

The Politics of Archives

Media, Power, and Identity

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[B]ecause *every* archive [...] is at once *institutive* and *conservative*. Revolutionary and traditional.¹

In December 1965, the Swiss weekly film newsreel SWN [SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU SFW] featured a peculiar short piece on young Swiss women and men preparing to deploy to development projects all over Africa (no.1192.2). First panning over idyllic impressions of a rural village in Ticino, the Italian-speaking canton in Southern Switzerland, the camera abruptly switches to close-ups of wooden signboards carrying the names of African countries. The brief feature continues to a group of young people seated in an improvised classroom, who are later depicted working with wood, installing lights and electronic switches, fixing pans and kitchen bowls, repairing car engines, and finally preparing dishes from different vegetables, eggs, coconuts and groundnuts. The commentary joins these images in a compelling narrative featuring an introductory puzzle: “Mogheno, in the Maggia Valley, is a typical Ticino village”, the voiceover states, “so the door plates featuring names of African countries seem all the more unusual”. The riddle is unraveled shortly after: “Here the Swiss Federal Political Department conducts a training for volunteers wanting to join development work in Africa”, and the village of Mogheno and the Canton

1 Cf. Derrida 1998: 7, emphases in the original.

Ticino, according to the newsreel, provide a fitting setting, for “the young people here find simple [living] conditions similar to those at their future work destinations”.²

Fig. 1: “A typical Ticino village...”



Source: MEMORIAV, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 1192.2

As bold and amusing the equation of living conditions in southern Switzerland and Africa might seem in both a historic and contemporary perspective, the episode exhibits the infamous power of newsreel seemingly capable of establishing cultural, national, and ethnical identities in little over a minute. The voiceover proclaiming the existence of ‘African’ living conditions in southern Switzerland and Swiss’ craftsmanship as an asset for development in Africa, imposes uneven qualities of Swiss, African, and not least Ticino, culture and nationality. The images similarly stage African food next to less exotic Swiss grocery products, and simple cooking tech-

2 For reading ease, all quotes from newsreels transcribed in this article are translated from German into English by the author.

niques over an open fire lead to a ‘Western’ dinner scenario with diners gathering around a wooden dinner table. By cleverly combining an empathic discourse on the value of ‘Swiss’ talent and entrepreneurship with well-staged images of handicraft and household duties in quasi-‘African’ rural surroundings, the newsreel does more than playfully explore geographical and cultural bounds, but rather determines and extends them.

Fig. 2: ...with “similar simple conditions as at their future work destinations”.



Source: MEMORIAV, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 1192.2

The newsreel’s signifying regime appears even more powerful in a historic perspective considering contemporary production settings and the medium’s then still young, yet encumbered, history. In their UNESCO-mandated study published in 1951, Peter Baechlin and Maurice Muller-Strauss caution against overlooking the orchestrating capabilities of the young audiovisual medium. While newsreels allegedly “deal with real events” and “display an external likeness of reality which is, in itself, convincing”, they hold a “great potential danger [...] if they should by any means falsify facts” (Baechlin/Mueller-Strauss 1951: 39). This and similar

concerns were especially potent after the experience of government-controlled and propagandistically distorted newsreel features during World War II.³

Yet the belief in the depicting and staging power of media in general—and particularly of audiovisual media from early photography to film, newsreel and television, and recently digitally produced or altered videos—certainly is well entrenched. The more recent, euphorically celebrated dawn of so-called ‘social’ or ‘participatory’ and thus seemingly more ‘political’ digital networks only recently demonstrated how global audiovisual networks, as opposed to manipulative and heavily institutionalized ‘mass media’, promise a more versatile, decentralized and thus ‘democratic’ production and distribution of images. Indeed, the hopes and fears attached to today’s digital media remain similar to those that accompanied cinema or television during the golden age of newsreel. “The motion picture”, as Baechlin and Muller-Strauss put it in the early 1950s, “with its tremendous possibilities for dramatizing actual events [...] may become a servant of falsehood as well as of truth” (ibid.: 11).

In the case of newsreel, the judgements on the medium’s opportune and dangerous powers seem to have remained ambivalent. Whereas newsreels’ selective perspectives and narrative style today surely appear too crude, biased, or indeed propagandistic, both original and re-edited newsreel footage is to date regularly used in TV-news and documentaries. The mediating strategy of these more recent broadcastings—for instance in reports on national holidays or documentary features on memorial days—remains at its core almost unchanged, with newsreel footage supposedly providing (audio-)visual evidence of the past. The representing and restaging, however, shapes and accentuates a set of cultural, national, or religious identities in need of a common history or shareable narrative. Indeed, the archived footage has the two-faced image that Kornelia Imesch, Mario Lüscher and Nadja Lutz describe for the public and academic perception of Swiss newsreel. Newsreel footage is either seen as “a product of national propaganda” [...], raggedly produced, stereotypically themed, and controlled by national governments”, or—on the contrary—is praised as a “cultural asset” of great na-

3 In particular in the Third Reich, as Baechlin and Muller-Strauss stress (cf. 1951: 39).

tional and “historic value” (cf. Imesch/Lutz/Lüscher 2011: 231, translated by the author).

In this *re*-presenting of archived newsreel footage however, through retrospectively constructing and restaging significant events and cultural identities, media demonstrate more than a stipulating power to determine discourses and shape visual regimes. The very act of archiving actuality and the option of repeating and reinterpreting it reveal a political mediality in which the articulable as much as the visual remain volatile constructs subjected to intervening transformations. Media archives therefore never just describe the processes and institutions of storing text and images, nor do they attribute any unalterable informing power or signifying force. Rather, they demonstrate every medium’s stratagem to selectively *depict* and *represent* ‘actuality’.

Briefly introducing two different, yet complementary concepts of the archive in the works of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, I will hereafter explore a political dimension of newsreel beyond the scope of governmental media control and implicitly overpowering old and new audiovisual technology. Media archives indeed figure as places where predominant discourses and visual regimes assemble to unfold the manifold effects of their power. Like the discourses and visibilities they hold, media however remain subject to constant transformations and interference. In both an institutional and discursive perspective, media archives therefore are a political space in which the unsaid and the unseen resonate and reappear.

DECONSTRUCTING THE POWER OF ARCHIVES

At first glance, newsreel’s power to construct and negotiate identities in the first half of the 20th century and the post-war period appears easily traceable to the medium’s technological progressiveness, screening context, and institutional production environment. At least until the proliferation of television sets in virtually every household from the 1950s onwards, newsreel figured as a widely uncontested audiovisual news medium, shown in cinemas before theatrical motion pictures and distributed by governmentally sanctioned production companies shining politically-driven spotlights on ‘actuality’. Similar contributory factors are—if to different extents—however distinguishable in the history of cinema, television, or digital vid-

eos, and are true for media in general. To construct ‘actuality’ by assembling and storing discourses is, in fact, a particular modality of (news) media and even a general perceptual condition. As Jacques Derrida phrases it in an interview with Bernard Stiegler, ‘actuality’ depends on the two traits of “*artificiality* and *actuvirtuality*“, which is to say it is “produced, sifted, invested, performatively interpreted by numerous apparatuses which are factitious or artificial, hierarchizing and selective, always in the service of forces and interests” (Derrida/Stiegler 2002: 3). Newsreel’s genuine operating area is thus the “fictional fashioning” of actuality; it belongs to the “set of technical and political apparatuses” that choose, “from a nonfinite mass of events, the ‘facts’ that are to constitute actuality.”⁴

As the remediation of newsreel footage in contemporary documentaries and television programs suggests, media’s performative power is not limited to a single act of selective and precluding representation, but rather is subject to repetition and reinterpretation. Newsreel’s and other media’s ability to selectively present implies the power to assemble, compile and store what is articulable and visible at a specific time, that is to *archive* actuvirtuality. In his essay *Archive Fever*, Derrida explores this temporally stretched, recursive power of media archives. Etymologically tracing the archive back to the Greek *arkheion*—a house, residence or domicile—he first emphasizes an archive’s need of domiciliation. Already in the ancient residences of superior magistrates filing official documents, archives, according to Derrida, “needed at once a guardian and a localization”, and thus “could neither do without substrate nor without residence” (Derrida 1998: 2). Archives therefore “take place in a domiciliation”, and their ‘documents’ are “only kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged topology” (ibid.: 3).

Derrida challenges and expands the archives’ topology by unmasking its prescriptive and assembling, quasi-‘legislative’, power. Archives ‘take place’ at “the intersection of the topological and the nomological, of the place and the law, of the substrate and the authority”, operating in a “topo-

4 Cf. Derrida/Stiegler 2002: 3, 42. Derrida however by no means aims to contrast an allegedly preexisting ‘reality’ with artificial media presentation, for an “interpretive sifting is not confined to the news or the media”, but “indispensable at the threshold of every perception or of every finite experience in general” (cf. ibid.: 42).

nomological” space (cf. *ibid.*: 4). Because archives also gather the “functions of unification, of identification, of classification”, they hold a “power of consignment”, of “gathering together” (cf. *ibid.*). Such consignment or gathering, strictly speaking, implies “to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration” and no “absolute dissociation, [...] heterogeneity or secret” can persist (cf. *ibid.*).

The powerful topo-nomology of archives aims at the “possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction or of reimpression” (*ibid.*: 11). As “[t]here is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority”, there is “[n]o archive without outside” (*ibid.*). The archives’ power to dwell and consignate, however, by no means only affects or shapes an uncertain future discourse or perception. The very institutions and technologies of archiving already condition the act/virtual and artefactual present. For Derrida, the archontic power therefore directly concerns “our political experience of the so-called news media” (cf. *ibid.*: 17). For “the archive, as printing, writing, prosthesis, or hypomnesic technique in general is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content of the past which would exist in any case”. Rather, “the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archiveable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future” (*ibid.*: 16 et seq.).

Within every archive’s drive to assemble, store and remember, however, slumbers a destructive force endangering and inevitably transforming it. The archive fever referenced in the title of Derrida’s text refers to a desire to archive in the face of a simultaneous death drive, which is “the radical finitude, [...] the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression” (*ibid.*: 19). Above all, “beyond or within this simple limit called finiteness or finitude, there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive” (*ibid.*). When Derrida thus stresses that the “archival technology no longer determines, will never have determined, merely the moment of the conservational recording, but rather the very institution of the archivable event” (*ibid.*: 18), he does not attribute to media technology an unlimited power. Indeed, the archive conditions itself as much as its ‘content’, yet it does so in light of forgetfulness, finitude, and facing the inevitable breach of articulable and visible configu-

rations *yet to come*. Media technologies—or rather the dispositifs⁵ of archiving—are thus themselves subject to intervention and transformation. What Jacques Derrida projected for the new technology of electronic mails in the late-90’s is certainly true for the rich interplays and many shifts between old and new media in general and up to date: “any destruction of the archive must inevitably be accompanied by juridical and thus political transformation” (cf. Derrida 1998: 17).

With newsreel today largely subsisting in storage, the medium puts itself forward as an illustrative example of the simultaneously forceful and fragile power of archives. In May 1957, the SWN aired a brief piece on the first experimental nuclear reactor in Switzerland (no. 772.3). As the first example discussed, this episode, too, is rich in nationalistic discourse and a number of cultural stereotypes conveyed by both narrative and visual means: “In Würenlingen by the River Aare the furnishing of the American reactor which was displayed at the Geneva nuclear conference has just been completed”, the voiceover states. Viewers are then informed that the reactor “has ten times the power and is most carefully operated and monitored by exactly calibrated instruments from the control room, [...] every man and everything is examined again and again for dangerous nuclear radiation with the Geiger counter”, and “an enormous concrete socket protects the research area in the basement”.

5 I suggest maintaining the original French term of the “dispositive” over the common English translations of the “apparatus” or “deployment”: both are problematic in that they either imply a dominant technical structure or a rigid or suppressing order. “Dispositifs” in the Foucauldian sense are a changing “system of relations” between “thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures” (cf. Foucault 1980: 194), and thus maintain a more open perspective accentuating both power relations and political transformation (cf. Sieber 2014).

Fig. 3: The first experimental nuclear reactor in Switzerland is “carefully operated and monitored by exactly calibrated instruments from the control room ...”



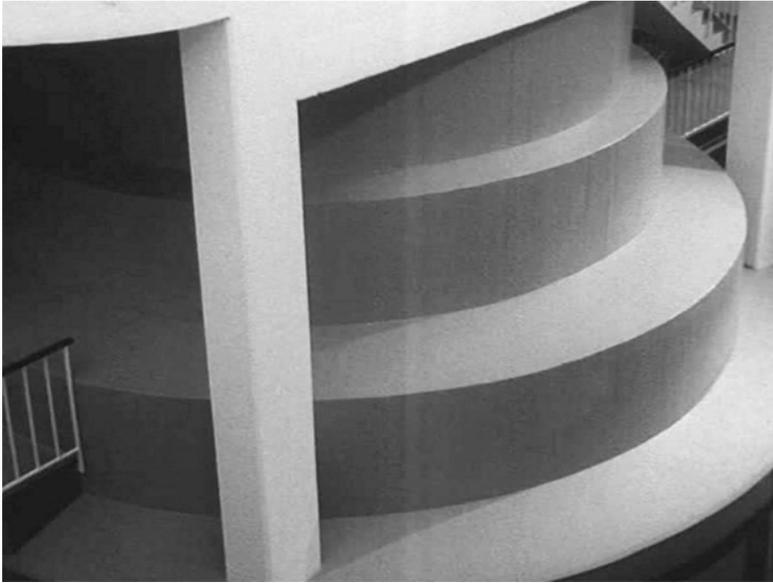
Source: MEMORIAV, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 772.3

Meanwhile, camera movement, shot perspectives, and image composition strive to mimic the sterile, strictly organized and security-minded architecture of a nuclear facility. Men⁶ in white lab coats appear as mere ornaments of the facilities' omnipresent devices and consoles, instruments and warning lights, steel beams and concrete vaults. The episode is filmed from extreme perspectives, shooting either steeply down- or upwards, and the camera seems to playfully accentuate the facility's architecture and technology

6 The only woman featured in the brief episode scans a group of male colleagues for dangerous radiation with a Geiger counter. Gender roles are thus, and by no means coincidentally, part of the set of cultural identities constructed by media archives. Derrida, in fact, precisely notes the strongly 'gendered' history of archives themselves. As the ancient *archons*, the guardians of documents, "the archontic dimension of domiciliation" is an "archic, in truth patriarchic, function" (cf. Derrida 1998: 10).

by panning over monitors and dials, and almost artistically framing the reactor's conical vault.

Fig. 4: Celebrating nuclear power, technology, and itself as a media archive: Perspective onto the reactor's vault.



Source: MEMORIAV, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 772.3

The bunker-like structure of the vault is not merely presented as the invisible, but tamed pinnacle of modern technology. Its almost abstract staging seems to celebrate newsreels' potency to narrate and show as the medium sees fit, applying a highly selective discourse in conjunction with various perspectives and framing techniques, making for an artistic and artificial presentation. Yet the doubtlessly powerful assemblage of visual and discursive elements today—in its remediation—feels oddly out of place: the visual tale of lab-coated men operating the precise instruments controlling nuclear energy, the aesthetic dominance of both nuclear and media technology, and the nationalistic narrative celebrating the Swiss adoption and improvement of American innovation, all appear pale and outdated. The sense of presence the newsreel archives and presents proves volatile, even fleeting.

THE AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVE OF NEWSREEL

There is another equally renowned notion of archives that offers a slightly shifted focus on media's capacities to assemble and store: In his famous study on the *Archeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault lays the groundwork for a discourse analysis leading towards a subtle analytics of power, including a short but important chapter on archives and archeology. Foucault, however, does not address "the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past, or as evidence of a continuing identity". Archives here are explicitly not considered "the institutions, which, in a given society, make it possible to record and preserve those discourses that one wishes to remember and keep in circulation" (cf. Foucault 1972: 128 et seq.). Instead, Foucault's discursive take at the archive emphasizes the coming-into-existing and persistent power of the articulable. The archive is "the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events", and "that which determines that all these things said [...] are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities" (ibid.:129).

Foucault's conceptualization of the archive is thus clearly not limited to storage technologies or media institutions. An archive is the "general system of the formation and transformation of statements", and while it "does not have the weight of tradition", it both includes and exceeds discourse in and on media (cf. ibid.: 130). Focusing on the discursive formation of statements, however, the archive stresses a highly political momentum in the discursive emergence and persistence of media technology. "[H]ow is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another", asks Foucault, highlighting the in- and exclusive forces at play in selecting and storing discourses during the process of archiving (cf. ibid.: 27). From the start, the *Archeology of Knowledge* is a political project, committed to exploring regularities in the formation of discourses, similar to the "interpretive sifting" Jacques Derrida locates "at the threshold of every perception or of every finite experience in general" (cf. Derrida/Stiegler 2002: 42).

As Gilles Deleuze puts in his essays dedicated to Foucault's work, the "strata" or "historical formations" revealed by discourse analysis are "positivities or empiricities" (Deleuze 1999: 41). These positivities, however, are not limited to statements in the narrow sense of speech or written text. In-

deed, the *Archeology of Knowledge* “seems to grant the statement a radical primacy”, but the discursive formations are “made from things and words, from seeing and speaking, from the visible and the sayable, from bands of visibility and fields of readability” (cf. *ibid.*: 41 et seq.). As Deleuze stresses, the Foucauldian archive is “audiovisual”, and it understands knowledge as “a practical assemblage, a ‘mechanisms’ of statements and visibilities” (*ibid.*: 43). A historical formation is thus a combination of “a way of saying and seeing, discursive practices and forms of self-evidence”, with their composition varying and contesting “from one stratum to the next” (cf. *ibid.*: 42).

Foucault’s notion of the archive is radical because it considers the articulable and the visible a “historical a priori” (cf. Foucault 1972: 126 et seq.). There is no conception of culture, nationality or ethnicity, and no technological or institutional form of media that precedes the archive. As Deleuze writes, “[a]n ‘age’ does not pre-exist the statements which express it, nor the visibilities which fill it” (Deleuze 1999: 42). It is therefore newsreel and other audiovisual media are attributed the power to *construct* and *transform* identities through time.⁷ As Foucault notes in his famous inaugural lecture on the *Order of Discourse*, “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality” (Foucault 1981: 52). Media certainly are amongst the procedures channeling and structuring discursive figures and visible forms. Yet there is no technicity, institution, or power of media before the discursive materiality. Rather, different configurations of audiovisual media form discursive orders and regimes of gaze *given* or *in the face of* the articulable and visible. As Christoph Tholen emphasizes, “there is now perception sufficiently determined by a natural condition” and thus no medium that would “extend or falsify an allegedly preset sensation”. Rather, perception is “always one of the medium”, it is always “affected by the artificial”, in the sense of a “de-

7 Following a similar train of thought in Jean Luc Nancy’s *Being Singular Plural*, there generally is no ‘substantial’ ‘identity’, as “the question of the ‘with’ can never be expressed in terms of identity, but rather always in terms of identifications” (cf. Nancy 2000: 66).

ceit or stratagem making something emerge altogether” (cf. Tholen 2005: 162, translated by the author).

For media technology, the auspicious turn of discourse archeology remains in the slightly modified political questions of how media themselves become, persist, and eventually stop being articulable and visible. The focus, then, shifts to the discursive ‘archiving’ of media archives: Understanding newsreel’s historic and contemporary power to construct identities by consigning discourses and perspectives first requires one to temporarily blank out all their obvious material, technical and institutional layers. Newsreel is then determined neither by film celluloid nor by the seating arrangements in a cinema, neither by the governmental production structure nor by a propagandistic gesture, although these aspects are themselves part of the medium’s audiovisual formation. In order to collude with governmental control, with nationalistic images, or cultural stereotypes, newsreel must first itself become articulable and visible as a medium. Only when newsreel is itself part of a discourse can it sustain, weaken or transform other discourses and their mechanisms of control, selection and redistribution. Likewise, the medium needs to become visible, to present and stage itself as a means, an instrument, or an interpreter. As Kornelia Imesch convincingly pointed out in the case of Switzerland, it might be precisely due to the medium’s attempt to “pass itself off to be authentic, [that] it proved to be a construct” (cf. Imesch/Lutz/Lüscher 2011: 226, translated by the author).

While a certain ‘self-fashioning’ is already apparent in the framing of shots in the story about future development workers in the Swiss canton of Ticino or in the artistic staging of the experimental nuclear reactor, a third example from Swiss newsreel illustrates this discursive ‘archiving’ and staging of newsreel as a medium. In 1946, a US-American Dakota C-53 airplane carrying ranking military personnel en route from Vienna to Pisa crashed on the Gauli Glacier in the Swiss Alps. Due to the initially unclear location of the crash site, it took the rescue workers six days to find the injured passengers. The subsequent rescue operation received international attention due to two Swiss airplanes landing on the glacier and flying the passengers to safety—and because SWN-camera operators thoroughly documented this as the first alpine air rescue operation in history. The SWN was among the original rescue squad climbing the slopes to the crash site; it accompanied the search aircrafts, filmed the American troops idly awaiting

orders upon their arrival in Switzerland, and documented the landing sites on the glacier and in the valley below.

Fig. 5: “Tiny in the white wasteland” and filmed from a Swiss rescue plane, the SWN shows the rescue force approaching the crash site of the US-American military plane.



Source: MEMORIAV, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 288.2

The resulting newsreel feature consequently presents itself as the highly dramatic story of fearless Swiss men daring the impossible, of helpless American troops surrendering to the hostile conditions of the Swiss Alps, and not least of the challenges and promises of newsreel's recording technologies themselves (no. 288.2). The camera operator accompanying the rescue squad on foot is at first unable to film due to his battery freezing during the climb. Once a rescue plane delivers a new battery to the glacier, however, the newsreel manages to show take-offs and landings in various perspectives from the glacier and from the plane.

At the landing site in the valley, journalists can be seen operating various photo and video cameras next to the operators handling radio equipment to communicate with colleagues on the glacier and the pilots flying

the planes. For shots of the American rescuing troops filmed arriving at a local train station with caterpillars and heavy machinery, the background music changes from the tension-building theme to a cheerful, almost comic melody. “They must realize that our Alps cannot be conquered with tanks”, the voiceover explains. It therefore seems all the more unjust when “Swiss reporters are dragged off the landing field”, although the newsreel’s camera is still able to document both the landing of the rescue planes and the expulsion of a reporter.

Fig. 6: Although “Swiss reporters are dragged off the landing field”, the newsreel feature manages to record and show the successful air rescue operation.



Source: MEMORIA V, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 288.2

From the airplanes to mobile and vehicle-based radio equipment, and not least to the film cameras, cables, and batteries, the episode shows and stages quite promising, but nonetheless constantly failing technology. Addressing the very technologies of archiving here also allows celebrating the continuing necessity of human intervention, which in turn shapes a highly patriotic Swiss narrative. The ‘intruding’ American troops are waiting, “slight-

ly embarrassed,” at the train station, while Swiss pilots accomplish the impossible and Swiss journalists struggle with dead batteries and strive for the truth, yet are eventually escorted away from the scene that dominated international headlines. This nationalistic tale of Swiss heroes strongly builds on the self-thematization and self-staging of the SWN—as an archiving technology, a media institution, and not least as an authority to show and tell the ‘Swiss’ story.

RE-THINKING THE POLITICS OF ARCHIVES

Media archives—including but not limited to newsreels—are powerful since they imply a selective assembly of the articulable and a form of self-evidence, which in turn determine whether discursive and visual figures of cultural or national identities flourish or wither. However, neither the discursive archives of media nor the discourses and evidences they assemble and store are rigid or unalterable formations. Both are subject to constant *trans*-formation, marking the substantially political mediality of media: both in the technological and the discursive sense, the archives’ power to consign and perpetuate is simultaneously a leverage point of intervention and alteration.

Newsreels’ power to set or reiterate identity figures is therefore never overwhelming, continuous, or gapless. As an archive in the Foucauldian sense, the topo-nomological potential of media requires constant re-articulation and re-presentation. The three examples of Swiss newsreel illustrated this with carefully sequenced image editing, both artificial and artistic camera perspectives, and not least by integrating media technology into a patriotic narrative. Newsreel here celebrates its contemporary technical and representational capacities as a medium in the very moment it so confidently sets and transposes national and cultural identities.

The iteration and re-staging of newsreel footage—to ‘celebrate’ national memory, to ‘demonstrate’ cultural heritage, or to ‘investigate’ audiovisual impressions of the past—challenge previously constructed identities rather than just resurrecting them. Jacques Derrida’s notion of the archive grasps this challenge as media’s feverish drive to domesticate and consign in the face of a constant forgetting. With Foucault, this drive propels the

powerful institutions and technologies attempting to control and channel the discourses and evidences.

In many regards Michel Foucault's later works succeed in joining these two complementary emphases of archiving the articulable and the visible. The 'dispositifs' of power, according to Foucault, always require and intertwine with audiovisual formations of knowledge. Further developing discourse analysis towards a subtle analytics of power reveals "power-knowledge relations" and underlines how "power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (cf. Foucault 1977: 27).

Thinking newsreel as a media dispositif therefore allows us to deconstruct the entanglement of discourses, visibilities, institutions and technologies that constitute the manifold, yet never absolute nor centralized power relations of the medium.⁸ Far from being just a suppressive structure or subduing apparatus, newsreel—by precluding national or cultural identities—opens the leeway for the return or intrusion of formerly untold narratives and excluded discourses, of banned gazes and invisible perspectives. The same holds true for the 'identity' and power of newsreel as a medium: With its former glory as an allegedly omnipotent national mouthpiece certainly faded, many of newsreel's formal characteristics and staging techniques persist in today's television news or web-based formats. The medium's 'own' history, in short, is 'itself' an *intermedial* one and rich in directional shifts and challenges. Understanding the fundamental politics of archives on that note embraces a plea: to re-consider the irrevocable political dimension in the power of old and new media.

8 I have argued elsewhere that dispositifs, rather than describing a 'topic' structure or 'rigid' order, conceptualise 'heterotopic' and constantly transforming networks or rhizomes—accentuating omnipresent political flightlines and interventions (cf. Sieber 2014: 103 et seqq.).

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