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Heritage and the recent and contemporary past

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AD281 Understanding Global Heritage

Book 3 Understanding Heritage and Memory

Chapter 8 Heritage and the recent and contemporary past

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This chapter considers the heritage of the recent and contemporary past, both as a specific time period taking in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and in terms of a series of themes that characterise the period – globalisation, transnationalism, and the influence of new communicative technologies. In doing so, it considers the usefulness of what some authors have described as 'the postmodern condition' as a way of characterising some of the social and economic changes that have given rise to the accelerated interest in heritage in the late twentieth century. The chapter looks not only at the ways in which new technologies are transforming heritage practice and our relationships with heritage, and at the ways in which these technologies might be considered to be a part of heritage itself. The case study, on heritage in the virtual 'world' Second Life, written by historian Daniel Weinbren and virtual worlds researcher Rebecca Ferguson, considers the ways residents have not only begun to develop their own distinctive heritage, but have also recreated and reworked real-world heritage sites within this virtual environment. The contrast of old and new highlights aspects of heritage that are important in both real life and virtual life, and raises a series of questions about the role of authenticity in heritage. The concluding section considers the implications of the case study for heritage management in the twenty-first century.

Introduction

In the post-industrialised western world in the early twenty-first century we have become so accustomed to the almost constant rate of technological change and the mediating role of technology in everyday life that it is difficult to imagine a world without plastics, the internet, mobile communication technologies or computers. Indeed, it is possible to argue that there is a distinct material culture of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that we can view as part of the period's material heritage, and to a large extent as a defining factor in the production of its 'intangible'

heritage. This chapter is concerned with the heritage of the various changes that occurred throughout the course of the twentieth century, and with the ways in which these changes might have influenced how we conceive of heritage itself and how we make decisions about managing it. We will consider the emergence of a field of 'virtual' heritage and the issue of authenticity that is closely associated with it. Before doing this, we need to look in more detail about how the technological changes of the late twentieth century have influenced the ways in which we experience the world around us, and how these might relate to the way we perceive of heritage in the early twenty-first century.

Many authors have pointed to the changes that have come about in modern western societies since the middle of the twentieth century as heralding a new and distinct period of history. In the same way that we are used to thinking of the modern age, or 'modernity', as relating to the outcomes of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, some authors have suggested we use the term 'postmodernity' to define a separate historical period. These authors point to the growth of communicative technologies, increased globalisation, and the widespread experience of migration and transnationalism that characterise the period since the 1950s or 1960s. In *The Postmodern Condition*, French philosopher and literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard suggested that *modernity* should be seen as a cultural condition characterised by the pursuit of progress, while *postmodernity* is the logical end product of this process, where constant change has become the status quo (Lyotard, [1979] 1984). Under such circumstances the notion of progress fails to have any meaning, as everything is constantly in flux. In this context we can begin to understand the recent 'heritage boom' as at least partially motivated by a desperate search for stability in a world that is constantly changing. We might think here of the expectation when we purchase a laptop or personal computer that it will become instantly outdated, or the idea that as soon as we drive our brand-new car out of the showroom it immediately loses value. Such notions would have been ridiculous as recently as the 1960s or 1970s. It is not important to engage with the nuances of Lyotard's argument here except to note that there seems to have been a series of technological and economic conditions in the late twentieth century that can be said to have heralded a new series of relationships with the material world, characterised by an expectation of constant change. The role of this chapter is to look at how these new relationships are transforming our relationship with heritage and its role in the production of social memory.

Figure 8.1: Visualization of the various routes through a portion of the Internet. New communicative technologies developed during the 1970s and 1980s have changed the ways in which large numbers of us interact with each other and with material things. This has stimulated some authors to suggest the 'postmodern condition' relates to new ways of experiencing time and space.

Postmodernity, heritage and nostalgia

The geographer David Harvey has suggested that the changes in technology and society that occurred during the later part of the twentieth century have given rise to a distinct way of experiencing time and place, which he terms the 'condition of postmodernity'.

> There has been a sea-change in cultural as well as in political-economic practices since around 1972. This sea-change is bound up with the emergence of new dominant ways in which we experience space and time … there is some kind of … relation between the rise of postmodernist cultural forms, the emergence of more flexible modes of capital accumulation, and a new round of 'time-space compression' in the organisation of capitalism.
>
> (Harvey, 1990, p. vii)

This new experience of time and space relates to a new series of economic and material circumstances that arose in the later part of the twentieth century, which relate not only to changes in technology and the economy, but also to the ways in which humans in the post-industrial West experience the world. Harvey associates postmodernity with a phase of 'late capitalism' when more flexible forms of capital accumulation and distribution develop, characterised by more flexible labour processes and markets, increased spatial mobility, rapid shifts in patterns of consumption, and a revival of entrepreneurialism and neo-conservatism (1990, p. 124). These shifts in material and economic conditions are understood to have produced changes in the ways people relate to the past and future.

Some authors would suggest that what Harvey describes as the postmodern condition should be seen as the setting for the rise of official forms of heritage as a social phenomenon in the West. As Harvey notes, Robert Hewison sees a link between the heritage industry and postmodernity in his book *The Heritage Industry*.

> Both conspire to create a shallow screen that intervenes between our present lives, our history. We have no understanding of history in depth, but instead are offered a contemporary creation, more costume drama and re-enactment than critical discourse.
>
> (Hewison, 1987, p. 135)

Hewison (1987) coined the phrase 'heritage industry' to describe what he considered to be the sanitisation and commercialisation of the version of the past produced as heritage in the UK. He suggested that heritage was a structure largely imposed from above to capture a middle-class nostalgia for the past as a golden age in the context of a climate of decline. Nostalgia is defined as a longing for the past, and in this sense we can see nostalgia as one important aspect of public memory.

Hewison believed that the rise of heritage as a form of popular entertainment distracted its patrons from developing an interest in contemporary art and critical culture, providing them instead with a view of culture that was finished and complete (and firmly placed in the past). He pointed to the widespread perception of cultural and economic decline

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which became a feature of Britain's perception of itself as a nation in the decades following the Second World War.

> In the face of apparent decline and disintegration, it is not surprising that the past seems a better place. Yet it is irrecoverable, for we are condemned to live perpetually in the present. What matters is not the past, but our relationship with it. As individuals, our security and identity depend largely on the knowledge we have of our personal and family history; the language and customs which govern our social lives rely for their meaning on a continuity between past and present. Yet at times the pace of change, and its consequences, are so radical that not only is change perceived as decline, but there is the threat of rupture with our past lives.

> (Hewison, 1987, pp. 43–5)

Reflecting on these major changes in technology (particularly information technology) since the 1960s and 1970s, as well as on the increased pace of change of material, cultural and social life, helps us to understand the motivation to conserve, celebrate and remember the past. It also helps us to understand that this motivation, in turn, gave rise to the acceleration of heritage as a formal concern in the modern world and to the growing interest in the past in western societies. In Chapter 5 we saw how societies with small ethnic minorities might develop the greatest vested interest in preserving homogenous nationalisms using heritage as a tool of the state. We might add to this that when the pace of material and economic change shifts in society, it becomes more concerned with anchoring its values in the past (but this is always a version of the past that is created in the present). Similarly, as we saw in Chapter 5, heritage in the late twentieth century became in many places stronger and more appealing as a nationalising tool in response to the development of transnational communities who do not form strong connections with particular places or whose sense of cohesion crosses national borders. Heritage in the late twentieth century, at least in its official uses by the state, seems to be about establishing control and stability in societies that are experiencing periods of rapid change.

If we are to acknowledge that it is this postmodern condition which provides the contemporary setting for the increased interest in heritage and the past in post-industrialised western countries, what about the *heritage* of this recent past? It might be argued that if increased interest in heritage is a product of postmodernity precisely because it offers escape from the conditions of postmodernity, then it would seem perverse to use heritage to seek to establish a memory of that postmodernity itself. However, in addition to the growth in popular forms of nostalgia and heritage throughout the twentieth century, we have also seen the development of a process whereby the present is made almost immediately past through the creation and conservation of what we might term *postmodern* heritage, in which certain aspects of everyday life which relate to the present are almost immediately conceived of in heritage terms, sometimes even before they move outside the realm of everyday contemporary life. With such a rapid pace of change in many societies, technologies and aspects of material culture become almost instantly redundant. Emails, text messages and other forms of

electronic communications have replaced the letters that might, in the past, have formed the basis for archival collections. CCTV surveillance images are constantly collected. How do we decide which of these to keep, and which to delete or throw away? Which of these should we keep for posterity? And should we feel an obligation to keep some of these for the future?

Decisions that we make every day, for example whether or not to delete a certain email from our email inbox, employ the same sorts of assessment of value that are made in establishing the significance of heritage (and hence the ways in which heritage should be managed or conserved). The decision about what is worth conserving (or protesting to conserve) and, indeed, how to conserve it, is always based initially on an assessment of *value*. Sometimes, this is an explicit assessment, as in the case of official heritage assessments carried out using explicit criteria, such as those against which World Heritage sites are assessed by UNESCO. In other cases, the assessment will not be made formally but is implicit in any decision to invest time and energy in conserving one object or place instead of another. It is important to realise that concepts of value always underpin heritage in the sense that the attribution of something to the category of 'heritage' sets the object, place or practice apart from other categories of things as worthy of conservation or management. These decisions about value are everyday decisions that constantly influence those things we choose to keep from the past and those things we choose to discard. Given that the things we choose to keep will form the building blocks of social memory, this everyday process of choosing which things to discard and which to preserve has wide-ranging effects on the ways we will be able to use what remains to construct our heritage in the future.

Twentieth-century heritage: new chronologies of nostalgia

The later part of the twentieth century saw an incredible proliferation and diversification of official and unofficial practices of heritage around collecting the modern. We need only think of the rise of vintage clothes as fashion rather than thrift, the proliferation of amateur collectors of twentieth-century technology and design, and the increased popularity of oral and family history to get a feeling for the range of unofficial practices around heritage which relate to the growth of nostalgia for the contemporary and recent past in the late twentieth century. These unofficial practices have been mirrored by a series of official heritage practices around recognising, collecting and conserving the heritage of the twentieth century. This section of the chapter briefly outlines some of these initiatives, in particular those relating to ICOMOS and the World Heritage List.

At the national and international level, 'recent' or 'twentieth-century' heritage began to receive increasing 'official' heritage attention among architectural historians in the 1960s and 1970s. An important international non-profit, non-government organisation, the International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement (DoCoMoMo) was established

in 1988 at the Technical University in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, its international secretariat moving to the cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine in the Palais de Chaillot in Paris in 2002 (DoCoMoMo, 2008). DoCoMoMo rapidly became an important force in the conservation of modern architecture, setting out its goals to conserve and educate the public about the architectural significance of the modern movement in its Eindhoven Statement in 1990. At the time of writing, DoCoMoMo has working parties in over thirty countries, each of whom undertakes to work on developing a national register of Modern Movement buildings and running campaigns to preserve what it perceives to be key works of architectural Modernism.

During the late 1990s, twentieth-century heritage became a major agenda item for ICOMOS. After a series of expert meetings held in 1995 in Helsinki and in 1996 in Mexico, and national ICOMOS conferences in Helsinki and Adelaide in 2001, ICOMOS announced the Montreal Action Plan on 'recent' (last 100–150 years) heritage in late 2001 (ICOMOS, 2001). The plan acknowledged the findings of the *Heritage at Risk 2000* report, which expressed

> concern over the fate of various heritage types associated with the 19th and 20th century, such as residential or urban architecture, industrial complexes, landscape creations or new building types such as stadiums, airports, waterworks or large city parks.
>
> (ICOMOS, 2001)

It aimed to

- Understand the full diversity of 20th century heritage and of the issues related to its recognition and conservation. To that effect, ICOMOS, with the support of US/ICOMOS, is carrying out a survey of illustrative cases, through all its National and International Committees. This survey should be ready in April 2002 and published later as a Scientific Journal. Its result will help ICOMOS identify needs for new international committees or further partnerships with other organisations.

- Promote 20th century heritage by dedicating the International Monuments and Sites Day, on 18th April 2002 to 20th century heritage in all its diversity. Our Finnish ICOMOS colleagues are working on a poster that could be distributed to all committees for that purpose.

- Put a special emphasis on 20th century heritage in the 2002 edition of the Heritage@Risk Report, and invite our partner organisations TICCIH and DOCOMOMO to contribute substantially to its content.

- Co-operate fully with UNESCO and other partners to develop workshops and meetings on that theme.

> (ICOMOS, 2001)

Figure 8.2: Poster announcing the creation of the New Orleans Louisiana Chapter of DoCoMoMo.

The Montreal Action Plan was followed by a UNESCO Heritage at Risk conference titled Preservation of 20th Century Architecture and World Heritage in April 2006 in Moscow and an ICOMOS International Scientific Committee meeting on 20th Century Heritage held in Berlin in 2007. The Berlin meeting found that twentieth-century heritage was under-represented on World Heritage List. According to the ICOMOS report and action plan *Filling the Gaps* (2005), in the year 2004 twentieth-century heritage made up less than 3 per cent of the (then) 800 World Heritage sites, and nominations for twentieth-century sites were seldom on the tentative lists of the signatory countries of the World Heritage Convention.

ICOMOS responded to this flurry of recommendations regarding the listing of twentieth-century sites on the World Heritage List with the widely publicised listing of several new twentieth-century World Heritage sites during the early 2000s, as a result of its Modern Heritage Programme, undertaken jointly with DoCoMoMo. This was the same approach that we saw UNESCO adopt in Chapter 7 –quickly to insert representative intangible heritage places on to the World Heritage List – and in Chapter 6 in relation to cultural landscapes. For example, the city of Tel Aviv was listed on World Heritage List in 2003. The listing description notes,

> Tel Aviv was founded in 1909 and developed as a metropolitan city under the British Mandate in Palestine. The White City was constructed from the early 1930s until the 1950s, based on the urban plan by Sir Patrick Geddes, reflecting modern organic planning principles. The buildings were designed by architects who were trained in Europe where they practised their profession before immigrating. They created an outstanding architectural ensemble of the Modern Movement in a new cultural context.

> (UNESCO, 2008)

What is interesting about this phenomenon of twentieth-century heritage is that it is, perhaps even more than other forms of contemporary western heritage management, very narrowly focused on what are perceived to be key or seminal works of architecture, and in particular architectural Modernism. Indeed, it appears to be focused on developing a new 'canon' of Modernism. One might distinguish between the DoCoMoMo and ICOMOS campaigns in this regard; the listing of places like Tel Aviv depends on the quantity and consistency of the housing and planning, as Tel Aviv has few really 'important' buildings from the perspective of the canon of Modernism. Nonetheless, what we have seen in the 1980s and 1990s has been a shift in policy to conserve increasingly 'modern' buildings as heritage. This has shifted the landscape of heritage, to make it into something that embraces both the very old and the comparatively new.

Figure 8.3: Arieh Sharon, Carl Rubin, Josef Neufeld and Israel Dicker, Meonot Qvdim workers' flats, blocks VII, Spinoza Street, Tel Aviv, 1935–6

Postmodern heritage: collecting 'us'

Another movement which reflects this impetus to historicise the immediate past as heritage relates to a field of research that we might term the

'archaeology of the contemporary past'. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s archaeologists developed in increased interest in oral testimony and the forensic or archaeological study of the contemporary or very recent past, in order to study contemporary societies (Gould and Schiffer (eds), 1981; Buchli and Lucas (eds), 2001). Projects including William Rathje's study of the archaeology of contemporary rubbish disposal in Arizona (Rathje and Murphy, 2001) and various projects relating to the archaeology of the Cold War (for example Schofield and Cocroft (eds), 2007), coupled with the increased reliance during the 1990s on forensic archaeological techniques in understanding the circumstances of war crimes have brought to the fore the archaeological study of the very recent past. This process of turning an archaeological lens on the present has influenced the development of an interest in the heritage of the recent past which moves beyond a nostalgia for architectural Modernism to encompass the tangible and intangible heritage of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in all its forms.

The idea of a postmodern heritage is reflected in the case example of an English Heritage book *Images of Change: An Archaeology of England's Contemporary Landscape* (Penrose (ed.), 2007). This developed out of an earlier discussion document titled *Change and Creation: Historic Landscape Character 1950–2000* (Bradley, Buchli, Fairclough et al., 2004) which set out to raise a series of questions about the importance of the twentieth-century landscape to people's sense of place in England.

A question posed by English Heritage in its discussion document in 2004 was: what does the landscape of the twentieth century mean to you? It is hard to answer this question without thinking about what the landscape of the twentieth century actually looks like. *Images of Change* develops a typological approach to the contemporary English landscape. Typology means the study of 'types' – in archaeology, typology is used to group things that are like each other based on particular criteria. The approach of *Images of Change* derives from that of historic landscape characterisation (HLC), a relatively new approach to heritage characterisation developed by English Heritage in the 1990s (see further discussion in Chapter 6). HLC focuses on understanding time-depth in *contemporary* landscapes (rather than the reconstruction of past landscapes, for example). It breaks down the landscape features of contemporary England into a number of broad themes – people, politics, profit and pleasure – before further isolating sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes employed by *Images of Change* are listed in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1   Themes towards a typology of features for an archaeology of the post-1950 English landscape (Penrose (ed.) 2007)

People	Politics	Profit	Pleasure
Temporary Housing	Hospitals	Forestry	Back Gardens
Social Housing	Mental Health	Farming	Front Gardens
Privatopia (private housing	Detention	Metals and Industrial	National Parks

		Minerals	
New Towns	Schools	Industry	Country Parks
Edge Towns (commuter satellite towns)	Higher and Further Education	Freight	Heritage
Migration	Defence Research and Development	Brownfield	Zoos
Faith	Defence Infrastructure and Support	Materials of Power	Television Landscapes
Homelessness	Memorialisation	The National Grid	Theme Parks
Airspace	Cemeteries	Energy	Swimming Pools
Airports	Crematoria	Nuclear Power	Leisure Centres
Motorways	Protest (eg places associated with protest, even where little material remains of this)	Renewable Energy	Sports Stadia
Roads		Water	Artificial Services
Car Parks		The Office	Golf Courses
Motorway Service Areas (roadside truck stops and diners)		Information (Internet, etc)	Cultural Centres
The Rail Network		Mobile Phones	Art and Place
Railway Stations		Out of Town Commercial Estates	Holiday Camps
		Town Centre Shopping	The Seaside
		Shopping Malls	

There is something strangely familiar – shockingly so, perhaps – about this list. The sub-themes represent not only what is 'new' about the postmodern landscape but also those things that typify it. It is worth pausing to reflect on this table and to document examples of these features from your own immediate environment. Are there examples on your list that you would consider to be heritage sites? You might not immediately consider any of them to be heritage, but think for a moment about how the loss of any item would change your familiar landscape. Would you be able to recognise it as the same landscape in which you had previously worked and lived? Would you be happy with those changes?

Figure 8.4: Shopping Malls – an important part of the heritage of the late twentieth century? Located in Kent, UK, Bluewater shopping centre is one of the largest retail shopping malls in Europe.

It is clear that while the heritage of Modernism, relating as it does to what is now an increasingly distant past, may produce an element of nostalgia in the early twenty-first century, such heritage has very little to do with the ways many of us, particularly those of us in the post-industrialised West, live our everyday lives in the present. We saw examples of this in the case study in Chapter 1 in relation to Modernist architecture and nostalgia in Moscow. We are far more likely to relate to the physical manifestations of the last thirty years with which to anchor ourselves in the places in which we live and work. In the context of the increasingly transnational world in which we live, we should also think about the potential importance of postmodern or 'recent' heritage to migrant communities, who need to build effective links with places that they have occupied over relatively short periods of time (see further discussion in Chapter 5). To what extent would a recent migrant from Ghana consider an eighteenth-century English country house to be a part of their heritage? How could they relate to such a place and use it to build a sense of themselves and the space in which they live. What would be its relation to the house in central London in which they reside? Many people are beginning to challenge the conventional forms of heritage promoted during the past thirty or so years as they become increasingly remote from the needs of contemporary communities. It has been argued that heritage is in part motivated by the desire to root one's self in a particular place and a community. But once that community loses its association with place, for example through the development of online communities over the internet, the conventional role of heritage is challenged. Some of these issues are explored in more detail in the case study in this chapter.

Digital heritage and the 'memory of the world'

So far this chapter has argued that the 'heritage boom' that started in the 1970s and 1980s was motivated by a desire to seek stability in the past, and that this desire was caused by societal changes reflecting the postmodern cultural forms that emerged at the time in many post-industrial western countries. This led to the efflorescence of 'conventional' sites of heritage – the very old, the very grand and those places associated with famous historical events and figures – as well as to increasing interest in both the heritage of the recent and even the contemporary past, and in the heritage of the everyday. The postmodern condition has prompted people to seek a sense of stability in sites of memory of the distant past, and to 'historicise' and make even the most quotidian objects into heritage. One area of heritage that exemplifies this move to consider increasingly the everyday aspects of contemporary life is digital heritage and the conservation of computer technology.

We now focus on some of the opportunities and problems that have been generated for museums, archives and other collecting institutions of heritage by the proliferation of new technologies, particularly information technologies. One of the major shifts in heritage in the second part of the

twentieth century came about partially in response to an increased recognition that heritage values are ascribed rather than intrinsic. Throughout the second part of the twentieth century the increased recognition of cultural diversity, the postcolonial critique and the contribution of multi-culturalism to western societies created a conundrum – how could the old ideas about a canon of heritage represent the increasing numbers of diasporic communities who now made such a contribution to the character and make-up of society (see further discussion in Chapter 5)? This challenge, together with a recognition that heritage values could not be seen as intrinsic, and the influence of the nature conservation movement, led to the development of the concept of representativeness. This recognises that those in positions of power cannot always anticipate the places that diverse members of society will find important. By conserving a 'representative sample' of the diverse range of places, objects and practices, it is thought that we might safeguard the protection of a sample of places and things that may be recognised as heritage in the future. A representative heritage place or object derives its values from the extent to which it can act as an exemplar of a class of place or type of object. The concept of representativeness was largely borrowed from the idea of biodiversity conservation in natural heritage management, where representative samples of species and habitats are quantified statistically. We might also see a metaphor of democratic representation here in the political impulse towards inclusiveness that pushes heritage organisations to reach out to all segments of society.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as the rate of change in technology has become almost constant, museums and archives have been faced with a problem of storage. How can they possibly conserve a sample of all the diverse forms of technology, and continue to archive important documents in the history of the nation, when such items have become so numerous and ubiquitous? Many enthusiasts for legacy technology have developed collections of old computer hardware and software along with other rapidly changing forms of technology, but such collections are necessarily large and pose problems of storage as well as problems relating to the ongoing maintenance of the artefacts. Countries have established national museums of computing and technology in attempts to tell the story of their own role in the history of computing. The National Museum of Computing at Bletchley Park in the UK, for example, tells the story of the development of computing technology and its association with British code-breaking during the Second World War. In addition to various code-breaking devices, the museum holds a very large collection of now defunct computing equipment which is maintained in running condition by a group of volunteers and paid staff.

Figure 8.5: The Amstrad CPC 464, on display as part of an exhibition of working computers and software associated with the history of personal computing technology at the National Museum of Computing at Bletchley Park, UK

At an official level, UNESCO made a gesture of recognising forms of digital heritage as part of its Charter on the Preservation of the Digital

Heritage (UNESCO, [2003] 2009). The charter defines digital heritage as follows:

> The digital heritage consists of unique resources of human knowledge and expression. It embraces cultural, educational, scientific and administrative resources, as well as technical, legal, medical and other kinds of information created digitally, or converted into digital form from existing analogue resources. Where resources are 'born digital', there is no other format but the digital object.
>
> Digital materials include texts, databases, still and moving images, audio, graphics, software and web pages, among a wide and growing range of formats. They are frequently ephemeral, and require purposeful production, maintenance and management to be retained.
>
> Many of these resources have lasting value and significance, and therefore constitute a heritage that should be protected and preserved for current and future generations. This ever-growing heritage may exist in any language, in any part of the world, and in any area of human knowledge or expression.
>
> <div align="right">(UNESCO, [2003] 2009)</div>

Its definition of digital heritage is incredibly broad, and its take on the significance of digital heritage perhaps even broader.

> The digital heritage is inherently unlimited by time, geography, culture or format. It is culture specific, but potentially accessible to every person in the world. Minorities may speak to majorities, the individual to a global audience.
>
> The digital heritage of all regions, countries and communities should be preserved and made accessible, so as to assure over time representation of all peoples, nations, cultures and languages.
>
> <div align="right">(UNESCO, [2003] 2009)</div>

It goes on to describe the threat of loss of digital heritage as a potential loss of the 'memory of the world' (its programme for conserving documentary heritage).

> The world's digital heritage is at risk of being lost to posterity. Contributing factors include the rapid obsolescence of the hardware and software which brings it to life, uncertainties about resources, responsibility and methods for maintenance and preservation, and the lack of supportive legislation.
>
> Attitudinal change has fallen behind technological change. Digital evolution has been too rapid and costly for governments and institutions to develop timely and informed preservation strategies. The threat to the economic, social, intellectual and cultural potential of the heritage – the building blocks of the future – has not been fully grasped.
>
> <div align="right">(UNESCO, [2003] 2009)</div>

The charter requires member states to develop and enforce legal and institutional frameworks to secure the protection of digital heritage. Its implications are far reaching. At a time when museums and archives are increasingly having to recognise that it is impossible to conserve an example of 'everything' and are shifting towards a thresholds-based heritage system, in which things must be assessed against a series of criteria to qualify for heritage status (and hence preservation), digital heritage produces particular problems. At the time of writing, new government initiatives are being developed in countries such as the USA, Canada, the UK and Australia to attempt to deal with the problem of how to archive digital publications such as websites, as well as government documents and electronic communications that form part of governments' remits as archiving institutions. Given the sheer volume of material being produced, this is pushing governments towards developing selection criteria to limit the material that is archived – to root out the 'treasure' from the 'junk'. Such selection criteria raise the same sorts of problems as the criteria that motivated the 'heritage as canon' model – principally, how can one dominant group in society decide what is significant and worthy of preservation for the future (see also Laurence, 2010)? It seems we have returned to the arguments in heritage that were common in the 1970s and 1980s and that led to the development of representative approaches in the first place.

Whatever the outcomes of these decisions, it is important to acknowledge the responses of museums and other archives to a 'post-representativeness' model of heritage. One of these responses is the increasing repatriation of materials from museums back to the communities in which they originated. While the push to repatriate indigenous cultural heritage began with debates in the 1970s over who owns human skeletal materials held in overseas museums, the redistribution of materials to communities who have a stake in them is being seen more and more as a solution to the problem of storage. In some ways this has had the effect of shifting the power balance from official institutions to communities to whom items have been repatriated. It is also leading to the development of new meanings and forms of significance for items of material culture that are in circulation once more – items both remembered and forgotten – as they are put to new uses in terms of the production of identity and locality in the communities who now hold them.

Virtual heritage

'Virtual heritage' is a term with three distinct meanings. The first involves the use of virtual reality to supplement access to and interpretation of heritage sites. English Heritage, for example, used virtual reality in 1996 to produce a high-quality and accurate 'walk-through' record of Stonehenge that allowed visitors to explore Stonehenge in ten different eras, from 8500 BCE to 2000 CE (Burton, 1997). Across the Channel, the prehistoric cave paintings situated in the cave of Lascaux, France, were closed to the public in 1963 to avoid further deterioration but the virtual version is always open to visitors from around the world (Wilson Fuller, 2008). The increasing use of virtual reality (VR) in museums and heritage sites in the early twenty-

first century can be understood to be an element of postmodern heritage practice. A VR representation of a place offers the viewer a realistic impression of moving in a three-dimensional world, either represented photographically or reconstructed graphically. In some VR representations the viewer is in control and can move or turn and look as they wish. In others, the program 'flies' the viewer through the space. VR heritage sites are increasingly replacing 'real' heritage sites. On the one hand, VR can be considered to be a tool to help understand and interrogate heritage in non-intrusive ways to promote conservation of certain types of heritage. For example, the use of non-invasive digital imaging techniques has increasingly taken the place of excavation of archaeological sites that might otherwise be destroyed by excavation. VR is also being used as a medium that allows off-site and widening access, for example over the internet for people who cannot visit heritage sites. Museums are using VR to help communicate heritage to a broader audience, as well as to create new ways of interrogating and understanding heritage from a conservation perspective.

A second interpretation of virtual heritage involves the preservation and interpretation of computer programs, games and other material that is available only in electronic form. Due to rapid changes in hardware and software, this is a fast-growing area that poses complex problems and in which heritage workers continually face new challenges. In 2008 the US Library of Congress launched a major project to preserve virtual worlds – worlds that have moved from a category of 'new phenomenon' to endangered heritage within twenty years (Lamolinara, 2007). This interpretation of the term virtual heritage relates to the issues surrounding digital archives and legacy computer software and hardware discussed above.

The third interpretation concerns items and locations that can be read as reflections on the past and are considered worthy of preservation in the medium of cyberspace. The case study of virtual heritage in the online environment of Second Life demonstrates that heritage is not necessarily rooted in a physical location or a long-term connection to a setting. Within five years of this virtual world opening to the public it already had its own heritage sites including memorials, monuments and a governor's mansion. These play a part in establishing Second Life as a thriving and developing community with its own perspectives and traditions. Residents of Second Life have not only begun to develop their own distinctive heritage but have also recreated and reworked real-world heritage sites within this virtual environment. The incongruity of this juxtaposition of new and old highlights aspects of heritage that are important in both real-life and virtual settings, and challenges the authenticity of real-world heritage sites.

Case study: the virtual heritage of Second Life

At the time of writing, Second Life is a thriving virtual world, with up to 76,000 people logging in concurrently by November 2008 (Nino, 2008). Virtual worlds are collaborative online environments that people normally access using a computer interface and where they can interact with others. These environments 'share three distinctive features: the illusion of three-

dimensional space, avatars which serve as the visual representation of users and interactive chat which allows users to communicate with each other synchronously' (Sheehy, Ferguson and Clough, 2007). Such environments can be accessed from many different locations and they persist when users are not online because they are not confined to the computers of individual users.

Second Life operates like the better-known environment of a massively multiplayer online game (MMOG) such as World of Warcraft, but with some important differences. Unlike an online game, there is neither plotline to follow nor roles to which players adhere. Players, known as residents, may extensively customise their avatars – the animated characters that represent them in world. These avatars can perform a wide range of actions including walking, running, flying and teleporting. They communicate in a variety of ways, including text-based chat. They can also own and develop virtual land, either on the world's mainland or on individually owned islands known as sims. Island name and three associated coordinates can precisely identify in-world locations, a reference method that is used throughout this case study. For each setting we describe, we have included the island on which we found it, and the coordinates that we used to locate it. However, virtual location is not permanent, and even well-known landmarks may be moved or removed without notice.

Residents use Second Life for many purposes, including teaching and learning, trading, social networking, engaging in sexual activity, working, building and creating art. Using building blocks known as prims and the Linden scripting language (LSL), they can create and program objects. Once this is done, they own the copyright to their creations. These can then be reproduced, bought and sold using the in-world currency of Lindens. A distinctive feature of this virtual world is that its currency has a real value – Lindens can be exchanged for US dollars.

Table 8.2   Second Life vocabulary

avatar	The virtual character that represents an individual Second Life resident. Avatars can change their shape, gender, species or outfit. They can also perform many actions and can move, walk, fly and teleport.
inventory	List of all the things currently owned by an individual avatar.
in world	Located within the virtual world rather than in a setting considered to be part of the 'real world' or 'physical reality'.
lag	Delay in response. When residents experience lag, their real-world input only affects in-world events after a significant period of time.
Linden (name)	Avatars all have names. Members of Linden Lab staff can be recognised

	because they share the surname Linden.
Linden™	In-world currency used to acquire objects, skills or services. The Linden has a real-world value. In December 2008, 262 Linden dollars could be exchanged for US $1.
Linden Lab®	Company that developed and currently owns Second Life.
LSL	Linden scripting language is the programming language used within Second Life. Although knowledge of LSL is not necessary for residents, LSL scripts control the behaviour of in-world objects.
machinima	Videos created in world.
prim	Objects within Second Life are made up of primitives, or prims, which can be shaped, textured and combined to form complex structures.
real world	Here considered to be an environment that is not mediated by technology. Also referred to as the physical world.
resident	User of the Second Life virtual world (contrast the term 'player' used in other persistent online environments).
script	Program affecting the behaviour of an avatar, object or environment.
sim	The SL Grid and Teen Second Life are divided into a series of islands, known as simulators or sims.
SL Grid™	The Second Life world is divided into two: the SL Grid is accessible by people aged 18 and over.
Steam punk	Counter-factual presentation of history. In Second Life, often refers to an apparently steam-powered Victorian-style setting.
Teen Second Life™	Area restricted to those aged 13–17 and to approved educators.

Second Life developed from the first persistent games, which were developed in the 1970s. Such games have localities that persist when individual players log off. They were originally text based but, as computer memory and processing power increased, graphical environments quickly became popular. In 1986 Habitat, a graphical environment in which people could interact and see representations of themselves in virtual space, was launched. Habitat involved avatars, money and marketplaces. Soon

developers found that, even with role-play games, many players preferred to have greater freedom. At the same time, interest grew in online chat rooms where people could communicate without intending to reach a specified goal.

The Alpha version of Second Life was launched by Linden Lab as Linden World in 2002. It was presented not in terms of gaming but as a result of 'research in streaming 3D content' and as 'an online society within a 3D world, where users can explore build, socialize, and participate in their own economy' (Detheridge, 2007; Rosedale and Ondrejka, 2003). The Alpha version was followed by a Beta test, and then a public launch to adults in 2003. The majority of the world, the SL Grid, is currently an adults-only zone, officially accessible only to those aged 18 or over. In January 2006 Linden Lab supplemented the SL Grid with Teen Second Life, a virtual world for those aged 13–17 (Second Life Wikia, 2008).

The Second Life community is not confined to activity on the SL Grid and in Teen Second Life. Residents share ideas and comments through websites, wikis and blogs. Some of these sites are ephemeral, while others persist. Second Life photographs are shared through image-sharing sites such as Flickr, where the Second Life group has posted over 208,000 pictures. Talented film makers such as Robbie Dingo share videos created in world (known as machinima) through social networking sites such as YouTube. Torley Linden's photographs and video tutorials, distinctive due to Torley's repeated use of the watermelon colours pink and green, are both popular and ubiquitous. The New World Notes blog by Wagner James Au (Au, 2008a) has provided consistent and detailed coverage of Second Life, and Au has built on the material in the blog to produce a book on Second Life (Au, 2008b).

Researching Second Life heritage

Our investigation of Second Life heritage has involved extensive visits to the current major heritage sites on the SL Grid. We have studied material available on these sites, as well as discussions and background information available online, particularly blog accounts by Second Life residents and images of Second Life posted on social networking sites. In addition, we have made an in-depth study, involving participant observation and interviews, of the uses of heritage on the Schome Park educational sims in Teen Second Life (Schome, 2008).

We have found that Second Life heritage is characterised by a blending of reality and fiction. The in-world reproduction of real-world images, texts and sounds challenges the concept of a straightforward binary divide between the authentic and the counterfeit, between the real and the virtual. At the same time, the contrasts between Second Life and everyday reality serve to make the familiar strange, throwing into relief some of the ways in which the past is utilised by individuals, groups and societies and providing an insight into the ways in which heritage is constituted. In this case study we concentrate on two aspects of Second Life heritage. The first is the development of an in-world heritage involving items that have never had physical reality but have links to real-world heritage conventions. The

second is the reproduction of buildings, communities and settings which draw upon and make reference to counterparts in the real world.

Developing Second Life heritage

In both physical and virtual reality, individuals and communities commonly – and often consciously – select and use elements of the past to position themselves within a certain context. For example, the classical style of Ancient Greece can be used as a marker of culture and refinement. It is therefore frequently used in heritage settings such as London's British Museum or the Harris Museum in Preston. Here it leads the visitor to connect these buildings with civilisation, culture and the glories of the past, overlooking the slightly inappropriate relocation to England of a style of architecture designed for a hot, dry climate. Such a selection and re-contextualisation of elements of the past is commonplace in real life, but in Second Life the incongruities of such an approach become clearer. In the real world, old-fashioned architectural features such as towers, crenellations and arrow-slit windows suggest power even when they are added to modern buildings for which they have no defensive value. In Second Life, where flight and teleportation are possible, it is more obvious that castles and their features are used as signifiers of a particular atmosphere and way of life, rather than as strong defensive structures. Indeed, Castle Row, where castles are arranged for buyers to browse, as in a supermarket, extends the metaphorical implications of these structures by including castles in the air (Hyojong 182, 178, 49).

Buildings on the Open University's educational sim in Teen Second Life, Schome Park (also known as SPii), also make use of references to the past. The use of classical design was a conscious decision on the part of architect and builder Woop Kamachi. Only six months after the central meeting area, Scholympia, was constructed, one resident commented that it gave the island coherence and a unified feel: 'Scholympia is all about the history of SPii … it was the first build I saw it was the first glimpse of that mysterious island, and it has been here, as the landmark, as the centre of the community'. He added, 'it does give a certain Greco roman feel to that particular area, and because of that people are sometimes hard to bend to the modern way' (Schome Park Resident, in-world interview, 2007). In an environment that has little need for roofs, walls or floors, classical architecture can be used as a marker for culture and history in a world which is less than two years old.

These stylistic and architectural references to the past act to set Second Life in a historical context linked to that of the USA and western Europe, where 80 per cent of Second Life residents are based (comScore, 2007). At the same time, these references are employed by residents as they develop their own, distinctive in-world heritage which situates them within a thriving and developing community with its own traditions.

Establishing continuity with the past is a frequent response to novel situations (Hobsbawm, 1983). Invented traditions, practices that promote values and norms connected to a suitable historical past, were part of the fast-changing culture of Europe in the years prior to the First World War.

The choice of a Gothic style for Britain's nineteenth-century Houses of Parliament and the development of rituals for imperial governance exemplify this trend.

Linden Lab, the company that developed and owns Second Life, is represented in world by a team of staff whose avatars share the surname Linden. One avatar, Governor Linden, has more powers than others to control what is happening in the world. Unlike the majority of other avatars, Governor Linden is not controlled by one real-world individual but by members of staff who need to use this avatar's powers. The Governor, unlike many other Lindens, is rarely seen in world, s/he is a figurehead rather than a character and, as a rarely present avatar, is unlikely to have need of a house. Nonetheless, Governor Linden's mansion has its place on the SL Grid (Clementina 139, 132, 64). It is one of the oldest buildings in the world, having been one of the few to be transferred from the Beta test version of Second Life. The importance of this building is implied by its transfer from one world to the next. Its heritage role is emphasised by the existence of an in-world group named 'Gov's Mansion Restoration Team', founded by Governor Linden, which has pledged to restore it to its former glory. Its age and status establish it as a site that is important to the community, a site which attracts virtual tourists as well as demonstrations by disaffected residents.

The oldest structure in Second Life, 'The Man' statue built by old John Linden, is even older than the Governor's mansion. It dates from the world's Alpha Test and, being six years old, is fast becoming a venerable antique. This build, which has no real-life counterpart, and which has had elements added and removed throughout its existence, thus merits a privileged position in world beside the old Delerium Castle and the popular and frequently visited Ivory Tower of Primitives (Natoma 189, 191, 40). The juxtaposition of the intricate design of the Ivory Tower and The Man's basic shape and texture suggests a time when the world was a simpler place, indicating how much it has developed over time.

Second Life has its historic house and its ancient monument – it also has its memorials. There are two Beta monuments. One of these, which is located beside Governor Linden's mansion (Clementina 162, 115, 60), was presented to Linden Lab by the beta testers. It bears the inscription

> This monument has been presented to Linden Labs to mark the culmination of its Beta Test. This will be an everlasting reminder of all they have done for and given to their beta testers. May it forever be a token of our appreciation and Gratitude for giving us the tools to create this amazing world.

On the back are listed the in-world names of twenty-five Linden Lab employees, six 'liaisons', seven 'secondary contributors' and three 'true believers'. The monument thus gives continuity to an environment in which the active life of many avatars can be measured in weeks – or even shorter periods.

A second, larger, monument (Plum 129, 56, 35) was created by the Lindens. Its inscription, which appears to be carved in stone, begins 'The 1500+

names listed here recognize the most active residents who made the Second Life Beta a tremendous success'. Further along the wall, these avatar names are inscribed. With these builds, residents have created a simulacrum of heritage, selecting and gathering in Second Life the elements that conventionally signify heritage in the USA and western Europe without the conventional context of a past. This in-world heritage is elsewhere represented in the SL Historical Museum (Phobos 228, 132, 45) and, on Schome Park, by the Schome Park Museum, which houses a variety of artefacts that residents wish to see preserved.

Residents are thus creating a Second Life heritage which reinforces the view that their world contains a thriving, developing community. They are also engaged in reworking real-world heritage sites in a variety of ways: for art, for role play, for political purposes and for personal reasons.

Reworking real-world heritage

We found that examining the heritage artefacts that are assembled in Second Life, away from their real-world contexts, added to our understanding of how heritage functions and is used in the real world. Second Life heritage sites hold up a mirror to reality, helping visitors to understand what they regard as normal by observing what it could be, what it has been and what it is not. Heritage sites that have been reproduced or recreated in Second Life demonstrate in different ways that even in the physical world such sites are not fixed and authentic but represent versions of reality that are produced for a purpose and that change over time. Whether in the physical or the virtual world, the location of any heritage site in time and space is open to interpretation.

Situating heritage in time

Heritage sites in Britain and elsewhere often make an effort to remove their visitors from real time, giving them the chance to forget the current hour and date as they meet a medieval jester, re-enact past battles or celebrate a Victorian Christmas. Actors, artefacts, costumes and settings are employed to enable visitors to experience the past. This 'authentic' experience is gained through a reproduction of the past, and a move away from contemporary norms and realities. In Second Life, the situation is more complicated because Second Life is already situated outside real time.

In world, residents can select the time of day whenever they wish. If they appear in Second Life when the default regional time is night, they can switch to dawn, noon or dusk. The world's isolation from normal temporal continuity is emphasised by the progress of its sun through the sky, producing three hours of daylight followed by one hour of night. At the same time, the real-world time in California is displayed to residents at the top of their screens. An individual logging on after breakfast may find that Pacific Standard Time is midnight, but that dusk is fast approaching in Second Life. Meanwhile, the avatar next to them may be eating supper in their home country, having set the in-world time to dawn. There is no guarantee that avatars standing next to each other are experiencing the same temporal context in either the physical or the virtual world.

In addition, due to a delay in computer response known as 'lag', Second Life residents do not necessarily experience events in the same sequence as one another. A countdown entered by one resident as the five statements '5', '4', '3', '2', '1' may come across to another as '5', '4', '2', '1', '3'. An avatar may simultaneously be crashed but still able to communicate from the perspective of its owner, recorded as offline in some residents' chat lines, and still online or back online for someone else. The more residents and complex objects that are crowded on to a sim, the greater the likelihood that residents will experience linear time as distorted with even their own typed comments appearing to them out of order in world.

A further complication is the rate of change in world. Schome Park residents have noted that the fast pace of Second Life, in which complex structures are created within hours and entire landscapes in weeks, gives a feeling that history has been speeded up, that the pace of change is far faster than real life. The terms 'history' or 'heritage' may therefore be used without irony to refer to events that took place only a few months previously. Here we see a radical example of the ways in which accelerated perception of change motivates individuals in society to historicise the immediate past and even those aspects of everyday life which are still current but which they understand will soon be superseded.

The sense of being outside real time is exploited effectively in the ancient-Roman-themed role-playing sim of Roma. Designed, built and owned by Torin Golding, this is managed jointly by Emperor Julian Augustus and Torin. A note card offered to visitors on arrival explains that

> The sim of ROMA was designed to be an immersive experience, and many visitors (though certainly not all) are interested in role playing like they were a Citizen of ancient Rome. The owners of ROMA encourage this, as this is the only place in SL that this is possible.

This being Second Life, the card goes on to clarify that

> sexual roleplay, including sexual slave relationships, should be kept to the confines of Caligula's Pleasure Palace up on the Palatine Hill. Visitors are encouraged to create a character based on an ancient Roman model and to join various role-playing groups based in the sim, including Roma citizens (SPQR) and Legion XIII.

Free togas and sandals are available for visitors to Roma to wear, so that their role-playing experience can begin quickly. Ancient Romans could not fly, so the owners of the sim have switched off flight capabilities. Neither did they make typing motions or keyboard noises when they spoke (as the majority of Second Life avatars do), so it is possible to visit the Roman Market and buy a 'moving scroll typing override' which replaces avatars' default typing animation with a writing animation. When a Roman role player begins to type a comment on their computer keyboard, the override places an unfurling scroll in one hand and a stylus in the other.

Unlike most real-world role-playing experiences, the opportunity to engage in role play as an ancient Roman is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As one nation's role players are logging off for the night, another's are switching on their computers on the other side of the world. This

extended role-play gives citizens a chance to build relationships, share information and develop both their knowledge of ancient Rome and their understanding of Latin.

Situating heritage in space

Historic settings within Second Life, such as Roma, are clearly modern interpretations of the past. In the real world, heritage sites appear more authentic but may be even more painstakingly constructed in order to present their owners' interpretation of the past. The heritage site of Blists Hill Victorian Town in Ironbridge is one such location. 'Visitors are transported back to a world of pounds, shillings and pence, where steam engines and horses powered industry and gas, and candles lit shops, factories and homes' (Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, 2008). In fact, the seemingly Victorian town is a modern amalgamation of buildings carefully moved from their original locations, including a canal warehouse from Wappenshall, a tollhouse from Shelton and Jackfield's Wesleyan chapel. They are combined in a location designed to help visitors understand the twenty-first century in the light of the nineteenth century. Elements of the past are blended seamlessly with the new, so that it is impossible to distinguish relocated originals from modern reproductions.

In Second Life such juxtapositions are far more easily achieved. In real-world Jerusalem, the Western (Wailing) Wall of the Second Temple is next to the Muslim shrine Masjid Qubbat As-Sakhrah, the Dome of the Rock. The proximity of the two sites supports understanding of conflict in the Middle East and the struggle for control of Jerusalem. However, in Second Life the Wall's setting and context are Jewish, and its nearest neighbour is a synagogue (Nessus 117, 128, 106). What is reproduced in Second Life is not a physical map but rather a mental map of the associations that the Wall has for many orthodox Jews: it is relocated from a physical to a spiritual setting.

Nearby, on the same sim, the Second Life Jewish Budapest (Nessus 143, 36, 103) was set up as a heritage site to draw attention to the current destruction of the buildings of real-life Jewish Budapest. A train takes visitors on a tour of the old buildings and they can stop to examine a slideshow of photographs, or the note card they were automatically given on arrival, giving information about the site. Times and places are selected and re-contextualised to produce one grand image of Budapest's Jewish heritage. The location is far from realistic – the 'buildings' are facades and a fiddler stands on one roof, a reference to a surreal painting by Chagall and the Yiddish story of eastern European Jewish life popularised by the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. By accentuating its artificiality, the site makes a persuasive point about the need to preserve the real buildings.

Representations of real-world heritage

Second Life heritage locations take the opportunity afforded by the medium to tidy up reality, positioning and highlighting key locations and key elements. As in real life, they remove items from their original setting and recontextualise them to support a particular interpretation or set of interpretations. When the residents of Schome Park filmed a version of the

Hindenburg airship disaster, they used a vast boat with a balloon as a sail. This interpretation of the Hindenburg preserved it as a flying form of transport at the same time as it drew attention to the metaphor within the term 'airship'. The Second Life reproduction of Stonehenge (Mystica 179, 213, 38) tidies up the stones that lie about the real-life modern-day ruins and instead takes the form of a complete stone circle. The virtual builder thus privileges the ring of stones above the sacred landscape within which English Heritage locates the real-world site.

This tidying of heritage in Second Life allows builders to make powerful points. Chebi contains a detailed replica of the Mezquita in Cordoba, Spain – a beautiful building, designed as a mosque which replaced earlier temples and churches on the site (Chebi 150, 212, 85). The Mezquita in Cordoba is now the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin for, despite the original purpose of the current building, it was consecrated as a church in 1236. In the middle of the sixteenth century a baroque Renaissance cathedral nave was constructed in the middle of it – a startlingly incongruous addition – and the building is currently a cathedral. In Second Life there is no place of Christian worship to be found within the Mezquita, which functions as a virtual mosque, though avatars of all religions are welcome to visit and to pray there. Some visitors experience this building as subversive. Spanish Muslims are not permitted to pray in the real-world building, although they are currently campaigning for this right, so the Second Life build challenges the real-world order. The presence of a Second Life mosque has angered racist avatars who have attacked it in the past, forcing it to close temporarily.

On the educational sim of Schome Park a reproduction of Hadrian's Wall was constructed to help students understand the original wall as it existed in Roman times. Archaeology lecturer Alan Greaves reported, 'the reconstruction included all the major features that made up the Wall system: the forward ditch, berm, wall, military way and the vallum (a wide flat-bottomed ditch flanked by raised banks)' (Greaves, 2007). Although archaeologists know enough about Hadrian's Wall to be able to construct its ground plan, the model was intended to provoke investigation of other aspects, including its original full height and external appearance. The Schome Park wall was not constructed as a full reproduction of the 73-mile-long original, but rather as a version of it that would help students to understand the Roman wall in ways which would not be possible on a visit to the real-life site.

Similarly, on the Main Grid of Second Life, avatar Aura Lily has used information collated by one of Napoleon's artist engineers to construct the ancient Egyptian Temple of Isis and buildings on the island of Philae (Themiskyra 54, 241, 36). The aim is to give visitors 'the feeling of being on Philae back in the time when the paint was still wet on the Temple walls' (Lily, 2006). The builds do, indeed, look brand new, allowing an understanding of them as spaces where real people lived their lives, rather than as the crumbling remains of an ancient civilisation.

Regulating experience of heritage

In the real world, heritage sites offer different experiences on different occasions. They may have opening times and closing times, winter seasons and summer seasons, times when tours and guides are available, when festivals are being celebrated or re-enactments are taking place. These sites are more accessible and comprehensible to the public at some times than at others. A cathedral or church, for example, maintains a tension between its role as a place of worship, and its role as a heritage site. At certain times, particularly Sunday mornings and festivals, casual visitors will be discouraged or excluded. The difficulty that some cathedrals experience in persuading visitors to donate to their upkeep may be seen in terms of their role as the interface between the sacred, mysterious interior and the profane, commercial and chaotic exterior of everyday life.

Behaviour in real-world heritage sites is also regulated – visitors may have to dress appropriately, leave their pets or children behind, travel at a particular pace or confine themselves to certain areas. Likewise, different parts of Second Life have their own conventions and codes of content. These are sometimes recorded on note cards, which are issued automatically to any visitor to the area. A note card in Roma informs visitors that 'ALL role play and citizen activity must respect the covenant of the sim. If you haven't yet, read this brief document. Open the land info window and click on the Covenant tab.' Appropriate costume enhances the heritage experience: togas in Roma, head coverings in the Mezquita mosque, and variants of Victorian costume in steam-punk locations such as Caledon are a few of the many examples of visitors being encouraged to make their experience of the location more immersive. The no-flying rule enforced on heritage sims such as Roma and Paris 1900 (Paris 1900 9, 174, 16) not only draws attention to how much slower transport often was in the past, but also forces avatars to visit more of the sim rather than just flying quickly between the most striking builds.

Unlike real-world heritage sites, those in Second Life are always open (except for times when the world is closed for software updates) but many of Second Life's heritage sites are best visited when their creator or an interpreter is available to explain the thinking behind them, how they are used and which developments are planned. If in-world interaction at a site is not possible, the opportunities for exploring and understanding the sites are enhanced by discussion of them in blogs, by machinima and the associated comments posted on online video sites, and by images shared in social networking sites which, again, are often associated with comment and discussion.

Understanding heritage in Second Life

To understand heritage in Second Life it is necessary to look beyond the virtual world itself to interpretations and representations that appear elsewhere. In the same way, understanding of heritage in the physical world is enhanced by study of interpretations and representations that appear in other settings. The artefacts and locations of Second Life, even those that can exist only in virtual space, mirror their real-life counterparts and many

are produced within the same cultural discourses. A heritage artefact in Second Life is not simply a copy from one medium to another, it provides a vantage point from which to reflect on heritage in the real world. By offering a re-organised, re-articulated space, the virtual opens up the possibility of a multiplicity of juxtapositions. Second Life residents are enabled to reassess their society as if from the outside, to come to fresh understandings of time and space and to realise that heritage, be it in real life or Second Life, is concerned with relationships, communities and contested accounts of the past, the present and the future.

Reflecting on the case study

The case study raises a number of issues about virtual heritage, the heritage of the recent and contemporary past, and heritage more generally (see also Harrison, 2009). As the authors argue, virtual heritage is not simply a 'copy' of heritage in real life but provides an opportunity to engage with and interrogate certain aspects of heritage in new ways. The ability to move between the online and real world provides Second Life users with particular ways of interacting with heritage sites from the real world. In doing so, they contribute to the significance of these places in the real world.

However, we should not assume that the ways in which Second Life residents interact with heritage is somehow unique. Indeed, many tourists 'visit' heritage sites virtually, over the internet, before they ever encounter them physically, and their interactions with a heritage site may shift backwards and forwards between virtual and real space. A whole series of virtual encounters occurs as they move from the internet to a museum, to reading about the place in a guidebook or magazine, to seeing the image of the site used on a tourist poster at the airport or bus station, to eating a themed meal in a hotel named for the site. They may then see the place in the 'real' world, but their encounter with the place is changed and mediated by all of these other 'virtual' encounters. The tourist may take photographs of the site, which they will later show to their friends – another series of virtual encounters. In the contemporary world interactions with heritage are entangled in a web of virtual representations that inevitably influence the ways people interact with, respond to, memorialise and remember those places when they encounter them in 'real' life.

Another issue that emerges from the case study is the way the creation of imaginary worlds breeds its own self-replicating nostalgia. This acutely modern form of time–place creation cannot easily be linked to postcolonial issues or, in one sense, to Modernism because it seems to be curiously uninterested in modernity in the traditional form of exchanging one world for another. What we do see is the way in which the accelerated sense of time–place change creates an equally accelerated and fragmented series of heritages which may be intensively memorialised by particular minority groups while being totally ignored by others. The case study underlines the increasingly fragmented and localised (in this case thematically, rather than spatially) nature of communities in the early twenty-first century, and the ways in which they deny the idea of national heritage while actively

creating their own new forms of commemoration and social memory in the present (see also Chapter 5).

Virtual heritage and the transformation of social memory in the twenty-first century

The three forms of virtual heritage raise a series of issues relating to heritage and authenticity. As Parry (2007) notes, the increasingly virtual presentation of heritage has produced a challenge for a heritage industry that has traditionally emphasised the 'tangible' and material aspects of heritage. As discussed in detail in Chapter 7, the various official charters of world and national heritage have traditionally articulated the value and significance of heritage as manifest within its physical fabric. We might call this special quality of the 'real' heritage object its 'aura'. Harrison et al. (2008) have discussed the way in which the work of German-Jewish literary and cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) on the idea of the 'aura' of art objects might help us to understand more recent processes in the field of heritage during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Writing just before the Second World War, Benjamin used the term 'aura' to refer to the 'special' qualities of authenticity that are attributed to works of art, and the ways in which the new reproductive technologies such as the camera and the phonograph were having an influence on the notion of authenticity by removing that aura. He noted,

> Above all, it [reproductive technology] enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in the auditorium or the open air, resounds in the drawing room.
>
> (Benjamin, 1999, p. 215)

The aura is intimately connected to the originality, or authenticity, of the artefact or artwork. Benjamin suggested that this aura, the basis for conceiving of an object's authenticity, became threatened during the twentieth century with the emergence of reproductive technologies such as the camera and photocopier. For Benjamin, it is the shared history of art object and its viewer that makes the artwork worthy of display and the attribution of sentimental value. As Wells notes,

> Formerly unique objects, located in a particular space, lost their singularity as they became accessible to many people in diverse places. Lost too was the 'aura' that was attached to a work of Art which was now open to many different readings and interpretations.
>
> (Price and Wells, 1997, p. 25)

Benjamin saw in the death of the aura the demystification of the process of creating art, making art itself much more widely available and generating radical new roles for art in mass culture. With the death of the aura, the 'distance' between the work of art and the masses grew smaller. He noted that concepts of the aura and the authentic have their roots in the associations of objects now venerated as 'art', and their creation within

ritual contexts, or the 'cult' of beauty and aesthetics. Benjamin saw this as a revolutionary and largely positive uncoupling, as 'the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice-politics' (Benjamin, 1999, p. 219).

But the death of aura has of course been greatly exaggerated. It might be said that aura has never been more highly regarded, and that it has been 'reborn' in the accelerated interest in the 'real' and the 'tangible' which is a major feature of the interest in heritage in the early twenty-first century. Even in virtual worlds such as Second Life we see an interest in the tangibility of heritage, and various discourses which reinforce the power (and hence the 'aura') of the authentic object..

In the same way that Benjamin saw art being transformed by the ability to reproduce images, we could argue that heritage has been transformed by the virtual. While traditional views of heritage have emphasised the connection between its physical fabric and its significance, the growing forms of virtual interactions with heritage have challenged this. If we can have a copy of a heritage site and interact with it in virtual reality, do we even need the original any more? On the other hand, we have seen that the circulation of images also contributes to the renown and significance of heritage objects, places and practices, and increases anticipation for the aura of the authentic original. We might compare this process to film or television trailers. Why bother to see the film when you have seen the best bits condensed into a few seconds? But we are attracted to see the whole thing, with those 'best bits' shown in their correct context in the film. What this all suggests is that the growth of new communicative technologies is making heritage more widely available as a 'tool' for the production of local forms of commemoration and social memory, and is democratising heritage by uncoupling it from its isolated existence in space. However, we should not necessarily see this as something radically new but as a continuation of the development of forms of virtual interactions with heritage which originally came about with the widespread adoption of personal photography during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as discussed by Benjamin.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the heritage of the recent past and the contemporary world. It has argued that new technologies are transforming heritage practice and our relationships with heritage, as well as the ways in which these new technologies might be considered to be a part of heritage itself. The case study on virtual heritage raises many of the same issues that apply to conventional heritage – questions of value, control, power and representation. It also causes us to question issues of authenticity and reality. In the museum sector in particular, virtual heritage and the challenges of the new communicative technologies are forcing us to rethink our attitude towards conservation and the representative approaches to heritage that developed as a result of the multi-cultural and subaltern challenges of the 1990s. As we look towards the future of heritage we can see that while many challenges to the AHDs that emerged throughout the

second part of the twentieth century have been levelled, such discourses continue to hold sway in many areas. Perhaps more than ever, heritage (both as a contemporary phenomenon and in terms of its critical academic study) is in a state of flux. The increasingly localised and fragmented manifestations of heritage, together with new global communicative technologies, points towards the ongoing negotiation and conflict between global, national and local forms of social memory and heritage in the twenty-first century.

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