

The Death Drive and Derrida's Question of the Archive:
'Where Does the Outside Commence?'

Tina Lê

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By: Tina Lê

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Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair and Co-Supervisor
David Morris

_____ Examiner
Matthias Fritsch

_____ Co-Supervisor
Emilia Angelova

Approved by _____

Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

March 30 th , 2026

Date of Defence

Dean of Faculty

Abstract

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This paper argues that Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995) is not merely about historiography or the recording of the past: rather, by showing how the notion of the archive depends on an internal contradiction, *Archive Fever* offers a theory of time as precondition to selfhood. The internal contradiction in question concerns the death drive. I turn to the death drive's role in the functioning of unconscious memory to posit this claim about the archive and, subsequently, its temporalisation as implied in the faculty of forgetfulness, i.e., the positive force of selfhood. This analysis of *Archive Fever* is overlooked due to insufficient consideration of the death drive, part of Derrida's approaches to Consciousness and the psychic apparatus in his interpretation of Freud. In particular, I retrieve how Derrida uses the death drive to juxtapose Freud's theory of time in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and in 'Notes Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad' (1925).

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Introduction

This paper argues that Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995) is not merely about historiography or the recording of the past: rather, by showing how the notion of the archive depends on an internal contradiction, *Archive Fever* offers a theory of time as precondition to selfhood. The internal contradiction in question concerns the death drive. I turn to the death drive's role in the functioning of unconscious memory to posit this claim about the archive and, subsequently, its temporalisation as implied in the faculty of forgetfulness, i.e., the positive force of selfhood. This analysis of *Archive Fever* is overlooked due to insufficient consideration of the death drive, part of Derrida's approaches to Consciousness and the psychic apparatus in his interpretation of Freud. In particular, I retrieve how Derrida uses the death drive to juxtapose Freud's theory of time in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and in 'Notes Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad' (1925).

Derrida claims that the archive "takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of [...] memory" (1998, 11). For him, "this *exterior*, thus archival model of the *psychic* recording and memorization apparatus" inaugurates a necessity of limits or borders within the psyche and so too, between interiority/exteriority (1998, 18-19). Significantly, Derrida considers the archive as a "*prosthesis of the inside*" and it is a topography of the unconscious, he asserts, which distinguishes the archive from the standard psychological notion of spontaneous memory (1998, 19; original emphasis). The 'inside' to which the archive is a prosthetic, I propose, concerns the Freudian psychic apparatus and namely refers to its innermost strata, the unconscious.

Since I am examining the death drive's role with respect to memory to posit a claim about the archive, we must first understand (a) what Freud's topographical model of memory is and (b) what the death drive is, and how it fits into his topographical view. This will clarify the role of the death drive in the functioning of unconscious memory that I need as a foundation to make good on Derrida's notion of the archive and why it then requires an exteriority that must be understood as an "opening to heterogeneity" (Trumbull 2022, 15). I will notably illustrate why Freud's use of the Mystic Writing-Pad for his model of memory, upon which Derrida bases that of the archive, should be understood as starting from the idea of limit and liminality. The Mystic Writing-Pad is a technique of recording; it is therefore a technological model of memory's structure, an organization of the psychic apparatus I will call the writing machine.

I will, however, only be able to attend to the writing machine's liminality in the last section with the help of Sina Kramer's analysis of constitutive exclusion as a quasi-transcendental structure in Derrida's 1974 book *Glas*. Kramer treats the quasi-transcendental structure as a paradoxical moment in which an inadmissible difference to a system is nevertheless that which the system requires to constitute itself against, and how the faltering of said system is therein part of its operation (2014, 522). This process of constitutive exclusion is crucial for how I want to problematize the archive as preserving the "internal contradiction of archive fever" (Derrida 1998, 19), or what I want to elevate to a presupposed missing presence, i.e., the objectivity of time order in the world. The theory of time that I argue *Archive Fever* offers is embedded in this internal contradiction. As such, what the archive and its fever is will have to wait until the end, once we have properly set the stage to apprehend all the moving parts of this contradiction.

To do so, I must first extract the theory of time Derrida retrieves from Freud. This involves (a) understanding what the topographical model of memory is, how the death drive fits into it, and how it relates to the spectrality of trauma; as well as (b) Derrida's intervention upon Freud's iteration of the death drive.

Beyond situating the death drive's central role in memory, the topographical model of memory is of interest because it claims that the spectral residue of the objectivity of the pastness does not exist objectively in the past. The quasi-transcendental structural claim is that time, rather than existing objectively as something 'to be measured' out there, is a *symptom*, i.e., an interruption and a hiatus. This paradoxical experience of discontinuity is "an effect of a protective configuration of the psyche" (Doane 2002, 34-5). The protection referred to here is against traumatic impressions, i.e., unsuitable or excessive neural excitations, which the technique of recording both incurs and aggravates. I propose, then, that the residues (or spectral presence) of trauma within the psyche is part of Freud's theory of time. More specifically, his theory of time engages a psychological temporality that is symptomatic of and therefore inextricable from trauma itself.

In other words, Derrida approaches Freud with a quasi-transcendental structure in mind, one which treats the objectivity of the past. Derrida claims that Freud first presumes a straightforward notion of atemporality of the psyche in his 1920 work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, but no longer by 1925 in the Metapsychology papers and under his topographical view (1967, 318). Freud's topographical model of memory and its development from his 1925 'Notes on the Mystic Writing-Pad' therefore prepares us to understand why, for Derrida, Freud's death

drive subtracts time's structural relation to undecidability. This lacuna frames Derrida's intervention upon the death drive, by which he formulates the temporal as a "trace." This is where the theory of time Derrida extracts from Freud will be made clear. It will, in the same breath, make salient how Derrida's death drive and trace are internally linked to the writing machine. As such, revitalizing Derrida's mobilization of the death drive grounds my argumentation on the temporalisation that the writing machine incurs by way of archive fever, read according to Kramer's quasi-transcendental structure of constitutive exclusion.

I attend to transcendentalism as premised on the indication of a signifier-signified hierarchy. In this sense, the objectivity of time order in the world falls on the side of the (ultimately missing, fractured) signified. I treat the relationship implied in signification structurally. Signification's logical condition of possibility is bracketed, suspended in an empty formal cause out of which, paradoxically, Derrida derives benefits: the empty void of signification's cause (i.e., its signified) is anticipated as the starting point of material meaning-making or memory-making. Broadly defined, memory-making is the task of mastering an inexhaustible residue: the excess from a necessary void opposing, for example, the splitting between (a) objectivity as such and (b) lived experience as subsumed in the time of history. This horizon of meaning-making, then, provides meaning and grounds the stability and unity of its structure. This horizon is presupposed as a condition of possibility for the unification of the self (as being for itself), for the passage of time and, ultimately, for time's external determination by the average understanding as being homogeneous, oriented towards an origin, and self-preserved in and through the historical progression of disparate events. I therein problematize the archive as the means or site in virtue of which occurs the self-preserving of the "internal contradiction of archive fever" (Derrida

1998, 19), or what I want to elevate to a presupposed missing presence, i.e., the objectivity of the world time order as play and horizon for the recurrence of the trace. Memory as such names this temporal structure. Thus, I defend that Derrida's main point is that the archive depends on the sustenance of an internal self-contradiction it fails to overcome.

This revaluation of temporal self-contradiction serves as my main insight as I position myself to be responding to Bragança de Miranda's 1996 '*The Virtualization of the Archive*', which has only been recently translated into English. He reproaches Derrida's theory of the archive as "too caught up in Freudian analysis" (2023, 244) and "in particular [for] appealing to the Freudian notion of the "unconscious"" (2023, 255). Miranda posits that the archive, now digitized, no longer requires some 'exterior place of consignment' as its necessary condition of possibility. He contends that Derrida's emphasis on the archive's exteriority evidences "a [dangerous and] peculiar gesture of Cartesianism" (2023, 256), unsuitable for "a moment when [the localized archive] is being deeply shaken up" (2023, 255). As such, Miranda posits that "[t]he Freudian metaphor is inadequate for thinking about the archival" (2023, 259), especially in the digital age. My paper, then, argues that Derrida's strategy is to use the death drive and provoke us into imagining how technologies (like the writing machine, which supplements and contaminates human cognition) affect our experience and relation to time and the 'now'. This will prove useful for thinking about the living present, its culture of spectacular images, and our place in it, especially in the face of an 'artificially intelligent' archive capable of generating text and images.

Retrieving the death drive's role in *Archive Fever*, for this study, therefore situates a problem of memory, what I posit is in the role of quasi-transcendental setting up for the scene of passing: the

objectivity of the past supposed as time's inevitable lapsing, on the one hand, and set up as faculty, power or force in opposition to memory, on the other. Both the coherence of the social order and the moral precepts that organize it, assumed as essential, necessary, calculable, standing security for the future, are at the service of the death drive and its uninterrupted flows (as opposed to its rigidification); and there could not be, without this, the organism of political life and politics that is political control (Derrida 1998, 4). My point is to demonstrate how the 'outside'—the objectivity of the world time order¹, responsible for pastness and the various notional constructs of memory of that past—is the hidden clue central to *Archive Fever*. The reinstatement of the 'outside' therefore shows Derrida's 1995 work as explicitly offering a theory of time.

¹Bennington defends the claim that, for Derrida, the possibility of reading and the mark in general (i.e., writing) necessarily depends on "the fact that 'ideas' always escape any given context, and in a way that breaks or bursts a semantic or hermeneutic horizon" (2014, 111). As Bennington recounts, Derrida, in his work on Heidegger, claims that an idea's necessary escape from its context is an *a priori* opening that conditions the very possibility of both history and "the historicity of that history, itself by definition not accessible to a historical account" (2014, 112). Bennington emphasizes that the *a priori* here is not to be understood as a historical *a priori* in the Foucauldian sense, but rather as one "which says something about historicity itself" (2014, 117). In other words, the *a priori* opening is the very basis for the historicity of history that can never be captured by a historical account. In this sense, there is a structure which conditions the possibility of a system that necessarily eludes the system's account. These 'necessarily possible-not' and 'possible escape from a context' structures—a quasi-transcendental structure—is what Bennington describes archive fever as (2014, 116). The archive's autoimmunity, or the death drive which a priori works against the figure it is inaugurated into, has to do with opening up possibilities of (re)reading an inscription, of returning and renewing it. Mark-making, then, opens up the condition of possibility for there to be a history and futurity at all. Thus, when Derrida writes that the archive *a priori* works against itself, Bennington wants to suggest it has to do with this opening that concerns historicity. This is to say that attempts to archive a concept such as psychoanalysis, in Derrida's case (and deconstruction, in Bennington's), in order to write a history thereof is nonsensical. Indeed, Derrida theorizes on the archive's nature as "necessarily finite and therefore exclusionary and potentially repressive" (2014, 113). As such, Bennington claims that Derrida's work can radically threaten the very "basic premises of historical scholarship" altogether (2014, 114). He argues that Derrida's notion of the archive (which notably runs against Foucault's conception of the archive) raises an issue for our understanding of what history, the archive and any research thereof in general may be.

Part 1: Freud's Approach to Memory and Psychological Life

For Freud, any robust theory of the psyche must account for memory's functioning insofar as the latter is the psyche's very essence (Derrida 1967, 299). In *'Notes on the Mystic Writing-Pad'* (1925), Freud develops a topographical view of the psyche he models according to the Mystic Writing-Pad's structure. Though Freud develops this first representation and 'staging' of memory (Derrida 1967, 299) in response to a problem of temporalisation, i.e., the presumed lack thereof within the psyche (Derrida 1967, 318), he arrives at a theory of time that concerns trauma and its spectrality, i.e., the notional residuals trauma leaves behind. My point is that Derrida's radicalization of the death drive (by which he conceives the temporal as a trace) is what problematizes technology's relation to the self-contradicting temporal structure that unconscious memory names in *Archive Fever*. This is why my paper offers a parallel study of Freud and Derrida.

Though commonly viewed as a children's toy, Freud approaches the Writing-Pad as a complex writing machine (Williams 2020, 10), whose structure produces palimpsests by way of layers, erasure and the recording of mark-makings. This memory aid is one of many novel technologies that form a backdrop of "increasing disembodiment, mechanization, decontextualization and automation" against which Freud develops psychoanalysis (Elsaesser 2024, 105). He notably wants to show that the sensorially violent effects of modernity inflect a temporality of interruption on the psyche.

Comprised of two sheets clipped onto a wax tablet, the Mystic Writing-Pad's uppermost layer is

a translucent protective one upon which one writes with a stylus. Inscriptions at the surface press through the inner celluloid paper by which their negative—the writing’s depressions—are copied in the wax. Lifting the top sheet erases the writing, but the substratum permanently keeps traces thereof all while remaining ever receptive for later ones. Layers of prior traces accrue under the current one, the past present not as pure presence but spectrality. Erasing prior traces, then, iteratively renews receptivity; this destruction, I contend, makes way for the future, its repetition necessary for the possibility of a perennial ‘accueil’ [a *site* of welcoming/reception] for what is still to come.

Freud uses the Mystic Writing-Pad as exemplary writing technology to model the psyche’s structure with regards to its dual function of infinite receptivity and recording. The Mystic Writing-Pad’s operation as a technique of inscription significantly reveals an anarchival force at play, i.e., the privilege of selecting what to retain against the tides of forgetfulness and therein expose to destruction. Crucial to Freud’s model here is that destruction iteratively renews the receptivity for further impressions, indicating that forgetfulness undergirds the functioning of memory.

The topographical view holds that each locality is inextricable from non-spatial properties such as function and temporality (O’Donoghue 2007, 107). While the two sheets and wax tablet may function as a unity, they each have their own processes. In this sense, the Mystic Writing-Pad as a model of memory unites distinct apparatuses of the mind by aligning and layering the multiplicity of their localities: the system of conscious-perception’s receptivity to stimuli and the recording of stimuli in the psychic apparatus or unconscious, mediated by the preconscious

situated in between.

It is therefore in his notes on the Mystic Writing-Pad that Freud crucially posits that the functioning of memory rests on the existence of an unconscious: that which stores the contents of forgetfulness and repression, or the residual objectivity of pastness. Repression, paradoxically, is a forgetting of forgetting (Clough 2000, 389). This means that the residual objectivity of the past is “haunted by the possibility of returning” (Elsaesser 2024, 106). The deposit of such residuals or excess where nothing is ever truly lost is moreover itself stratified, the most recent inscriptions accruing as layers upon prior ones. The Mystic Writing-Pad’s operation therefore also shows that past mark-makings (such as past traumatic stimulations) are present not as presence but as notional spectrality² in the unconscious. Psychoanalysis qua theory of memory is therefore an excavation of the unconscious that proceeds layer by layer (O’Donoghue 2007, 107).

It is important to note here that for Freud, memory is the force of a lived experience (Derrida 1967, 300). In psychoanalysis, the sustained flow or passage of such forces constitutes the mind’s ‘economy’. By mapping out the unconscious as a topography of spectral traces, Freud explains how the force of an experience impresses itself upon memory qua psychical essence and comes to spatialize the mind’s unconscious which nevertheless remains malleable to further (re)inscriptions. The topographical model, then, explains memory’s economy of return (into the conscious mind) affirmed of difference, i.e., an economy of renewal that requires forgetfulness, indeed, this anarchival force that is called the death drive.

² Spectrality is something never fully present as such but which also can never completely pass away into the past. This ambivalence of being present-yet-not is spectrality. This internal contradiction of ‘present-yet-not’ entails a recurrence of what it leaves behind as a deposit or residue.

The Death Drive

I must first provide an account of the death drive before I can move into explaining why there is a productive play of difference inherent to it and Freud's approach to memory. There is a key point about difference in Freud's topographical view that I will unfold for my argument, which concerns the death drive and its expression by way of repetition-compulsion. This will prove crucial for my claim on Freud's theory of time, as well as how the archive is dependent upon the theory of the death drive and, by extension, memory.

Freud first theorizes about the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) in the context of traumatic dreams and flashbacks, observing disruptive compulsions to repeat which adhere not to the pleasure principle but to something *beyond* it (Rottenberg 2019, 30). The reliving of unpleasant events—i.e., of a trauma surging back up and forcing itself upon consciousness—evidences that the repetition-compulsion here is spurred on by some self-destructive force, rather than one merely aligned with the earlier theory of wish fulfillment in Freud's 1895 book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Rottenberg 2019, 31). Freud in fact states that the death drive [Thanatos] is both destructive and self-destructive: it opposes the 'sexual *life* drive' (Rottenberg 2019, 25) while still yet attempting to "protect the life of the organism" (Rottenberg 2019, 31). Freud underscores the sexual aspect of the life drive because it is under sexuality (the reproduction of life) that the life drive confronts the death drive (Rottenberg 2019, 93-4). The origin of the sexual drive [Eros], Rottenberg affirms, lies in the need to restore the pattern to an earlier state of being (2019, 96). The life drive is a binding principle, a totalizing Eros (Rottenberg 2019, 95) aspiring towards synthesis and which runs counter to that of the death

drive, a principle of unbinding. These two principles respectively regulate the sexual life drives and sexual death drives.

For the death drive, adequately protecting the psyche, in this case, entails ‘mastering the stimulus’. Freud postulates that consciousness emerges from the organism’s need for protection against external impressions, acting as a barrier. It shelters its underbelly—the unconscious—from excessive and unsuitable stimulations (Rottenberg 2019, 31). Consciousness registers and processes perception stimuli, making sense of them “on the basis of a horizon of anticipation and knowledge” (Rottenberg 2019, 32). Rottenberg affirms that the manner in which consciousness protects, therefore, is by ordering the stimuli in such a way that produces a coherent experience of time.

Trauma, this unsuitable stimulus piercing through the protective barrier and inscribing itself as a scar upon the unconscious, however, ruptures the psyche’s experience of time. Trauma, in accordance with Freud’s theory of *Nachträglichkeit* developed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, is a temporal structure. Though initially referring to a temporal dislocation, French psychoanalyst Jean LaPlanche argued for a reading of trauma as a belatedness or delay: consciousness always “comes too late”(and, not merely physiologically in ontogenetic and phylogenetic development, or in the evolution of the species) in recognizing a traumatic event as such (Rottenberg 2019, 27 and 32-3). Consciousness fails to foresee this event that catches us off guard. As such, trauma reveals a structure of unpreparedness or vulnerability that one’s development fails to safeguard against. Trauma is thus a temporal structure of inherent belatedness not to an event but to the missing thereof (Rottenberg 2019, 32-3).

The death drive therefore seeks to revisit the inscription—a scene of violence—to correct the past and belatedly protect someone “from the accident [... they were] not prepared” for (Rottenberg 2019, 31). Hence, the death drive is an unconscious tendency immanent to the psyche and all living organisms to return, by way of repetition, to an earlier state of being—prior to the disruption of external influences that are themselves attributes of life (Rottenberg 2019, 96 and 33). It is a drive that dissolves units of life to return them to a more primeval, i.e., inorganic, state such that the aim of all life, for Freud, would be death. Rottenberg notes that he claims “the organism’s attempt *not to die* is an attempt *to die* (but only in its own way)—and that’s life!” (2019, 84) The death drive is therefore both there at the onset (of life) *and* perennially renewed, operative at every instance of an organism’s subsistence, ensuring its survival against external threats so that it can achieve a death proper to itself, as a restoration to its incipience as inanimate matter.

The death drive is unconscious because it specifically works by silent vocation (i.e., graspable solely through an ‘other’ (Khan 2020, 139), an event qua life, or attribute thereof, without ever leaving traces of its own labour (Derrida 1998, 10)) to dissolve the fixity of every binding that organizes a being’s maturation. In this case, the accident one was unprepared for is life, i.e., the disruption of external influences upon the psyche and more specifically, the unconscious. The death drive is therefore at work (unconsciously) through consciousness, the latter’s failure to protect the substratum inciting a forgetfulness that stirs the renewal of a traumatic event until the psyche masters what it hitherto could not.

Freud considers the unconscious as an interiority that determines the psyche's relation to the 'outside', or the world. Attempts to master the stimulus are therefore attempts to overcome prior conditionings in such a way that the psyche would no longer be affected by the hold of a traumatic experience and, by extension, a temporal structure of delay and interruption. Repetition, here borne of a forgetfulness, offers the chance and the hope to do differently this time. Destruction, here in the figure of forgetfulness, paradoxically becomes a creative force: it destroys the past and amplifies the presence of its notional residuals, i.e., the spectrality of the past inscribed upon the unconscious. Crucially, what is being repeated here is not the trauma itself, but its residual trace, i.e., an excess it leaves behind. The death drive, in its self-destructiveness, therefore compels the (re)generation of openings towards yet actualized potentialities by way of repetition.

Heterogeneity in the Topographical Model

Freud spatializes the psyche as a topographical, i.e. layered, 'contact grid' with what he calls frayings or breaches, which involve the carving out of neural pathways *of least resistance* by which stimuli travels. The fact that a stimulus privileges the path of least resistance entails that such channels pre-exist an incoming impression. Prior stimulations therefore press into the malleability of the psyche and leave a mark of their passage as a fraying. This attests not only to the inscription's violence harkening to trauma qua puncturing stimuli, but also to two heterogeneous orders of neurons: mutable ones of perception offering no resistance (Derrida 1967, 298), and, conversely, neurons recording the quantitative *force* of neural activity by which the neurons receive an inscription's 'violence' and traces thereof. Freud claims only the latter are shaped by the force of an impression: insofar as they can resist the trace's transgression, they are,

in the same breath vulnerable to it. Thus, he claims that only the neurons receptive to an inscription's quantitative force are indicative of memory and, by extension, psychological activity in general (Derrida 1967, 298-9). These neurons retain the passage of prior memory as a quantitative violence by which future ones may travel, if indeed it offers the path of least resistance.

With respect to paths of least resistance, fraying always entails difference and indeed cannot exist without it (Derrida 1967, 299). This is because without difference, we would end up with equidistant routes that would therein *arrest* memory. From this, I extrapolate that memory qua psychological essence *is* necessarily a movement, i.e., an economy of forces that entails a work of difference. Note, however, that the difference predicating the network of fraying qua psychological system rests upon a neural heterogeneity. Derrida claims that the trace of a memory, then, is not some fraying to be recollected at any instance as simple presence. Rather, it is an 'elusive' differential interplay between the work (or quantitative force) of fraying that impressions inscribe upon the psyche and which altogether, in the paths they carve out, *spatialize* the topography of the unconscious (Derrida 1967, 299). Insofar as fraying metaphorically stand in for the written trace (Derrida 1967, 297), the receptivity of an inscription punctures to the innermost, leaving an enduring trace of its force upon the unconscious and surges back into the system of conscious-perception via already established channels (Derrida 1967, 329).

Repetition, Freud stresses, does not compound the intensity of a force; rather, it reprints an impression—a trauma—while nevertheless holding the power to fray (anew) (Derrida 1967, 300). This agrees with the repetition borne of forgetfulness in the hopes of overcoming a past

trauma. Thus, it is both the quantity of stimuli and the frequency of its repetition that constitute memory. This harkens to the heterogeneity of the neural orders capable of distinguishing between (1) the number of repetitions adding to the quantity of neural activity received, and (2) the intensity of a fraying qua force. This is to say, these two orders of quantities are differentiated yet analogous to one another. I thusly posit that they do not truly form an opposition by which memory itself is also made heterogeneous. I note that this mirrors the heterogeneity of the Thanatos-Eros relation (insofar as the death drive works through an other qua life) by which Derrida states that memory qua psychological essence exceeds naturalistic and phenomenological explanations (1967, 300).

Freud, then, views psychical life as a topographical difference in the work of forces (Derrida 1967, 297). This entails, I posit, that residual traces (of an inscription) are the differential play of forces constituting the spatialization of memory. Memory, or psychical life and essence, is therefore inherently marked by excess (i.e., the residual traces of the past) and thus, heterogeneity (here in the productive play of difference between such forces). This productive interplay of difference that *is* memory evidences the death drive's labour, necessary for renewing the reception of further inscriptions and thus is that which facilitates the accruing of residues.

It follows that the death drive, here in the form of forgetfulness or repression, is the originary condition for both memory (Trumbull 2022, 80) and time's futurity; and attests to their ontologically differentiated structure perpetually eroding and sedimenting *in order* to remain emergent. This is a logic Derrida will call 'trace', a heterogeneous structure of the living present (Trumbull 2022, 16) which entails repetition insofar as the current 'now' must last long enough

to pass onto (becoming) the next moment (Trumbull 2022, 12). Indeed, it is a presence differentiated in itself, deferred and never fully given in order to make way for what is still to come. In this way, the trace is “a kind of excess, or insinuation of heterogeneity, rather than simply temporal opening (temporal opening of the trace to the next now and the future to come)” (Trumbull 2022, 16).

Derrida’s trace therefore develops through his revitalization of Freud, particularly in his reconstruction of the Freudian problematic of the psyche’s (a)temporality, represented by the Mystic Writing-Pad. Indeed, the ‘trace’ follows from a lacuna Derrida identifies and resolves in Freud’s death drive: an inconsistency between his 1920 work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and the script on the Mystic Writing-Pad in 1925.

Part 2: Derrida in Conversation with Freud

Derrida sees in psychoanalysis the potential to undermine the ground upon which the tradition of Western metaphysics rests (Khan 2020, 158), if only Freud’s work were no longer cloistered by a Cartesian logocentrism current for his time (Derrida 1967, 296) that renders the field “subservient to a certain calculus, to a certain economic determination which Derrida finds reductive and closed onto itself” (Khan 2020, 148). Freud’s topographical model based off the Mystic Writing-Pad contended with the presumed ‘atemporality’ of the psyche. Freud subsequently theorized of time as the psyche’s anachronistic temporality inextricable from the spectrality of trauma or residues of the past accruing as layers and constituting the unconscious. This is the theory of time Derrida extracts from Freud.

However, Derrida takes issue with Freud's dualist conception of the death drive from 1920. Indeed, he conceived of it as opposing the life (sexual) drive (Rottenberg 2019, 94). Derrida points out that this unwittingly commits Freud to a determinism inconsistent with his later project, in 1925, where he heralds the first representation of memory that can moreover irrupt from past determining conditions, thereby rejecting a psychical 'atemporality'. Derrida opening the death drive up to an economy of heterogeneity and positing it as life (Rottenberg 2019, 84)—as an originary force and condition of life—rectifies this.

While Freud conceives the death drive to be an "aneconomy"—a power to unbind a sustained passage of forces in the mind that thereby "threatens every principality" (Derrida 1998, 121)—his iteration nevertheless fails to exceed the 'economy of the possible' and its logic of determinism, thereby "clos[ing] the opening to the other, to the event" (Khan 2020, 147). I take this to mean that in such a state, the death drive (working through the other, or an event qua life) cannot truly dissolve the rigidity of an inscription's hold on the unconscious (which is to say, the manner in which a prior violence has come to shape it), repetitions thereof doomed, as it were, to yield the same result without hope of learning anything new. Stuck in a structure of opposition, repetition cannot be affirmed of a difference that would provide a way out—a way of overriding—prior frayings. In this case, memory's economy of return becomes one of self-same repetition, rather than one of renewal.

Derrida therefore "opens the death drive to the [general] economy of the fetish, that is, to the oscillation and structural undecidability that Freud elucidates as the structure of fetishism" (Khan

2020, 148). This is an economy which “refuses the structure of opposition”: the “[f]etishist[, unable to] hold the position of opposition (presence/absence, having/not having), [...] hold[s] them together, and [must] reconcile, in the same instant, two irreconcilable positions” (Khan 2020, 150-1). Ontologically prioritizing neither terms but rather the oscillation between them, it is an economy “oscillat[ing] between repetition (of the same) and difference” (Khan 2020, 150). Said differently, the irreconcilable positions are held in a double-bond of *simultaneous* affirmation (Khan 2020, 149). Derrida’s 1974 work *Glas* puts this economy to work as a movement whose “at-once[—a power of excess *in relation to the opposition*—] constitutes an economy of the undecidable” (Derrida 1986, 210-1); in fact, it plays this “undecidable mobility of the fetish” (Derrida 1986, 211) *in* the dialectic, *through* and *with* it rather than against it (Khan 2020, 148).

Having drawn out the terms of “indirection and undecidability [which] support a differential relation to the economy of the death drive” (Khan 2020, 137), the death drive’s work may exceed “the space of truth, [i.e., of] opposition” (Derrida 1986, 209) qua economy of the possible. It is therein free of any “ontological or transcendental imperatives” (Khan 2020, 150-1). This is what is of interest for Derrida. That the ‘concept’ of the fetish can escape opposition by which it is made undecidable implies for Derrida that “the structure of the text, Freud’s in particular, includes heterogeneous statements, not contradictory ones, but in a singular heterogeneity” (1986, 209). Thus, Derrida opens the death drive up to the heterogeneity of the undecidable—both a notion (rather than concept) and structure—which “remains open to the other, to the principle of indetermination” (Khan 2020, 152) by which it can be aneconomy.

From this, Derrida asserts that what are thought of as ‘opposites’ or binary pairs of rigid categories (i.e., life/death, hypomnesis/anamnesis, human/machine...) actually coincide with one another. Indeed, for him, a

principle of death [is] at the center of the economy of life insofar as life itself (spontaneous, natural, alive, and so on) is held to coincide with the prosthetic (technical, technological, material, and in that sense, “dead”) extensions that make it alive (Khan 2020, 140).

It follows that death (and so too trauma, for Freud) *is* life (Rottenberg 2019, 84), is originary force and condition thereof. Here, death life work together—a heterogeneity working within its differentiation as the productive play of differences. Without Derrida’s radicalization, the death drive (and by extension, Freud’s psychical theory of memory) precludes the creativity of dissolving the rigidity of a system. This would therein subtract time’s structural relation to undecidability and conditions the reinforcing of what has already been. This move (and by extension, his reconstruction of Freud) is precisely what allows Derrida to formulate the trace as both a spectral logic and structure of undecidability and indirection underpinning the living present.

Memory’s Fetish Economy

Derrida finds significant that Freud represents the psyche’s structure with a writing machine, and thus he asks what (1) a text is (a heterogeneous ‘scene of violence’ insofar as it is the scene of writing) and (2) what the psyche is if it is to be represented by text (Derrida 1967, 297) which I assert can only be a capacity for recording. Crucially, he notes that technicity and exteriority, already in the form of Mystic Writing-Pad as the archive’s structural predecessor, contaminates memory (Khan 2020, 139). This has to do with Derrida’s account of the archive as “prosthesis of

the inside” (Derrida 1998, 19). I assert that this prosthetic specifically contaminates memory’s fetish economy. I will first unfold a reading of memory’s fetish economy and a preliminary account of the archive’s contamination.

Derrida thinks “the copy of an impression [is] already a sort of archive” (1998, 28). This is precisely the Mystic Writing-Pad’s operation and moreover that of any writing machine. I assert that human memory having limitations, i.e., its finitude, is an ‘other’ through which the death drive labours. The necessity of the archive’s existence as a memory aid therefore results from and ‘bears witness’ to the death drive here as “the finitude of mnemic spontaneity which is thus supplemented” (Derrida 1967, 227-8). This means that the writing machine follows from mnemic finitude—requires, as its materialized supplement, this finitude.

The writing machine can supersede the work of unconscious memory, receiving and preserving infinite inscriptions in its stead. This device therefore sidesteps the renewing process of the death drive in the figure of forgetting. By externalizing the trace, which is to say by materially representing it, the machine provides a way to transcend memory’s finitude. This is why Derrida affirms that the writing “machine—and consequently representation—is death and finitude within the psyche” (1967, 227-8).

Forgetfulness, however, conditions repetition by which it renews the chance of doing things differently. I approach forgetfulness as specifically emerging at the interstices of finitude and the death drive qua aneconomy (Derrida 1998, 19); it is the manner in which the unconscious holds

onto the residues of the past such that we can repeat differently. Forgetfulness renews our chance to master the stimulus. Thus, I posit that memory's limit is not a hard one: it is unlike a cup filling up with water, in which the excess is lost, never to be recuperated (where drinking is concerned). In the case of memory qua psychical essence where the death drive works to renew its receptivity, the excess forms a subterranean topography that one returns to in the dark—subconsciously, under the shroud of forgetfulness—to discover something yet new under the auspices of a fresh neural impression: a chance to learn from what one could not previously master. Forgetfulness is therefore not memory's finitude, I posit; rather, it arises 'beyond' (which, for Derrida, is a 'within' qua differentiation (Khan 2020, 145), or what I understand as within a differentiation without opposition, i.e., a heterogeneity) this limit as a condition of possibility for the oscillation between a difference and repetition necessary to rupture out of the rigidity of a prior conditioning.

In other words, forgetfulness is an excess relative to mnemonic finitude, rather than remembering's opposite. Just as the death drive and trauma is life, here forgetfulness is memory—is its functioning. Forgetfulness, this destruction which amplifies the past's residual traces qua excess, makes way for new experiences to register. It is the process which perennially (re)generates the psyche's opening to the still-to-come. Forgetfulness, then, requires finitude, and it is precisely by dint of finitude that one crucially "keeps [a structural] relation to incalculability and undecidability" (Derrida 2014, 256). By extension, finitude enables the heterogeneous, i.e., differential play with the death drive's (an)economy such that its labour can exceed what has hitherto been possible. It conditions what we would refer to today as neuroplasticity.

What does Derrida then mean when he claims that the machine, in its infinite receptivity for the written trace qua representation, does not merely attest or bear witness to but rather *is* the death drive and finitude within the psyche, by which it supplements the limit of mnemonic spontaneity from without? Only that a technological exteriority—a prosthesis—has breached what is necessarily the interiority of the human psyche, yes, but indeed the heterogeneity of its essence, i.e., of memory as fetish economy. And it is by this exteriority, by the stockpiling of materialized copies of an impression, that this ‘prosthesis of the inside’ acquires a limitless receptivity to supplement memory’s finitude.

Doing so contaminates, even overrides and ‘takes the place’ of both finitude as that which underpins a structural relation to the undecidable, *and* the ‘other’ through which the death drive labours. The archive comes to supersede both terms in this relation and, by extension, the ‘limit’ qua differentiation the death drive operates within. This, in turn, contaminates memory’s ‘soft’ limit I proposed earlier. What then of the possibility of forgetting—of its excess and the repetition it gives rise to—in the wake of a prosthesis of the inside? What becomes its purpose?

Freud notes that, in the case of the archive’s receptivity without limit, the problem of the typographical (Derrida 1998, 34) impression—which is that of inscription, or whatever leaves a mark upon the substrate—becomes a “place of consignation, of ‘inscription’ or of ‘recording’” (Derrida 1998, 27). As we have just seen, here ‘consignation’, as an act of setting apart and committing to an external place, exports the trace of a past inscription into a materialized representation. This therefore alters the movement of memory, supplemented and therefore

‘extended’ outside of itself.

What does this mean for the *fetish* structure of memory (i.e., one which refuses opposition) and indeed, for the powers of forgetting—of renewing the chance to rupture out of the fixity of our being’s becoming, thereby expanding our horizons of possibility? What becomes of the death drive, the repetition by which it expresses itself, and finitude, in light of their contamination if not supersession? What of the nature of forgetting, considering the evolution of the writing machine—“materialized supplement” to the psyche that Derrida claims Freud insufficiently considered (1998, 14)—increasingly resembling and supplanting memory as psychical essence (Derrida, 1967, 227-8)? Where the death drive in the figure of forgetfulness is the conservation or archiving drive’s necessary condition of possibility, Derrida turns to psychoanalysis as an economy and genealogical excavation of memory (1998, 34) to theorize about the *notion* of the archive in the wake of *techne qua exteriority* contaminating memory, and namely takes up this problem of consignment.

The Writing Machine as Prosthesis

Derrida undertakes an etymological excavation of the concept of ‘archive’ we inherit, tracing the historicity of its history³. He insists on developing a *notion* of the archive (1998, 29), perpetually

³He posits that ‘archive’ refers to the topo-nomological sense of the *arkhé* which marries (a) the historical or ontological principle of commencement according to nature or history—a *residence from whence*, Derrida is careful to emphasize, things originate with (b) the nomological one of commandment, *from whence* ‘gods’ enforce social order and codify their hermeneutic-legal authority. Derrida adds that the title

incomplete (1998, 52) and which resists and opens up the otherwise rigid and self-effacing concept of 'archive'. In truth, the archive can never boast of a stable signification (Derrida 1998, 25). By this, I take Derrida as making place for what the archive may become in light of technoscientific changes like that of digitization (1998, 66), and so too the novel hold it may have on memory as the essence of the human psyche.

Where the archive consists of unifying, identifying and classifying documents placed in a stable repository, its function entails, for Derrida, the power of consignation: assembling, stockpiling and coordinating signs upon some stable substrate, therein codifying them as a coherent system or synchrony whose every constituent enounces the singularity of an ideal configuration. Indeed, there cannot be fragmentation within the archive; neither heterogeneity nor secret may rend asunder the unity of its corpus (Derrida 1998, 3). Fundamentally homogenous and homogenizing, 'archive' marks a signifier's institutionalization: its passage from the private to the public realm, or the conferring to a hermeneutic authority from which it is legitimized and spoken into legality. In the same breadth, 'archive' instantiates and in fact presupposes, Derrida claims, categorical limits it declares cannot be transgressed and which have a history (Derrida 1998, 4). This institutionalization of limits by which one classifies and identifies signifiers—limits to which 'archive' defers and reifies—is therefore entrenching a prior structure we inherit from history, and thus concerns the tradition of metaphysics.

of 'archive' is granted "by virtue of a 'privileged topology'" according to which documents that need not be discursive are classified and placed under the "archontic dimension of domiciliation" (1998, 3) which he states is inherently patriarchal and without which any archive could even appear.

Here we can identify how Derrida builds upon Freud; first, that the structure of the writing machine is that of self-agreeing homogeneity, directly affronting the structure of the text qua singular heterogeneity. Second, the topographical view is still in play, in fact applicable to the archive. The archive boasts of a particular function that is, just as Freud had advanced, inextricable from a specific locality (here external) and temporality. Its archontic power of consignation, of gathering and accumulating materialized traces into a homogeneous corpus that it conserves, specifically places the forces of past experiences under house arrest. Indeed, I posit that the externalization qua materialized representation of a trace leads to its crystallization. In other words, the archive's function arrests the movement or fetish economy of memory, and I will elaborate on this with the help of Kramer's quasi-transcendental structure. To prepare for this, I will first sketch out the archive, relative to the death drive, in greater detail.

Part 3: The Quasi-Transcendental Plane of the Death Drive: Why We Need the Outside

The archive, undergirded by an exterior place of consignation, is erected at 'the place of originary and structural breakdown of memory'. This reinforces the gesture of an exteriority seeding itself as a parasitic contamination of unconscious memory it brings about. Insofar as the death drive is the originary ground for memory, I posit the archive intervenes wherever the death drive labours, but more precisely, wherever forgetfulness emerges, i.e., 'beyond' or within the death drive-finitude productive relation. In wedging itself *from without* in this homeostatic process of renewing receptivity (thereby interrupting that which underpins the process of forgetfulness that stirs a repetition oscillating with difference), the writing machine accomplishes

its purpose as memory aid; it is a technology that, in its existence, contaminates our relation to forgetfulness.

Insofar as the death drive is at work in memory both resulting in its finitude and subsequent renewal, the archive corrupts the labour of the death drive that begets forgetfulness relative to finitude⁴. Therefore, the archive's existence contaminates memory's return qua renewal into the conscious mind, resulting in its originary breakdown. Of course, the movement of return qua renewal is no longer needed: the archive conserves materialized traces of an impression, whose externalization as representation will simply prompt mnemonic spontaneity. While this may be the archive's 'raison d'être', I posit it is far from a neutral memory aid. It results in the breaching of memory and moreover the very essence of the human psyche. Thus, the writing machine is a 'prosthesis of the inside' that corrupts, supplants and comes to *constitute* the psyche itself.

It bears saying that the archive does not eliminate forgetfulness per se; the need to jumpstart memory—to remember—emerges precisely from forgetting. Rather, the archive undercuts the powers of forgetfulness as begetting an unconscious repetition affirmed of difference. Still, insofar as the mnemonic device deals with the materialized copying of an impression and thus externalizing a force into a written trace, one could argue that repetition and difference is still operative, only in a different manner now that *techne* and exteriority are in play. We will set this

⁴The archiving technologies or writing machines' increasing embeddedness with/in algorithmic processes are a novelty that I contend could be understood as a contamination, but it is unclear whether Derrida himself would agree to this. The vocabulary I use throughout my paper suggests the archive as reinforcing the presupposition of an objectivity of time and its pastness; this is meant as a critique of metaphysics, a Derridean project I take seriously and indeed espouse, rather than wanting to detract from or speak against.

aside for the time being, as I will soon make clear that the prosthesis' relation to difference is no longer one of affirmation.

The *structural* breakdown of memory qua topography entails that it is no longer a heterogeneity; in supplanting finitude, the archiving machine also contaminates memory's structural relation to undecidability. Indeed, heterogeneity—this difference without opposition—is a condition of possibility for finitude (Derrida 1994, 18), or memory's fetish economy of repression qua renewal. As such, the archive eclipses the undecidable movement of the fetish, “a power of excess in relation to the opposition (true/nontrue, substitute/nonsubstitute, denial/affirmation...)” (Derrida 1986, 211). Without holding two irreconcilable positions in a double-bond of simultaneous affirmation, there is no excess and thus no longer a productive oscillation of Thanatos-Eros. By extension, the archive also prevents a differential interplay in the work of forces constitutive of memory. Since this work of difference is the necessary condition of possibility for spatio-temporalizing the psyche, the structural collapse the writing machine brings about is one which flattens the heterogeneous time-space of its essence, or memory. Memory qua movement of forces is compromised and so too the topographical spatio-temporalization of our unconscious (functioning).

Contextualized in Freud's theory of time, as the psychological experience thereof, this creates a problem. Freud and Derrida's project is to argue for the psyche's temporality, but here we have the archive undermining just that. Our experience of time is necessarily informed by the spectrality of trauma, of the past's residual presence inscribed upon our unconscious. This spectrality is what underpins the Derridean trace, or the heterogeneous structure-logic of the

‘now’. As we have seen, however, the archive as homogeneous corpus necessarily quashes heterogeneity, consigning difference and its productive work to an exterior and stable substrate. By doing so, I assert that the archive in its structure proposes that time would indeed exist somewhere out there, as if objective. This is a vantage point that Derrida’s move of radicalizing the death drive, by which he conceives the temporal as trace, provides us.

Indeed, the homogenous-homogenizing archive undermines the frayings, a work of difference, by which traces of the past may return into conscious-perception affirmed of difference. Obstructing the movement of memory, i.e., its fetish economy, entails a calcification of its flow. For me, this gestures towards the writing machine as a crystallization of traces. The archive suppresses and congeals the spectral movement of the past into artifacts, preserving them as part of a materialized collection.

While Derrida notes that the archive’s exteriority leads to an economy-logic of opposition (1998, 13), one would be remiss to assume this merely returns the death drive to what it was prior to his radicalization. Yes, the archive eclipses the death drive’s relation to the undecidable, but now that the machine has exteriorized its labour, the death drive becomes a destruction drive, or a “drive towards mastery, aggression, and cruelty” (Khan, 143). Thanatos finds itself cloistered once more, forced to ‘confront’ Eros such that its economy can longer puncture out of the realm of the currently possible. But, what should we make of this death drive reenlisted towards mastery, aggression and cruelty in the context of a logic of opposition that is not closed upon itself per se, as if it did not account for heterogeneity, but rather closes out difference?

I would first call to attention the manner in which the archive lays waste to memory's topographical structure and therefore the very crux of its functioning. In doing so, the machine corrupts the essence of the human psyche through which its structure, as prosthesis, becomes that of the psyche. It lays siege to the topographical grid of conduits first, flattening and thereby overriding it. Thus, the archiving machine is one that (re)structures memory and by extension, the very essence of psychological life. Having this prosthetic extension of memory to rely on, the labour incumbent to renew and print over a prior inscription is no longer necessary. Neural pathways fall out use. Resistance to inscriptions grow, resulting in a more strenuous process of reprinting or fraying anew. It is therefore more difficult to break out of past conditionings, or from the past's hold on us, and this entrenches a discontinuous experience of time.

Over time, human memory becomes less reliable simply by the archive's existence: we rely on it and are (re)constituted by it. In other words, this technology conveniently corrupts memory. It creates a problem to which it can but present itself as solution, thereby inaugurating itself as prosthesis to our unconscious. In fact, I posit that the framing of forgetting as a problem/remembering (by way of the archive) as a solution is an opposition that arises from the machine's contamination of memory's fetish economy.

Archive Fever

The death drive, always working through an 'other' and by way of repetition, now falls to the custody of the writing prosthetic which closes out difference. Finitude is henceforth "overwritten by [the death drive as] a *limiting* structuring principle" (Khan 2020, 140; emphasis mine). I take this to mean that the archive—this exteriority which (re)structures the unconscious—uses the

mnemonic finitude from which it is borne to impose a structural limit upon finitude's renewing powers of excess, i.e., where this excess is recuperated and never lost. The archive, which owes its existence to the death drive as its condition of possibility, co-opts the death drive's paradoxical destructive-creative force: specifically, the archive decouples the 'at-once' necessary for the creative dissolution of a system towards one which merely destroys the past and amplifies the presence of its residuals.

This is why Derrida claims that the archiving machine, already in the Mystic Writing-Pad's structure, incorporates an internal contradiction between the destruction drive [Thanatos] at odds with the conservation or archiving drive [Eros], that he calls 'archive fever' (1998, 19). To properly make sense of this, we finally move into an analysis of archive fever as quasi-transcendental plane that locks the death drive in an impossible reconciliation with the compulsion to repeat.

A system's exclusion of a difference against which it defines itself always implies said difference (Kramer 2014, 523). This process of constitutive exclusion has the quasi-transcendental structure, which is both produced by the system all while conditioning its existence (Kramer 2014, 522). Said difference is its condition of (im)possibility. This structure is therefore a paradoxical moment, implying a difference inadmissible but necessary to its system. As such, the system constrains "difference into a determinate productive difference through the dialectical logic of contradiction" (Kramer 2014, 523) and is precisely what the economy of the fetish deconstructs.

The quasi-transcendental structure—developed in the context of Hegel’s limit/passage relation—holds two contradictory terms together “in a way that preserves, rather than overcomes, their tension” (Kramer 2014, 525). This structure of limit/passage instantiates a logic of opposition: it ensures a separation of the terms and mediation by which they communicate with/through/across each other (Kramer 2014, 525).

I posit that the writing machine is precisely what mediates the death and life drive, and hence why they continuously war against the other. This means that these contradictory forces are made to confront each other *without reconciliation* as, respectively, the ‘archivolithic drive’ and the ‘archontic principle’ (Derrida 1998, 11 and 3) in the “figure of the archive” (Arvatu 2011, 147). Under this logic of opposition, one repetitiously archives traces of the past to avoid forgetting them, consigning it to the ‘outside’ (of ‘human’ or unconscious memory) to shelter the past from the death drive’s ‘pure’ destruction. Forgetfulness here, under the figure of the archive, has little to do with stirring the repetition of a trace, affirmed of difference. Rather, forgetfulness is framed as oblivion of the past that now exists objectively out there. Thus, it fuels the compulsion to repetitiously externalize qua suppress the trace, as a means to keep a presumed objectivity of the past from falling into a defunct time, a time that is always already slipping away.

With respect to the archive’s homogenization, archive fever is to be read as a paradoxical moment that cannot admit to, yet still requires the death drive’s labour. Thus, it expulses heterogeneity and constrains its oscillation towards preserving a contradiction. I call this a

dialectical logic which the memory fetish economy deconstructs. I assert that archive fever as a quasi-transcendental structure is founded on the exclusion of a difference intolerable to the temporal (i.e., the Derridean trace as spectrality), and against which it constitutes itself (Kramer 2014, 523). Archive fever therefore preserves the internal contradiction between the death drive and conservation-archontic drive. It does so by not merely constraining productive difference to a determinism but indeed suppressing it, a repetition compulsion to archive impelling the perennial forestalling of contending with forces of the past, and how they are still operative as spectrality. The archive therefore eclipses the possibility of (re)working through the past and thereby “arrests th[e] destiny’ of said system” (Kramer 2014, 523) or in this case, the objectivity of the time world order. It encases productive difference in the rigidity of a metaphysical category, defanging it of its undecidable potential or aneconomic powers.

The archive, then, preserves the ‘internal contradiction of archive fever’ or what I elevate, by way of the Derridean trace, to a presupposed missing presence, i.e., the objectivity of the world time order. Indeed, the archive, rather than offering a means to overcome the contradiction, artificially maintains it: producing more materialized traces that does not provide a chance to ‘master the stimulus’ but delays this process. This forestalls the rupturing out of prior/inherited conditionings and how we actually contend with the past always haunting the present.

The quasi-transcendental plane of memory therefore reveals how the death drive’s movement of repetition as renewal devolves, under the archive, into one of self-same repetition, i.e., of maintaining what already is. In other words, the writing machine appropriates the death drive towards the foreclosing the still-to-come’s undecidable potentiality into what Derrida calls a

‘future perfect logic’ of time (1998, 9), or what I take to be a determinism.

Furthermore, the quasi-transcendental plane of memory requires the ‘outside’, better understood in this argument as necessary heterogeneity. Heterogeneity here is already latent in Derrida’s account of the prosthetic—of the machine coinciding with human. It is by this technology’s exteriority, of its parasitic seeding from without that supersedes finitude and through which it subsequently contaminates-reframes forgetting as oblivion. Consequently, the relegation of productive difference to the outside is also how the archive constrains the heterogeneity of the death-life drive into a perennial, i.e., determinate irreconciliation or contradiction.

The archive’s ‘outside’ (that which allows the (objective) past to survive the destruction drive) is therefore a reinstating of the presupposition of an irreversible objectivity of the world time order. It is what Derrida worked to reveal in the theory of time he retrieves from Freud. Moreover, this outside or exteriority of the objectivity of the past (relative to Freud’s psychical temporality as time) is responsible for pastness and the memory of that past. As such, even though Derrida’s archive institutes limits within the psyche, namely erecting one between interiority/exteriority (or the unconscious/‘objective’ time), it is far from an insufficiency to resolve a Cartesian linearity in Freud on his part. Rather, Derrida’s contribution to Freudian psychoanalysis is what allows us to grasp the archive as the instituting of limits and a reductive logic-structure of opposition. Indeed, its exteriority is precisely what forecloses productive difference in its conditioning of the quasi-transcendental plane of memory.

Conclusion

Derrida retrieves a theory of time from Freud that is an anachronistic psychological temporality symptomatic of and thus inextricable from the spectrality of trauma. The death drive underpinning memory's functioning is a paradoxical creative-destructive force. This heterogeneity founds the structure-logic of the living present. However, it presupposes a transcendental plane about the objectivity of time which cannot be removed and therein the fetish economy of memory. Archive fever, a paradoxical moment that cannot admit to, yet requires the death drive's labour, expulses heterogeneity and constrains its oscillation (a power of excess) towards preserving a contradiction. This is a dialectical logic that the memory fetish economy deconstructs. Thus, archive fever artificially sustains a compulsion to repeat not the trace of an event (by which repetition could be affirmed by difference), but rather something closer to the effect of a representation thereof, that thereby excludes, delays, defers, suppresses productive oscillation. Derrida therefore emphasizes the writing machine's capability to eclipse time's structural undecidability and steer its actualization towards a 'future perfect' logic.

We can recall that, in *Archive Fever*, Derrida asks, 'where does the outside commence' (1998, 8). I have shown how this is rhetorically the question of the archive; Derrida points us to the problem of its relation to the death drive as prosthesis, rather than neutral memory aid. As of late, many theorists hold computational technology as a novel iteration of the archive (Seberger 2022) insofar as its control increasingly permeates and organizes the entirety of one's experience. Considering technology's (and by extension, our) growing enmeshment with automated decision-making processes, this raises crucial questions for human agency and what our relation

to time is. The more recent emergence and widespread usage of generative ‘artificial intelligence’ has, in particular, taken this problematic to a whole new level. What kind of prosthesis are we dealing with today and what are its effects for spectrality? How do artificially generated representations and thus crystallizations of the trace complicate our relation to forgetting, memory and time in such a way that might forestall the productive play of difference?

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