Prehistory and the (Un)loved Modern: Archaeological Perspectives on the Contemporary Past

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ABSTRACT
This talk will consider landscape change in a way that might surprise some, from a specifically archaeological perspective. Originally working in prehistoric archaeology, I have always had an interest in the related and inevitable processes of change and creation, and how these have together shaped the landscape, partly by generating new types of monument and material culture from which archaeologists can interpret and understand culture change in the past. In recent years, however, I have turned my attention to the contemporary past – the world we ourselves shape and influence in our everyday lives. I have come to the view that this recent or familiar past can matter just as much as earlier periods, and that as archaeologists we can learn a great deal from it as well as contribute significantly to its understanding. Many archaeologists in the UK and elsewhere share these views, and have increasingly extended their gaze into the modern world. A large part of this burgeoning interest concerns archaeology's traditional focus on people, and what we can tell about people in the past from the everyday stuff they leave behind. Here I will use Paul Klee's (1920) work, *Angelus Novus* as the starting point for an alternative view of landscape – a reverse perspective on the value and significance of archaeology, landscape and memory, as they apply to the (un)loved modern.

THE ANGEL OF HISTORY
Walter Benjamin describes a Paul Klee painting - *Angelus Novus* (Benjamin, 1940, 392-3). 'It shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before *us, he* sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is *this* storm'. In his *Landscape of Events,* a review of cultural chaos in the late twentieth century, architect and philosopher Paul Virilio notes how 'this theological vision no longer belongs only to the angel of history. It has become the vision of each and every one of us' (Virilio, 2000, xiii).

For Virilio this was a time that reflected the 'cruelty of an epoch, the hills and dales of daily life, the usual clumps of habits and commonplaces'. This was a time of 'boom and bust', in which the landscape seemed to many to follow an accelerating transformation at previously unforeseen and unprecedented rates, reflecting globalisation, technology, social change and environmental concern (eg. Finn, 2002). This was a time that saw growing numbers of archaeological sites discovered, investigated and destroyed alongside the construction of new places and the introduction of new forms of material culture – what became through its very creation the everyday archaeology of the supposedly familiar world around us.

The traditional administrative systems for managing cultural heritage are concerned largely with special places, and places associated with high culture, with renowned architects, and state infrastructure. Much of this cultural heritage refers to the built environment, and much also to earthworks and buried remains – to archaeological sites in the conventional sense. Yet archaeological practice has always been about the ordinary and the everyday, every bit as much as it has concerned special places. In prehistoric Britain we study 'everyday' stone-age communities as much, in fact far more, than we do 'Stonehenge'. This emphasis on the everyday

is true also of the way archaeologists are approaching the modern period, meaning that we bring a particular and perhaps distinctive perspective to it, a perspective that focuses on the everyday, and not the creations of renowned architects, and the structures that merit protection through listing: instead archaeologies of the contemporary past focus on the ruination and untidiness of our urban environments, the interstitial places, and the contradictions that we often find in the world, and especially at the margins of our middle-class everyday experiences. Our view as archaeologists is often very similar to that of the Angel of History, taking a longer-term perspective on what many consider the detritus, the wreckage of everyday life. As archaeologists we like rubbish – rubbish is what we do. And that is true for the modern world, as it is for the ancient. As archaeologists we also look to the future. We are, or can be, futurologists. We can document the present situation, and how we responded to similar situations in the past. We are thus uniquely placed to comment on the future, and on what the future could be like.

CHANGE

Whether or not one accepts the catastrophic world-views with which we began, there are aspects of this argument that bear close scrutiny, not least by those of us with concern for the historic environment, and in particular for the more recent contributions of architecture, archaeology, art and landscape – places we engage typically, routinely in our everyday lives and social practices. As an archaeologist I can understand Virilio's observation that the 'age-old agreement of tenses' has collapsed, and that we are now obsessed with the present. Notwithstanding my background in prehistoric archaeology, I have an active interest in the archaeology of this contemporary past, in the world we ourselves are constructing and shaping in our everyday lives. This everyday archaeology fascinates me, largely because it challenges my assumptions as an archaeologist, such as the distinction between that which is old and antiquarian, and the new and contemporary, as well as the methodologies and theoretical frameworks at our disposal. I can personally see no benefit in making the distinction between old and new – a Palaeolithic artefact and something I created myself; it is all part of the historic environment, though we will of course choose to manage and conceptualise these two parts of our archaeological resource in very different ways – caring for and curating one, and perhaps discarding the other, although of course discarding objects merely consigns them to another part of the archaeological record!

But as always there is a counter view. In working with contemporary archaeology I am often reminded of the landscape historian W.G. Hoskins' comment on the devastation of the English landscape by scientists, the military and politicians. To me, he sounds a little like the Angel of History when he describes a world increasingly dominated by 'the obscene shape of the atom-bomber, laying a trail like a filthy slug upon Constable's and Gainsborough's sky. England of the Nissen hut, the 'pre-fab', and the electric fence, of the high barbed wire around some unmentionable devilment' (Hoskins, 1977, 299). And as a local resident he wrote these words, of course, with the American and former British airbase of Upper Heyford uppermost in his thoughts.

But what is it about our landscape, and changes made to it over the past fifty or so years, that can be at once so appealing and yet so distasteful? It is difficult to avert our gaze from the 'piling wreckage' because it intrigues us, provoking a reaction wherever we see it. As archaeologists this is probably because we see the wreckage as meaningful, as signifying something in the same way that debitage from flint knapping can tell us about some particular aspect of prehistory. Others see only what was wrecked. As Virilio said, the meaning of landscape is oriented 'by the itinerary of the passer-by' (Virilio, 2000, 11), and that maybe is part of the answer – that as archaeologists we are perhaps uniquely placed to see what we are creating for the future. We are so often passers-by but in a privileged sense, informed observers in most cases, with a critical eye and an insight that allows us to question the changes we see, and challenge what are increasingly the taken-for-granteds of the world around us. It may be an incongruously placed wind-farm, a modern house in a rural setting, a new road, or a military establishment; or a new settlement, a sustainable community perhaps in an area where historical and archaeological enquiries have shown that new settlements, created periodically, form part of its essential character. For those of us - like Hoskins and others – who take an interest in the character and grain of the landscape, its time depth represented by the archaeological remains of settlements

and field systems, open moor and woodland, and the remains of industry and conflict, we are drawn to the landscape, and to the changes within it, however ancient or modern these might be. And for many people, the more recent they are, the more relevance they have, for the memories those places hold and evoke.

A MORI opinion poll conducted in 2000 demonstrated how for most people 'history' is only recent, meaning typically the last 2-3 generations. Most people disagreed with the statement that anything after 1950 does not count as heritage and felt it important to preserve modern buildings for future generations. Support for modern architecture had undergone an astonishing ten percentage points rise to 76% since an English Heritage/MORI poll on this subject just three years previously. These local views matter for other reasons too. Changes to the familiar landscape can be traumatic for those that live there – Peter Read's book *Returning to Nothing* (1996) cites examples of loss of place which have particular personal and often very intimate associations, and the loss of community which once contributed so much to the local economy and to society. Change affects us all and inevitably therefore we will react to change, whether we like it or not.

It is important here to recognise the very particular insight we can provide, as archaeologists, to the study of change. Change is nothing new – the pace of change may be faster now, and involve different materials, styles and scales of construction, while the modern planning system has introduced some control and an accountability that was less evident in the past. But the processes of change have always been with us, from woodland clearance in the Neolithic, to romanisation, to post-war industry, and ultimately the types of sprawl and development identified and characterised recently in the United States and the UK (Hayden, 2004; Penrose, 2007).

As archaeologists we are uniquely placed to document, describe, interpret and narrate those changes; and to do all this within a much longer-term perspective than planners, developers, anthropologists, even historians (Bradley et al., 2004). We are well placed to recognise and critically review these changes as they occur. We also recognize a wider field than some other disciplines. Archaeology concerns the stories of people told through their material remains, and those people are an ever present. Thus as archaeologists we feel uncomfortable with selecting only particular and 'important' places to study. We are more at ease with a situation that is holistic and all-encompassing. But we also need to be aware – as a profession that has traditionally concerned itself with conservation and preservation issues – that we cannot prevent the process of change, even some particular changes, from happening and perhaps we shouldn't even try. What we are well placed to do, is to document and describe change, record it, and even – in some cases – discourage particular changes where these would impact directly and in a damaging way on the character or historic fabric of a particular place. Graham Fairclough notes that there is 'no reason why archaeologists should always oppose change' (2006, 194). He makes an important related point too. That: 'Archaeologists do not believe that landscape is ever finished (any more than it ever had an original "authentic" form). An archaeological ideology of landscape might well therefore include acceptance and encouragement of further landscape change, within (or deliberately outwith) the past trajectories of change that we can identify' (ibid.). Change in itself therefore is an inevitable and necessary process.

The geographer Tim Cresswell refers to this process as the genealogy of place, noting – with other geographers like Alan Pred - how places are 'never finished' but 'always becoming'. In Pred's words, this process 'takes place ceaselessly, [and] contributes to history in a specific context through the creation and utilization of a physical setting' (Pred, 1984, 279). Cresswell cites the university as an example of this:

> 'It would be wrong (he says) to think of the university as a finished place. The traditional arrangement of furniture in the lecture theatre for instance is frequently ignored in small classes where dissatisfied students or a professor rearrange chairs into circles or other more inclusive spatial arrangements. Over time this might mean that more and more university rooms are built with increasing amounts of moveable furniture. Perhaps even

> more revolutionary are the opportunities provided by the Internet and 'distance learning' that makes formal placed education increasingly redundant. The university as a place, then, is not complete. In general places are never complete, finished or bounded but are always becoming – in process.' (2004, 37)

Cresswell further describes how places need to be studied in terms of the dominant institutional projects, the individual biographies of people negotiating a place and the way in which a sense of place is developed through the interaction of structure and agency.

As I have already said, there is in my view no question that the contemporary landscape, and the material culture it contains, can quite legitimately claim to be archaeological. It is archaeological primarily because archaeological perspectives, views and theories are used to understand and explain it, just as these perspectives form the basis for interpreting material remains of earlier date. Related to that is the fact that archaeology concerns the historic environment as a whole, incorporating the diversity of places of all periods that we see around us, whether prehistoric settlements or new towns, medieval castles or a military building from the 1980s, prehistoric rock art or contemporary graffiti – its about the use and interpretation of material culture in the pursuit of understanding; its about social interaction with place, about how people respond to what's around them and how they influence and shape the world through their everyday practices. Why distinguish between that which lies beyond memory, and that which is a part of us – of which we have memories, emotional attachment and – inevitably - strong opinion? On what basis would we draw that distinction? A fifty-year threshold exists in some countries. I'm not sure there are any grounds for separating 'past' from 'present' in this way, and I would argue on that basis for a symmetrical archaeology that recognises both as inseperable and closely tied.

I want to use the remainder of this essay to explore some of these ideas a little further, to examine more closely our approach to the heritage and archaeology of the recent past, taking the reverse perspective that Virilio and Klee have adopted. I will return frequently in my examples to the close proximity of past and present, place and memory, and to the gradual democratisation of heritage which gives the contemporary past such immediacy and such direct social relevance.

LANDSCAPE

Landscape is central to archaeological practice, and has been for some considerable time. Landscape has also been a key field in which trans-disciplinary approaches to understanding the past have been developed: landscape archaeology in the literal sense; palaeo-environmental studies; historical geography; landscape psychology and phenomenology. For recent industrial and militarized landscapes, systems theory has been a predominant theme in understanding the close relationships between stages of a research and production process. Richard Rogers refers to these places as 'Technological Landscapes' where it is the organisation of technology that appeals to the viewer, the passer-by (1999, 11); where a grasp of science is needed to fully comprehend the construction and meaning of place. Landscape is also the scale at which some of the more significant changes are occurring to heritage management practice – to the way we curate the historic environment. Characterisation - an holistic, value-free and inclusive approach – is changing the way we perceive landscape, the way planners think about it, and how others (developers for example) are beginning to appreciate the significance of its historic dimension, seeing it not merely as a constraint, but also an opportunity, for regeneration and the creation of sustainable communities for example (see Fairclough, 2006a and www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation - accessed 9 August 2007).

The British government has recently ratified the European Landscape Convention which defines landscape as, 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human forces.' The reference is clearly to 'landscape', not natural landscape or cultural landscape, but all landscape, urban, peri-urban and rural. This definition involves space and environment, change, material culture and perception; most importantly it sees landscape as an idea, not a thing. Landscape is ubiquitous, everywhere, and 'for this reason

as well as because it is located in people's perception, it is a democratic common heritage' (Fairclough, 2006b, 178).

I should explain briefly where this approach sits within more traditional approaches to landscape archaeology. Simply, a distinction can be drawn between three particular traditions or approaches (ibid.):

First is archaeology at landscape scale – by studying the material remains of the past at extensive scales using methods such as large-scale survey and aerial photography. This is essentially a reconstructive and positivist approach, to find out what the past was like.

Second is the archaeology of past landscape, or attempts through archaeology and anthropology to gain insight into the way people in the past perceived the landscape and how it shaped society, through cosmology and phenomenology for example.

Third is the archaeology of landscape, which is what most of my examples refer to. This involves using archaeological perspectives and methods to study landscape as it exists today. This is both descriptive and interpretive, aimed at contributing an archaeological perspective to wider holistic understanding, albeit privileging the most dominant survivals from the past as contributing most to present day character.

In recent years heritage practitioners have gradually started shifting attention from the first and second of these, to thinking more about the third. We do think very differently now about landscape – what it is; how we define it and whether we should; how it is managed; and who has an interest in it. We still do archaeology at landscape scale, quite rightly so. And we still practice an archaeology of past landscape. But the archaeology *of* landscape is an important new way of seeing, representing a form of everyday archaeology in which we recognise particular inscriptions within the broader cultural narrative – a particular field pattern for example, or a distinctive street alignment that has survived into the present and influenced the shape of the contemporary landscape. Three examples of this everyday archaeology of landscape, each at a different resolution, illustrate these points.

Taking first the landscape at macro- (national) scale, English Heritage, in partnership with Atkins Heritage, University of Bristol and University College London, have been coordinating Change and Creation, a research programme that looks at elements of historic landscape character that have been created in the past few decades (Bradley et al., 2004; www.changeandcreation.org – accessed 9 August 2007). This is a national programme that seeks to canvass views from a wide constituency on what characterises the later twentieth century, and why it matters – 'what does the later twentieth century mean to you?' A booklet was produced in 2004, a website created and book published (Penrose, 2007). This initiative, like most characteristation studies, doesn't pass judgement. Rather it documents landscape character in all its forms. For something so recent, and so rich in 'theatres of memory' (Samuel, 1994), we felt that public opinion was especially relevant here. We therefore posed the questions:

- What do you remember most clearly about the twentieth century? How are those events or activities still represented in the landscape?
- What do you appreciate, dislike or miss about the later twentieth-century landscape?
- What do you think about change and creation? Would you prefer our landscape to be more like it was in the early twentieth century?
- What can, and what should we do with modern landscape character? What should we be recording now for the future?

We then asked about the images contained within the booklet, from retail parks, to festival sites and sporting venues, and asked for suggestions on community participation. Case studies described valuing the recent past, boundaries and how the emergence of CCTV has shifted and

blurred our boundaries, interstitial landscapes, landscapes of movement, transient landscapes and landscapes of exclusion.

Some people say that places aren't what they used to be (just as the past is not like it used to be). And they are right of course. It seems appropriate to return to our Angel of History at this point and reflect, with Tim Cresswell for a moment, on the end of place, and the way that places are tied into global flows of people, meaning and things – Virilio's catastrophe perhaps? With resonances with Virilio and Paul Klee, Tim Cresswell describes how:

> 'A combination of mass communication, increased mobility and a consumer society has been blamed for a rapidly accelerating homogenization of the world. More and more of our lives, it has been argued, take place in spaces that could be anywhere – that look, feel, sound and smell the same wherever in the world we may be. Fast food outlets, shopping malls, airports, high street shops and hotels are all more or less the same wherever we go. These are spaces that seem detached from the local environment and tell us nothing about the particular locality in which they are located. The meaning that provides the sense of attachment to place has been radically thinned out.' (2004, 43)

Increasingly, this is the contemporary character of landscape – 'clone-town Britain' (new economic foundation, 2004), a phase of change and creation, following innumerable other phases which we, as archaeologists, continue to study and research in order to improve understanding of the historic environment and to promote enjoyment and knowledge for others.

We can see how far the twentieth century has contributed to regional landscape character at Milton Keynes. To mark Milton Keynes' fortieth birthday recently, BBC Local Radio invited comment from residents, many of whom had been there from the start (http://www.bbc.co.uk/threecounties/content/articles/2007/01/24/mk40_celebrations_feature.shtml - accessed 28 March 2007). The overriding impression was that everyone loved the place; they liked the familiarity and simplicity of the grid; the leisure facilities and open spaces; the retail outlets and malls. Very few who lived there had a bad word to say about it, unlike many of those who live outside who don't much like the place. For them it is typically an unfortunate and inappropriate introduction – a significant contribution to the pile of wreckage Klee dumps at the feet of his retreating angel. Our perspectives as insiders and outsiders will be very different therefore. And our values will often be contradictory, making consensus difficult to achieve.

Memory and place are central to this everyday archaeology, and that's one reason at least why local residents will feel a stronger attachment to places like Milton Keynes. Attraction is often sentimental and due to a particular memory or event, whether real, imagined or fictional – something we remember doing, or think we did, or a film we saw. We will all have examples. A student of mine recently spoke about a gateway in Suffolk where her grandfather proposed to her grandmother. They then returned to that gateway on most of their anniversaries. Both have now died, but the grand-daughter revisits the gateway occasionally. Here's an example of a place, an everyday place, that may have few other associations of value or meaning (we can never know this of course), but which has this social value because of its close proximity, its immediacy. This is why the contemporary past, the landscape around us and those parts of it which we created and shaped, have this relevance and why people value the places they are so closely familiar with. It's about home in other words, both the place and the sense of belonging and ownership. (Read, 1996)

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO HERITAGE

In Roger Thomas's recent 'Archaeology and Authority' essay (2004), the author described the diminution of the influence of the state in Britain, for example by extending market principles into areas of life previously controlled by state-run monopolies. Customers now have more choice – in public utilities for example, and broadcasting. Concomitant with that is a greater plurality of ideas, interests and belief systems, a principle that extends of course to how people think about

heritage, and how – and in what ways – they value the historic environment. It is clear that places matter to different people for all sorts of different reasons. And rather than maintaining archaeological officials as state authority figures in the future, a more useful and relevant role might be as guides and facilitators. Having said that, by recognising this multiplicity of views, and increasingly the desire for people to 'make their own explorations of the past' (ibid., 198), what research practices exist that might enable this to happen?

I will take as read the merits of some more conventional approaches to landscape archaeology: field surveying; collecting artefacts; and aerial photography. These are all well suited to understanding the contemporary past, just as they are for earlier landscapes. What I want to focus on here are those new approaches to landscape that archaeologists are increasingly adopting, either as a result of technological developments or through trans-disciplinary collaborations. For example 'bimbling', a methodology used specifically to investigate social interaction with place. This follows social anthropologists like Jon Anderson (2004) for whom bimbling amounts to walking or wandering with an informant as a means to providing the ideological space necessary to experience people's connections with landscape. Walking and talking is such a simple thing to do. We see it all the time in television documentaries, and travelogues – celebrities returning to the places where they spent their formative years, reassessing how these places shaped them and influenced their lives and careers for example. It can and does work for contemporary archaeologies of landscape in much the same way (Schofield and Morrissey 2006).

Oral history and ethnography can help unravel complex meanings and narratives embedded in the contemporary landscape: questioning those that worked there, and who value the places that remain (eg. Low 2003). But oral history in particular needs careful handling. One approach adopted for the military estate is to return people to the places where they worked, and interview them 'in place'; like bimbling but more focussed on a particular location. English Heritage recently conducted an archaeological survey at Spadeadam, the former Rocket Testing Establishment in Cumbria. Working alongside the survey team was the artist Louise K Wilson, who made a film about the place and the project, documenting the very rapid transition from a major government-funded research programme to heritage (Cocroft and Wilson 2006). One aspect of this documentation was oral history, or ethnography. Louise Wilson interviewed the former 'rocketmen' in the buildings and rooms where they once worked. Some spoke of the camaraderie; others spoke about the functions of particular buttons and switches; one former employee upturned what may once have been his chair.

The current development proposals for London and the Thames Gateway, emanating from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), include some element of this; a personalisation of the landscape, and a recognition of social values alongside all of the other cultural and economic values that will shape the future of this area. A planning document – *East London Green Grid Primer* (Major of London 2006) – is part planning document, and part commentary and insight, with essays (including a photographic essay) commissioned from local commentators, writers, architects and environmentalists. These insights are often personal; they build on existing definitions of green architecture to suggest ways of framing and shaping growth, image and identity. They describe a Green Grid that will find room for new functional spaces alongside what they term natural landscapes and the existing cultures of place, recognising that every place can have meaning and significance. The environmentalist and writer Ken Worpole made this comment:

> 'Some years ago in Stockholm I interviewed a government planner about how they measured and evaluated green space in the city. "As long as people have a name for it – even the smallest patch of grass or a few trees – we count it," he said. This is a useful reminder that no matter how scruffy many London woodlands, footpaths, field systems, canals and river edges appear, these fragments nearly all have local names and associations. There is more to history and ecology than meets the eye: you can't judge a brook by its culvert.' (Worpole, 2006, 10)

Counting things we have a name for is a common principle in heritage management practice – English Heritage's Monument Class Descriptions (MCD), which informed scheduling decision-making under the Monuments Protection Programme (MPP), is a case in point. Monument classes that didn't have a MCD were largely ignored, at least in the Programme's early stages (Fairclough, 2006a).

Photography has long been considered essential practice in archaeology. Material culture is photographed for archives and publications; sections, plans and general shots of excavation projects; even photographs of the archaeologists, individuals and group photographs, have become part of archaeology's social-historical archive. Landscape archaeology too is documented through photography – Mick Sharp's work is a well known and popular example. But photography lends itself in particular to documenting contemporary landscape and the places and objects within it. I have already mentioned the inclusion of photographic essays within planning documents at a time when the planning system is increasingly democratic and participatory. In this field of work there is recognition that all of those characteristics that together characterise a contemporary place or landscape can be captured by a photographer. Jason Orton achieves this for the Thames Gateway in his photographic essay (Orton, 2006), following a long tradition of landscape artists seeking to visually capture *genius loci* (de Botton, 2002, Ch.7). Angus Boulton, another photographic artist that English Heritage has worked with on numerous military sites, said this of his role:

> 'Artists have sometimes been viewed with suspicion, seen as separate practitioners, frequently working alone towards personal goals. More recently they have become familiar as contributors to the practice of recording the contemporary environment … Indeed, their input is perhaps now appreciated as having equal validity, and often forms an intriguing antidote to the purely factual, generally drier and more thorough investigations undertaken by others'. (Boulton, 2006, 35)

Perhaps the greatest potential for developing new research practices however lies in the use of new technology, including mobile telephones and the Internet (and especially with such things as GoogleEarth and LocalLive now providing high resolution mapping and aerial photography free for all). Proboscis is an artist-led studio which combines artistic practice with commissioning, curatorial projects, design and consultancy (http://proboscis.org.uk – accessed 9 August 2007). Since 2001 Proboscis has initiated a number of projects that explore the relationships between individuals, communities and the environments they inhabit. Their work has developed from an initial focus on the geography of place to the social relationships that underpin it. What interests us here perhaps is their recognition of the multiple ways in which place is valued by those most familiar with it, and overcoming the thorny issue of representing those multiple views. Increasingly, with the move towards democratization that Roger Thomas describes, including changes to the planning system, these new approaches and the potential uses of new technology have direct relevance to how we approach the archaeology of landscape.

In 2005 60 million mobile phones were in use in the UK. Eighty percent of adults use them, and ninety percent of secondary school children. With mobile telephones now connected to the Internet via GPS, and their capacity to take, store and send photographs, movies and sound clips, users can easily record particular relationships with a place (eg. www.mapmylondon.com – accessed 9 August 2007). By encouraging local residents or visitors to an area to do this, and by explaining the validity and benefit of their contribution, to future planning decisions for example, information can be easily and quickly gathered with minimal effort and administration. The approach Proboscis has taken involves users documenting their experiences through the creation of 'pockets' and 'threads'. Pockets are the relationship a user has with a particular geographic place, while the media with which one fills that pocket can include photographic images, a movie or sound clip all captured by mobile phone. Threads are the thematic relationships between

pockets – 'places I like' for example, or 'places with a sense of history'. Once sent, this information can then be seen by anybody via a customised web-browser, or on GoogleEarth.

Taking this further still, the artist Christian Nold has developed a technique called Biomapping, in which a small back-pack is worn by project participants, who then simply wander the landscape – inner city or rural. The pack contains a GPS which feeds their route directly to a mapbase, while skin response is monitored, measuring the emotional reaction to the places one experiences along the way. How does one react to open spaces in the city for example, or a historic building? How does a biomapping thread relate to zones of different historic landscape character? How one interprets and uses the results is another matter altogether, but at least the technology now exists for easily gathering data that can bring real benefits to understanding people's attachment to place. A particular application might involve accommodating this information into the planning system, perhaps in a similar way to the advent of online petitions. But with the technology in place and proven, that's a challenge we can begin to meet with confidence.

What we have here then is a reverse perspective. As archaeologists interested in landscape, and the processes of change within it, we are moving I think from a position where we oppose or dislike change because of the impact it can have on a landscape we seek to understand, and which we enjoy for its beauty and diversity, to one where we recognise the necessity of change, and accept a willingness to accommodate it within the broad parameters of sustainable development. For archaeologists a 'good' landscape isn't necessarily one that still looks like it did in the past, or which has a high density of prehistoric or medieval monuments; it's an 'interesting' landscape, and what archaeologists find interesting has shifted dramatically in recent years. Our direction therefore is forward, but with our eyes and expertise cast back to the past, recognising of course the piling wreckage at our feet. In fact, the great thing about being archaeologists is that the wreckage is exactly what we need, to help understand what we are leaving behind for others in the future.

CASE STUDIES

Heritage then is about places, of course, but it is also about people, and this connection between people and place is most sharply focused, and often the most contested, with modern heritage sites: sites that are, in themselves modern, or sites where a particular and modern engagement has influenced the way people think about it. What has interested me over the past few years is the various ways that archaeologists have contributed to that particular issue. Valletta is the capital of Malta, a small island strategically placed in the Mediterranean between Italy and North Africa. Valletta is a fabulous and historic city, founded by the Knights of St John in the sixteenth century, and later encircled by vast defences by the British during their colonial occupation. History and culture resonate throughout, and many visitors come here to see the 'historic' sights. But there is a darker story, and one still fresh in people's memories. In a country that identifies strongly with the Catholic faith, and with a rich colonial heritage also to contend with, the seedier side of life is not something people wish to be reminded of. Heritage here is a positive, monumental and popular thing; something that encourages a positive and uplifting encounter with Malta. Yet one street away from Valletta's main shopping street is Strait Street, the street formerly lined with bars, clubs, boarding houses and – some say – brothels. While the allied navies remained in Malta this was a central place, a place many older visitors and residents recall. People built careers here, as bar owners, musicians and artistes. Some earnt their living here through prostitution. In the mid to late 1960s Malta declared independence from Great Britain, the navies left and, with nothing to sustain them, all of these businesses quite suddenly closed down. The stigma attached to Strait Street (also 'The Gut') ensured that it has never been reoccupied. The street remains empty, lined with boarded up bars and boarding houses.

In studying this street reaction was at first quite hostile. Some simply asked why: 'there is no heritage here'; some asked us to ensure our story was 'respectful; while others warned us off. The pervading theme seemed to be Strait Street as a shameful place. As work progressed we met people who lived in the flats above the locked buildings, usually in abject poverty. Sad faces

looked down on us as we walked along the street making sketches and taking photographers. More voyeurs or do-gooders they probably thought. But our regular revisits aroused curiosity, and the dialogue began. It transpired that these were the former dancers, musicians, bar workers and (possibly) prostitutes. And our questions and obvious interest sparked their own enthusiasm. These were proud people, disappearing into their flats to bring us photographs and mementoes. There was no shame here that we could see. Joseph Buttigieg spoke proudly of his father starting and successfully running a business in Strait Street – in fact such was his pride that in converting the bar to a workshop following the decline in trade, he retained all of the bar's infrastructure 'in honour of my father' he said. A dancer posed for a photograph. He lived in a flat that was falling down around him, a flat above the Cairo Bar where he used to be the star attraction. He is being re-housed in a modern block outside Valletta, but he doesn't want to go. 'This is my home' he said – 'if I leave all of my connections with this place will be gone.'

I am not suggesting that only archaeologists can unlock this type of story, but it is a very far cry from most of the heritage we read about. This is not a pretty place, or one with any particular aesthetic merit. It is not even one you might call 'historically significant'. But the place isn't what really matters here – it's the people, and for them this place clearly matter.

In a similar vein, I have recently been examining landscapes of street homelessness in Bristol. Notwithstanding all the methodological, logistical and ethical issues this raises, there are real benefits here for those that participate. Typically homelessness is the result of significant childhood abuse and a mistrust of anything that resembles authority or anything that appears 'fixed'. Homelessness is a very transient and unstable existence. But another characteristic is low self esteem and the feeling of being marginalized. I have spent time watching the way homeless people are avoided, by crossing roads and looking the other way. I took the view that heritage may be able to help this situation, albeit in some small way. Perhaps it is simply the fact of asking homeless people, or anyone marginalized by society, what they think, about a place, a building, a small park. 'Does this place matter to you?' And to understand their answers we need to ask why it matters, the answer to which may take days of work, building trust, and sharing their lives, albeit for a short time. I don't have to be an archaeologist to do this, and others are probably far better qualified. But archaeology takes the study in a particular direction. At one level we are mapping the experience of homelessness, but also its materiality. We learn to speak their language, as they tell us what words they use to describe the many places that populate 'their' landscape. It is an unfamiliar landscape, just as prehistoric landscapes are unfamiliar, and in both cases archaeological skills (and often the same skills) have relevance. The subject matter qualifies as heritage because it concerns people's views of the place in which they live, and how it should be managed in the future. It is their personal heritage too, as they often will tell their appalling and traumatic stories of abuse and drug and alcohol dependency as part of this process.

What do we in the heritage sector think about graffiti? Typically, if its beyond a certain age it becomes interesting; if it is 'contemporary' then generally speaking it has a detrimental effect on the local area, and is sometimes literally 'criminal'. In fact we spend a lot of money clearing it away. But isn't there a counter narrative here too? We, the middle-class and predominantly white, heritage practitioners and professionals, sometimes encourage cultural heritage that represents only our own interests, because these are what we understand. But what about those that live in the inner cities, in the less affluent areas where young graffiti artists tag spaces as a form of communication, as artistic intervention, as a challenge to authority and representative also of their own social conditions. A 'Graffiti Archaeology' website captures the process of constant change and makes it visible. The website is an interactive, time-lapse collage of photographs of certain walls, taken over a span of months or years. The photos are precisely superimposed, so that by moving through the layers, you experience a compressed version of time passing, as old tags are submerged beneath new ones. You can see how one writer's style changes over the years, or explore the dialogue between writers as they paint over each other's work. The project also functions as a living archive, since most of the pieces on the site no longer exist in the real world. By assembling and juxtaposing these scattered fragments, we can gain new kinds of insight.

What else can we reconstruct from so many points of view? What subtle dimensions will we discover?

What much of this amounts to is something I have termed autocentricity, after the Canadian geographer J Douglass Porteous (1996). Autocentricity represents a close, personalized attachment to the world, often through direct experience, and contradicting the typical approach of heritage practitioners which is allocentric – cool and detached. An allocentric view is of course advantageous in much of the work we do. We stand apart from immediate local concerns and emotional attachment, and take an 'objective' view from safe distance. But at times we need to recognize what it is that people value about a place, and with some particular groups we can help them to express that attachment. In Australia this seems to me to be exemplified by the work of NSW NPWS in their studies of the Macedonian and Vietnamese communities, for example. Much of the work I have presented is autocentric in its ambitions and outlook.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I want to draw back from the examples and case studies I have included, to present a more optimistic view to the one I started with. Our Angel of History seems to move forward reluctantly, forced forward in fact while glancing back to the piling wreckage of the contemporary past. As archaeologists we could sometimes be accused of moving forward reluctantly, hesitantly, but we do so now at least with an acceptance of contemporary material culture, recognising its existence as the latest stage of a cultural or genealogical process. Archaeology and landscape is everywhere and everything; it is unnecessary and unwise – I think – to begin to separate it out, into that which is old and matters, and that which is new and doesn't.

For several of the reasons I have described here, I have come to the view that it is perhaps also unhelpful to view the archaeological resource as diminishing as some would have us believe. Of course once a prehistoric burial mound has gone it has gone forever. And once a component of landscape character has been lost it will be hard to retrieve. But recognising the continuation of a process by which places are 'always becoming', the continuation of change at landscape scale, and the relevance of this contemporary past to society, brings with it a more encouraging view of the archaeological resource, as one rapidly expanding in new and previously unforeseen directions. We create far more than we use in other words, and that will surely always be the case (Schofield 2006). I'm going to end with a paragraph from Cornelius Holtorf's excellent *Archaeology as Popular Culture* (2005: 132). He said this:

> 'Over the centuries, many novel pasts replaced others. The Sociologist George Herbert Mead states: "Every generation rewrites its history – and its history is the only history it has of the world" (1929: 240). With every new past, new archaeological and historical sites and objects are created or become significant in relation to this past. Others become redundant and eventually disappear. This may be sad, but only in the way that the autumn is sad (Vayne 2003: 15).

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