

## *New Materialisms in the archive: in the mode of an œuvre à faire*

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*Abstract:* In this paper I look at archival research methods that I have deployed in my research with women workers' narratives in the light of new materialisms. In doing so there are four areas that I highlight and discuss: a) research approaches and methodologies that take the archive as a living organism and as a process; b) reading, analysing and 'rewriting' archival documents as 'events'; c) excavating material, spatial and embodied imaginings and memories; d) taking the archival process as *an œuvre à faire*. The paper draws on archival work at the *Bibliothèque Historique de la ville de Paris* in the context of writing a feminist genealogy of the seamstress. What I argue is that understanding and practicing 'how matter matters' offers fresh insights in feminist histories in general and in women workers' contribution to the cultural and political formations of modernity in particular.

Key words: archives, events, imagination, memory, process, *œuvre à faire*

Over the years that I have conducted research in archives around the world, I have persistently defended the idea that the archive is a living organism, a field of forces where events erupt, tracks are mapped, traces are discerned and new knowledges emerge and crystallize. It is on archival research as a process in becoming that I focus in this paper drawing on Alfred Whitehead's (1985) philosophy of organism, which has offered insights in how we can interrogate long-held presumptions about the world and our modes of thinking about it beyond a range of dualisms, such as objects/subjects, facts/values, appearance/representation, individual/society, reason/experience and agency/structure. In further following trails of narrative

sensibility within the archive, I raise the question of how we can conceptualise the researcher and the archive as an *assemblage* rather than as separate and independent entities. The archive is thus taken as a laboratory of memory [and forgetting], but also as an experimental time-space continuum, where memory and imagination are brought together in the study and understanding of documents. Seen in the context of Whitehead's process philosophy archival documents are taken as *events* that mark discontinuities and ruptures in our habitual modes of readings and understandings. In light of the above, archival research ultimately becomes an, *œuvre à faire*, work to be made, in Étienne Souriau's theorisation of different modes of existence (2009). The paper draws on archival research at the *Bibliothèque Historique de la ville de Paris* with political and personal writings of French seamstresses, who were active in the feminist circles of the romantic socialist movements of the nineteenth century (see author). What I argue is that understanding and practicing 'how matter matters' (Barad 2007) in the archive offers fresh insights in feminist histories in general and in women workers' contribution to the cultural and political formations of modernity in particular.

### *Archival Assemblages*

We usually perceive archives as the end of the active life of a document, a place where a document is deposited to be protected and preserved for the creation of future memories and histories. And yet archives are beginnings as much as they are ends: they give their documents a new life and particularly with the advent of digitisation, new and diverse forms of life; but they can also deprive their documents of a future life, by hiding them through mysterious cataloguing structures, complex classification practices or simply impromptu spatial arrangements. Arnold Hunt's statement is here utterly revealing: 'As a curator myself, I'm intrigued by the ways that the physical organisation of archives can affect – and sometimes obstruct – their use by historians. As the old saying goes: where do you hide a leaf? In a forest. Where do you hide a document? In an archive.'<sup>1</sup>

But apart from curators and archivists who create and organise archives, often hiding documents in them, researchers also create archival assemblages when they bring together documents from diverse archives and sources around the world. *Olive Schreiner's letters*<sup>2</sup> and *Emma Goldman's Papers*<sup>3</sup> are lucid examples of such archival assemblages that have influenced my own approach to the feminist archive. These are of course archival assemblages that have developed as major research projects in themselves. What I want to remind us here however, is that all research projects create archival assemblages, be they documents, oral interviews, transcriptions or other research data and there has been a lot of interest recently in ideas and practices revolving around the notion of 'archival sensibility' (Moore et al., 2016). But researchers, like archivists, often hide the archival strategies or sources of their research, through their immersion in the power relations of knowledge production that Foucault (1969) has influentially theorised in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*.

While recognising my own inevitable involvement in the power/knowledge relations of the archive I have nevertheless attempted to unveil my practices: not only have I analysed them, but I have also created archival blogs for them, so that they can be accessed, viewed and revisited by future researchers.<sup>4</sup> Conceived as an *assemblage* in Deleuze and Guattari's configuration (1988), these documents continuously create new meanings through the connections they make: they develop internal relations between and amongst themselves, but also external ones with other discourses and documents. As already noted above, it is my archival research with the personal and political writings of French seamstresses, active in the feminist circles of the romantic socialist movements of the nineteenth century that I revisit in this paper in the context of the problematics revolving around the archival sensibility that I now want to consider.

### *Archival sensibilities, narrative phenomena and research events*

How is 'archival sensibility' to be understood in the context of writing a feminist genealogy of the Parisian seamstress? As Niamh Moore, Andrea Salter, Liz Stanley and

Maria Tamboukou have suggested, archival sensibility encompasses a set of practices that highlight the need to study archival documents carefully, in the sense that they should not be simply treated as sources of nice quotations or as illustrations of an analysis that was noted by their study. (see Moore et al. 2016: 168) Although we always go to the archive with some questions in mind, we should also let its documents surprise us, allow them to interrogate our a-priori judgements, understandings and prejudices and let them redirect our analytical paths and routes of interpretation. Archival documents will always offer us exciting stories or quotations but their place should be formative and not illustrative or simply evidentiary in the historiographical practice. As Arlette Farge has pithily noted, ‘a quotation is never proof, and any historian knows that it is almost always possible to come up with a quotation that contradicts the one she has chosen’ (1989: 74). But there is more to ‘archival sensibility’: although archival documents are often assemblages of fragmented, broken and discontinuous stories, traces of the past rather than representations or mirrors of it, their fragmentation should not be continued in the researcher’s discourse. On the contrary we need to be sensitive to the lives of the documents found in the archive, try to understand and map the conditions of their possibility and attempt to imagine their lives before and after our encounter with them. Finally, we need to be sensitive to their potentiality, the forces and effects of their intensity, which we need to facilitate and set in motion, rather than block, hide or sidestep. Simply put, we cannot engage with documents of life while ignoring the life of documents within the archive and beyond.

Let us then start with an archival event, tracing the process of understanding emerging from a line in a newspaper article written in 1832 by Joséphine Félicité Milizet: ‘Women alone will say what freedom they want’<sup>5</sup>. I remember very well the day when I read this article: it caught my attention and stopped my quick browsing and diagonal reading of the first feminist newspaper in nineteenth century France.<sup>6</sup> While working busily in the archive, Milizet’s storyline emerged as an *event* through which I became ‘a reader’. But how, one can ask, is it the case that the subject becomes a reader through her encounter with a storyline? We know very well that the researcher was already ‘a reader’ studying and analysing women garment workers’ texts in the

archive. However, it is not the abstract notions of 'the reader' that I had in mind when marking my encounter with Milizet's article as an *event*. Rather, what I wanted to underline is the process through which both the reader and the story emerge, not in the linear subject/object relation, but rather as intra-actively constituted entities within the boundaries of a 'narrative phenomenon' (Tamboukou 2014a).

Here, as elsewhere in my work I have used the notion of the 'narrative phenomenon', following Karen Barad's reconfiguration of Niels Bohr's<sup>7</sup> thesis that 'things do not have inherently determinate boundaries or properties, and words do not have inherently determinate meanings' (Barad 2003: 813). It is only through the configuration of a particular 'phenomenon' that things can be bounded and acquire properties and words can take up meaning. As Barad explains, 'Bohr's epistemological framework rejected both the transparency of measurement as well as the transparency of language' (813) and in this light the primary epistemological unit for Bohr was 'the phenomenon', marked by the inseparability of 'the observed object' and 'agencies of observation' (814). While challenging the separation between subject and object and knower and known, Bohr's philosophy-physics maintained and defended the possibility of objective knowledge within the configurations of a particular phenomenon. What Barad's proposition has added to Bohr's thesis however is that phenomena are not only epistemological units, milieus within which things can be measured and meaning can be enacted; phenomena in Barad's theorisation are ontological units, constitutive of reality. It is in this light that the reader emerges as an entity through her entanglement in the 'narrative phenomena' of her archival research. Henri Bergson's idea of 'trance reading' (1970) is particularly illuminating here. As Isabelle Stengers has pointed out, Bergson 'asks readers [...] to agree to slow down, to let oneself be penetrated by the words, to release the grip that makes us think we know what they mean' (2011: 62). It is in the process of slowing down that the reader 'becomes', by feeling elements in the story line that he or she had not thought about before. In doing this, he or she re-emerges as a reader with new ideas about meanings that the storyline carries with it. In this case, it is not just the reader who becomes other, but also the story: they both become through their entanglement and 'intra-actions' (Barad 2007).

It is in this light that we can perhaps see why or rather how amidst the series of newspaper articles that I had been busily reading in the archive, I was drawn to this line, having eliminated or disregarded many others. 'We experience more than we can analyse', Whitehead has written in discussing different forms of process within the historic world. (1968: 89) It is in our entanglement with archival documents that we are drawn to certain storylines, topics, characters or themes and not to others. We thus become situated readers or listeners in a process where the force of the story emerges from a process wherein 'reading does not consist in concluding from the idea of a preceding state the idea of a following state, but in grasping the effort or the tendency by which the following state itself comes out of the preceding one by a natural force' according to Deleuze (cited in Stengers 2011: 467).

But how can we understand the process through which the researcher is drawn towards certain documents, files and storylines in the archive? As I have discussed elsewhere at length (Tamboukou 2016), Whitehead's philosophy configures reality on both a microscopic and a macroscopic level and highlights the fact that process should be understood as both flux and permanence. On the one hand, there is the problem of following the process wherein each individual unity of experience is realised and on the other hand comes the recognition that there is some actual world out there, already constituted, 'the stubborn fact which at once limits and provides' according to Whitehead (1985: 129). In this light 'the stubborn fact', which belongs to the past, inheres in the flowing present wherein actualities are being constituted. This co-existence of permanence and flux creates conditions of possibility for the future, which is anchored in the present but has not been actualised yet. Each actual entity is thus an organic process that 'repeats in microcosm what the universe is in macrocosm [and] although complete as far as concerns its microscopic process, is yet incomplete by reason of its objective inclusion of the macroscopic process.' (Whitehead 1985: 215).

Whitehead's dual conceptualisation of process as microscopic and macroscopic is a useful configuration in terms of understanding process while reading archival

documents: a story maybe complete in terms of its microscopic actualisation as an Aristotelian beginning-middle-end, but incomplete in terms of the macroscopic process of being entangled in the web of stories that comprise ‘the storybook of mankind, with many actors and speakers and yet without any tangible authors’ (Arendt 1998: 184). In the same vein a story maybe incomplete in terms of its microscopic process—incomplete, fragmented or broken narratives—and yet contributing as a condition in the macroscopic process of narrative understanding.

But, attentiveness to ‘the stubborn fact’ is the weak link of all modern philosophies, Whitehead has remarked: ‘Philosophers have worried themselves about remote consequences, and the inductive formulations of science. They should confine attention to ‘the rush of immediate transition’, to the fact that ‘we finish a sentence because we have begun it, we are governed by stubborn fact’ (1985: 129). It is our adherence to ‘the stubborn fact’ that I have considered in thinking about archival research as a process in becoming. In doing so I have highlighted Whitehead’s important notion of ‘the flight of experience’: ‘The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalisation; and it again lands for renewed observation rented acute by rational interpretation.’ (1985: 5).

### *Flying, imagining, remembering*

So, what exactly is happening when ‘we are flying’ while immersed in the nuts and bolts of archival research? The archive seizes moments in the life process that have been symbolically transformed into novellas and images or have left their traces upon artefacts, memorabilia or simply forgotten and/or lost objects. When we see, read or touch such traces of the past, we feel that we have somehow grasped ‘the real’, no matter how fleeting or ephemeral such experiences have been. And yet the idea of ‘touching the real’ is an illusion, Farge has pithily noted: ‘No matter how much the real seems to be there, visible and tangible, it reveals nothing more than its physical presence, and it is naïve to believe that this is its essence’. (Farge 2013: 11) The

importance of the archival object, be it a story, an administrative document, a photograph or a piece of string that slips out of an envelope, 'lies in the interpretation of its presence, in the search for its complex meaning, in framing its "reality" within systems of symbols—systems for which history attempts to be the grammar', Farge argues. (2013: 12) This is precisely where 'flying' works: it throws the researcher in the air, disentangles him or her from the material and affective forces of 'the natural presence' and creates the necessary distance for understanding and interpretation beyond the stubbornness of common sense notions and perceptions. Flying both metaphorically and literally enables the researcher to see things differently and ultimately creates conditions of possibility for critical analyses and imaginative knowledges.

Imagination plays a crucial role in Whitehead's experiential philosophy: he actually argues that the process of experience in its complex and advanced phases emerges as an effect of a 'joint operation between imaginative enjoyment and judgement'. (1985: 178) It is through their encounter Whitehead argues that the method of imaginative rationalisation unfolds. But what we have in the above metaphor of the aeroplane flight is what Whitehead has also discussed as 'conscious imagination' and 'mutual sensitivity of feelings', (1985: 275), the idea that imagination leaps from the situatedness of a concrete experience, although it keeps the element of 'surprise as an unexpected gift' (Casey 1976: 69). Stories are important in congealing this process of imaginative rationalisation I argue, as they facilitate the experience of landing, namely they ground abstractions, flesh out imaginative fabulations and carry traces of events.

It is therefore in considering the role of memory and imagination woven together through narrative in archival research that I will now turn. 'Imagining lies within our own power, when we wish', Aristotle<sup>8</sup> has famously suggested in a long line of philosophical thinking around imagining. Taking my starting point from the supposed link of imagination to a wishful self, I rather want to suggest the idea of the 'will to imagination'. In doing this I see imagination as a force that initiates something new in the process of archival understanding. What is important here is to rethink via



Whitehead the link between imagination and perception and particularly what Casey discusses as ‘the imaginative extension of perception’ (1976: 140) as a process of feeling women workers’ narratives in the exemplar I have chosen from my archival research above. In this light, the storyline of Milizet’s article: ‘Women alone will say what freedom they want’ has evoked for the reader particular feminist memories—the emergence of an autonomous feminist movement in the 70s. Memory provides here ‘a ready stock of material on which we can draw in making an otherwise chaotic imaginative presentation more coherent’, Casey has suggested (1976: 193). While reading Milizet’s article, I remember drifting into a state of mind that was taking me away from my desk. I was imaginatively transposed to those days of feminist activism back in the seventies when we had to stop our comrades from coming to the women’s meetings as women needed space to think for themselves and most importantly to speak for themselves. ‘Everybody wants to advise us about our freedom but their opinions do not really matter’, Milizet wrote. Freedom for her was an agonistic process, always emerging through opposition and conflict, but also something to work for:

Whoever else may desire our freedom, I desire it; this is what matters most. I wanted it before I knew the Saint-Simonians. I wanted it before I knew M. Fourier; I want it in spite of those who deny our rights; and I am perhaps working for it outside the circles of those who want it. But I am free. We have had enough of men’s advice, direction and domination. It is up to us now to march in the direction of progress without a tutor. It is up to us to work for our liberty, by ourselves, us alone, it is up to us to work for it without the support of our masters.<sup>9</sup>

It was therefore in the process of grasping Milizet’s idea of freedom while reading her article in the archive that a conceptual novelty arose: ‘in each concrescent occasion its subjective aim originates novelty [which] in the case of higher organisms amounts to *thinking* about the diverse experiences’, Whitehead has written (1985: 102). In this process, imaginative extension enriches perception and therefore understanding through material enactments. This imaginative extension is both physical and mental,

there is no such a distinction in Whitehead's denial of the bifurcation of nature: 'it is a matter of pure convention as to which of our experiential activities we term mental and which physical' Whitehead has written (1958: 20). In thus seeking answers to my questions about the meaning of freedom amongst the editors of the first feminist newspaper, I have imagined their struggles, worries and agonies of publishing a newspaper written by women only, by remembering my own involvement in the feminist press, a century later. It is in this process that I have felt the author's desire 'to say what freedom they want'—the phrase that had 'accidentally' captivated me in the archive. While there was not enough time for ruminations while still in the reading room, something did happen in the rush of transition: Milizet's storyline created an *event*, opening up vistas in the reader's imagination, which would later become an element in her grasped unity of understanding.

The geography of the archive, very close to the places where the first feminist newspaper was written and published had a notable effect in creating conditions of possibility for the imagination of the reader to roam within and beyond the space/time extensive continuum of the archive.<sup>10</sup> As Whitehead has written, 'there are two elements of common structure, which can be shared in common by a percept derived from presentational immediacy and by another derived from causal efficacy [...] (1) sense-data, and (2) locality'. (1958: 49) Indeed, spatial relationships ingress in our modes of knowledge and experience but we are not always consciously aware of such activities. But hand in hand with geographical proximity, loneliness in the archive has also been identified as a *condition sine qua non* of archival imagination. As Casey has suggested, the autonomy of imagining 'consists in its strict independence from other mental acts, from its surroundings, and from all pressing human concerns' (1967: 191). Of course this romantic image of the lonely researcher in the archive, beautifully narrated by Farge (1989) and Steedman (2001) amongst others, radically changes when the archival space becomes your desk, your room and your computer, when working with digitised archives and documents.<sup>11</sup> Still I argue, there is an uncanny feeling of dizziness or frenzy when you feel you have felt something in your 'data', which makes you forget your world and its concerns, whether around or far away from you.

By freezing an *event* in the archival process for the sake of dissecting its concreteness, what I want to highlight is that it is in this process of remembering /imagining that a story line from an archival document initiates for the reader a mode of understanding that is congealed as the beginning of a new research story. In the case of Milizet's storyline 'women alone will say what freedom they want', what has flashed as an idea is the recurrence of the need for women's autonomy and freedom in the course of feminist histories. What we therefore have is a rhythmical repetition of remembering/imagining and a vibration of contrasting feelings around autonomy and freedom as opposed to relational attachment and solidarity—affective and political tendencies in the nineteenth century feminist movement that I have discussed elsewhere in my work (Tamboukou 2015). Following Whitehead, 'my unity [...] is my process of shaping this welter of [archival] material into a consistent pattern of feeling.' (1968: 166)

In thus trying to make sense of the notion of 'imaginative generalisation', Whitehead's notion of vibration and of the vibrant existence is I suggest, illuminating. This is how Whitehead explicates his notion of vibration: 'Suppose we keep to the physical idea of energy: then each primordial element will be an organised system of vibratory streaming of energy [...] This system, [...] is nothing at any instant. It requires its whole period in which to manifest itself [like] a note of music [...] (1967: 35) Here again, the analogy with the note of music is very succinct in making us understand this idea of vibration.<sup>12</sup> Ideas and knowledge emerging from archival research require a period in which to manifest themselves and this is why considering and analysing rhythms within the space/time continuum of the archive is so important. But also the archival documents themselves, in my case the French seamstresses' writings, are traces of the vibratory existence of their writers, who equally require a whole period in which to manifest themselves. As Deleuze has put it: 'a quality perceived by consciousness resembles the vibrations contracted through the organism' (1993: 97). The question is not about 'scientific materialism' anymore, Whitehead has argued, but of energy in the concrete expression of the organism as an *event* in the process of becoming. (1967: 36-37) This is why I have argued that archival documents should be

conceptualised as *events* and the analytical interest should shift from structure to process.

As readers in the archive we are caught up in a rhythmical feeling of time/space vibrations, while novel ideas in our reading and understanding of documents emerge from what Edward Casey has configured as the phenomenon of ‘the imaginal ark’, (1976: 88) a plane of possible actions constituted by the act of imagining. Here it is important to note that processes of imagination—in the archive and elsewhere—are short-lived and discontinuous, as they occur in the Whiteheadian ‘rush of immediate transition’ (Casey 1976: 76). No wonder then that such novel ideas often feel as coming out of the blue, as the gift of a chance, an unexpected encounter, a serendipity, a notion that I have challenged and problematized elsewhere in my work (Tamboukou 2016). This is of course not to deny the possibility of pure chance, which is always, already there; it is just that sometimes when you read accounts of archival research serendipity emerges as a refrain, a rhythmical repetition which emits signs that there must be something different, something more [or less] than pure chance.

‘Each initial feeling is an “expressive sign”, giving rise to the creative process that will make it come into being as the feeling of a subject’ Stengers has beautifully written about Whitehead’s understanding of human experience. (2011: 427) So far in this paper I have taken an instant from my archival research in the French seamstresses’ archives to illuminate the emergence of an initial feeling and then think around the process of understanding, as well as the creation of new ideas and concepts, while immersed in ‘the stubborn fact’ of archival research. What I have argued is that as researchers we are not always cognitively aware of how busily modes of perception function before we enter the phase of conceptual analysis, where of course conscious knowledge emerges.

But once we have been entangled in the process of archival research, there are problems to be solved, questions to be answered, tasks to be fulfilled, work to be done. It is this anticipation of work to be done that sets off the flight of imagination,

Stengers (2011, 462) has commented drawing on Etienne Souriau's notion of the *œuvre à faire*, as an adventure of human experience:

In fact, if the poet did not already love the poem a bit before writing it, if all those who think of a future world that is to be brought in life did not find, in their dreams on this subject, some amazed premonitions of the presence called for, if, in a word, the waiting for the work was amorphous, there would no doubt be no creation. (Souriau 2009: 206)

Despite its institutional constraints and limitations, archival research is a world enabling the flight of imaginative experience, giving form to 'work to be made', shaping new modes of thought and ultimately initiating creative processes in how we can understand the documents we are working with, as I will discuss next.

#### *Work to be made, œuvre à faire*

In trying to understand Milizet's storyline, as an *event* that made me a situated reader of the first feminist newspaper, I now want to discuss Souriau's notion of the *œuvre à faire*, work to be made (2009), as a methodological novelty embedded in the philosophies and genealogies of new materialisms. There are three characteristics of the *œuvre à faire* in Souriau's analysis: freedom, efficacy and fallibility (2009, 202). Let us see how these traits illuminate the initiation of the first feminist newspaper in nineteenth century France. The decision to found a 'little brochure, written and published by women only' was an agonistic act of establishing freedom. In initiating it, its first editors, Désirée Véret-Gay and Marie-Reine Guindorf,<sup>13</sup> materialised the idea of the importance of women's liberty and expressed their conviction that freedom would only come from women and not from any enlightened male leaders. This realisation of the need for autonomy and freedom emerged through their involvement in the Saint-Simonian movement: it was not an act of anger or revenge,

but the effect of a process of political maturity, a 'politicogenetic phenomenon' as I have called it (Tamboukou 2014b).

Their decision to found an autonomous newspaper, however needed to be realized. As Sourieau clearly puts it: 'The soul of a new society is not made by itself, it must be worked toward and those who work toward it really effect its genesis' (2009: 203). How was then this first newspaper effected? Being politically involved in the romantic socialist movements of their times the seamstresses knew that pamphleteering was an effective way of propagating their ideas. Indeed, the pamphlet emerged as a flexible means of political action and communication within the newly emerging public spheres of modernity (see Raymond 2003). There was a well-established publishing network amongst the Saint-Simonian circles and the seamstresses used it to advance their movement. But in doing so, they also knew of the perils and risks of the work they had undertaken: their movement was 'like climbing a mountain at night, always uncertain of the abyss that you might encounter' Souriaiu has poetically written (2009: 205), fleshing out the fallibility of the *œuvre à faire*.

Most importantly the 'little brochure' was not a project, in terms of concrete plans to be performed, managed or mastered. It was rather 'a dramatic exploration, a spontaneous adventure' (2009: 205); it was the waiting for the work that mattered, the process of making it, the ideas that animated it, the vectors of its forces, not its final form. Souriaiu rejects both the idea of finality and futurity for the *œuvre à faire*, as these configurations exclude the experience felt in the process of making. 'If you consider the *œuvre à faire* as a project' he writes, 'you miss, the delights of discovery, of exploration, in short the experiential input in the historical route of the advancement of the work' (2009: 207). The trajectory of the work includes the experience of all encounters in the process of realisation: the efforts of fidelity, painful acceptances, onerous refusals. The important element here is the process of 'instauration' of establishing something new and innovative: 'we determine what is going to come by exploring its path' Souriaiu wrote (2009: 207).

As creators of a new brochure, the seamstresses had to subsume themselves to the force of the work, to enable and facilitate its autonomous realisation and they did that by inviting all women to express their will, their fears and their dreams: 'what we mostly want is that women outgrow the condition of their spirit and the constraints that society keeps them in and that they dare speak with all the sincerity of their heart about what they think of and want for the future'<sup>14</sup> Marie-Reine Guindorf wrote in her editorial. Speaking the truth and speaking from the heart was what the seamstresses wanted from women to accomplish, but here also lay the perils of the adventure. Saint-Simonian women, as well as other proletarian women who joined their movement, wanted many different and often contradictory things and they expressed them through their articles and letters in the newspaper. Although its editors tried to keep the newspaper open to all opinions, they did not succeed in containing their disagreements. Désirée Véret -Gay withdrew from the editorial group after the first issue, while her last article appeared in the seventh issue. But despite its problems and shortcomings, 'the work waits for us' Souriau notes, 'if we make mistakes, it will return, always there, always questioning us: "what are you going to do?"' (2009: 209)

There are thus three situations to be considered in relation to the *œuvre à faire*: a) questioning—'what are you going to do?' the *œuvre* keeps asking the creator; b) exploitation—'by calling me, the work exploits me' Souriau notes (209: 211); and c) the necessary existential reference of the actualised work to the *œuvre à faire*, the distance between 'work made' and 'work to be made'—what Souriau calls 'the diastematic relation'. (203: 212) There is always *œuvre à faire*, work to be made for the world we are responsible for, Souriau concludes. (203: 215) It was precisely this sense of responsibility for women's world that animated the seamstresses and kept them going even when their work seemed to be failing vis-à-vis the disagreements or oppositions they confronted. Ultimately, it is not work that can ever fail but the world without work, without activity: if there is no work, there is no being: nothing is given in advance, everything is being constituted in the process of the *œuvre à faire*. Milizet's line that 'women alone will say what freedom they want' symbolically expresses the open futurity of the feminist *œuvre à faire*. It shows that the writer is aware of the differences revolving around the notion of freedom per se, while

recognizing the fact that it will be through a political process involving debates and persuasion that this notion will eventually take up meaning.

In engaging with the archive as an *œuvre à faire* I have thus followed tracks and trails in Souriau's analysis that I now want to map as a plane of methodological experiences and experiments, by way of conclusion. First, freedom in the sense of my 'power of choosing' according to Souriau (2009: 202), amongst the piles of archival documents that I found and read in the archive. By using Milizet's article as an exemplar amongst many, I have revisited the process of making choices and turning my attention to some documents, while downplaying and side-lining others. As Souriau puts it, this is a 'practical freedom' (2009: 202) or I what I will call a 'technology of making choices' conditioned by previous experiences, situated knowledges, embodied memories and future imaginings'. What the *œuvre à faire* highlights here however is 'the questioning situation', which my encounter with Milizet's article initiated when posing the question: 'what are you going to do?'. Milizet's article or indeed any archival document never reveals itself to the researcher; it rather initiates 'a mute dialogue' according to Souriau, challenging the researcher to respond to its presence by following its trails of meaning and understanding.

This is how efficacy, the second characteristic of the *œuvre à faire* was put in motion, also initiating the situation of the researcher's exploitation by the archival documents she has 'chosen' to work with. The researcher 'galvanizes all [his] powers of imagination or memory, [he] rummages through [his] life and soul, to find the response that [he] seeks' Souriau writes. (2009: 210) This surrender of the researcher to the world of his/her archival documents is one of the most salient experiences of being in the archive—Derrida's 'fever', Steedman's 'dust', Farge's 'diving', being amongst the most well-known metaphors that have been used to express it.<sup>15</sup> Throughout this paper I have shown how I have allowed myself to get entangled in the space/time/matter conditions of my archival documents and how the archive has smashed the researcher's frenzy clock opening up other spaces, initiating time travels, reflections, reveries, as well as on-site ethnographic visits.



In finally considering the ‘diastematic relation’ between documents read and documents to be read, I have shown how the conceptualization of the archive as an assemblage with various and multi-levelled connections, between and amongst documents within and beyond the archive has allowed their entanglements to navigate my reading, understanding and interpretation. Here, ‘the digital era’ has indeed revolutionized the practices and methodologies of archival research and has raised a wide range of theoretical, epistemological, methodological, and ethical issues that still need to be explored and addressed within the philosophies of new materialism. In changing our understanding of “what an archive is” to a realization of “what an archive can become, ‘the digital revolution’ (Tamboukou 2017) has also redefined Souriau’s ‘diastematic relation’ and more particularly the relation between existing archives and archival research to be made, in short the archive as an *œuvre à faire*.

#### Archive Sources

Apostolat des Femmes-La Femme Libre, available on line at :

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold Hunt is a curator at the British Library, see his contribution in a discussion about the politics of archival practices at:

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<http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/qa-how-archives-make-history>

[Accessed, November 14, 2014].

<sup>2</sup> This rich archive assemblage is available on-line, see

<http://www.oliveschreiner.org/> [Accessed, November 14, 2014] For a rich analysis and discussion of this work see, Stanley and Salter 2014, Stanley et al. 2013a, 2013b.

<sup>3</sup> *Emma Goldman Papers Project*, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/goldman/> (EGPP), is housed at the University of California, Berkeley. See Falk et. al., 2003, 2008, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://sites.google.com/site/mariatamboukoupersonalblog/home/research-projects>

<sup>5</sup> *Apostolat des Femmes-La Femme Nouvelle* 1(6), 45-47, October, 1832. Also published in Moses and Rabine, 1993, 291-292.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout the 3 years of its publication, 1830-1832 this newspaper changed many titles and subtitles that somehow reflect the ideological struggles within the 19<sup>th</sup> century French feminist movement. For a detailed discussion of these name changes, see Tamboukou, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> The Nobel laureat physicist Niels Bohr (1885-1962) was one of the founders of quantum physics and the most widely accepted interpretation of the quantum theory, which goes by the name of the Copenhagen interpretation. For a detailed discussion of Bohr's philosophy-physics, see Barad 2007.

<sup>8</sup> *De Anima*, 427b, 16-17.

<sup>9</sup> 'Women alone will say what freedom they want', *Apostolat des Femmes-La Femme Nouvelle* 1(6), 46, October, 1832, available on line at:

<http://gallicalabs.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k85525j> [Accessed, 18-4-2015]

<sup>10</sup> All addresses were around the Sentier, the garment industry district in Paris and Le Marais, where I worked in the archives of *La Bibliothèque Historique de la ville de Paris* and *La Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal*. See the book archive, for links to these addresses: <https://sites.google.com/site/mariatamboukou/the-book-archive/mapping-the-seamstress>

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of digitised archives and documents, see Moore et al., 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Previously in my research I have drawn on music to show how my work has always been an on-going process of finding the rhythm between genealogical and ethnographic approaches to research. (see Tamboukou 2012)

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<sup>13</sup> When founding this first feminist newspaper the two editors chose their own names: Jean-Désirée and Marie-Reine. For a discussion of these name wars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century feminist movement, see Tamboukou 2015, particularly chapter 3.

<sup>14</sup> *La Femme Libre-Apostolat des Femmes* 1(1), 7. August 15, 1832.

<sup>15</sup> For a critical discussion of these metaphors, see Moore et al., 206, particularly chapter 1.