# THE ARCHIVE AND THE UNCANNY
## Danilo Kiš's "Encyclopedia of the Dead" and the Fantasy of Hypermnesia

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In his introduction to *Les Lieux de Mémoire* Pierre Nora argues that archives, in which genealogists outnumber professional historians, have become "sites of memory," institutionalized substitutes for the loss of environments of memory: our memory is "nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces"(8). Genealogy, the search for family memory, has become the new and dominant historical mode — the unaccredited masses shouldering legitimate historians out of the archives, "making everyone his own historian."[1] Amateur genealogists, says Nora, by reconstructing the "furtive" existence of their ancestors, are reviving positivism in a way that professional historians have long since abandoned. Positivism "has found in this urgent need [to track one's genesis] a popularity and necessity it never knew before" (15). But, does one really search the genealogical archive in the mode of positivism with the assumption that one will find the "truth of one's origins"? What kind of "truth" about the self does the genealogical archive offer? And how does one enter it? Is not the very notion of "origins" uncanny, straddling as it does the liminal space between life and before life, between life and death? Disavowing positivism, as Nora claims professional historians do, may admit permutations of interpretation, but it does not address the metaphysical nature of the genealogical archive or the uncanny experience of the amateur genealogist who searches there.

Incensed as he is by the invading hordes, Nora may very well be right at a mundane level. But as I stood on the threshold of an archive that I hoped held family treasure, I asked myself a series of questions: What had driven me there? What did I want to find? What did I already know? How would I understand what I found? And how would it act upon me? What I found is a long story.[2] Answers to these questions—which are not as simple as they may seem on first reading—came in the form of an apocryphal fiction, a story about an uncanny archive, *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*, and its uncanny double, The Mormon Genealogical Archives in Salt Lake City.

In 1981, Yugoslav writer Danilo Kiš published, in the Serb-Croat magazine *Knjizevnost*, a short story called "The Encyclopedia of The Dead (A Whole Life)."[3] The story appeared in

English in *The New Yorker* in 1982, and then once again in 1989 as the title story of a posthumous English language collection of Kiš's short stories.[4] The story is built around an encyclopedia in which every detail of every unremarkable life is recorded by a host of anonymous authors in the name of biblical resurrection. In its last publication, a long postscript followed, itself an account of an uncanny coincidence linking the dreamscape archive of the *Encyclopedia* to the Mormon Genealogical Archives in Salt Lake City.

For Kiš, the very existence of the Mormon Archive, of which he claimed no prior knowledge, confirmed the truth of his story—a story which relies, as most of his writing does, on the historical document as a crossover artefact between truth and fantasy. The document, says Kiš, is "the most reliable method by which to achieve authenticity and truthfulness, and what else [is] the aim of literature, any literature, but to convince the reader of the truthfulness of all our literary fantasies" (quoted in Gorjup, 163). "According to Kiš," writes Branko Gorjup "the author's objective is dual: to convince the reader of the authenticity of both the story and the 'document' from which the story is derived, which can be real or apocryphal" (163). Apocryphal as Kiš's *Encyclopedia* is, its premise—that every life can and must be recorded—mirrors uncannily the Mormon Genealogical Archive, driven as both are by what I shall call historical "hypermnesia," the fantasy of full memory.

Jacques Derrida, in *Archive Fever*, agrees with Nora that the archive is "hypomnesic" (11), always recording less than memory and at once destroying memory, replacing it with an outside, an institutional form. "True memory," writes Nora, "which has taken refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories" is being replaced by memory transformed by history, which is nearly the opposite: "voluntary and deliberate, experienced as a duty, no longer spontaneous . . ." (13). Derrida goes further, finding in this substitution of archival traces for spontaneous memory evidence of Freud's destructive principle, the death drive.

Derrida locates the death drive (or doesn't locate it, finding only traces of it in repetitive disguise, since it leaves no archive of its own) in the condition of the archive itself, the destruction of memory that makes the archive necessary. For the archive incites amnesia in what it selects and what it doesn't, as well as in its very purpose: to replace spontaneous memory. Here we find one of Derrida's famous paradoxes, for although the archive is an external tool for recording memory, that very repetitive externalization fixes and replaces memory, and destroys it in the process. As a consequence, "right on that which permits and conditions archivization, we will never find anything other than that which exposes it to destruction, introducing *a priori*, forgetfulness and the archiviolithic into the heart of the monument" (12). Derrida allows this paradox to stand as an internal contradiction that "conditions" all of his further remarks on memory and the archive: "There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression" (19). Thus, desire in the archive is, like any kind of desire, a want that perceives in itself its own hole. Derrida then argues (somewhat cryptically) that "[t]he death drive tends

3. "The Encyclopedia of the Dead (A Whole Life)" is the title of Kiš's short story. *The Encyclopedia of the Dead* (in italics) refers to either the title of Kiš's 1989 collection or to the fictional *Encyclopedia* of the title story (italicized in the story itself). Only context makes each reference absolutely clear, and the slide between them seems particularly appropriate.

4. The *New Yorker* story was translated by Ammiel Alcalay. All the stories in *The Encyclopedia of the Dead* were translated by Michael Henry Heim.

5. Friedlander himself explicitly argues with Freud's work on the uncanny in favour of Ernst Jentsch's discussion of the "uncanny" as the blurring of animate and inanimate, which Freud argues is insufficient. Were the perpetrators of the Holocaust men or automa-tons, asks Friedlander ("On the Unease in Historical Interpretation" in *Memory, History*).

6. See Friedlander, "Trauma, Transference and 'Working Through.'"

7. Vladimir Jankelevitch quoted by Henri Raczymow in "Memory Shot Through With Holes" (100). Raczymow discusses how he writes about having nothing to write about. See also Ellen S. Fine, "The Absent Memory: The Act of Writing in Post-Holocaust French Literature" in Lang, *Writing and the Holocaust*. Additionally, the language of and about the second generation is full of phantoms, for example, "the scar without the wound," (Ellen Fine quoting Arthur A. Cohen, *The Tremendum,* 23 in "The Burden of Memory," Efraim Sicher ed. *Breaking Crystal.* 27), or Nadine Fresco's "phantom pain without the limb." [417–27?]

8. Young, in his essay on Art Spiegelman and *Maus*, quotes Spiegelman's letter to the editor of the *New York Times* protesting the listing of *Maus* "on the fiction side of the ledger" of the best-seller list of 1991. Spiegelman writes: "I believe I might have lopped several years off the thirteen I devoted to my two volume project if I could

thus to destroy the hypomnesic archive, except if it can be disguised, made up, painted, printed, represented as the idol of its truth in painting" (12).

"The Encyclopedia of the Dead (A Whole Life)" is exactly that idol of the archive's truth disguised in its loveliest incarnation, that of "hypermnesia." Kiš's *Encyclopedia* takes Derrida's "archive drive" to its uncanny limit: the desire to capture every detail of a life, to exclude nothing, to both embrace and refuse the institution of the archive itself, demanding total recall and refusing selection. The hypermnesic archive may be the most destructive of all, promising, as it does, a total external record on which to rely. Yet (and here with Derrida I simply allow the paradox to stand) it is also a fantasy —not so fantastic as it turns out—that reaches beyond the stasis of the physical archive and invokes the historical uncanny: historical knowledge which crosses back and forth between life and death, between certainty and uncertainty, between conscious and unconscious knowledge, between history and memory, between fact and fiction, per-haps most emphatically in the guise of positivism.

Radical indeterminacy rather than positivism is the usual haunt of the historical uncanny. James E. Young, following Saul Friedlander, uses the term "uncanny" not in the psychoanalytic sense of familiar but unfamiliar origins,[5] but in the sense of resisting semantic closure. "Uncanny history" bridges "deep memory," the mostly unarticulated memory of Holocaust survivors—and the eventuality of its loss—with the production of common memory (memory which tends to restore or establish coherence, sometimes redemptive) and historical narrative. Writing of Friedlander's use of the term, Young suggests this definition: "[Friedlander] issues a narrow call for an aesthetics that devotes itself primarily to the dilemmas of representation, an 'uncanny' history of the Holocaust that sustains uncertainty and allows us to live without a full understanding of the events" (1998, 666). Voices of the second generation, particularly writers like Kiš who accentuate the problems of history-telling, often possess this uncanny quality, something hard to achieve in the mode of rational discourse.[6]

For historiography, melding memory and history produces something "uncanny" in that memory is never completely recovered, completely known, or verifiable in the nor-mal sense of the word, and therefore upsets historiographical desire for narrative or semantic closure, the need "to know," the archaic sense of "canny." So the uncanny in this sense becomes an unknowing, known and unknowable, together. For the second generation's attempts to work through received memory, which frequently reduces to "an I-don't-know what and a next-to-nothing" (Jankelevitch) or "a memory shot through with holes" (Raczymow),[7] to include knowledge is to introduce into the story a major dilemma of representation. The conditionality of how one comes to know what one pre-sumes to speak about in turn "sustains uncertainty" (Young), leaving reader and writer in a unknowing or *uncanny* state.[8]

Most of Kiš's fiction must be read through this filter of writing about the Holocaust. Hungarian by birth, Kiš describes his (auto-)biographical trilogy, *Garden, Ashes, Chagrins précoces,* and *Hourglass* as three different points of view about the same subject: the van-ishing world of the Hungarian Jews. What is important to Kiš, whose father died in

Auschwitz in 1944, is the principle of recording a life, any life and maybe even every life, in the face of the wholesale anonymous destruction of the millions of lives lost between the Holocaust and Stalin's purges. As Kiš says, "What is the meaning of 'six million dead' (!) if you don't see an individual face or body—if you don't hear an individual story" (*Homopoeticus*, 206). Less relevant for Kiš is the veracity of the documents on which a story of a life may be based. The truth of the historical record is provided by the richness of the literary imagination. The facticity of the document is not as important as the idea of the fact of the document itself and the emotional, intellectual, symbolic value with which we invest it. By frustrating our demand for an unambiguously authentic document—the cornerstone of all historical truth—Kiš pokes at the strength of our attachment. The clearest example of this is the bitter letter included as a postscript to *Hourglass*, the second book of his "family cycle." This letter, ostensibly written by Kiš's father from Auschwitz two years before his death, has become a debated artefact. The debate foregrounds our investment in the artefact itself, for the document's (in)authenticity determines our emotional response to its content.[9] Rather than accept the incompleteness of the historical record, and acquiesce to the loss of memory that accompanies this kind of mass destruction, Kiš, in his *Encyclopedia,* fills in *all* the gaps, exhuming the uncanny nightmare of the living that both fears and longs for a complete record of the dead.

What I hope will emerge from this reading of Kiš's story (as ironically incomplete as it must be) is a description of hypermnesia and its role in the genealogical archive and the historical uncanny. In the crossover between the apocryphal and real we can read the truth. Hypermnesia is part of that archive desire of one who would read in the genealogical archive, driven by the fantasy of knowing everything.

"The Encyclopedia of the Dead (A Whole Life)" begins with the interpellation of the reader with a direct address: "Last year, as you know, I went to Sweden at the invitation of. . ." The tale that follows recounts one particular event in our narrator's trip, a night when she is taken to the Royal Library after hours, delivered into the care of a guard who escorts her to a vault in which she is left and locked. Here, to set the scene, the reader is free to fill in every trope of the Gothic: The guard resembles Cerberus, the three-headed guard dog of Hades and the library a dungeon, and our narrator is buried alive in this dimly lit, draughty, cobwebby, womblike tomb of tomes hewn from stone. A series of sudden realizations, moments of frightening recognition, set off the traumatic structure of the narrative,[10] moving it swiftly from the register of the real to the surreal. Each room, our narrator realizes, houses one letter of the alphabet. But before she has fully comprehended the significance of this, she runs to the room housing the letter "M", as though driven by a premonition. By the time she gets there she is sure that this is the rumoured, celebrated, and carefully guarded *Encyclopedia of the Dead*, but she is unsure how she knows about it: "perhaps I read about it somewhere" (40).

Having gone on her trip to escape the grief of her father's death two months earlier (as if, she says, "we did not bear our grief within ourselves") she now finds herself cradling the tome that contains his entry. "The thick layer of dust that had gathered along their

have only taken a novelist's license while searching for a novelistic structure . . . I know that by delineating people with animal heads I've raised problems of taxonomy for you. Could you consider adding a special 'nonfiction/mice' category to your list?" (Young, 10). The *New York Times* subsequently agreed to move *Maus* to the nonfiction list.

9. Gabriel Motola, in his perceptive discussion of Kiš's work as a whole, observes that "for Holocaust victims and their children the surreal and the real are so closely intertwined that the distinction between them often fades into nonexistence" (606). He describes Kiš's work as "labyrinthine realism that often culminates in linguistic flights and philosophical ambiguities," offering aesthetic excitement and intellectual challenges that evoke in the reader "an exhilaration few other writers can match" (607). Yet Motola seems rather more bothered than exhilarated by the uncertain authenticity of the "Letter, or Table of Contents," as Kiš titles it, which concludes *Hourglass.* "Both the text of *Hourglass* and the historical circumstances would militate against such a letter being preserved during the war and retrieved by Kiš after it," argues Motola, "especially since it is filled with invective against members of the family, including the addressee herself, his sister Olga. Its being mentioned, ostensibly by a copywriter, as being an actual letter only on the impermanent cover of the book rather than a prefatory note or in an

epilogue under Kiš's own imprimatur, thus attesting to the validation of such a literary phenomenon so long as the book remains in print, also mitigates against its authenticity as a historical document" (618). Motola is clearly bothered by Kiš's refusal to authenticate the document in a permanent fashion. By refusing to do so Kiš has managed to enter into the historical record a document whose status will become harder and harder to determine over time, a kind of historical time-bomb deliberately designed to explode when the jacket falls off the book. Motola seems disappointed, let down somehow by Kiš; surely Kiš could be more generous to his readers by giving us some firm ground somewhere.

10. Cathy Caruth argues that the structure of traumatic repetition stems not just from the direct threat of the experience, but also, and perhaps more significantly, its suddenness. Fright itself constitutes a breach in time, hurling one back to birth, an awakening from death for which there was no preparation. ("Parting Words: Trauma, Silence and Survival." Lecture given at the Toronto Women's Bookstore, February 5, 2000).

edges and the dangling cobwebs bore clear witness to the fact that no one had handled the volumes in a long time. They were fettered to one another like galley slaves, but their chains had no locks" (41)—documents under "house arrest," as Derrida puts it, chained forever to their institutional domicile (2). Our narrator reads, oblivious of time until, like any character that enters the underworld, she begins to worry that she has overstayed her welcome. She then begins to take notes of what she has read, details that would only interest her and her mother. So we read a condensation of a condensation that we, who sustain the story's fantasy, then expand again to complete the record of a completely recorded life.

Though Kiš will wait until the end of the story to reveal that it is an account of a dream, the mechanisms of dreaming are already obvious in the narrative's structuring of the uncanny. Our narrator recognizes in the archive something she didn't know she knew, a residue of reading, perhaps, that had not registered until it surfaced in the dream. The dream fulfils her wish to be with her father again, to have him returned to her; but it is we who, listening to her story, suspend our disbelief, performing imaginative expansion of the excerpts recounted by the narrator. In order for the story to work we must believe that such a record might exist, or at least give in to our desire for the possibility of such a record. Only in dreams can we truly resurrect the dead, conversing with them, reconstructing them from the archives of our memory. As we are drawn into the uncanny double of our own fantasy, externalized by Kiš's story, so too does the dreamwork of our narrator become externalized. She reads only what already exists through the tasks of the archivists themselves.

The authors of the *Encyclopedia* are an "odd caste of erudites" who "believe in the miracle of biblical resurrection, and they complete their vast catalogue in preparation for that moment. So that everyone will be able to find not only his fellow men but also—and more important—his own forgotten past" (43). For the compilers of the *Encyclopedia*, history "is the sum of human destinies [every one unique], the totality of ephemeral happenings. That is why it records every action, every thought, every creative breath, every spot height in the survey, every shovelful of mud, every motion that cleared a brick from the ruins" (56–57). Unlike the historical archive in which the distinction between what is historically significant and what isn't is enacted in the process of selection—a form of political power—this particular archive is dedicated to the impossible principle that everything is important, that every moment lived is worthy of recording. Further, this archive is republican in its inclusion, reversing the general rule that the lives of important people are more worthy of recording by recording the lives of everyone but the rich and famous, the lives of the officially unknown. "[N]othing is lacking, nothing is omitted, neither the condition of the road nor the hues of the sky.... The principle is clear, yet the erudition, the need to record it all, everything a human life is made of, is enough to take one's breath away" (46).

Just as the number of readers in Kiš's text is multiplied by the *mise-en-scene* of reading itself, so does Kiš's insistence that he is not the sole author of this story multiply the number of writers (towards the end of the story, Kiš adds another possible author, "M").

Kiš's authorial function is reflected by the authors of the *Encyclopedia*. They are his creation, yet he ascribes to them a style; they are "an unlikely amalgam of encyclopedic conciseness and biblical eloquence" (44). Similarly, Kiš's own style has been described as "the union of the specific, synesthetic, and surrealistic" (Motola, 610). Yet, Kiš's narrator tells us that what we read is only a poor copy of the original. "Take, for example, the meagre bit of information I was able to get down in my notebook: *there* it is condensed into a few lines of such intensity that suddenly, as if by magic, the reader's spirit is overwhelmed by the radiant landscape and swift succession of images" (44–5). We read at third remove an infallible *Encyclopedia* in descriptions of snippets on the pages of a fictional notebook recorded by a character in turn inscribed by an all too human author. The erudition of Kiš, in the guise of his imaginary chroniclers, extends beyond the events of any day in the life of "D.M.," our narrator's father. Since history, the archivists believe, is the sum of human destinies, the chronicle that the narrator reads is not simply a record of her father's life, but its interpretation as well. Or, rather, it is a palimpsest of interpretations that destroys D.M. in the process of recording him. What we read is Kiš's description of his narrator's notes of her reading of her father's entry in the anonymous *Encyclopedia*. Though the events are described from her father's point of view, the entry is written by everyone but him. We are left with the suggestion of a ghostly fourth remove in this re-presentation of D.M.'s voice—the object but not the subject of memory:

> The Belgrade street battles in October 1944 are described from his point of view and from the perspective of Palimoticeva Street: the artillery rolling by, a dead horse lying on the corner. The deafening roar of the caterpillar treads momentarily drowns out the interrogation of a *Volksdeutscher* named Franjo Hermann, whose supplications pass easily through the thin wall of a neighboring building where an OZNA security officer metes out the people's justice and revenge. The burst of machine-gun fire in the courtyard next door reverberating harshly in the abrupt silence that follows the passing of a Soviet tank, a splash of blood on the wall that my father would see from the bathroom window, and the corpse of the unfortunate Hermann, in fetal position—they are all recorded in *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*, accompanied by the commentary of a hidden observer. (56)

This fantasy of the hidden observer invokes the principle of the perfect historical record against which all our strivings to create verifiable, credible, believable, publishable records must always fail. Perhaps more than any other discipline that straddles the threshold between fiction and fact, the practice of history suffers from its unattainable object: the "true" historiographical record, the right facts marshalled in unerring order, imbued with their proper significance.

Yet in stark contrast to the completeness of the record, the *Encyclopedia*'s recorders hide themselves. Afraid that they will be persecuted for their religious beliefs, or influenced

by the living, these multiple anonymous authors leave no subjective mark. They embody the ideal of the truly objective historian, recording with "breathtaking erudition"; objective, but also exhaustive; prescient ("these would be the best years of his life"), and omniscient. This is an archive which forgets (or obscures) its own origins to the extent that the method of inscription is itself unknowable. Judging by the dust and unbroken chains that cover and bind the volume that houses her father's entry, no human hand has touched these books in a very long time. Apocryphal as this impossible inscription is, it leads us in the direction of a question we seldom ask of the archives: how did the records come to be there? Archives seldom record the recorder, the actual hand that turns a piece of paper into a document. Similarly, we remain somewhat mystified by the process by which memories are recorded. Electrical impulses across synaptic gaps are seemingly as difficult to pinpoint as the source of a particular memory as the fingerprint of the archivist on the document. Captured as they are by these unknowable authors, the lives recorded in the *Encyclopedia* have never been asked their permission, nor do they have any control over their future.

The lives recorded there are both remembered and imprisoned, souls chained to an eternal existence. These entries record "everything that can be recorded concerning those who have completed their earthly journey and set off on the eternal one" (43). But the picture of the archive draws a cruel contrast here between the liberation of a soul from its earthly clay and the narrative bound to the stasis of the archive. The lives recorded in the *Encyclopedia* are imprisoned by the very act of archivization, a process begun before death and before life itself. And when the time comes, "this compendium will serve as a great treasury of memories and as a unique proof of resurrection" (43). By then the *Encyclopedia* will have completely supplanted any living memory, and yet every soul will be returned to its former life, if only to prove a point. As our narrator reads, she arrives at her own birth and life as an element of her father's. She has already been inscribed into the book.

The promise of the *Encyclopedia* is the complete story of the life of our narrator's father, a promise which exposes what she doesn't know about him and her prehistory, his life before her life, her genealogical biography. Knowledge promises to restore to her something more complete than what she has lost, and so she reads on. Yet, in the process of reading on she is drawn further and further towards her own death, towards the time before she was and towards the entry that will be hers.

> What makes the *Encyclopedia* unique (apart from its being the only existing
> copy) is the way it depicts human relationships, encounters, landscapes—
> the multitude of details that make up a human life. . . . Because *it* records
> everything. Everything. The countryside of his native region is rendered
> so vividly that as I read, or rather flew over the lines and paragraphs,
> I felt I was in the heart of it: the snow on the distant mountain peaks,
> the bare trees, the frozen river with children skating past as in a Brueghel
> landscape. And among those children I saw him clearly, my father,

although he was not yet my father, only he who would become my father,
who *had been* my father. (42)

In the genealogical archive time is structured as in the unconscious, where no clear distinction exists between the events of the day or the decade before, or perhaps even of the life before. We read in one sentence a past which has not yet happened (not yet my father), a future which will happen (he would become), and a past which is entirely completed (he had been my father, but is no longer). The very exercise of genealogy is to project oneself (or one's genetic material) backwards, to find the source of both one's physicality and psyche in the remains of ancestors. Watching her father as a child not only collapses the space of a generation between them, but also suggests the possibility that she could be his mother. This uncanny continuity/discontinuity between the living and the dead, at once a myth and physical reality, becomes explicit later in the story as her father contemplates his own death:

> The succession of the quick and the dead, the universal myth of the chain
> of generations, the vain solace man invents to make the thought of dying
> more acceptable—in that instant my father experienced them all as an
> insult; it was as though by the magical act of bestowing his name upon a
> newborn child, no matter how much his flesh and blood, we were "pushing
> him into the grave." (63)

To the dying, the myth of the chain of generations is of little comfort. Only to the living does it offer the promise of immortality by fending off the eventuality of death with the promise of the *universal chain*. For the child named in this fashion, who has little choice in the matter, its name will be a constant reminder of mortality, a conceit of comfort for the parent perhaps, but not for the child.

We left our narrator standing in the vault reading the final paragraphs of her father's entry. Now we find her in a moment of disappointment, suspicious of the authors' infallibility:

> Suddenly, somewhere in the final pages devoted to him, I noticed a flower,
> one unusual flower, that I first took for a vignette or the schematic drawing
> of a plant preserved in the world of the dead as an example of extinct
> flora. The caption, however, indicated that it was the basic floral pattern
> in my father's drawings. My hands trembling, I began to copy it. More than
> anything it resembled a gigantic peeled and cloven orange, crisscrossed
> with red lines like capillaries. For a moment I was disappointed. I was
> familiar with all the drawings my father had done in his leisure time on
> walls, boards, bottles, and boxes, and none was anything like this one. Yes,
> I said to myself, even *they* can make a mistake. (65; emphasis in the original)

Where the account of the chronicles comes into conflict with the memory of our narrator, we find a certain combination of disappointment and relief—"even they can make a mistake." However, mistakes are only part of the human historical record: fiction and dreams cannot make mistakes *per se*:

> And then, after copying the gigantic peeled orange into my notebook, I read the concluding paragraph and let out a scream. I awoke drenched in sweat. I immediately wrote down all of the dream I remembered. And this is what remains of it . . . . (65; ellipses in the original)

11. Freud, Sigmund, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 46.

12. Although elsewhere Kiš says, "My use of women narrators in those two stories from *The Encyclopedia of the Dead* is also the result of a quest for change, for a new psychological register and a new voice" (*Homopoeticus* 198). Once again the idea that the dream might have actually been dreamt is thrown into question. Perhaps "M" is only a persona, the idea of the woman behind the woman who dreamed the dream.

13. This recent description comes from the Utah Valley PAF (Personal Ancestral File) Users Group:
So that families may continue to discover their ancestors, specialist teams are sent around the world to locate and copy existing records. Since 1938, they have been using microfilm as the principal medium. The films preserve the land grant, deed, parish, will, marriage, cemetery and other public records that help to document the lives of many people. Where they are permitted to photograph the records, a copy of the film is given to the original record holder.

"Do you know what was in the last paragraph?" the narrator asks the reader, bringing us again into intimate interlocution and breaking the fictional frame. "That D.M. took up painting at the time the first symptoms of cancer appeared. And that therefore his obsession with floral patterns coincided with the progress of the disease" (65). The narrator then takes the drawing to her father's doctor who confirms "with some surprise, that it looked exactly like the sarcoma in my father's intestine. And that the *efflorescence* had doubtless gone on for years" (65).

The horror of the living nightmare is the horror of knowing too much. Our narrator's father knew too much about himself and death: "I haven't the strength to describe the look he gave me," the narrator confides, "as he said goodbye on the hospital stairs a day or two before the operation; it contained all of life and all the terror that comes of knowing death. *Everything a living man can know of death*" (64; italics in the original). Extending this chain of deadly knowledge, our narrator, following her father and the authors of the *Encyclopedia*, now also knows too much. Her memory of her father has changed, has become supplanted, extended by what the archival record has revealed.

But, beyond the fantasy of the hypermnesic archive embedded in the dream, the dream itself is a product of hypermnesia. Hypermnesia is very stuff dreams are made of: "The fact that dreams have at their command certain memories which are inaccessible in waking life is so remarkable and of such theoretical importance that I should like to draw still more attention to it by relating some further 'hypermnesic' dreams."[11] Thus Freud begins his theoretical investigation of the interpretation of dreams with accounts of hypermnesic dreams, both his own and those of others. The dreams and the subsequent verification of their truth, drive us to admit, writes Freud, "that in the dream we knew and remembered something which was beyond the reach of our waking memory" (45). What may not have registered in conscious memory may register in the *psychic archive*. It is on this basis that Freud derives a model of the unconscious in which, hypothetically, everything that happens in a life is recorded and can be recalled. One might consider hypermnesia to be the cornerstone of Freudian psychoanalysis. In fact Freud developed both his theory of repression and the pleasure principle from the mechanics of the abnormally sharp recall of dreams. Moreover, at the end of his career Freud would proceed from his corpus of work on abnormally sharp recall of traumatic dreams, to deduce the principle that goes hand-in-hand with pleasure—the death drive.

It is not surprising then that Kiš's hypermnesic story derives from a dream, both intra- and extradiagetically. Thus, our narrator, who claimed no prior knowledge of the source of her father's "efflorescence," remembers the horrifying detail of it in her dream of the archive, and seeks to verify its authenticity. Her account shifts from hastily written notes of an uncanny archive in a draughty vault to a waking account of all that could be remembered of the dream. The doctor who recognizes the pattern of her father's cancer, verifies not only the truth of the narrator's dream, but also the register of the real. Each shift in register is a traumatic one for both the dreamer and the reader, for each register of the text authenticates the truth of the others, collapsing the distinction between them.

The story ends here, and would be enough on its own to make the point about the nightmare of knowing too much, about the faith we place in documents, about the uncanny nature of the archives, about the blurring of the boundaries of fantasy and fact, about the fantasy behind the fact. This story would be enough on its own, but it doesn't end there. In a postscript to the story that appears only in the collected version, Kiš relates the following order of events. He claims, adding yet another author and placing himself on the side of the reader as witness, that the story is not his, but belongs to "'M'... the person who dreamed the dream and to whom the story is dedicated."[12] "[*This*] *person awoke one day to find, not without a shudder of amazement, that her most intimate nightmares were etched in stone, like a monstrous monument. About six months after the dream, and shortly after the story had appeared in print, a Yugoslav magazine published the following item under the title* '*Archives*'... East of Salt Lake City, deep in the Rockies' granite bowels, lies one of the most unusual archives in all the United States" (193; italics in the original). The article goes on to describe a closely guarded archive, the access to which is "limited to a highly selected staff...all entrances...equipped with iron doors and other security measures" (193). In a labyrinth of tunnels and rooms blasted into rock, the names of eighteen billion people, living and dead, are stored on 1,250,000 microfilms compiled by the Genealogical Society of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints. "Six immense halls lined with a double layer of concrete," temperature and humidity controlled, with constantly circulating purified air (for preservation is only possible under certain natural and unnatural conditions) "currently contain as much information as is contained in six million books of three thousand pages each."[13] The names in these archives have been collected from all over the world towards the ultimate goal of recording—until when?— the whole of mankind, past, present, and future, in the name of retroactive baptism for the ancestors of those "unfortunate enough to have missed the 'Mormon revelation'" (*Duga*, May 19–23, 1981; quoted by Kiš, 193–94).

Kiš leaves it up to us to note the uncanny correspondences between the archive nightmare and the stolid reality of the Mormon Genealogical Archives. The Mormon Archive, with its goal of becoming the most complete genealogical record in the world, partakes physically and psychically of the same fantasy as Kiš's *Encyclopedia*. Housed in a closely guarded rock-bound tomb, gathered by an army of anonymous archivists infinitely accumulating the records of the willing and the unwilling, the living and the dead, the

Today there are 200 camera operators working in 45 countries around the world. Master copies of the films are stored under carefully controlled conditions in the Granite Mountain Records Vault in the Wasatch mountains southeast of Salt Lake City. This repository is not open to the public. It contains a store of about 2 million rolls of microfilm (equivalent to more than 6 million 300 [sic]-page books) that are safe from flood, fire, earthquake, and man-made disaster. Only a fraction of the available space has so far been filled, and with new technology even more information can be stored in less space, e.g. by using 16mm microfilm in place of 35mm. The collection is growing at a rate of more than 4,100 rolls of film a month.

The present library building was constructed in 1983–85, and contains microfilm, microfiche and paper copies of records in open access shelving and cabinets. There are about 2 million rolls of film, 0.4 million microfiches, and more than 250,000 books available. There are an estimated two billion records on deceased persons.

14. In May of 1999, the Mormon Church launched online access to its genealogical archive. The Mormon site contained links to 400 million names and promised that it would soon add millions more names from its records of 2 billion deceased. Obviously, the large discrepancy between the figures in *Duga* and the current information about the archives may come from the combining of the names of the living and the dead. The only online searchable records are those of the deceased. However, these statistics are unlikely to be stable for any length of time. According to a November 1999 press release from the Church, in less than six months since its launch the site had received more than 1.5 billion hits and was averaging 8.5 million hits a day. Users are able to submit information to the database and approximately 1.2 million new names are added to the Pedigree Resource File every month (www.lds.org).

archive arrests the lives it records, holding them for retroactive rebaptism in the name of resurrection. At the same time, the completeness of the record makes it the most comprehensive source for those who would project themselves back into genealogical time.[14] Kiš's story is thus a metonymic double for the Mormon project; the completeness of and the curiosity about one life (or two) stands in for the whole of the human record.

Kiš's *Encyclopedia* and, by extension, the Mormon Archive, exploit the morbid curiosity and the impossibility of the desire to know "A Whole Life" (the subtitle of Kiš's story), a desire that can only be filled in an uncanny way (and thus at once natural and unnatural). Everything about this story is uncanny in every sense of the word: its genesis as a dream; its familiarity and strangeness, both within the textual diagetic and without; its similarity to a bizarre "real"; its indeterminate status as an account of an actual dream and/or an imagined one; its cavelike setting condensing, in a fabulous Freudian fashion, tome, tomb, and womb; and the role of the historians, who by recording the completeness of a life at the moment of its end, draw the living into the deathness of the archive. "The first thing I saw was his picture, the only illustration. . . . It was the photograph you saw on my desk. . . . Under the picture were his name and, in parentheses, the years 1910-1979" (40).

But, to second-guess Kiš, the most frightening similarity between the dream archive and its uncanny double, is the totality of the enterprise compiled in the name of resurrection. Here one senses that Kiš has confirmed the truth of his story, that the archive both strives to capture too much and, once having captured its prey, claims the documents for its own purposes and the purposes of the living. For the complete record of a life comes only at the end, when only the archive is left. Hypermnesia, the desire to remember all in the name of resurrecting life, the drive to know oneself, beyond oneself to one's infinite origins, is the deathly drive of the genealogical archive and those who search there. How can it be anything but uncanny, and most emphatically in its mode of positivism. Is not certainty itself—positivism—the other side of the uncanny coin? Does the uncanny quality of not knowing not have to rest against the uncanny quality of knowing? At its extreme, the dream of positivism participates in an uncanny more fantastic than that of partial knowledge or fact mixed with fiction or memory mixed with forgetting. It draws its libido from the horrifying promise of the unattainable: from hypermnesia, the dream of complete knowledge.

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