



Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection *

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Abstract. Public and private organizations depend, for their disciplinary and surveillance power, on the creation and maintenance of records. Entire societies may be imprisoned in Foucauldian panopticism, a system of surveillance and power-knowledge, based on and practised by registration, filing, and records. Archives resemble temples as institutions of surveillance and power architecturally, but they also function as such, because the panoptical archive disciplines and controls through knowledge-power. Inside the archives, the rituals, surveillance, and discipline serve to maintain the power of the archives and the archivist. But the archives' power is (or should be) the citizen's power too. The violation of human rights is documented in the archives and the citizen who defends himself appeals to the archives. People value "storage" as a means to keep account of the present for the future. In order to be useable as instruments of empowerment and liberation, archives have to be secured as storage memory serving society's future functional memories.

Keywords: archives, human rights, knowledge-power, panopticism, surveillance

I repeat . . . that all power is a trust – that we are accountable for its exercise – that, from the people, and for the people, all springs, and all must exist.

Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881)

The Jedi archivist

In the recent movie, *Star Wars. Episode II. Attack of the Clones*, Madame Jocasta Nu is the Jedi Archivist. The Jedi Master Obi-Wan Kenobi is visiting the archives and trying to find a distant planetary system called Kamino, that does not seem to show on any of the archives' charts. Madame Jocasta Nu undertakes a search on his behalf, but she has to conclude:

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‘I hate to say it, but it looks like the system you’re searching for doesn’t exist.’

‘That’s impossible – perhaps the Archives are incomplete.’

‘The Archives are comprehensive and totally secure, my young Jedi,’ came the imposing response, the Archivist stepping back from her familiarity with Obi-Wan and assuming again the demeanor of archive kingdom ruler.

‘One thing you may be absolutely sure of: If an item does not appear in our records, it does not exist.’ The two stared at each other for a long moment, Obi-Wan taking note that there wasn’t the slightest tremor of doubt in Jocasta Nu’s declaration.¹

“Perhaps the Archives are incomplete?” Master Obi-Wan hardly dares to think this unthinkable thought. And Madame Jocasta Nu – tough as old boots and smart as a whip, according to the filmscript² – reacts sharply when so challenged. Each in their own way expresses the conviction that Archives are comprehensive and totally secure. Jocasta Nu goes even further and stresses the power of the archives: if an item does not appear in our records, it does not exist!

Is this an overestimation, typical for the dedicated professional who is so entirely taken up by her own world that external reality is rated lower than its internal representation? Jocasta Nu’s words are like the ancient adage: *Quod non est in actis, non est in mundo* – What is not in the records does not exist.³ Public and private agents do not merely observe and describe reality; they shape people, events, and the environment into entities that will fit their categorizations and that are recordable. This social reification entails that there are virtually no other facts than those that are contained in records.⁴

Records are not only a reflection of realities as perceived by the “archiver.” They constitute these realities. And they exclude other realities. Elsewhere

¹ Robert A. Salvatore, *Star Wars. Episode II. Attack of the Clones*, based on the story by George Lucas and the screenplay by George Lucas and Jonathan Hales (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), pp. 155–160, here 160.

² <http://www.sithclan.net/episode2/scriptEP2.doc>

³ Eric Ketelaar, “Archivalisation and Archiving”, *Archives and Manuscripts* 27 (May 1999): 54–61, quote on 57.

⁴ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 82–83; Alain Desrosières, “How to Make Things which Hold Together: Social Science, Statistics and the State”, in P. Wagner, B. Wittrock and R. Whitley (eds.), *Discourses on Society: The Shaping of the Social Sciences Disciplines, Sociology of Sciences Yearbook* 15 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), p. 208; Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out. Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1999).

I have used the example of the photograph that is taken of your family: it makes a record of a group, but it also occasions it. A photograph is not just a recording: it constitutes the event. Just think of the famous pictures of the flag raising in 1945 at Iwo Jima and on the Berlin Reichstag. “The archivization produces as much as it records the event.”⁵ If this is so, then there cannot be a reason to deny the existence of the event – as Jocaste Nu does – simply because it has not been archived. On the contrary, by examining the process of archivalization (the process of the myriad of choices that precede archiving and shape it), we may discover the values that infused the creation of the record. Those values in turn empower the record, and help give it context and meaning.

Jocasta Nu suggests that the archived reality is part of the record. At the same time, we have to realize that the reality that has not been archived determines the record as well. What has been excluded from the record determines its meaning as much as what was included. They are both part of the provenance, in the sense recently reformulated by Tom Nesmith, in that they are part “of the social and technical processes of the records’ inscription, transmission, contextualization, and interpretation which account for its [the record’s] existence, characteristics, and continuing history.”⁶

There is something else that strikes us when watching *Star Wars*. Obi-Wan is trying to locate the planet system Kamino by visiting the Jedi Archives. Why does he not look it up at home? (Do these philosopher-mystic Jedi warriors have homes?) That is what we do today on earth: we sit behind the computer and use one or more search engines. One of those search engines – on Starwars.com – is even called “Ask JC” – Ask Jocasta. But Obi-Wan does not use “Ask JC,” but rather asks the real Jocasta – despite the much greater information technology advances of his era compared to ours. He takes the trouble to go to the archives in the temple (I will come back to the temple at a later stage) to explain his problem to the Jedi Archivist. With all his powers of mystical insight into The Force, Obi-Wan is powerless when seeking information. Although Jocasta Nu does not appear to be the most helpful of reference archivists, she evidently is the necessary intermediary between brain and source. Archives are complete and comprehensive, secure and reliable, but to release their power, they need an archivist. Is such mediation the power of the archivist? What other powers may the archivist have?⁷

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 17.

⁶ Tom Nesmith, “Still Fuzzy, But More Accurate: Some Thoughts on the ‘Ghosts’ of Archival Theory”, *Archivaria* 47 (Spring 1999): 146.

⁷ Francis X. Blouin, “Archivists, Mediation, and Constructs of Social Memory”, *Archival Issues* 24(2) (1999): 101–112; Compare also two papers presented in the seminar “Archives, Documentation and the Institutions of Social Memory,” organized by the Bentley Historical

“All Power is a Trust”

Government is bound by the social contract to be accountable to the people who give it power to rule, as Disraeli remarked in the opening quotation. The most recent archives law – the *Australian Territory Records Act* of 2002 – mentions as its first purpose: “to encourage open and accountable government by ensuring that Territory records are made, managed and, if appropriate, preserved in accessible form.” Openness as a prerequisite for accountability. Or, as the European Parliament states

Openness enables citizens to participate more closely in the decision-making process and guarantees that the administration enjoys greater legitimacy and is more effective and more accountable to the citizen in a democratic system.⁸

This is as it should be: open and accountable government, with reliable records, empowering vigilant citizens to exercise their civil rights: “Archives of the people, by the people, for the people.”⁹ Unfortunately, however, reality is often quite different. Records are, indeed, both “enablers of democratic empowerment” and “instruments of oppression and domination,” as Adrian Cunningham suggests.¹⁰

Nowhere is this double-edged power of archives shown more poignantly than in oppressive societies where a

huge bureaucracy, which reached into almost every aspect of citizen’s lives, generated a formidable memory resource. Control over racial classification, employment, movement, association, purchase of property, recreation, and so on, all were documented by thousands of government offices. This was supplemented by the record of surveillance activities by the security police and numerous other state intelligence bodies, as

Library and the International Institute of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2000–2001: Nancy Bartlett, “Past Imperfect (*l'imparfait*): Mediating Meaning in the Archives”; and Kathy Marquis, “From Dragons at the Gate to Research Partners: The Reference Archivist as Mediator”.

⁸ “Regulation (EC) nr. 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council on 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents,” *Official Journal of the European Communities* L 145/43, also available at: www.privacyinternational.org/issues/foia/eu-foi-reg-501.pdf.

⁹ Eric Ketelaar, “Archives of the People, By the People, For the People”, *S.A. Argiefblad/S.A. Archives Journal* 34 (1992): 5–16, reproduced in Eric Ketelaar, *The Archival Image. Collected Essays* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), pp. 15–26.

¹⁰ Adrian Cunningham, “The Soul and Conscience of the Archivist: Meditations on Power, Passion and Positivism in a Crusading Profession”, *Argiefnuus/Archives News* 43(4) (June 2001): 167–177, here 173.

well as by large quantities of records confiscated from individuals and organisations. . . .¹¹

In these terms Verne Harris describes South Africa under Apartheid. But it might also have been the description of the German Democratic Republic with its Stasi files, or the Soviet Union with its KGB archive, or Cambodia with the Pol Pot archives, or Nazi-Germany, or too many other cases.¹²

Oppression through records

In Auschwitz, Dachau, and most other concentration camps, the *Arbeitseinsatz* (Labour Assignment Office) was crammed with IBM sorters, tabulators, and printers. The office “tabulated not only work assignments, but also the camp hospital index and the general death and inmate statistics.”¹³ Edwin Black’s recent book shows how state agencies and private business co-operated in carrying out oppression through records. Like other totalitarian regimes, the Nazis were obsessed by registering, counting, making lists, and censuses. Thousands of people were involved in the *restlose Erfassung* – the term means “total registering,” but also has the connotation of all-embracing seizure.¹⁴ And seized they were, the Jews, the gypsies, the mentally-ill, the handicapped. The German census of 1939 supplied the data for the *Volkstumskartei*, the “Registry of National Character,” which captured Jews and all other people in the German Reich who were considered not to belong to the German *Volk*. Keeping this registry up-to-date, and perfecting it, was the main task of the Bureau for Publications of the SS Security Office, the *Sicherheitsdienst*. And where else could such a registration bureau be better located than in the Archives? Indeed, Johannes Papritz, Director at the Prussian State Archives in Berlin Dahlem, was in charge of the registry.¹⁵ The pinnacle of European archival theory and methodology at the time was the very same archive. It was in these Prussian State Archives that the principle of provenance was codified and adopted in 1881. And it was in these archives that Ernst Posner worked until the November 1938 program. He then found

¹¹ Verne Harris, *Exploring Archives: An Introduction to Archival Ideas and Practice in South Africa* (Pretoria: National Archives, 2000), p. 8; Verne Harris, “The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa”, *Archival Science* 2 (2002), forthcoming.

¹² Antonio González Quintana, “Archives of the Security Services of Former Repressive Regimes”, *Janus* (1998.2): 7–25.

¹³ Edwin Black, *IBM and the Holocaust* (New York: Crown, 2001), p. 352.

¹⁴ Götz Aly and Karl Heinz Roth, *Die restlose Erfassung. Volkszählen, Identifizieren, Aussondern im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000) (original edition: Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1964); Carl J. Couch, *Information Technologies and Social Orders* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 90–92.

¹⁵ Aly and Roth, *Die restlose Erfassung*, p. 95.

a new home in the United States where he educated generations of American archivists. Posner, by the way, stressed the power of records when he stated in 1939 that “in the last analysis, the overwhelming success of the Germans was attributable to the fact that they had entered the war with a better filing system.”¹⁶ After the war, Papritz, too, became an archival educator. As head of the Marburg Archives School, he taught archivistics for twenty years, his Nazi past being a closed book – which holds good for most of his generation of archivists.¹⁷

The Prussian State Archives not only managed the deadly census bureau; they also did “a proper archival job” in collecting all the Judaica kept in the different German archives. A proper job? “Archival memory became in this way an instrument in the National Socialist programme for annihilation of European Jewry,” wrote Wolfgang Ernst recently in his article on “the archives as ROM and its political instrumentalization under National Socialism.”¹⁸

In all totalitarian systems – public and private – records are used as instruments of power, of extreme surveillance, oppression, torture, murder. The records themselves are dumb, but without them the oppressor is powerless. However, in the hands of *Schreibtischmörder* (desktop murderers) such as Adolf Eichmann, the files and registers gain fearful power.

Surveillance and power

Is this only the case in totalitarian systems? “There is no political power without control of the archives,” Derrida writes.¹⁹ In fact, there is no lasting power of any kind without the legitimizing role of the archive. The power of archives is as old as the concept of archives. Indeed, the word derives from the Greek *archè*, meaning power or government. Governing the Greek *polis*, or city, or state, both for its internal organization and for its disciplinary and surveillance power, depends on the creation and maintenance of records.²⁰

¹⁶ Ken Munden (ed.), *Archives and the Public Interest. Selected Essays by Ernst Posner* (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1967), p. 87.

¹⁷ Torsten Musial, *Staatsarchive im Dritten Reich. Zur Geschichte des staatlichen Archivwesens in Deutschland 1933–1945* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1996). See also Eric Ketelaar, “Archivistics Research Saving the Profession”, *American Archivist* 63 (2000): 322–340, here 331.

¹⁸ Wolfgang Ernst, “Archival Action: The Archives as ROM and its Political Instrumentalization under National Socialism”, *History of the Human Sciences* 12(2) (May 1999): 13–34, here 25.

¹⁹ Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 4.

²⁰ Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence. Volume Two of A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), pp. 172–192; Anthony

In the eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham designed a panopticon, a prison where the inmates were kept under constant surveillance (pan-optical) by guards in a central control tower, who could not be seen by the prisoners.²¹ Bentham believed the power of the system to be that it not only locked up prisoners in their cells, but, more so, by the prisoners' self-consciousness of knowing that they were constantly being watched and guarded. Real panopticons have seldom been built – although a famous one was constructed in Tasmania for hardened exiles. In my country, there are a few nineteenth-century dome-shaped prisons that strongly resemble Bentham's panopticon.²² Yet the concept of the panoptical building inspired not only the architecture of prisons, but of libraries too. The best known example is the panoptical reading room of the British Museum (1854), which expressed the power of a comprehensive and well-ordered system of knowledge resting at the heart of the then-greatest empire in the world, to be consulted under the strictest surveillance and discipline.²³

Apart from prisoners being locked up in their prison, society itself often became imprisoned. In the eighteenth century, for example, the French introduced the police state with the *lettres de cachet* (in other words: records) that once issued by royal edit confined the subject to house arrest or worse.²⁴ The records were as powerful as the prison. Therefore, the people storming the Bastille on 14 July 1789 cried, according to Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (book 2, chapter 21),

Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Houndmills and London: Macmillan Press, 1995), pp. 174–176; Christopher Dandeker, *Surveillance, Power and Modernity. Bureaucracy and Discipline from 1700 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); David Lyon, *The Electronic Eye. The Rise of Surveillance Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1975); Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 89–91.

²² Richard F. Hamilton, *The Social Misconstruction of Reality. Validity and Verification in the Scholarly Community* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 175–81.

²³ George F. Barwick, *The Reading Room of the British Museum* (London, 1929), and Philip R. Harris, *The Reading Room* (British Library, London, 1979), quoted by Jo Tollebeek, “Het Archief: de panoptische utopie van de historicus”, in Theo Thomassen, Bert Looper and Jaap Kloosterman (eds.), *Toegang. Ontwikkelingen in de ontsluiting van archieven. Jaarboek 2001 Stichting Archiefpublicaties* ('s-Gravenhage: Stichting Archiefpublicaties, 2001), pp. 76–91, here 88.

²⁴ Wolfgang Ernst, *Das Rumoren der Archive. Ordnung aus Unordnung* (Berlin: Merve Verlag, 2002), pp. 22–23, 78–79; Arlette Farge and Michel Foucault, *Le désordre des familles. Lettres de cachet des archives de la Bastille* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).

The Prisoners!
 The Records!
 The secret cells!
 The instruments of torture!
 The Prisoners!

The prisoners were freed, the Bastille prison with its dark cells and instruments of torture was demolished, the records were liberated from tyrannical control! Nearly two centuries later, their power was released anew by Michel Foucault and Arlette Farge's study devoted to the *lettres de cachet* in the archives of the Bastille prison.

Entire societies may be imprisoned in what Foucault calls panopticism, regimes where power rests on supervision and examination that entail a knowledge concerning those who are supervised: Foucault's knowledge-power.²⁵ Big Brother is watching you, not by keeping his eyes continually fixed on you necessarily, but primarily by making and ever checking your file. And there is not one Big Brother, but a network of governmental and corporate Big Brothers. Documentary surveillance to discipline citizens is not only a tool of public government, however.²⁶ Every religious, economic, or social organization is dependent upon administrative power, to keep track of what the organization is doing in relation to its members, workers, and clients. Consequently, they also survey how people behave. Oscar Gandy uses the term "the panoptic sort" to denote the system of disciplinary surveillance, using a number of technologies, involving collecting and sharing of information about citizens, employees, and consumers – information which is used to coordinate and control access to products and services in daily life.²⁷ Such "womb-to-tomb surveillance" has been called the "record-prison," as effective as the panopticon:²⁸ "Files of files can be generated and this process can be continued until a few men consider millions as if they were in the palms of their hands," writes Bruno Latour,²⁹ describing this system of

²⁵ Michel Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms", in James D. Faubion (ed.), *Michel Foucault. Power*, Volume 3 (London: Penguin Books, 2002), pp. 58–59.

²⁶ Dandeker, *Surveillance, Power and Modernity*, pp. 150–192; Oscar H. Gandy Jr., *The Panoptic Sort. A Political Economy of Personal Information* (Boulder, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 60–122.

²⁷ Gandy, *The Panoptic Sort*, pp. 1, 15; Poster, *The Mode of Information*, pp. 91–98.

²⁸ Arthur R. Miller, *The Assault on Privacy: Computers, Databanks, and Dossiers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971), quoted by Thomas S. McCoy, "Surveillance, Privacy and Power: Information Trumps Knowledge", *Communications* 16 (1991): 33–47, here 35.

²⁹ Bruno Latour, "Visualization and Cognition: Thinking with Eyes and Hands", *Knowledge and Society* 6 (1986): 28. I thank Margaret Hedstrom for drawing my attention to this article.

surveillance and power-knowledge, based on and practised by registration, filing, and records.

Records, then, may be instruments of power, but, paradoxically, the same records can also become instruments of empowerment and liberation, salvation and freedom. The Nazis' obsession with recording and listing also made them receptive to the liberating effect of lists, as everyone knows who has seen *Schindler's List*. The detailed record-keeping system of the Nazis still forms an excellent source for restitution and reparation. On-going restitution now, a half-century later, to the rightful owners or their children of works of art, diamonds, gold, and other Holocaust assets is only possible by using the records made by German institutions.³⁰ In the same way, the records of government institutions and church missionary societies continually supply the clues for many Aboriginal people in Australia (and elsewhere) to reunite with their families. Sometimes the log books of cattle or sheep stations provided references needed to link an individual to his or her parents.³¹

Records in our surveillance society reveal as much about the administering as about the administered. That is why it is so difficult to keep the right balance between, on the one hand, the requirement to destroy personal data when they have served their primary purpose, including that of serving the legal rights of the data subjects, and, on the other hand, the possibility that the files might get a new meaning and purpose in the future. Many of the files created during and after the Second World War, that are now being used in the processes of restitution of and compensation for Holocaust assets, should have been destroyed, according to both the criteria of the European Data Protection directive³² and most professionally accepted criteria for archival appraisal. One of the lessons learned is that files created under unprecedented circumstances, or in an extraordinary era – during or after war, revolution, natural or man-made disasters, political or economic crises, etc. – have to be appraised differently from those created in the course of “normal” human business.

³⁰ Eric Ketelaar, “Understanding Archives of the People, by the People, and for the People”, in J.D. Bindenagel (ed.), *Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets Proceedings* (Washington D.C., 1999), pp. 749–761.

³¹ Rowena MacDonald, *Between Two Worlds. The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part Descent in the Northern Territory* (Alice Springs: IAD Press, 1995), pp. 72–73.

³² “Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data,” *Official Journal of the European Communities* L 281/31, also available at: www.privacy.org/pi/intl_orgs/ec/eudp.html.

Saving archives

Archives can sometimes also be sanctuaries. Because the Nazi Nuremberg Laws declared everyone to be a full Jew who had four Jewish grandparents, a life could be saved if a person could prove that one of the grandparents was non-Jewish. During the German occupation of The Netherlands, several archivists were involved in forging seventeenth- and eighteenth-century registers of marriage. They faked a marriage between a forefather of a Jew with a Christian, thereby saving the lives of their descendants. After the war, these faked registers were replaced by the originals, which had been kept hidden – like the proverbial needle in a haystack – in the stacks, sometimes in the company of irreplaceable Jewish archives and Torah rolls.³³

Sometimes, quite unintentionally, archives may be safe havens. Vitaly Shentalinsky revealed how the KGB archives yielded literary treasures, which had been confiscated from their authors and kept in files as evidence of the writer's alleged treason. These files also contained the original literary texts written down during the interrogations in the Lubyanka headquarters of the KGB, such as Osip Mandelstam's autograph copy of his poem about Stalin ("The Kremlingrag dweller . . . Fat fingers as oily as maggots . . . And his large laughing cockroach eyes . . ."). The poem is annotated, "Appended to the record of O. Mandelstam's interrogation, 25 May 1934," and countersigned by the interrogator.³⁴

Human rights

Records act as instruments of power. Oppressed by power, but also countervailing that power, is the basic human veneration of human rights: the right to life, liberty, and security of person and property; freedom from slavery, torture, or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; and the freedom of any kind of discrimination, because, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms, all people are equal before the law. Ensuring and securing these human rights has nowhere been expressed more convincingly than in societies in transition from oppression to democracy. In most of the former communist countries, the new democratic parliaments have passed laws to compensate citizens for arbitrary and unlawful nationalization in the former communist regimes. This has led to thousands and thousands of people rushing to the state archives where they hope that the evidence they

³³ Frederick C.J. Ketelaar, "Qui desiderat pacem", *Nederlands Archievenblad*, 90 (1986): 97–102.

³⁴ Vitaly Shentalinsky, *The KGB's Literary Archive* (London: The Harvill Press, 1997), pp. 170–175.

needed would be kept.³⁵ People wrongly convicted under a totalitarian regime for crimes they never committed are regularly being rehabilitated on the basis of evidence in the archives of their former oppressor.³⁶

Classic human rights enshrine these rights in terms of the citizen and the state, under the rule of law. But private business enterprises, associations, churches, universities, and others also have to adhere to them. If human rights are violated, the citizen has to be able to defend him or herself. Here we see an essential connection between archives and human rights: the violation of these rights has been documented in the archives and citizens who defend themselves appeal to the archives.³⁷ The archives have a two-fold power: being evidence of oppression and containing evidence required to gain freedom, evidence of wrong-doing and evidence for undoing the wrong. This restraining and empowering power of the archives is an interesting complement of the social reification I mentioned earlier. Because the corollary of the assertion: “if it does not appear in our records, it does not exist,” is: “it appears in the records, therefore it exists.” If the fact of oppression appears in records originally inscribed for surveillance and tyranny, they can also be used for reclaiming human rights and regaining freedom.

The archival record, as John Fleckner said in his 1990 address as president of the Society of American Archivists,

is a bastion of a just society. In a just society, individual rights are not time-bound and past injustices are reversible. . . . On a larger scale – beyond the rights of individuals – the archival record serves all citizens as a check against a tyrannical government. We need look no further than the Watergate and Iran-Contra scandals to see that without the documentary record there could have been no calling to account, no investigation, no prosecution. And that record – the tapes, the documents, and all the rest – stands as witness in the future to those who would forget or rewrite that past. . . . The archival record assures our rights – as individuals and collectively – to our ownership of our history.³⁸

³⁵ Lajos Körmeny, “Historical Challenges and Archivist’s Responses, Hungary, 1945–2000”, *Archivum* 45 (2000): 41–53, here 49.

³⁶ Quintana, “Archives of the Security Services”, 13.

³⁷ Quintana, “Archives of the Security Services”, 10, calls this: the boomerang effect.

³⁸ John A. Fleckner, “‘Dear Mary Jane’: Some Reflections on Being an Archivist”, *American Archivist* 54 (Winter 1991): 8–13, reproduced in Randall C. Jimerson (ed.), *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2000), pp. 21–28, here 26.

Memories

Psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists often distinguish between two modes of external memory: primary and secondary memory, or living and historic memory, or, in yet other words, functional and storage memory.³⁹ The storage memory forms the perspective or background for the functional memory:

It holds additional knowledge which as memory of memories can ensure that really existing functional memories can be evaluated critically and, when necessary, be renewed or changed.⁴⁰

The ever-expanding storage memory keeps more information and different information that may be taken out by functional memory and restructured and recomposed into stories, into meaning. Storage memory can be regarded as a reservoir for future functional memories, and as a corrective for current functional memories. These concepts are from Aleida Assmann, a literary theorist, not a records specialist, just as most writers about collective memory are not archivists – our discipline is sadly disconnected from the current, interdisciplinary discourse on collective memory.⁴¹ Assmann remarks that archives

can be organised as functional or as storage memory. The former contains those documents and records that safeguard the legitimizing basis of existing power relations, the latter stores potential sources forming the basis of the historical knowledge of a culture.⁴²

I presume that her words express what we mean by the distinction between records in the first three dimensions of the Australian records continuum as

³⁹ Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München: C.H. Beck, 1999), pp. 130–142; Eric Ketelaar, “The Archive as a Time Machine. Closing Speech of the DLM-Forum 2002, Barcelona, 8 May 2002”, forthcoming in *INSAR Supplement*, VI (2002).

⁴⁰ Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 136: “Es hält ein Zusatzwissen bereit, welches als Gedächtnis der Gedächtnisse dafür sorgen kann, daß real existierende Funktionsgedächtnisse kritisch relativiert und gegebenenfalls erneuert oder verändert werden können.” In so far Assmann implies that the storage memory is unalterable, I do not agree. The renewal and change of the functional memory changes the storage memory too. See Eric Ketelaar, “Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives”, *Archival Science* 1 (2001): 143–155.

⁴¹ Sue McKemmish, “Placing Records Continuum Theory and Practice”, *Archival Science* 1 (2001): 333–359, here 345.

⁴² Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 409: “Archive können sowohl als Funktions- wie als Speichergedächtnis organisiert sein; im einen Falle enthalten sie jene Dokumente und Beweismstücke, die die Legitimationsgrundlage bestehender Machtverhältnisse absichern, im anderen Falle bergen sie potentielle Quellen, die die Grundlage des historischen Wissens einer Kultur ausmachen.”

process-bound information serving as evidence of transactions, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, records in the pluralizing fourth dimension serving as historical evidence for collective and societal memory. I propose to revalue the nexus between archives and storage, a link that seems to have grown disreputable, a victim of the custodial versus non-custodial debate. Archivists often complain that “storage” and “custody” have such passive meanings, as if conserving is what archiving is all about. However, as Bill Taylor said,

The ‘attic image of archives’ is not at all bad – things are usually stored there because they no longer have current administrative use but are recognised as having continuing value.⁴³

Query any search engine for the term “archives” and it will yield millions of hits. Most of them are not archives or records in the archivist’s terminology, but a back-up that saves what may be of value in future: information put in storage to be retrieved when you need it. Apparently, people value “storage” as a means to keep an account of the present for the future. Archiving is not about history looking backward, but about storing and securing for the future. Archiving – all the activities from creation and management to the use of records and archives – has always been directed towards transmitting human activity and experience through time and, secondly, through space. A storage memory allows information to be used by functional memories at any later point in time. It is the quality of the archive as a time machine.⁴⁴ Archives can, however, only have the power of a time machine if the information has been stored some way, some where.

Archival temples

Storage in a temple, perhaps, as in the Jedi temple? Temples and churches convey by their architecture the idea of surveillance and power. The architecture and the ceremonies serve to initiate the novice, they instil submissive awe and enforce silent obedience. In our world, many archives are temples as well. Some are built as a classical temple, as the Archivo General de la Nacion of El Salvador and the National Archives of the United States. When the cornerstone in Washington was laid on 20 February 1933, President Hoover boasted: “This temple of history will appropriately be one of the most beautiful buildings in America, an expression of the American soul. It

⁴³ Michael Piggott and Colleen McEwen (eds.), *Archivists. The Image and Future of the Profession* (Canberra: Australian Society of Archivists, 1996), pp. 213–214.

⁴⁴ Ketelaar, “The Archive as a Time Machine”.

will be one of the most durable, an expression of the American character.”⁴⁵ Modern French archival buildings have been likened to cathedrals;⁴⁶ the Public Record Office at Chancery Lane in London was one of the many archives with the appearance of a church. Places not only of worship, but also of safe-keeping records. The War Memorial in Canberra combined these two functions from the very beginning. In the ancient world and in medieval times, the treasury in temples and churches contained both the treasures and the records, safely stored and hidden from the strangers’ gaze.⁴⁷ Whatever their architecture, archives serve symbolically as temples shielding an idol from the gaze of the uninitiated, guarding the treasures as a monopoly for the priesthood, exercising surveillance over those who are admitted.

The panoptical archive

Earlier I referred to Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon and Michel Foucault’s panopticism. The power of the archive is derived from its panoptical visualization, seeing while unseen, because all records “can be superimposed, reshuffled, recombined, and summarized, and that totally new phenomena emerge, hidden from the other people from whom all these inscriptions have been exacted,” as Latour writes.⁴⁸ The panoptical archive disciplines and controls through knowledge-power. This knowledge is embedded in the records, their content, form, structure, and context. Moreover the physical ordering of the archives in the paper world and the logical ordering of digital archives express knowledge-power. Archival institutions, unlike libraries, do not publicly display their holdings to offer a panoptic view to their clients.⁴⁹ But they do display the knowledge-power of the finding aids, as representation of what the public may not see openly, but may expect to find behind the closed doors of the prison-like repository.

The search room in the archives is a panopticon as well. Researchers are called “patrons,” but are subjected to a host of policing measures. They have

⁴⁵ Herman J. Viola, *The National Archives of the United States* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984), p. 46.

⁴⁶ Danièle Neirinck, “Les bâtiments d’archives”, in Jean Favier and Danièle Neirinck (eds.), *La pratique archivistique française* (Paris: Archives Nationales, 1993), p. 536.

⁴⁷ Ernst Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1972; reprinted: Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2002); Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record. England 1066–1307*, 2nd edn. (Oxford and Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 154–157, 164.

⁴⁸ Latour, “Visualization and Cognition”, 29.

⁴⁹ With at least one exception: the public entering the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas, sees – behind a glass wall, high up in the entrance hall – rows of archival boxes with the gold embossed presidential seal. They are – so I was told – empty, but they nevertheless give the impression that one beholds the presidential archives.

to register and sign a statement subjecting them to the rules of the institution; they have to leave their bags and personal belongings behind before entering the search room; any papers they carry into and out of the search room are checked – sometimes by uniformed security personnel, as in the United States' National Archives. In the search room, researchers have to keep silent, and they are under constant supervision. Some archives employ for this surveillance uniformed guards and closed circuit television cameras (as in the National Archives of Canada and the United Kingdom's Public Record Office): the true panoptical seeing without being seen. In most search rooms, the archivist on duty is seated on an elevated platform, from which he or she has a panoptic view, global and individualizing, of each and every "inmate" of the search room. Every user is enveloped in the observation by the other users and by the archives personnel. Nobody escapes this watch or the exacting ritualization of the search room.⁵⁰ The layout and furniture of the room provide for a maximum of surveillance, and a minimum of privacy for the researchers. They are disciplined as children in a classroom; in some archives, they are even deprived of their own writing paper and pen, required to use only the paper and pencils provided by the institution.

Researchers want to consult documents: that is the sole purpose of the visit to the search room and their surrender to the power of the archives. They have a legal right to consult public archives, but that right is reconstructed inside the archives into a privilege, the granting of which has to be requested. In several countries, the researcher has to specify the reason for this request, once more allowing the archives to invade the researcher's private domain with penetrating questions. In Germany, the archives respond to the request by a formal "*Benutzungsgenehmigung*": a consent to use the archives, for the given reason only.

When finally the documents have arrived on the researcher's table, the user is further disciplined: documents are not to be touched with bare hands (white gloves are provided by the institution); only a limited amount of documents is allowed per retrieval or day; the making of photocopies by the researcher or the use a scanner is usually prohibited. And when the researcher is finished, (s)he may approach the archivist's desk to beg: "Please, Sir, I want some more."

To a great number of documents, access is restricted to protect the privacy of individuals, or the security of the State, or the fragility of the documents. If a researcher wants to consult these documents, he or she is submitted to

⁵⁰ Arlette Farge, *Le goût de l'archive* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989), pp. 66–67.

an even stricter disciplinary regime.⁵¹ That involves providing more details about what the researcher wants to achieve, signing more engagements, acquiescing to more restrictions, accepting more close surveillance (sometimes involving “solitary confinement” in a special “study cell”), submitting his notes and drafts to the archivist for censorship – or, even further, not being allowed to take notes or to make copies of the sensitive records at all. Here, then, the archivist is indeed mediating, but as the Jedi Archivist, as archive kingdom ruler.

Any archivist will immediately object that all these measures are in the interest of the security and integrity of the archival documents, the security and integrity of the State, and ultimately in the best interest of the researcher who otherwise would get no access at all. Many researchers would even agree – if they do not, they risk their peers’ ostracism and the archivists’ banishment.

I contend though that these noble arguments – inscribed in the archivists’ code of ethics – are to a large extent rationalizations of appropriation and power.⁵² There are deeply hidden reasons – very seldom talked about, let alone written about, except in the fictional world of archives. Martha Cooley’s fictional archivist admits “As an archivist I have power over other people. I control access to materials they desire. Of course this power has limits . . . A good archivist serves the reader best by maintaining . . . a balance between empathy and distance.”⁵³ The surveillance and discipline in archives are ingrained in the archivists’ professional distrust of anyone other than the archivist using the archives.⁵⁴ The distrust is the psychotic shield to protect

⁵¹ Sonia Combe, “Reason and Unreason in Today’s French Historical Research”, *Telos* 108 (Summer 1996): 149–164; Marcel Lajeunesse and François Gravel, “L’utilisation des archives pour la défense et la promotion des droits du citoyen”, *Archivum* 45 (2000): 177–178.

⁵² Michel Foucault, “Government Rationality: An Introduction” [original French version published in *Esprit* 371 (May 1968): 850–874], in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 60.

⁵³ Martha Cooley, *The Archivist* (Boston etc.: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), p. 246. On some of the other implications of this novel see Verne Harris, “Knowing Right from Wrong: The Archivist And the Protection of People’s Rights”, in Verne Harris (ed.), *Archives and the Protection of People’s Rights*. Proceedings of the XVth General Biennial Conference of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, Zanzibar, 26–30 July 1999, pp. 15–22, reprinted in *Janus* (1999.1): 32–38, reproduced in Harris, *Exploring Archives*, pp. 66–76; Eric Ketelaar, “The Ethics of Preserving and Destroying Private Archives”, *Argiefnuus/Archives News* 43(4) (June 2001) [Festschrift Verne Harris]: 70–77.

⁵⁴ Nancy Bartlett, “The Healthy Distrust of the Archive’s Inhabitant”, paper of commentary remarks presented to the seminar “Archives, Documentation and the Institutions of Social Memory”, organized by the Bentley Historical Library and the International Institute of the

the fetish from being stained by the non-initiated.⁵⁵ The rituals, surveillance, and discipline serve to maintain the power of the archives and the archivist.

The power of the archivist

The panopticism of the search room corresponds to that of the files which the researcher is permitted to consult. While reading in the files what public and private authorities have observed, seen, heard, and recorded, the researcher himself or herself is observed in the searchroom, recording and being recorded, taking notes and being noted. It is the archivist who rules the archive kingdom, just as the Jedi Archivist does. The archivist is the link between these different panoptical systems and fulfils a role in these different systems. As priest, as guard, as guardian? As accomplice of oppression and torture? As friend of liberation and justice? As warden of a temple sanctuary or a stark prison? As purveyor or with-holder of knowledge-power? Maybe each and every of these roles.

Is that the final verdict? No: the panoptical archive has more than one face, like the surveillance society of which the archive is both a tool and a reflection. That society “may be viewed either from the perspective of social control or from that of social participation,” according to David Lyon.⁵⁶ Archives are places of surveillance, policy, and power, but the power is the citizen’s power too. Surveillance, Lyon remarks, has a dual character: control and care, proscription and protection.⁵⁷ The citizen is also protected by the power of the archivist.

Verne Harris refers to the archontic power of the archivist: the power to consign, the power over the place of consignment.⁵⁸ Consignation is the expression used by Derrida, meaning not only, in the ordinary sense of the word, handing over for custody, to entrust or commit to another’s charge or care (Oxford English Dictionary – OED), but also gathering together, assembling parts to form a whole “in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration.”⁵⁹ It is, in other words, the power to ensure that “The Archives are comprehensive and totally secure.” With these words, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 13 September 2000. It was in fact this paper which caused me to rethink the way archivists are using instruments of surveillance and discipline.

⁵⁵ Helen Wood, “The Fetish of the Document: An Exploration of Attitudes Towards Archives”, in Margaret Procter and C.P. Lewis (eds.), *New Directions in Archival Research* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Centre for Archive Studies, 2000), pp. 20–48.

⁵⁶ Lyon, *The Electronic Eye*, p. 31.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

⁵⁸ Verne Harris, “Of Fragments, Fictions and Powers: Resisting Neat Theorising about ‘The Record’”, available at www.rmaa.com.au/events/natcon2001/papers

⁵⁹ Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 3.

the Jedi Archivist affirms her role in the Jedi society. But these words also express what I believe our society expects of archivists. “Secure” can mean (OED again) free from care, free from distrust, but also in safe custody – and finally confident in expectation, feeling certain of something in the future. And that finally is what society expects of archivists: that archives as storage memory are secured, and that archivists use their power for empowering, so that society can be confident of the future.