

INTRODUCTION

History, the archive, and the appropriation of the indexical document

Silent black and white images, scarred by dust and scratches, of World War II planes dropping bombs on the landscape below. Men in top hats dodging horse-drawn carriages and early model cars on the streets of San Francisco during the early-twentieth century. African-American protestors confronting the police and members of the Ku Klux Klan during the Civil Rights Movement. Martin Luther King Jr. telling us of his dream. Neil Armstrong stepping onto the moon. A Chinese student standing alone in front of a tank as it advances towards him in Tiananmen Square. Despite the very different contexts from which they emerge, all of these images might be referred to as “archival footage” and understood as evidence of past events. Each of these images is compelling even if – at least without added narration and contextualization – its precise meaning is sometimes obscure. Such images seem to bring us into “contact” with the past, to offer us a glimpse of a world that existed but has been erased and overlaid with different faces, current fashions, and new technologies. Indeed, the past seems to become not only knowable but also *perceptible* in these images. They offer us an *experience* of pastness, an experience that no written word can quite match.

But what is this experience of pastness? And how is it connected to “history,” which generally connotes an official and objective account of past events? In other words, what exactly is “archival footage” and how does it shape our experience as well as our understanding of the past and, hence, of history? Despite our frequent encounters with what we may recognize as “archival” sounds and images, just what they are and how they contribute to the construction of history has in recent years become increasingly uncertain.

The “crisis” in historiography and the problem of the indexical archival document

In the past 50 years, the very notion of “history” has undergone a transformation and, with it, our understanding of our relationship to the past. In written histories before

2 Introduction

the 1970s, the past was often conceived as a linear narrative of cause and effect with a relatively closed meaning that was assumed to be warranted by historical documents themselves rather than narrative articulation by the historian. Hayden White's seminal 1973 book, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, led to a reconsideration of historical narratives as stories organized by the same tropes found in literature – metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony – and mobilized, often unconsciously, by historians.¹

At a time when historical narratives were often regarded as transparent and objective representations of fact based on archival research, White drew attention to the ways in which tropes were deployed by historians in order to turn the archival documentation of events not only into representational narratives but also into particular *kinds* of narrative, emplotted according to the literary structures of the romance, the comedy, the tragedy, and the satire. Over the years that followed, White's fundamental insight changed the way in which historical narratives were understood, reframing historical representations in terms of their construction rather than in terms of simple truth or falsehood.

In tandem with this “crisis” in historiography, a crisis occurred around the concept of the archive. Since the professionalization of the discipline of history, which began in the mid-nineteenth century, archives, originally defined as official institutions in which official documents were preserved, have been the foundation upon which modern history has been constructed.² The contents of these archives have long been venerated as the solid and objective evidence upon which factual accounts of the past can be built. In recent years, however, the objectivity of archival documents has been put into question, and as faith in the archive as a comprehensive source of objective “evidence” has become problematic, the distinctions between archives, libraries, collections, and other gatherings of objects, including virtual objects in digital archives, have increasingly blurred.³

Abstract theorizations of “the archive,” although sometimes incompatible with discussions of specific archives, have also reframed the way in which historians perceive individual archival institutions. Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have both discussed the archive less as a physical institution than as a system that governs what can be said about the past. By the time of White's *Metahistory*, Foucault's 1969 essay, “The Historical *a priori* and the Archive,” had already offered a critical redefinition of the archive and its function. Foucault writes:

The archive is the first law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities.⁴

Rather than viewing the archive as a repository of unmediated evidence about the past, Foucault saw it as a particular structure of power in which particular kinds

of documents are kept in a particular order, thereby delimiting the possibilities of what may be said about the documents and, indeed, of knowledge itself.

Derrida extended this line of thought in his own discussion of “archive fever.” He writes about the ways that archives are structured according to the logics of power that determine which objects are preserved, stored, and revered and which are excluded, thereby *creating* the past rather than simply preserving it.

The archive ... is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content of *the past* which would exist in any case, such as, without the archive, one still believes it was or will have been. No, the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event.⁵

Moreover, Derrida indicates the extent to which the administrators of archives – once called the “archons” – control access to these traces of the past, thereby keeping history in the hands of those who are deemed worthy of authority.⁶ Each individual archive may have its own peculiarities, but such structures of power, inclusion, and exclusion, Foucault and Derrida suggest, are inevitably at work.

To be sure, the result of these reevaluations of “the archive” for historians was not a rejection of actual archives and their resources but rather an instigation to use archives in a more self-conscious way. Indeed, the coalescence of New Historicist strategies in the 1980s led many historians to return to the archive in search of “evidence” of something very different from what previous historians had sought. New Historicism begins from the premise that there is no single, universal history but rather many histories, based in the unique, the particular, and the anomalous.⁷ New Historicists often search the archive for eccentric anecdotes and enigmatic fragments as the basis for constructing counterhistories that interrupt the homogenizing forces of previous grand historical narratives and archival order by grounding themselves in the contingent and “the real,” all the while acknowledging that “the real” is never accessible as such.⁸ It is, in fact, the embrace of archives as a vast amalgamation of unrelated and unruly rather than neatly ordered objects that makes the New Historicist project possible.

However, the unruliness of archival objects became even more pronounced with the emergence of archives collecting indexical audiovisual documents such as photographs, films, videos, and sound recordings.⁹ It is not only official state and commercial institutions that have begun collecting audiovisual media: so have unofficial grassroots or private collections as well as the designers of digital, virtual archives. Yet, audiovisual documents pose many problems for the historian/filmmaker that are absent – or at least easier to repress – in written documents. Both cinematic and written histories share the problems of the excess and inexhaustibility of the archive – there are always too many documents and too many possible ways of reading them. However, citations of written documents do not have the same simultaneously iconic and indexical relationship to the historical world as do

4 Introduction

photographic, filmic, or other audiovisual media, in which issues of excess are even more prominent. Written documents may certainly always mean more – or have more potential meanings – than the historian can account for, but indexical images and sound recordings are even less easy to contain than written documents; their tangibility and ambiguity is often even more unruly. They seem “closer” to the past they represent and are potentially seductive in their seeming transparent textuality; and although every trace, written or otherwise, is open to interpretation, indexical audiovisual recordings are especially resistant to full comprehension or interpretation.

In this regard, media theorist Friedrich Kittler has argued that the indexical sign, unlike writing, records uncensored, unfiltered “noise,” which resists signification.¹⁰ Given their unruly indexical excess, audiovisual media often demonstrate (whether intentionally on the part of the recordist or not) the excess, ambiguity, and disruption characteristic of “the real.” Following Kittler, film theorist Mary Ann Doane has suggested that the ability of technologies of mechanical reproduction to create indexical traces holds both the allure of preserving the past and the threat of preserving too much of it, generating only an “archive of noise.”¹¹ Indeed, archives and the indexical traces they preserve often escape the control of the archons as well as the historians and filmmakers who use them. These traces mean subversively more than we might intend or wish – or subversively less.¹²

In a similar vein, documentary theorist Stella Bruzzi writes, “Documentary has always implicitly acknowledged that the ‘document’ at its heart is open to reassessment, reappropriation and even manipulation.” Nonetheless, she argues, this openness is qualified and does not obscure or render “irretrievable the document’s original meaning, context or content.”¹³ Bruzzi thus suggests that, despite its unruliness, there is something about the indexical document that resists the extension of its potential meanings beyond a certain limit. Conversely, however, documentary scholar Bill Nichols has shown that the meaning of indexical images, for instance the video footage of the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles, always depends on how the images are contextualized and explained. The meaning of the footage is altered as it is placed in different “interpretive frameworks,” although the tendency is to imagine that the meaning is inherent in the footage rather than in the interpretive framework through which we approach it.¹⁴ The fact that the prosecution and defense in the Rodney King case both used the same footage to represent different versions of the same event, one version arguing for the police officers’ guilt and the other for their innocence, crystallizes the way in which decontextualization and recontextualization of indexical archival documents have the power to generate very different understandings of a past event. Thus, although, as Bruzzi suggests, the indexical document may possess a certain resistance to wholesale manipulation of meaning, it also possesses the potential to serve multiple interpretative frameworks.

Although many academic historians have avoided working directly with audiovisual documents because (at least in part) of the unruliness of the indexical sign, filmmakers and other media practitioners have been drawing on preexisting audiovisual documents for over a century. Many of these audiovisual documents have been

housed in official and institutionally-based archives including government, university, and commercial archives. More recently, however, as home video and digital photography collections as well as online digital video and photography archives have grown, the reuse of such documents in films has also expanded. As the sources from which audiovisual documents may be appropriated shift and multiply, these appropriations give rise to a new and altered sense not only of the documents but also of what constitutes “the archive” in the contemporary social and historical moment. Thus, by looking at how filmmakers have variously negotiated the problems of finding and reusing photographic, filmic, video, and audio recordings, we may come to a clearer understanding of how the relationship between the archive and history has changed with the advent and expansion of audiovisual media.

“Rare archival footage! Never seen before!”

Since its invention, cinema has been a productive site for the representation and exploration of historical events. While fictional recreations of historical moments have been one method of trying to understand history, other film practices have attempted to bring the viewer into a relationship with the past through the use of archival film footage of the historical event in question – as well as other indexical archival documents including photographs, sound recordings, and, later, video footage. As film historian and theorist Jay Leyda has shown, the appropriation and editorial linkage of film footage from disparate sources dates back to the earliest days of film exhibition and to the establishment of the newsreel format. However, the use of preexisting film footage in documentary film to specifically reflect on historical events may be traced back to the 1920s when Soviet filmmaker Esfir Shub reedited old newsreel footage from the last years of the Czarist rule of Russia in order to tell a new – and triumphant – narrative of the birth of Communist Russia in her film, *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927).¹⁵ This “repurposing” of preexisting film images to illustrate new historical narratives and arguments in what Leyda termed the “compilation film” became increasingly popular throughout the following decades.¹⁶ Indeed, turning on the History Channel for even a few moments reveals that films that appropriate and repurpose documents from various contexts in order to produce narratives of historical events continue to be produced en masse today. Such films frequently draw upon and appropriate documents housed in official archival institutions to serve as “evidence” of some argument or assertion about the past. The inclusion of archival evidence is one of the major selling points for many historical documentaries – a sign of both meticulous and tedious historical research as well as of historical “truths.” The blurbs for such films often entice audiences with claims of providing “rare archival footage” that has “never been seen before.”

Some films that use and promote new or rare archival footage augment an already known (or received) historical “truth,” bringing into greater, visible (and sometimes audible) detail or focus some element we already “know” more generally. For example, Ken Burns’ PBS documentary, *The War* (2007), even though it boasted

6 Introduction

a wealth of “rare” archival footage, was generally regarded as complicit with established historical narratives of World War II. In her review “Old Soldiers Never Lie: Ken Burns’ *The War* tells great stories, but is it great history?” film critic Beverly Gage answers her own titular question:

The War, despite its graphic footage and remarkable personal testimony, is a relatively safe film, unlikely to offend anyone’s political sensibility. Although Burns successfully undermines the bloodless “good war” myth – after 14 hours, he amply demonstrates that World War II was, in his words, “the worst war ever” – he happily affirms the popular image of a selfless and unsurpassed “Greatest Generation.”¹⁷

By contrast, other films that proffer “rare” archival footage have been experienced as generating a whole new narrative – or counternarrative – of the past, upending the established or accepted historical record. For instance, Yael Hersonski’s *A Film Unfinished* (2010) reframes footage that was accepted as documentary evidence of life in the Warsaw Ghetto with outtake footage found much later, revealing the “documentary” footage – which featured well-dressed Jews entering a butcher shop while ignoring children begging in the street and similarly prosperous-looking Jewish passers-by seemingly oblivious to corpses lying in the street – to have been staged by the Nazis. In her review of the film, Jeanette Catsoulis explains:

For almost half a century, an unfinished Nazi propaganda film of the Warsaw Ghetto, simply titled “Das Ghetto” and discovered by East German archivists after the war, was used by scholars and historians as a flawed but authentic record of ghetto life ... These images were subjected to a radical rereading with the appearance of another reel in 1998: 30 minutes of outtakes showing the extent to which scenes had been deliberately staged.¹⁸

The discovery of these outtakes and Hersonski’s use of the footage served to radically shift our vision of Jewish life in the Warsaw Ghetto, revealing that what we thought we “knew” was a Nazi fiction. As these examples illustrate, the use of archival footage can support or be disruptive of established historical knowledge. In both examples, however, the authority that adheres to the archival document as evidence underpins the films’ claims to representing history.

Indeed, the ideas of both “archivalness” and rarity seem to promise truth-value as well as an experience of evidentiary revelation. The footage has been “found,” and it therefore has an aura of being directly excavated from the past. The sense of the “foundness” of the footage enhances its historical authority because what has been “found” has not (ostensibly) been fabricated or shaped by the filmmaker who repurposes this footage. Paradoxically, then, something “old” gains part of its power by also promising something “new,” something we did not know or had not seen before. While the sheer volume of recorded – and digitized – audiovisual documents now multiplies every day, this promise of “rare” archival footage continues to

exercise an epistemological seduction and to feed the desire for a revelatory truth about the past that, of course, can never be fully satisfied.

This seduction and this desire, however, beg the question of exactly what we mean when we talk about archival footage and other indexical archival documents. The term “archival footage” may once have referred specifically to physical materials stored in archives controlled by state or other institutions, collections officially sanctioned as authoritative repositories of audiovisual evidence about the past. However, this definition is problematic in that it simply refers to a location in which certain documents, whose contours are determined by variously informed acts of inclusion and exclusion, are stored. Moreover, the ideas of the location, provenance, and authority of an archive have become increasingly uncertain as online digital archives are constituted and accessed not only by institutions but also by individuals and groups all over the globe. The notion of an archive as a particular place and of archival documents as material objects stored at a particular location has ceased to reflect the complex apparatus that now constitutes our relation to the past through its photographic, filmic, audio, video, and digital traces.¹⁹ Although official archives continue to be mined by historians and filmmakers as sources for audiovisual documents, filmmakers have ever more frequently drawn on documents that are housed outside of official archives. Increasingly, they have appropriated and repurposed home movies, home video collections, and now user-generated documents accessible through online digital databases along with, or instead of, documents found in official archives. As a result, they are producing works – and historical effects – that may differ greatly from those that draw only on institutions authorized by state and commercial power. Thus, the meaning of the term “archival” when applied to film footage or other indexical documents has become increasingly difficult to define even as we as film viewers seem – in the terms of the famous aphorism about pornography – to know it when we see it. Indeed, it is this aspect of knowing it (or thinking we know it) when we see it that I seek to theorize in relation to films that appropriate existing film and video footage for various kinds of historical effects.

In this book, then, I argue that the contemporary situation calls for a reformulation of “the archival document” as an *experience of reception* rather than an indication of official sanction or storage location. I refer to this experience as “the archive effect.”²⁰ In this repositioning of the archival from the authority of place to the authority of experience, I argue that archival documents exist as “archival” only insofar as the viewer of a given film perceives certain documents within that film as coming from another, previous – and primary – context of use or intended use. This reformulation of archival footage and other indexical archival documents as a *relationship* produced between particular elements of a film and the film’s viewer allows us to account not only for emergent types of archives and the diverse documents held within them but also for the ways in which certain documents from the past – whether found in an official archive, a family basement, or online – may be imbued by the viewer with various evidentiary values as they are appropriated and repurposed in new films.²¹ By looking at the ways in which found audiovisual documents function within the films that appropriate them and at the various relationships established between the viewer

of these films and the documents mobilized within them, we may come closer to an understanding of how these films generate particular conceptions of the past and, ultimately, of history itself.

“The archival document”: from object to experience

In general, the terms “archival footage” and “compilation film” have been associated with documentaries that are believed to convey “history” through their use of and primary dependence upon appropriated documents. Conversely, the terms “found footage” and “found footage film” have been associated with experimental films that, rather than presenting “reality” or “history” and using the footage they appropriate as historical “evidence,” problematize the construction of “facts” through a reflexive interrogation of media images. However, the boundaries between compilation film and found footage film and between archival footage and found footage are often nebulous. Indeed, one of the problems theorists have encountered stems from the attempt to classify films that appropriate preexisting documents as a genre on the basis of what “kinds” of sounds and images are used, of the method or strategies by which these sounds and images are put together, and/or of the particular “objective” characteristics of the finished film. Excellent studies of found footage film not only by Leyda but also by William Wees, Cecilia Hausheer and Christophe Settele, Patrik Sjöberg, Paul Arthur, Jeffrey Skoller, and Steve Anderson, for instance, have articulated many of the ways in which found footage has been appropriated and used. However, in these works, the fundamental question of what constitutes “found” or “archival” footage remains unclear or, at very least, unstable.²²

Thus, despite some very thoughtful attempts, no one as yet has adequately explained what “archival” or “found” documents are and on what basis we should make the distinction between them. In addition, the repeated binary in which the formal strategies of the “found footage film” are valorized over those of the “compilation film” often seems to be based on the personal preference of the theorist rather than on a substantial theoretical foundation. Moreover, the proliferation of terminology for both the source material – including “archival footage,” “found footage,” “stock footage,” and “recycled footage” – and for the films into which these sources are incorporated – including “compilation film,” “found footage film,” “collage film,” and “appropriation” film as well as “montage,” “détournement,” “mash-up,” and “remix” – is itself a signal that we need a new way of talking about these objects.

This new way is suggested in film theorist Vivian Sobchack’s “Toward a Phenomenology of Nonfictional Film Experience,” which argues that we understand “documentary” not only as a kind of filmic object but also and more significantly as a mode of reception. She writes:

The term *documentary* designates more than a cinematic *object*. Along with the obvious nomination of a film genre characterized historically by certain objective textual features, the term also – and more radically – designates a particular

subjective relation to an objective cinematic or television text. In other words, documentary is less a *thing* than an *experience*.²³

Building on Sobchack's notion that a genre such as "documentary" may be understood as a relation between viewer and text, I offer my own revised formulation of what I call the "appropriation film." The films in this category should not be seen merely as objects determined by their "inherent" and "objective" characteristics or by their deployment of particular filmmaking strategies but also – and perhaps primarily – as a set of films that may produce a particular *effect* or evoke a particular kind of *consciousness* in the viewer, however much that effect and consciousness can never be guaranteed.²⁴ Indeed, in my reformulation, the constitution of an appropriation film as such is significantly dependent on the film viewer's recognition that a film contains what I will henceforth refer to as "archival documents," which themselves are also constituted only insofar as the viewer experiences them as "archival" – that is, as coming from another time or from another context of use or intended use (an experience I discuss in much greater depth in the next chapter). Thus, I am calling for a reconceptualization of the appropriation film as not merely the manner and matter of the text but also – and significantly – a matter of reception, dependent on the effects the film produces, namely, the archive effect.

Although William Wees has used the term "appropriation film" to indicate films that appropriate film footage only to generate postmodern pastiche, I wish to rehabilitate the notion of appropriation as an act that transcends Wees' categories (and his dismissal of postmodern effects).²⁵ Appropriation occurs in many ways and may have a variety of effects, but the act of recontextualization that generates in the viewer a sense of textual "difference" always offers the possibility of critique and the recognition that the contexts in which we live are subject to change and are neither universal nor permanent. Moreover, the notion of appropriation, which carries with it the ideas of both the "appropriate" and the "inappropriate," suggests a destabilizing of assumptions about what is "proper" to the discourse of history. Thus, I use the term "appropriation film" here not as a pejorative but rather as an overarching category in which many different kinds of appropriation may occur and be experienced by the viewer. Furthermore, in what follows, I use the term "appropriation *film*" to indicate works created in a variety of media so long as they repurpose materials – thus, "film" here includes films, videos, and digital media works of all kinds. When a distinction between these different media is necessary, I specify the medium of the work in question.²⁶

The term "archival document" registers the fact that appropriation films have implications for our conception of "the archive," defined – following Foucault – as the first law of what may be said: all the possible documents available for appropriation at a given moment. Indeed, all appropriations refer to "the archive" on some level and evoke a particular idea of what the archive is, what it contains, and what role it may play in the construction of the past. My aim, then, is to examine and to attempt to theorize the implications that audiovisual appropriations may have not only for the films that use them and the viewers who see them but also for how we

understand the archive as the source of historical knowledge. The archive, broadly conceived, is the point of access to what counts as evidence of past events. What is at stake, then, is precisely how certain film practices can help us to locate and trace the changing ways in which we think about history and our access to it and how we may be able to transcend reified notions about our relationship to the past.

My use of the term “document” responds to the work of theorists who have focused on the transformation of the indexical “document” into a “documentary,” and, thereby, into a representation of “history.” Philip Rosen has attempted to account for this transformation and compares it to that of modern historiography, suggesting that the difference between the document and documentary is a difference in temporality and sequenciation. He argues that this transition – the conversion of primary materials to a secondary, historicized understanding – is characteristic of the modern historiographic project, and that it is the act of sequenciation of documents that generates the interpretive meaning that is fundamental to both documentary as it is edited and history as it is written. In both cases, the document must be transformed through its (re)contextualization. Indeed, like written documents, indexical documents must be converted into a narrative at a point in time after the event they record. In parallel to White’s argument that primary source written documents must be “emplotted” by the historian, Rosen argues that audiovisual documents must be arranged in a particular order by the documentary filmmaker to produce an historical narrative. Documents, with their fragmentary status, are distinct from documentary in that documentary, in order to narrate history, must provide both sequence and meaning.²⁷

Bill Nichols has also explored this link between document, documentary, and history, arguing that the relationship between documentary and history is characterized by “excess” in that history is always in excess of what a documentary can capture and beyond the full control of the filmmaker. Documentary tries, in one way or another, to contain this excess, but history – the “real” – will always exceed this attempt at containment. Thus, Nichols suggests that although the indexicality of the audiovisual document guarantees a certain ontological relationship to its referent, it cannot guarantee the meanings of these referents when the “document” is (re)contextualized within a “documentary.”²⁸

In addition to its theoretical pedigree in relation to indexical traces and their appropriation into films, the term “document” is also useful in that it can be used to refer to both material and virtual objects. In our daily lives, the term “document” is now used for both printed paper and digital files. Unlike the term “archival materials,” which emphasizes the physical materiality of an archival object, the term “archival documents” offers a discursive space in which we may account for the different kinds of documents that circulate in both material and virtual form.

As we shall see, reformulating the “appropriation film” and the “archival document” as co-constituted by the experience of the viewer in relation to an audiovisual text and establishing the notion of the “archive effect” allows us to account for variable experiences of reception of the same text; to see how “archivalness” manifests itself and produces historical effects across the generic boundaries of films usually categorized as documentary, experimental, fake documentary, and even

fiction film; and to account for a variety of different kinds of appropriated documents that appear in a film and the different epistemological effects these different kinds of documents may produce. In the chapters that follow, I examine the potential relationships that may be constituted between the viewer of an appropriation film, the archival documents whose recognition constitutes the appropriation film as such, and the (potentially historical) events and objects represented in those documents. My goal is not to write a history or comprehensive account of the appropriation film but rather to establish a broad theoretical framework for thinking about such films. Nevertheless, appropriation films must be understood within the context of the social and technological changes that have influenced the forms these films have taken. My focus is trained primarily on films made in the West in the past 20 years because I believe they stage a confrontation with the archive and history that is unique to a particular cultural and historical moment, in which technologies that record, preserve, circulate, and manipulate sounds and images have changed and continue to change how we think about documents, archives, and history. Thus, even as I attempt to establish a framework that may be useful for thinking about films from other times and places, I seek to locate these particular film practices within the particular and complex matrix of theoretical, social, and technological concerns from which they have emerged. However, although these contexts are important, my emphasis will ultimately remain on the form of these appropriation films and on the modes of their reception.

In regard to the latter, one problem posed by any study structured around the viewer's experience is the impossibility of accounting for every viewer's experience of a given film. Here, it is my premise that the archive effect may occur for some viewers of a given text while other viewers watching the same text at the same time may not experience the archive effect at all – or may experience it differently. Indeed, one of the films I later examine – *Tearoom* (William E. Jones, 2007) – dramatically demonstrates different viewer responses to the same text. Drawing on film reviews, film publicity, filmmakers' statements, post-screening “question and answer” sessions with filmmakers, documented responses to particular films, and viewer comments posted online, I attempt to gauge certain tendencies that have prevailed in the reactions to particular films. However, when such evidence is unavailable, I deploy my own close textual examination to suggest how the archive effect might occur. Combining these two strategies, I read both the films themselves and the discourses produced around them as symptomatic of larger social conceptions of the archive and of history.

Chapter 1, “The Archive Effect: Appropriation and the Experience of Textual Difference,” delimits the category of films that I refer to collectively as “appropriation films,” which are those films that, appropriating previously recorded textual material, give rise to the viewer's experience of the “archive effect” – a sense that certain sounds and/or images within these films come from another time and served another function. Through an analysis of several documentary films, I suggest that the two constitutive experiences that make up the archive effect are a sense of “temporal disparity” and “intentional disparity” between different sounds and/or images within

the same film. In addition, drawing on the understanding of irony put forth by literary theorist Linda Hutcheon, I suggest that irony is the constitutive trope of the archival document since the very experience of the archive effect is dependent on an experience of multiple possible contexts of reception and, therefore, possible meanings.²⁹ Using a case study of the complex reception of William E. Jones' *Tearoom* (2007), I argue that, like the experience of irony, the experience of the archive effect can never be guaranteed.

Chapter 2, "Archival Fabrications: Simulating, Manipulating, Misusing, and Debunking the Found Document," explores the demonstrated spectatorial desire to believe in the authenticity and evidentiary authority of archival documents – even though we know the signs of the archive effect can easily be "faked." It also explores the corollary suspicion of iconic archival images, especially those used over and over again, that seem – at least to some – to have "too much" authority. In the first half of the chapter, I examine several films that demonstrate the ways in which the archive effect may be simulated or manipulated and explore the various reactions to these archival fabrications, which range from celebratory enjoyment to dire predictions about the fate of historical knowledge. I also discuss claims that particular uses of archival documents may be considered "misuses," producing what some consider illegitimate meanings. The second half of the chapter deals with the corollary desire to "debunk" the authenticity and/or accepted meanings of certain widely-circulated documents – and hence of accepted historical knowledge. I examine the way in which Holocaust deniers and moon hoaxers have attempted to undermine the accepted meanings of Holocaust photographs and the Apollo moon landing footage, respectively. The media produced by these deniers and hoaxers simultaneously attempt to inscribe a new (and very tenuously founded) archive effect – using the archival documents themselves to "expose" the historical "hoax."

In **Chapter 3**, "Archival Voyeurism: Home Mode Appropriations and the Public Spectacle of Private Life," I explore the way in which appropriations of snapshots, home movies, and home videos into other films produce a particular kind of archive effect in which documents that read as originally intended for a private or limited audience are repurposed as public documents available to anyone. Through an analysis of several films, I suggest that the use of home movies expands the territory that we regard as historical, enabling personal micronarratives to emerge as a significant element of our understanding of past events. However, I also contend that, at the same time, because they read as private documents that have been made public, the reception of these appropriated home movies always entails a certain form of ethical transgression that I refer to as "archival voyeurism." I nonetheless argue that this particular form of ethical transgression is sometimes necessary to a responsible writing of history.

Chapter 4, "The Archive Affect: The Archival Fragment and the Production of Historical 'Presence,'" seeks to account for our affective experience of archival documents, in other words, how archival documents make us feel. I suggest that certain appropriation films engage directly with the fragmentary nature of the archive

to produce a sense of the “presence” of history rather than its meaning. Indeed, by deploying archival documents as metonymic fragments without fully explaining them or fitting them into a coherent, causal narrative, these films evoke our desire for an affective encounter with the past that cannot be reduced to a desire for its meaning. Moreover, these films reveal the fact that our desire for the presence of history is always accompanied by our recognition of its absence and of the loss incurred through the passage of time and change. This aspect of the “archive affect” is inextricable from nostalgia. Following Svetlana Boym, however, I suggest that this may be either a “reactionary” nostalgia that seeks to restore an idealized past that never existed or a “reflective” nostalgia – a self-conscious awareness of the longing that points to the gaps in the archive and informs the relationship between past and present.³⁰

Chapter 5, “The Digital Archive Effect: Historiographies and Histories for the Digital Era,” begins with an examination of the ways in which certain appropriation films engage with documents appropriated from digital archives, and reveal certain aspects of the digital archive as a whole. The chapter thus raises questions about how digital storage and distribution may affect our encounters with the historical past. In contrast to the “material” archive effect with which the rest of my study is mostly engaged, the “digital archive effect” can be said to articulate a new set of conditions for trying to know the past through its digital traces. I argue that several recent films that explicitly draw from digital archives can be regarded as an emergent form of “digital historiography.” I then outline a different kind of digital archive effect in which documents from the material archive are appropriated into and made accessible through digital interfaces including hypertexts and videogames. In contrast to the films in the first part of the chapter, I regard these as part of the nascent form of “digital history,” which begins to reframe the reader or viewer of history as the “user” of history.

If the archive is indeed, as Foucault put it, “the first law of what can be said,” my study seeks to trace the contours of that law as it emerges in and through appropriation films. Although the archive and its contents are constantly changing, at any given instant the archive is static, waiting for someone to enter and appropriate particular documents and put them into motion, giving them a direction or an intentionality in order to articulate some idea about or relationship to the historical past. Every film that is made and preserved also becomes part of the archive, awaiting new (and frequently unanticipated) use. The freedom to continually use and reuse archival documents means that we will never determine a stable, objective truth about the past, but it is that freedom that makes the archive a site not only of repression and limitation but also of possibility.

Notes

- 1 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).
- 2 Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 233.

14 Introduction

- 3 Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from across the Disciplines," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4, no. 1 (2004): 10.
- 4 Michel Foucault, "The Historical a Prior and the Archive," in *The Archive*, ed. Charles Merewether (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 28–29.
- 5 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 16–17.
- 6 Derrida, 2.
- 7 Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 6.
- 8 Gallagher and Greenblatt, 49.
- 9 The term "indexical" derives from the theorizations of Charles Sanders Peirce, who distinguished between three kinds of signs: symbols, icons, and indexes. Most photographic, filmic, and video images as well as sound recordings of a live sound can be considered iconic because they resemble the object or sound represented (known as the referent). They can also be considered indexical because they were produced in the presence of the referent. See James Hoopes, ed. *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic by Charles Sanders Peirce* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 30.
- 10 Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 86.
- 11 Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 65.
- 12 For instance, Allan Sekula has shown that while still photography offered nineteenth-century police departments a means of regulating criminals' bodies and the bodies of the lower classes in general, these photographs also threatened to overwhelm the police through proliferation of details. Sekula writes, "Photography promised more than a wealth of detail; it promised to reduce nature to its geometrical essence ... This archival promise was frustrated, however, both by the messy contingency of the photograph and by the sheer quantity of images." Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter, 1986): 17.
- 13 Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000), 12.
- 14 Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 29. See also Frank Tomasulo, "'I'll See It When I Believe It': Rodney King and the Prison-house of Video," in *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, ed. Vivian Sobchack, 69–88 (New York: Routledge, 1996).
- 15 Jay Leyda, *Films Beget Films: A Study of the Compilation Film* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 23–28.
- 16 Leyda, 9.
- 17 Beverly Gage, "Old Soldiers Never Lie: Ken Burns' *The War* tells great stories, but is it great history?" *Slate*, 20 September 2007. www.slate.com/id/2174386/. Accessed 13 April 2013.
- 18 Jeanette Catsoulis, "An Israeli Finds New Meanings in a Nazi Film," *The New York Times* 18 August 2010, C1.
- 19 Of course, there are many other kinds of traces preserved in archives, but this study is focused on audiovisual traces.
- 20 I thank Roger Hallas for the term "archive effect," which he suggested after I first presented a portion of this study at the Visible Evidence Conference in Bochum, Germany in December 2007.
- 21 Of course, "the viewer" here is a theoretical construct given that the experiences of individual viewers of the same film text may greatly vary. However, as I discuss further below, an examination of film reviews, user comments, and other similar sources, as well as of the film text itself, offers clues to the ways in which actual viewers might experience the text.

- 22 See Jay Leyda, *Films Beget Films: A Study of the Compilation Film* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964); Cecilia Hausheer and Christophe Settele, eds. *Found Footage Film*, (Luzern: VIPER, 1992); William Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993); Patrik Sjöberg, *The World in Pieces: A Study of Compilation Film* (Stockholm: Patrik Sjöberg, 2001); Paul Arthur, *A Line of Sight: American Avant-Garde Film Since 1965* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Steve Anderson, *Technologies of History: Visual Media and the Eccentricities of the Past* (Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2011).
- 23 Vivian Sobchack, "Toward a Phenomenology of Nonfictional Film Experience," in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, ed. Michael Renov and Jane Gaines (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 241.
- 24 I hesitate to refer to appropriation films as a genre since an appropriation film's categorization as such depends on a given viewer's experience. Since subjectivist definitions of genre are often problematic, I prefer to think of appropriation films as a category of films that may exist across genres.
- 25 William Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993), 40–42.
- 26 An objection to my use of the term "appropriation" might also arise from those who regard it as a Marxist term referring strictly to the appropriation of forms of cultural production and resistance by the capitalist system, which transforms everything into a commodity to be consumed. However, I am interested here in the other valences of the word "appropriation" and the etymological roots it shares with the words "propriety," which has to do with socially acceptable usage, and "property," which has to do with legally acceptable usage.
- 27 Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 237.
- 28 Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 14.
- 29 Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (London: Routledge, 1994).
- 30 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 49.