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Journal of Social Archaeology 2007; 7; 413
DOI: 10.1177/1469605307081400

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Journal of Social Archaeology ARTICLE

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ISSN 1469-6053 Vol 7(3): 413–431 DOI: 10.1177/1469605307081400

Heritage-making and political identity

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ABSTRACT

In this essay, I argue that the concept of heritage today, as we have come to understand it through the lens of the politics of recognition and through various tourism-oriented national and global programs of public recognition, contains within itself a number of inherent structural logics – logics which suggest that projects labeled heritage will be pulled in directions which might run counter to the hopes and expectations of those invoking the term. We must, therefore, be cognizant of the fact that at the same moment that heritage discourse enables one mode of conceiving of – and potentially celebrating – historical persons and events, it also disables other forms and modes. We must take seriously what these modes are and what are the implications of their being bracketed. This essay, then, is a call for scholars to consider carefully the fundamental political rationalities at the hearts of our central concepts if we are to understand more fully what is at stake in choosing them.

KEYWORDS

heritage sites • history • multiculturalism • politics of recognition • postcolony

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THE CONCEPT OF HERITAGE

Public heritage spaces, museums and the like have a very specific historical genealogy, one that derives from a very particular set of colonial imperatives and bourgeois Victorian values, and recent scholarship on such genealogies has come to provide a good deal of insight into the organization of heritage discourse (Bennett, 1990). What precisely does this insight reveal to us these days, when the term heritage would seem to encompass an almost unrecognizably broad assortment of sites, projects and spaces? Where do we locate the coherence of this genealogy within the ascendancy of global tourism (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998), digitization projects (Issacman et al., 2005), ever-growing lists and intangibles bearing the imprimatur of UNESCO (Brown, 2005; Deacon et al., 2004; Munjeri, 2004), as well as heritage in the hyperreal spaces of entertainment or cyberspace (Hall, 2006a, 2006b; Hall and Bombardella, 2005)? Having globalized right along with other familiar idioms of the nation-state (Appadurai, 2001), a certain anxiety is evoked by the multitude of diverse conversations regarding the term heritage: it would seem to be virtually limitless, even something of a floating signifier.

Yet, at the same time, one can't help but notice that the concept also seems to have a tendency to be deployed according to a very familiar set of expectations having to do with identity rights or rights to recognition generally (Appiah, 2006). Thus, for a great many people, though by no means for all, the desire for a seemingly endless chain of signification seems rather less immanent than the much more tangible and (for those who have fallen on the wrong side of the tracks of globalization) more promising hope for providing recognition. This recognition has a dual significance: for the potential recipient of recognition it affords a certain participation in the new polity; and, at the same time, it functions more broadly in the postcolony as a sort of 'social copula', resolving the uneasy relationship between abstract idealized citizenship on the one hand and the valorization of previously oppressed identity claims on the other.

The shadowy persistence of certain organizing logics that arose with the nation-state would seem a perennial theme – the sublation and reemergence of the national boundaries as a source of exclusionary dynamics in particular (Balibar, 2004; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh, 2000; Hindess, 2005; Sassen, 2006), and it is arguably within the terrain of heritage that we witness perhaps one of the more explicit demonstrations of this sort of dynamic. Specifically, we come to see that the assertions of rights within the global polity of heritage – whether regarding intellectual cultural property or access to sites – have come very much to be about the politics of recognition (Brown, 2005; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, 2006; Meskell, 2002; Silverman, 2005). In the past, we have asked who or what sorts of institutions come to perform the labor of recognition within multicultural

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democracies (Rowlands, 2002), and we have asked, what does it mean for those for whom socioeconomic well-being is predicated on performing rather than celebrating difference (Ahmad, 1987; Ebron, 2002; Ndebele, 1996)? My interests center on heritage's troubling 'thickening' of citizenship, and I think that archaeology should take a second look at the politics of recognition as they come to imbricate with historical claims, in order to better re-evaluate the implications for the sorts of ethical considerations that have always been so central to our disciplinary mandate (Meskell and Preucel, 2004; Shepherd, 2002b; Wylie, 2004).

My research takes place in South Africa, a postcolonial country whose mandate for nation-building centers around rectifying the fragile collectivity of a society that for so long had existed in division (Brink, 1998; Coombes, 2003). And it is in the postcolony, where critiques of modernity were forged through the reclamation of identity (Césaire and Kelley, 2000; Césaire et al., 2001; Fanon, 1968), that one of the defining contradictions of contemporary multicultural democracy has emerged. The contradiction I refer to is that between the policy of a difference-blind citizenship on the one hand and recognition of particular identity claims by the same government on the other (Taylor, 1994). Heritage, I suggest, has come to function as a crucial mediation of this contradiction. And, just as so often with discourse of the nation-state (Kohl, 1998; Meskell, 2002; Silberman, 1989; Trigger, 1984), so too with this contemporary paradox of multiculturalism, it is archaeology that has come to inhabit a prominent position of creating and institutionalizing conceptual spaces that participate in the historical legitimating of contemporary struggles for selfhood and political autonomy that have come to settle on the question of cultural identity (Taylor and Gutmann, 1994). Researchers have emphasized, in turn, the importance of tracing the discursive genealogies that have led to the terms by which we negotiate such spaces as history and identity today (Hacking, 2002; Shepherd, 2002a). The following discussion is an attempt to unpack the terms history and heritage as they come to denote the particular ideological terrain within which the context of my fieldwork in South Africa unfolded. As such, this presents the discursive space as importantly constitutive of a field locale.

I want to underscore this sort of contextualization because, of course, 'one cannot simply prepare a universal mandate for the practices of archaeology in the global milieu' (Meskell and Preucel, 2004: 327). One of the specific advantages of pulling away from the abstract language of heritage covenants or categories is that one resists the 'view from nowhere', and, with it, the ensuing assumption that all citizens, cosmopolitan and national alike, are able to don a sort of Rawlsian 'veil of ignorance' (1971) and therefore come into history-discourse with equal stakes and equal abilities to shed strategic interests and goals (Meskell, 2005; Nandy, 1995). As Meskell states, '[w]hat is troubling with such bourgeois theories of justice is the

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propensity to detemporalize or decontextualise, presenting themselves as fixed and unchanging standards. Such abstractions fail to account for real institutions and relations in practice' (2005: 75). Thus, the stark socio-economic inequalities experienced by various identity groups (who collectively constitute any national body or even an imagined global community) remind us of the very real and awful present-day effects of colonial injustice. This in turn makes us wary of the idea that all heritage stakeholders participate with equal willingness in transcendental speech situations or that all heritage stakeholders have been located and consulted comprehensively. As such, the questions that emerged over the course of working closely in a museum and archaeologically situated field locale constantly returned to the same point of troubling over these stakes and the resultant effects they can have on determining the range of forms that the production of the past will take (Tully, 1995).

The past is no longer simply a foreign country (Hartley, 1953; Lowenthal, 1985); in the guise of heritage, it has become a world force. It inhabits a complex matrix of economic, political and global processes. The reality is that the heritage industry has become, in many important and frankly powerful ways, no less a site of consumption than any other rapidly expanding market of material culture (Mitchell, 2002: 200). The primary difference is that this particular arena of consumption is heavily infused with what Walter Benjamin terms the 'aura of history': a potentially powerful redemptive and moralizing force that I consider to be intrinsic to the medium of heritage (Brown, 2001: 30–44). The first conclusion one can draw from this is that heritage sites primarily oriented towards the consumer (such as tourists, school groups and similar sorts of visitors) are susceptible to glossing the complexities of local interests and politics in order to make these local politics more suited to a redemptive narrative perceived as desirable to that audience. In so doing, and in order to sustain this process, it's important to consider that heritage operations – whether through academic discourse or local discourse – come to conceal what is, in effect, the alienation of nearby populations not readily linked to the site's narrative. This alienation operates by concealing these inequalities, while concomitantly producing a kind of cultural 'freezing' in those who *are* linked to the site's history (Garland and Gordon, 1999). The commoditization of the heritage site, in some sense, prompts this disenfranchisement of the local as a mode of currency, in order to continually reify the same site narrative. And this inevitably elides the constantly changing and ambiguous relations of local communities to the site. This process can be allegorized as creating the global tourist on one side of the heritage site counter, and the global vagabond on the other (Bauman, 1998). This, at present, would seem simply intrinsic to the relationship of heritage to tourism. Hence, the heritage 'thing' (or site) – precisely as it comes to be a site, or a collection as it comes to be a display – carries this fundamental aporia which resides in the

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unbridgeable difference between the state promise of equal 'shared heritage' for all communities, and the inevitably polarizing experience of heritage recognition unequally unfolding on the ground. Witnessing these sorts of dynamics as they unfolded around heritage sites, I came to wonder, finally, to what extent a history that is fundamentally based in recognition of particular groups can ever escape a certain exclusionary force.

Simply revisiting and revising historical domains of neglect still leaves us with the much discussed paradox of recognition – the simple point that misrecognition, or recognition undertaken in the wrong way, can be as damaging to a group of people as non-recognition (Kukathas, 1992a, 1992b). What I am attempting to convey is that, unless it examines the modes and logics by which such a celebration is undertaken, this very modality of recognizing and celebrating identity and resistance (which is largely what the politics of recognition amount to in the context of heritage) risks to some extent disabling not just academic pursuits of nuanced genealogies of power but also the very conceptual tools through which communities and individuals seek to pursue the construction of their own identities – which is to say that I think we need to be able to tell and celebrate more complicated stories about ourselves and our pasts. This is not just important for our scholarship but also if we want to be able to construct identities and politics that can be truly liberatory in the full constitutive sense of who we are as individuals and groups. My concern is that heritage, as we now understand it through the politics of recognition, is not up to this challenge. The question then becomes: can we make of heritage a sharper concept – and thus a sharper tool – or are we better off looking elsewhere?

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CASE

A contextualization of these politics leads me to consider the postcolonial transformations in African National Congress (ANC) South Africa, where free market initiatives have come to position the culturally celebratory potential of heritage directly in line with the global marketplace of tourism. Revenue from tourism in South Africa has become a major initiative for government policy, and it is now approaching 10 percent of the nation's GDP (Moosa, 2003). The prominence of the tourism industry in neoliberal economic empowerment strategies cannot be overstated. In a speech delivered at Durban's tourism *Indaba* in 2006, deputy president Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka stated, '[i]ndeed tourism is our gold, we have to nurture it and make our country a must to see by every traveler'. Heritage, then, comes to designate a sphere in which the political negotiation of identitarian claims comes to be thought of in terms of tourist dollars, as well as the personal visions of site managers, archaeologists, curators and so on. However, many

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heritage participants, who ultimately aim for recognition and protection of cultural property rights, quickly come to understand that identity, under the sign of heritage, is imagined as occurring in a somewhat extra-political or indeed sub-political domain (i.e. economic).[1] That is to say, heritage's potential to advantageously position one group or another comes to be seen as less explicitly about issues of citizenship or rights and more about how tourism or public culture mandates identity. In other words, under the sign of heritage, citizenship as corporate- and tourist-driven identity replaces citizenship as a rights-bearing political category. This could be said to be not only the case for South Africa but for well-visited countries throughout the global south.

Yet, in the wake of this shriveling of citizenship and rights-based identities, it would hardly be a provocation to suggest that heritage plays an important new political role in the contemporary multicultural state. The potential of heritage to offer recognition and celebration is powerful *precisely* because it occurs in less explicit political terms. It offers an invaluable rhetorical device that allows the government to pronounce a de-racialized agenda on the one hand, while on the other hand endorsing the recognition of particular ethnic and social groups within the domain of heritage – and, importantly, outside the domains of legislation and redistribution (Fraser, 2000). In South Africa, one sees this process at work with indigenous rights movements and other claims for recognition. When identity-based land claims and political lobbying are unsuccessful (Johnson, 2003) or trivialized within the celebratory language of the united postcolonial nation (Erasmus and Pieterse, 1999: 172), it is interesting to note how these sorts of identity-based claims come to find their more substantive call for redistribution displaced by a promise of recognition within the domain of heritage. Largely blocked from the ability to make substantive land claims by the terms of the constitutional agreements that brought about the democratic dispensation,[2]

> lawyers representing the Khoi and San groups have generally refrained from focusing too closely on aboriginal and 'tribal' land rights, [but] like their clients they have found that stressing 'tribal' history and status has tended to produce favorable responses and strong interest from media and state. (Robins, 2002: 74)

The outcome of this situation, given the free-market outlook of the ANC and the 'dwindling rights and resources of the growing number of people rendered surplus to requirements by the cold globalist wind blowing through the New South Africa' (Lazarus, 2004), is that claims for recognition come to find their most receptive public forum within heritage and tourism. Obviously, this move brings a welcome sense of collective recognition and commemoration centering upon those who had been for so long overlooked and disenfranchised. Unfortunately, at the same time it

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performs another move – one that displaces identity politics from potentially more effective political realms. It also means, insofar as heritage is a heavily commoditized space, that historical revolutions and movements of power that occur in murkier and less classifiable social worlds become glossed over in attempts to render these complexities palatable to outmoded culturalist frameworks that are invoked by the lore of the tourist (Hassan, 1999: 404).

Those whose work centers on spaces of heritage provide us with ample illustration of the fact that the daily life of heritage is highly contested and deeply ambiguous; above all, it is a sphere of discourse, rather than merely constituting concrete sites, identities and communities – and a sphere with myriad vernacular incarnations (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1994; Castañeda, 1996; Meskell, 2004). The anxiety emerges, in light of this, that the logics of the conceptual terms through which we attempt to 'think' heritage may be constantly glossing precisely such complexities.

In post-apartheid South Africa, where the task of historical revisionism seems to be more vigorously and politically mandated than perhaps anywhere else in the world at the moment, it is important to understand the fallout of the uneasy coexistence of colonial scars on the landscape out of which are pursued and teased romantic narratives of liberation and revolution. South Africa is a place where the same sites that demarcate profound historical continuities stretching as far back as the origins of humankind are simultaneously the sites of historical and colonial occupations that well evoke a certain 'radical alienation' from history (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2005) among South Africans because of their evocation of violence and oppression. Keeping this reality in mind, then, it is important to figure in how the very framing of heritage within the dynamics of recognition comes to force a very specific set of possibilities for the mediation of both identity claims and the imagining of these sites and their primary significance. How to imagine all these sorts of pasts at a particular site often comes down to the question of whose history it will be.

At present, there are two major dynamics at play in South Africa. On the one hand, there emerges the push to tear down the valorizing monuments of apartheid figures of oppression and to rethink the tradition of musealization (Huyssen, 1995: 14) of indigenous groups in order to counter 'a history of pathologizing objectification' (Coombes, 2003: 242). On the other hand, there is the consumption side of heritage, in which 'new cultural villages are positioning themselves for tourism virtually every day' (Rassool, 2000: 10). Do these two moves truly participate in discrete discursive realms, or do they, in fact, share the same set of limits that frame their very debating of the past, as Appadurai has suggested (1981: 217)? I think that this is the sort of fundamental question to ask ourselves – and the defining line of questioning for any postcolonial heritage project. To rephrase, I wonder to what extent a history that is fundamentally based in

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recognition of particular groups can ever escape a certain exclusionary force, and what are the more systematic limitations of this sort of exclusionary dynamic in terms of democracy and historical inquiry more generally (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh, 2000)?

My research covers the late nineteenth-century South African diamond rush and questions how companies such as the early De Beers came to refashion the city of Kimberley into what, for all intents and purposes, was a nineteenth-century version of an apartheid city. Brutal and mechanical segregation of urban space, the imposition of pass laws and the architecture of the compound all contributed to making the urban landscape of Kimberley in many ways a material foreshadowing of twentieth-century apartheid's urban landscape. The field aspect of my project involved the excavation of an informal roadside hotel and canteen site on the outskirts of the early diamond fields. Such sites emblemized the informal and hybrid communities British corporate forces were responding to in their project of formal segregation. The late nineteenth-century canteen was on the road between the 'river diggings' whose claims were held by poorer diggers (many of whom were African) and the main diggings that became De Beers. Such a roadside site would have seen a diverse and heterogeneous set of individuals. Because marginal hotels and canteens were vilified by mining elites (assumed to be locales of inter-racial illegal diamond buying and alcohol consumption), I was interested to better understand these differentiated spaces – what Foucault (1986) termed heterotopias – as iconic sources of imperial anxiety for this period (Foucault, 1986). I also came to confront how such a locale was unfailingly at odds with popularized notions of what ideal heritage sites were supposed to be, and this was certainly not a candidate for a heritage site. I came to be curious about the implications of its poor 'fit' within heritage, because that also meant that the sort of project it represented, that is, the interrogation of the archives' 'lapses and silences' or sites of hybridity – sites inimical to the colonial project – was somehow at odds with the dominant heritage discourse.

Here it is important to mention that the site of the nineteenth-century Half-Way House was directly adjacent to a much better known rock engraving site, Wildebeest Kuil. I would often stop and chat with the visitors and tourists who had come to view the engravings and think about the local San history. Serious efforts have been put into the site, which is presented as a palimpsest of histories in which the rock engraving site (hundreds of years older than the Half-Way House) was one of a series of historical occupations, of which there is even a later twentieth-century farmhouse. The tourist cannot fail to note the displays featuring historical artifacts, the nineteenth-century historical engravings on the rocks themselves, and the tour of the hill, which itself has indications of the twentieth-century occupations. The average visitor, however, has come to see rock art and resists thinking about the site in such complicated and hybrid terms. This is so even

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as these complex histories – what Morris (forthcoming) refers to as the 'thick texture and open-endedness of a site' – have been drawn out of the site and presented to the visitor, in the narratives of the tour guides, in quite non-essentializing terms. In my discussions with local heritage workers who were involved in one of the new 'heritage learnership programs', it seemed that the common sense was that Wildebeest Kuil was first and foremost a site that was about the San, and any attempts to draw out the complicated palimpsest of the site (indeed for some, the practice of historical archaeology more generally) was a relatively superfluous endeavor. As one heritage worker suggested to me, sites like that of the Half-Way House were 'just *history*' – that is, something to be known, not something to be celebrated under the banner of heritage. The history of the rock art, although it happened to also be home to one of the last San uprisings against the encroaching settlers, was seen as totally distinct from what is commonly referred to as 'the struggle' against colonialism. Moreover, the history of the Half-Way House was seen as little more than a curiosity to visitors, although such sites formed the loci of colonial anxiety during what was perhaps one of the formative periods of British late colonialism.

It is a fact importantly redolent of the conceptual imaginaries which dominate conversation in the new South Africa that the Half-Way House represents a heritage that is unclear to so many – which is to say unclear within the two dominant modes of thinking heritage in the new South Africa, identitarian narratives and anti-apartheid, liberation narratives. It is, perhaps, too closely related to the elite assertion of corporate monopoly and to the 'superfluous men' who would have come to participate in drinking, trading and the negotiation of labor, both above and below the table. The broader material landscape of migrant labor, as it came to intercalate with just such sites as Half-Way House, would seem to be, in some very crucial respects, invisible due to its culturally complex and indissolubly hybrid nature. It would seem untranslatable into the political currency of heritage discourse at present.

During my fieldwork, it seemed that there was a constant and tacit distillation of historical narratives into stories about identities moving towards romantic or tragic victories. Indeed, I asked some of the project participants, who were also involved in heritage work, whether or not the Half-Way House site could conceivably become a heritage site in its own right – or part of a heritage trail exploring the perceived routes of illegal diamond buying and the earliest forms of resistance against colonialism. This struck most as an unlikely prospect because, as I was told, this particular sort of site was only 'history' – nothing important happened here because such sites didn't politically affect the lives of people directly linked to the progression of the anti-apartheid struggle (nor could they represent identitarian claims). In subsequent discussions over the course of more than a year, the fact that

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these places wouldn't pull tourists seemed to underscore, for many people, that this really could only ever be a part of history. Again, it was something to be *known*, not something to be celebrated within the rhetoric of heritage. What was so troubling about this state of affairs was that this distinction was not derived from the site's visitor center, where complexity had been pursued with the utmost care and attention to historical detail, but it seemed to be the inevitable distinction tacitly sought out by visitors and hence to resonate with most entrepreneurial heritage-based businesses. I wondered about these ideas – particularly the notion of 'just history', and I became interested to consider the genealogy of this conceptual distinction. Understanding the political rationalities that were producing such distinctions in the face of so much historical complexity is as much a part of the archaeological mandate as rendering such complexity available in the first place. That is to say, one of the outcomes of my fieldwork was to understand that pursuing and delivering complexity was simply not enough. We have to understand the political forces that distill and distort (or co-opt) this complexity in order to better orient our own projects and modes of engagement. I am not interested in being in the business of pointing out an apparent lack of historical complexity at sites; my point of inquiry indeed starts at a site whose presentation resonated a great deal of sociohistorical complexity and yet at the same time seemingly 'failed' to be entirely within the rubric of heritage. It is important, I would suggest, to understand how this complexity gets reshuffled and reshaped according to local political rationalities.

A few months after returning from the field, I had occasion to look at some of the readings used by the provincial heritage learnership initiative. These learnerships are part of a broader enablement strategy in South Africa, which seeks to empower those who were not able to obtain academic or professional credentials due to the legacy of the apartheid educational system. Specifically, such programs, and there are a handful nationwide, prepare and train local heritage managers for national accreditation in the management of heritage, and, it is worth noting, the majority of people now being hired to work in the heritage sector in South Africa today are coming through these programs. When I read the 'Introduction to Heritage Management' that was used in the classes for this program, I came to realize that it had a very particular discussion of the distinction between history and heritage. It states, 'It is often the mistake in South Africa, that people believe that history and heritage are the same thing. They are not!' (Underpressure Agency, 2005: 12). Continuing, the text in the manual goes on to delineate how subjective history-making can be. The subjectivity of history is quickly linked with the apartheid project and the distorted narratives of Afrikaner mythologies. Heritage, by contrast, is almost exclusively seen through the lens of culture, but it is a conception of culture understood primarily as something 'produced' and 'consumed'. For instance, in illustrating the

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desired production of heritage, the educators urge the learners to consider their style of dress:

1. Does it have any significance in terms of assisting someone else to understand something about my culture?
2. Does it follow a particular tradition or have a particular value?
3. Is it unique to my culture?
4. Has the style originated as a result of certain political or economic factors?
5. Who values this dress and why?

Political factors are elaborated as articulating with heritage: 'How does the governing party want the public to remember and identify itself by?' [sic] (Underpressure Agency, 2005: 19). Further on in the module reader, the 'consumption of heritage' as a concept is introduced. It illustrates that the primary consumer of heritage is the maker of the heritage, the culture or community insofar as 'the production of the heritage forms a part of their formation of identity'. The next in order of importance is, of course, the tourist. It quickly becomes plain to see that history is considered to be a discourse in which heritage is necessarily *situated*, but history, at its very best, seems to be largely devoid of all its political vibrancy and present-day relevance, while, at its very worst, it has become an accomplice to political distortions. This observation could hardly be said to be a novel one in South Africa (Andah, 1995; Pwiti and Nodoro, 1999; Rassool, 2000; Schmidt, 1995). Colonial and apartheid South Africa underwent an exceptional series of educationally and governmentally ordained distortions of the past that were truly unprecedented in the context of the colonial project (Witz, 2003). In light of this fact, it is immensely important to consider how very limiting this new set of priorities can be in the context of heritage-making and identitarian political and self-fashioning.

Indeed, in the final analysis, there is something about this idea of 'just history' that seems to exist not only in excess of heritage, but in fact seems to be, at least in some small part, disabled – or at the very least resented – by heritage. The original *ressentiment* of anti-colonial historical revision has persisted in heritage discourse, it seems to me, to the point where alternative history-spaces become primarily supplemental, and the original trope of romance has yet to make way for new modes of fashioning political selves within modernity (Scott, 2004: 210). Thus, whether we want to replace the concept of heritage with something else or to try to expand the political and academic possibilities the concept of heritage carries, we will need to ask ourselves what exactly are the implicit and unstated assumptions that come in when we take up the language of heritage in contemporary South Africa. So I think we need to take, as deeply emblematic of something historically and structurally very real (and as certainly more than just

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happenstance), the fact that this understanding of heritage sees relevance in history only insofar as it relates explicitly to one of its two dominant forms – that is, either as related to the cultural-heroes of the ANC anti-apartheid struggle, or through communal identity claims. That, in the former case, the limits of heritage have really become this specific is shown clearly by precisely what – even what struggles – cannot count as heritage. One example of this silence, and the one related to my work, is heritage's bracketing of even the early anti-colonial struggle. It is difficult to say what the reasons for this are: perhaps this is because it was directed at British (corporate and state) interests (as opposed to South African – or Afrikaner – nationalism); perhaps this early resistance is seen as still insufficiently politically organized; perhaps this is because this struggle failed (and then left no clear narrative telos to the later struggle). However, it is quite clear, from all that I have said already, that the issues and interests at stake in these early sites were simply too complex to boil down into simple liberatory narratives. For example, a great deal of discussion has begun to emerge about the perception that governmental heritage recognition often now tries to co-opt even the historical figures and events pertaining to other factions of the struggle (such as the Pan Africanist Congress, PAC) within the celebratory histories of the ANC (Friedman, 1999). This has certainly been a consistent accusation towards the government's heritage projects related to the interpretation of the struggle in the events around both the Sharpeville Massacre (the date of which has become Human Rights Day) and the Soweto Uprising (the date of which has become Youth Day). The importance of the distinctions between the ANC and the particular political movements behind those particular moments of resistance, strongly (but not exclusively) associated in the former case with the PAC and in the latter with the Black Consciousness Movement, cannot be overstated theoretically or politically, and they represent deeply antagonistic political ideals which remain very much salient to today (Marschall, 2006).[3] One does not need to side with these other perspectives to see why we should insist on the importance of the conceptual and ideological distinctions they depended on – and on the complex histories, internal to the struggle as well as external, in which these differences emerged as salient. Even if one has a world-view largely in agreement with that of the ANC leadership, do we really think the new democracy will be stronger if it denies the antagonism – and even violence – within the struggle? Indeed, the most profound moment on a recent visit to Robben Island was when a former prisoner, now serving as a guide, acknowledged his own transformation from his initial radicalism to Mandela's more moderate position. Isn't this, ultimately, the real lesson of the struggle and of the challenges of the new democracy, that negotiating our relationships with those who are most justifiably aggrieved – and perhaps those closest to us – may be as much a challenge as dealing with those we actively oppose. The real difficulty is to find

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a path between the twin shoals of our opponents and the excesses of those we want to see as with us.

In the final analysis, I couldn't help but feel that there are many such complex sites, which get reformulated as a result of these dominant discourses within heritage. It therefore becomes important to wonder to what extent accepting the irreducible hybridity and complexity of sites and histories might not just make sense academically but might also provide a better strategic vantage from which to imagine various historically framed political claims.

CONCLUSION

I took away a great deal from my conversations with heritage workers while I was working in South Africa, and I think the issues they raised have important broader implications. My sort of historical project – the genealogy of power and the moments that precede its emergence locally – was not something that easily translated into the notion of heritage in South Africa at all. I believe that the explanation for this lies in the fact that my own theoretical pedigree approaches history from a certain loss of faith in history's redemptive course – and so it was the same for those South Africans with whom I worked, but for very different and much more pragmatic reasons. This failed quality of history's redemption for all, as experienced by all, engenders a sort of moralizing discourse, one that very much is taken up in heritage's claims to provide recognition. This move, in turn, would seem to enshroud history and enter it into a particular form of negative labor that is always already oriented to particular modes of understanding power and personifying power in the past. In her essay 'Moralism as Anti-Politics', Brown discusses this negative labor:

> While moralizing discourse symptomizes impotence and aimlessness with regard to making a future, it also marks a peculiar relationship to history, one that holds history responsible, even morally culpable, at the same time it evinces a disbelief in history as a teleological force. When belief in the continuity and forward movement of historical forces is shaken, even as those forces appear so powerful as to be very nearly determining, the passionate will is frustrated in all attempts to gain satisfaction at history's threshold: it can acquire neither an account of the present nor any future there. The perverse triple consequence is a kind of moralizing against history in the form of condemning particular events or utterances, personifying history in individuals, and disavowing history as a productive or transformative force . . . Having lost our faith in history, we reify and prosecute its effects in one another, even as we reduce our own complexity and agency to those misnamed effects. (2001: 30)

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What Brown describes here is arguably the production of heritage itself. That is to say, when history becomes infused with a moralized force, a consequence of this move is that it is delimited to only particular sorts of narratives, and this is precisely what happens when history comes to be about recognition. When this happens, heritage is what we are allowed to conceive of as redemptive, and the rest will only ever be 'just' history. This trope of the redemptive comes to dominate even the most intimate realms of memory and negotiating identity (Nuttall and Coetzee, 1998: 6). White notes the irony in the fact that this is particularly acute for descendents of migrant laborer families, who simultaneously recognize that 'history grounds the very estrangement from the ancestral past of custom' and 'call on that past and its powers' to amend the wrongs of apartheid (2004: 164). Because no one can recognize themselves or readily celebrate historical redemption in the form of sites such as those along a late nineteenth-century migrant route means that such historical moments – and all the ramifications for the organizing of power and knowledge – in many crucial senses are lost to the public culture of heritage. This, perhaps, is the most troubling effect of heritage as it enters history into recognition-based identity politics and is certainly worth a great deal more consideration than it currently receives. This sort of instrumentalization of history, whether from the top down through government edicts or the bottom up through community-based initiatives, cannot escape this dynamic at present. This is not to say that history is *ever* outside of its instrumentalization (Dirks et al., 1994), or that substantial good does not come of fashioning these sorts of histories to heal communities, restore dignity and tradition, and bridge the residual social chasms of colonial rule. But there is also important fallout from this realization, which I think is timely to engage. We come to see that heritage – insofar as it is grounded in the politics of recognition – in many important ways will 'always already' displace (or at least render supplemental) ill-defined identity groups, the sites that are important to them, and the complex genealogies of power that explain why these people have 'no' heritage. As a result, history-work can only with great difficulty critically engage our received modes of understanding and grouping people. To engage this dynamic, an important shift would be to take seriously this supplemental form as central and also as fundamentally destabilizing (Stahl, 2001: 16), interrogating that which it supplements, and producing profound reconfigurations of the past – ones that potentially unpack even more of the complexities of historical power, as well as the social categories that these modes of rule sought to deploy. This move resists the depoliticization and relegation of identity claims into the domain of heritage-tourism, and ultimately opens up the parsing of historical narratives to a broader and less moralized range of discourses.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Ellen Boucher, Sarah Croucher, Martin Hall, Erin Hasinoff, Ronald Jennings, Chris Matthews, Sephai Mngqolo, Carrie Nakamura, Matt Palus, Nan Rothschild, Ben Smith and Stephanie Wynne-Jones who have provided direction on this topic through their conversations and comments. I'd like to especially thank Lynn Meskell for her constant guidance and support, and David Morris for his incredible generosity while I was in Kimberley. Finally, I thank the anonymous reviewers for their very thoughtful and perceptive commentary. This dissertation research was made possible with funding from the Social Science Research Council, Mellon Council on Library and Information Resources, the American Historical Association and the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University.

Notes

1 Indeed, some groups have been banished to a premature extinction: for instance, the president actually referring to the San as a 'perished people' in a 1996 public speech marking the adoption of the Republic of South Africa's Constitutional Bill.

2 Section 2 of the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 forecloses land claims for any land dispossessions that occurred before 1913. This was part of the original constitutional compromise between the parties which brought about democracy, but it serves to invalidate claims by many South Africans (and the San almost completely).

3 Thus the date of the Sharpeville Massacre on 21 March 1960 has been named by the ANC government as Human Rights Day, and the Sharpeville Memorial and Sharpeville Resource Center are sited in what is called the Human Rights Precinct. This despite the fact that the Sharpeville pass law protests, which led to the killings of 69 people, were the project of Robert Sobukwe's Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), and the PAC represented the so-called 'Africanists' who had split from the ANC and who followed a philosophy of racially assertive sense of nationalism, active mobilization of the masses, and who rejected the ANC's multiracialism. Thus, the Sharpeville protests were not just supported by the ANC, they were scheduled so as to preempt an ANC campaign scheduled for the following month. What is more, Sharpeville is generally understood as the signal moment in the transition to armed resistance in South Africa. The massacre led to the banning of both the PAC and the ANC, and this, as well as the brutality of the Nationalist government's response, gave the upper hand to more radical elements in the struggle – as well as becoming one of the catalysts for the creation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, and Poqo, the military wing of the PAC. Similarly, the date known as the Soweto Uprising, 16 June 1976, is now officially celebrated as Youth Day in South Africa. The government has recognized the event through the creation of the Hector Pieterson Memorial – in memory of the young student killed by police in the protests and memorialized in a famous photograph. The protests were directed against the new requirements of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in schools established by the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974, and they were led

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by the students of the Soweto Students' Representative Council (SSRC) Action Committee, students associated with and actively supported by Stephen Biko's Black Consciousness Movement – which, of course, had emerged as a critique of the ANC and was (and for supporters remains) significantly at odds with it.

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