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## Giving voice to heritage: a virtual case study

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## ***Giving Voice to Heritage: a Virtual Case-Study***

This essay explores changing discourses of heritage with reference to concepts of place broadly defined. Our virtual case-study is the celebration of *genius loci* in the film project *Cathedrals of Culture* (2013), which was initially showcased in Berlin in February 2014. In this series of documentaries, the film director, Wim Wenders, invited five other film directors to give voice to their favorite buildings on 3D. The filmmakers selected the Berlin Philharmonic, the National Library of Russia, Halden Prison, the Salk Institute, the Oslo Opera House and the Centre Georges Pompidou.

Our research questions focus on the sense of place generated by these documentaries with particular reference to what Harrison and Rose (2010) call a ‘dialogical’ model of heritage. While dominant American-European thought has conceptualized heritage in hegemonic material terms, Harrison and Rose (2010) describe heritage as a collaborative venture involving people, material objects and the environment. We query whether giving ‘voice’ to material artefacts in our Wenders’ case-study challenges the material dominance of architecture for heritage, deepens our sense of place and constitutes a step forward for a dialogical model of heritage. From the perspective of critical heritage studies, we ask whether this project gives greater sensitivity to the human/non-human nexus? Does it construct a multivocal sense of place?

### Hegemonic Discourse and Tangible Places

The buildings represented in *Cathedrals of Culture* are all real, tangible places. With the exception of the Salk Institute, the buildings selected by the filmmakers are located in Europe. Four of them are located in major European cities; Berlin, Paris, Oslo and Saint-Petersburg. The oldest building is the National Library of Russia (1795) while the most recent is the Halden Prison (2010). Like many buildings on UNESCO's World Heritage List, (such as the Tower of London, the Acropolis, the Kremlin and Red Square), all of the 'cathedrals' are iconic buildings; some are aesthetically beautiful and all have been designed with care. Unlike many of the buildings on the UNESCO list, the buildings in the *Cathedrals of Culture* do not necessarily project a national grand cultural narrative and are not the property of elite groups – although some may have elitist associations.

Many buildings on the World Heritage list project what Laurajane Smith (2006) has termed 'authorised heritage discourse' (AHD). Although 'few regions in today's world can lay claim to being culturally homogenous' (Kockel 2010: 135), many employ a hegemonic and ideologically charged discourse to capture a single, national cultural narrative and the buildings themselves are (in the main) national treasures. In particular, such buildings encapsulate the concept of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) which was central to the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (UNESCO, 1972). That Convention stipulated that individual or groups of buildings are classed as World Heritage 'because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science' (UNESCO, 1972, paragraph 1). It is no accident that UNESCO World Heritage Lists have been dominated by European castles, buildings and monuments since the concept of OUV is associated with the European cultural tradition that derives from classical philosophy (Cleere, 2001). With

reference to Kant's Critique of Judgement (1790), Labadi (2013) argues that several European texts served as the catalyst for linking of art, heritage and intrinsic value.

For us, one of the most important issues with World Heritage status has been the emphasis on materiality – on what Labadi (2013) calls 'object-based epistemology'. This discourse defines heritage as tangible, powerful, and monumental in scale and buildings have had significance only from a material perspective. Their importance was determined and normalized by elite powers at state level. With her emphasis on discourse, Smith draws on Foucault's (1991) argument that discourses objectively reflect relationships between power and knowledge. Buildings in this context were selected by the privileged and designed to reflect the nation and its place in the world.

In recent decades, various initiatives have served to reduce the American-European emphasis on materiality and widen the scope of the definition of heritage. The adoption of a new category of cultural landscape in 1992, for example, placed emphasis on living traditions rather than the material object itself. The revised operational guidelines proposed that in exceptional circumstances – or in conjunction with other criteria – a site could be nominated as World Heritage on the basis of its association with 'events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of significance' (UNESCO, 1994)

More recently, the (2003) UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage established intangible heritage as a distinct category (see Nic Craith 2008). The ICOMOS Ename Charter (2008) further reinforced the connection between tangible and intangible heritage. Additionally, World Heritage experts have encouraged a more anthropological approach rather than a purely architectural and monumental conception of cultural heritage. 'They encouraged the understanding of cultural heritage not as monuments in isolation but as holistic entities, part of a wider social and spatial context' (Labadi 2013: 45). They also identified a number of themes which they regarded as under-represented on the

heritage list. These included (a) human coexistence with the land and (b) human beings in society. The objectivity of World Heritage status has been reduced and greater emphasis is now placed on the social context – on the interactions between buildings or monuments and the wider society. The most recent guidelines on World Heritage status from the World Heritage Centre note that while ‘attributes such as spirit and feeling do not lend themselves easily to practical applications of the conditions of authenticity’, they are still ‘important indicators of character and sense of place, for example, in communities maintaining tradition and cultural continuity’ (World Heritage Centre 2015).

Although welcome, these initiatives have come under criticism as reinforcing the notion of heritage categories. Meskell (2015) argues that despite the gloss of neutrality, the inscription of sites as World Heritage has become an exchange value that is driven by economic or political imperatives. Harrison (2013) argues that introducing further categories such as ‘intangible’ heritage’ reinforced the Cartesian dualism that had previously underpinned the evolution of the concept. Adding another category does not transform our understanding of heritage. Nic Craith and Kockel (2016) also reject the dual trajectory between tangible and intangible heritage and call for a more inclusive, holistic and genuinely democratic approach to the concept. With reference to indigenous ontologies, Harrison and Rose (2010) call for a dialogical model of heritage which suggests an interactive relationship between people, ‘things’ and the natural environment as part of collaborative process of heritage making (Harrison and Rose 2010, 264). Through our case-study, we wish to ascertain whether the voices which are constructed around these buildings support a more dialogical model of heritage that is of relevance in a wider context.

### Anthropomorphized Places

Part of the human condition is to tell stories (Nic Craith 2013) and in *Cathedrals of Culture*, all the buildings are given a voice and have a narrative to tell. This approach is not entirely new. In 1946, Sharp argues that ‘a city has the same right as a human patient to be regarded as an individual requiring personal attention rather than abstract advice’ (Sharp 1946: 11). He argues that a good plan ‘will fulfil the struggle of the place to be itself, which satisfies what a long time ago used to be called the Genius of the Place’. Four years later, Conzen (1949, 89) suggested that towns have their own personalities.

Four of the six buildings in *Cathedrals of Culture* are given voice. (For the purposes of this essay, we discard the Salk Institute and the National Library of Russia, since neither of these are given human voices). While the rest of the buildings ‘speak’ to us as human beings in the unfolding of the architectural narratives, it is interesting to think about the implications of giving buildings a ‘voice’. Does that make them human or is it the case that they are simply material artefacts with constructed voices? This begs the question of how directors decided on particular voices. When thinking about voice, we automatically consider gender, age, accent and perhaps even class. The choice of voice instinctively conveys particular characteristics and in the case of *Cathedrals of Culture*, directors’ choices have been lauded and damned.

The selection of a voice of a ‘well-spoken middle-aged woman’ for the Berlin Philharmonic has been regarded both as a success (Wainright 2014) and at the same time ‘pretentious’ and ‘whispery’ (Reid 2015). In choosing a voice for Halden Prison, the Director appealed to the prison psychologist in his quest for authenticity (Stephens 2014). The voice attributed to the Pompidou is not ‘the bolshie slurs of a French punk from the 1970s, but the soporific English tones of the London Design Museum director’ (Wainright 2014) while the voice of the Oslo opera house is criticized for its ‘one-syllable Anglosaxon English’ (Young 2014). All voices (apart from some comments by the voice-over in the National Library of

Russia speak in English) – rather than in the national tongue i.e. German, French etc. Does this hint at an elitist perspective?

Our selected four buildings speak to us as if they were human beings. The voice-over of the Berlin Philharmonic begins with a greeting: ‘Hello! Lovely to see you’. The impact of the anthropomorphisation of these buildings is to promote them as dynamic entities rather than simply material fabric. It encourages us to think of them as living creatures rather than dead material. The Centre Pompidou draws us into an intriguing personal narrative. She tells the audience that she wakes every day ‘just before dawn’. She continues: ‘It’s precious time to myself, time for some solitude before the crowds come.... I breathe and swallow. My heart keeps steady even beat. When the sharp wind hits my bones, they sing’. The anthropomorphized Centre sets her early morning routine in the context of the brightening horizon and the singing of the birds. She speaks of her birth when people declared that she looked like ‘an oil refinery, a giant climbing frame or a gothic cathedral made out of steel’ but the voice-over insists: ‘I am not just a museum or a library. I am a living breathing culture machine’.

In giving these buildings a voice, the series of films is also emphasizing the social dimension of place which was highlighted in 1999 (first) version of ICOMOS Australia’s *Burra Charter*. This Charter shifted the emphasis away from OUV in the heritage sector to the notion of cultural significance. Coming from an Australian context, the Charter stated that ‘[p]laces of cultural significance enrich people’s lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences’. The narrative of national hegemony was replaced with one of inclusivity. ‘Places of cultural significance reflect the diversity of our communities, telling us about who we are and the past that has formed us and the Australian landscape. They are irreplaceable and precious’ (ICOMOS Australia 2013: 1). The Charter defined cultural significance as meaning ‘aesthetic,

historical, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations’. Associations were defined as ‘the connections that exist between people and a place’ while meanings denoted ‘what a place signifies, indicates, evokes or expresses to people’ (Articles 1.15 and 1.16)

Central to the 1999 Charter and its subsequent revisions is the recognition of the tangible and intangible dimensions of place as well as an acknowledgement of the dynamic nature of cultural heritage. The Charter notes the differing range of values a particular place can have for individuals and groups. This reflects a shift not just in the way we look at heritage, but also in how its value is determined. The European discourse of objectivity and materiality has been fractured and following Australian initiatives in particular, there is greater recognition of living tradition for the significance of place.

### Places of National Significance

Given that places are more than the sum of the geographical location and/or building, but are also interpreted and narrated, their meanings can and do change over time (Gleryn 2000). Some places are invested with national significance and become iconic symbols of the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1991). These meanings are often expressed as stories about a people with a ‘common culture’ and usually reflect only the dominant perspective. ‘In fact, places typically have multiple, often conflicting histories that shape and define cultures and individual identities. In other words, places organize and constitute human/social relations, power, and actions identities. In other words, places organize and constitute human/social relations, power, and actions’ (Williams 2014 76).

This link between buildings and the collective national imagination is to some degree articulated by the Berlin Philharmonic in *Cathedrals of Culture* when the voice-over declares: ‘maybe it was only possible to create such an open public space, as a resounding body for the



young federal republic that time in the 60s...'. The female voice of the building emphasizes its urban setting stating that 'the city of Berlin has certainly shaped me as I in turn have shaped the city, a bit, I hope'. The voice-over adds provocatively: 'as buildings, we have more influence on the world than you let yourself think' and sets her birth in the context of a divided city. 'Back then it was quite a provocation or at least a gamble to set me into the middle of a no man's land on the extreme periphery of West Berlin'. Referring to the Cold War, she describes her co-location with the Berlin Wall: 'in 1961 in the midst of my construction a grim rival structure was started right in front of my door, just 100m away - the Berlin Wall'.

The Philharmonic remained in splendid isolation for a number of years, But the narrative of place has changed. Highlighting her awareness of national history, the voice of the building forges a sense of place that is both historical and contemporary. She says: 'And so, I stand now in what has become a new city and a new country if you want – the jewel of the cultural centre I was once planned to be. As its very heart, I have now been beating for 50 years'. In cases such as this, the building reflects a heritage-inflected historiography, one that upholds a continuum of the national place that the building was made to symbolize. In other words, buildings have often been accorded symbolic capital as a mechanism to validate the *status quo*, sustain the dominant discourse of power wielded by state or elite authority and perpetuate the narrative of the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991).

The voice in the Pompidou Centre also refers to the national narrative: 'I am where France keeps its memories of the 20th century, and where it imagines its future'. This affirmation of the tangible heritage object embodying a national narrative arguably 'takes its cue from the grand narratives of Western national and elite class experiences, and reinforces the idea of innate cultural value tied to time depth, monumentality, expert knowledge and aesthetics' (Smith 2006: 299). But this narrative of France has been challenged. The voice-over states: 'At times, I feel that Paris has accepted me but rejected the vision that gave birth

to me' Furthermore, she asks: 'was I ever really young or was I in fact born as a version of the future that never came to pass'. This re-enforces the transitory nature of a sense of place which can be subject to constant reinscription.

However, *Cathedrals of Culture* also diverges from and critiques the national narrative where 'dominant groups will teach their values, beliefs and interests to the 'general public'' (Smith 2009: 29). In line with the spirit of the Burra Charter, some buildings' historical links to peripheral individuals and communities are acknowledged, such as the Jewish antecedents of Philharmonic architect (Hans Scharoun) and the building's current 'friend', veteran first violinist Hellmut Stern. The Berlin Philharmonic makes additional overtures towards inclusivity by focusing on an East Asian woman with dyed blonde hair who procures a ticket to the Philharmonic's concert and takes her place among the audience. The Philharmonic declares its plurality – 'everything is organically connected and accessible to each and everyone. In the light of all this, I am the utopian image of a society composed of all walks of life'.

Similarly, the Oslo Opera House identifies itself with the immigrants sheltering at its margins. Importantly, the building's declaration of alterity and its allegiance to otherness constitutes a show of solidarity with the stranger. This could be seen as a contestation of the AHD's normative narrative. Indeed, in its culminating moments, the Opera House's narrative reveals the structure's egalitarian ethos as a heterotopic space. Figuratively throwing open its portals the structure speaks of the democratization of its cultural output and its identification with the multitude 'those who needed the proof of a song, the beauty of a dance'. The filmic evocations of national stories as well as the fracturing of these narratives of place with the inclusion of minorities invoke Foucault's premise of a heterotopias; places where dominant and marginal actors and narratives are coterminous and mingle.

### (Secular) Spirits of Place

As well as evoking national narrative of place, we argue that some of the buildings in *Cathedrals of Culture* operate as ‘spirits of place’. The concept of spirit of place is a direct translation of the Latin term (*genius loci*) and is indicative of peoples who believed in a range of gods and spirits who inhabited mountains, rivers, streams and a range of places. These spirits were divine in nature and gave the place an identity. Moreover, they guarded the local inhabitants and their help could be sought in difficult circumstances. With time however, the significance of these spirits has been dissipated and the concept now tends to have a secular meaning (Relph 2007).

Although there are no ‘spirits of place’ in our case-study, *Cathedrals of Culture*, we argue that there is a striking relationship of secular guardianship in many of the individual documentaries. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of the Halden prison which places special emphasis on power over but also care for the inmates. The voice-over comments on the transformation of a young offender into an inmate as, on entering the prison, he is stripped of his personal effects and his clothes: ‘I am the one who defines who you are’. The building is not just housing the inmate but is also instrumental in shaping his or her identity. However, there is some flexibility and prisoners can still be themselves in their own cells. They are also permitted the comfort of short-term family reunions.

As an example of a society’s penal culture, Halden is strikingly complex. However, Halden prison has also gained the accolade of ‘the world’s most humane prison’ and the prison strikes a balance between imprisonment with rehabilitation. This is reflected in its setting and encoded in its architecture within the prison walls which contain an entire village. The voice of the building says: ‘It is like a little village and I am the one who separates this village from the rest of the world’. The prison psychologist is the voice in this film and when she comments on the penal structures within the system, she is also in a caring mode:

You really shouldn't hate being with me. I am the one place where you can try to be a little bit of yourself. You can cry if you want to, you can laugh if you want to. You can talk to yourself, you can have imaginary talks with your friends and family and you can use your imagination to escape me for a little bit.

The voice-over argues for the need for rules which apply where rules are violated and continues: 'in one way that feels good, or else this little society will collapse'. When we are introduced to a house for family visits within the prison grounds, the voice-over notes 'I know it is in inside the prison, but the house and the garden are almost like an ordinary little house'. These imagined responses to the workings of this building, downplay the power relations which sustain its ultimate aim of reshaping transgressive identities.

There is an element of care in many of the other segments of *Cathedrals of Culture*, although in a less significant manner than exemplified in Halden Prison. The voice-over of the Berlin Philharmonic speaks of the many visitors from all age groups who come every day. Some of these have grown very dear to her heart. She expresses a sense of duty to her conductors and musicians and describes the personalities of the three directors – although displaying no favourites. She says: 'I would not presume to rate or assess anyone or to favour one over the other. As a public building, I am not entitled to that. I perform my duty'.

The voice-over of the Oslo Opera House appears to respond to people in their brokenness. In fact, the voice-over portrays it as the rationale for her physical location. She explains: 'they put me here in this neighbourhood of arrivals and departures. Among the broken hearted and the open-hearted they widened their circle and let me in. They gave me a seat. I am an immigrant, an intruder'. She invokes the senses when describing the artists who work within her: 'There were those who touched me and those who did not. Those who talked to me and

those who did not. Those who needed the proof of a song, the beauty of a dance'. But the relationship is not one-dimensional. The artists engage with the building, which in turn shapes their identity: 'For I am a house, and what I can offer in return is to remember this one thing...YOU'.

In a similar manner, the Centre Pompidou engages with 'countless millions of eyes' and the voice-over describes the relationship between those who work within the Centre and the building itself as 'needy': 'all the cleaners and security guards, students and artists they take what they need of me and ignore the rest. The tourists and performers they make their own worlds out of me'. The voice-over projects optimism about the creative spirit of artists whose paintings fill the galleries. The building gives them confidence. The voice-over speaks of guiding the architect who did the initial sketches and the building continues to act as a spirit-guide to artists. It's as if the building is operating in terms of what in the Catholic tradition might be referred to a 'guardian angel' or what we (in this essay) would term a 'secular spirit of place'.

### Virtual Place (and Space)

However, one might reasonably ask whether it is possible to have a sense of place when one is engaging with virtual representations albeit of real buildings. More than 50 years ago, Marshall McLuhan hypothesized that all media are extensions of the senses. He argued that our rational perspective on the world is being replaced by a world-view associated with electronic media that stresses feelings and emotions (McLuhan 1964, see also Nic Craith 2004). Electronic media also impact on our sense of place by giving us access to places we have never physically visited. Although we have never been there, we have 'visited' them via our computers or our iPods. Relph (2007) notes that at the beginning of the 21st century, we have a sense of place that is quite different from the one held by previous generations. 'I think that many of us have

traded the previously deep but narrow sense of place for a broader but shallower sense of many places' (Relph 2007).

The representation of place and therefore space in a filmic medium draws on a range of expressive devices and techniques and most notably the arrangement of sound and image and their processing through the medium's technological resources. By contrast to the imaginary space of the fiction film, works of non-fiction present a 'historiographic space' for which 'the premise and assumption prevails that what occurred in front of the camera was not entirely enacted with the camera in mind' (Nichols 1991, 78). The processing of a given architectural space is a central undertaking in *Cathedrals of Culture* as the film explores public places and positions the viewer in relation to these.

As is the case in their general approach and conceptualization of buildings, the four contributions of *Cathedrals of Culture* that we deal with, differ in the manner in which they present places to us. However, all the contributions display a form of spatial representation which Plantinga contrasts with the maintenance of unity of time and space in classical fiction and associates with documentary film. Freed from the demands of classical narrative, this, he notes is 'spatially more fluid, moving from place to place with an ease rarely seen in its fictional counterpart' (Plantinga 1997: 151). In *Cathedrals of Culture* this fluidity in gathering space together draws on mobile framing as a stylistically dominant device. This is realized through recurrent tracking shots, pans and tilts in all contributions.

Architectural structures such as voluminous interior spaces and long winding corridors provide the most frequently recurring setting for such camera mobility in *Cathedrals of Culture*. Designed to hold and channel the flow of the public for which the buildings are designed, they co-operate with the cinematography by delivering the *mise-en-scene* for the itineraries which the films construct through these buildings. On these journeys, we follow people as they interact with the place in going about the practices which are allied to their

specific function. At times, the camera movement is not motivated by human mobility, such as when it arcs around a performing cellist in *The Berlin Philharmonie* or an inmate who is working out in Halden. Unmotivated by human movement, the camera seems to take us on an exploratory errand of our own. The effects of camera mobility are described by Bordwell and Thompson as a gradual unfolding of place through ‘continually changing perspectives on passing objects as the frame constantly shifts its orientation. Objects appear more solid and three dimensional when the camera arcs (that is tracks) around them’ (Bordwell and Thompson 2008: 195). The pronounced mobility of frame in *Cathedrals of Culture* reflects the filmic project of disclosing the order of this architecture not through distant observation but by positioning us as visitors who experiences its solidity as we are taking on a passage through it.

The film’s use of 3D co-operates with this project. In *Pina*, Wenders had employed 3D to study the art of movement as captured in the work of the late choreographer Pina Bausch. Here he positioned viewers amongst the dancers as if ‘floating bodiless through more solid phantoms’ (James 2011). In *Cathedrals of Culture* his investigation shifts towards what the static and inanimate features of architectural ensembles may yield to a form of representation which ‘offers space itself as a source of spectacle’ (Klinger 2013: 428). 3D’s capacity to dramatize space rests on the representation of a layered, deep space behind the screen through parallax and, most dramatically, the ‘emergence’ of objects in front of the screen through negative parallax. The immersive potential this implies in relation to its audience as 3D has been associated with the interpolation of viewers into the diegesis through an – if virtually – embodied form of perception. Contributions to *Cathedrals of Culture* make extensive use of this immersive quality of 3D and in particular its propensity to deliver an ‘into-the-screen’ illusionism (Klinger 2013: 426) as viewers become subject to a ‘camera-induced kinesis’ (Klinger, 2013).

### Benjamin's Aura and a Sense of Place

We have already argued that giving 'voice' to buildings could imply a more holistic or even relational approach to heritage and Wenders' 3D venture is an attempt to highlight the social nature of buildings. What is different about Wenders' project is the 'humanization' of buildings – and an attempt to give them a 'soul' which could also be construed as a postmodern and very different version of Benjamin's aura. In his seminal essay, Walter Benjamin augurs a future fusion of reality and virtuality. Recasting Benjamin's arguments, it is possible to state that the 3D technology deployed in *Cathedrals of Culture* realises his prediction of an 'intensive interpenetration of reality with equipment' (Benjamin et al. 2008: 35). *Cathedrals of Culture* could be framed through Benjamin's dual preoccupations; firstly, ascertaining artworks' ability to encapsulate *zeitgeist* and secondly to evaluate how advancements in media technology 'affect the human sensory apparatus' (Benjamin, 2008: 9). *Cathedrals of Culture* exemplifies Benjamin's understanding of technology's transformative ability to blur the boundaries between art and science, the virtual and the real, the inanimate object and the living subject. The *Cathedrals of Culture* venture is an attempt to shift from Cartesian dualism in favour of a more holistic model which, in this context, integrates tangible and intangible heritage.

Benjamin contends that architecture (i.e. tangible heritage) functions as an object of simultaneous viewing by a mass audience, analogous to cinema. 3D in general is also a collective viewing practice. In this regard, in a contemporary 'culture of spectacle' (Lahiji 2010: 87), it is possible to argue that 3D is the technological interface that virtualizes the materiality of architecture and in this instance, gives 'soul' to the constructed voices of the buildings. 3D transfers the tangible sites of culture seen in *Cathedrals of Culture*, ostensibly by bending time, space and representation.



3D is instrumental in diluting the spatio-temporal separation between screen and observer and giving an impression of relationships – not just between the buildings and the people that occupy them but also between the voices of the buildings and us, the viewers. This is part of a larger endeavour to breach boundaries not just between buildings and the people that visit/use them but also between privileged arenas of culture and what Benjamin would refer to as the domain of the masses. At first glance, *Cathedrals of Culture* seems to be a motor for the reproduction of aura causing the ‘cathedral to leave its site’ (Benjamin et al. 2008: 22) to be heard and consumed by the viewer in public and private spaces. 3D possesses the ability to place the viewer in the *mise-en-scene* (literally ‘putting in the scene’) to listen to the constructed voice of the building and to interact with the environment, thereby enhancing a sense of place.

However, our argument is not straightforward and it could be argued that an ambivalent scenario resides in *Cathedrals of Culture* representation of the aura or ‘souls’ of buildings. On the one hand, this relates to whether Wim Wenders and the other directors are indeed disassembling the ‘sacrosanct’ notion of aura by facilitating virtual access to the tangible places represented in *Cathedrals of Culture*. On the other hand, one might argue that the *Cathedrals of Culture* project gives a new and very different aura by reasserting a personified yet metaphysical ‘authority of the object’ (Benjamin 2008: 22), the buildings’ historical testimony of uniqueness. Rather than suggesting a straightforward reduction of aura per se, it may be more accurate to argue that *Cathedrals of Culture* strategic incorporation of 3D substitutes the tangible original ‘aura’ of the buildings with a perceived ‘soul’ which contributes to our sense of place. In giving voice and ‘soul’ to the buildings, the 3-D venture has disrupted the concept of building as material artefact only and set it in a wider social, relational context.

## Conclusion

Using 3D for buildings is not unusual at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and there are currently many attempts in the heritage sector to capture World Heritage sites on 3D. These include Archeoguide (an augmented reality heritage on-site guide) as well as iTacitus (Intelligent Tourism and Cultural Information through Ubiquitous Services) and the Powerhouse Museum of Sydney (a museum which has developed an AR application using the Lagar browser technology) (see Guida and Coelho 2013). In selecting this 3D case-study, we were interested in querying whether the Wenders' project has succeeded in generating a sense of place and whether this in turn has implications for the concept of heritage more broadly.

Our original interest in the venture stemmed from the act of constructed voice-overs for selected buildings and blurring of the physical and the living or what Bruno Latour (1993) has described as the 'Great Divide'. Through assigning voices to physical buildings, the directors have primarily appealed to our emotions. Heritage is an emotional issue and heritage interpretation can 'have a strong affective and emotional impact on people' (Uzzell and Ballantyne 2008: 503). It can turn people into what Brumann (2015) describes as reverential believers, critical atheists or as a 'third path', heritage agnostics.

With the anthropomorphisation of the buildings, the Wenders' project has departed from the presentation of these artefacts as simply material objects. This is a disruption of AHD as defined by Laurajane Smith and has moved the debate beyond the dominant Euro-American model. It is rather unfortunate, in our view, that the five of the six buildings are located in Europe. (Indeed, most could be regarded as classic examples of Western heritage). It is also telling that they speak predominantly English, despite being located in countries with different majority languages. However, it is important to note that Wenders permitted the directors to select their own favourite buildings and did not restrict them to any geographical location.

Different levels of success were achieved by the four episodes under review here. While giving voice to buildings may have - to an extent - disrupted the master narrative, some of these

constructed voices went onto reinforce the national narrative. Only the Oslo Opera House departed from the mainstream to identify with the marginalized and the migrant. As such, the venture failed to represent the multi-vocality and heterogeneity that exists in heritage constructs. This drawback should not prevent further experiments with buildings in 3D – ones that go simply beyond the physical recording of the physical environment.

Present times are traumatic for the heritage sector. The actions of ISIS and their annihilation of the World Heritage site of Nimrud epitomize an attempt at historic-cultural erasure by effacing *genius loci*. They also signify an integrated approach to heritage which does not separate tangible and intangible heritage. In particular, the fundamentalists' decimation of the iconic ancient Assyrian lamassu, winged bull statues that served as symbolic cultural sentinels, signifies how tangible heritage artefacts connote intangible cultural meaning and therefore, are linked to power. The modus operandi employed by ISIS in destroying these Assyrian custodians of culture entails the religious vandals' disavowal of a specific *genius loci* by the obliteration of its physical (and spiritual) signifier – the winged statues. ISIS's actions are analogous to Hitler's Nazi cultural reterritorialization programme manifested in public bonfires of books, in a bid to reterritorialise Germany with Nazi ideology. These iconoclastic acts demonstrate that tangible heritage sites are open to both conservation and destruction of their *genius loci*. Following the example of *Cathedrals of Culture*, it may be timely to think more imaginatively about the use of 3D and its potential for moving towards a more integrated model of heritage.

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