
Editorial

Gabriel N. Gee*

Franklin College,
TETI,
Via Ponte Tresa 29, Sorengo 6924,
Ticino, Switzerland
E-mail: ggee@fc.edu
*Corresponding author

Michelle L. Stefano

Department of American Studies,
University of Maryland,
Baltimore County (UMBC), 453 Fine Arts Building,
Baltimore, Maryland 21250, USA
E-mail: ms@umbc.edu

Biographical notes: Gabriel N. Gee is an Assistant Professor of Art History at Franklin College, Switzerland. His research interests include 20th century British and Irish arts, industrial shifts and their relations to aesthetics, urban and post-urban landscapes. He is the co-founder of the Textures and Experiences of Transindustriality (TETI) group.

Michelle L. Stefano divides her time between serving as the Folklorist-in-Residence within American Studies and the Programme Coordinator for Maryland Traditions, the folklife programme of the Maryland State Arts Council. In 2010, she was awarded her PhD from the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies at Newcastle University (UK). Her research examined how 'intangible cultural heritage' can be most effectively safeguarded within the geographical context of the North East of England. She received her MA in International Museum Studies from Gothenburg University, Gothenburg, Sweden in 2004, and her BA from Brown University, Providence, USA, in 2000. She co-edited the volume, *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which was published by Boydell & Brewer in 2012. She also serves as the US representative for the Association of Critical Heritage Studies, and co-founded its US Chapter in 2013 (<http://achsus.umbc.edu/>).

This special issue of the *International Journal of Tourism Anthropology* explores the notion of 'interstitial heritage', reflecting on past and present modes through which alternate forms of cultural heritage can be expressed, safeguarded and encouraged. It uses as a platform of enquiry the realm of the interstice: a "space, opening, crevice etc, between things near together or between the component parts of a body" (Cassell, 1999). The field of heritage is, in contrast, a large mass to which traditions, artefacts, buildings and practices are continuously being added; it is composed of multiple actors and agencies that overlap, and sometimes clash, in a continuous effort to define their properties and identities. Heritage establishes an ongoing relation to the world, which

spans non-intentional practices to highly developed strategic configurations such as museum organisations and tourism industries. As for the potential of interstitial strategies and forces within this broad field of heritage, two remarks coming from the scholarly literature on the topic are of particular interest to our present reflection.

First, as West (2010) suggests, heritage can be subdivided in two: official and unofficial heritage. 'Official heritage' is described as institutional and bureaucratic, while 'unofficial heritage' has been neglected/misused by the official channels of the heritage enterprise. Moreover, the 'unofficial' is often recognised as intangible. In this perspective, the domain of intangible heritage finds itself in an alternate position. Furthermore, by stressing the 'uses of heritage', one can counterbalance a set of established material values that tend to disguise themselves as 'natural' and immanent, when they are really the product of social and cultural construction (Smith, 2006). Nevertheless, while these distinctions are clearly productive and useful for our purposes, and while interstitial heritage can be seen as located within an alternate mode of cultural production, it might be more adequate to think of its articulation in a transversal perspective: interstitial practices, as well as objects, in both tangible and intangible realms. The common denominators are in the texture, the strata and the fluxes that move through them; Deleuze and Guattari (1980), in *A Thousand Plateau*, evoke a phenomenon of stratification taking place on the body without organs of the earth. Their reflection opens the realm of the interstitial to practical subdivision, such as the inter-strata and the para-stratas, apertures that constitute alternate conduits to existent structures; and these can grow in both 'official' and 'unofficial' environments.

The second remark to bring to the fore pertains to a distinction made by Lowenthal (1998) between heritage and history, two activities that are often understood to be made of the same metal. While history seeks to record and analyse scientifically the past, heritage often appears to be more similar to a rebranding, or 're-packaging', of that past in the present (Harrison, 2009). For better or worse, heritage appears to be resolutely tied to industry, and in particular to tourism, a human activity of ancient descent, which has grown exponentially with the 1970s shift from Fordist to post-Fordist organisation, and from a production-led to a service and finance dominated economy (Bell, 1973; Harvey, 1989). Heritage is tied to economy, and the tourism industry plays an increasingly influential role in its evolution (Kurtz, 2010). If interstitial discourses can offer a transversal perspective, they can also function both as a tool for present initiatives as much as an exploration of historical forms of interstitial practices. What interstitial heritage, as it is reflected upon in this issue, cannot be a part of is any consumer-oriented, re-packaging of the past. On the contrary, the interstice provides an entry point into deconstructionist strategies, which aim to break the 'package' and reveal the multi-layered textures from which the world is made. This is not to say that institutional bodies and economy-driven heritage activities do not provide spaces for the deployment of interstitial movements. We can think of the museum, for instance, and its efforts to facilitate self-generated interpretations and empower the visiting public, as well as local communities (see for instance, Croke, 2007). We may reflect on the history of tourism, and acknowledge, with Urry (2002), the specificity of 'the tourist gaze'; narratives and experiences of travel need not be understood from the sole point of view of the travel agency, and can be enlightened by experiences that are both deviationist and profound [see for instance Peat (2010) on initiatory and acquisitive pilgrimage in modernist literature]. So far, we have underlined the transversal potential of interstitial heritage, and while rejecting theoretically its amalgamation with unifying practices, such as those

promoted by some of the consumerist trends of the heritage industries, we have thrown in a word of caution: the interstice is not the sole property of idealist progressive forces; so what might be some of interstitial heritage operational characteristics?

In 1977, the Belfast-based artist McLennan (1988) performed an action (his preferred terminology) entitled, *Target*, in Belfast city-centre. At the heart of the troubles, the violent conflict that opposed for 30 years Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland, the artist walked on his commute to and from work through the streets of Belfast with a large circular dart board attached to his torso. The highly charged performance appeared to call for a *resolution*, which the numerous searches then taking place in the city could potentially provide; however, the target remained a moving one: its resolution was to be found neither here nor there; the work resided in an inter-strata that shied away from the binary division of northern Irish religious and social parties. *Target* provides an exemplary entry point for our discussion on the components and the issues pertaining to the presence and exploration of interstices in the field of heritage; it explores the interstice through the body, through architecture and space, and through cultural and historical layers that deeply inform the work's symbolic sphere of resonance.

This special issue began as the session, *Constructing interstitial heritage: architectures, visions and experiences*, we organised as part of the 2012 inaugural conference of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS) in Gothenburg, Sweden. The session was developed with the research foci and aims of the Textures and Experiences of Transindustriality (TETI) group in mind, and queried through the three platforms of 'architectures, visions and experiences' as a general interrogation of what 'interstitial heritage' might consist. In particular, this meant reflecting on the roles interstices can play in our environments, both physical and mental. Moreover, we wanted to examine why, or to what extent, might the notion of 'interstices' be useful for thinking about heritage? Similarly, what can the *construction* of interstitial heritage imply and where could it lead us with respect to the larger heritage field and related sectors?

In her influential book, *Uses of Heritage*, Smith (2006) underlined the role of language and set knowledge systems in the articulation of heritage values through the notion of the 'authorised heritage discourse' (hereafter AHD). Smith's arguments have helped to crystallise a discursive formation that can be seen to favour 'official', as well as hegemonic, modes of producing knowledge and of ordering the world. The development and increasing recognition of intangible heritage, and the rise of critical endeavours in the field of heritage studies, can be seen as presenting forms of alternative thinking about heritage, which can include the possibilities of modifying its structural configuration as well as the practices within it. In this light, interstitial heritage takes the form of a reflection and a study of forms of heritage that escape or elude the aforementioned ordering pattern, those that work against it or in its shadow. On the one hand, it aims to identify such forms, and to contribute to safeguarding them, when applicable; on the other hand, its contemporary articulation can work in favour of their production in the present. Each of the papers presented in this issue respond to this query through specific case studies that highlight a range of constructive interstitial perspectives.

In the opening essay, Worrasit Tantipankul looks at a number of issues revolving around the preservation of vernacular wooden architecture in Thailand. Significantly, the wooden architecture considered by Tantipankul does not fit into the official Thai heritage conception, and finds itself along with the modes of living it supports in danger of eradication. The study underlines the functioning of a specific mode of AHD, the socio-political and historical reasons for its implementation, and the challenges that face

contemporary Thailand to preserve a representative and alive body of its past and present identity in the form of built heritage and community dwellings. Tantini-pankul interlaces a scrutiny of discourses, urban planning, historical narratives and trajectories, symbolical forces and investments with modes of living, collective memories and histories, to provide both an understanding of the present configuration of heritage in Thai provincial cities, and a possible alternate course that would encompass a better recognition and preservation of existing communities. The stress is put on a recognition of cultural landscapes, as opposed to a focus on frozen monumental heritage. In his discussion of two urban communities located in the city of Phetchaburi and the district of Thonburi, Tantini-pankul specifically reflects on the role of tourism in the process of disappearance and preservation of urban heritage, contrasting the ill-effects of homogenising global tourism industries, with the potential for positive community-led sustainable tourism and participatory heritage conservation initiatives. The wooden architecture of such Thai cities and the modes of living they foster find themselves in between the prestigious, as well as hegemonic, symbols of Thai identity, and a pastoral rural folklore. Yet, it is from this interstrata that they draw their unbranded and grounded reality, whose associations and preservation the author explores and defends.

Language and the role of discursive positions are also at the heart of Alison E. Vogelaar and Brack W. Hale cross-disciplinary study of Swiss heritage through the prism of 'invasive species'. Combining a perspective stemming from biology and environmental sciences with an outlook informed by communication studies, Hale and Vogelaar operate a telling comparison between natural and cultural heritage through a joint reflection on the historical arrival and presence of the palm tree in the Ticino region and Muslim migrants in Switzerland. Symbolism plays an important role in both case studies: the minaret and the polemics surrounding their construction providing an iconic focal point for discussion surrounding Muslim communities in Switzerland, while the monitored palm tree enters the cultural landscape of Ticino through its adoption by local tourist industries as a positive visual connotation and asset. Crucially, the comparison underlines the existence of vociferous voices in the articulation of Swiss identity that seek to assert the existence of clear boundaries between what is and what is not Swiss (and what can be labelled as such). However, as the parallel with the implantation of the chestnut in Ticino teaches us (now an iconic identity marker), and the complex past construction of a Swiss state made of multiple fluxes indicates, the binary division that the notion of invasive species entail is misleading: it does not do justice to the multi-textured plan of gradation that stretches from the two extremes of 'native' and 'invasive'. Accordingly, Hale and Vogelaar argue for a liberating and creative construction of and reflection on 'interstitial species'. They enjoin us to avoid the debilitating reductive binary contrasts, to better envision how environments, people and society, objects and ideas are made of interlocking surfaces, where countless polychromic substratas interlace in the construction of the present; and crucially, they argue for a pragmatics of the interstice, where the actors of heritage bodies, the agents of public political affairs, and the managers of tourism organisations and businesses, can all benefit from investing in the recognition, supervision and promotion of interstitial spheres.

Sumiko Sarashima's contribution to this issue interrogates the tensions between officially-recognised 'intangible cultural heritage' (ICH) and the more fluid roles and meanings of 'tradition' in contemporary Japanese society. While the notion of 'intangible cultural heritage' is not new within the Japanese context, as there is a decades-long history of nationally-honouring and supporting practitioners of particular living

traditions, Sarashima critically engages with the main tenets of UNESCO's 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which is responsible for propagating the ICH concept at national and global levels, as well as conceptualising ICH as cultural forms that are 'to be safeguarded' via narrow, cultural policy and related institutions only. She argues that when understanding the consumption of ICH by the populace through high-end magazines, popular and updated-stylings of the traditional kimono, and school curricula, as examples, a more nuanced relationship between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' is revealed. These 'interstitial elements' – interstitial since they are not addressed within the increasingly-dominant UNESCO-ICH paradigm – derive strength from growing socio-economic and cultural demands for the 'traditional', demands that also help to support the livelihoods of traditional cultural practitioners, and the significance and values of their living traditions.

Shifting from Japan, André Cicalo's article focuses on the early stages of heritage-making and commemoration of the transatlantic slave trade in Gamboa, the port area of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This aspect of Gamboa's past, which was neglected until recently, has been raised in priority-level by government institutions as a result of the 2011 accidental discovery of the archaeological remains of a slavery-era disembarkment pier. As Cicalo examines, this was a very important 'accident' for the re-writing of the city's history, as well as for the expression of Afro-Brazilian interstitial heritage. Recognising that roughly one million enslaved Africans passed through this area, state-sponsored archaeologists claimed that it needs to be memorialised as a result of its historical importance. Here, the AHD, as it corresponds to the official history and heritage of Rio and Brazil, began to expand in order to include these overlooked voices and deeply, dark events. Nonetheless, as argued, the interstitial heritage, in the form of political protest, activism and performance, came into play when Brazilians of African descent, and other marginalised groups, also began to use the area as a site of exercising their cultural identities. These groups were able to reconnect to an area of the city that was once known as Little Africa, but over the course of the 20th century, were moved to the outskirts of Rio. Similarly, Júlia Székely investigates the spontaneous and rebellious interventions by artists on monuments and public statues within Hungary. Through an extensive look at the meanings and uses of monuments by Hungarian authorities, particularly after the 1989 regime change, Székely connects these public displays of particular pasts, people and stories to a form of constructing a certain, AHD-like collective memory. Nonetheless, the author underscores the fact that such monuments and statues – tangible markers of what the populace should value – can also serve to provoke the public into resisting its messages. Székely takes the reader through several examples of how artists changed the appearance of such monuments to re-write history, and to intervene in the production of a certain, shared memory of the past. Both Cicalo's and Székely's contributions bring to light how the performance of interstitial heritage is less about creating a product for consumption and more about a process that seeks to reconnect, and reclaim, the threads of history, stories, voices and identities that slip between the cracks of official heritage channels.

In the concluding paper, Toby Juliff draws from the 'hauntology' developed by Jacques Derrida to discuss the nature of spectral textures in London, focusing more specifically on what he terms 'Livingstone heritage', after the name of the first and former mayor of the city, Ken Livingstone (2000–08). The argument is tied to the Livingstone campaign to remove statues of identifiable colonial figures on Trafalgar square, an iconic, popular and highly touristic place in the city centre. Juliff argues

against the ‘defenestration of heritage’ that such an eradication would imply, and points towards how these urban signs can conjure up ghosts from the past, spectral figures of tragic and necessary subterranean auras. Ghostly figures inhabit British architecture, argues Juliff, and as such create interstitial spaces in the fabric of the urban social body, eschewing definite meanings, for ghosts move in and out of our vision, as we amble along our terrestrial lives. The work of the British sculptor, Rachel Whiteread, is scrutinised for its capacity to call on the spectres into public space, while recent contemporary art interventions on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar square are evoked in order to ultimately consider the conditions and benefits of confronting, rather than discarding, the spectres from the past as they stand in the present. Juliff’s reflections add a powerful continent to the scope of interstitial heritage: not only are objects, people, environments and practices susceptible of being or carrying inter-stratas that might deviate from would-be Unitarian entities, but they are necessarily invested with memorial traces which have a realm of their own. Heritage is, of course, interested in memory(ies), but this extension points to a domain which escapes heritage’s active traditional interpretation – be it that of the historical or museum space, the branding of attractive sites for tourist consumption, or even the focus on intangible practices and their safeguarding. Between that which is in the present, that which has been and that which will be, an indefatigable ghost can appear to remind us of that which would have been targeted for oblivion.

Of course, ghostly layers can also be explored by the heritage industries to their benefit. To return to Belfast briefly, the opening of a museum in 2012 in the former shipyards dedicated to the ‘Titanic experience’ would testify as much. With more than 800 000 visitors in its first year, the Titanic Belfast has positioned itself as a major actor of the city’s regeneration scheme, aiming to attract visitors and tourists alike as part of Belfast cultural renaissance in the post-trouble era announced by the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Its displays revolve around a drawn ship and a tragic history; and certainly the spectacular nature of the ship’s fortune attracts the initial attention of the visitor. However, the museum’s focus is plural, bringing the visitor in contact with the busy Belfast shipyards, the history of the harbour, ways of life of the workforce at the time of the ship’s construction (the beginning of the 20th century), engineering methods and business acumen, together with a reconstruction of the social strata on board at the time of the maiden voyage. The journey ends underwater, amongst the debris of the boat lying fragmented on the ocean’s grounds. Titanic Belfast belongs to the 1970s ‘post-industrial’ shift of former industrial bastions into cultural hubs. Yet it does so transversally, highlighting forgotten or little known history to the greater public, showing beside the well-known brand name a constellation of individual and collective stories, an interlace of destinies made of complex fabrics, conveying, in other words, interstitial forms of heritage.

Such aperture to hidden strata in societies and history is possible and desirable within the field of ‘official’ heritage. On the one hand, interstitial heritage can be observed in very formal terms: the disruption of mass units by conduits and passages within and between them. On the other hand, as stems out from the various discussions in this special issue, while interstitial heritage need not necessarily negate a prevailing socio-political order, it can ultimately provide individuals and groups with a ground on which to construct their environment rather than be subservient to existent determinacy. The form can also be the vehicle of interpretative and expressive modifications

susceptible of altering socio-political balances. Constructing interstitial heritage suggests variations, multiplication and heterogeneity, against immutability and simplification.

References

- Bell, D. (1973) *The Coming of Post-industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*, Basic Books, New York.
- Cassell (1999) *Dictionary and Thesaurus*, Cassell, London.
- Crooke, E. (2007) *Museums and Community*, Routledge, London.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1980) *Mille Plateaux*, capitalisme et schizophrénie 2, Les Editions de Minuit, Paris.
- Harrison, R. (2009) 'What is heritage?', in Harrison, R. (Ed.): *Understanding the Politics of Heritage*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Harvey, D. (1989) *The Conditions of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Cambridge, Mass., Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Kurtz, M. (2010) 'Heritage and tourism', in West, S. (Ed.): *Understanding Heritage in Practice*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Lowenthal, D. (1998) *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- McLennan, A. (1988) *Is No, 1975–1988*, Arnolfini, Bristol.
- Peat, A. (2010) *Travel and Modernist Literature: Sacred and Ethical Journeys*, Routledge, London.
- Smith, L. (2006) *Uses of Heritage*, Routledge, London.
- Urry, J. (2002) *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- West, S. (2010) 'Introduction', in West, S. (Ed.): *Understanding Heritage in Practice*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.