ARCHAEOLOGY VERSUS ANTHROPOLOGY

WHAT CAN TRULY BE PRESERVED?

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PRESERVATION OF COMPLEX OBJECTS, CARDIFF

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- THIS TALK CONCERNS WHAT IT MEANS TO "**PRESERVE**" A VIRTUAL WORLD
  - MAINLY **GAME** WORLDS (MMORPGS) BUT ALSO SOCIAL WORLDS (*SECOND LIFE* – REMEMBER THAT?)
- **MMOS** ARE GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE A GENRE OF **COMPUTER GAME**
  - THEY'RE **SOLD** AS COMPUTER GAMES
  - THEY APPEAR IN COMPUTER GAMES **CHARTS**
- SO ... CAN'T WE **PRESERVE** THEM JUST AS WE WOULD ANY **OTHER** COMPUTER GAME?

- HERE IS AN INHABITANT OF **LEICESTER**:

- WHY DO WE **WANT** TO PRESERVE **ANYTHING** FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS?
- STANDARD RESPONSE: SO THEY CAN **LEARN** FROM IT
- LEARN **WHAT**, THOUGH?
  - WHO **WE** WERE?
  - WHO **THEY** ARE?
  - WHY ARE IMPORTANT THINGS **IMPORTANT**?
- PUT **ANOTHER** WAY: HISTORY, LITERATURE AND **ART**

- HISTORIANS AIM TO UNDERSTAND **OLD** MEANING FROM **OLD** ARTEFACTS
  - THE PAST MEANS THE **PEOPLE** OF THE PAST
- PRESERVATION IS IMPORTANT TO HISTORIANS BECAUSE IT GIVES THEM A **SOURCE**
- THEY USE IT TO **RECONSTRUCT** THE PAST
- THEY CAN THEN **EXPLAIN** THE PAST IN WAYS **RELEVANT** TO THEIR PRESENT
  - WHICH **ALSO** ACT AS HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS FOR **TOMORROW'S** HISTORIANS

- A GAME HISTORIAN PLAYING *GALAXIAN* TODAY CAN ONLY **IMAGINE** WHAT IT MUST HAVE BEEN LIKE PLAYING IT WHEN IT FIRST CAME OUT
  - WELL, IT WAS LIKE *SPACE INVADERS* EXCEPT I COULD GET TO THE **SECOND SCREEN**
- TO **UNDERSTAND** GAMES OF THE PAST YOU NEED TO PUT **ASIDE** YOUR PRESENT-DAY SELF AND TRY TO PLAY AS YOUR **PERIOD** SELF
- THIS CAN HELP YOU GET A SENSE OF WHAT GAMES **MEANT** TO PEOPLE BACK THEN

- TO PRESERVE A **NON-MMO** IS TO TREAT IT MUCH AS A LIBRARY WOULD AN ANCIENT **TEXT**

- YOU **KEEP** THE ORIGINAL IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM WHEREVER **POSSIBLE** BUT REPRODUCE ITS **CONTENT** IN AN **ACCESSIBLE** FORM

- THE **PROBLEMS** ARE MAINLY **PRACTICAL** TO DO WITH H/W AND S/W **SIMULATION**

  - RETAIN ORIGINAL SOFTWARE THAT RUNS ON ORIGINAL, WORKING HARDWARE IF YOU CAN

  - USE **SIMULATORS** TO DEMONSTRATE IT

- STUDENTS OF **LITERATURE** REVEL IN THE FACT THAT THE SAME TEXT **TODAY** DOESN'T MEAN WHAT IT DID IN THE **PAST**

- **LANGUAGE** AND **SYMBOLS** GRADUALLY **CHANGE** IN MEANING OVER TIME

- BOOKS ARE **SITUATED** IN THEIR HISTORICAL **CONTEXT** BUT ARE OPEN TO INTERPRETATION

- MOST IMPORTANTLY, TODAY'S **READERS** ARE **NOT** THE READERS OF THE PAST

- JANE AUSTEN 2012 IS **NOT** JANE AUSTEN 1816

- A **GAMES STUDIES** EXPERT LOOKING AT AN OLD GAME **ISN'T** TRYING TO EXTRACT **OLD** MEANING FROM **OLD** SYMBOLS

- THEY'RE TRYING TO EXTRACT **NEW** SYMBOLS

- THE DESIGNER **CEDED** AUTHORIAL CONTROL WHEN THE GAME WAS **PUBLISHED**

- IT'S **NOW** AN ARTEFACT FOR PEOPLE IN GENERAL TO **INTERPRET** HOW THEY WILL

- IF YOU PLAY A 1985 GAME FOR FUN, DOES IT **MATTER** WHETHER IT'S 1985-PLAYER FUN?

- YOU CAN LOOK AT THE *MONA LISA* AS A **DOCUMENT** OF 16TH CENTURY TUSCANY

- YOU CAN LOOK ON IT AS SOMETHING YOU CONSIDER **BEAUTIFUL** OR **ADMIRABLE**

- YOU CAN **ALSO** LOOK ON IT AS AN EXPRESSION OF **ARTISTIC INTENT**

- IN THIS VIEW, THE ARTIST IS ATTEMPTING TO CONVEY A **MESSAGE** THROUGH THEIR WORK

- BY **EXPERIENCING** THE WORK, AN EXPERT CAN **DIVINE** THE ARTIST'S MEANING

- A GAMES EXPERT PLAYING OLD GAMES GAINS **INSIGHT** INTO THE GAMES` CREATORS MINDS

- THEY **SEE** HOW IDEAS **DEVELOP** AND **CHANGE** OVER TIME

- THEY CAN TELL A **MOLYNEUX** GAME FROM A **MEIERS** GAME AS EASILY AS THEY CAN TELL **MOZART** FROM **LADY GAGA**

- IN **GAINING** THIS UNDERSTANDING, THEY ARE BETTER ABLE TO CREATE THEIR **OWN** GAMES

- THIS IS MOUNT VESUVIUS ERUPTING IN 1944
  - I COULDN'T FIND PHOTOS FROM 79

- ALL THIS WOULD ALL BE **FINE** IF MMOS WERE GAMES, BUT THEY'RE **NOT**

- THEY'RE **PLACES**

- JUST LIKE PLACES, THE PEOPLE WHO **LIVE** THERE ARE **PART OF THE PLACE**

- YOU CAN'T TALK ABOUT **LEICESTER** WITHOUT CONSIDERING THE **INHABITANTS** OF LEICESTER

- WHAT MMOS **ARE** IS **BOUND UP** WITH WHO **INHABITS** THEM
- YOU CAN'T **SEPARATE** THE TWO
  - WELL, YOU **CAN**, BUT THEN YOU MISS HALF THE PICTURE
- MMO **PLAYERS** ARE AN INTRINSIC PART OF:
  - THE HISTORICAL **CONTEXT**
  - THE **ARTEFACT** CREATED
  - THE **MEDIUM** THROUGH WHICH ANY AUTHORIAL **MESSAGE** IS BEING DELIVERED

- PRESERVING ONLY THE **SOFTWARE** OF AN MMO IS LIKE PRESERVING ONLY THE **BUILDINGS** OF A CITY

- THAT'S BETTER THAN **NOTHING**, BUT ITS STUDY BASICALLY AMOUNTS TO **ARCHAEOLOGY**

- IT'S PRESERVING ONLY **EMPTY SPACES**

- IF WE'RE PRESERVING FOR A **PURPOSE**, WE NEED TO HELP PEOPLE **USE** WHAT WE PRESERVE

- FOR MMOS, THAT MEANS PRESERVING THE **PLAYERS** AS WELL AS THE **WORLD**

- CRYOGENICALLY PRESERVING RANDOM PLAYERS COMES WITH SOME TIRESOME **MORAL** ISSUES
- IF WE CAN'T PRESERVE **THEM**, THE NEXT BEST THING IS TO PRESERVE **STUDIES** OF THEM
- THERE IS A **DISCIPLINE** FOR STUDYING COMMUNITIES: **ANTHROPOLOGY**
  - AN ETHNOLOGY FILLS THE PRESERVATIONAL **HOLE**
- **UNFORTUNATELY**, YOU CAN ONLY UNDERTAKE AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY **BEFORE** YOUR CITY IS BURIED IN ASH

- **EXPENSE** ASIDE, THERE ARE **PRACTICAL** PROBLEMS WITH CREATING ON-GOING STUDIES OF VIRTUAL WORLDS

- THE WORLDS **THEMSELVES** CHANGE
  - *WOW 2004* IS NOT *WOW 2012*

- THE **PLAYERS** CHANGE OVER TIME

- THERE CAN BE CULTURAL **DIFFERENCES** BETWEEN SERVERS
  - **MINOR** BUT STILL PRESENT

- STUDIES LAST **MONTHS**, NOT A **DECADE**

- DESPITE ALL THAT, WE **COULD** STILL HELP THE PEOPLE FOR WHOM WE'RE PRESERVING MMOS
  - **VIDEOS** OF PEOPLE PLAYING AT VARIOUS POINTS IN THEIR PLAYING CAREER
    - (ACTUAL PLAYERS, NOT ACADEMICS)
  - **INTERVIEWS** WITH THE DESIGNERS AND DEVELOPERS
  - DESIGN **DOCS**
- ARCHIVE WHAT WE **THINK** THE PEOPLE 200 YEARS FROM NOW WILL **NEED** TO KNOW TO MAKE SENSE OF WHAT WE'RE **PRESERVING**

- IF SOMETHING IS **WORTH** SAVING, IT'S WORTH SAVING FOR A **REASON**

- WE SHOULD **ANTICIPATE** THAT REASON AND PROVIDE AS MUCH SUPPORTING MATTER AS WE **CAN** TO **AID** RESEARCHERS OF THE FUTURE

- FOR **MMOS**, THIS WOULD IDEALLY INCLUDE AN **ETHNOLOGY**

- FOR **ALL** COMPUTER GAMES, IT MEANS **MORE** THAN JUST THE SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE

- THAT **IS** THE PLACE TO START, THOUGH!