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Version: Accepted Version

Book Section:
Stainforth, E (2019) Disruptive forms, persistent values: negotiating digital heritage and 'The Memory of the World'. In: Carter, T, Harvey, DC, Jones, R and Robertson, I, (eds.) Creating Heritage: Unrecognised Pasts and Rejected Futures. Routledge Cultural Heritage and Tourism Series . Routledge , Abingdon . ISBN 9780815347927

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Disruptive Forms, Persistent Values: Negotiating Digital Heritage and the 'Memory of the World'

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Abstract

This chapter discusses digital heritage in the context of the Memory of the World (MoW) programme, established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1992. It begins by giving an overview of the world heritage enterprise that finds form in UNESCO's registers, lists and conventions. Concerns regarding the loss of memory and material culture inform the ethos of the organization, and its principles for protecting and safeguarding heritage. This ethos also expresses itself as the desire for memory resistant to loss in MoW's policy guidelines, which are examined with particular reference to digital documents and digital heritage. The digital medium unsettles established notions of heritage persistence and highlights different dimensions of the persistence loss-relationship. The chapter argues that tensions between heritage and the digital medium may be productive for the figuring of both; the palpable performativity of the latter holds open the potential for a different relationship to memory than MoW would seem to allow for. Likewise, the challenge of preserving digital objects serves to emphasize the varied material forms heritage might take.

Introduction

In 1995 Federico Mayor, the former Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1987-1999), wrote *Memory of the Future*, in which he identified what in his view were the most pressing obstacles facing multilateral cooperation and UNESCO's ongoing efforts to address them through cultural, educational and environmental initiatives:

> All around us, there are […] more and more 'signs of the irreversible', which are causing us to plunge headlong into a state of confusion […] I am convinced that the human species is capable of extricating itself from this predicament but time is getting short. How can I communicate both my impatience and my determination? If action is not taken, the 'Gordian knots' will remain tied. Can they be loosened? Yes, if we move off the well-trodden track with imagination and daring, if the vision of the future wins over the vision of the past. It is never too late to think about tomorrow, no matter how distressing today may be (Mayor, 1995: 11).

Mayor introduces the general character of the problem and expresses concerns that 'signs of the irreversible' may threaten the legacies of the future. By way of explaining UNESCO's response, he goes on to describe the Memory of the World (MoW) programme. Launched in 1992, with the aim of facilitating 'preservation, by the most appropriate techniques, of the world's documentary heritage' (UNESCO website, 2017), digitization has come to feature prominently in MoW as a means of preserving and accessing heritage materials. The programme's emphasis on the digital provokes questions about the kinds of futures and legacies digitization promises for heritage. With this in mind, here I examine MoW and its associated policies in order to draw out the values implicit in UNESCO's configuration of memory, heritage and digital media.

I begin by giving an overview of the world heritage enterprise that finds form in UNESCO's registers, lists and conventions. Such initiatives are informed by the ethos of the organization, and its principles for protecting and safeguarding heritage. This ethos also expresses itself as the desire for memory resistant to loss in MoW's policy guidelines, which I examine with particular reference to digital documents and digital heritage in the second half of the chapter. I argue that tensions between heritage and digital media may be productive for the figuring of both; the palpable performativity of the latter holds open the potential for a different relationship to memory than MoW would seem to allow for. Likewise, the challenge of preserving digital objects serves to highlight the varied material forms heritage might take.

World Heritage

The initial impetus for the creation of UNESCO in 1946 was international educational development, following the end of the Second World War. The aftermath of the War was the foundation upon which UNESCO marked its project of reconstruction; as its *Constitution* states, 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed' (UNESCO, 2014: 5). The practical objective of protecting and maintaining cultural heritage was part of the way in which it approached this task after the War. UNESCO's concern with peace and reconciliation stems from what Jacques Derrida has described as the organization's philosophical ethos; that is, a Kantian philosophy of universal peace through which the Eurocentric values of humanism, democracy and cosmopolitanism became globalized in the post-war era (Derrida, 2002: 4).

UNESCO's strategies for protection and preservation are principally negotiated through the concept of world heritage and the idea of universal value. Originally, this concept encompassed sites of natural beauty and the built environment but, over time, a growing interest in other forms of heritage led to the expansion of its remit and the introduction of new heritage programmes, including MoW, based on similar principles. Therefore, world heritage and the operations by which universal value is measured are inextricable from MoW and inform the dialogue between heritage and memory in that context.

The concept of world heritage developed out of the introduction in 1972 of the *World Heritage Convention*, which came into effect after ratification from forty signatories in 1975. The *Convention* initially focused its definition of world heritage on monuments, buildings and archaeological sites. On a functional level, it set out a plan for the protection of this heritage through international support, grants from the World Heritage Fund and the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List (UNESCO, 2017a). The *Convention* text also emphasizes the responsibility, to protect 'the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value', warning that the 'deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world' (UNESCO,

2017b: 2). Such sentiments began to give shape to the idea of heritage as an internationally important and collective entity.

It has been argued, however, that the idea of a shared set of values for universal heritage does not correspond with the traditions associated with many sites and monuments, and that it is a means by which Western values have been imposed on non-Western settings (e.g. Byrne, 1991). Further, writers like Laurajane Smith contend that the discourse of universality promotes a totalizing view of heritage, stressing material concerns and official narratives over cultural practices and inter-generational knowledge-sharing (2006).

Although criticisms of the *Convention* have been ongoing, demands for representative heritage from increasingly wide-ranging audiences became more prevalent in the late 1980s. These demands were shaped and perpetuated by a number of factors, relating to economic, political and social changes under globalization, and largely came about as a result of the expansion of the heritage industry and cultural tourism (Bennett, 2007). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's work is instructive here insofar as her analysis of world heritage is revealing of its structural dynamics. She writes:

> World heritage weakens the link between citizenship and nationality (by affirming the prepolitical cultural bonds of subnational groups) in order to strengthen the bond between emerging cosmopolitan citizens and an emerging global polity. In other words, this move, unlike civilizing missions predicated on the monocultural universalism of "civilization," reverts to subnational as well as diasporic particularities in order first, to transcend the national articulations of culture, and second, to rearticulate them supranationally (2007, 190-191).

This description shows how current understandings of world heritage are distinct from monocultural models of universalism and are, instead, predicated on diversity as a universal principle. As Rodney Harrison comments, although UNESCO's universal standards have been

seen as exclusionary, it is the same standards that mean it has been unable to ignore reformative demands on the part of minority communities who represent a component of the humanity it seeks to uphold (2013).

Nevertheless, these concepts sit in an uneasy relationship and the desire for more representative world heritage, which would later be inaugurated in the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, is demonstrative of the tension between them. The advent of the 2003 *Convention* constitutes formal recognition of intangible heritage in international policy, which is intimately linked to the diversity model of heritage. The *Convention* text sets out the following definition:

> The 'intangible cultural heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO, 2003a: 2).

The necessarily broad outline for intangible heritage incorporates an explicit affirmation of human diversity and the integral role of communities, along with an acknowledgement of the benefit and threat that 'processes of globalization and social transformation' (UNESCO, 2003a: 1) pose to them. Yet there is little sense in the text that UNESCO is in fact a symptom of these processes and that a phenomenon like world heritage also plays a role in the transformation of communities. Moreover, the mechanism by which intangible cultural heritage is recorded is a list, a measure of value based on the same ideas of universal significance as (tangible) world heritage. Implicitly, then, diversity must be qualified, and some expressions of intangible heritage are placed above others, which is an inevitable by-product of the list form itself.

In his book *Memory Practices in the Sciences*, Geoffrey C. Bowker explores universal knowledge systems, identifying the coin and the list as examples of the two dominant universal modalities. The first, the coin, works by according everything a single value, which is the modality of implosion; the second, the list, attempts to categorize every single thing, which is the modality of particularity. He explains, 'with the modality of particularity, we find background stasis […] The result is a packaging of species that guarantees humans some kind of immunity from the flow of natural time' (2005: 216), leading to a hypostatization and freezing of the present. Both universals, he claims, developed as methods of dealing with scale through abstraction and classification and could be described as truth systems for understanding the world. However, these types of systems are inadequate to an understanding of diversity, which involves other, localized ways of knowing. Although Bowker's study focuses on biodiversity, UNESCO's model for cultural diversity follows a similar pattern; by breaking heritage down into countable units, the World Heritage Lists transform the sites and practices of diverse cultures into recognizably Western heritage products. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett outlines the effects of this transformation, suggesting that 'heritage is a mode of metacultural production that produces something new, which, though it has recourse to the past, is fundamentally different from it' (2007: 196).

To conclude, the employment of lists in UNESCO's programmes produces a structure by which diversity and complexity are codified in a narrow representational framework. The listing process also highlights tensions between the fluidity of cultural practices and the metacultural freezing of time, which defines the world heritage project (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2007: 180). This key aspect of world heritage will be significant for the following discussion of the MoW programme and the idea of world memory, which presupposes the (digital) storage of memory in a static form against the backdrop of large-scale global transformations.

Memory of the World

The previous section gave an abridged account of the development of world heritage and UNESCO's employment of World Heritage Lists. In what follows I introduce MoW and examine

its objective of safeguarding and facilitating access to documentary heritage, with particular reference to the 2003 *Charter for the Preservation of Digital Heritage*. This was established to address issues of format obsolescence for digitized and born digital heritage. MoW's association with the *Charter* is bound up with its description of a document as that which 'records' something by deliberate intellectual intent, and is reproducible and migratable (UNESCO, 2002: 8). The transference of analogue documents to digital formats and the increasing production of born digital material connects the *Charter's* activities and MoW's aims. Being a later initiative, the *Charter* also updates some of MoW's guidelines and offers a definition of digital heritage, as another adjunct to world heritage. My analysis considers how these entities are implicated in UNESCO's goal of 'permanent' and 'universal' access to heritage (UNESCO, 2002: 14-15).

The MoW programme, founded by UNESCO in 1992, came in response to the destruction of the National Library in Sarajevo. Following its first meeting in 1993, UNESCO undertook to foster national government partnerships, and prepared a list of endangered documentary heritage in coordination with the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) and ICA (International Council on Archives) (UNESCO, 2002: 3). Recognition of the threats posed to documents, notably war and social upheaval, along with a systemic lack of funding, informed the key objectives of MoW to facilitate preservation and promote universal access to these resources. Thereafter, an International Advisory Committee (IAC) was established, with international, regional and national subcommittees. These correspond with the three-tier structure of the MoW registers, which all contain material of world significance (UNESCO, 2002: 20). The programme is similar to the *World Heritage Convention* in its designation of universal significance: 'Documentary heritage are (sic) part of the inheritance of the world, in the same way as are the sites of outstanding universal value listed in the UNESCO World Heritage List' (UNESCO, 2002: 5). But it also highlights 'diverse knowledge and disciplines' (UNESCO, 2002: 5), and hence shares affinities with other UNESCO programmes, particularly the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, mentioned previously. The trope of memory is significant, then, both as it is materialized in the document and insofar as it points beyond the materiality implied in UNESCO's definitions. This focus may also be informed

by the contemporary popularity of memory and its frequent association with the commemoration of former conflicts or the recuperation of past injustices from the mid to late twentieth century onwards (Harrison, 2013). The widespread references to memory in that context resonate with the circumstances out of which MoW was founded. These studies tend to emphasize collective memory, its social construction and its mediation via external records and documentation (e.g. Assmann and Czaplicka, 1995; Olick, 2007).

Because MoW's remit is documentary heritage, its activities have tended to encompass library and archive collections, which is reflected in its outline:

> Memory of the World embraces the documentary heritage of humanity. A document is that which 'documents' or 'records' something by deliberate intellectual intent. While the concept of a document is universal, it is acknowledged that some cultures are more 'document oriented' than others. Therefore – for this and other reasons – not all cultures will be equally represented within the global documentary heritage, and hence within Memory of the World (UNESCO, 2002: 8).

Such statements introduce a degree of ambiguity into the understanding of the document and its substantive elements. The *Memory of the World General Guidelines* attempt to address this ambiguity by indicating the varied forms the document can take. Documentary heritage is defined as comprising items which are:

- moveable (but see below)
- made up of signs/codes, sounds and/or images
- preservable (the carriers are non-living)
- reproducible and migratable
- the product of a deliberate documenting process (UNESCO, 2002: 8).

The list takes account of both the documenting process and the potential reproducibility of the medium, elements that are isolated from one another later on: ‘A document is deemed to have two components: the information content and the carrier on which it resides. Both may be of great variety and both are equally important as parts of the memory’ (UNESCO, 2002: 8). Memory is re-introduced into the frame here, and the term document and memory are sometimes used interchangeably. Yet, while MoW registers the potential for documents to be copied or migrated into different formats, the other features it attributes to documentary heritage of the world run counter to the dynamic definition required by reproducible media. The *General Guidelines* suggest the significance of some items ‘is deemed to transcend the boundaries of time and culture, and they should be preserved for present and future generations and made accessible to all peoples of the world in some form’ (UNESCO, 2002: 5). However, the emphasis on transcendence presents a problem for the time-based structure of digital media, and hints at the implicit privileging of the content over the carrier.

Other examples of this privileging can be found in the kinds of items and collections appearing on MoW’s International Register. To date, no entries for digital documentary heritage have been added to the list. The Australian National Register has the PANDORA web archive, which was added in 2004. The archive was also submitted for inclusion on the International Register. The nomination stressed the interactivity of websites, making its case on structural grounds, but it was ultimately rejected because its content was not unique enough. Ross Harvey writes that web archives like PANDORA also present a challenge to the concept of documentary heritage: ‘It seems that fluid entities, those that are constantly growing or changing, such as some archives and digital collections, pose a problem’ (Harvey, 2007: 268). He argues that the reason for the problem is that documentary heritage is perceived as fixed, unlike intangible heritage, which is ‘constantly recreated’. Therefore, while claiming to allow for ‘diverse knowledge and disciplines’, MoW’s alignment with the *Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention* can only accommodate diversity within narrow formal parameters. Digital documents throw these issues into sharp relief.

Concerns about different document formats in MoW relate to the *Charter's* focus on ensuring long-term access to digital materials. This more recent initiative was a response to institutional calls for greater awareness of the importance of digital preservation practices at a government level. With the creation of digital content comes the realization that it, too, must be safeguarded. As Jussi Parikka writes:

> Digitalization represents a curious wave of practical interest in maintaining important materials for posterity, even if at the same time it leads into crucial foundational questions: how does the encoding of film material in M-PEG introduce a new kind of image conception […] and what about the fact that the digital is, despite hype in the 1980s and 1990s about immaterial virtuality, itself a very material notion that includes hardware, software and other material contexts and is prone to deterioration? (2012: 118-119)

Both MoW and the *Charter* address potential problems associated with the management of digital content; MoW recognizes the threats to audiovisual and electronic materials from 'man-made technical obsolescence […] driven by commercial imperatives' (UNESCO, 2002: 2) and the *Charter* stresses that 'continuity of the digital heritage is fundamental' (UNESCO, 2003b: 75). Continuity refers to a commitment to ensuring that heritage resources are widely accessible to users over time, and supported by keeping abreast of developments in technology. The 2003 *Guidelines for the Preservation of Digital Heritage*, which are closely linked to the *Charter*, go into detail about digital preservation strategies such as migration, emulation and preservation metadata. These are distinguished from digitization: 'Digital preservation […] does not refer to the use of digital imaging or capture techniques to make copies of non-digital items, even if that is done for preservation purposes', rather 'the purpose of preservation is to maintain the ability to present the essential elements of authentic digital materials' (UNESCO, 2003c: 20-21). Like the custodianship of artefacts or archival records, the emphasis is on the persistence of the materials, but the *Charter* also introduces the idea of digital heritage in its own right, an entity that is necessarily wide-ranging. Article 1, 'Scope', states:

> The digital heritage consists of unique resources of human knowledge and expression. It embraces cultural, 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 (UNESCO, 2003: 75).

The definition of digital heritage is a distinct formulation of world heritage because it incorporates analogue materials converted into a digital form. However, it presents several difficulties. If it is 'heritage' by virtue of being unique, how are criteria for uniqueness to be established when the technology allows for the production of multiple copies? The picture becomes even more confused, considering this description encompasses both born digital objects and digital surrogates. For example, the latter could be viewed as part of a broader practice of preservation, whereby the creation of digital surrogates decreases the need to handle fragile analogue originals. In such a scenario, it is difficult to determine whether the surrogates would qualify for the same levels of preservation.

Another difficulty pertaining to the designation of uniqueness for digital resources relates to the framework for selection. Because digital documents require the maintenance of more elements to render them readable, the preservation of material ideally takes place at each stage of the digital life cycle, including creation. This necessitates decision-making about significance at a very early stage, perhaps without knowing whether UNESCO's standards for world heritage have been met. Michael Heaney, former member of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) of MoW (2011-2015), proposed that the ubiquity of digital memory making practices contributes to the uncertainty of the situation:

> We are entering a new age of ephemerality. We treasure the remains of the ancient and medieval worlds that have come down to us because they are fragments of a much greater corpus of material now lost to us […] The age of print and material recording (disc, film) inserted a barrier to production (it had to be worth the investment in printing

> presses or film studios) so what was produced had passed a quality test and was available in multiple copies (leaving aside the continuing production of MS material), making the issue of preservation less pressing – 'all the documents' was both justifiable and achievable. Now anybody can produce material and everybody can know about it, so the question arises of what is worth keeping, and the fear that we can't always know – the experience of lost works of the past puts us on our guard against throwing it away (or letting it disappear) unthinkingly (2014).

The suggestion here is twofold; while conceding that pre-determined criteria for heritage may be difficult to establish, Heaney also notes a reluctance to take decisions pre-emptively. He implies that it is a 'new age of ephemerality' that intensifies the issue.

Ephemerality and loss of heritage are addressed in the policy documentation of both the *Charter* and MoW but it is a central preoccupation of MoW, since part of the programme's remit entails awareness-raising about the historic losses of documentary heritage:

> All Information Society Division Programmes, and other relevant UNESCO Programmes, should include a broad introduction to Memory of the World. This should include an appreciation of the significance of documentary heritage, the scientific and practical issues relating to its preservation and accessibility, and the context of its vulnerability and past losses (UNESCO, 2002: 19).

The recognition of past losses also extends to guidelines for the Memory of the World Register:

> The Memory of the World Register will include a section devoted to the listing of lost and missing heritage which, had it survived, would have been eligible for inclusion in the main body of the register (UNESCO, 2002: 28).

The decision to include, not only endangered documents, but destroyed or lost heritage gestures towards the notion of unity and the utopian return to a former completeness. It is the spectre of such completeness that underpins the logic of MoW and the reinstitution of lost memory, which is connected to the foundational principles of UNESCO itself. The digital medium is implicated in the process to the extent that the digital document is compatible with a model of memory composed of finite parts, i.e. virtual memory. When maintained properly, these parts can be consolidated and repeatedly produce and recall the same image or object without the gradual decay associated with analogue formats. As Paul De Marinis remarks:

> Analogue media, to be preserved, must not be played: each replay is a partial erasure and a new recording – an overlay. Digital preservation relies instead on the frequent rereading, erasure and rewriting of the content (cited in Parikka, 2012: 223).

A contradiction inherent in this notion of digital heritage is that it seems to offer a system of memory that is resistant to loss, even while its formal structure undermines narratives of continuity and makes its discrete components less discreet. The danger of loss, combined with the appearance of persistence defines the threat and promise of digital media as storage.

However, such contradictions also create tensions within MoW, which struggles to accommodate digital documents that go beyond the documentation or record of fixed entities (be they objects, texts or events). As Harvey observes (2007), MoW has failed to represent digital documentary heritage, even as it advocates digitization and the preservation of born digital material. The overt processual nature of digital content would perhaps require a definition closer to that of intangible heritage, even while being thoroughly material. The next section will explore these characteristics of digital media in more detail.

Memory Resistant to Loss

Examination of the interplay between world memory and the document, particularly the digital document, revealed that, despite acknowledging issues of format obsolescence and long-term

solutions for digital preservation, MoW is expressive of a model of memory that is resistant to loss. Digital documents are assumed to guard against loss, while also making their structural discontinuity more apparent, so that preservation becomes more a matter of ensuring long-term *access* to resources. As Matthew Kirschenbaum writes:

> The preservation of digital objects is logically inseparable from the act of their creation – the lag between creation and preservation collapses completely, since a digital object may only ever be said to be preserved if it is accessible, and each individual access creates the object anew (2013).

Kirschenbaum's insight draws attention to those discontinuous elements of the digital medium and clarifies the close proximity of preservation and accessibility in the rendering of digital documents. MoW's *General Guidelines* are influenced by this factor in the statement that 'permanent access is the goal of preservation' (UNESCO, 2002: 14), suggesting that the document is becoming increasingly aligned with records in a digital form. However, the introduction of words like permanence and continuity into definitions of digital heritage indicates the undesirability of the reverse condition, i.e. transience and discontinuity. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun argues that the conflation of memory and storage underpins and undermines digital media's archival promise, which leads her to contend that new-media scholars have been blinded to some aspects of its recursive nature (2008). She uses the phrase enduring ephemerals to write about these aspects of digital media:

> Digital media […] depends on a degeneration actively denied and repressed. […] If our machines' memories are more permanent, if they enable a permanence that we seem to lack, it is because they are constantly refreshed so that their ephemerality endures, so that they may store the programs that seem to drive our machines (Hui Kyong Chun, 2008: 167).

This notion of enduring ephemerality incorporates the ideology of memory as storage (that which endures) and helps to explain the implicit hope invested in digital media (as that which represses degeneration). Both Hui Kyong Chun and Kirschenbaum also focus on digital media's performative elements; these appear to be built into the process of digitization because the objects it produces are systemic and require a combination of hardware and software components to be decoded and viewed. Hence, the recall of a document is tantamount to an act of creation, or re-creation. Additionally, its machine readable format makes it vulnerable to manipulation and undetectable modifications. Discontinuity, then, is essential to an understanding of the digital medium.

In his essay 'The Discrete Image', Bernard Stiegler discusses this issue in relation to digital photography. The function by which the photograph is converted into a machine readable format, he calls 'discretization' (2002: 157-158). The discrete of the title is indicative of digital technology's capacity to store images as binary code, a form that is entirely quantifiable, and which could be seen to interfere in the process that renders the photograph whole, or continuous (Stiegler, 2002: 164). It is Stiegler's view that 'by discretizing the continuous, digitization allows us to submit the 'this was' (of the photograph) to a decomposing analysis' (2002: 157-158). However, this form of analysis is also what destabilizes the experience of continuous time. In the heritage context, a digital image or object disrupts continuity by revealing its 'wholeness' as an illusion.

Another way of exploring the value system implied by the opposition of continuity and discontinuity is suggested in the functionality Stiegler locates in digital images. His description of a decomposing analysis is reminiscent of decay, more often aligned with natural than technical processes. The motif of decomposition warrants further examination insofar as Stiegler's use of the word highlights the discontinuity of cultural artefacts. The already fragmentary nature of cultural heritage collections is reinforced by the digital image and the circulation of digital objects. Decomposition occurs with the passing of time but digital technology initiates, accelerates and is even capable of reversing the process (Hoskins, 2013).

The systemic structure of this technology, while vulnerable, is also dynamic. Its capacity to break down and reconstitute digital objects does not square well with a conventional definition of decomposition that is indicative of irreversible decay, but the metaphor is productive in allowing that idea of 'degeneration actively denied' (Hui Kyong Chun, 2008: 167) to be brought to the surface. What emerges in Stiegler's writing is the productive capacity for decomposition as a mode of analysis; that is, the coupling of degeneration with regeneration in digital media. Rather than attempting to minimize these unstable elements, Stiegler engages with the specificity of the medium to posit new formations of knowledge, based on reconfiguration and reassembly. The longstanding association of decomposition with gradual decay is thus challenged by the reversibility of this condition in the media context.

A similar suggestion has been made with regard to the dominance of archival logic more generally. Rebecca Schneider's essay, 'Archives: Performance Remains', is helpful in clarifying the argument. Schneider discusses the way performance acts as a destabilizing force against a Western tradition that privileges the material remains of the past. Challenging the preservative impulse of the archive, she questions: 'To what degree can performance interrogate archival thinking?', for 'Is it not precisely the logic of the archive that approaches performance as disappearance? (Schneider, 2001: 101)' The 'logic of the archive' is a reference to the debate that divides performance from its subsequent documentation in archives (e.g. Auslander, 2006). Schneider seeks to reconcile these concepts, proposing that the document is a site of performance; rather than disappearing, performance remains but remains differently. This thinking can be productively channelled into MoW's interpretation of the documentary losses of the past. In her characterization of performative documents 'producing the fleshy losses to which they testify' (Schneider, 2001: 105), Schneider calls to mind the guidelines for listing lost heritage and offers a corrective to the rationale for this policy, emphasizing active practice rather than irretrievable loss. Furthermore, the staging of loss and remains as mutually constitutive demonstrates how performance disturbs the assumption of the archive as that which persists, and begins to signal towards the performative aspects of documents. Like Stiegler's notion of

decomposition, performance introduces a productive trope for heritage and demonstrates its potential to disrupt static definitions such as those outlined by UNESCO. Digital documents are also arguably more explicitly performative in that they rely on access and use for their material constitution.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate the complex and contradictory relationship between digital media and heritage in the MoW programme. As Fiona Cameron observes, the 'ascription of heritage metaphors to cultural materials in a digital format means that digital media has become embedded in a cycle of heritage value and consumption' (2008: 170). These insights have significant implications for the figure of memory resistant to loss, identified in MoW. On one level, it is consistent with earlier formulations of heritage and world heritage in UNESCO, but it finds a peculiar expression in digital documents and digital heritage, which both offer and deny a sense of continuity. However, the dream of total or complete memory that digital media superficially promises is not equal to MoW's concern with loss, which is more oriented around the certainty of inevitable decay. Decay does not disappear with the digital but the physical signs of decay change substantially, and in ways that do not necessarily mark the gradual passing of time. The discussion here reveals that the dialogue between heritage, memory and the digital is an uneasy and provocative one. Heritage management practices of storing, maintaining and preserving are severely challenged by a medium which relies on active degeneration and regeneration. These are issues which call for sustained critical reflection and an active reconfiguring of the values embedded in heritage work.

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