

## A Morbid, Finite Bond: Derrida, Freud and Archival Technologies of Inscription

Abstract:

Focusing on two of Derrida's works on Freud – *Freud and the Scene of Writing* (1967) and *Archive Fever* (1994) – the article first traces the literalization of figures of writing from the early to late work. Specifically, the article reads *Archive Fever* as the realization of the theme of the materialization of writing technologies first introduced in the 1967 essay. By tracing the tendency of technological figures of writing to converge what is singular and what is repeatable in analogical relations, the article identifies the singularity of such relations with their materialization in writing technologies. Such technological and material singularity, the article concludes, provides Derrida with a model of (un)natural relation between deconstruction and psychoanalysis – with the struck-through “un” a sign of the «right on [*à même*]» of technologized, material writing. The morbid, finite bond that Derrida forges between deconstruction and psychoanalysis, then, operates speculatively across an (un)natural paternal-filialism that Derrida gleans from Freud's interpretation of Moses as Jewish arch-patriarch.

*Keywords:* Archive, Figuration, Materiality, Paternal-Filialism, Writing Technologies

### 1. Derrida and Freud, 1967-1994

In the Exergue to *Archive Fever* Derrida adds the following two questions to his remarks on the worries Freud expressed to his publishers about the possibly “useless expenditure” of *Civilization and its Discontents* given its discussion of matters covered elsewhere in the *Standard Edition*<sup>1</sup>, on the consignatory character of the archive – how «[there is] no archive without [an] outside»<sup>2</sup> – and on a recollection of *Freud and the Scene of Writing* (1967)<sup>3</sup>:

[W]hether, concerning the essentials, and beyond the extrinsic details, the structure of the psychic apparatus [...] which Freud sought to describe with the “mystic [writing] pad”, resists the evolution of archival techno-science or not. [And] [i]s the psychic apparatus better represented or is it affected differently by all the technical mechanisms for archivization and for reproduction [...] [e.g.,] microcomputing, electronization, computerization?<sup>4</sup>

Nearly 30 years later, Derrida repeats a theme of his 1967 Freud essay, namely, the role technology plays in the psychoanalytic conception of the psyche – primarily of perception, but also of the unconscious and memory. In repeating this theme, Derrida also expands upon it. In *Archive Fever*, unlike in the earlier essay, the question is how technological developments affect systems and processes of archivization, the psychic apparatus included. Here, in considering these “exergic” questions and showing them, despite their extrinsic textual placement to be central to Derrida's reading of Freud in both 1967 and 1994, I begin with figurations of writing in the early essay. Subsequently, I argue that the technological materialization of supplementary figuration – its specification in and as technology – enables Derrida in *Archive Fever* to draw together deconstruction and psychoanalysis across an (un)natural paternal-filial bond<sup>5</sup>. The bond Derrida forges in the

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<sup>1</sup> Derrida (1996), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ivi, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ivi, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Ivi, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Questions of paternalism and filial descent occupy Derrida in any number of texts from the early – to mid – 1990s. E.g., about Kierkegaard's treatment of the Abraham-Isaac story in Genesis, Derrida writes in *The Gift of Death*, which is based on a lecture at the 1990 Royaumont Conference, «[i]t is a story of a father and son, of

1994 London lecture and under the heading of the materiality of technologies of writing is, moreover, prepared for by his treatment of figures of writing technology in the 1967 Freud essay. In short, *Archive Fever* realizes what *Freud and the Scene of Writing* merely intimates.

Below, we will consider the tendency of analogical figures for systems of inscription – including both what is inscribed and the process of inscription – to combine in one what in the figure is specific and finite as well as what in the figure is infinitely repeatable. It is this tendency toward convergence as it operates in the technological figuration of writing that is of interest to me in Derrida’s 1967 Freud essay; it is this tendency within the figure of writing that, I argue, Derrida realizes in the 1994 London Freud Museum lecture in the materiality of technologies of writing. Finally, it is the materialization of the tendency of figures of writing to converge into one that, I claim, Derrida capitalizes upon in 1994 to (unn)aturally bond deconstruction to psychoanalysis. Deconstruction is not thereby identified with psychoanalysis; the line of descent from the latter to the former is not direct, nor is it natural – hence, the term “(unn)atural”. Rather, Derrida’s work on the technological character of writing supplements – first, figuratively, then, materially – implicitly forges an (unn)atural paternal-filial bond between deconstruction and psychoanalysis. While acknowledging the “violence” of asymmetrical communities formed between the living and dead, Derrida, like Yerushalmi, whose reading of *Moses and Monotheism* provides one of the interpretive frameworks of *Archive Fever*, invokes a “we” between himself and Freud – a “we”, I argue, of (unn)atural paternal-filial descent<sup>6</sup>.

Alternately, and following Elizabeth Rottenberg in her reading of *For What Tomorrow... A Dialogue*, we might put this last point in terms of Derrida being a «friend of psychoanalysis» in the twofold sense of giving “irreversible approbation” to the certainty that psychoanalysis is a good thing while also remaining “on [one’s] guard” against a «certain problematic proximity» between deconstruction and psychoanalysis<sup>7</sup>. It is this «certain problematic proximity» between deconstruction and psychoanalysis that is of interest to me: a proximity that I trace between Derrida’s 1967 and 1994 works on Freud, and along the morbid, finite bond Derrida forges with Freud in these respective works through the materiality of writing technologies. Finally, I argue in conclusion that the heritage Derrida forges between psychoanalysis and deconstruction is an (unn)atural paternal-filialism – like that between Moses and the Jews on Freud’s speculative rewriting of the exodus out of Egypt.

## 2. The Technological Figure of the Mystic Writing-Pad (Derrida and Freud, 1967)

Quoting Freud’s *Note on the Mystic Writing-Pad* (1925), Derrida in *Freud and the Scene of Writing* reproduces Freud’s description of the children’s writing tablet: it is made of a «dark brown resin or wax with a paper edging» over which is lain «a thin transparent sheet» that can be lifted from the wax under-layer and so «clear[ed] of writing»<sup>8</sup>. Marks appear on the transparent over-sheet wherever a stylus has, from above, pressed it into the undercoat of resin; lifting the sheet from its waxy imprint, the writer effectively clears it for subsequent re-inscriptions.

The limits of the pad for modeling the psyche are given in part in its reliance upon a device other than itself to form its impressions; as Derrida puts the point, «[t]he machine

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masculine figures, of hierarchies among men (God the father, Abraham, Isaac[...])» (Derrida, 2007, p. 75). Similarly, *Specters of Marx*, which grew out of a two-session lecture at the University of California Riverside in 1993, begins with a long “Injunction” on the appearance of the ghost of the father at the beginning of Hamlet (Cfr. Derrida, 1994, p. 2ff.). In part, then, I am situating *Archive Fever* within a broader theoretical context named by “patrilineality” and “patriarchy”. In turn, I follow Derrida’s directive to read the 1994 lecture at the London Freud Museum in reference to – or, as a development of – his 1967 *Freud and the Scene of Writing* essay.

<sup>6</sup> On the paternal-filial “we” Yerushalmi imposes on Freud, see Derrida (1996), pp. 41-42; on Derrida’s imposition of a “we” on Freud, see *ivi*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>7</sup> Rottenberg (2014), p. 306.

<sup>8</sup> Derrida (2001), p. 280.

does not run itself [...] [a]t least two hands are needed to make the apparatus function»<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, as Derrida notes, Freud recognized a comparable “auxiliary” insufficiency to the model in his *Note* essay: «There must come a point at which the analogy between an auxiliary apparatus of this kind and the organ which is its prototype will cease to apply»<sup>10</sup>.

But, let us take care in reading these last remarks of Freud’s. In doing so, we find, with Derrida, that what “breaks down” is not primarily the mystic writing pad *as device*. Undoubtedly, a transparent plastic sheet attached to a wax tablet is significantly simpler than human perception as it relates to consciousness and the unconscious. About the material failure of the model Derrida writes that while the mystic writing-pad may be «infinitely more complex than slate or paper, [and] less archaic than a palimpsest», still, «compared to other machines for storing archives, it is a child’s toy»<sup>11</sup>. More basically, the limits of the writing-pad model are given in the *analogy* between «two apparatuses and the possibility of this representational relation»<sup>12</sup>. Fundamentally, the limits on an extra-psychic apparatus that would model the psyche are *tropic* rather than material; to repeat Freud’s conclusion with added emphasis, «[t]here [...] come[s] a point at which the *analogy* [...] cease[s] to apply»<sup>13</sup>. By Derrida’s estimation, the mystic writing-pad is in form infinitely more complex than a writeable slate or sheet of paper; as such, it is closer than other apparatuses to modeling the psychic system. Such relative infinite complexity, however, is irrelevant once the technology of the writing-pad is cast in *analogical* relation with the psyche. Analogically, it is the *figure* of the relation that determines the fit, or misfit, between intra- and extra-psychic inscriptive systems.

The historico-technical production of a particular analogical relation, as in Freud’s comparing the perceptual system (Pcpt.) to the mystic writing-pad, is what Derrida in *Freud and the Scene of Writing* terms a technological “supplement” to the finitude of the psychic system. In what does such finitude consist? What is involved in this “supplementation?” We will consider these two topics in turn. Though the Pcpt. does not itself record permanent traces of former sensory impressions, permanent marks *are* scored into memory as traces. Accordingly, the underlying Ucs.-system is changed materially such that the Pcpt. loses some degree of its ever-readiness to receive and transmit new sensory impressions. In turn, the Ucs. can conjure its memory-traces and replay them – it can repeat them – in the Pcpt.-Cs.-system. The Pcpt.-Cs.-system is thus partially inhibited from below from receiving new sensible impressions. Briefly, this line of thought reconstructs Freud’s account of Pcpt.-Cs.-Ucs. in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920)<sup>14</sup>. On the analogy of the children’s toy, we might envision the finitude of the system as a slow deformation of the under-tablet of wax through repeat tracings onto the over-sheet. Subsequently, the grooved under-wax distorts the overlying transparency: the latter loses

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<sup>9</sup> Ivi, p. 284.

<sup>10</sup> Ivi, p. 286.

<sup>11</sup> Ivi, pp. 286-287.

<sup>12</sup> Ivi, p. 287.

<sup>13</sup> Ivi, p. 286 (emphasis added).

<sup>14</sup> Consider, in this regard, Freud’s discussion of the relationship between sensory impressions in the Pcpt. and permanent memory-traces in the underlying Ucs. in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*:

On the basis of impressions derived from our psychoanalytic experience, we assume that all excitatory processes that occur in the other systems leave permanent traces begin in them from the foundation of memory [...] We find it hard to believe, however, that permanent traces of excitation such as these are also left in the system Pcpt.-Cs. If they remained constantly conscious, they would soon set limits to the system’s aptitude for receiving fresh excitations [...] Thus we should be able to say that the excitatory process becomes conscious in the system Cs. but leaves no permanent trace behind there; but that the excitation is transmitted to the systems lying next within and that it is in them that its traces are left (Freud, 1955a, pp. 24-25).

Despite Freud’s “disbelief”, given the adjacency of perception and consciousness – a proximity so close that Freud joins them into one system with a hyphen – the traces “left [...] in” the unconscious would exert an upward impression on the Pcpt.-Cs. system.

some of its flat elasticity. In one sense, then, the Pcpt. is *materially* finite in relation to the underscored Ucs.; still, *in principle* the system remains infinitely renewable.

Since our focus is on the *figure* of the psyche/mystic writing-pad analogy, the material finitude of the psychic system is not, presently, as relevant as is the tropic limitations of this analogy. Below, we will consider material finitude as it relates to systems of inscription and archivization. Here, rather, we take the finitude of the analogy to consist in the particularity of any/every one of its inscriptions and the threat of erasure and over-writing that every particular inscription faces in its very particularity. As Derrida puts this last point about figurative – or, as in the following passage, “representational” – finitude, «Freud, evoking his representation of the psychical apparatus, had the impression of being faced with a machine which would soon run itself»<sup>15</sup>. A machine, moreover, that portends death because it repeats – it overwrites – the «living present, which it repeats originally»<sup>16</sup>.

Every analogical figuration is specified by its constitutive terms, e.g., *human perception* is like *the mystic writing-pad*. In turn, once figured analogically the relation – *is like* – is subject to subsequent re-inscriptions that depart from its first formulation: different terms substitute in for the tenor and vehicle of the original metaphor. Borrowing from Derrida in *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, we can restate the point as follows: by being figured analogically, the relation between the Pcpt. and an extra-psychic writing-device is rendered both finite and infinite – or, better, it is rendered (in)finite. The historico-technical analogy of the writing-pad, that is, the specific analogical relation between the writing-pad and perception, articulates the finitude of the system itself: a permanent trace is scored into the psychoanalytic literature with *perception* being presented as like *the mystic writing-pad*.

Freud’s analogization of the Pcpt.-Cs.-Ucs.-relation as *like* the mystic writing-pad also, in Derrida’s language, “supplements” the finitude of this relation by opening it to tropic reiteration. The specificity of Freud’s first articulation of the analogical relation notwithstanding – and, indeed because of its specificity – once the system has been rendered figuratively this discursive supplementarity undergoes countless reiterations. In this regard, and limiting our textual reference to just the *Standard Edition*, we are reminded of the «entirely and conventionally topographical metaphor of the psychic apparatus» in the last chapter of the *Traumdeutung*<sup>17</sup>, and, more generally, of Freud’s various “topological” mappings of the «several psychological systems»<sup>18</sup> in *The Ego and the Id*<sup>19</sup> and the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*<sup>20</sup>. Each figuration of the Pcpt.-Cs.-Ucs.-system repeats and slightly displaces every other. Further, we recall in this regard Freud’s late historico-anthropological analogues between the psyche and ancient socio-cultural forms and practices; for example, in *Totem and Taboo* Freud draws a “parallel” between «[socio-cultural] taboo and obsessional neurosis»<sup>21</sup>. In each instance, we can read Freud as capitalizing on the analogical relationality – the “is like” tropism – between figures of writing and the Pcpt.-Cs.-Ucs.-system, or, in the case of *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*, between ontogeny and phylogeny.

The inscription of these specific and various figurations into the *Standard Edition* – their archivization into and as the canonical version of Freud’s works – in turn institutes a second-order analogical relationality: the text(s) of the *Standard Edition* function as a memory-system into which the textual traces of psychoanalysis as a theory-in-progress are inscribed, i.e., a textual re-inscription of Freud’s working (original) inscriptions. In reading Derrida on the archive, then, we do well to note this last “generic” point. In *Archive Fever*, Derrida is not theorizing an idealized archive, as, for example, Ariella Azoulay

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<sup>15</sup> Derrida (2001), p. 285.

<sup>16</sup> Ivi, p. 286.

<sup>17</sup> Ivi, p. 265.

<sup>18</sup> Derrida (1996), p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> Freud (1955b), p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Freud (1955c), p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Freud (1955d), p. 35.

criticizes him for doing<sup>22</sup>. Rather, Derrida's interest in *the* archive is in the figuration of inscriptive systems at a second-order; his focus is on the *genre* of figures of writing. Moreover, Derrida recognizes that genres are open to refiguration. Though more resistant to change than single figures, still genres are changed "from below", as it were, by different analogical instances. In these terms, the present argument is that between 1967 and 1994 Derrida shifts from the specific figure in Freud's *Note* essay of the mystic writing-pad technology to the genre of technological metaphors in psychoanalysis in general. In turn, Derrida in *Archive Fever* considers the material specification of the genre of technological figures of writing – a generic specification, as it were, that allows him to fit into a single line of descent the otherwise distinct theories of deconstruction and psychoanalysis.

Fittingly, in *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, Derrida presents the above two points – the specificity of the mystic writing-pad metaphor as the articulation of the finitude of the Pcpt. system and the tropic supplement of such finitude in the repeatable metaphorical relation, that is, what he terms a "repetition machine" – in a single compressed sentence. Derrida's singular formulation demonstrates the tendency of analogical relations toward converging their separate elements. The same tendency is heightened once analogical relations are figured generically – as in the genre of technological metaphors; significantly, this is Derrida's focus in *Archive Fever* on the genre of technological metaphors for archival inscription systems. We will pursue this line of thought, below, in reference to *Archive Fever*. For now, let us consider Derrida's formulation of the infinite-finite ambivalence of analogical figuration in the 1967 "Freud" essay.

In quoting the relevant passage from *Freud and the Scene of Writing* I introduce a conjunction for the sake of exposition; I do so in order to highlight the two aspects of analogical figuration: «Metaphor as a rhetorical or didactic device is possible here only through the solid metaphor» – *and* – «the "unnatural", historical production of a *supplementary* machine [is] *added* to the psychological organization in order to supplement its finitude»<sup>23</sup>. The "solid[ity]" of the metaphor refers to the always specific instantiation of figurative relations, i.e., their formulation in terms of single specific tenors and vehicles. In turn, the «"unnatural" historical production of a supplementary machine» refers to the dispersive repetition of the singular specific relation. I will return to the unnatural character of the repeatable supplement in conclusion. Working, as he is in *Archive Fever*, on issues of relation, paternalism and inheritance – first, through the gift of the family Bible from Jakob Freud to his son Sigmund<sup>24</sup>, subsequently, as a matter of Moses' arch-patriarchy of the Jewish people<sup>25</sup> – Derrida displaces natural heredity with the unnatural bonds of material re-inscription. That Derrida proffers a "non-natural" form of (paternal) relation follows from his figurative treatment of inscriptive relations in the 1967 "Freud" essay, which, as Derrida announces, forms the "horizon" of the 1994 London lecture. I.e., *Archive Fever* inherits an idea of unnatural relation from *Freud and the Scene of Writing* because the focus of the latter on figurative relations of inscription determines the unnatural character of relations of inheritance in the former essay. Yet, Derrida in *Archive Fever* capitalizes on the naturalism of the unnatural, as it were, to forge a bond between deconstruction and psychoanalysis – a capitalization or "speculation" on the materialization of the figure of technologies of writing from the early "Freud" essay<sup>26</sup>.

In terms from *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, it is the interplay between the specific historico-technical inscription of psychic finitude and the supplementary "movement" of reiterating the trope through different tenors and vehicles that Derrida identifies in the 1994 lecture at the London Freud Museum as "archive fever". Such "fever" is occasioned by the infinite threat posed to the former by the latter: there is a malicious risk of effacing a specific metaphorical relation by repeating it through other analogical supplements,

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<sup>22</sup> Arzoulay (2011), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Derrida (2001), p. 287.

<sup>24</sup> Derrida (1996), pp. 20-21.

<sup>25</sup> Ivi, p. 64.

<sup>26</sup> On the "spectral" character of Freud's inscriptive patriarchy see ivi, p. 84ff.

which are themselves specifically figured. Archive fever plays out between the promise-of-presence of specific and ineffaceable inscriptions and the threat of non-presence to every such inscription by its being a figure of something else – a promise and threat heightened by the materialization of the technological supplement on which all such inscriptions rely.

As noted above, in *Freud and the Scene of Writing* Derrida casts this figurative or “representational” threat as one between «death and finitude», which despite all Freud’s thoughts on «the unity of life and death» throughout his corpus remains, according to Derrida, unquestioned in the *Note* essay<sup>27</sup>. Accordingly, we might re-read Derrida’s early “Freud” essay as an airing of the unasked questions of death and finitude in the service of opening through Freud’s initial metaphorical inscription of the psyche in the mystic writing-pad the «scene of writing» or, as Derrida phrases it at the end of the essay, the «becoming-literary of the literal»<sup>28</sup>. I leave this proposed reconstruction of the 1967 essay aside. Rather, I take this last concluding remark from Derrida to supply, conversely, the directive for the 1994 lecture. Instead of finding in Freud the becoming-literary of the literal, Derrida in *Archive Fever* finds the literalization – the *material specification* – of the figurative<sup>29</sup>.

### 3. Technological Figures of Writing Materialized: Archive Fever (Derrida and Freud, 1994)

Repeating his earlier «death and finitude» formulation in *Archive Fever*, Derrida claims that the 1967 essay «sketch[e]s, by anticipation, the horizon» that he follows in the London lecture 27 years later. The “horizon” *Freud and the Scene of Writing* provides for *Archive Fever* is that of representations of the psychic apparatus in an «exterior technical model»<sup>30</sup>. Repeating the earlier link between death, finitude and the exteriority of a technological model of the psyche, in the Exergue to the 1994 lecture Derrida connects these further with archive fever and the death drive:

The model of this singular “*mystic pad*” also incorporates [...] a destruction drive [...] It is what I called [...] archive fever. There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude [...] Above all [...] beyond or within this simple limit called finiteness or finitude, there is no archive fever without the threat of th[e] death drive<sup>31</sup>.

Let me underscore two words – “singular” and “incorporat[e]” – in the first sentence of the passage. I do so in order to align *within the technological figure* of the analogical supplement the two aspects of metaphoricity discussed above in *Freud and the Scene of Writing*. We should also, given our changed textual scene, reformulate the above findings in the language of the 1994 lecture: “analogy” and the mystic pad as “writing-machine” are replaced in *Archive Fever* by the language of “archive” and “death drive”.

The «destruction drive» – or, in the more familiar Freudian parlance Derrida appeals to early in the lecture, the «death drive»<sup>32</sup> – is not extrinsic to so-called archive desire<sup>33</sup>. The

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<sup>27</sup> Derrida (2001), p. 286.

<sup>28</sup> Ivi, p. 290.

<sup>29</sup> In *Freud and the Scene of Writing* Derrida anticipates what is here being called the “specification” of figures of writing through their materialization as writing technologies. On the topic of Freud’s modeling the psychic system on the mystic writing-pad Derrida writes, «Freud [in the *Note* essay] does not explicitly examine the status of the “materialized” [writing machine] supplement» (ivi, p. 286). Accordingly, we can read *Archive Fever* into the continuation of the same passage from Derrida’s 1967 essay: the 1994 lecture, «examine[s] the status of the “materialized” supplement», while *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, «examine[s] the possibility of this [writing] machine, which [...] increasingly resembles [memory] more closely», i.e., the encroachment of the writing machine as analogical supplement upon the psychic system for which it is supposed merely to stand.

<sup>30</sup> Derrida (1996), p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Ivi, p. 19.

<sup>32</sup> Ivi, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> In *Copy, Archive, Signature*, Derrida associates technology in the particular form of the photograph as archival to the “*punctum*” as Barthes discusses this photographic “moment” or “instant” in *Camera Lucida*. What Derrida notes in this photo-technological singularity is the relation that it opens between art and death – and this because the singularity of the technological archive is «beyond art» (Derrida, 2010, p. 9). Derrida continues, the point-like singularity of the technologized archive – which in this context is specifically the

archival drive to record, store and safeguard is one with the anarchic risk of erasure, forgetting and destruction; hence, the radical finitude – a finitude radicalized by an infinite threat – that is “archive fever”. Moreover, these countervailing tendencies operate within what Derrida calls the hypomnesic supplement that enables and that is the locus of inscriptive archiving: the archive is anarchic in the technological apparatuses of writing and recording. The ambivalence Derrida identifies in *Freud and the Scene of Writing* between historico-technically specific figures of writing and their tropic reiteration is in *Archive Fever* condensed into the singularity of the hypomnesic supplement to archival inscription. It is so condensed, moreover, because the inscriptive supplement is a *materialized technological apparatus*<sup>34</sup>.

The material technologization of the figure of intra- and extra-psychic inscription from Derrida’s early to late essays on Freud has a number of consequences. One is the future-orientation of archival inscription as something always yet-to-come. Technology is essentially futural. By design, technology is open to the latest development and newest model. In this regard, materially technologized inscription and preservation points forward to a future archive. In *Archive Fever*, Derrida explains the futurity of the technologized archive:

[T]he archive, as printing, writing, prosthesis, or hypomnesic technique in general is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content *of the past* [...] No, the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content [...] in its relationship to the future<sup>35</sup>.

A second consequence of the materialization of the figure of technologies of writing, and one that is more to the point of my present interests, is that such materialization changes the relationship between the terms in the figure. Finitude, which Derrida in the 1967 “Freud” essay aligns with materiality, comes in the 1994 lecture to predominate over in-principle immaterial infinitude – hence, in the above cited passage, Derrida presents as a limit the “radical finitude” of the technologized archive. If analogical figures of writing operate equally between specific inscription and plural repetition, once rendered in and as material writing technologies, specificity is privileged over plurality and variability.

Accordingly, and in reference to the futurity of the technical archive, Derrida describes it as a «very *singular* experience of the promise»<sup>36</sup>. Such “singularity”, I am here claiming, follows from the *technological* character of the analogical figure Freud inaugurates with the mystic writing-pad figure for systems of inscription; it is a “singularity” made more pointed, as Derrida shows, once the figure is materialized in writing and archiving technologies. Employing, as he will throughout the London lecture, the phrase «right on [*à mème*]»,

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photograph – opens up an experience that «cannot be mastered»; one, moreover, in which perception is «immediately reproduced» and «immediately archived» (ivi, p. 10). The impossibility of mastery of the immediately reproduced, immediately archived “pointalism” of the technologized archive leaves one “passive” and “exposed”. Hence, Derrida associates the technological archive with singularity and death – an association that, Derrida claims, Freud failed to consider despite his attention throughout his writings to the question of life and death.

<sup>34</sup> My emphasis is on the “singularization” that occurs in a technological materialization of the metaphorical relation between a writing (or, inscription) apparatus and what it writes (or, inscribes). Both poles of the metaphor are combined into one in the technologized apparatus. My claim, though, is not simply that the materialization of a metaphorical relation collapses the poles of the relation, i.e., that a single technology condenses the different figurative elements that signify that technology. Rather, I emphasize the material singularization of technological figures of writing in order to show, further, that Derrida utilizes the tendency toward singularization *already operative in the figure* to draw psychoanalysis and deconstruction together as related accounts of archival inscription. Nevertheless, there are other ways of characterizing Derrida’s development of metaphorical relationality between the 1967 Freud essay and the 1994 London lecture. One such characterization is pertinent here. Whereas in *Freud and the Scene of Writing* Derrida focuses on the specificity of metaphorical relations by attending to the specifics of Freud’s “mystic writing-pad” metaphor, in *Archive Fever* he is concerned with general types or genres of metaphoricality – in Freud, the *kind* of figure used to represent the inscription-like processes of the psyche is technological.

<sup>35</sup> Derrida (1996), p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> Ivi, p. 36 (emphasis added).

Derrida announces the singularity of the materially technologized relation of inscription-and-inscribed as follows: «[R]ight on [à même] that which permits and conditions archivization, we will never find anything other than that which exposes it to destruction»<sup>37</sup>. As materialized in and as technological apparatuses, the archive is anarchivic *a priori*: re-inscriptions are written “right on” the inscriptive surface; the depthless technologized archive records and re-records over the same digital surface<sup>38</sup>.

The *a posteriori* threat of destruction every archive faces because of its reliance on material means and sites of record is not insignificant. Even if the risk empirical archives face historically and politically is not *a priori* infinite it is nonetheless real and often catastrophic. To take but one empirico-historical example, and one to which Derrida refers in various works from the early- to mid-1990s, the archive of apartheid in South Africa is uneven and selective. Materials deemed unfit to the prevailing political narrative of the post-apartheid changeover were held out or discarded altogether<sup>39</sup>. The reason for this, as Derrida discusses in the 1998 *Refiguring the Archive* seminar at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, is «the social and political power», «which consists in selecting the traces in memory, in marginalising, censoring, destroying, such and such traces through precisely a selection, [and] filter» because of «the finitude, the limitation [...] of human power, of space, the place where to accumulate the archive»<sup>40</sup>.

Materially, the external site of the archive is finite *a posteriori*: storage space is limited, document-preservation is time-consuming and cost-inefficient, etc. Finitude thus becomes a governing principle and legal warrant. The partial destruction of a national or event-specific archive is justified by whatever political power stipulates the spatial-and-temporal extent of its storage capacities. In focusing on the *a priori* anarchivism of the archive, my aim is not to deny or neglect the real socio-political forces of destruction that assault archives. Likewise, in his attention to the (an)archive *a priori* Derrida is not forsaking the *a posteriori* ruin wrought on archives by economics and politics. The above point concerning Derrida’s (seemingly) idealized vision of the archive is applicable here as well: the (an)archive *a priori* is not a negation of the historical and empirical archive *a posteriori*.

Rather, in quasi-transcendental fashion we should take Derrida to be rooting the *Realpolitik* of archive-keeping – in both its preserving and destroying modes – in the technological *a prioricity* of the (an)archive precisely because of its technological materialization of figures of inscription<sup>41</sup>. Indeed, if the (an)archive *a priori* is the condition

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> In a more distant “exergue” to *Archive Fever* than the one with which I am presently concerned, Derrida explains the *a priori* anarchivic threat to the archive in a 1998 seminar at University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa: «[T]he possibility of the destruction of the archive [...] is not simply a risk which is run because of [its reliance upon] exteriority [...] [Rather, it] has to do with what Freud defines as the death drive – that is, a drive to, precisely, destroy the trace without any remainder, without any trace, without any ashes [...] the aneconomic death drive [...] a drive which motivates [...] the radical destruction of the archive» (Derrida, 2002, p. 42). The “without [...] ashes” of the archive should be read in the context of the 1993 *Specters of Marx* lecture: faced with the radical erasures and excisions of the apartheid record, Derrida finds few or no material means of inscription. This differs, though, from the archive that occasions Derrida’s 1994 London museum lecture: though massively incinerated by the political powers of 20<sup>th</sup> Century anti-semitism, the Freudian-Jewish archive holds sufficient material remains to allow Derrida to “write on” those ashes his impressions of Freud (Cfr. Prenowitz, 1996, p. 111). In this last regard, consider Derrida’s comment in the 1994 lecture that, «[i]f Freud suffered from *mal d’archive*, if his case stems from a *trouble d’archive*, he is not without his place [...] in the archive fever [...] we are experiencing today, concerning its lightest symptoms or the great holocaustic tragedies of modern history» (Derrida, 1996; emphasis added).

<sup>39</sup> South African apartheid figures, as well, in Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*: Derrida dedicates the lecture to Chris Hani, leader of the South African Communist Party, who had recently been assassinated for his anti-apartheid political activism at the time of Derrida’s 1993 lecture at the *Whither Marxism?* conference (Derrida, 1994, pp. xiv-xv).

<sup>40</sup> Derrida (2002), p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> In his review of the exhibition *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* at the International Center of Photography in New York (Winter 2008), Okwui Enwezor suggests that the archive, «as a representation of the taxonomy, classification, and annotation of knowledge and information» could be understood as «a representative historical form»; or, in the terms Enwezor borrows from Foucault, «an historical *a priori*» (Enwezor, 2008, p. 16). The anarchivic *a prioricity* Derrida identifies in the inscriptive logic of the



of both the possibility and impossibility of a pure memorialization – of a perfect archive – its technological materialization collapses the *a priori/a posteriori* distinction. I.e., the historico-empirical threat to the archive *a posteriori* is determined in the material technologization of the (an)archive *a priori*. With such materialization the site of recording and over-writing is condensed into the same – *right on the same* – technological interface.

Further, and quite radically, by forging an (unnatural) paternal-filial bond between deconstruction and psychoanalysis across the materiality of technological systems of inscription – on, that is, what is finite and effaceable in the figures of such systems – Derrida finds in the material *a priori* a productive while still finite form of memorialization. Freud is remembered in the technologies of writing; Derrida, in turn, aligns deconstruction with psychoanalysis through those very technologies: together, bound by material and thus finite and limited bonds, deconstruction and psychoanalysis are written into an archive that is *a priori* threatened by anarchic over-writing. The morbidity and finitude of the paternal-filial bond notwithstanding, the question remains of what the character of the binding force is that holds deconstruction to psychoanalysis. This question is made all the more pressing by the fact that the archive *a posteriori* is subject to destruction because of the materiality of the technological (an)archive *a priori*. The answer to the question of the tie that binds deconstruction to psychoanalysis across the otherwise morbid and anarchic material technologies of writing is a basically (unnatural) form of descent borrowed from Freud's account of Moses as arch-patriarch of the Jewish people.

Before turning in conclusion to the (unnatural) bond Derrida forges between deconstruction and psychoanalysis across the materialized technologies of inscription, let us for now locate these matters within the textual scene formed between Derrida's London lecture and the Freud archive in which it was delivered. While we have been moving about at the extrinsic edges of this textual exchange – drawing from the Exergue to Derrida's lecture and Freud's *Note* essay – we are in fact at the very center of the archival and inscriptive matter named by «deconstruction and psychoanalysis». Recall Derrida's questions from *Archive Fever* with which we began, namely, whether, and, in what ways, the psyche is susceptible to transformation through new technological apparatuses. Derrida in 1994 cites such examples as microcomputing and electronization – to which we can add 30-years later such technologies as hand-held and hands-free mobile telecommunicating, so-called “big data” servers, and multi-device synchronous cloud storage. How has technologization in its various forms changed the archive? Such questions are particularly acute to ask of psychoanalysis because it frames “both” aspects of metaphorical relationality in *technical* terms – a “both” that really is not separate; a “both” of my own doing, above, in introducing an “and” where there is not one between the material specificity *and* the iterated differentiation of the writing-pad metaphor; in “both” cases, Freud's presentation of inscription/inscribed is technological.

Moreover, questions of the techno-scientific evolution of the structure of the psychic apparatus are not a matter of “extrinsic” detail to psychoanalysis. The idea that the psyche might be “technical[ly] model[led]”, a Freudian idea that connects Derrida's *Freud and the Scene of Writing* to *Archive Fever*, is not externally “added on” to psychoanalysis from a distinct and discrete theoretical position. Rather, these questions «concer[n] the essentials» of psychoanalysis. In asking them first in 1967 and again in 1994 Derrida raises these questions from the very center of Freud's technological metaphors – a center that Derrida identifies as deconstructive because it combines issues of death and finitude within the problematic of inscription and archivization. In 1967, what such questions show is the inscriptive character of both the model of the psyche and of the Pcpt.-system itself such that what Freud would treat “merely” as a metaphor redounds through the latter system. The mystic writing-pad, which Freud merely would have represent the psychic system,

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archive might, accordingly, be read as a corrective against Foucault's idea of an historical *a priori*: rather than “archive” naming the representative form of knowledge that prevails in the post-photography modern period, Derrida takes it to name something more basic – because technologically materialized – in the systems of inscription.

instead informs and is incorporated into it through the very process of it metaphorizing that system – an “incorporation” that Derrida suggests but does not develop in 1967 would have to consider the materialization of the inscriptive supplement. Such a materialization would articulate the morbid finitude of the Pcpt.-Cs.-Ucs.-system; death and finitude are bound to one another across the material technologies of archival inscription. Derrida’s reading of the same in 1994 reveals, further, a basic *a priori* anarchivism to the archive – and, in both cases this deconstructive impression of Freud emerges in reference to a *technologized* inscriptive system – a system made all the more impactful, all the more “significant” or “impressive”, in being realized materially<sup>42</sup>.

#### 4. (Un)natural Paternity: Derrida and Freud’s Moses

If the above reconstruction of Derrida’s 1994 London lecture is viable, that is, if we have rightly read *Archive Fever* as an inheritance of *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, then in turn we should take Derrida’s opening questions in the lecture about the techno-scientific developments of the psychic apparatus not to be about the neuro-physiology of changed thought-patterns forged by our using ever more – and ever different – technological interfaces. To proceed in this way would be to “naturalize”, in Derrida’s terms, the relation between the intra- and extra-psychic. The assumption made in such scientific modeling is that the systems and orders of virtual data directly impact our neural pathways and synapses. To proceed in this manner is to abandon Derrida’s insight into the technological character of tropic relations in inscriptive/inscribed systems – even after such tropism has given way to materialized systems of technological inscription.

Instead, and following Freud’s early abandonment of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Derrida in 1994 encourages us to set aside the machine-neuron model of direct relation in order to allow the ambivalence of tropic – and, in particular, technologically tropic – relations between inscriptive systems to operate. Here is Derrida in the 1967 essay discussing Freud’s departure from the *Project* – a departure that anticipates the *Note on the Mystic Writing Pad* in its focus on figuration: «[W]hen [Freud] renounces neurology and anatomical localizations, it will be not in order to abandon his topographical preoccupations, but to transform them. Trace will become *gramme*»<sup>43</sup>. That Derrida in *Archive Fever* can in looking back to *Freud and the Scene of Writing* ask in quick succession whether new technologies “better represen[t]” or “affect differently” the psychic apparatus signals that he intends the relation between extra-psychic apparatus and psyche as already tropically figured to operate in unnatural, non-causal fashion. The extra-to-intra-psychic order has already been aligned differently; Freud’s tropism has rendered the relation asymmetrical. In abandoning the *Project*, Freud has disavowed his early scientism. Hence, Derrida in 1994 poses the “technological question” in terms of the possibility of better representations.

For similar reasons, in *Archive Fever* Derrida addresses Freud’s purported Lamarckian-naturalism in relating past to present psycho-social inscriptions. The case in point is *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) – one of the texts around which Derrida organizes *Archive Fever*. Briefly, in his last published work Freud advances two novel and interrelated theses. One is that Moses was not a Jew but an Egyptian. As a contemporary of Akhenaten, Moses’ monotheistic Judaism can, Freud argues, be seen as a development of pharaonic Atenism<sup>44</sup>. Circumcision, which is one of the points of refrain of Derrida’s «right on [à

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<sup>42</sup> In another regard, the historico-technical production of Freud’s metaphors also explains the acuteness of archive fever across the whole psychoanalytic field, that is, in «the private or public life of Freud, of his partners or his inheritors, sometimes also of his patients, of the personal or scientific exchanges, of the letters, deliberations, or politico-institutional deliberations, of the practices and of their rules» (Derrida, 1996, p. 16); further, in the occasion of Derrida’s 1994 lecture at the London Freud Museum and the effort of Yerushalmi to “decide” matters within the Freudian archive, etc.

<sup>43</sup> Derrida (2001), p. 258

<sup>44</sup> Freud (1955e), p. 24ff.

*même*]» phrase in the 1994 lecture<sup>45</sup>, is on Freud's reconstructed history not original to the Jews but «derived [...] from Egypt»<sup>46</sup>. Materially instantiating while also metaphorically reiterating the (an)archivism of systems of inscription, circumcision is for the (paternal-filial) Jew a writing of one's psycho-sociality right on [à *même*] what is effaced and removed. That Freud in *Moses and Monotheism* further effaces this inscriptive practice by locating it in an Egyptian supplement to ancient Jewish history repeats at a general level the specificity of the (an)archival a priori.

Freud's second novel thesis is that the Jews murdered Moses in the wilderness during the exodus from Egypt. On the basis of Sellin's findings in the prophetic literature<sup>47</sup>, and on scriptural evidence of the worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32: 1-35) and the Jews' desert "murmurings" against Moses (Numbers 16: 41), Freud explains the murder as a rejection of Jewish strictness in favor of the dissolute ways "of the flesh" of traditional Egyptian polytheism<sup>48</sup>. Subsequently, Judaism disappeared in practice from the near Middle East. A "latency period" ensues between the death of Moses and the «establishment of the new religion [of Judaism] at Kadesh», which Freud estimates to have lasted «two generations» or «perhaps even a century»<sup>49</sup>.

All of this is "still [just] history" – however tenuous its textual, archaeological and scriptural basis. What is needed, and what Freud is able to contribute to the ancient past of Judaism – and, in so contributing, claim that past *from* "traditional history" and *for* psychoanalysis – is insight into the "remarkable [*merkwürdig*]", the "impressive", fact that «the most powerful effects of the [Jewish] people's experience were to come to light only later»<sup>50</sup>. Succinctly, «[t]he remarkable fact [...] is [...] that these [ancient Mosaic] traditions, instead of becoming weaker with time, became more and more powerful in the course of centuries» despite going unpracticed in the interim<sup>51</sup>.

Where "traditional history" would predict the disappearance of a long-forsaken practice and belief, psychoanalysis discerns the opposite: «[T]he phenomenon of latency in the history of the Jewish religion [...] may be explained [...] by the circumstance that the facts and ideas which were intentionally disavowed by what may be called the official historians were in fact never lost»<sup>52</sup>. As in the forceful "return" of a repressed trace in the Ucs., the historical return of monotheism from the "remarkable" or "impressive" murder of its founder – its arch-patriarch – manifests in and as the force of faith in the later Jewish people. But, the inheritance of this past impression is not identifiable, strictly, as a "natural" relation *à la* Lamarckian biologism. The relation of the past mark of murder to the present impressiveness of the Jewish faith is, rather, (un)natural, i.e., residually tropic. As Derrida explains in the 1994 lecture:

[T]hese traces could well follow [...] quite complicated linguistic, cultural, individual relays, transiting through an archive [...] All that Freud says is that we are receptive to an analogy between two types of trans-generational memory or archive [i.e., between the biology of "inherit[ed] [...] acquired characters" and a "symbolic" relationality]<sup>53</sup>.

In light of the technological specification of the tropic relation between the intra- and extra-psychic – between the archive and its anarchic destruction – and, further, in light of the "singular" promise of the futurity of the archive, and, finally, in light of the "singular" monument of circumcision as writing «right on [à *même*]» the destroyed supplement, we

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<sup>45</sup> «[C]ircumcision [is] [a] very *singular* monument, it is also the document of an archive. In a reiterated manner, it leaves the trace of incision right on [à *même*] the skin» (Derrida, 1996, p. 20; emphasis added).

<sup>46</sup> Freud (1955e), pp. 26-27.

<sup>47</sup> Ivi, p. 36.

<sup>48</sup> Ivi, p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> Ivi, p. 39.

<sup>50</sup> Ivi, p. 62.

<sup>51</sup> Ivi, p. 69.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>53</sup> Derrida, 1996, p. 35.

can ask after the unnatural character of the relation Derrida, following Freud, here envisions. What significance do «complicated linguistic [...] relays» have in a relationality materialized in specific technologies? The latter, as I have shown, accent what is singular in inscriptive relations. Simply, technology materializes figures of inscription as well as the relationship between the inscriptive and inscribed moments of such a figure. Material technologies emphasize specific relational instances over further permutations of such relations. If we read this same singularizing tendency into the relationship between Moses the arch-patriarch and his Jewish descendants, though latent for countless generations, the inheritance is singular and direct because it is conveyed by material technologies of inscription, e.g., circumcision, Scripture, genealogies written into family Bibles, etc. If natural or scientific models of relationality emphasize sameness and singularity, then how can Derrida present Freud's – and, more problematically, his own – material technological account of inscriptive relationality as unnatural and non-scientific?

Aware, I think, of the challenge these considerations pose to his reading of Freud in *Archive Fever*, Derrida begins the lecture by generalizing as “science fiction” questions of the impact of technology on psychoanalysis<sup>54</sup>. In turn, throughout the middle sections of the lecture, and despite his claim not to be taking up this “science fiction[al]” question, Derrida tacks his lecture close to Yerushalmi's study of the Jewishness and the *scientificity* of psychoanalysis<sup>55</sup>. As noted above, the (an)archival supplement, once technologically materialized, condenses the two aspects of metaphoricity, i.e., its grammatical specificity and its open-ended iterability. In drawing together these aspects of tropic relationality, the material technological supplement brings the moments of the relation – an “original” inscription and its repetition – into (almost) absolute proximity with one another and subordinates pluralism and dissemination to singularity. Hence, the “singularity” and the «right on [à *même*]» of the (an)archive; hence, the (in)finitude of the promise and threat to lasting inscription; hence, archive fever. In sum, the *a prioricity* of the (an)archive as determined by the material technological supplement seems in important and not easily dismissible ways *like* the scientific equivalence and naturalistic directness of relationality that Derrida rejects in the name of Freud: an analogue that trends toward singularization through the materiality of archival, inscriptive technologies.

Derrida's “fictionalization” of the psychoanalytic scientific account of patriarchal-filial descent – Derrida begins the lecture with the reminder that *Moses and Monotheism* was a book «Freud himself wanted to present as a fiction»<sup>56</sup>; he ends the lecture with a Postscript on the fictional scientist Hanold from Jensen's *Gradiva*<sup>57</sup> – is a displacement but also an implicit appeal to the scientific tenor of Freud's reflections on inheritance. Further, by insisting on the “spectral” character of the absent patriarch, Derrida displaces and thus allows an (unnatural) paternal-filial bond to run through the lines of psychoanalytic descent – Derrida included, as a “friend” of psychoanalysis. In short, Derrida does not expressly consider the “science fiction” of the technological transformation of psychoanalytic models of (an)archival relationality – while returning to and repeating this theme throughout the lecture – so as to allow an (unnatural) line of descent to run from psychoanalysis to deconstruction. The emphasis we have found on “sameness” and “singularity” in relations figured as technical – and, materialized in and as technological apparatuses – might best be read as the terms in which an (unnatural) bond is formed between Freud and Derrida's respective theories of archival inscription: an (unnatural) bond that Derrida disavows in the name of the spectral father so as to allow it to operate speculatively between deconstruction and psychoanalysis<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> Ivi, p. 16.

<sup>55</sup> Ivi, p. 46ff.

<sup>56</sup> Ivi, p. 41.

<sup>57</sup> Ivi, p. 97ff.

<sup>58</sup> Ivi, p. 100.

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