country, would be eager to put this in such a safe that everyone could just forget it […] (Derrida 2002b, p. 54).

Derrida opines this is perhaps the "unconfessed desire of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission" (2002b, p. 54). Not a radical destruction, to be sure; it represents a systematic forgetting, at some level a violence to living memory (see McKemmish 2005, p. 2). In time, this forgetting is an *eradication* of memory (see Derrida 1996, p. 11). In the meantime it is a work of mourning. Perhaps a lingering *sickness*.

At the end of "Archive fever," Derrida arrives at the *trouble d'archive*, which stems from *mal d'archive*, and the divided notion of the archive and its contradictory forms; it follows the modulating and conditioning of the concept of the archive and of the concept of the concept (Derrida 1996, pp. 89–90). The *trouble d'archive*, a more advanced form of *mal*, expresses a desire for origins, for the impossible return to the absolute beginning (see Howells 1999, p. 115). In Derrida's final analysis "[n]othing is thus more troubled and more troubling today than the concept archived in this word 'archive'" (Derrida 1996, p. 90). Derrida's deconstruction of Freud's thinking reflected in his final statement of the theses of "Archive fever" reveals something of the aporiae of psychoanalysis that may lie at the root of *trouble d'archive* and Derrida's not fully satisfactory efforts to illuminate deconstruction with psychoanalysis and *vice versa*. At the moment psychoanalysis formalizes the conditions of archive fever and of the archive itself, "it repeats the very thing it resists or which it makes its object"; redoubling the complexities, it "raises the stakes" (Derrida 1996, p. 91).

Derrida's theses, numbered "three plus one," are each a "higher bid" or so labeled (see Derrida 1996, pp. 91–95; Howells 1999, pp. 115–116). The three theses

are examples of the "plus one" thesis, which states: All concepts are divided. The three theses may be said to be "riven, divided, contradictory" (see Howells 1999, pp. 115–116), but as paradoxes, they are more curiosities of history and biography than deep deconstructive discoveries. Derrida's first thesis concerns Freud's model of the mind. The paradox: Freud helped make the concept of a psychic archive intelligible (Derrida 1996, p. 91); however, at the same time, Freud considered prosthetic memory aids secondary, maintaining the primacy of actual memory (Derrida 1996, p. 92). Derrida's second and third theses are similarly benign (*possible* places to seek aporiae).

The postscript—the plus one thesis—which concerns the problematics of concepts themselves, is somewhat ill-formed (or, rather, fissured or divided). Derrida postulates Freud desires to track the archive back to its inception, to the very instant separating origin and representation, before the inscription and the trace (Howells 1999, p. 116). "This would be the irreplaceable and unique moment of truth before its repetition and loss of originality" (Howells 1999, p. 116). Derrida reexamines Freud's essay on "Gradiva," Wilhelm Jensen's gothic novella about an archeologist, Hanold, enchanted by the young woman portrayed in the ancient bas-relief, who seeks Gradiva's still-living footsteps in the ashes of Pompeii. Hanold is haunted by Gradiva's mid-day ghost. But radically, unavoidably, "the spectre itself had no original plenitude, it was always fissured" (Howells 1999, p. 116). Hanold's quest is a death drive inasmuch as Derrida and the ultratranscendental foundations of deconstruction comprehend the pure, the original, unfissured presence—the thing impossibly present in itself—as pure death (Derrida 2002b, p. 72).

Possessed by some form of *trouble d'archive* Freud no doubt seeks Gradiva's first footstep (Derrida 1996, p. 97). And Derrida, too, writing in Naples, "on the rim of Vesuvius, right near Pompeii, less than eight days ago" is seeking her "archaic imprint" (Derrida 1996, p. 97, emphasis omitted). The archive, however, "does not record an original experience," nothing to which one could be returned (Howells 1999, p. 116).

Radical atheism (deconstruction's new wave)

The *arkhē*, to Derrida, names the *commencement*, but even so, resists its own beginning (Derrida 1996, p. 1). The archive does not record the original experience. The now, as fully discussed in this subsection, "can appear only by disappearing" in the very event of its appearance (Hägglund 2008a, p. 18). A trace is inscribed in order for the now "to be at all." The synthesis, the flow of time, "is always a trace of the past that is *left for the future*," that enables "the tracing of relations between past and future" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 18). The "spatiality of the trace" is thus "a temporal notion" (Hägglund 2008b, p. 191). As an "originary synthesis," the trace is understood to be an "irreducibly nonsimple (and therefore, *stricto sensu* nonoriginary) synthesis of marks" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 18, block quoting Derrida 1982, p. 13). This "originary synthesis *revises the concept of origin itself*. If the synthesis is originary, *there cannot ever have been a simple element or an absolute beginning*" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 210, fn. 6, emphasis added).

Hägglund's account in full: The trace is defined in terms of "spacing" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 18). The constitution of the present, the interval dividing itself dynamically, is called "spacing" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 18, block quoting Derrida 1982, p. 13). "Spacing is shorthand for the *becoming-space of time* and the *becoming-time of space*, which is also the definition of arche-writing and *différance*" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 18). Hägglund's elaboration of Derrida's definition "allows for the most rigorous thinking of temporality" (i.e., radical atheism) by accounting for "an originary synthesis *without* grounding it in an indivisible presence" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 18)—without succumbing to Western metaphysics' unthinking insistence on an indivisible presence, i.e., on identity as presence in itself or being in itself.

According to Hägglund, the trace is not necessarily concerned with metaphysics at all. The trace is "not an ontological stipulation"; rather, it is "a *logical structure* that makes explicit what is implicit in the concept of succession" (Hägglund 2011b, p. 265). As such, the notion of the trace shares similarities to empirical writing and conforms to certain traditional notions in philosophy. In this connection, the trace may be said to possess three characteristics that "reinforce the conditions of possibility for experience and life in general" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 51): (1) The trace and empirical writing share traits "such as the structure of representation, intrinsic finitude, and the relation to an irreducible exteriority"; (2) the trace is an inscription inasmuch as the past, no longer present or "accessible as a presence in itself, […] must have been inscribed as a mark that can be repeated from one time to another"; and (3) the trace is "conceived in relation to a present consciousness that reactivates the past and ensures that we remember it in the present." Hägglund is careful to point out, however, what we remember "in the present" must be rethought (see generally Hägglund 2008a, chapter 2, which provides a further exploration of these ideas).

As "a *logical structure* that makes explicit what is implicit in the concept of succession" (Hägglund 2011b, p. 265), the notion of the trace helps solve a metaphysical problem puzzling Derrida—namely, how "to think the necessary synthesis of time [succession] without grounding it in a nontemporal unity" (see Hägglund 2008a, p. 26). In other words, the notion of the trace helps solve the problem of how to think the coming together of moments (the flow of time) without basing time's passing on the undivided presence of things—as understood according to traditional Western metaphysics, pre-committed to a world of things that have a self-identity (where the I = the I) about which you can say the thing present is the same as itself. This puzzle is evocative because "the synthesis of time" is incommensurate with the "non-temporal unity," i.e., the presence of things in themselves, it may be reasoned, is impossible when time is ever-flowing and the identity of those things is ever-changing along with it (Hägglund 2008a, pp. 26–27). Hägglund writes:

> Given that the now can only appear by disappearing – that it passes away as soon as it comes to be – it must be inscribed as a trace in order to be at all. This is the *becoming-space of time*. The trace is necessarily spatial, since spatiality is characterized by the ability to remain in spite of temporal succession.

> Spatiality is thus the condition for synthesis, since it enables the tracing of relations between past and future. Spatiality, however, can never be in itself; it can never be pure simultaneity. Simultaneity is unthinkable without a temporalization that relates one spatial juncture to another. This *becoming-time of space* is necessary not only for the trace to be related to other traces, but also for it to be a trace in the first place. A trace can only be read after its inscription and is thus marked by a relation to the future that temporalizes space (Hägglund 2008a, p. 18).

Thinking time as the succession of traces means one needs not think of things as present in themselves. This is deconstructive thinking. I explore its consequences next.

I now turn to strict first principles of deconstruction and of radical atheism (beyond the trace, the critical "archival" notion tied to the constitutive division of time, discussed above). It is significant that Brothman (1999), as a postmodern archival theorist who makes his own attempt to make Derrida clear, recognizes the central importance of time in his overview spelling out the vocabulary of deconstruction and exploring its meaning to actual archives. His definition of the trace (see Brothman 1999, p. 71), however, is helpful but not given a reasoned basis in the becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time. Rather, it is based, less satisfactorily, on propositions of deconstruction oriented to language and discourse, what Critchley (2008, p. 21) describes as "an unproven philosophy of language." Brothman's concept of tensegrity is incompatible with the premises of deconstruction; still, it proves helpful in Brothman's account of the archivist's thought processes. "Autoimmunity" is a key to deconstruction oriented to the material and the real. Autoimmunity is the notion "everything is threatened from within itself" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 9). New wave deconstruction "emerges forcefully through the notion of 'autoimmunity,'" which underpins deconstructive logic, in contrast to standards of ordinary philosophical logic (Hägglund 2008a, pp. 8–9). Derrida's last work linked the constitution of time and the so-called "autoimmunity of all things" (Hägglund 2008a, pp. 8–9, 14–15). "[T]here cannot be anything without the tracing of time. The tracing of time is the minimal protection of life, but it also attacks life from the first inception, since it breaches the integrity of any moment and makes everything susceptible to annihilation" (2008a, p. 9).

Derrida introduced the vivid notion of autoimmunity as another means to understand the impossibility of presence in itself. Addressing immortality or timelessness, Hägglund seeks to demonstrate the so-called desire for immortality dissimulates a desire to live on within the finitude of life. The desire for survival "precedes" the desire for immortality and "contradicts it from within" (Hägglund and King 2011, p. 63). Developing the notions of "radical finitude" and of the "finitude of survival," Hägglund argues

> the finitude of something is intrinsic to what makes it desirable. It is *because* things can be lost that one cares about them. If things were fully present in themselves – if they were not haunted by what has been lost in the past and

what may be lost in the future – there would be no reason to care about them, since nothing could happen to them (Hägglund and King 2011, p. 64).

Radical finitude and the finitude of survival mean "[e]ven the most intense enjoyment is haunted by the imminence of death," recognizing "without such finitude there would be nothing to enjoy in the first place." There is an internal contradiction "at the heart of every experience, since whatever one wants to affirm is constituted by the fact that it will be negated. There is no way out of this double bind because the threat of loss is not extrinsic to what is desired; it is intrinsic to its being as such" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 34). Care depends on an investment in survival (Hägglund and King 2011, p. 64), and autoimmunity is again involved:

> If one were not invested in the survival of someone or something, one would not care about anything that has happened or anything that may happen. […] [Again,] the purported desire for immortality can be seen to contradict itself from within. Without an investment in survival, one would not fear death and desire to live on. […] Rather than redeeming death, the state of immortality would *bring about* death, since it would put an end to mortal life. […] [I]t would eliminate the possibility for anything to survive or anyone to care (Hägglund and King 2011, p. 64).

Combining death and desire implicates Freud's notion of the death drive. Responding to Laclau's (2008) critique of radical atheism's notion of desire, Hägglund acknowledges that to argue the supposed desire for immortality equates to a desire for death, and is therefore undesirable, is indeed insufficient, unless one shows there is something intrinsically contradictory in the desire for death (Hägglund and King 2011, p. 64). As discussed in "Archive fever (deconstruction)" section above, Hägglund rejects the notion of a death drive because Freud bases the notion on the same axiom as the pleasure principle; the supposed desire for death is explained according to the phenomenon of psychic binding. The pleasure principle and psychic binding presuppose an investment in living on (see Hägglund 2012, pp. 125–132).

"The deconstructive notion of life entails that living is always a matter of *living on*, of surviving" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 33). Derrida stresses "his thinking proceeds from an unconditional affirmation of *life*," synonymous with mortality (Hägglund 2008a, p. 33, referring generally to Derrida and Birnbaum 2007, Derrida's last interview). "The unconditional 'yes' to such finitude does not oblige one to accept whatever happens as an unconditional condition of life"; "[w]hatever we do, we have always already said 'yes' to the coming of the future, since without it nothing could happen" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 34).

Saying "yes," as in the affirmation of survival, has distinctive autoimmune implications showing "the possibility of negation at the core of affirmation," analyzed as an essentially temporal notion (Hägglund 2008a, p. 35). In the block quoted figure to follow, Derrida ingeniously illustrates the interconnection of temporal spacing, autoimmunity, indeterminacy, and other notions, including the finitude of survival and the necessity to decide and take action. His compelling figure parallels the tracing of time, with the word "yes" standing in, functioning as a

trace. As Hägglund notes in his lead in, "To say 'yes' is to turn toward the past [as does the trace], since it responds to something that precedes it, if only a moment before. On the other hand, to say 'yes' is to turn toward the future [as does the trace], since one has to confirm the affirmation by repeating it, if only a moment after." The movement and pattern of spacing is obvious. Thus, "[t]he moment I say 'yes' is immediately succeeded by another moment and has to record itself as a memory for the future in order to have been stated" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 35). Derrida, "unpack[ing] the implications":

> There is a time and a spacing of the "yes" as "yes-yes": it takes time to say "yes." A single "yes" is, therefore, immediately double, it immediately announces a 'yes' to come and already recalls that the "yes" implies another "yes." […]

> This immediate duplication ["yes-yes"] is the source of all possible contamination… The second "yes" can eventually be one of laughter or derision at the first "yes," it can be the forgetting of the first "yes." … With this duplicity we are at the heart of the "logic" of contamination. One should not simply consider contamination as a threat, however. To do so continues to ignore this very logic. Possible contamination must be assumed, because it is also opening or chance, our chance. Without contamination we would have no opening or chance. Contamination is not only to be assumed or affirmed; it is the very possibility of affirmation in the first place. For affirmation to be possible there must always be at least two "yes's." If the contamination of the first "yes" by the second is refused – for whatever reasons – one is denying the possibility of the first "yes." Hence all the contradictions and confusion that this denial can fall into. Threat is chance, chance is threat – this law is absolutely undeniable and irreducible. If one does not accept it, there is no risk, and if there is no risk, there is only death. If one refuses to take a risk, one is left with nothing but death (Hägglund 2008a, p. 35, block quoting Derrida 2002c, pp. 247–248, footnote eliminated).

According to Hägglund (2008a, p. 35), "The interval that divides the moment of the 'yes'—the spacing of time that is intrinsic to affirmation as such—opens it to being forgotten, derided, or otherwise negated." Hägglund emphasizes the "contamination cannot be 'accepted' or 'refused'"; "deconstruction spells out that there can be no final cure against contamination and that all ideals of purity are untenable, since their 'refusal' of contamination equals nothing but death." As expressed in Hägglund's "message slips" opening this paper (message slip II), "[T]he finitude of survival opens the possibility of everything we desire *and* the peril of everything we fear." And "[t]he affirmation of survival is thus not a value in itself; it is rather the unconditional condition for all values." Apart from Derrida's ingenious figure, I know of no better illustration of the source point of the internal contradictions, discontinuities, and instabilities in meaning characteristic of all things, which are the consequence of time's constitutive division. As with the "yes" of the affirmation of survival, so with all things, ideas, and desires.

And the call for justice: Justice is autoimmune, as are hospitality, democracy, and similar abstractions (Hägglund 2008a, p. 19). In Derrida's earliest essay on justice, even though the term "autoimmunity" had not yet entered his philosophical vocabulary, Derrida's notion of the "autoimmunity of justice" may be said to inhere in his formulation of the aporiae concerning justice. Derrida writes:

> To be just, the decision of the judge, for example, must not only follow a rule of law […] but must also assume it, approve it, confirm its value, by a reinstituting act of interpretation, as if ultimately nothing previously existed of the law[.] […] [F]or a decision to be just and responsible, it must [*il faut*], in its proper moment, if there is one, be both regulated and without regulation: it must conserve the law [*loi*] and also destroy it or suspend it enough to have [*pour devoir*] to reinvent it in each case, rejustify it, reinvent it at least in the reaffirmation and the new and free confirmation of its principle. Each case is other, each decision is different and requires an absolutely unique interpretation, which no existing, coded rule can or ought to guarantee absolutely. […] It follows from this paradox that there is never a moment that we can say *in the present* that a decision *is* just […]. Instead of "just," we could say legal or legitimate, in conformity […] with the rules and conventions that authorize calculation but whose founding origin only defers the problem of justice (Derrida 1990, pp. 961, 963, adding the sentence preceding and the two sentences following the excerpt Hägglund quotes, with slight variations in translation, in Hägglund 2008a, p. 42).

"It is always possible," Hägglund writes, "the law is more unjust than the injustice against which it asserts itself. The attack on the law may thus be a defense of justice, and the defense of the law may be an attack on justice." And, "for the same reason, one may attack justice when one thinks that one is defending it, since there is no absolute rule for distinguishing between what is just and unjust." To have meaning, law and justice "must [be] played out against each other, in a process where it cannot be known which instance will be more violent than the other" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 42).

Derrida joins the phrase "unconditional coming of the future" with terms such as *justice, hospitality*, and *democracy* (Hägglund 2008a, p. 19). Hägglund (2008a, p. 39) spells out why "the coming of time is the unconditional condition for there to be justice, hospitality, democracy, and everything else." The notion of *justice to come* is a phrase from Derrida's work often misread in the secondary literature. Hägglund identifies Critchley, Caputo, and several other influential thinkers who, he argues, misread Derrida's notion of justice and erroneously ascribe a normative dimension to deconstruction (see, e.g., Critchley 2014; Caputo 1997a, b). Justice to come may be inspiring, but it comes without any assurance. "The coming of the future is strictly speaking 'undecidable' ["opening toward the coming of the future," indeterminate] since it is a relentless displacement that unsettles any definitive assurance or given meaning." The notion of "temporal finitude" and the "unconditional coming of time" underlines the constitutive undecidability of the future as, neither more nor less than, "the very possibility of justice or quite simply as a 'justice' beyond the law" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 40).

At the Cardozo Law School colloquium on "Deconstruction and the possibility of justice," where he considered the notion of justice for essentially the first time ever, Derrida made the striking declaration: "Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond the law, is not deconstructible. No more than deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists" (1990, p. 945). He is not invoking the "Idea of absolute justice." Justice, if such a thing exists, is autoimmune, just as deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. Fully unpacking Derrida's related statement, "justice is the 'undeconstructible' condition of deconstruction," Hägglund writes, Derrida consistently regards law and justice as two poles, aligning the law with the conditional, and justice "with the unconditional that exceeds the law" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 40). He continues:

> [T]he demand for justice is always raised in relation to singular events, which there is no guarantee that the law will have anticipated. The condition of justice is thus an essential contingency. The specific applications of the law cannot be given in the law itself but require decisions in relation to events that exceed the generality of the law (Hägglund 2008a, pp. 40–41).

"[T]he unconditional that exceeds the law is not an Idea of absolute justice; it is the coming of time that undercuts the very Idea of absolute justice" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 40).

Justice in the final analysis *is* indeterminacy; it operates through law, which admits a mechanical calculation, up to the point law is applied and a decision (e.g., a judge's decision) is rendered. At that point, there is an aporia, what Derrida calls "the ghost of the undecidable" (Derrida 1990, pp. 963, 965). The experience of this aporia—"a non-road […] we shall not be able to pass"—is justice (Derrida 1990, p. 947). There is no justice without this experience of the impossible:

> A will, a desire, a demand for justice whose structure wouldn't be an experience of aporia would have no chance to be what it is, namely, a call for justice. Every time that something comes to pass or turns out well, every time that we placidly apply a good rule to a particular case, to a correctly subsumed example, according to a determinate judgment, we can be sure that law (*droit*) may find itself accounted for, but certainly not justice. Law (*droit*) is not justice. Law is the element of calculation, and it is just that there be law, but justice is incalculable, it requires us to calculate with the incalculable (Derrida 1990, p. 947).

"[A]poretic experiences are the experiences, as improbable as they are necessary, of justice, […] moments in which the decision between just and unjust is never insured by a rule" (Derrida 1990, p. 947).

Deconstructing the "presumption of a determinate certitude of a present justice," Derrida suggests, challengingly, "itself operates on the basis of an infinite 'idea of justice' […]." "We can recognize in it, indeed accuse, identify a madness […] about this kind of justice." Derrida may have in mind Critical Legal Studies or other ill-conceived efforts in the name of deconstruction (including, perhaps, the work of some allies at the Cardozo Law School colloquium). "This kind of justice, which isn't law, is the very movement of deconstruction at work in law and the history of

law, in political history and history itself, before it even presents itself as the discourse that the academy or modern culture label 'deconstructionism'" (Derrida 1990, p. 965). Derrida warns,

> I would hesitate to assimilate too quickly this "idea of justice" to a regulative idea (in the Kantian sense), to a messianic promise or to other horizons *of the same type*. I am only speaking of a *type*, of this *type* of horizon that would have numerous competing versions. By competing I mean similar enough in appearance and always pretending to absolute privilege and irreducible singularity. The singularity of the historical place – perhaps our own, which in any case is the one I'm obscurely referring to here – allows us a glimpse of the type itself, as the origin, condition, possibility or promise of all its exemplifications (messianism of the Jewish, Christian or Islamic type, idea in the Kantian sense, eschato-teleology of the neo-Hegelian, Marxist or post-Marxist type, etc.) (Derrida 1990, pp. 965, 967).

Derrida continues—cryptically at first—"It also allows us to perceive and conceive the law of irreducible competition (*concurrence*), but from a brink where vertigo threatens to seize us the moment we see nothing but examples and some of us no longer feel engaged in it; […] we always run the risk (speaking for myself, at least) of no longer being, as they say, 'in the running' (*dans la course*)." But, taking Derrida's words to heart (and contemplating the archivist's call for justice, as I do in final "Commitments to social justice and contestation" section below):

> [N]ot to be "in the running" on the inside track, does not mean that we can stay at the starting-line or simply be spectators—far from it. It may be the very thing that "keeps us moving," (*fait courir*) with renewed strength and speed, for example, deconstruction [without, this time, quote marks] (Derrida 1990, p. 967).

This time Derrida does not surround the word deconstruction with so-called scare or shudder quotes. We cannot simply be spectators on the call for justice. It may be historically contingent notions of justice that draw us from the starting line; it may be deconstruction itself that "keeps us moving," even understanding it is justice ever always to come, undecidably, from the future. Note I do not address in this paper Hägglund's notion of justice as a struggle for survival "essentially dependent on the negative infinity of time" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 166). This and other aspects of justice developed by Derrida in *Specters of Marx* (2006) are recommended. In the next section I turn to the need to decide, to act, and, most important, to *take responsibility* for acting in face of constitutive indeterminacy, indeed, *because of* such indeterminacy.

Commitments to social justice and contestation

The term "undecidability" (as in the "undecidability of justice") "elucidates what it means to think temporality as an irreducible condition." There is no opposition between undecidability and making decisions. "On the contrary, *it is the*

undecidable future that necessitates decisions" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 97, emphasis added). Inasmuch as violence is irreducible, "we are always already involved in the process of making decisions that are more or less violent" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 97). In fact, "rigorous deconstructive thinking maintains that we are always already inscribed in an 'economy of violence,' where we are both excluding and being excluded." Such an economy is politics. "No position can be autonomous or absolute; it is necessarily bound to other positions that it violates and by which it is violated" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 82).

Our "unconditional exposure to time," as Hägglund phrases it elsewhere, "is inseparable from ('calls for') conditional, performative responses that seek to discriminate between the chance and the threat" of constitutive indeterminacy. A performative response is a decision or an action. Derrida emphasizes, "[I]t is *because* one is exposed to the incalculable that it is necessary to calculate" (Hägglund 2013, p. 105). One makes decisions because calculating what will happen is impossible. "[O]ne always acts in relation to what cannot be predicted" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 81). And, continuing in Hägglund's words:

> These conditional decisions are in turn unconditionally haunted by the relation to the undecidable. It is not only that I cannot calculate what others will do to me; I cannot finally calculate what my own decisions will do to me, since they bind me to a future that exceeds my intentions[.] [...] To insist on this condition is not to deny the responsibility for the future but to elucidate the inherent exigencies of such responsibility. The openness to the future is unconditional in the sense that one is necessarily open to the future, but it is not unconditional in the sense of an axiom that establishes that more openness is always better than less (Hägglund 2013, p. 105).

The struggle for justice never escapes our constitutive inability to calculate what will happen. The struggle for justice therefore can never strictly be a struggle for peace; rather, it is a struggle only for lesser violence (Hägglund 2008a, p. 82). Hägglund argues:

> If there is always an economy of violence, decisions of justice cannot be a matter of choosing what is nonviolent. To justify something is rather to contend that it is less violent than something else. This does not mean that decisions made in view of lesser violence are actually less violent than the violence they oppose. On the contrary, even the most horrendous acts are justified in view of what is judged to be the lesser violence. [...] The desire for lesser violence is never innocent, since it is a desire for violence in one form or another, and there can be no guarantee that it is in the service of perpetrating the better (Hägglund 2008a, p. 83).

There is no way "to objectively define and measure violence"; if there were, the "range of political critique would be limited in advance" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 83). But there is always the possibility a decision or act will represent lesser violence. If there were not the possibility of less violence or the risk of greater violence, "there would be no political struggle, since nothing could ever be changed" (2008a, p. 84).

The radical finitude of survival gives rise to responsibility, as well as political struggle. "If we were not exposed to the coming of a future that could violate and erase us, there would be nothing to take responsibility for, since nothing could happen to us" (Hägglund 2008a, pp. 164–165). Hägglund continues,

> It is thus the finitude of survival—and the affirmation of such survival—that raises the demand of responsibility. If I did not desire the survival of someone or something, there would be nothing that precipitated me to take action. Even if I sacrifice my own life for another, this act is still motivated by the desire for survival, since I would not do anything for the other if I did not desire the survival of him or her or it (Hägglund 2008a, p. 165).

Still, "[t]he unconditional affirmation of survival […] does not have a moral value in itself. No given ethical stance can be derived from it." Finitude is "the reason for all compassion and care," but also the reason "for all fear and hatred" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 165).

The nature of these unconditional propositions is now clear. The tropes and logical formulations, first encountered in Hägglund's "message slips" opening this paper, ultimately underpin all our decisions and actions; the unconditional propositions give rise to our responsibility for deciding and acting. Archival praxis involves violence. The decision to retain records of one group of persons and not retain those of certain others is the most compelling example. The violence is not subject to mitigation that can be predicted in advance; thus, decisions and actions targeting lesser violence are not assuredly decisions of greater justice. The finitude of survival and the affirmation of survival form no basis for definite moral values.

Archival literature invokes the call for justice and may be said to strive for an ideal of justice, an ideal origin (*arkhē*) or an ideal end (*telos*) "that would prevail beyond the possibility of violence" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 84). Hägglund demonstrates, "Anything that would finally put an end to violence (whether the end is a religious salvation, a universal justice, a harmonious intersubjectivity, or some other ideal) would end the possibility of life in general. The idea of absolute peace is the idea of eliminating the undecidable future that is the condition for anything to happen. Thus the idea of absolute peace is the idea of absolute violence" (Hägglund 2008a, p. 84).

The call for justice and the archivist's response may involve an expression of faith, i.e., "taking in trust," whenever the archivist is concerned to behave ethically, even when it is unclear what acts or decisions are ethically justified, or what faith or messianicity is at work (see Hägglund 2013, p. 101). Messianicity—a kind of hope for the future (for justice or democracy "to come") without definite expectations as to what is to come—is active in the literature of archival theory (see, e.g., Harris 2005). Faith and hope are important; "[i]n order to do anything, we must have faith in the future and in those on whom we depend, since we cannot *know* what will happen or what others will do to us" (Hägglund 2013, p. 101).

Hägglund urges, however, the indeterminate and absolute openness to the future represented by faith and messianicity is not the basis for ethical validation. If "indeterminate openness to the future" is an ideal of, say, democracy to come, that openness—as a matter of logic—is not something one can promote against decision making. The very openness renders decision making "necessary and unavoidable"

(while thus compromising its integrity from within). Not acting or not deciding—always a form of acting and of deciding—represents no ethical ideal (Hägglund 2013, p. 102). No determinate ethical or political principles follow from the logic of deconstruction. Consequently, deconstruction politicizes our acts and decisions. This is the "hyperpolitical" logic of deconstruction, which we first encountered in Hägglund's "message slips" on the call for justice opening this paper (message slip III); "no value has an inherent value but must remain open to contestation and [...] no act or decision can be immune from critique." Deconstruction therefore "insists on a responsibility from which one cannot be absolved" (Hägglund 2013, p. 107).

Accordingly, the call for justice reasonably may inspire the archivist's faith and hope for "justice to come." But the logic of deconstruction affords the archivist no determinate principles guiding the archivist's response. His or her response to the call for justice is always subject to contestation and critique, the unavoidable openness of the future compelling the archivist's responsible political strivings. Our "radical finitude," in the phrasing of radical atheism, drives the archivist's care in "relentless questioning" (cf. Hardiman 2009, p. 27): underlining the archivist's understanding of indeterminate alternatives for acts and decisions, framing the response to the call for undecidable justice—at the same time underlining the archivist's commitment to acts and decisions, achieving political answers to political questions. Thus Derrida's work may be thought to *justify* archivists' social justice activism, recognizing supposed ideals of justice and democracy unconditionally contain internal contradictions, discontinuities, and instabilities in meaning; and activism involves "thinking twice" in the deliberate engagement in relations of power.

The mentality I describe is Hägglund's radical atheism. Harris largely has this mentality right. It is the mentality antithetical to that of the "emperor without clothes," to which Harris (2004, p. 217) alludes, at one point, urging archivists to open to deconstruction the inevitable metanarratives involved in building archives. We thus "open the door to discourse which is liberatory" when we realize "the notion of a 'reflection of reality' is a chimera." If "we cannot avoid constructing 'metanarrative[s],'" then "the best we can do is to open our metanarratives to deconstruction" (Harris 2004, p. 217). Grasping deconstruction's new wave, the mentality I describe is reflected in Hägglund's "message slips" recognizing the unconditional affirmation of survival. We take to heart the epistemological challenges of archival praxis, and advancing deconstruction further, we recognize our professional commitments are forever open to "the possibility of everything we desire *and* the peril of everything we fear" (message slip II).

This answer is as indeterminate as it is, I hope, informative and enlightening. Hägglund's work shows the unconditional limits of values without refusing the call for justice; radical atheism or new wave deconstruction shows the foundation on which the archivist stands in responding to that call. Values such as "justice," inspiring if indeterminate, inevitably gauged according to the social and historical conditions under which political stances evolve, are allowed "in the running"; deconstructive logic assures the archivist is never a mere "spectator." The upshot of radical atheism or new wave deconstruction is struggles for justice are not concerned with an absolute ideal or with worldly transcendence. Such struggles, rather, are concerned with survival. "[W]hether a given struggle for survival,"

Hägglund writes in one of his latest works, "should be supported or resisted is a different question, and one that only can be settled through an actual engagement with the world," rather than "a pious logic" (or a righteous one); "a completely reconciled life" that has eliminated all traces of survival, would be equivalent to death (Hägglund 2011a, p. 129). "The struggle for justice and the hope for another life have never been driven by a desire to transcend temporal [radical] finitude but by a desire for mortal survival." The deconstructive mentality understands "[e]verything […] remains to be done, and what should be done cannot be settled on the basis of radical atheism. Rather, the logic of radical atheism seeks to articulate *why* everything remains to be done, by refuting the untenable hope of redemption and recalling us to the material base of time, desire, and politics" (Hägglund 2011a, p. 129, message slip I).

My answer challenges postmodern archival theory to the extent that theory misapprehends Derrida's work, especially "Archive fever," and misunderstands Derrida's contribution to postmodern theorizing of power and power relations. Harris, for example, provides a poetic and truly inspirational account of deconstruction, viewing as "enchanted" those records within the archival sliver representing the universe of records (e.g., Harris 2002b). But his and other postmodernist readings of "Archive fever" benefit greatly from equally existentially sensitive—ultimately no less poetic—inspirations that more fully appreciate Derrida's core contributions to philosophy, psychoanalysis, and ethics. Derrida's ultratranscendental fountainhead—the archive—sustaining "the possibility of everything we desire *and* the peril of everything we fear," can be read in "Radical atheism" as the focus of a meditation, reflections on life's work, on life and living. Hägglund rather elegantly concludes, as I quote in part:

> Derrida's work offers powerful resources to think life as survival and the desire for life as a desire for survival. […] Given that every moment of life passes away as soon as it comes to be, it must be inscribed as a trace in order to be at all. […] [T]he survival of the trace that makes life possible must be left for a future that may erase it. The movement of survival protects life, but it also exposes life to death, since every trace is absolutely destructible. […] Whatever one may posit as a value, one has to affirm the time of survival, since without the time of survival the value could never live on and be posited as a value in the first place (Hägglund 2008a, p. 164).

This contains some words first encountered in Hägglund's "message slips" on the call for justice opening this paper (message slip II). They are the tropes and logical formulations of a *remarkable* restatement of the ordinary. They bear repeating.

A final word about Verne Harris' concept of activism inspired by Derrida's work. Unfortunately, Harris has not provided a fully reasoned account of activism, as he so frequently is called to inspire, rather than systematically ground, the passion for justice. Harris may be representative of what Osborne (2011, p. 22) identifies as "self-sufficient philosophy." That genre represents "a turn to explicitly philosophical references in theoretical work across the humanities (often a turn to the *citation* of philosophical writings as a substitute for theoretical work)," which has taken the form of "quasi-Levinasian and other post-Derridean forms of 'ethics'" incorporating

"the post-analytical mainstream of liberal political philosophy" (Osborne 2011, p. 22). "The crucible" of Harris' "personal contextualization"—as a whistleblower in South Africa's State Archives Service and, subsequently, as head of transformation in the postapartheid National Archives of South Africa—is well known; the longer record of his achievements in social justice activism is outstanding (see, e.g., Harris 2011b, pp. 348–350). His paradoxical comment, "Following Derrida, I don't believe that justice, ultimately, can be knowable" (Harris 2007a, p. 249) resonates with arguments in this paper. Justice "is a phantom," he writes, "at most 'a relation to the unconditional that, once all conditional givens have been taken into account, bears witness to that which will not allow itself to be enclosed within a context'" (Harris 2007a, p. 249, quoting Derrida and Ferraris 2001, p. 17).

Harris locates the beginning of an appropriate professional ethics in "a fundamental opening—an opening to the voice of 'the other,' to the haunting of context, to the knocking of the stranger, to Derrida's ghosts that flit behind, through, and under the concrete presence of power" (Harris 2011b, p. 352). "The beginning is to invite a fundamental hospitality that values and gives energy to experiences belonging to the stranger." Harris goes on to state "fundamental hospitality" is ethics (Harris 2011b, p. 352, citing Derrida 1997; Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000). He praises Gibbs (2000) as a "brilliant reading of Derrida on ethics" (Harris 2011b, p. 352, fn. 15). Gibbs' basic contention is ethics is concerned about taking responsibility, not about justifying the right things to do (Gibbs 2000, pp. 3–6). Gibbs' interesting "postmodern" commentaries on fragments selected from Derrida's writings, "unified" with fragments from other authors of diverse traditions, appear to be informed by Critchley (2014), whose work is a serious target of Hägglund's critique (see Hägglund 2008a, chapter 3). A fuller account of activism based on Harris' reading of Derrida is needed. The profession's interest in developing the philosophical foundation for archival theory and praxis would invite a fuller exploration of these important ideas.

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