CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE AGE OF NEW MEDIA

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Abstract: Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', constitutes one of the earliest reflections on the way in which the cultural experience and interpretation is transformed by the advent of what were then the 'new' media technologies of photography and film. Benjamin directs attention to the way in which these technologies release cultural objects from their unique presence in a place and make them uniformly available irrespective of spatial location. The way in which old media technologies apparently obliterate the place of cultural objects is also a feature of new media. However, the apparent obliteration of place that occurs in this way is itself problematic, in giving rise to a loss of the sense of spatial and temporal distance, and so of the relative locatedness of both experiencing subject and interpreted object. The loss of a sense of the place of the object threatens a loss of the sense of place of the subject, and with it, a loss of a proper sense of heritage as such.

1. Introduction

Although the latter half of the twentieth century has seen enormous technological changes that have had, and continue to have, a direct impact on the modes of experience and interpretation of cultural heritage, discussion of the impact of what were then the 'new' media (now perhaps better designated as 'old' media), primarily photography and film, was already well underway in the first half of the century. One of the most important of these discussions occurs in Walter Benjamin's famous essay from 1936, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. In that essay Benjamin focuses on the particular form of cultural heritage that is the artwork, arguing that mechanical techniques of reproduction and representation such as film and photography, but also advances in printing, have the effect of destroying what Benjamin calls the 'aura' of the artwork, its character as a uniquely existing object. In this respect, one of the key points in Benjamin's analysis concerns the spatio-temporal character of the changes associated with the new technologies at issue. Thus Benjamin writes that:

> Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This unique existence of the work determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership. The traces of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analyses which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original (Benjamin, 1969: 220).

The mechanical reproduction of the artwork, according to Benjamin, destroys the presence of the work, that is, the work no longer has a unique existence at a place (and it is important to

recognise here the way in which ‘place’ encompasses both the spatial and the temporal), and it is this that Benjamin takes as referred to by the concept of ‘aura’.

Benjamin may have been writing seventy years ago, before the advent of new digital media, and with a focus on the artwork, rather than on cultural heritage in any broader sense, and yet the connection he indicates between modern media technologies, whether new or old, analogue or digital, and space, time and place, seems an enduring and essential one – indeed, Benjamin himself notes that the phenomenon he describes is ‘a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art’ (Benjamin, 1969: 221). It is the nature and implication of this connection, and more specifically the impact of new media on the character and experience of place that I wish to take as the focus for my discussion here today. How is place, and so also space and time, altered in the age of new media, and what does this imply for the experience and interpretation of cultural heritage?

2. Heritage and Materiality

Let me begin with some comments about the nature of cultural heritage as such, particularly since Benjamin’s comments, focussing as they do on the uniquely existing artwork, and its reproduction, may seem to be at odds with the emphasis in contemporary cultural heritage practice, not only or even primarily, on material culture, but on the non-material, and on issues, not so much of reproduction, as of interpretation, and, more pointedly, of the multiplicity of interpretations.

While it is undoubtedly true that much contemporary heritage practice, exemplified, by, for instance, the National Museum of Australia in Canberra, and given codified form in the UNESCO Statement of XXXXXX, has shifted away from a focus on the individual object, and onto the narratives, practices, representations, systems of knowledge, and broader socio-cultural contexts within which such objects were originally embedded, this should be taken necessarily to imply an abandonment of the material in favour on the non-material. Instead, it reflects a reaction against past heritage practice with its emphasis merely on the collection, conservation and static display of artefacts presented from a single and unquestioned cultural perspective. In fact, the distinction between material and nonmaterial heritage, or material and nonmaterial culture, is itself somewhat artificial. Culture is always tied to its materiality and is inseparable from it. Specific cultural practices, for instance, while they may be construed as themselves ‘nonmaterial’ or ‘intangible’, nevertheless depend upon, and are articulated by means of, specific instruments and arrangements of instruments, specific sites and pathways, specific sequences of concrete actions. Even language has its own materiality in the form of speech, mark and sign, while the very possibility of meaning resides in the inter-relation of speakers with one another and with an objectual world.

The materiality at issue here is not to be understood in terms of some simplistic materialism, but rather in terms of the essentially 'placed' character of any form of en-cultured, that is, human, existence. To exist in the world in a way that includes a sense of one's relation to oneself, to others like oneself, and to the things of one's environment, requires that one have a sense of one's own locatedness within that world. Such locatedness, which encompasses bodily location as well as a sense of social and cultural location, requires orientation in time, meaning a sense of successive relationality (which includes notions of, for instance, actuality and potentiality), and orientation in space, meaning a sense of simultaneous relationality (including up and down, left and right). Together these forms of orientation constitute the sense of place that is fundamental to being in a world at all, but which are also, therefore, basic to the possibility of culture, and of any human mode of existence. Indeed, having a sense of one's determinate human identity, whether individually or collectively is inseparable from having just such a sense of place (and what this indicates, of course, is that only is culture itself dependent on its 'material' articulation, but that the grasp of any object as culturally significant, or as capable of bearing some specific interpretation, also depends on the orientation of the interpreter).

It is because culture is 'material' in this way, because the formation of culture occurs in and through the formation of places, that one cannot understand the idea of cultural heritage independently of the idea of the places of cultural formation and articulation. Thus particular modes of cultural practice and social meaning, those associated with various institutions, for instance, are maintained and also conserved through particular sites and structures, and when we wish to recover some aspect of past culture that is now lost, we do so through a recovery, as far as we are able, of those sites and structures. Similarly, particular cultural memories depend crucially on their localisation in the form of public memorial. The naming of places is one form of such localisation, as is the construction of monuments. Individual memory exhibits the same essential character: things and places carry memory with them, and so also carry identity and meaning (something explored in exemplary and striking fashion in the work of Marcel Proust). Benjamin's own comments on the way the unique existence of the artwork is the basis for the historicality of the work itself provides another exemplification of the essential connection of the past with the placed materiality of things.

While the artwork does indeed constitute a certain type of cultural heritage, the materiality of the artwork exemplifies a materiality that is characteristic of culture, as well of that which we refer to as 'cultural heritage'. The artwork is not reducible just to the material 'stuff' of which it is made, and yet the artwork is what it is through its concrete spatio-temporal existence, it placed presence. It is similarly though the spatio-temporal articulation of persons and things, and their inter-relation, that culture, and so also cultural heritage, are

formed and maintained. It is, moreover, the materiality of culture and of cultural heritage in this sense that makes it possible to talk of a multiplicity of interpretations that that may attach to any cultural artefact or heritage location. It is sometimes aid that one of the great lessons of twentieth century thought, partly following from Nietzsche, but also Heidegger, is that there are only interpretations. The fact is that there are no interpretations unless there is that which is the object of interpretation, and this is so even though there are no objects except as interpreted. It is precisely because of the concrete materiality of that which is the object of interpretation – 'its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be' as Benjamin puts it – that anything that can be interpreted can always sustain more than one such interpretation. In this respect, the emphasis within contemporary heritage practice on keeping open the possibility of multiple interpretations is actually dependent upon a grasp of the placed materiality, or localised particularly, of that which is interpreted.

3. From Old to New Media

Benjamin's 1936 claim is that the artwork has an essential 'materiality' that consists in its unique spatio-temporal existence, and that this is threatened by the advent of mechanical techniques of reproduction. My suggestion is that this claim about the materiality of the artwork can be extended to culture and cultural heritage more broadly. But to what extent does what Benjamin have to say about the techniques of mechanical reproduction, the techniques of 'old media', and the way they transform the being of the artwork, also apply to the techniques of the 'new media' of today?

Benjamin's discussion focuses primarily on photography and film, both of which operate by means their capacity for the reproduction of visual images, and so can be used simply to visually re-present already existing objects and events, but which can also be productive, in that they have a capacity to create new images in their own right. The photograph and the film, as well as the analogue audio recording (another form of media already present, of course, in 1936, although not discussed by Benjamin) can thus be employed, not only to record and reproduce works and performances, but they can also be used to create new works – although the truly productive capacity, even of such analogue technologies, was much less evident in 1936 than it is today. The shift from the analogue to the digital brings with it enormously increased reproductive and productive capacities – not only is there greater possibility for realism, such that works and performances can be recorded and reproduced with much greater fidelity to the original, but there also arises a much greater capacity for what we may term 'virtualism', the creation of entirely new works, and even new domains, that are nevertheless highly realistic in their own terms.

Notwithstanding these differences in reproductive and productive power, however, it is still the case that we can view new media, no less than the old, as having the same two

aspects, the reproductive and the productive, that also figure in Benjamin's discussion. If we consider this in relation to cultural heritage, then we can distinguish between the reproductive use of new media, where the aim is to record or to re-present heritage artefacts or sites (where the term 'artefact' includes stories, for instance, no less than tools), and a more productive use of new media to create something new or supplemental to the artefact or site – whether that be an interpretative context within which the artefact or site is situated or perhaps an experiential simulation that is additional to the artefact or site as such.

We can readily cite examples of the reproductive versus productive uses of media in heritage contexts. Straightforward reproduction arises where the artefact or site is for some reason inaccessible or unavailable for display. The archiving of art images on the web has thus made available artworks from galleries and collections around the world to anyone with a computer and web access. From a curatorial perspective, the use of a 'virtual' presentation may perform the same role as the museum replica did in the past – the advantage of the virtual representation is not only that it may incorporate dynamic elements, or allow access to aspects of the artefact or site that may otherwise be hidden, but the virtual reproduction, so long as it is evident as virtual, does not masquerade as the real thing. Typically, of course, such virtual presentations are employed, not so much in the presentation of single artefacts, as to provide a mode of presenting complexes of artefacts, entire sites for instance, or parts of artefacts, such as their otherwise hidden interior. A simple example of this use of new media is in the presentation of interactive displays that allow a visitor to 'walk-through' a virtual reconstruction of a site. The 'Virtual Room' at the Melbourne museum allow visitors to look into three-dimensional, dynamic scenes as if they were looking into a real space (see the virtual room site at www.vroom.org.au). Sometimes, of course, this reproductive use of media is also reconstructive – a particularly good example being the project undertaken by a students at the Technical University in Darmstadt in 2000 to build virtual reconstruction of 14 Jewish synagogues destroyed during the Nazi period of the 1930 ('Synagogues in Germany: A Virtual Reconstruction', 17 May – 1 October 2000, TU Darmstadt).

It is perhaps less the reproductive uses of new media that attracts most interest, however, as the productive uses – uses where the artefact or site is not simply reproduced, but where something new is created that supplements the artefact or image or perhaps, sometimes, may even stand in for it. Such productive uses include the use of interactive displays alongside the displayed artefact as well as multi-media experiences of the sort exemplified by the Jorvik Viking Centre in York. Moreover, just as the web has been used to make available reproductions of artefacts and sites, so it also provides access to a huge number of interpretative and informational sites that can be viewed as providing further

instances of this productive use of media in heritage practice (although the provenance of many of these sites is sometimes unclear).

The distinction between the reproductive and the productive uses of media that I have advanced here, as with all good distinctions, is not absolute – and this point is illustrated by a number of the examples just mentioned. More generally, it should be noted that the capacity for a productive use of media is often supervenient upon its reproductive capacity – as the creative, as opposed to documentary use of film, may nevertheless depend on the capacity to record live action (even animation depends on its ability to produce images that stand in some meaningful relation to the actual world); while some forms of reproduction that cannot draw directly on the artefact or site, perhaps because it no longer exists, may be thought to be more like instances of genuine production, while sometimes reproduction may itself give rise to a new artefact or site as such. An intriguing, if rather extreme and admittedly fictional, example of the latter, is explored in Borges' famous story 'Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote' (Borges, 1998), but there are also more straightforward cases where the reproduction becomes, to a greater or lesser extent, a productive work in its own right – the virtual synagogue project in Darmstadt could be viewed as one such case.

Benjamin, as I noted earlier, seems to provide examples of both reproductive and productive uses of the media he discusses. Moreover, he also gives explicit notice to the way film, in particular, enables access to what might otherwise remain hidden or unavailable to us. Through the close-up, with slow motion, we see things in a new way such that 'a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye' (Benjamin, 1969: 236). Both old and new media, both analogue and digital, thus expand our capacity to enter into and engage with the world, the cultural world no less than the world of nature; the inherited world of the past and the present no less than the projected world of the future. Yet it is not just that these new technologies expand the capacity for engagement – the characteristic feature of the reproductive technologies to which Benjamin draws our attention is the way they alter the thing reproduced, the way they dissolve the presence of the thing in its place. In this respect, the reproductive and productive power of new, as well as of old, media, ought not blind us to the possible transformation that these media bring with them. We need to consider that what is at issue is not simply the enhancement or the extension of the experiential or interpretative engagement with cultural heritage, but of a change in such experience and interpretation; perhaps a change the way in which cultural heritage itself appears to us, and so also a change in the way we understand, experience, and interpret ourselves.

4. The Obscuring of Place

Let me return to my comments earlier regarding the materiality of culture and of cultural heritage. Such materiality, I argued, was to be understood in terms of the way in which human

life is essentially formed and articulated, and so also understood, in relation to spatio-temporal formation and articulation. New media, as well as the old media discussed by Benjamin, do not destroy the placed materiality of human existence – human life remains tied to specific spaces, times and places – but they do change the way in which space, time and place themselves appear, and are understood, and so too, the way in which human existence appears, is understood, and is experienced.

One of the characteristic features of new media technologies, present in those technologies to an even greater extent than is true of the old media technologies of photography and film, is not only their capacity for endless reproduction – for the multiplication of image, sound or sequence – but also their capacity to transform the elements that they reproduce, to produce new such elements, and to juxtapose those elements in new arrangements and forms of connection. This is itself directly tied to the way in which these technologies have, to a great extent, severed the need for any direct connection with the uniquely present object – the artefact, the site, the work. Within some forms of heritage presentation, there is no object, not merely because it may be unavailable, but because the object has ceased to be the focal point for the heritage experience or interpretation. This is sometimes a function of the tendency to shift away from supposedly material to non-material modes of culture, but it is a tendency more strongly encouraged by the nature of new media itself, since such media offer so much more in terms of access, information, engagement and even entertainment. In this respect, new media may seem to provide a much greater capacity to meet the guiding principles for heritage interpretation set out by Freeman Tilden, in particular, the very first principle that enjoins upon us the need for interpretation to 'relate what is displayed or described to something within the personality of experience of the visitor' (Tilden, 1977: 9).

There can be no doubt that the importance of cultural heritage lies in the way in which it shows us something about ourselves and about the world to which we belong – in this respect even that which we do not take as part of our own heritage can nevertheless be significant to us just in virtue of being part of the heritage of those others with whom we share the same world – in this respect, the heritage of others is also part of our own heritage. The task of heritage interpretation, then, is to enable the visitor to recognise that which is, in a certain sense, already her own, but this is not always an easy task. The technologies of new media seem to give us much greater capacity to achieve this sort of recognition, or, at least, to achieve a greater level of engagement with heritage artefacts and sites. Yet does new media actually enable greater engagement with the site or the artefact as such, or does it enable, instead, a greater level of engagement only with the reproduced site or artefact? And even if the latter is true, what does it mean for that to be so, and does it matter? In Benjamin's terms,

what difference does it make if we lose sight of the work of art or the heritage object as a uniquely existing entity, if we lose any sense of the place in which it is properly present?

Benjamin's own analysis of art in the age of mechanical reproduction focuses on the way in which the reproducibility of the artwork changes the role and character of the artwork – no longer is the artwork embedded in a ritual practice where it may accessible to only a few, instead what becomes essential is its availability for display and exhibition to all. In this respect, the loss of the aura of the artwork, the loss of its specificity, is also a release of the artwork into the realm of the universal and the generic – the realm of what Benjamin calls 'the masses'. The artwork no longer finds its being in its unique presence in a particular place, but exists instead in its availability anywhere and everywhere. The shift at issue here is one that Benjamin argues is characteristic of modernity, and rests, according to Benjamin:

> … on two circumstances, both of which are related to the significance of the masses in contemporary life. Namely, the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction… To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'senses is the universal equality of all things' has increased to such an extent that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of a reproduction (Benjamin, 1969: 223).

The 'desire' that Benjamin describes here is perhaps best understood, not in terms of something driven by the 'masses', but rather as a tendency that is inherent in modern technologies as such, including the technologies of new media.

One of the key features of many contemporary technologies (and not just those of new media) is, indeed, their drive towards increasing standardization and commoditization – 'globalization' can be seen as naming one, albeit complex, manifestation of this contemporary tendency. It is significant, moreover, that Benjamin describes this tendency in terms not only of an overcoming of uniqueness, but also as a bringing of things closer, 'spatially and humanly'. In this respect, what Benjamin describes as the destruction of the aura of the artwork is also a destruction of the artwork's being <u>in place</u>, and, together with this, a radical shift away from the particular place as that in and through which the work is encountered towards the universal availability of the work from anywhere within a generic and uniform space (elsewhere I have connected the destruction of the aura of the artwork as discussed by Benjamin with the film director Wim Wenders' account of the present age as characterised by the proliferation of images – see Malpas, 2006 and Wenders, 1999 – and it is notable the Wenders also connects this proliferation directly with a loss of place). This capacity to release things, and not only works of art, from the places in which they are is perhaps the key element in the transformative power of modern communication and information technologies –

although it is equally crucial to older technologies also, the printing press being an excellent example. The web, and the digital technologies associated with it, represents the most radical instantiation of this capacity – here place no longer seems to have any significance at all and has instead been replaced by a network of equally accessible locations within a single 'space'. Similarly, the software and hardware technologies of new media enable the manipulation of space and time so that the past can be apparently brought into the present, what is spatially distant can be brought near, place itself can be recreated, reproduced, manipulated, and transformed. Yet although this capacity for the releasement from place that seems so characteristic of modern technology, and of the technologies of new as well as old media, is central to the power that technology brings, this capacity also brings certain other changes with it.

One of the points Benjamin himself makes concerns the way in which the technologies of mechanical reproduction remove objects from their embeddedness within 'the fabric of tradition' (Benjamin, 1969: 223) – a particularly significant claim from the perspective of cultural heritage. This removal of the object from its connection with tradition, from the past, can be see as partly a result of the way in which the reproduction, in duplicating the original, also duplicates the marks of its history, but it does so without that history belonging to the reproduction as such – the more perfect the more perfect the reproduction, the more completely will the history of the reproduced work be obscured by its replication of the traces given in the original. Thus the marks of its past that are carried on the original, and which are duplicated in the reproduction, no longer serve to connect the reproduction with a past at all. Perhaps more importantly, however, the disconnection from tradition also occurs through the way in which the reproduction of the original severs it from the original context in which was located. In Benjamin's discussion, this means that the artwork is removed from its traditional connection with ritual – the artwork is de-sacralised, turned into a 'commodity' available anywhere and for anyone. More generally, we may say that reproduction removes the object from its original context of significance so that the object does indeed become something generic rather than unique, and as such, ceases to have any unique significance, and since its being as a historical object is tied to its uniqueness – to its existence at through a particular time and space, and at a certain place or places – so too does the object cease to be historical.

It is, in fact, precisely through the apparent obliteration of place, through the overcoming of spatial and temporal distance, that both old and new media technologies enable the increased availability of their objects – whether they be particular artefacts, representations, sites or events. But while this seeming obliteration of place, and so also of distance, brings increased availability with it, it also tends towards an obliteration of difference. Thus what is physically distant is no longer experienced as distant, but neither is

what is close experienced as close, since everything is uniformly accessible in more or less the same way – see Heidegger (1971), also Malpas (2006). Moreover, not only does this mean a change in one's of the object, but it also brings a change in one's experience of oneself. For in the dissolution of any sense of the near and far in relation to the object, one also loses a sense of the near and far in relation to oneself. The transformation of the experience or 'sense' of place under the impact of new media may bring a change in one's sense of one's own place no less than of the place of the things around one. To take a mundane example, in playing a computer game, the relative locations of the objects around the gamer and the objects in the game are changed in the playing of the game itself, but so too is the gamer's own sense of location altered – the gamer is as much, if not more, 'in' the realm of the game than she is 'in' the room where the computer is itself situated. Indeed, in computer gaming, one can lose a sense of one's immediate physical locatedness in spite of the fact that one's interaction with the game is itself dependent on that physical locatedness.

Although the experience and interpretation of cultural heritage is, as Tilden emphasises, of what connects with us, of what we may, in a certain sense, already belongs to us, it is nevertheless also the case that it involves an encounter with that which stands somewhat apart from us – indeed, this is perhaps a central aspect of heritage experience and interpretation, and although it is perhaps under-explored within much heritage literature, it is something to which a great deal of attention has been given in modern hermeneutic theory, see especially Gadamer (1989). The way in which modern technologies tend towards the apparent obliteration of temporal and spatial distance presents a serious problem in the experience and interpretation of cultural heritage. It may lead, in fact, to an inability to appreciate heritage as heritage, and, since the significance of heritage lies in large part in the way it contributes to the formation of our own sense of identity, so the loss of such an ability may also entail a loss of a proper sense of ourselves – in short, the way in which the technologies of old and new media appear to remove spatial and temporal distance and difference, the way they release things, including ourselves, from place, may also bring with a loss of any proper 'sense' of place, and so of any proper sense of identity as such. It is this issue, I would suggest, that should actually be seen to underlie the frequently voiced concern about the possible 'Disneyfication' of heritage experience and interpretation that is associated with some aspects of the use of new media as well as with the trend toward business-oriented models of heritage management and administration. Such 'Disneyfication (which could be seen as simply a extension of the same tendency towards 'the universal equality of all things' described by Benjamin) is problematic, not because it may be seen as a form of capitulation to commercial interests or as involving any form of 'dumbing down', but rather because of the way it does indeed threaten to obscure and obliterate our own sense of what heritage is, and what it means, and therefore also, our own sense of ourselves. Indeed, the way in which new

communication and information technologies may be seen to threaten self identity and social locatedness was something already explored by the media theorist Joshua Meyrowitch in the 1980s (see Meyrowitch, 1985).

The apparent loss of a sense of temporal distance is one problematic element in heritage experience and interpretation in the age of new media. From a hermeneutic perspective such a loss is especially problematic in that it is through our capacity to stand apart from the past, to gain temporal distance in relation to it, that itself plays a role in enabling critical engagement with the past as well as with our own heritage. However, not only is temporal distance important, but so too is spatial distance and differentiation. We gain a sense of who we are, and so can take a stand on own identity, including being able to address our sense of ourselves critically, through being able to place ourselves simultaneously alongside others. Moreover, the capacity to engage with our world in a critical and reflective fashion also depends on being able to distinguish our own interpretations of the world, as well as the interpretations of others, from the world itself.

Indeed, as I indicated earlier, it is thus that the materiality of the interpreted object turns out to be crucial in underpinning the possibility of interpretation. It is also crucial in enabling us to adopt a critical perspective in relation to the interpretations that we encounter. In that case, however, it becomes essential that we be able to distinguish interpretation from that which is interpreted. We need to have a sense, then, of the object as such as that which supports many different interpretations of it, but which also constitutes that on the basis of which any interpretation can be subject to question, and for this to be possible we need to retain a sense of the unique particularity of the object as such; we need to retain a sense of the placed materiality of that which is interpreted. Inasmuch as new media, as well as old, have a capacity for the proliferation of the object, for its representation and interpretive supplementation, so too do new and old media have a capacity to obscure the difference between object and interpretation, to lose a sense of the object as such. Moreover, sometimes this may be encouraged, not only by the technical capacities of media technologies, but also by a misguided commitment to the idea that there is indeed only the multiplicity of interpretation – that there is no object that has any authority in relation to those interpretations. Here a loss of the distinctness of the object from its interpretations, which is itself tied to a loss of the sense of the properly placed presence of the object, a loss also, one might say, of a sense of its spatial as well as conceptual difference from its many representations or supplementations.

5. Conclusion

New media offers enormous possibilities for the enhancement and enrichment of heritage experience and interpretation, the question is how to make best use of new media in ways that

also maintains the integrity of heritage artefacts and sites, that maintains a sense of the distance and difference between the past and the present, between the original and the reconstruction, between the object and its interpretation. Exactly how this is to be achieved will, of course, vary according to particular heritage contexts, artefacts and sites; it will also differ according to different curatorial practices and different media. One point I would emphasise, however, is something already present in Tilden – a point that can be seen as in part restating my own emphasis on the importance of not losing a sense of the proper place of heritage and of the heritage 'object' as well as of the 'subject' who experiences and interprets.

The penultimate of Tilden's six principles of heritage interpretation reads as follows: 'Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man [sic] rather than any phase' (Tilden, 1977: 9). The tendency of modern media technologies is one that runs counter to this principle inasmuch as there can be no sense of the 'whole', of the integrity or unity of the site, artefact or whatever, without a sense of the integration of its parts, and such integration itself depends on an understanding of the way in which those parts are themselves located in respect of one another and in respect of the whole. To have a sense of a work, or an artefact or site as a whole is, I would argue, to have a sense of its properly placed presence.

The reproducibility of the artwork, as described by Benjamin, in which the artwork is amenable to endless repetition involves a dissipation of any sense of the work as itself a whole since the work becomes simply a repeatable mark – it can have no 'parts' since there is nothing with respect to which or within which those 'parts' can be integrated. Thus, while the artwork may be a single thing, as it must be to be repeatable and reproducible, it is not therefore a whole – its wholeness is itself obliterated by its reproduction and repetition. For the artwork to be present as a whole is perhaps not for it to be wholly present (at least not as something that is present in any complete determinacy – there is always something indeterminate about what is present, always more that can be seen or said about it), but it is for it to be present in space and time, for it to be present in 'its unique existence at the place where it happens to be'. The same, I would suggest, is also true of cultural heritage.

If we take Tilden's principle to heart then (leaving aside its somewhat old-fashioned tone), we will look to find ways of deploying the resources of new media in ways that do indeed aim to present a whole, and this will mean presenting the heritage artefact or site as itself an integral presence, existing in its own place and distinct temporally and spatially from us and from its reproductions and interpretations. Since Tilden also talks, moreover, of maintaining a sense of the integrity of the 'subject' to whom the interpretation is presented, so too must heritage interpretation retain a proper sense of the place of the subject. Only by maintaining such a sense of the placed 'materiality' of heritage, both in relation to 'object' and 'subject', can we make sense of the importance of heritage for us, and only then can we

properly engage with it. This is, of course, to attempt to find ways of deploying new media in ways that run somewhat counter to that which Benjamin claims is the characteristic tendency of modern media technologies; it means finding ways to deploy new media in ways that maintain, and do not obscure or dissolve, a sense of place, but this may well be essential if we are not to obscure or dissolve a sense of heritage as such.

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