Seeing through the archival prism: A history of the representation of Muslims on Dutch television
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CHAPTER 1
The Archive is Alive. Seeing through the Archival Prism
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The status and the power of the archive derive from this entanglement of building and documents. The archive has neither status nor power without an architectural dimension, which encompasses the physical space of the site of the building, its motifs and columns, the arrangement of the rooms, the organization of the ‘files’, the labyrinth of corridors, and that degree of discipline, half-light and austerity that gives the place something of the nature of a temple and a cemetery [...].

Achille Mbembe (2002: 19)

Throughout the evening of 1 December 2006, the Netherlands Institute of Sound and Vision in Hilversum celebrated the opening of its new building and museum named The Experience. In attendance were an array of prominent Dutch citizens and dignitaries. Furthermore, Queen Beatrix was invited to festively inaugurate the new building by pushing a button and thereby symbolically activating the archival machinery. The ceremony was broadcast live on Dutch national television, followed by a two-hour compilation of archival material of memorable, remarkable and important moments in Dutch television history which alternated with interviews of public broadcasting luminaries. In every respect, the opening ceremony was designed to present the Institute of Sound and Vision and its impressive new building as a site of great national importance, as a symbolic space and physical repository of Dutch public memory and cultural heritage.

Figure 1: The building of Sound and Vision
Strikingly, the contrast between the new sanctuary of Sound and Vision and its previous accommodation could hardly be any greater. When I began this project, the archive of Sound and Vision was still housed in an inconspicuous building at an unremarkable location within Hilversum’s Media Park.\footnote{The Media Park is the area near the city of Hilversum where all Dutch public broadcasting organizations and facilities are based.} It is great understatement to say that the new building is now more present and visible in its physical environment. With its overwhelming magnitude and beauty, it reminds the viewer of a spectacular mausoleum. The building is prominently located at the entrance to the Media Park and cannot be overlooked or escape anyone’s attention. Its polished glass façade sparkles in sunlight and refracts a magical play of colours. 768 archival images have been applied in such a way that the glass façade architecture of the building makes visible what is stored inside.\footnote{Neutelings Riedijk Architecten was the architect of the building and Studio Drupsteen designed the glass-façade.} Thus, the outside of the building reveals, embodies and pays homage to what is preserved inside and thereby reiterates the stakes of this archive: not only preserving Dutch audiovisual heritage but also making it publically visible and accessible.

Clearly, it is not only the outside of the building that is designed to caress the eyes of its visitors and passersby. Entering the building is yet another powerful experience for the senses. In the central atrium, the transparency of the façade brings about an enchanting play of light and colour. The acoustics contribute to the serenity of the spatial ambience; all sounds are significantly muffled. The central atrium offers a canyon-like view of five subterranean floors, which house state-of-the-art archival vaults. On each level, squares have been excised from the grey wall, which descends to the bottom; through these squares, orange passageways leading to vaults can be seen. With time-codes displayed above them, these orange squares clearly resemble screens. While the outside of the building seems to symbolize the beating-heart of Dutch public broadcasting, the inside – pushing the bodily metaphor further – resembles a brain, with compartments where different parts of public memory are processed and stored. Unquestionably, the comparison of the archive with a memory machine is quite common, a metaphor that is frequently evoked when the ontology of the archive is at stake. The parallel between a brain and a building is not a new one either; it echoes the \textit{ars memoriae} of ancient Greek, whose mnemotechnics consisted of disclosing the inner space of memory by imagining memory as an outer space. Like a building with numerous rooms, through which one could walk in order to retrieve memories stored inside individual spaces.
Indeed, when I think of my own experience of doing research in the archive of Sound and Vision, it feels like I am wandering through the crypts and caverns of Dutch public memory, through a labyrinth of passages, each leading to different parts of the public imagination, and each space facilitating entry to forgotten
moments, most of which I have never experienced myself. Although my body does not move – only sitting in front of a television screen – the architecture of the building reinforces the experience of physically strolling through the realm of Dutch audiovisual heritage.

This brings me back to my epigraph, where political scientist Achille Mbembe rights that the architectural dimension of the archive provides it with a status similar to that of a cemetery and a temple. In many respects the archive of Sound and Vision also resembles a temple. The new building is clearly designed to be a reflection of the unique treasures that it holds. It figures the Institute of Sound and Vision as a site of remembrance; as a space of worship where the dead are extricated from oblivion. A temple however is more than a mere place where treasure, according to certain rituals, is safely stored and guarded. As archival scientist Eric Ketelaar (2002) argues, a temple is a building of the panoptic sort: “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 (233).” Ketelaar argues that archival institutions – like temples – shield their treasures from “the gaze of the uninitiated” and guard their treasures “as a monopoly of the priesthood”; exercising “surveillance over those who are admitted” (ibid: 234). The comparison of the new monumental building with a temple thus evokes issues such as surveillance, power and knowledge. Ketelaar writes that:

The panoptical archive disciplines and controls through power-knowledge. 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 power-knowledge (ibid: 234).

Many useful questions concerning the status of the audiovisual archive arise from taking a closer look at the new archival structure. Could the renewed visibility of Sound and Vision perhaps be hinting at more profound developments in contemporary society? Neither money nor pain has been spared in the creation of the new repository for the Dutch national television archive. Is this monumental building symptomatic of a growing interest in the audiovisual archive in contemporary media society? Within different domains of society, such as the humanities and the arts, an interest in the archive seems to have emerged. How can this archival impulse be explained? In what ways has the status of the archive in
today’s media society changed? What are the politics at stake in the archive? Furthermore, how can the relationship between archives and public memory be theorized?

In this chapter I use these questions as my point of departure for a theoretical exploration of the notion of the archive. Clearly, the archive is a fluid concept and can refer to numerous conceptualizations: from the actual space where records are kept, to the collection of documents itself, or to the more symbolic and abstract notion of the archive as a cultural form. It is not surprising then that the archive is truly a metaphor-machine. My aim here is to shed some light on how the concept of the archive has changed, by exploring some of the metaphors by which the archive has been conceived. I take a closer look at the “archival turn”—a term coined by anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler (2002)—that took place in the humanities and social sciences. The archive has become a major trope in many disciplines and seems to have been elevated to a new status—a true paradigm shift that was precipitated by postmodern scepticism and technological developments. I examine the current concerns of the politics of the archive and of the relationship between the archive and public memory. More specifically, I focus on the audiovisual archive and question the status of the archive in contemporary visual and digital culture. Defining the stakes of the archive will provide me with a theoretical framework that informs my research in the archive of Sound and Vision and which guides my analysis of its collection of archival material regarding Muslims and Islam in the Netherlands. This chapter reveals how I view my object of research through the prism of the archive.

1.1 From the Archive as a Mirror to the Archive as the Sliver of a Window

To begin this section by exploring a typical metaphor by which the archive has traditionally been conceived is more than a mere rhetorical device. In order to be able to fully grasp the paradigm shift that has recently swept through archival science, it is important to note that archival science is rooted in an era in which positivism held sway. A common and persistent metaphor by which the archival record has been traditionally conceived of in archival discourse, is the record as a mirror of historical reality; a metaphor that assumes that the archival record is a transparent reflection of an historical event and can provide an unproblematic means of access to the past. This notion of the archive is rooted in the nineteenth-
century paradigm of positivism, in which both archival science and history emerged as “objective sciences”.

This period was deeply marked by Enlightenment thinking and belief in progress and rationality. Cultural theorist Scott McQuire (1998) notes that people witnessed the birth of “a new historical consciousness” (122), that was attended with “a burgeoning interest in the document and the archive” (ibid) and that it was part of a broader shift: “Foucault suggests that ‘[…] at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the great upheaval that occurred in the Western episteme: it was discovered that there existed a historicity proper to nature […]’ (ibid).” In this new episteme, history became a “hard” science that was supposed to objectively describe the historical facts, or in Leopold von Ranke’s words, show “what actually happened” (ibid: 121-22). Ranke, often referred to as the father of modern historical scholarship, distinguished between primary and secondary sources, and rejected every form of historiography that was not based on primary sources (Juergens 2005: 4). Thus, the document, the record and the archive gained an important status, as it was now the task of the historian to reconstruct the past based on the archival record and the archive became a repository of historical truth. To borrow archival theorist Juergens’ words: a place that was visited by the historian as part of a rite de passage by which he was turned into a proper historian (Juergens 2005: 4). It was within this nineteenth-century scientific discourse that what came to be called “archival science” emerged, initially leaning heavily on the positivist epistemological framework of historiography (ibid). Finding historical truth was now the final goal both for the historian and archivist. Archival science was almost completely devoted to the arrangement and description of archival materials and was informed by assumptions rooted in positivism and Enlightenment thinking (ibid: 4-5). These assumptions were based on the conviction that the documents themselves were transparent, providing unproblematic access to the past, in which the role of the archivist was neutral and objective, and that one’s self-effacement assured that one’s position remained outside of power relationships. As archival scholar Tom Nesmith (2002) recapitulates:

Archivists not only attempt to acquire primary (or original) sources, or records, which are thus
thought to have special (even unique) integrity as means of access to the past, they believe
that providing information about the records’ origin and respecting the original order of their
creation are essential to ensure that archiving is a neutral means of communication of the
recorded past. [...] Although this approach has brought archivists as guardian and preserver
of records, it has also implied a rather passive, incidental role overall, as the records’ mere
recipient and keeper. In this role, archivists simply document or mirror the world around the
archives, and list, describe, copy, and retrieve the records and, thereby, the knowledge
already in them in a neutral, inconspicuous, and simply factual way (27).

It is hence then no coincidence, as archival theorist Verne Harris (2002) points out,
that the archive has been conceived of by the same metaphors by which knowledge
has been conceptualized in our western thinking; where knowledge is linked to sight
and ignorance to blindness (ibid. 75). Within this framework, as Harris writes, “what
we remember we keep in the light, what we forget is consigned to darkness. To
remember is to archive (ibid.)”. The archive clearly belongs to the realm of vision
and sight.

Although the ideology of the archive as a mirror of historical reality that
reflects its light, making information visible and accessible in a transparent and
unproblematic way, is still persistent, postmodern thinking has turned this classical
notion of the archive inside out and has deconstructed the idea of the archive as a
beacon of light and sight. Juergens writes that the archive as has been stripped of
its positivist certainties by philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida
and by an array of postmodern archival theorists (2005: 10). 19 The theoretical focus
has now moved away from the physical record towards the role of the archivist as an
active shaper of the document; in archival theorist Terry Cook’s (1997) words,
towards “[…] the creative act or authoring intent or functional context behind the
record (25).” Exemplary for this paradigm shift are the new metaphors that have
arisen in archival discourse, all of which disturb the notion of the archive as a mirror
of the past. Harris (2002b) invented a very powerful new trope: the archive as the
“sliver of a window”. Arguing against the notion that “archives, mirror-like, reflect
reality (136)”, Harris suggests that the relationship between an archive and reality

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19 See for a list of writings discussing postmodernism in archival theory: Nesmith, Tom. “Seeing
Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives”, in: The American
Joan M Schwartz. “Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival)
should be seen as partial: “To return to my ‘sliver of a window’ metaphor, the window is not only a medium through which light travels; it also reflects light, transposing images from ‘this side’ and disturbing images from ‘the other side’ (ibid).” Harris thus contends that archival documents reflect reality in a “deeply fractured and shifting way (ibid).”

Harris is surely not the only archival theorist who rejects the classical metaphor of the mirror, while still remaining within the discourse of light and vision. Although postmodern scepticism has questioned and criticized the concept of the archive as a site of neutral knowledge retrieval, this certainly does not mean that archival theory is now dominated by a nihilist vision of the relationship between the archive and (historical) truth. Today, the archive is still related to knowledge, although the theoretical focus has shifted to the idea that this knowledge is neither neutral nor innocent and is therefore partial and contested. Inspired by Dutch historian Niek van Sas, Ketelaar conceptualizes the implications of postmodernism for archival theory as “the multiplication of perspectives” when he writes that:

Archival researchers and archivists are exploring a multiplication of perspectives. They are learning (or relearning) from anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, cultural and literary theorists: to look up from the record and through the record, looking beyond – and questioning – its boundaries, in new perspectives seeing with the archive (to use Tom Nesmith’s magnificent expression), trying to read its tacit narratives of power and knowledge (132).

Shortly I return to Ketelaar’s ideas, but for now, I move from the new metaphor of the archive as the “sliver of a window” which indicates the recent paradigm shift in archival theory in general, to its more specific characteristics and features. Inspired by two of the most radical interrogators of classical notions of the archive, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, I now focus on issues surrounding the politics of the archive, and archives and (public) memory. Both issues feature quite prominently in their writing and are also important themes in my study. The fact that the classical notion of the archive is under siege from many directions cannot be denied. In the next section, I explore the work of a few theorists who have played a leading role in this battle.
1.2 The Politics of the Archive

It is hardly groundbreaking to claim that there is a “before Foucault” and an “after Foucault” in archival scholarship and theory. Foucault’s engagement with the archive has been extremely influential and his reworking of the notion of the archive has permanently destroyed the innocence of the archive. While one could say that Foucault’s early historical work has always been about the relationship between power and discursive formations in society that make knowledge possible, and that all this work is implicitly about the archive, it is in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969/1972) that he most explicitly re-conceptualizes the notion of the archive and theoretically presents his *archaeological* method of analysing discourse that underlies his other work. In the introduction, Foucault tells us that the main enterprise of his book is to define a method of historical analysis, in line with “the transformation that is taking place in the field of historical knowledge (17)”. Whereas history was traditionally aimed at “reconstitution, on the basis of what the documents say, and sometimes merely hint at, of the past from which they emanate […]” (7), history has now changed its position in relation to the document:

[...:] let us say that history, in its traditional form, undertook to ‘memorize’ the monuments of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which in silence say something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is what transforms documents into monuments. [....] it might be said [....] that in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology, to the intrinsic description of the monument. (7-8, emphasis in original)

Thus, Foucault maintains, history’s primary task is no longer the interpretation of documents, or the evaluation of documents in relation to “truth”, but the systematic and intrinsic description of documents and their interrelationships. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is devoted to exploring the many consequences of this new approach to the document and to theoretically elaborating on the method of archaeology, which seeks to examine the past on the level of discursive regimes.

In this Foucauldian method for the analysis of discourse, the archive is a key concept. In the section “The Statement and the Archive”, Foucault suggests we

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should not see the archive as a collection of separate documents that can be interpreted, but as “the general system of the formation and transformation of statements” (146). The archive is in Foucault’s thinking linked to the concept of the historical a priori, which is “a condition for reality of statements” (143). It is the historical a priori that provides a discursive formation with its unity: “the positivity of a discourse [...] characterizes its unity throughout time” (142). Foucault redefines the archive in terms of the historical a priori when he writes that:

The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass [...]; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations [...]. (146).

The archive is thus the law that defines the possible ways of speaking, the “set of rules which at a given period and for a given society define the limits and forms of the sayable [...]” (1978/1991: 59). The method that Foucault has coined archaeology describes “discourses as practices specified in the element of the archive” (1972/2006: 148). With Foucault, the archive no longer is a source of historical knowledge, a site of knowledge retrieval, but a site of knowledge production that defines the conditions of possibility that shape what stories can be told.

Foucault’s inquiry into the archive has inspired many researchers working in the humanities and social sciences. His scrutiny of the positivist innocence of the archive has been an important factor in what Laura Ann Stoler has coined as the “archival turn” (Stoler 2002). The editors of Refiguring the Archive (2002) state that Foucault’s influence is particularly strong in their proposition “that archives are often both documents of exclusion and monuments to particular configurations of power”(9). In her contribution to this book Stoler, who works on colonial archives, argues that it is exactly this discovery of the politics of the archive that characterizes the “archival turn”: “From whichever vantage point – and there are more than these – the “archival turn” registers a rethinking of the materiality and imaginary of collections and what kind of truth-claims lie in documentation” (87). For Stoler, the insistence on the link between what counts as knowledge and who has power, is what the many participants in the archival turn have in common.

Another frequently quoted philosopher by participants in this archival turn is Jacques Derrida, whose statement “there is no power without control of the archive”
(1995: 4) has become legendary in archival discourse. In his Archive Fever (1995), a complex and dense essay that relates questions concerning the archive to questions concerning psychoanalysis, Derrida begins his deconstruction of the notion of the archive with the etymology of the word archive:

[...]

By discussing this duality in the meaning of the word archive as the actual residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, and as the power of consignation that they exercise from there, Derrida points out that archives should be conceptualized both in terms of time and place as well as in terms of the operation of state power: “A science of the archive must include the theory of this institutionalization, that is to say, the theory of both of the law which begins by inscribing itself there and of the right that authorizes it” (4). While Derrida’s main concern is theorizing the instability of the archive and its ambiguous relation to time, to which I shortly return, it is important to note that Derrida insists on the impossibility of arriving at a notion of the archive without taking into consideration issues concerning power and politics.21

The emergence of the pressing interest in the politics of the archive has led to new theoretical perspectives on the different stages of and interventions in archiving. Evidently, archiving has different phases, such as selection, categorization, arrangement and description. In each of these phases, re-contextualization of the record takes place (Ketelaar 2001). Recently, an array of researchers has been engaged in theorizing how various interventions by archivists change the meaning of the document. These interventions cannot be considered as neutral acts and each intervention infuses the record with new meanings and social values. Tom Nesmith (2002) argues that: “Seeing archives, then, means seeing archivists anew – as visible, active agents in the construction of this history and the societal knowledge it shapes.” (41). Once more, it is the politics of the archive that is at stake during the several stages of archiving.

A neologism invented by Ketelaar to indicate the first phase in archiving is archivalization (2001: 133). Ketelaar argues that while in the customary sense, archiving follows the creation of a document; while in archival theory, archiving is carried one phase forward. Archivization is the word used to include the creative phase before capture; there is another “moment of truth” at an earlier stage:

It is archivalization [...] meaning the conscious or unconscious choice (determined by social and cultural factors) to consider something worth archiving. Archivalization precedes archiving. The searchlight of archivalization has to sweep the world for something to light up in the archival sense, before we proceed to register, to record, to inscribe it, in short before we archive it. (133, emphasis in original)

Differently stated, the archive is primarily a matter of selection and judgment. Mbembe therefore maintains that the archive is a status rather than a collection of data and documents when he writes that:

In any given cultural system, only some documents fulfil the criteria of ‘archivability’. [...] the archive is the product of a judgement, the result of the exercise of a specific power and authority, which involves placing certain documents in an archive at the same time as others are discarded. (19-20)

The issue is thus how the archive emerges from the discursive mechanism of archivalization that decides which records are considered archivable, and that elevates certain documents, to adopt Nesmith’s evocative expression, on a “pedestal” (2002: 33). This mediation not only affects what we can know about the past, but moreover what we think we need to know. Nesmith explains that:

This very act of placing certain records on the pedestal of national progress, sacred memory, civilization, history, culture, democracy or societal necessity often raises records which were once thought quite ordinary to this new special status as “archives” or, for some records even higher yet, as archival “treasures”. (ibid)

The following step in the archiving process that has recently been scrutinized is the crucial practice of archival representation, which refers to both arrangement and description, and follows archivalization. This practice has traditionally been considered the main task of the archivist, since it is the very process of archival representation that is supposed to guarantee that the documents are stored in ways that do justice to their provenance and assemblance. This assures, through the creation of access tools and systems, that the documents can actually be retrieved.
Today, it seems there is agreement among many theorists working in the field that the practice of archival representation is an act of narration and storytelling. Archival theorists Wendy Duff and Verne Harris (2002) in an article devoted to the exploration of “descriptive architecture”, building on insights from Derrida, Foucault and Hayden White, argue that narrativity always brings a “certain fictionalization” to the content of the record (276). They contend that archivists can only describe but a slice of a record’s reality and that descriptions therefore inevitably privilege, highlight and make visible some views and silence and obscure others (ibid: 278). Duff and Harris stress the fact that archivists should be seen as political players: “What we are marking here are the dangers of story; the power of the metanarrative; and the capacities to privilege or to marginalize, to construct knowledge, to exercise control” (277). Recent archival theory has thus underlined the fact that acts of classifying, naming, labelling and describing must be considered as cultural constructs that are never innocent and that reify social and political values. Or as Eric Ketelaar (2001) describes it: “Numerous tacit narratives are hidden in categorization, codification and labelling. [...] Social, cultural, political, economic and religious contexts determine the tacit narratives of an archive. One should make these contexts transparent, maybe even visible [...]” (135-37).

One of the implications of the fact that every intervention of the archivist adds meaning and value to the document and leaves “fingerprints” (Ketelaar 2001: 137 ) is that the boundaries between content and context of the archive can no longer be considered fixed. This makes the archive in Ketelaar’s view “membranic”: “[...] the membrane allowing the infusing and exhaling of values which are embedded in each and every activation” (ibid: 138). Ketelaar argues that the archive is permeable and absorbs social and political values. For him, the new challenge for scholars working in and with archives is to interrogate what he terms the “semantic genealogy” of the archive and to deconstruct its “tacit narratives” when he writes that:

The semantic genealogy provides the opportunity for any construction or deconstruction of what people involved in the archives’ creation may have meant in archivalization and archiving. That re- and deconstruction is not the end of the archive, it is only possible through seeing with the archive. (ibid: 139)

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In Ketelaar’s view there is no need to be pessimistic about the possibility and potential that the archive still offers to the researcher; he advocates that the archive should be read from multiple perspectives.

In (post)colonial studies the discovery of the politics of the archive has resulted in a critical approach to colonial archives. Stoler (2002) argues that over the last two decades scholars have been committed to reading colonial archives “against the grain”: “As such, engagement with the colonial archives was devoted to a reading of ‘upper class sources upside down’ that would reveal the language of rule and the biases inherent in statist perceptions” (91). However, in her own work Stoler pleads for a reading “along the archival grain” when she writes that:

> If a notion of colonial ethnography starts from the premise that archival production is itself both a process and a powerful technology of rule, then we need not only brush against the archive’s received categories. We need to read for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission and mistake, along the archival grain. (92)

In her most recent book Along the Archival Grain (2009), Stoler promotes a reading of the archive that not only focuses on archival content and considers the archive as a biased source of knowledge; she also scrutinizes the archival forms and practices themselves. Her aim is to study “the colonial order of things as seen through the record of archival production” (20). Stoler summarizes the consequences of the archival turn as “the move from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject” (2002: 86; 2009: 24) and designates her own position as a devotion to reading the archive along the grain when she writes that:

> The issue of ‘bias’ gives way to a different challenge: to identifying the conditions of possibility which shaped what could be written, what warranted repetition, what competencies were rewarded in archival writing, what stories could not be told and could not be said. (2002: 86)

Stoler is directly influenced by Foucault and her phrasing here clearly echoes his thinking.
1.3 The Archive as Time Machine and the Manufacturer of Memory

Although it has become clear from the last section that the notion of the archive as depository of (public) memory and the archivist as its guardian is quite a problematic one, this certainly does not mean that this notion is no longer presently persistent in archival and historical discourse. Archives are often referred to, following Pierre Nora’s (1989) famous work on French public memory, as “lieux de mémoire”, as storage places where public memory is anchored. Additionally, it is certainly without doubt that the architecture of many of today’s archives recalls the project of nation building and the creation of imagined communities. One merely needs to recall Tom Nesmith’s (2002) potent metaphor of the “pedestal” in order to realise that the role of the archive in the construction of national consciousness and public memory needs to be revisited. Harris (2002) contends that “if as many archivists are wont to argue, the repositories of archives are the world’s central memory institutions, then we are in deep amnesic trouble.” (136).

Here I dwell a bit longer in the archive with Derrida, for it is Derrida’s philosophical engagement with the archive that addresses the archive’s affiliation with time and memory in such a radical and lucid way, that it has caused great upheavals in the realm of archival scholarship. Derrida’s Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression (1998) can be read as an encounter between the concept of the archive and the discipline of psychoanalysis and centres on the Freudian idea that unconscious forces and instincts always threatened the unity of the archive, like the human psyche. As cultural theorist Susan van Zyl (2002) in her writing on Derrida’s work maintains, this does not mean that Derrida’s contribution to an understanding of the archive is a conventionally psychological one (39). His work on the archive not only evokes questions of authority and power, as I made clear in the previous section, but moreover, of time and memory. It is primarily the latter issue that forced many archival scholars to distance themselves from a too straightforward and simplistic understanding of the archive’s connection to public memory.24

To fully grasp the gravity of Derrida’s re-conceptualization of the archive’s relation to time and memory is it instructive to look first at the title of his book. In Derrida’s Freudian theory of the archive, he stresses psychoanalysis not only as a science of memory, but furthermore as a science of the death instinct that destroys

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24 Ann Laura Stoler (2009) argues that one should not be tempted to see the new analytic status of the archive as the effect of the publication of Archive Fever only: “Archive Fever compellingly captured that impulse by giving it theoretical stature, but Jacques Derrida’s intervention came only after the ‘archival turn’ was already being made” (24).
memory. For Derrida we are in need of archives because the death drive always threatens their very existence: “The death drive is not a principle. It even threatens every principality, every archontic primary, every archival desire. It is what we call le mal d’archive, archive fever” (12). Remembering and forgetting are in Derrida’s (and Freud’s) hands no longer opposites. The archive, which is in Derrida’s conception tied to the idea of consignment and is always an external location that is inscribed with a trace, is as much related to remembering as to forgetting. Our drive to archive and our compulsion to maintain and store records in material form would not exist without this risk of complete annihilation:

It is what I called earlier […] archive fever. There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression. Above all, and this is the most serious, […] there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive. (19)

Derrida localizes an “a priori forgetfulness” in the very “heart of the archival monument”, which consequence it is that “the archive always works, and a priori, against itself” (12). This destruction, this forgetting leaves no traces: “It is at work, but since it always operates in silence, it never leaves any archives of its own. It destroys in advance its own archive” (10). Since the archive has the power to “posit and conserve the law” – which Derrida describes as “the violence of the archive” – the process of forgetting in the consignation of the archive is far from innocent; it represses and consigns to oblivion that which is left outside the archive (7). Because the archive is shaped by these selective forces, Derrida claims, the archive is not a simple record of the past, but it constitutes the past: “The archivization produces as much as it records the event” (17). In Derrida’s reworking, the archive is the manufacturer of memory; surely not its guardian and produces memory as it simultaneously produces forgetting.

Yet the selective power that shapes the archive is not the only force that acts upon the archive. It is the future, as Derrida persuasively argues, that gives the archive retrospectively its final meaning:

[…] the question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past. […] It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come. (36)
Derrida suggests that the “archive has always been a pledge [...] a token of the future” (18). There are various aspects to this “messianicity” (36) that is at work in the archive. Documents in the archive are, to begin with, always open to reinterpretation and contestation. Their meaning is not stable or fixed but constantly deferred, since a “meta-archive” (67) does not exist that authorizes interpretation and no “meta-textual authority” (68) that completes their meaning. Ketelaar (2001) argues about Derrida’s writing that every interpretation of the archive is an enrichment of the archive:

Every activation of the archive not only adds a branch to what I propose to call the semantic genealogy of the record and the archive. Every activation also changes the significance of earlier activations. It is an application of Freud’s retrospective causality. (138)

In addition according to Susan van Zyl (2002), it is fruitful to read Derrida’s emphasis on the archive’s openness to the future through Freud’s concept of ‘retrospective causality’, which refers to the process in the psychic apparatus in which new experiences and memories change and transform the nature of prior ones. Van Zyl argues that the archive, in Derrida’s work, relates to the future according to the principle of ‘retrospective causality’ when she writes that:

[... ] the effect of Derrida’s emphasis on the necessity of recognizing the archive’s openness to the future-to-come, as read through the psychoanalytic concept of retrospective causality, is to point not just to the cumulative role that additions to the archive play, but to their potentially transformative capacity. (55)

Finally, as Derrida suggests, this condition of the archive, this intrinsic instable nature of the archive, this innate openness to reinterpretation, confronts us irrevocably with an ethical and political responsibility, which Derrida terms the “obligation of the archive” (75).

Another aspect of the archive’s openness to the future that Derrida is hinting at in his study is related to technology. Derrida points out that technology changes the very content of the archive: “The technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future” (17). Although he addresses this question of technology only slightly, it has important theoretical implications, for it means that the composition of the archive is conditioned by technological possibilities and developments. I delve deeper into the issue of technology in the
next section. For now, I conclude that Derrida has left an influential heritage in archival theory, which has inspired many theorists to stress the active role of the archivist as creator and shaper of memory. And with this realization that memory is not something found in the archive, but something that is continually made and reinvented, and that archivists are thus, in archival theorists Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz’s (2002) words, the “performers in the drama of memory-making” (172), we arrive again at the main stake of the archival turn.

1.4 The Audiovisual Archive in Contemporary Digital Culture

Since, following Derrida, technology determines and structures the very content of the archive, it is not surprising that the emergence of today’s digital technologies for organizing and storing information has caused another great upheaval within the archival realm. The amount of documents and images that are stored in digital archives is exploding rapidly, in a manner incomparable to what was possible before the era of digitization. Besides, the archive itself is becoming disseminated, as it can now escape the confinement of architectonic structures. The ubiquity of digital technologies has resulted in the extension of the boundaries of what might fall within the scope of the archive. Many archival theorists have pointed out that the paradigm shift in archival theory is partly caused by this digital revolution.25 Before exploring some of the questions and concerns that have arisen about the status of the archive in today’s era of digitization, I take one step back into the past and turn to the question of how the invention of mechanical and electronic reproducibility have changed and transformed the status of the archive. It is my contention that to understand what is happening today in our archives – where electronic and digital images are ubiquitous – it is helpful to linger a bit longer in the nineteenth and early twentieth century to unravel the affinity between the image and the archive, as well as to map the discursive field from which the camera emerged.

It is beyond doubt that the invention of mechanical reproducibility has radically transformed the archive. Strikingly, since its emergence in the early nineteenth century, photographic records have been conceived by the same metaphors by which archival documents have been conceptualized: as mirrors of reality. Born in the era of positivism, in which documents and archives attained a

25 See for example the statement of the editors in the introduction of *Refiguring the Archive* (2002): 15. See also the contributions of Verne Harris (“A Shaft of Darkness”) and David Bearman. (“Electronic Record-keeping, Social Memory and Democracy”).

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major epistemological prestige, photography was regarded as a new language of reality that finally made it possible to write with light the (historical) truth (McQuire 1998: 31-3). “A paradox: the same century invented History and Photography”, proclaims Roland Barthes (1993: 93). Although Barthes touches in this notorious phrase on the uncertain relationship between photography and history, what is at stake here is that both apparatuses of representation have their origins in the same epistemological realm of positivism, both were born, in the words of historian John Tagg (1995: 287), “under the sign of the Real”. Consequently the camera was believed to bring unique possibilities to the representation of history and inspired dreams of the creation of total archives (McQuire 1998: 132). Cultural theorist and artist Allan Sekula (1987) addresses it thusly:

Within bourgeois culture, the photographic project has itself from the very beginning been identified not only with the dream of a universal language but also with the establishment of global archives and repositories according to models offered by libraries, encyclopaedias, zoological and botanical gardens, museums, police files and banks. (118)

Therefore, the photographic image and the archive shared the same cultural aspirations and positivism, which gave rise to the idea that the image could function as an archive.

With the emergence of cinema, this nineteenth-century archival impulse only intensified, since, as film and media professor Mary Ann Doane argues, archival ambitions were also intrinsic to cinematic practice. In her work The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive (2002), Doane shows how cinema participated in the structuring of time and contingency in capitalist modernity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Cinema emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century, the moment in modernity that the idea of time was transformed by industrialization and by the expansion of capitalism. Time, and certainly labour time, became increasingly rationalized, standardized and stabilized. Yet, as Doane argues, this rationalization of time in the public sphere produced a tension, because what felt to be lost was the experience of time as immersion, of time as presence. It is within this discursive space that cinema emerged. The promise of its indexicality – that seemed to be assured by its technology – fed into the archival desire and into the intensified time consciousness of this era (22-3). Doane argues that:
The significance of the cinema [...] lies in its apparent capacity to perfectly represent the contingent, to provide the pure record of time [...]. Where photography could fix a moment, the cinema made archivable duration itself. (22)

According to Doane, cinema thus emerged from and contributed to the nineteenth century’s archival impulse, and its technology was characterized by a tension between “a desire for instantheity and an archival aspiration” (29). Doane contends that there has not been any radical rupture between the modern technologies of representation (photography and film) and the current “postmodern” technologies (television and digital media) (29). The questions that haunt the archive today are in Doane’s hands conceptualized as a continuation of this impulse to archive time that has its origin in the nineteenth century, and as a continuation of modernity’s attempts to structure the contingent in a time of acceleration. The promise of indexicality, Doane contends, our desire to capture the moment, our obsession for instantaneity and immediacy, and our archival aspirations are still so persistent in our current times.26

Evidently, the positivist trust in the photographic image that haunted the nineteenth century’s imagination has been challenged from the very outset and today the evidential status of the image has been heavily criticized. As the innocence of the archival document was destroyed, such was the fate of the image. However, the technological mutation of the archive that resulted from the emergence of the camera has had severe consequences for our notion of history. The amount of images in archives has increased rapidly, and as these images have become important historical sources themselves, they have simultaneously transformed our image of history. Archival images are constantly available for reuse and the audiovisual archive keeps gaining importance in the production and legitimization of history. Before turning to the current era of digitization, I briefly address some of the questions that are raised by the specificity of the audiovisual archive, in particular the television archive and by its relation to history.

Undoubtedly, Harris’ compelling trope of “the sliver of a window” is also quite a relevant trope to conceptualize the relationship between the audiovisual archive and historical reality. Given that, following Harris, the relationship between

26 Doane argues that indexicality is not a quality that is confined to photography and cinema: “In Peirce’s description, the index is evacuated of content; it is a hollowed out sign. It designates something without describing it [...] Hence, the indexicality together with the seemingly privileged relation to the referent – so singularity and contingency – is available to a wide range of media. The insistency and compulsion Pierce associates with the indexical signs are certainly attributes of television and digital media as well” (231).
the document and historical reality should be seen as partial in traditional archives, this is certainly the case in audiovisual archives, whose audiovisual records give access to the mediated past. The relationship between audiovisual heritage, history and media history is a complex one, since, as media historian Paddy Scannell (2004) argues: “The historicality of media […] concerns their role in the unfolding of history itself” (130). Clearly, this is profoundly at stake in broadcasting archives, whose holdings consist to a large extent of television broadcasts that have simultaneously contributed to, in Scannell’s words: “the making of history while showing, recording and narrating it” (ibid: 141). In her work on television archives and the epistemological implications of online access, Julia Noordegraaf (2010) describes two problems in conceptualizing the relation of television heritage to the history of television. First of all, Noordegraaf, following Paddy Scannell, points to the fact that television broadcasts are always involved in the writing of history:

Besides contributing to the making of history, broadcasting also shapes our perception of that history. In that sense archival broadcasting materials provide insight into how at the time people made sense of the past – they thus become sources for the past perception of historical events. (4)

Furthermore, Noordegraaf argues that the second problem for determining what archival broadcasting materials actually document is the fact that it is “very hard to define television […]. Because of television’s many guises – so many different programmes, channels and modes of address – it has proven very difficult for critics and scholars to provide general insights into the medium” (5). Building on the work of television historians Jonathan Bignell and Andreas Fickers (2008), who have distinguished three typical features of television: its liveness (or the perceived simultaneity of event and broadcast), its realism, and the home as viewing space, Noordegraaf writes that “Once broadcasting materials enter the archive, they lose their liveness and their connection to the home as viewing space. What remains is their realism, but now no longer of actuality but of historical events […]” (ibid). Therefore, as Noordegraaf suggests, archival broadcasting materials have a double historical meaning: “on the one hand they document historical events and on the other they document the history of broadcasting itself” (ibid). I return to these issues in the next chapter, but for now it is useful to look at some of the implications of today’s electronic and digital technologies for archival theory.

Archival theory has only just begun to come to terms with the new challenges that the dematerialization of electronic records and digital archives confront us with.
Today, one pressing issue in archival theory is the question of the materiality of archival documents. As the editors of *Refiguring the Archive* (2002) argue in their introduction: “The institutional (and conceptual) range […] is expanded dramatically by the electronic technologies that underpin an archive at once actual and global. Clearly the materiality of archives, for so long simply assumed in archival discourse, is troubled by this reality” (15). They describe the shift that has taken place as a consequence of electronic and digital technology when they write that:

[… the shift from archives as purportedly stable repositories of original material – places where the body historically has gone physically to engage with the material trace – to electronic archives, unconstrained by space and place, and eschewing the claim to be original.] (15)

Terry Cook is one of the theorists who are concerned with the changing status of the archive in this era of digitization. He suggests that archives are becoming “virtual archives without walls”, existing on the Internet to facilitate access by the public to thousands of interlinked record-keeping systems […]” (23). The result of this dissemination of the archive is that the core theoretical formulations about archives and archiving are turned upside down. Cook argues that the three components of the record – its structure, content and context – that were traditionally fixed on a single medium, are now shattered into separate stores of data:

A record thus changes from being a physical object to becoming a conceptual data ‘object’, controlled by metadata, that virtually combines content, context, and structure to provide evidence of some creator activity or function. Moreover, as a record’s context and uses change over time […], the metadata changes, and the record and its context is continually being renewed. Records are no longer fixed, but dynamic. (22)

This transformation of the status of the archive and the record has many consequences for the way archivists exercise their tasks of arrangement, description, appraisal and preservation. What is certainly at stake in audiovisual archives is, as the amount of images that are stored digitally is exploding, the moment of appraisal and selection changes. Additionally, preservation now concentrates more on “continually migrating or emulating the concepts and interrelationships that now define virtual records and virtual fonds to new software programmes” (ibid: 23), than on repairing, conserving and safeguarding the physical medium. I conclude this section on the status of the audiovisual archive in today’s era of digitization with the watchwords that Cook promotes for present-day archival science: “Process rather
than product, becoming rather than being, dynamic rather than static, context rather than text, reflecting time and place rather than universal absolutes” (24). The phrase lucidly conceptualizes the paradigm shift in contemporary archival science around which this chapter revolved.

Concluding Remarks

In this opening chapter, if there is one thing that I hope to have achieved, it would be to show that the archive today is indeed alive in many respects. To begin with, the archive is certainly alive in our current visual and digital culture in which much attention and money is invested in the preservation and digitization of cultural heritage; in building and developing new shelters for and new modes of display for this cultural heritage. As digital technologies for storing information are becoming so wide spread in society, and as the Internet and social media provide us with seemingly unlimited possibilities to gather and store information, the boundaries of what might constitute an archive are ever expanding. The immense archival impulse to preserve cultural and audiovisual heritage goes hand in hand with the new possibilities offered by digital technology and with the growing presence of electronic records, both in traditional archives and in the virtual realm of digital archives.

Consequently, the archive is alive in the humanities and has become an important concept and tool for critical theory in a whole range of disciplines. This pressing interest in the archive is not only informed by postmodern philosophy, that caused a true paradigm shift in archival discourse, but simultaneously by the digital revolution that produced another great upheaval in the realm of the archive. Critical theory has only just begun to come to terms with the way the technological developments have challenged classical notions of the archive and the record, and have turned these notions upside down. The result of all this is a major shift in archival theory from the archive as a static, neutral and material site of knowledge retrieval, to a dynamic, contextual, virtual space of knowledge production. Archival science has irrevocably moved away from its positivist roots.

Since Foucault’s work, the archive has become the place that determines the statements that regulate possible knowledge, the archive is constantly alive as an active player that shapes and produces our possible ways of speaking. Today much scholarly attention is paid to the way archives actively produce discourse and shape public memory. The current transformation of the audiovisual archive certainly raises
new questions concerning our notions of history and memory because the new technologies of recording, storing and retrieving information change the content of the archivable and thus determine which statements and images enter discourse and memory. The growing accumulation of images in the archive, and the circulation of these historical images in our media society have severe consequences for the way we remember the past and for the way historical knowledge is produced and legitimized. With the work of Derrida, the archive has become a site that is indissolubly connected to the future, and this is certainly true in the cases of both the audiovisual and digital archive. Its virtual dimension is alive more than ever, as images are constantly being recycled and reused in the present.

Returning full-circle, I arrive at where I began, with the physical building of Sound and Vision. This building is surely symptomatic of all these shifts in society and theory. Now that in the archive of Sound and Vision the actual materiality of newly preserved documents is disappearing as a result of digitization, this certainly does not mean that less value is attached to the actual material place of the archive. On the contrary, at the very moment that the archive’s holdings are becoming dematerialized, the monumental building emphasizes the glory, the importance, the aliveness and the authority of the Institute of Sound and Vision. Its coloured glass façade is a reflection of the unique treasures that the archive holds, it is also the sliver of the window through which I look at the archive’s holdings and through which I can see only a sliver of the (historical) reality that these holdings depict. The archival images printed on the glass-panels of the façade are continually abstracted, fractured and transposed by reflected sunlight. Depending on my perspective, I see different things. The façade thus seems to perfectly symbolize my critical approach to the archive of Sound and Vision and represents the archival prism through which I view the object of my research. If the archive of Sound and Vision is in the first place the spokesman of the language of its discursive regimes and thus a monument to configurations of power, this power is then inherently inscribed in the documents inside, in the descriptions of the records and in the archive’s system of classification and labelling. In the case studies that follow, I investigate television’s representation of Muslims and Islam through the prism of the archive, seeing with the archive and reading it along the grain. Now it’s finally time to move from the archive as a conceptual tool to the concrete archive of Sound and Vision and to analyse what I actually see when I look through its façade.