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Lists, Narratives, and Archives of Intangible Heritage: The Politics of Digital Re-enactments

Sheenagh Pietrobruno

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Résumé de l'article

Le site Web de l'Unesco ainsi que les médias sociaux tels que la plate-forme YouTube entraînent un processus de reconstitution et de réactualisation des performances qui constituent le patrimoine intangible. Les technologies des médias permettent à cette reconstitution ou réactualisation de prendre place grâce à l'élaboration de listes, d'archives et de récits patrimoniaux. Toutefois, ces derniers se trouvent à être politisés et à être au centre de conflits. Ces conflits surgissent lorsque les technologies des médias mettent à jour le système de valeurs existant dans le contexte où la reconstitution des pratiques patrimoniales a lieu. Ces listes, archives et récits patrimoniaux partagés sur le Web divergent parfois de ceux mis en place et confrontent les valeurs institutionnalisées par les autorités politiques. Les médias engendrent ainsi la création de récits secondaire à l'hégémonie culturelle actuelle et préconisée par les autorités d'une société donnée. La reconstitution et la réactualisation de ces pratiques patrimoniales présenteraient donc une menace pour certaines autorités.

Lists, Narratives, and Archives of Intangible Heritage: The Politics of Digital Reenactments

Sheenagh Pietrobruno

What role does digital media play in cultural heritage? What impact do digital representation and transmission have on heritage? Scholars who consider the intersection between digital media, social media, and cultural heritage argue that participatory digital media can problematize the division between official and unofficial heritage.[1] The task of recording cultural memory is moving from official institutions to everyday digital media environments, including social media environments[2] that enable the confluence of a diversity of participants and a range of ever-evolving heritage narratives. Yet heritage institutions as well as ordinary citizens are involved in the memory work conducted in everyday digital media environments, including Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube.[3] For instance, through its YouTube channel, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) disseminates videos of intangible culture. These videos are also featured on UNESCO's official website, which lists the elements of intangible heritage officially protected under the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Convention), adopted by UNESCO in 2003.[4] For the

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[1] Elisa Giaccardi, "Introduction: Reframing Heritage in a Participatory Culture," in Elisa Giaccardi (ed.), *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding Heritage in a Participatory Culture*, London, Routledge, 2012, p. 4.

[2] Jussi Parikka, "Archival Media Theory: An Introduction to Wolfgang Ernst's Media Archaeology," in Jussi Parikka (ed.), *Digital Memory and the Archive*, Minneapolis, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 2013, p. 16.

[3] Sophia B. Liu, "Socially Distributed Curation of the Bhopal Disaster: A Case of Grassroots Heritage in the Crisis Context," in Elisa Giaccardi (ed.), 2012, p. 30–55.

[4] UNESCO, "Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," *Intangible Cultural Heritage*, UNESCO, 2003, http://www.unesco.org /culture/ich/index.php?pg=00006 (accessed August 4, 2016).

purposes of the Convention, intangible cultural heritage encompasses an array of practices produced and recognized by communities, groups, and in some cases individuals. These intangible practices include ceremonies, social events, dances, food preparation, and games as well as the instruments, objects, and cultural spaces involved in their creation. Both UNESCO's website of intangible heritage[5] and YouTube's archive of intangible heritage composed of user-uploaded videos employ similar forms of media to represent, store, and transmit heritage. In both spaces, intangible heritage takes shape through narratives and lists that combine to form digital heritage archives. Hence, heritage is reenacted through narratives, lists, and archives. Reenactment in this context refers to the repeated performances of intangible heritage through these mediated technologies. The political concerns—notably, issues of authority—surrounding the formation of narratives, lists, and archives on UNESCO's websites and on YouTube may nonetheless counter one another. Political underpinnings surface through the material technologies of these media forms as well as the context in which they are situated and circulate. Theorizing the reenactment of heritage through the dynamics of the narrative, list, and archive on UNESCO's official website of intangible cultural heritage and on YouTube can illustrate the way that these specific technologies in divergent digital environments can intertwine with heritage content to produce the competing political values that such reenactments can assume.

¶2   To analyze the impact of media forms on the transmission of heritage by UNESCO and through YouTube, the argument presented here unfolds in stages. The first and second sections of this essay explore the form and content of the lists and narratives that produce an archive of intangible cultural heritage on UNESCO's website.[6] These sections theorize the way that these media forms are rooted in UNESCO's institutional authority, which promotes representations of intangible heritage put forward by state parties, that is, states or nations bound by the Convention. In turn, this authoritative structure, which recognizes the sovereignty of state parties, impacts the political consequences of heritage. The final section analyzes how the online circulation of official UNESCO videos of intangible heritage affects the social space of YouTube. The formation of lists and the dissemination of heritage

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[5] UNESCO, "Browse the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices," *Intangible Cultural Heritage*, UNESCO, 2012, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00011 (accessed August 4, 2016).

[6] *Ibid.*

narratives within YouTube's archival structure have the potential to challenge the authoritative structure and content of official lists, narratives, and archives. This possibility to counter the work of state parties and the authority of UNESCO also engenders specific political outcomes.[7] These ramifications stem from the shifting nature of the heritage lists and narratives that forge YouTube into an emerging archive of intangible heritage, shaped by both user-generated content and Google algorithms.[8]

UNESCO AND ITS LISTS OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

¶3   As of April 2017, UNESCO's website, featuring intangible heritage lists,[9] tabulates 429 elements of intangible heritage practices classified under two lists and one register. The first list, called the Representative List, specifies heritage that represents the intangible cultural heritage of humanity; the second, the Urgent Safeguarding List, specifies heritage that requires timely protection; and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices specifies heritage that exemplifies best practices in reflecting the principle and objective of the Convention. These elements are depicted through a textual description and a set of photographs on UNESCO's website and through a video featured on YouTube. Intangible heritage on this official website is represented and transmitted to the world in various forms of media. These different forms—the two lists and the register cataloguing elements, as well as the video narratives describing each one of these elements—have an impact on the content of the transmitted heritage. The form used to represent specific content—in this case, official intangible heritage—impacts the content itself. Theorists of media[10] and

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[7] Sheenagh Pietrobruno, "YouTube and the Social Archiving of Intangible Heritage," *New Media and Society*, vol. 15, nᵒ 8, 2013, p. 1259–1276; Sheenagh Pietrobruno, "YouTube Flow and the Transmission of Heritage: The Interplay of Users, Content and Algorithms," *Convergence: The Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, prepublished December 7, 2016, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856516680339.

[8] Sheenagh Pietrobruno, "Between Narratives and Lists: Performing Intangible Heritage through Digital Media," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 20, nᵒˢ 7–8, 2014, p. 742–759; Pietrobruno, "YouTube Flow and the Transmission of Heritage," 2016.

[9] UNESCO, 2012.

[10] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1970, p. 219–253; Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformation in Early-Modern Europe*, vol. 1, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1979; Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Massage: An Inventory of*

theorists of digital heritage [11] have illustrated that technology is not impartial. Different media produce different cultural practices, and media are sites where meaning-making takes place. The compilation of lists on UNESCO's website is a media practice that has refigured intangible heritage to produce a new culture of global intangible heritage and a concomitant set of meanings grounded in decontextualization as well as in the production of hierarchies and exclusions.

¶4   In accordance with the Convention, once a specific intangible cultural heritage is nominated by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Committee), which is composed of national representatives, this heritage practice is registered on one of the two lists or the register mentioned above. The manner in which a specific nominated heritage is officially depicted is determined by the representatives of the state parties that have ratified the Convention. Since this heritage instrument legally grants sovereignty to state parties,[12] it is national governments that ultimately decide the way that intangible heritage in their territories is to be represented.[13] These lists of intangible heritage, as configured through the dictates of state parties, are featured on UNESCO's official website[14] and have become a system of classification that sections off a portion of intangible world heritage into boxes characterized by spatial and temporal demarcations.[15]Intangible heritage that is reproduced and created by practitioners such as individuals, groups, and communities within particular social circumstances becomes recontextualized within the parameters of UNESCO's online lists of intangible heritage.

Effects, New York, Bantam Books, 1967; Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, New York, Vintage Books, 1993.

[11] Fiona Cameron, "The Politics of Heritage Authorship: The Case of Digital Heritage Collections," in Yehuda E. Kalay, Thomas Kvan, and Janice Affleck (eds.), *New Heritage: New Media and Cultural Heritage*, London, Routledge, 2008, p. 170–184; Bharat Dave, "Virtual Heritage: Mediating Space, Time and Perspectives," in Kalay, Kvan, and Affleck (eds.), 2008, p. 40–52; Thomas Kvan, "Conclusion: A Future for the Past," in Kalay, Kvan, and Affleck (eds.), 2008, p. 304–314.

[12] Lucas Lixinski, "The Interplay of Art, Politics and Identity," *European Journal of International Law*, vol. 22, nº 1, 2011, p. 86.

[13] Pietrobruno, 2014.

[14] UNESCO, 2012.

[15] Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1999.

¶5   Through UNESCO's lists, intangible heritage shifts from being cultural heritage, as understood from both a social sciences and cultural studies perspective, to being political heritage, which is a delimited version of cultural heritage that has been mobilized by national governments to realize certain political and economic aims and policies. An anthropological perspective on culture refers to the "way of life" of a specific group, community, people, or nation. When this definition of culture is employed to describe how a particular way of life produces the shared values of a group or society, the anthropological definition assumes a sociological stress.[16] When intangible heritage as culture is recreated, which is an essential element of the definition of intangible cultural heritage within the Convention,[17] the practices and meanings of intangible heritage are in a constant negotiation, rendering the creation of culture and hence heritage a process of both contestation and consensus.[18] The notion that culture is grounded not in a shared and homogenous agreement but in an exchange of cultural meaning between members of a society or group finds resonance in the cultural turn within those social science disciplines that have been influenced by cultural studies. [19] According to cultural anthropologist Regina Bendix,[20] the processes of nomination and listing to protect intangible heritage are strategies on par with the economic cultivation of national resources, which is often aligned with governments' political goals.

¶6   Parallels can be drawn between the creation of lists and the production of political (or institutional) heritage.[21] According to Valdimar Tr. Hafstein,[22] whatever is selected as heritage is abstracted from its prior social context and positioned in connection to other practices that are additionally singled out and classified within the grouping of intangible heritage. This classification is permeated with national

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[16] Stuart Hall, "Introduction," in Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, Milton Keynes, UK, The Open University, 1997, p. 2.

[17] UNESCO, 2003.

[18] Wim van Zanten, "Constructing New Terminology of Intangible Cultural Heritage," *Museum International*, vol. 56, nᵒˢ 1–2, 2004, p. 37.

[19] Hall, 1997, p. 2.

[20] Regina Bendix, "Heritage between Economy and Politics: An Assessment from the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology," in Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (eds.), *Intangible Heritage,* London, Routledge, 2009, p. 265.

[21] Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, "Intangible Heritage as a List: From Masterpieces to Representation," in Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (eds.), *Intangible Heritage*, London, Routledge, 2009, p. 93.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

authority and granted prestige by individuals and institutions connected to ruling governments that endorse the categorization.[23] Likewise, the list as a form of media turns cultural practices and expressions into artifacts, removing them from the social contexts in which they occur to reframe them within national inventories and international lists. In the case of national inventories, the reframing occurs in terms of practices and expressions managed and represented under the authority of national governments, and in the case of international lists, the reframing occurs with respect to acclaimed elements of humanity.[24] The practices that are formally inventoried as national heritage or formally listed as international heritage are bestowed with a value that departs from the basis for their previous valuation. This new value is not only distinct but also more general and standard.[25] As Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star contend,[26] a tension is always present between attempts at the universal standardization of lists and the local circumstances of those individuals, groups, and communities featured within them. "Listing," then, according to Hafstein,[27] "shadows heritage making." List-making decontextualizes living practices and recontextualizes them in the context of the list.[28] The particular elements of intangible heritage featured on UNESCO's lists, according to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett,[29] are also transformed from "local descent heritage to translocal consent heritage—the heritage of humanity." The global register of intangible heritage takes on a life of its own. Heritage becomes a practice of cultural production that constructs something new in the current context.[30]

¶7   Compiling intangible heritage on international lists also shifts cultural practices from the realm of living practice to the sphere of modern science and bureaucracy and their interrelation, a process that has political underpinnings. Bruno Latour maintains that the principal task of the bureaucrat is to create lists that can be

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

[26] Bowker and Star, 1999, p. 139.

[27] Hafstein, 2009, p. 104.

[28] *Ibid.*, 93; Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 104.

[29] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production," *Museum International,* vol. 56, nos 1–2, 2004, p. 57.

[30] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage*, Berkeley, California, University of California Press, 1998, 149.

rearranged, shuffled around, and compared.[31] The bureaucratization of science in the nineteenth century relocated it from the hands of the gentleman amateur to the jurisdiction of bureaucracies in order to realize the goals of empire. The work of nineteenth-century scientific taxonomists, which entailed ordering the world through the production of lists, was an attempt to control the world.[32] In detailing the labour of imperial taxonomists, Bowker and Star write, "The material culture of bureaucracy and empire is not found in pomp and circumstance, nor even in the first instance at the point of a gun, but rather at the point of a list."[33]

¶8   The process of producing and updating inventories of intangible heritage incorporates a genre of list-making that Jack Goody claims dates back to the earliest history of written materials: "The most usual [kind of list] is a record of outside events, roles, situations, persons, a typical early use of which would be the king-list. It is a kind of inventory of persons, objects or events."[34] The king lists of ancient times were not neutral documents but emulated the political desires of the rulers. The Sumerian king list, which chronicles dynasties of Mesopotamian kings, depicts an uninterrupted succession of the royal lineage and the smooth unfolding of historical eras, while simultaneously omitting a rupture in this seemingly seamless royal descent when adversary Mesopotamian cities competed for control.[35]

¶9   Parallels can be drawn between the official lists of ancient epochs and those produced by the international institution of UNESCO. The lists of international intangible heritage are a prestigious mechanism of display and public spectacle celebrating the global institution of UNESCO and the state parties whose heritage is featured on the list. The individual elements tabulated on UNESCO's online lists of intangible heritage present a version of heritage that is not impartial but instead conforms to the dictates of the state parties that have ratified the Convention. These lists are grounded in the authority of a centralized structure—the sovereignty of state parties—that does not exercise the absolute control of the kings of ancient times but, nevertheless, has a considerable degree of jurisdiction over the content of the lists. The sovereignty of the state parties, which the Convention maintains, also means that there is no guarantee that a state will consider expressions of a particular nominated

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[31] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1987.

[32] Alison Adams, "Lists," in Matthew Fuller (ed.), *Software Studies: A Lexicon*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2008, p. 175.

[33] Bowker and Star, 1999, p. 137.

[34] Goody, 1977, p. 80.

[35] Adams, 2008, p. 175.

heritage that counter its selected versions. In regard to UNESCO's lists of intangible heritage, not only do the lists as heritage reenactments exclude other forms based on selection criteria, but the entries that compose the lists more often than not also offer partial state-sanctioned versions that become fossilized in digital texts, photographs, and videos.

UNESCO's YouTube Videos and Their Heritage Stories

¶10   UNESCO's lists of intangible heritage provide concretized narratives of each of the elements that they tabulate. These narratives emerge audio-visually in posted YouTube videos that often reiterate the contents of the textual descriptions included in the lists. These uploaded videos stem from the candidature files submitted by representatives of state parties with the aim of having their proposed national intangible heritage nominated and featured on UNESCO's prestigious lists. The inclusion of a maximum ten-minute video is an optional requirement of the candidature file. Yet the majority of states include a video in their application. If a candidature file is successful and the element is nominated by the Committee, the included video, at times in a modified version, is posted on UNESCO's website. These YouTube videos describe the heritage put forward by ruling national governments in the form of stories. The technology of the narrative not only transmits official heritage but also impacts its content.[36]

¶11   These officially sanctioned videos on UNESCO's intangible heritage website can be viewed as simple narratives. Drawing from Paul Ricœur's [37] work on temporality and Gérard Genette's [38] writings on narrative modalities, Mieke Bal claims that at its minimum a narrative contains an actor and a narrator and unfolds on three separate levels: text, story, and fabula, or the chronological order of retold events.[39] According to Bal, the combining of elements to produce a narrative as well

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[36] Sheenagh Pietrobruno, "YouTube and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Disseminating Communication Expressions within a Commercial Platform," in Marta Severo and Severine Cachat (eds.), *Patrimoine culturel immatériel et numérique*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2016, p. 114.

[37] Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990.

[38] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1983.

[39] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of the Narrative*, 2nd ed., Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998, p. 6; see also Katherine N. Hayles, "Narrative and Database: Natural Symbionts," *PMLA* [Journal of the Modern Language Association of America], vol. 122, nº 5, 2007, p. 1606.

as the reading of a narrative are subjective processes.[40] She adds that in every narrative text, one can find sections that deal with something other than the events of the story, such as opinions in regard to a particular concern, a declaration made by the narrator that diverges to a certain extent from the events, or a description of a location or character. According to Bal, it becomes possible to analyze what is told in a text and to categorize it as being either narrative, descriptive, or argumentative. [41] These assessments facilitate identifying the ideological or aesthetic drive of a narrative. Discerning the drive underlying a particular aspect of a text is a subjective process based on an interpretation that is dependent upon cultural perspectives. [42] As expounded upon by numerous literary theorists,[43] meaning-making in narratives is a process that gives rise to potentially competing interpretations. The structure of the narrative itself facilitates its fundamental purpose, which is to generate a search for meaning.[44]

¶12   In light of this theoretical perspective on narrative, an example of a video narrative on UNESCO's website can be put forward to illustrate how global intangible heritage is presented to the world as short narratives. In a video of two minutes and forty-two seconds, the historical and contemporary narrative of the Tumba Francesa is encapsulated. The Tumba Francesa, a Cuban practice that combines dance, song, and drums, was proclaimed a Masterpiece in 2003 and integrated as an element on the Representative List in 2008.[45] In terms of Mieke Bal's definition of narrative,[46] this short video is a narrative that consists of a narrator and various "actors," including Tumba Francesa dancers and singers as well as musical instruments; it contains an audiovisual text that produces the story of this Cuban practice in a particular chronological order, or fabula. With a definite beginning, middle, and end, this short video recounts the tale of this cultural practice. The first part of the story relates the origins of the Tumba Francesa with reference to a series of historical events. Accompanied by an array of still and moving images, the

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[40] Bal, 1998, p. 4.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[43] See Mikahil M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, M. Holquist (ed.) and C. Emerson and M. Holquist (trans.), Austin, Texas, University of Texas Press, 1982; and Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, B. Johnson (trans.), Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983.

[44] Hayles, 2007, p. 1606.

[45] "La Tumba Francesa," *Intangible Cultural Heritage*, UNESCO, 2012, http://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/la-tumba-francesa-00052 (accessed August 29, 2016).

[46] Bal, 1998, p. 6.

voiceover, or narrator, recounts how this tradition came to Cuba via enslaved Haitians who moved to the nation's eastern part as a result of the upheavals in Haiti in the 1790s. The narrator of the video adds that after the abolition of slavery in 1886, Tumba Francesa societies were established in various cities by former slaves who moved to urban areas to find work. The middle part of the story recounts how the performance is enacted today in the contemporary context, and the concluding section asserts that three musical ensembles currently keep the tradition thriving.

¶13   Descriptive elements of the video's narration open it up for an analysis that extends beyond the chronological events. For instance, in the first part the narrator provides a description of the Tumba Francesa by stating that it was "developed from an eighteenth-century fusion of music from Dahomey in West Africa and traditional French dances."[47] This descriptive reference invites possible interpretations. One of them could be that the reference serves as an implicit means to highlight the fusion of culture that characterizes the Tumba Francesa, while simultaneously downplaying any deeper analysis of the historical circumstances that led to this mixing of cultures—the horrors of slavery. In contrast, another descriptive comment made by the narrator, which occurs in the last section, summons a more engaged analysis. Through the voiceover, the audience understands that even though the Tumba Francesa was most popular at the end of the nineteenth century, this cultural tradition has "preserved its primary values."[48] The video ends by stating, "Nowadays, three community ensembles continue to keep the traditions of the Tumba Francesa alive."[49] This conclusion could be interpreted as a means to highlight that cultural authenticity is to be valued since contemporary Tumba Francesa performances maintain this tradition in its "original" form. A moralizing tone underscores these comments by paying tribute to contemporary renditions that serve as faithful reenactments of the past.

¶14   Static and moving images combine with the aural narration to convey the story of the Tumba Francesa. The first part of the narrative, which recounts its historical development, is conveyed visually through photographs of paintings depicting the past as well as black-and-white footage of early-twentieth-century performances. The middle section relates, from a musical and dance perspective, the manner in which the Tumba Francesa is to be performed. The narrator's description of the various dances and musical elements enacted in the contemporary context is

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[47] "La Tumba Francesa," 2012.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] *Ibid.*

accompanied by an array of camera angles, from close-ups to high-angle shots, in order to depict various performance moments executed by actors. In this section of the narrative, camera angles and the voiceover combine to transform the drums into "actors" who audio-visually become active participants in the Tumba Francesa. While the narrator recounts that, "Following the composé's [lead singer's] cue, the catá, a large wooden idiophone, bursts into a pulsating beat enhanced by three drums known as tumbas," the visual imagery features a close-up of a brilliant red catá.[50] The video also employs numerous other cinematic elements, such as costumes, music, sound, and editing, to narrate the story of this Cuban practice.

¶15   Official videos, such as the one recounting the history of the Tumba Francesa, relate their national tales of intangible heritage in narratives composed of language, sound, and visual imagery that are intended to be objective, historical, and contemporary representations. The narratives in these videos are not supposed to parallel literary stories produced by the imagination of creative writers; but UNESCO videos use a literary form to recount the past and current "realities" that they depict. The stories in these videos are pitched to global audiences as truthful accounts of the historical and contemporary contexts of national intangible heritage. According to Hayden White, as historical accounts are shaped into narratives, there emerges a relation between historical "reality" and the narrative form.[51] This connection is applicable to UNESCO's employment of narrative structures in YouTube videos designed to depict representations of global intangible heritage as faithful to past history and current circumstances. White relates that the story recounted in the historical narrative is presumed to be an imitation of the events experienced in historical reality, and to the extent that the narrative is a faithful representation, it is regarded as a genuine portrayal.[52] Historical narrative as a mode of discourse has become an instrument that produces meaning rather than merely being a means to transmit information from an external referent.[53] Consequently, the content of discourse is conveyed both by the form of discourse and by the information that may be obtained from a reading of it.[54]

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[50] *Ibid.*

[51] Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," *History and Theory*, vol. 23, n° 1, 1984, p. 1–33.

[52] *Ibid.*, 2.

[53] *Ibid.*; Roland Barthes, "The Discourse of History," in *The Rustle of Language*, Richard Howard (trans.), Berkeley, California, University of California Press, 1989, p. 127–140.

[54] White, 1984, p. 20.

¶16   In historical discourse, the narrative works to convert a list of historical events from a mere chronicle into a story.[55] To accomplish this conversion, the events, actors, and agencies featured in the chronicle need to be distinguished as story-elements by being fashioned into events, actors, and agencies that can be understood as facets of a specific type of story, such as farce, comedy, or tragedy.[56] As the designated events in actual experience are not inherently tragic, comic, or farcical, they must be framed within one of these story-types, which in turn bestows meaning upon the narrative.[57] In the case of the video representation of the Tumba Francesa,[58] this short narrative cannot be regarded in its entirety as adhering to a story-type, yet it does contain elements of comedy. The video of the Tumba Francesa does not focus on the negative or tragic side of the historical origins of this tradition, namely the enslavement of African peoples in Haiti and Cuba. Instead, it bathes the fusion of African and European cultures in a neutral or even positive light by emphasizing that it gave rise to a creative music and dance tradition. This untroubled and even joyous outcome is reinforced through the cinematic shots of exuberant performances of the songs and dances of the Tumba Francesa. This story of the Tumba Francesa also ends on a "happy note" by reinforcing how this intangible heritage is thriving in the contemporary context through its re-creation by contemporary ensembles.

¶17   As illustrated by the case of the Tumba Francesa video, a historical narrative may employ a story-type, or elements of a story-type, to represent past events, but this does not necessarily mean that this mode of discourse, which translates events into a narrative form, is without any claims to truth.[59] Just as literature and poetry provide insight into certain truths of the human condition, historical narratives reproduce their own claims to truthfulness in their integration of story-elements and story-types. Instead of considering each historical narrative as simply "mythic" or "ideological" in its essence, White proposes configuring it as allegorical in the sense that a historical narrative "[...] says one thing and means another."[60] The story of the Tumba Francesa reenacted in UNESCO's YouTube video presents a version of this cultural practice in historical and contemporary circumstances that simultaneously conveys more than one meaning. By presenting the Tumba Francesa in a manner that

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[55] *Ibid.*

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] *Ibid.*

[58] "La Tumba Francesa," 2012.

[59] White, 1984, p. 21.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

does not foreground the oppression and suffering at the core of its historical development in Haiti and Cuba, this representation conforms to the official vision of intangible heritage, namely that national representations of heritage should depict the identities of communities and groups in a manner that does not highlight any tensions between them in either their historical or current developments. According to UNESCO, intangible cultural heritage "contributes to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity and responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different communities and to feel part of society at large."[61] Furthermore, as the narrative of the Tumba Francesa video attests, UNESCO's videos of intangible heritage moralize by showing that the intervention of national representatives through UNESCO is a praiseworthy venture that safeguards heritage of value to nations and the world. This goal, which emerges in UNESCO video narratives, masks an underlying aim of state parties, which is often to realize the national agendas of their governments through the project of officially safeguarding intangible heritage under the Convention.[62] According to White, the tendency to moralize is integral to the narrative form and its historical version.[63] If we accept that a story is a type of allegory that conveys a moral, it follows that the historical narrative bears the implicit or explicit aim of moralizing the events that it describes. The moral perspective that underscores UNESCO video narratives derives from the vantage point of the Convention, which privileges the sovereign authority of those state parties that have ratified it.

¶18   In light of this discussion of the role of narrative as a means to reenact heritage as stories, intangible heritage videos can be situated within a long tradition of heritage communication that takes shape in the form of narratives designed and administered by governing authorities and agents.[64] As Neil Silberman and Margaret Purser

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[61] "What is intangible cultural heritage," UNESCO, https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003 (accessed September 2, 2017).

[62] Bahar Aykan, *Intangible Heritage's Uncertain Political Outcomes: Nationalism and the Remaking of Marginalized Cultural Practices in Turkey*, doctoral thesis, City University of New York, 2012; Pietrobruno, 2013; Pietrobruno, 2014.

[63] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore, Maryland, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990, p. 21.

[64] Neil Asher Silberman, "Promised Lands and Chosen Peoples: The Politics and Poetics of Archaeological Narrative," in Philip L. Kohn and Clare Fawcett (eds.), *Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archaeology*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 249–262; Neil Asher Silberman and Margaret Purser, "Collective Memory as Affirmation: People-

eloquently state: "From Herodotus, through medieval pilgrim guides, through national monuments and heritage sites of the present, the main trajectory of communication has been from an expert to a reader or hearer, relating a sequence of carefully chosen details, often with a subtext of contemporary political significance."[65]

Shifting Archives: From UNESCO's Website to YouTube

¶19   The videos, textual descriptions, and photographs featured as part of UNESCO's online lists of intangible heritage can be viewed as comprising an archive. As Ben Highmore asserts: "Archives are lists and lists are often archives and archived."[66] UNESCO's lists of intangible heritage bear a relation to the conventional archive. These lists are administered by a governing body that is responsible for bestowing value on the contents of the collection, monitoring their access by the public, and preserving them for the future.[67] These online lists of intangible heritage are managed by UNESCO, whereas the value of their contents is determined by the Committee, which decides whether a particular intangible heritage as depicted by state representatives should be given the status of officially recognized heritage. Through the Committee's top-down authoritarian control, these online lists intersect with the traditional archive. In his book *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida notes how the etymology of the term "archive" connects it to a place governed by a central power: the Greek word *arkheion* means "a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrate, the archons, those who commanded."[68] But neither UNESCO nor the representatives of state parties can completely control public access to the lists of intangible heritage since they are presented on a website whose contents

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Centered Cultural Heritage in a Digital Age," in Elisa Giaccardi (ed.), *Heritage and Social Media, Understanding Heritage in a Participatory Culture*, London, Routledge, 2012, p. 14.

[65] Silberman and Purser, 2012, p. 14.

[66] Ben Highmore, "Listnessness in the Archive," *M/C Journal,* vol. 15, n⁰ 5, 2012, http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/546 (accessed April 12, 2017).

[67] Jeannette A. Bastian, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archive and Found Its Memory*, Westport, Connecticut, Libraries Unlimited, 2003, p. 13; Pietrobruno, 2013; Sheenagh Pietrobruno, "Social Media and Whirling Dervishes: Countering UNESCO's Cultural Heritage," *Performing Islam*, vol. 4, n⁰ 1, 2015, p. 3–24.

[68] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,* Eric Prenowitz (trans.), Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 2.

are available to users from around the world. Furthermore, the components of this archive, including the lists of videos and the accompanying textual descriptions, circulate on YouTube, meaning that they are disseminated in the public forum of a video-hosting service. The need to circulate the material of its archive underlies UNESCO's goal as a heritage institution. Archives are not peripheral to heritage institutions but fundamental to their administration.[69] According to Derrida, the institutional concern with safeguarding information is also symptomatic of an ingrained and inevitable impulse to destroy it. [70] Underlying the storage of information is the desire to protect it for the use and enlightenment of those who possess it as well as the desire to release it for use by others. Revealing archived information to the outside world can lead to its destruction since doing so is likely to impair the archival institution's mission. [71] Consequently, when the contents of UNESCO's official lists are disseminated to the public, especially within the social space of YouTube, the exclusive authority of state parties to determine official heritage narratives through UNESCO is compromised.

¶20   On YouTube, UNESCO's videos of officially sanctioned intangible heritage, which are uploaded on the YouTube channel of this global institution, circulate alongside videos of versions of this intangible heritage that are uploaded by a range of other users. Official and unofficial heritage videos are shaped into lists under an array of search headings. These lists, composed of videos, texts, and discussion forums, are also archives.[72] The structure and contents of the lists that feature YouTube videos of intangible heritage are determined by user-generated content and algorithms. Since user-generated content and participation on YouTube as well as Google algorithms are constantly changing, the contents of the lists that feature intangible heritage videos can also shift. [73] The archiving of intangible heritage on YouTube is an unstable process. This instability is the result of the changing nature of the archive in the digital era, whose organization in the form of lists takes shape in a mathematically prescribed realm.[74]

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[69] Richard Coyne, "Mosaics and Multiples: Online Digital Photography and the Framing of Heritage," in Elisa Giaccardi (ed.), *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding Heritage in a Participatory Culture*, London, Routledge, 2012, p. 162; Derrida, 1996.

[70] Derrida, 1996; see also Coyne, 2012, p. 168.

[71] Coyne, 2012, p. 162; Derrida, 1996.

[72] Pietrobruno, 2013.

[73] Pietrobruno, "YouTube Flow and the Transmission of Heritage," 2016.

[74] Pietrobruno, 2014.

¶21   Expounding upon Wolfgang Ernst's theory of the archive, Jussi Parikka observes that obtaining information, an essential component of the perpetuation of cultural discourses, is directed by computer algorithms instead of by "interpretative, iconological semantics."[75] Information that is retrieved under a particular search heading in the mathematical space of the digital archive takes shape as a list that can contest the preceding organization of information in the conventional archive. According to Ernst, archives are not made up of stories or historical narratives but rather are constituted of separate units and disconnected discourses that are generally linked and shaped into narrative representations through archival investigation and the work of human interpretation.[76] The process of listing generated by algorithms, according to Ernst,[77] disturbs the prior ordering in traditional archives by connecting documents together that were previously dissociated in detached units. Lists that mathematically join distinct elements in digital archives can unsettle the structure of the traditional archive and its attendant mode of historical research, where separate documents are connected through interpretive narratives generated by human agency.[78] Computation in the digital archive, for Ernst, impacts the generation of cultural memory, shifting it from human interpretation to the machine.[79] Lev Manovich has also identified lists as a cultural form that is replacing narratives in the digital era.[80] He elaborates upon the way that algorithms have transformed ways of telling by replacing narrative structures with calculations, which characterize databases. He relates how the database depicts the world as a list of items and how it does not organize this list. In contrast, a narrative produces a cause-and-effect path of elements or events that are supposedly not sequentially ordered. Consequently, database and narrative are "natural enemies," with each declaring "the right to make meaning out of the world."[81]

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[75] Jussi Parikka, "Operative Media Archaeology: Wolfgang Ernst's Materialist Media Diagrammatics," *Theory, Culture and Society,* vol. 28, n° 5, 2011, p. 58.

[76] Cited in Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory,* Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2011, p. 212.

[77] Wolfgang Ernst, "Dis/continuities: Does the Archive Become Metaphorical in Multimedia Space?," in Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan (eds.), *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, London, Routledge, 2006, p. 105–123.

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] Cited in Parikka, 2011, p. 56.

[80] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2001, p. 225.

[81] *Ibid.*

¶22   Katherine N. Hayles provides a counter-argument to Manovich that can also be applied to Ernst's assessment of the ordering of the archive in terms of mathematically prescribed lists as opposed to narratives.[82] She contends that lists of data generated by algorithms do not by necessity oppose the narrative and the role of meaning generation and human agency in the investigation of culture and the dissemination of knowledge. The linked contrasts provoked by lists need narrative to render these information associations significant. The explanation of these correlated juxtapositions can furnish additional narratives that differ from those construed through the relation of disconnected units in traditional archives. Hayles envisions narrative and database not as natural enemies but as engaged in a symbiotic relationship. [83] Databases need narrative to make their relational juxtapositions meaningful, and links produced by databases create the potential for new narratives, emphasizing the role of interpretation and narrative in the digital era.

¶23   The example of the list of videos under the search heading "tumba francesa" sheds light upon the theorization of YouTube as an archive whose listing mechanism through relational juxtapositions enables the forging of new narratives, including those that problematize dominant heritage narratives. On August 29, 2016, when the search term "tumba francesa" was entered in the Chrome browser, about 24,000 videos appeared in a list that featured videos uploaded by an array of users, including the UNESCO channel. The relational juxtapositions produced through user-generated content on intangible heritage and computer algorithms yield narratives that can provide perspectives different from those imparted in UNESCO's video. For instance, as mentioned earlier, the narrator in UNESCO's video states that the Tumba Francesa embodies cultural links to Cuba's African-Haitian heritage as well as to the music of Dahomey in West Africa and to "traditional French dances."[84] What the descriptive elements in the historical narrative of the video fail to mention is that these "traditional French dances" are in fact the eighteenth-century minuet and contredanse, which were part of the high court dances of Paris. These elite expressions at the heart of the Tumba Francesa[85] were performed in the Americas to emulate the

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[82] Katherine N. Hayles, *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 174–183.

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

[84] "La Tumba Francesa," 2012.

[85] Caridad Santos Gracia and Nieves Armas Rigal, *Danzas Populares Tradicionales Cubanas*, La Habana, Cuba, Centro de Investigacíon y Desarollo de la Cultura Cubana Juan Marinello, 2002, p. 160.

values of the European aristocracy in the colonial era.[86] This omission is significant since the high cultures of Western Europe are not featured on the lists of intangible heritage safeguarded through the Convention and the previous Masterpiece program. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's criticism that the Masterpiece program established a divide between the West and the rest of the world by not considering the elite arts of Europe as intangible heritage could still be generally applied to the forms of heritage that are featured on UNESCO's current intangible heritage lists.[87]

¶24   Relational juxtapositions attending the lists of videos under the search heading "tumba francesa" reveal that the high court dances of Europe have been integrated into this Cuban cultural practice. For instance, on the first page of the list of videos under the search heading "tumba francesa," the official video uploaded by the UNESCO channel, in Spanish,[88] is featured above a video uploaded by a user from France entitled "Le Menuet de la Tumba Francesa—Tumba Francesa Minuet." The textual description of this latter video explicitly mentions, in French, that the minuet was one of the French high court dances that were also performed in Haiti and Cuba.[89] Another video featured below UNESCO's video on the list, entitled

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[86] Charles John Chasteen, *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Popular Dance*, Alburquerque, New Mexico, University of New Mexico Press, 2004, p. 116.

[87] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004, p. 57. The focus established in this essay, which draws theoretical interconnections between the list, narrative, and archive in the context of heritage and YouTube, builds upon previous research that approaches these media forms primarily through the prism of the gendered analysis of the safeguarding of the Mevlevi Sema ceremony of Turkey. See Pietrobruno, 2014. The additional case study of the Tumba Francesa of Cuba enriches this exploration of the list, narrative, and archive by delving into a second dimension within the official safeguarding of intangible heritage through the UNESCO Convention: the Eurocentric bias that excludes the high cultures of Europe from the UNESCO lists of intangible heritage. See Sheenagh Pietrobruno, "The High Arts of Europe and UNESCO's Intangible Heritage," in Savaş Arslan, Volcan Aytar, Defne Karaosmanoğu, and Süheyla Kırca Schroder (eds.), *Media, Culture and Identity in Europe*, Istanbul, Bahçeşehir University Press, 2009, p. 144–160. These two case studies are part of a larger book project, entitled *Digital Legacies: The Global Archiving of Intangible Heritage*, which examines the archiving of intangible heritage on YouTube through two central themes related to the Convention: the issues of gender and Eurocentrism.

[88] UNESCO en español, "La Tumba Francesa," , YouTube video, September 29, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23gDleCxfrc (accessed August 29, 2016).

[89] "Menuet de la Tumba Francesa—Tumba Francesa Minuet," YouTube video, posted by RudySkB, December 21, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFoDdSfpnl4 (accessed August 29, 2016).

"Mirta Gomez: La Tumba Francesa in Cuba" and uploaded by the Library of Congress, provides a detailed lecture given by Mirta Gomez, in which she explains, in English, the interconnection between eighteenth-century European court music and the Tumba Francesa. Gomez describes how the musical score of the lead singer of the choir in the *masón* of the Tumba Francesa repeats the rhythm pattern of the eighteenth-century minuet, in particular compositions by Johann Sebastian Bach.[90] The narratives forged through these relational juxtapositions produced through YouTube lists enter in dialogue with the official heritage video uploaded by the UNESCO channel. They also problematize the hierarchy maintained by the Convention, which exempts the high arts of Europe from being classified as world intangible heritage, ensuring their age-old status as distinct and perhaps even supreme expressions.

¶25   Relational juxtapositions that emerge on YouTube lists are not stable since they shift and change in accordance with user-generated content and algorithms. For instance, on February 2, 2013, one of the up-next videos associated with "Le Menuet de la Tumba Francesa—Tumba Francesa Minuet" was the "Napoleonic Ball-Menuet." This video depicts a historical reenactment of the minuet in Florence on May 22, 2010, at the Villa del Poggio Imperiale, the imperial residence of Napoleon's sister.[91] This visual link between the Tumba Francesa and the minuet of the French court vividly connected this Cuban practice to the high arts of Europe through the system of YouTube. But since this date, the "Napoleonic Ball-Menuet" has not appeared as an up-next video in this context. This potential heritage juxtaposition has vanished since 2013 perhaps to return again at some future point. The order of videos under a particular search heading as well as the up-next videos related to each video in a particular list are determined by user-generated activity in conjunction with Google algorithms. Google does not reveal the algorithms it uses in its YouTube ranking system that orders videos into lists. Google's algorithms are being continuously updated with the goal of monetizing YouTube and the work of its users.[92] The manner in which YouTube safeguards heritage can counter the authority

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[90] Library of Congress, "Mirta Gomez: La Tumba Francesa in Cuba," YouTube video, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQAz_CGXcNM (accessed August 29, 2016).

[91] "Napoleonic Ball-Menuet," YouTube video, posted by florencecostumes, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-a2DoRwr8w (accessed August 29, 2016).

[92] Alexander Halavais, *Search Engine Society*, Houndmills, UK, Polity, 2008; José Van Dijck, "Search Engines and the Production of Academic Knowledge," *International Journal of*

of UNESCO-sanctioned heritage narratives because it enables YouTube to feature the work of an array of users (including that of other heritage institutions such as the Library of Congress).[93] At the same time, this approach to safeguarding heritage compels YouTube to succumb to another authority. As an unofficial archive of heritage, YouTube is under the control of algorithms that Google has designed to render YouTube a lucrative enterprise for an American multinational corporation.

¶26　　　This theoretical study of the list, narrative, and archive in regards to UNESCO's official website of intangible cultural heritage and YouTube's dissemination of heritage videos demonstrates how these mediated reenactments of heritage emerging in disparate digital contexts intersect with heritage content to forge divergent political dimensions. These dynamics either counter or reinforce traditional concepts of heritage, which are not democratic in their processes but are based upon the value structure and authority of national governments, cultural elites, or corporations seeking to monetize on users' online activities. The interconnection of cultural heritage with commercial social media platforms that are controlled by corporate interests is a burgeoning trend that will become more expansive with the future growth and widespread use of social media.

Cultural Studies, vol. 13, n° 6, 2010, p. 574–592; Pietrobruno, "YouTube and the Social Archiving of Intangible Heritage," 2013.
　　[93] Library of Congress, 2012.

Lists, Narratives, and Archives of Intangible Heritage: The Politics of Digital Re-enactments

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ABSTRACT

Intangible heritage is re-enacted through its repeated performance on UNESCO's websites and YouTube. This re-enactment via media technologies takes shape through narratives, lists, and archives. The political concerns—notably, issues of authority—surrounding the formation of narratives, lists, and archives may nonetheless counter one another. Political underpinnings surface through the material technologies of these media forms as well as the context in which they are situated and circulate. Narratives, lists, and archives in divergent digital environments intertwine with heritage content to produce competing political values that such re-enactments can assume.

RÉSUMÉ

Le site Web de l'Unesco ainsi que les médias sociaux tels que la plate-forme YouTube entraînent un processus de reconstitution et de réactualisation des performances qui constituent le patrimoine intangible. Les technologies des médias permettent à cette reconstitution ou réactualisation de prendre place grâce à l'élaboration de listes, d'archives et de récits patrimoniaux. Toutefois, ces derniers se trouvent à être politisés et à être au centre de conflits. Ces conflits surgissent lorsque les technologies des médias mettent à jour le système de valeurs existant dans le contexte où la reconstitution des pratiques patrimoniales a lieu. Ces listes, archives et récits patrimoniaux partagés sur le Web divergent parfois de ceux mis en place et confrontent les valeurs institutionnalisées par les autorités politiques. Les médias engendrent ainsi la création de récits secondaire à l'hégémonie culturelle actuelle et préconisée par les autorités d'une société donnée. La reconstitution et la réactualisation de ces pratiques patrimoniales présenteraient donc une menace pour certaines autorités.

NOTE BIOGRAPHIQUE

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