

## Chapter 3

### Archival Rhythms: Narrativity in the Archive

Maria Tamboukou

#### Encounters and Entanglements in the Archive

How many ways are there to engage with archival research and how has digital and other new media changed the way we do it? How important are the questions we bring into the archive and what are their possibilities and limitations? How do we deal with eruptions and unexpected encounters in an archive? What does it mean 'to feel' narratives in the archive and what is the role of spatio-temporal rhythms? How can we understand the researcher and the archive as an entanglement rather than as separate and independent entities?

In exploring these questions, this chapter draws on my research in the Archives and Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library. This involved me working with documents of women trade unionists in the garment industry in the first half of the twentieth century, and more particularly with the papers of Rose Pesotta (1896-1965) and Fannia Cohn (1885-1962), two of the very few women vice-presidents in the history of a predominantly women's union, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). Despite their importance in the history of the American Labour History, they have received little attention in the relevant literature with the notable exceptions of Elaine Leeder's (1993) biographical study of Pesotta and Ricki Cohen-Myers' (1976) PhD thesis on Cohn. Among the many themes that have arisen from my research and which have informed a range of conference papers, methodology workshops and journal articles (Tamboukou, 2013a, 2014a, 2014c, 2015a), in this chapter I explore the paths of a narrative sensibility within the archive, something which informs all my work on this project.

In particular, the chapter focuses on how genealogical questions and spatio-temporal rhythms have an impact on how researchers orient ourselves within the archive, how we follow specific storylines, narrative personae and analytical insights, and how we write about them. It is striking from my archival research at the NYPL that, although working in the same institution for two consecutive summers, my experience was very different from one to the other, not only in terms of the surrounding space, but also regarding the nature of the archival documents: 'real' papers in 2011, microfilm versions in 2012. As I will show, there were things to gain and things to lose from both, which calls into question simplistic divisions between old and new ways of doing archival research and shows its complexity and sometimes unpredictability. In addressing these questions, the chapter unfolds in three sections: imagining the archive, working in the thickness of archival research, and the return from the archive.

#### Imagining the Archive

The questions we carry with us into an archive are important because they will have shaped the preparatory work we have done for the research, which is both theoretical and practical. As archival researchers, we mostly

work within limited periods of time and on relatively low budgets, so careful preparation is as important as the actual research. It is the time before the researcher arrives at the archive that I want to consider here, by raising a seemingly simple question: when does archival work begin? Looking back at my journeys in a number of archives in the UK, France and the USA where I have conducted research over the past twenty years, one of the patterns I can discern is that of multiple beginnings. Following a research question and immersing ourselves in the relevant literature is of course a recurrent mode of tracking and identifying archival sources, but it is only one of many. Sometimes beginnings emerge while we already work in an archive and we encounter a line of writing, a document, a person or a source that we want to trace further. But even when such new beginnings emerge in the middle of a process, they still demand planning and preparation to be realised as concrete archival projects. Although deriving from my own experience of doing archival research, this understanding is transferable to different contexts and can be helpful for a great variety of archival research circumstances.

Archival research is a process that is conceived as part of a wider research project, but which develops its own life, puts forward its own demands and requires specific responses to the questions and problems it raises. The latter are both intellectual and material and always interrelated as such. The material conditions of possibility for archival research always include intricate space/time arrangements, both local and global. Take for example my NYPL project on the papers of women trade-unionists. This started through my reading of autobiographical documents of seamstresses in the first half of the twentieth century; Rose Pesotta emerged as an intriguing figure in this body of literature, and this is how I decided to follow her in the archive. The only way I could have access to her papers was physically to visit the New York Public Library; but in order to secure funding, I had to make sure that her papers were not available in any digitised or other form that would be accessible in different and possibly cheaper ways. The fact that the Library had a detailed catalogue of her papers (NYPL/RPP/MSS2390) was immensely helpful: this gave me a very good idea of the extent and overall size of the collection, which helped calculate the study-leave time I needed to ask for, and also guided practical but essential arrangements, such as travel expenses, as well as accommodation and subsistence costs. In this light, the on-line resources of the NYPL were a gift: they helped my research in ways that would not have been possible twenty years earlier when I made my first trip to an archive. This was in 1994 when I visited the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick to read Clara Collet's diary (Tamboukou, 2003). I remember phoning the archive beforehand to make sure that a copy of the diary was indeed there. I knew that the original was with Jane Miller, Collet's great niece (Miller, 1990), who I had talked to in relation to my PhD project on women teachers' technologies of the self (Tamboukou, 2003). The archivist told me that they had no such diary, but a week later I received a letter from her, apologising for having 'misguided me' and confirming that a copy of the diary was indeed there. All I would have to do now would be to type 'Clara Collet' in a Google search and a lot of information would be at the

tips of my fingers (eg. MRC/CCP). As this suggests, locating inventory aids, where they exist, is a very important step for any type of archival research.

But once in the archive and new beginnings emerge, around people, documents and sources that had not been thought about when designing the research. In my case with Pesotta's papers, two new projects erupted from the archive: a) the importance of women workers' education, a theme that made me return to the NYPL the following year to work with Fannia Cohn's papers; and b) Pesotta's epistolary friendship with Emma Goldman through her involvement in the anarchist labour movement, something that sent me to Emma Goldman's papers at Berkeley the following year as well (Tamboukou, 2013b). It goes without saying that new space/time preparations and funding applications had to be initiated, but this is the nature as well as the excitement of new and multiple beginnings.

What also came out of these archival projects is the importance of considering migration in the gendered history of the labour movement. While both Pesotta and Cohn were Jewish immigrants who fled the Russian pogroms at the end of the nineteenth century, Italian women immigrants in New York also emerged as an important group to be considered (Guglielmo, 2010). In looking for archival sources for this thematic strand of my research, I came across oral interviews with women garment workers and more specifically the collection, 'Italian Immigrant Women in New York City's Garment Industry Oral Histories, 1976-1978' in the Sophia Smith Collection (SSC/IIW/MS556). While contacting the archivists of Smith College, however, I found that they could send me digitised copies of the oral interviews I was looking for, which have now been added to the archive of my overall research project of writing a feminist genealogy of the seamstress (Tamboukou, 2015d), my version of the 'archive of the other archive' discussed in Chapter 2. The possibilities of working with 'real papers', with microfilm or with digitised versions of documents in archival research has received much discussion (eg. Nicholson, 2013; Berry, 2012; Rogers, 2008). It is the use of microfilm I want to discuss next, placing it in the wider context of 'the digital turn'.

### *Archives and Microfilms*

26/6/2012: First day in the archive: I have woken up feeling slightly jet-lagged but not quite ... I carry a small beige box full of [microfilm] reels in my hands while going down the stairs of the New York Public Library. How long ago has it been since I have worked with reels? I suddenly remember my PhD and lonely days at the Queen Mary and Westfield college archives in Mile End, reading the unpublished papers of its founder, Constance Maynard - which by the way have now all been digitised (QM/CMP). But this is different: I am not alone anymore. The basement of the NYPL is buzzing. I try to start with hesitation and remorse. I so much preferred my experience of the 2011 summer, when I was working with Rose Pesotta's 'real papers' in the secluded area of the second floor manuscripts division of this same library... As I find a machine that both works and is somehow in a quiet corner, I realise that I can see the Empire State Building through the window I am sitting next to. It feels as I am at the heart of the city where thousands of women worked and fought for their rights and as I start

reading the first reel I feel that something is happening to me and my work...

This is an entry from my research diary from the summer of 2012, when I returned to the NYPL archives to look at Fannia Cohn's papers, funded through a British Academy small grant. Although I knew that Cohn's papers were available in thirteen reels of microfilm (\*ZZ-35052), I had still thought that working with the actual papers would have still been an option, which it was not. I only had the chance to touch and smell Cohn's boxes when I worked with her photographs on just one day during the whole month I worked at the NYPL archives. Instead I found myself disappointedly carrying a small box full of microfilm reels to the basement of the library, leaving the lovely section of the manuscripts division on the second floor to those lucky researchers whose documents had not been turned into the cold microfilms that I was going to work with for a whole month. Everything was different in July 2012, then, even the weather was unbearably hot in relation to 2011, or so it had felt...

But after overcoming the first shock and learning or rather remembering the ropes of using the microfilm reels, avoiding broken or unfocused machines and securing places to sit that were quieter than others, new possibilities emerged. Apart from the obvious fact that the reels give the researcher the opportunity to magnify texts and thus read difficult handwriting or black and thick typewriter fonts, what came as a nice surprise was that I had much more freedom with using documents from across the collection: they were in the form of films and therefore not sacred any more, so I could 'do more things' with them. Take Cohn's 'Correspondence', for example, which together with her 'Writings' are the biggest sections of her papers, comprising eight boxes out of thirteen. They have been classified as 'Letters received' (Boxes 1, 2, and 4) and 'Letters sent' (Boxes 4 and 5) in the initial collection (NYPL/FCP/MSS588). If I were to work with the Boxes, I had first of all to read the 'received' files before I could ask for the 'sent' ones - the order could be reversed of course - and I could never have more than two Boxes in front of me. Things were different with the microfilm reels, however. I could move fast forward or backwards, find the sequence of a letter immediately and see how the argument had developed, twisted or changed. I could also more easily search for a particular sender or addressee who seemed to be relevant to an epistolary conversation or debate and thus put together missing pieces of epistolary puzzles. This freedom of surfing the microfilms gave me a better understanding of the stories that were unfolded in these documents, the issues that were at stake, as well as the role of the different 'dramatis personae' in them ([http://www.oliveschreiner.org/dramatis\\_personae](http://www.oliveschreiner.org/dramatis_personae)). Let us consider a moving letter that Theresa Wolfson (1897-1972), a labour economist and professor at Brooklyn's college, sent to Cohn on 6 May 1922:

As I came to the desk to write my letter, my eye fell upon the letter you were writing- and my attention was riveted to one word - 'lonely'. That word followed me - I felt it so deeply - and your extreme loneliness that I read the few lines - and for this I hope you will forgive me! Why should I misunderstand your loneliness - your feeling of

unhappiness? [...] It is only when one knocks, and knocks, and knocks - that one can perceive the real 'you' and how many people are there ready to knock when souls can be had for the asking? And even when you and I are talking on a perfect basis of friendship -your work, yourself as a part of your work, creeps in and you are no longer yourself - but what you would be - what you would like your work to be! (FCP/NYPL/MSS588/Cor/LR)

Amongst the many themes that struck me when I first read this letter was the question of how Wolfson could have had such close access to her friend's desk and why she wrote this letter from Cleveland, when she could have talked to her about it in New York, where they worked together. Eventually I wrote a paper about this epistolary exchange in terms of the relational stage of recognition that opens up between the two letter writers (Tamboukou, 2014c). But what I want to highlight here is the way I worked while still in the archive to configure this relationship: by moving fast forward to 'Letters sent', I could retrieve Cohn's response, written only nine days later, on 15 May 1922:

...Do you wonder that working under such conditions for an ideal that is dear to one's heart, one can never sufficiently detach oneself from one's work, and willingly or unwillingly he is forced to become part of it... there are those amongst the few, who possess deep feelings and who refuse to accept things as they find them... they are rather complex, and it is only 'when one knocks and knocks and knocks' that one can break through one's real self. (FCP/NYPL/MSS588/Cor/LS)

By having immediate access to Cohn's response, I was able to put their epistolary conversation in context. But also having parallel access to the other parts of the catalogue and particularly her 'Writings' (Boxes 6-8), as well as the 'ILGWU documents' (Boxes 9-12), I was able to trace the space/time conditions of this epistolary exchange: Wolfson was staying in the same hotel room with Cohn in Cleveland, where they had both gone to attend the ILGWU Cleveland convention, which took place 1 - 12 May 1922. This is how Wolfson had inadvertently read her friend's letter; Cohn left Cleveland before the end of the convention, but Wolfson stayed on and felt the need to write to her friend about failures in their communication.

I have used this epistolary exchange as an example to show how the microfilm form has supported what I later discuss as the narrative fabric of archival research. Although deriving from my own research, this is certainly not a unique or unrepeatable case: researchers in the digital humanities have already written about the possibilities that are opened up by digital collections, particularly in relation to the 'contextual mass' and the multiple connections they can facilitate between and among texts, authors and documents (eg. Flanders, 2014). Cold as they were, the microfilm reels opened wider vistas in the documents and their context, and did so while I was still in the archive and therefore able to reread documents, revisit details that had initially gone unnoticed, see their relation with other documents in the same or different catalogue series, or photocopy important letters of a particular epistolary encounter. Indeed, the fact that

all the machines were connected to a printer gave me the opportunity to have a photocopy of whatever letter or document I was interested in immediately, without the need to fill in forms and have to wait for a month until the digital copies could land in my inbox, as had been the case the previous year.

It should be noted that, according to the NYPL regulations, you have to present your photocopies when leaving the archive to make sure that you have not gone over the limit of what researchers are allowed to photocopy; but this is also because you need the receipt to claim the cost from your funder, if you have one. The immediate access to and possession of photocopies significantly changed and enhanced the things that I could do when the archive was closed: having more time with the documents opened up possibilities for contextual information to fill in missing gaps of my understanding and orientation and ultimately it changed the rhythms of my working in the thickness of the archive, a theme I discuss in the next section of the chapter.

Having an overview of the entire collection literally in my hands, I could also more easily discern Cohn's epistolary strategies and tactics, feel something of the mood she was in when writing, and last but not least I could see the patterns of silences arising from the gaps between and interstices of her letters and other writings. I do not want to say that this understanding of the archive was an effect of using the microfilms; as I will discuss in the last section of the chapter, all of the things discussed above are included in the analytical and interpretational practices at play during 'the return from the archive' (Farge, 1989). What the microfilms gave me, however, was an immediate feeling that such interpretations could further unfold; in a way they provided shortcuts for my understanding and initiated the shaping of some of my analytical paths and directions. Here the question was not so much how to 'do things quickly', and more how to 'do things in time', for my stay in New York was limited and expensive and returning would be difficult.

What I want to show by looking back at my experiences of working with different types of documents in the same archive for two successive years is the growing multi-modality of archival research, which calls for more openness towards the effects of the digital turn. Working with microfilms is just one way - and a rather old one - of thinking about a wide range of theoretical, epistemological, methodological and ethical issues that the digital turn has brought forward. As Adrian Cunningham has rightly noted, we need to be more attentive to the differences between concepts such as 'digital curation', 'digital archives' and 'digital libraries', since 'the phrase digital archive has been misused and even hijacked, and that this misuse obscures fundamental issues associated with the capture and long-term management of archival resources' (Cunningham, 2008: 530). One thing is certain: the need to recognise the fact that archival documents are transposed not only when they are filmed, photographed or digitised, but also when they are transcribed. 'With an electronic scan... I can read words that I would not be able to see', Carolyn Steedman (2011: 327) has commented about her digital experiences, and in doing so she has also acknowledged the epistemological questions that arise from such 'technologies of retrieval'. These are wider questions we raise and discuss

throughout the book (see in particular Chapters 1 and 4 and the Epilogue), since they are relevant for a wide spectrum of archival research in the humanities and the social sciences.

Digitised, filmed or photographed documents should not therefore be considered as surrogates of the originals, but as kinds of documents in their own right that impose and indeed demand situated and tailored methodological approaches, as well as different analytical and interpretational strategies and tactics. The digital archive has radically shifted our understanding of 'what an archive is' to a realisation of 'what an archive can become'. Understanding the specificities of the digital turn provides transferable skills that can be applied in many cases and very diverse contexts. What I want to highlight in concluding this section is that digital archives are here to stay and archival researchers need to learn how to work with them, as well as how to include them as important components in the assemblage of our archival practices. In this sense the digital turn has not only changed what it means to do archival research, but has also greatly influenced the epistemologies and ontologies that underpin archival projects.

### **Working in the Thickness of Archival Research: Space/Time/Matter Rhythms**

In the previous section I have discussed the imaginary phase of archival research when researchers plan and prepare a visit to an archive, and have also looked at some aspects of the digital turn as one node of the multi-modal nature of archival research. Drawing on my experience of doing research at the NYPL archives, I have considered positive and negative effects of unexpected encounters in the archive. Indeed, no matter how well we have prepared, once we find ourselves in an archive, we have to adapt to new conditions and contexts, synchronise ourselves with its space/time rhythms, and in this way become organically entangled in it. It should be remembered here that archives and libraries are powerful power/knowledge institutions and like other organisations impose strict time/space restrictions and regulations. They all have different opening hours, usually complex systems of ordering and delivering documents on your desk, restrictions about how many files or boxes it is permitted to have in front of you, as well as diverse arrangements about photocopying, photographing or otherwise reproducing archival documents. Over the years I have worked in archives, I have understood that allowing myself time to get to know these rules and adapt to different archive systems, as well as to the diverse rules and regulations prevailing, is as important as finding, reading or transcribing documents. In this light, 'start slowly' would be my suggestion for researchers visiting an archive for the first time. But as the research proceeds, we also have to take into consideration that speediness and slowness should be considered in their interrelation, for archival research is a question of rhythm, and it is the depth of the understandings that result that we are primarily interested in.

What is also important to bear in mind is that researchers need not to upset the archivists they will need to work with. The archive is their workplace, while we researchers will only temporarily reside there: we are therefore welcome guests, but guests who need to know how to behave

appropriately. Moreover archivists have different personalities and expectations and practices that seemed fine to one archivist on Monday morning, might not go down well with their colleague in charge on Tuesday afternoon. In this light, a researcher cannot just storm an archive and do things instantly from the beginning, no matter how experienced, well-published or academically famous they are. In this connection, there were cautionary stories about ‘prestigious’ although unnamed academics told in a paper entitled ‘How researchers can frustrate the work of archivists’, given at a conference on *Failure in the Archives* in October 2014 in London (<https://failureinthearchives.wordpress.com/2014/09/02/conference-programme/>)

It is also worth remembering that a researcher’s relationship with archivists may continue well after leaving the archive in question. They are the people we may need to contact for additional or missing information, or if more photocopies are needed, for instance. It is these archivists who will also facilitate permission to reproduce and other copyright processes when the stage of publishing research outputs is reached. Archivists are thus importantly involved in the whole research process and acknowledging their contribution should be part of archival research ethics more widely, a topic returned to in Chapter 6.

In raising these concerns, my point is that the materiality and sociality of the archive is crucial for the entire research process and that as researchers we should not separate the physical, social and intellectual dimensions of the archival research we carry out. But what does it mean to become organically involved in an archive? I address this question by drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s (2004) ideas about the ‘rhythmanalysis’ of different spaces in relation to what I have called the ‘heterotemporalities’ of archival research (Tamboukou, 2011).

### *Finding the Rhythms of ‘Other Spaces’*

‘What we live are rhythms, rhythms experienced subjectively’, Lefebvre wrote in his major work, *The Production of Space* (1991: 206). But it was only at the end of his academic life, when perhaps he had more time to indulge his love for music (being a pianist as well as an intellectual and activist) that he wrote a small book on *Rhythmanalysis*. The book was published in French after his death in 1992. However, it took twelve years to be translated in English, being published in 2004, which explains perhaps why this approach has yet to be taken up more fully in methodological discussions in the social sciences. The fact that Lefebvre’s three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* - wherein *Rhythmanalysis* appears in context - was only published in its full form in 2014 throws further light on the neglect of this approach.

In following Lefebvre’s method of rhythmanalysis, already briefly presented in Chapter 1, I shall consider space/time rhythms as constitutive of archival practices and therefore of the knowledges that can derive from archival research. An archive is a dynamic space traversed and indeed constituted by multiple rhythms and is thus open to new ideas and encounters. Moreover, an archive is not restricted within buildings or other architectural arrangements, majestic though some of them might be. Conceived as an entanglement of space/time rhythms, the archive extends

into the world, both in terms of its immediate locality as well as with reference to its global position in colonial histories, as influentially discussed by Ann Stoler (2009).

This is where my situated position as a sociologist in the archive has been at its best, since I have considered myself as an ethnographer and in a classic ethnographic way I have gone beyond the archive. This does not mean that in 'going beyond' I have downplayed the importance of the archival stuff, the things that need to be pointed to as crucial in advancing knowledge and understanding. Rather, my point is to emphasise that we cannot possibly separate material and intellectual processes in configuring and mapping archival worlds. This stance of holding on to the importance of the archival stuff and not merely downgrading them to a backcloth of other research approaches, such as ethnographic fieldwork, is important and we return to it throughout the book and particularly in the last chapter.

I have written elsewhere about my visits to all the epistolary addresses that Gwen John (1876-1939), an expatriate Welsh artist in Paris, wrote letters from to her *maitre*, lover and mentor Auguste Rodin, as well as about the effects that these spatial encounters had upon the direction of my research and my overall understanding of John's extravagant narratives (Tamboukou, 2010b, 2011). During the two summers of my research in the NYPL, I followed the rhythms of New York, a city that was the hub of the US garment industry in the first half of the twentieth century. Living in the 'fashion district' of middle Manhattan and walking up and down streets still full of garment workshops was thus a spatial experience that was entangled in the daily rhythms of my archival understanding. Indeed, spatial and temporal serendipities had an unexpected impact on my research. When I first went to New York in summer 2011, I chose my accommodation in the 'fashion district': it was within walking distance from the NYPL and it felt comfortable as I had not lived in New York before. It was quite accidentally that my visit in 2011 coincided with the centenary commemoration of the *Triangle Fire*, one of the most tragic events in the history of the garment industry in the US, when 146 young immigrant women garment workers died while trying to escape the burning building wherein they were locked (Stein, 1962). Reading women's immediate impressions of this event in their letters was thus a moving experience framed within different temporalities: 'I suppose you are still waiting for the letter of which I spoke to you in my card of last week yet. I could not write, I could not do anything for the last two or three weeks, the Triangle tragedy had a terrible affect upon me', Pauline Newman (1887-1986) wrote to her friend Rose Schneiderman (1882-1972) on 12 April 1911, just a month after the disaster (RSP/TAM/18). For Cohn, the Triangle Fire was not just a shock, but also a turning point in her life, as she wrote in an autobiographical letter to a friend much later in her life, on 8 May 1953:

It was the Triangle Fire that decided my life's course. This tragedy influenced then my decision to join the labor movement. I faintly remember joining the protest demonstration on the East Side against this tragedy, but I cannot recollect the streets where we marched. (FCP/NYPL/MSS588/Cor/LS)

Reading these letters a hundred years later in the heart of a city that staged a series of mnemonic practices to remember these events, and also reflecting upon women's current position in the world of work, had a significant impact upon my own affective understanding in the archive (<http://www.wnyc.org/story/118644-100-years-later-remembering-triangle-shirtwaist-factory-fire/>). Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000:113) has argued that a relation of contemporaneity allows historical time to unfold and disrupts 'the empty, secular and homogeneous time of history'. In this light, leaping into *Triangle Fire* times and places became a condition of possibility for a genealogical understanding of the hardships of women garment workers' lives. I read Pauline Newman's letters in the archives of the Tamiment Library, which is literally round the corner from the Triangle Fire Building, after having visited the exhibition that the students of New York University had co-curated as part of the commemoration events (<http://www.nyu.edu/greyart/exhibits/shirtwaist/shirtwaisthome.html>). This opened up a third space of understanding where 'time present and time past collapsed' (Dinshaw, 2007: 121). Indeed, by reading letters written in different times - just after the event, as well as forty years later - by women who had witnessed it, and who had also worked to make it part of the history of political struggles around women's labour, made me feel like a body immersed in multiple and heterogeneous times. It was here that the Foucauldian genealogical framework of my archival research made it possible for all these different times to be held together, a way of re-imagining the past as the only way of revisiting it: 'one "fictions" history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one "fictions" a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth', Foucault (1980b: 193) has influentially written.

In 2012, I chose to live in Brooklyn as it was cheaper and I felt more comfortable moving around the city in my second summer there. But Brooklyn was also the place where Pesotta as well as most of the Jewish seamstresses lived. Retracing their steps and daily journeys from home to work thus created a different affective space for their writings to be read and understood. Let me provide an example from my reading of Pesotta's 'fictional diary'; it gives an almost breathless image of the garment industry working rhythms, which the alarm clock seemed to be ticking incessantly day after day:

*Monday, 7 A.M.* The alarm clock rings.... Riding in the subway, there is enough time to look over the Want section. In the proletarian Rits (The Automat cafeteria in the Garment Centre) I meet friends. Many are out of work ... usually this is our busy season, but now it seems there will be no busy season for us... A friend and I answer an advertisement. The employer without any questions gives us two machines - he seems to be rushed... the place is nice and airy and the workers seem to be more human... We work the whole day. The employer is anxious that we stay to work overtime- everybody works overtime- we stay...

*Tuesday, 7 A.M.* I do not wait for the alarm clock to wake me. Am up early to get to work on time... We stroll along the Garment Avenue meeting friends still in search of work... In the newly found shop

again... The workers throw hostile glances towards our section... a bad sign... we work till noon. My work finished, I take it over to the counter; there is nothing more for me- no more work! We decide to spend the rest of the afternoon at the library.

*Wednesday, 7 A.M.* Again the cursed alarm clock, the newspaper Help Wanted section, the “Ritz”- a new job. This time it is a dark and gloomy joint... At noon in the market, shall inquire among friends if anyone has heard of a job... Gertrude comes soon. She has found a new job where another worker is needed. She has already spoken to the employer about me - we can go up this afternoon.

*Thursday, Ditto A.M.* Work, Work, Work, I must go to work... My garment finished, about ten o'clock in the morning, I must leave... It is raining, I shall seek shelter at the office of the union. At the office someone has a job for me, but he seems to be reluctant, telling me that it is a tough job. The employer is a lady and everyone seems to hesitate about going to work for a LADY-BOSS.

*Friday, 7 A.M.* Luckily it is the last day of the week. The strain is nerve wrecking! The whole night I have dreamed about garment mannequins... I am called to the mannequin - something does not fit. [...] It seems whatever was good yesterday is extremely wrong today. My prejudice against the LADY is growing... The day is coming to an end. I am exhausted... I shall quit now, this very minute.  
(RPP/NYPL/MSS2390/Writings, emphases in the text).

The garment industry was indeed organised along specific and intense spatio-temporal rhythms that women workers had to learn how to synchronise with on a daily, weekly, monthly, seasonal and annual basis. In writing this fictionalised diary, which clearly draws on remembered real life experiences, Pesotta was able to condense the rhythms of working life in a few pages and thus to freeze the continuously passing moments of being-in-the-world-of-work. Although dates are amongst the usual temporal frames through which we remember, it is rhythms that structure the memory of work of the diary above. Remembering time is not easy and is always inextricably linked to particular spaces. Since temporality and spatiality are always entangled in memory, the New York garment district as it appears in the diary extracts above becomes the memory frame within which bodies, places, objects and events are presented and emotions and affects are expressed. It also becomes a frame within which we, as readers of the diary, can imagine what is remembered and written about.

It is at this point that my own rhythms of living in New York were entangled with echoes or distant vibrations of Pesotta's diary rhythms. Living in Brooklyn I could feel Pesotta's frustration in the morning subway: most probably we were travelling along the same line to go to Manhattan's fashion district. Moreover, during the summer of 2012, the NYPL had an interesting exhibition about 'Lunch Hour in NYC': it was while visiting this exhibition (during my own lunch-hour) that I learnt about the New Yorkers' excitement of 'the automat cafeterias' that Pesotta wrote about in the

Monday entry of her diary above. Both my experience of the exhibition as well as my reading of Pesotta's diary changed by actually realising that 'lunch' acquired its modern identity in New York as a means to accommodate the long working hours of a relatively new metropolis. Lunch was therefore an effect of industrialisation that merged bodily, industrial and urban rhythms in a daily practice that we take for granted today (<http://exhibitions.nypl.org/lunchhour/exhibits/show/lunchhour>).

Thus, during my research at the NYPL archives, my actuality as a researcher was becoming a blurring sensation of past and present images, spaces and times. This co-existence of different spacialities, temporalities and urban rhythms influenced my understanding, as well as my theoretical and methodological orientations within the archive. It was an understanding that I could not have experienced sitting at my desk in London and simply working with digitised versions of documents. To return to the debate around the digital turn, the materiality of the archive does matter, while digitisation changes not only the form and content of archival collections, but also the ways we read and understand archival documents, and last but not least it drastically changes the ways we do archival research and 'feel the archive' (Tamboukou, 2015b).

In drawing on my understanding of Pesotta's diary rhythms, I also want to highlight that archival methods are often combined with other approaches such as ethnographic fieldwork. In this light, attention to the physicality of the research is not only a rich source of inspiration and ideas, but also necessary in terms of how to make better sense of our sources and their complex interrelation. Attention to 'rhythmanalysis' places the researcher in the middle of his/her sense-data, thus challenging the distinction between subjects and objects of research, the world as it is and the world as we perceive it. As I have written elsewhere, archival research can be considered in parallel with the epistemological restrictions and limitations of any scientific experiment conducted within a laboratory, including acknowledging that the way an archival project is set up will effect its outcomes and findings (Tamboukou, 2014b). It is while living/thinking in between other spaces and different temporalities and in the realm of the sociological imagination that ideas have emerged, themes have been followed, ideas have been coined, and also 'narrative personae' - that is, archival people, both real (as they did live) and imaginary (in terms of my internal conversations with them) have come into life, as I discuss next.

### *A Feminist Genealogist in the Archive*

The researcher goes to an archive with certain questions in mind, since 'the documents do not speak unless someone asks them to verify, that is, to make true, some hypothesis', as Paul Ricoeur (2004: 177) has aptly noted. As I suggested in the first section of this chapter, there is no doubt that our research questions initially orient us within the archive, and they are necessary in how we prepare, plan and organise our research, including the selections from the archive we will explore. The question of how to gender the memory of work was central to my research in the NYPL archives and shaped my initial theoretical departures, as well as my methodological strategies. Following the genealogical quest of problematising the present, I wanted to excavate the conditions for needlework to emerge as the

feminine 'labour problem' *par excellence* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: how has the seamstress been marginalised in the social and political movements in modernity? and why is women's work still a riddle even amongst feminist theorisations and debates? These were the genealogical questions that I took with me into the archive.

But instead of seeing history as a continuous development of an ideal schema, genealogy is oriented to discontinuities. Throughout the genealogical exploration, there are frequent disruptions, uneven and haphazard processes of dispersion, that call into question the supposed linear evolution of history. In this context of reversal, the present is not theorised as the result of a meaningful development, but rather as an event, a random result of the interweaving of relations of power and domination. Genealogy as a method of analysis searches in the maze of dispersed events to trace discontinuities, recurrences and play, where traditional historiography sees continuous development, progress and seriousness. Women's work in the garment industry is a paradigmatic case of uneven historical developments and its study seriously deviates from the canon of analysing the industrial formations in modernity.

Archival research is thus catalytic for the emergence of the event, indeed it is in itself an event, an eruption that may radically shift our habitual ways of reasoning and understanding, as Arlette Farge (1989) has remarked. What erupted as an event in my NYPL research was the richness of women workers' cultural lives. I was there to excavate their involvement in the socio-political movements of modernity, but amongst their agonistic labour literature I found novels, poems, literary criticism essays and theatrical plays (Tamboukou, 2013a, 2015a). These unexpected encounters made me return to the NYPL for a second year and had a huge impact on my research interests and 'objects of inquiry'. Indeed, the events that erupt in the process of doing archival research often radically change our practices, our prior knowledges, as well as the objects of our inquiry.

This is why pointing to 'the archival stuff', following it and attending to its specificities is so important, as we flag up throughout this book. In further understanding the contingencies in the way 'the present' has come to be what it is, researchers need to be inspired to think about other possible ways of being that have not been actualised, and which can become possibilities for the future. As a direct way of facing the past, archival research makes researchers more intensely conscious of how past, present and future co-exist and the part this plays in how we understand and make sense of the social.

But, given the eruptive nature of the archive, what exactly is happening when we fly away from the grounds of our initial understanding? Alfred North Whitehead has offered a lovely metaphor for flying and understanding: '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 rent acute by rational interpretation' (Whitehead, 1985: 5). Interestingly, Whitehead talks about 'the thin air of imaginative generalisation', which in the case of the archive is always juxtaposed to the thickness of archival research as a laboratory of memory. The study of memory reveals a thickness, in the sense that it possesses a depth not

penetrable directly by consciousness. What we are dealing with, then, is a rhythmical movement between the thickness of memory and the thinness of imagination within the specific space/time continuum of the archival research we are entangled in, our research experiment, which in my case regarding analysing narratives I have called 'narrative phenomenon' (Tamboukou, 2014b).

Thus, while working with women trade unionists' papers at the NYPL archives, I was at the same time looking at the histories of the US labour movement and at the gendered power relations, discourses, ideologies and practices that had created conditions of possibility for such archival documents to be created. Surprisingly enough, I did not have to worry about external institutional selections and deselections, for the simple reason that it was Cohn and Pesotta themselves who had carefully selected the papers they bequeathed in the NYPL archives. In this sense, their archives were considered in the light of wider autobiographical discursive limitations and constraints as influentially theorised by Stanley (1992) amongst others (see also Smith and Watson, 1998). Of course such 'archival technologies of the self', as I have called them (Tamboukou, 2014a), come as no surprise: both women were aware that they had to look after their legacy (see also Chapter 5). This is after all the concern of many single women, whose memory may be lost because there is nobody to enact mnemonic and commemoration practices after they die.

What is important for social researchers to remember when working in archives is that archives are institutions of power/knowledge relations and formations, an acknowledgement that should mobilise a critical approach to the knowledges and memories they hold and offer (*History of the Human Sciences*, 1998, 1999). However, archives are more than that; it is their labile and open spaces, as well as the counter-discourses and counter-narratives that their dusty documents carry with them, that a researcher who is interested in 'othering' the history of the present can trace and explore. What emerged from my research in the NYPL was Farge's and Foucault's taste of the archive, *le goût de l'archive*: the archive became a heterotopic place of archaeological excavation, a site of genealogical deconstruction, and most importantly, a laboratory of memory (and forgetting). It is therefore in deploying genealogical strategies that I have worked in the archive, looking at women workers' narratives as Foucauldian 'grey dusty documents' (Tamboukou, 2011). These documents have re-enacted marginalised voices and subjugated knowledges from the archives of the memory of work: they have textualised the conditions of women workers' lives and have mapped material and discursive entanglements between workspaces and personal spaces. In so doing they have foregrounded the intimate, intense and often invisible ways through which women workers lived their workspaces, populated them with ideas, beliefs and everyday practices, and also imagined them differently. As already noted, it is because the archive is not a monolithic space that different histories can emerge while we excavate it. It is in this light that the archive has been conceptualised as a heterotopia, a spatial notion in Foucauldian analytics, already introduced in Chapter 1, I have drawn on in my work with archival documents (Tamboukou, 2000, 2012). Genealogical investigation in the heterotopic spaces of the archive is a site for counter-

memories to emerge and for mnemonic practices to be revealed and deconstructed, wherever our research area or field is located. But how are these diverse experiences, different spaces and heterogeneous times brought together? This is what I discuss in the next section of the chapter.

### **The Return from the Archive, or the Narrative Fabric of Archival Research**

As researchers we become entangled in a web of archival stories, irrespective of whether we do narrative analysis or not with the documents we find in archives. In considering stories in the archive, we are of course mindful of Steedman's provocative warning that 'archives contain practically nothing, just disconnected fragments of documents and lists, collected for purposes forgotten or not to be known' (Steedman, 2001: 18). Archival research is indeed a process of finding fragments and working with discontinuities. It is here, however, that narrativity becomes a way of assembling disparate and sometimes disconnected pieces and fragments into a design that has a meaning. In thus considering the narrative fabric of archival work, I want to look at two classical narratological themes, characters and plots, and see how they have been deployed in archival research, but also how they can be transposed in my post-narratological approach.

One of the things that struck me from the very beginning of reading the 'Letters received' section of Fannia Cohn's papers were the letters of Evelyn Preston it contained. These were warm, kind and very different in style from all the other letters that Cohn was receiving in the same period. After reading three of these letters, I had already decided that I could not wait until I finished the whole 'Letters received' section. Instead I moved to the next microfilm reel of 'Letters sent' and carefully searched for Cohn's response to them. In doing this, I wanted to trace a body of correspondence that might throw a different light on Cohn's dry administrative life as it appeared in the archive. I did this by reassembling the temporal order of the documents, a meticulous work that could only be done after the archives had closed (see also Chapter 4 on deploying different temporal orders). The fact that these different and disparate letters were already photocopied and stored in the beautiful plastic files I had bought from the Library shop filled me with joy as I left the NYPL archive each day. The importance of women's friendship as a support network consequently emerged as a crucial storyline in my analysis and its unexpected twists and configurations created conditions of possibility for a more complex understanding of Cohn's life.

Evelyn Preston was a wealthy and well-educated young woman with a passionate interest in the labour movement. She was 23 years old when she met the 37 year-old Cohn and despite or maybe because of their age difference they developed a warm friendship and spent time together, going to dinners, the theatre and even swimming on Coney Island: 'I am looking forward to having you chauffeur me around in your four cylinder Buick ...', Cohn wrote to Preston on 21 September 1923 (FCP/NYPL/MSS588/Cor/LS). By that time Preston had left New York to follow a Master's Degree in labour history and Economics at the University of Wisconsin, their friendship had become mostly an epistolary one, but still very important for Cohn.

Moreover, the collection of letters between Cohn and Preston were very different both in content and in form from the letters between Cohn and Wolfson, some examples of which have been discussed in the first section of the chapter. As I have written elsewhere, the Cohn-Preston correspondence highlight issues around cross-class encounters in the gendered histories of the labour movement, but they also put forward complex interrelations between ethics, aesthetics and politics (Tamboukou, 2015a). They certainly paint a different image of Cohn, revealing her love for art, her care for young women's development, as well as the way she deeply valued the gift of friendship. As Cohn wrote to Preston on 2 January 1923:

I am a great believer in friendship... I never could over-estimate its value provided it is based on real understanding and confidence. Every person is eager to have a human being close to him. We cannot share with everyone around us some of our innermost feelings. And nothing is so helpful to deepening our minds and clarifying our thoughts as exchange of views with our friends... We can get the best out of our friends if we can make an effort. (FCP/NYPL/MSS588/Cor/LS)

Cohn thus appears as a different person when writing to Preston, than when writing to Wolfson, let alone when writing to the ILGU president or other friends and collaborators. There is a rich body of literature revolving around the epistolary I/you relationship, including the variety of the subject positions that correspondents take up, inhabit and move along (Altman, 1982; Stanley, 2004; Stanley and Salter, 2014; Tamboukou, 2010b, 2014d). What I want to highlight in relation to archival research, however, is that Cohn's different epistolary personae have created a new way of ordering her letters in the 'other archive' of my research. The new ordering followed the mode of significant correspondents: 'Evelyn Preston letters', 'Theresa Wolfson letters', 'Marion Philips letters', 'Charles Beard's letters' (Tamboukou, 2014c). After mapping the letters across significant correspondents, I created a second level of ordering, this time drawing on periodisation: the 1921-1922 letters, the years when significant changes in workers' education occurred, so it was important to have an overview of the synchronicity of Cohn's correspondence (Tamboukou, 2014b, 2014d). The lived rhythms discussed earlier were thus transposed to a reconstruction of temporal and ordering rhythms in the archive.

The importance of 'significant correspondents' as a way of ordering also made connections with my experience of working with Pesotta's letters in the NYPL. Apart from the fact that these were 'real documents' that demanded different 'real time' rhythms, Pesotta's papers included a wide range of diaries, as well as a rich collection of creative writings. Three surprises thus erupted from Pesotta's papers that had an impact both on the ordering of the researcher's 'other archive' but also on the analysis.

Her diaries were very different in style, form and content - some of them were very private and revealing, others business-like agendas. However, revealing as some of her diaries were, it was neither in her diaries nor her letters that provided insight into her inner world, but her creative writings. And it was not in the letters that she sent, but in the letters that

she received that we can discern something about her emotions and feelings: Pesotta is actually the first woman in my experience of working with letters on love, gender and agonistic politics (Tamboukou, 2013b, 2013c; 2014d) where I have mostly read the other side of the correspondence - her lover's letters, not hers. After reading these letters, I felt for the first time the need to consider the question of 'men in love'.

What I want to highlight here is the difficulty of grappling with 'the return from the archive'. There are many issues to consider about 'the return'. There is the question of how to manage the welter of archival data that the researcher comes back with. There is the problem of how to reconnect with the world left behind while in the archive, while retaining the memories, affective bonds and imaginary travels that were experienced while in the archives. And also there is the small detail of writing, of creating the publications that were promised to funders but are also important to the academic self you hopefully still inhabit. This is where the importance of narrative sensibility emerges: stories are traces of human existence and human actions, Hannah Arendt (1998) has famously suggested; without stories there is no history, it is through stories that we are entangled in the web of human relations. Drawing on the Arendtian take on narratives, I suggest that it is through narrativisation that we create meaning in archival research. There are of course interesting debates around the force, power and even domination of narratives, including Hayden White's (1987) critique of the content of the form that I want to consider here in making the argument for a narrative sensibility in archival research.

In exploring 'the content of the form' of narrative discourse in historical thought, White has influentially suggested that 'narrative, far from being merely a form of discourse that can be filled with different contents, real or imaginary as the case may be, already possesses a content prior to any given actualisation of it in speech or writing' (White, 1987: xi). Narrative in this conceptualisation imposes its form on modes of historical analysis and understanding. Although I agree with White that content and form are inextricably entangled, I cannot see their interrelation simply as limiting and restrictive. In analysing Rosa Luxemburg's letters to her lover and comrade Leo Jogiches, I have argued that 'the epistolary form dramatises and gives specificity to the relationship between politics and love' (Tamboukou, 2013c: 52). In extending this line of argument I therefore suggest that narrative offers new modalities of re-assembling the archive in line with the research questions, theoretical frameworks and epistemological orientations of the research. Discontinuous and interrupted as they are, narrative fragments create their own rhythms of archival existence and it is specific spatial and temporal rhythms that the genealogical investigation follows and focuses on. Narrative sensibility means that the analysis starts when we are still in the archive, and here I am in disagreement with Steedman, who has argued that 'historical knowledge is always produced *after* the archive (2011: 323, original emphasis). While in the archive and during our attempt to manage the bulk of material we encounter, we start following rough paths of storylines that usually revolve around grey archival figures, something I have come to configure as 'the narrative personae of my research' (Tamboukou, 2010a,

2014e), a concept that I want to explicate in the context of the archive.

As already noted, narration in Arendt's thought creates conditions of possibility for uniqueness, plurality and communication to be enacted within the sphere of the political. Read in this light, the seamstresses' archival documents open up a performative scene, a dialogic space wherein the writer of the document and the researcher as reader meet, interact and negotiate meaning about subjects and their world. The archive of the seamstresses' documents thus becomes a site of mediation and communication enabling the emergence of a multiplicity of meanings and traces of truth interwoven together in the narrative fabric of archival research. Moreover, far from being essentialised, pinned down in a fixed subject position, or encased within the constraints and limitations of the archival documents, the seamstresses become 'narrative personae', figures who respond to the theoretical questions and concerns of the researcher without losing the actuality of their 'words and deeds'. In configuring the seamstresses as 'narrative personae', I have followed Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) notion of the 'conceptual personae' in philosophy. 'Philosophy constantly brings conceptual personae to life' (62), Deleuze and Guattari have suggested, and the Socrates in Plato, the Dionysus in Nietzsche, the Idiot in Descartes, are their exemplars of the best known conceptual personae in the history of philosophy. The philosopher speaks through her/his conceptual persona, keeping a critical distance from what is being said and from the subject of enunciation. This is a third person - the conceptual persona, not the philosopher - that says 'I', since there is always a multiplicity of enunciations and subjects in the work of philosophy.

But although the initial idea of the narrative persona comes from Deleuze and Guattari, it is in Arendt's work that the concept has been narratively grounded. As Arendt (1990: 106) notes in *On Revolution*, the roots of 'the persona' are to be found in ancient drama wherein it has a twofold function: firstly, as a mask disguising the actor in theatre; and secondly, as a device that, although disguising, would allow the voice of the actor to sound through. If we follow the historicity of the concept, however, in Roman times the persona passes from the theatre to the legal realm and means a legal personality, a right-and-duty bearing person, a Roman citizen, not any natural person. So there is the drama persona and the legal persona. In this context, the notion of the narrative persona in my work is a conceptual figure, who acts and whose story we can follow in the pursuit of meaning and understanding. But the fact that we follow the story of the narrative persona does not necessarily mean that this story represents the essence or character of who these people 'really' were. This is not to deny that they were real persons, but to denote the limitations of their - and indeed anybody's - stories to convey the essence of who their author is. As Arendt has aptly put it: 'nothing entitles us to assume that [man] has a nature or essence in the same sense as other things' (Arendt, 1998: 10). But the lack of essence does not necessarily lead to 'the death of the subject', be it in Barthian or Foucauldian terms. Foucault (1988) himself returned to the subject, in considering ethics as a genealogical axis alongside truth and power. While rejecting essence, Arendt theorises human existence, 'life itself, natality and mortality, worldliness, plurality and the earth' (Arendt, 1998: 11), and here again she emphasises the fact that we are not reducible

to the conditions of human existence. Instead of a unified and autonomous subject, there are instead nomadic passages and subject positions that the narrative personae of my inquiries take up and move between, while inscribing personal and political stories. It is through their stories that certain concepts, ideas and events can be expressed, rehearsed and dramatized, so that their enactment can create a scene for dialogic exchanges, communication, understanding and action.

Further considered within the legal dimension of the Roman tradition in Arendt's analysis, the narrative persona takes up a position in discourse and assumes her rights as a legal subject. This positioning does not essentialise her either; it rather creates a person with whom one can be in dialogue, but also to whom one is responsible: 'a right-and duty bearing person, created by the law and which appears before the law', as Arendt (1990: 107) has pithily remarked. The seamstresses of my archival research thus become personae through their narratives: as a feminist narrative researcher, I am accountable to them, having taken up the responsibility of presenting their stories as an Arendtian design that has a meaning. The latter is open to interpretation and negotiation between you as audience/readers, myself as an author and narrative researcher, and my narrative personae. Although dead for many years, they are still alive, active and very much amongst us as their 'words and deeds' still shape feminist histories in the making and therefore the archives of the future.

As researchers in the archive, we are thus surrounded by the narrative personae emerging from the archival documents we work with. We listen to their voices and also talk to them as we read their documents; their ideas give us some orientations; we have arguments with them and yes, we need to acknowledge it, we like some of them and dislike others. It is actually while struggling to make sense of 'what is wrong' with some of them that questions and problems arise that have an effect on our analysis and understanding: Why was it that Pesotta seemed so gloomy in her diaries? Why was she crying almost every night? Why could she not sleep? Her diaries did not give any answers, I had to read her letters of the same period to start making sense of some of the problems she was grappling with and even then I could not always agree with some of her ideas and attitudes to life. 'Stop doing that, girl', I kept telling her as if she could hear me; and reading a box of her papers later, I could turn to her /myself and say, 'well, I can see your point now' or 'I told you not to'. As I write this chapter, I am still in conversation with the narrative personae of my research and I do not think that this conversation will ever conclude. 'Never the last word', Molly Andrews (2013) has emphatically written about the process of revisiting life histories as well as the narratives of our analyses and interpretations.

While in the archive we are thus entangled in the web of human relations that include both the living and the dead. Even though I have had access to Pesotta's amorous correspondence, I know there are things I will never write about. It wouldn't be right, no matter how many copyright clearances or how much time would have elapsed since her death. My research ethics and even more myself as a researcher have been moulded through my relation with Pesotta, even though she has been dead for sixty years. As Steedman has aptly noted, 'there has been little attempt to theorise the place of the dead and death in the human and social sciences'

despite the fact that ‘contemplation of and interaction with the dead was a foundational activity for history’ (Steedman, 2011: 327). Taking up the challenge of our non-interaction with the dead, I am therefore proclaiming myself accountable to Pesotta, not only because she has been configured as a narrative persona bearing rights, as already explained, but also because she is inextricably interwoven with my own self as a researcher. As Stanley has succinctly put it, we need to consider the specificities of ‘ontological ethics’ in documents of life research (Stanley, 2013: 27). Drawing on Simone de Beauvoir, Stanley has persuasively argued for a relational notion of the self, ‘a self-and-other’ which constitutes the premises of ontological ethics. Archival research is indeed a milieu where ontological ethics should play a crucial role, a proposition that is returned to in the last chapter of this book.

### **Feeling Narratives in the Archive: Some Conclusions**

In this chapter I have created a plane for diverse theoretical approaches to illuminate my archival research practices: Lefebvre’s spatio-temporal approach of rhythmanalysis was underpinned by Foucault’s genealogical analytics, while an Arendtian based narrative sensibility was my proposition for reassembling and making sense of the texts, discourses and figures emerging from archival documents. Although these theoretical and methodological approaches revolve around my research in the NYPL archives, they also arose in doing archival research over the last twenty years in other archives in the UK and around the world. These include the Queen Mary and Westfield College Archives, University of London and the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick (Tamboukou, 2003), the Rodin Museum Archives in Paris, the National Library of Wales Archives, the British Library Manuscripts, the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre at the University of Texas at Austin and the Massachusetts College of Arts Archives in Boston (Tamboukou, 2010a), the archives of the Tamiment Library, Collection at New York University, the Emma Goldman’s Papers Project at the University of California at Berkeley (Tamboukou, 2013b) and the Bibliothèque Historique de la ville de Paris (Tamboukou, 2014b, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d). The diversity of these archival spaces and places shows that such approaches and practices are transferable and can indeed be used in different research and disciplinary contexts. As already noted, each archival case had its own specificities with emerging questions and problems to be addressed and solved, but together they create an assemblage of methodological approaches and moves that I have tried to unpack in addressing the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter and to which I now return.

As will be obvious from the archives discussed in this chapter, I have mostly worked in what could be considered as ‘traditional archives’, that is, collections of archival documents in libraries, universities and museums, although I have also worked with paper and digitised documents as well as microfilms. There are many more diverse archives discussed throughout this book, but even regarding the traditional archival places and spaces, different approaches can be deployed. This multiplicity of modes of doing archival research relates to the interdisciplinary nature of the archive as a research milieu, and also to the radical changes that the digital turn has

brought in what used to be a place/paper/bound research approach often covered with many layers of dust and even more layers of power/knowledge relations and discourses. What I have tried to show throughout this chapter, however, is that space, time and matter are crucial not only in our understanding of how an archive becomes, but also in how the researcher and the archive create an assemblage that fuses divisions and separations between the subjects and objects of the research and further problematises a range of dualisms, such as mind/body, texts/readers, reason/experience, memory/imagination, reality/representation, in short, the world as it is and the world as we perceive it (and see also Chapter 4 on the idea and practice of cultural assemblage in relation to digital archival projects).

Confronting the archive as an assemblage of documents, institutional practices, power/knowledge relations as well as space/time/matter rhythms, has epistemological, methodological and ethical implications for doing archival research. Such a conceptualisation goes beyond the conditions and limitations of the exemplars unpacked in this chapter, and opens up new paths in the field of archival research in the social sciences and humanities. In drawing on my experience of working at the New York Public Library with the papers of women trade unionists in the garment industry, I have shown the more general applications of this approach. Also, throughout the chapter I have emphasised that archival research is always a situated process with emerging questions, problems and issues, and these need to be addressed and dealt with in an on going way. This multi-modality of engaging with and raising questions about the archive in itself creates an archive of methodological approaches that can be drawn upon, by always bending 'previous rules' and charting new paths. In this sense, archival research charts trails for research, invites new researchers to follow some of them but also to open up new paths while immersing themselves in the specificities of their own inquiries and archival circumstances.

In perceiving the archive as a process, a research approach in becoming, I have highlighted the importance of the research questions we bring to the archive, and also the limitations of our prior understandings and conceptualisations. I have argued instead that we should be bold enough to deal with the openness of archival research, to welcome and indeed embrace unexpected encounters, and to be willing to abandon some of our habitual ways of theorising and understanding. Here the archive has been conceived not only as a process, but also as an event, marking discontinuities and ruptures in our modes of analysis and interpretation. In doing this, I have looked at how genealogical questions and spatio-temporal rhythms have an impact on how researchers orient ourselves within the archive, how we follow specific storylines, narrative personae and analytical insights, and how we write about these.

In configuring the archive as both a process and an event, I have also highlighted the importance of narrative sensibility. Analysis always starts while we are still in an archive, in what Whitehead has called 'the middle of the pack, where there is pushing, shoving and mutual constraint' (Stengers, 2011: 448). This is where the narrative fabric of the archive is being interwoven with our subsequent analysis and the writing of our research outputs. In considering narrative sensibility in the archive, I have followed lines of Whitehead's theorisation of feelings as crucial in the constitution of

reality as well as in our understanding (Tamboukou, 2015b). As Whitehead influentially argued, 'there is nothing in the real world which is merely an inert fact. Every reality is there for feeling: it promotes feeling; and it is felt' (1985: 310).

Here it goes without saying that the richness of the archival worlds that researchers engage with over the years will never be represented in an encompassing way in our writings, no matter how nuanced our observations, how robust our analysis or how eloquent our writing style are. But what we can try for as researchers is to open up windows to the worlds of archives and invite others to visit them. It is by sharing our impressions that we can perhaps gain some further grasp of the social worlds we are trying to understand. Despite the institutional constraints and limitations, archival research is a world of activity enabling the expression and flow of feelings; it further facilitates the flight of imaginative experience, shapes new modes of thought and ultimately initiates creative processes in how we can understand ourselves and the world we emerge from.

What I therefore hope readers will gain from this chapter is an understanding of archival research as an entanglement of intellectual and material practices with multiple points of emergence, some unforeseen destinations, as well as a wide variation of flows and rhythms. In this light, being-in-the-archive is both a journey and an adventure that needs a map and a compass, but it will certainly also open up its own paths. I hope that some of the analytical trails and methodological moves suggested in this chapter will be helpful in orienting researchers in their archival journeys to come.

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