

# 5

## SELLING THE PAST

### Commodification, authenticity and heritage

Figuring out how to stop or stave off forgetting is becoming a huge business.  
Eric Gable and Richard Handler<sup>1</sup>

An anxiety repeatedly voiced in the memory phenomenon is that the past is being commodified. History is becoming business; money is being made out of memory; and Europe is turning into a market of heritage attractions. Welcome to *Memorylands*, the European heritage theme park!

Central to this concern is not just that there is money to be made from marketing the past, but that, deluged by a proliferation of standardised historical forms produced for tourists, Europe's populations will lose their sense of their own identities as they are manipulated into putting on performances of themselves or their pasts for commercial ends. Real diversity will be swept away in a barrage of predictable forms of superficial difference. Historically themed places will be manufactured as part of an essentially standardizing identity industry. Heritage, by these accounts, is a noisy cultural form, an artificially manufactured memory practice, dominated by the market, which risks drowning out 'authentic' relationships with the past.

We have already seen the contours of this debate in previous chapters, especially in concerns about invented traditions and the commercialised dimensions of nostalgia; and will meet them again in discussions of 'musealisation' in the following. They are also reflected in wider debates central to the anthropology of tourism,<sup>2</sup> in which tourism is conceptualised as a kind of 'cultural contamination' (Meethan 2001: 90), with 'commodification' cast as the principal pollutant, and heritage or cultural performance that requires payment to view regarded as inherently inauthentic. In this chapter I explore some of the

arguments and assumptions involved in this position through anthropological research on Europe. While giving attention to the ways in which the past is being marketed and to consequences of this, I am also interested in the fact that anxieties about the memory phenomenon – in academic analyses and local discourses – so often centre upon commodification. To couple terms such as ‘industry’, ‘business’, ‘commerce’, ‘market’ and ‘money’ to ‘heritage’, ‘history’, ‘the past’, ‘identity’ and so forth seems itself a kind of sacrilege. Certainly, strong arguments have been put forward about the commodification of the past and why it might be cause for concern, and anthropologists of Europe have reported cases of standardisation and a loss of diversity, as we will see below. Nevertheless, I suggest that the prevalence of commodification anxiety discourse also merits attention as an ethnographic phenomenon in itself. The opposing of the ‘spheres’ or ‘assemblage elements’ of heritage/memory/identity, etc., on the one hand and commodities/industry/the market on the other is itself a distinctive feature of the European memory complex.<sup>3</sup>

The axis of this opposition is authenticity. Put overly crudely, the market is typically considered inauthentic – as concerned only with profit; and heritage is valued for its promise to provide ‘something more’, ‘something real’ – the authentic. So when the two come together, this is oxymoronic and unsettling. It is worth noting here that if authenticity is indeed about ‘objective’ qualities of a thing, such as its origins and age, then the idea that it becomes less authentic when it is treated as a commodity is rather odd. Why should it be considered any the less ‘genuine’ just because it can be bought and sold? As we will see, there is a lot ravelled up in this, not least, both specific and variable ways in which ‘authenticity’ is understood and performed. These contribute to particular effects, dilemmas and paradoxes involved in heritage practice, including techniques such as official heritage listing – something which is both part and not part of marketing the past and which is also proliferating in the contemporary memory phenomenon.

### Commodification and inauthenticity

A classic account of cultural commodification is Davydd Greenwood’s ethnographically-based account of a ritual called the *alarde* in the Basque town of Fuenterrabia (1989/1972). The *alarde* is a commemoration and celebration of a seventeenth-century siege that the town successfully endured. In the ritual, the townspeople come together, ignoring status differences that might normally divide them, and collectively perform a sense of equality and of Basqueness, in opposition to outsiders. As Greenwood emphasises, ‘*it is a performance for the participants, not a show*’ (1989: 176, original emphasis). Nevertheless, during the expansion of tourism in the 1960s the *alarde* increasingly became a magnet for tourists seeking out ‘local color’ (1989: 172). Indeed, so popular did it become that the town could not accommodate all those wishing to view it. In response, the municipal council decided to charge tourists and to stage the ritual twice

on the same day. As Greenwood reports, however, this was highly detrimental to local people's sense of the meaningfulness of the ritual. Outsiders became a legitimate presence at the event rather than its symbolic other. They had, in effect, bought the right to view it. Something that had been part of an authentic culture, thus, became instead a commodity, 'rob[bing] people of the very meanings by which they organise their lives' (1989: 179).

This loss of meaning was not, however, simply the result of making the viewing of the ritual available for a price. Also at issue was a transformation involved in the shift from performance to show; a shift that Greenwood casts as a transformation in the nature of 'culture' itself. Prior to becoming a show for tourists, the meanings of the ritual were encoded in its practice – they were *implicit*. Greenwood regards tacit meaning as characteristic of authentic culture. In performing the ritual for paying tourists, however, the meanings became *explicit*. For Greenwood this means that 'culture' loses its significance – it is, we might say, 'de-meaned'. Generalising from this, Greenwood argues that tourism almost always and inevitably involves a loss of meaning for those who put their culture on display.<sup>4</sup>

Dean MacCannell's celebrated work on tourism is similarly concerned with the ways in which display may render practice inauthentic. He employs the notion of 'staged authenticity' (1989) to highlight what he sees as the ersatz nature of that which the tourist is offered. He regards tourism as a quest after the authentic – a quest that is inherently doomed because, as soon as anything is presented to tourists, it is necessarily 'staged', so rendering it inauthentic. If this is a dilemma for the tourists avidly seeking 'the real thing' it is even more so for those putting their cultures and heritages on display for touristic consumption. The latter involves what MacCannell calls 'a kind of going native for tourism' (1992: 159), which puts its performers in danger of 'a distinctive modern form of alienation, a kind of loss of soul' (MacCannell 1992: 168). This alienation stems, according to MacCannell, from commodification, a process in which phenomena such as ethnicity or authenticity cease simply to 'be' and to have *use-value* in everyday life-worlds but instead come to have *exchange value* in a cultural system that peddles numerous formulae for translating between, or exchanging, things and categories that would normally be thought incommensurable. The market and market-values subsume everything 'to the exclusion of all other values' (MacCannell 1992: 169). Nothing is valued in itself but only as currency. Moreover, he suggests, there is a standardisation that accompanies this process. Although standardisation may adopt a veneer of variation – such as a superficial appearance of cultural difference that is presented to the tourist – it works in fact to iron out real, authentic, difference.

In a more recent work, *Ethnicity, Inc.*, (2009) John and Jean Comaroff offer a similar argument along slightly different lines. Observing people around the world seeking to market themselves and their culture through distinctive ethnicity, they argue that this does not mean a weakening of cultural identity, as MacCannell assumes, but that it has become its means of affirmation. Gaining

more 'sales' – literal and metaphorical – of their 'ethnic' products and selves, is a means by which those marketing their culture in these terms accrue rather than lose value. Although the Comaroffs claim that this gaining of value from circulation makes the 'ethno-commodity' 'a very strange thing indeed' (2009: 20), it is surely not so unusual in commodity terms – there are other products that become more desirable as they become more widely known about (this is the point of advertising). It is only strange if we think that it is ethnicity (and its manifestation as heritage) that is up for sale and that it will, therefore, have new owners once it is bought. But we do not usually assume that selling a product is also selling the people who made it – even if qualities about them are used to sell the product. So, to return to an example from [Chapter 2](#), when French wine is sold there are not concerns about this as an alienating selling of people, even though the qualities of Frenchness and *terrain*, or specific châteaux, may be used in selling. Although the Comaroffs add cautions about historical contingency and 'material exuberance' (2009: 146, 23; after Mazarella 2003), like MacCannell, they too regard what they call 'the identity industry' (2009: 24) as producing greater sameness, working according to a common, if not invariant, neo-liberal logic. This involves subjects operating according to self-directed economic calculation as choice-making consumers or entrepreneurs – 'ethno-preneurs' as they put it for those engaged in 'the ethnicity business' (e.g. 2009: 27).

Below, I address these arguments by looking at some anthropological research on heritage and tourism in Europe, including a sustained example from my own fieldwork in the Scottish Hebrides. As we will see, there undoubtedly is much evidence of marketing places and products through forms and ideas about heritage and the past; and local people as well as academics may be concerned about commodification and authenticity. But to interpret these concerns straightforwardly as evidence of commodification and a loss of authenticity does not get at all that is involved.

### **Culture and enterprise in *The Skye Story***

Like a number of anthropologists working in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, I found that the making of heritage and museums, and debate about whose history should be displayed and how, was going on around me – and, as such, demanded attention in relation to my focus on identity and history.<sup>5</sup> A heritage centre or museum can be seen as an instance of what John D. Dorst refers to as an 'auto-ethnography' (1989: 4) – a text that 'culture' has produced about itself (1989: 2). It is a formalised and self-conscious cultural account, though one that inevitably bears the imprint of more than its makers' conscious intentions. By looking at both the 'text' – the finished exhibition – within the surrounding cultural context, and also discussing its making and aims with its makers, an auto-ethnography of this sort can help to highlight the preferred histories that are being told and also the particular conceptions of history, identity, commodification, authenticity and related elements that are in operation.

In 1993 a new heritage centre opened in the Isle of Skye's capital, Portree. Called *Aros: The Skye Story*,<sup>6</sup> I chose to look at it as it seemed a telling case for ongoing debates about heritage, as well as being part of the fieldwork context in which I had worked for a decade. At first sight, it was a typical example of the kind of tourist-oriented heritage centre that was springing up at the time, and had various features that suggested that it might well be an epitome of the commodification and inauthenticity that critics such as MacCannell were decrying. It employed exhibitionary technologies that were often regarded as part of a relatively ersatz or even fake heritage: namely, models and reconstructions, bought from specialist heritage companies that were also proliferating at the time, and that were supplying many of the new heritage centres springing up around Europe and beyond. It contained very few 'old things' – in contradistinction to the museum of folk-life that I will discuss in the next chapter; and it was located in a prefabricated building, erected specifically for the purpose. Tourists were an intended audience – its audio commentary was available in French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish as well as in English and Gaelic. But, as I learnt, tourists were not the *only* ones at whom it was aimed.

The centre had been established by two men in their thirties who had been brought up on Skye – Donald and Calein – both of whom were Gaelic-speakers and had been involved in various Gaelic revival projects on the island. This revival had taken off during the 1980s, with a wide range of developments aimed at preserving the Gaelic language and community. It included educational projects, such as increasing the use of Gaelic in schools, cultural projects, such as community history initiatives, and economic projects, such as the establishment of community cooperatives. This was part of the broader ethnic revival – sometimes called 'ethnic resurgence' or 'ethnonationalism' – underway in many parts of Europe, especially the peripheries with longstanding minority languages.<sup>7</sup> Donald and Calein were part of a generational group who would previously have had to leave the island to find work but who now, with the expanding Gaelic revival, were able to tap into some of the new possibilities, including new funding sources, to become revival entrepreneurs – or what the Comaroffs call 'ethno-preneurs' (2009: 27). As Donald described it to me, he and Calein were 'looking around for something new' to do in the late 1980s and a visit by Calein to the Jorvik Viking centre in York – one of the most renowned and successful of the heritage developments of the new 'heritage industry' at that time – inspired them to investigate doing something along those lines in Skye.

Donald's account of making the centre and of his own wider experience of the revival made it clear that he did not see a gulf between enterprise and Gaelic culture. He referred, for example, to 'the revival or business or whatever you call it', taking them as synonymous; and he accounted for his own participation in the revival in terms of the life experience that turned him into an enterprising person. He was aware that some – such as an older generation or those who looked at the Hebrides as a repository of qualities lacking in the urban,

industrialised and rational world – did see calculated business activity as running against the grain of local, Gaelic, culture; and perhaps he was also aware of a wider critique at that time of entrepreneurial activity as at odds with ‘authentic culture’ (e.g. Corner and Harvey 1991). But he regarded this as a view that needed to be challenged. Challenging it also meant refusing to locate Gaelic culture and language just in the past, or as separate from wider socio-political developments. The heritage centre – and its exhibition, *The Skye Story* – were a means of doing this.

### Inalienable heritage

One running theme of the exhibition was about the survival of the Gaelic language and culture over time in the face of oppression. This was a direct counter to a widespread discourse about Gaelic decline; and it served to depict the current revival and its various developments as part of a longer history of popular struggle and resistance. At work here was also an interesting conception of *heritage*. The Gaelic subtitle for the heritage centre was *Dualchas an Eilein*, which can be translated as ‘heritage of the Island’ (*An Eilein*, ‘the Island’, being used colloquially to refer to Skye). However, *dualchas* means heritage in rather a specific sense. Most Gaelic-English dictionaries list *oighreachd* as the standard translation of *heritage*. *Oighreachd* refers to material property that is inherited from generation to generation. *Dualchas*, by contrast, refers to more intangible matters of nature, character and duty. The following glosses are given in Gaelic’s most comprehensive dictionary, which also notes the difficulty of translating the term into English:

1. Hereditary disposition or right. 2. Imitation of the ways of one’s ancestors.
3. Bias of character. 4. Nature, temper. 5. Native place. 6. Hire, wages, dues.
6. [sic.] Duty.

(Dwelly 1977/1911: 367)

*Dualchas* is something to which one is obviously and undeniably connected and for the most part from which one is inseparable. It might manifest itself in various ways (a child is not identical to its parents), and might be put to various uses, but at root it is inalienable: it is kept even while it is passed on (as from one generation to the next).

According to anthropologist of Melanesia, Annette Weiner, this idea of the inalienable, and its embodiment in material form, is a very different kind of relation to objects than that of commodity relations (Weiner 1992).<sup>8</sup> In commodity exchange, ownership is transmitted from seller to buyer. ‘Inalienable possessions’, by contrast, are kept for as long as possible or, if they are passed on, stolen by or lent to others, are not fully disconnected from their original owners but remain ‘imbued with [their] intrinsic and ineffable identities’ (Weiner 1992: 6). Her main examples are drawn from Melanesia, especially

the armshells and necklaces that are exchanged in the system known as *kula*, famously described by Malinowski (1922), but she also notes the Crown Jewels, the Elgin Marbles, heirlooms and art works among Western instances. Such objects are what she calls 'symbolically dense' (1993) to varying degrees: that is, they are regarded as rich in significance and many stories are told about them. Over time, this symbolic density, and their value, usually increases. This means too that inalienable possessions are likely to play roles in what she calls 'cosmological authentication' (1992: 9) – asserting the legitimacy of the social identities of their owners. In addition, because of their relative persistence over time and resistance to the movement of exchange, 'inalienable possessions' act, she says, as 'stabilizing forces' (ibid.). This does not mean, however, that they are necessarily uncontested. On the contrary, others might want to possess them, especially as they may accrue particular value from the fact that they are kept out of the market. In addition, because of their role in cosmological authentication, they may become a focus of struggles for change. This does not mean that inalienable possessions never change hands; but just that even if they do so they are somehow still partly 'kept' due to the link with their original owners. Neither does it mean that they exist in settings that are fully outside the market. On the contrary, they may be surrounded, and even sustained, by accompanying exchanges of alienable things.

Heritage would seem to be an inalienable possession in these terms (cf. McCrone *et al.* 1995: 197). It is dense in history and symbolic significance and tightly bound to the identity of a particular people and/or place. It is properly kept, though its ownership may be contested. What are called the Elgin Marbles in the UK and the Parthenon Marbles in Greece are a clear example of this, Greece putting more emphasis upon origins and the UK on subsequent aspects of the sculptures' history.<sup>9</sup> More widely, however, the notion of inalienable possession opens the possibility for non-owners to come to learn and admire, and to take away souvenirs, knowledge, images and memories, without this leading either to a diminishment of what is 'kept' by the people nor to its recasting in commodity terms. This, we should note, is very different from the argument of the Comaroffs who regard heritage as 'identity in tractable, alienable form, identity whose found objects and objectifications may be consumed by others and, therefore, be delivered to the market' (2009: 10).

### **Dualchas: *inalienable dispositions***

Inalienability in the sense described by Weiner does seem to be characteristic of *dualchas*. It is what endures – what keeps its identity – over time, through any exchanges (such as inheritance) that occur. As such, it is not conceptualised as a commodity and nor does it have 'commodity candidacy' – i.e. the likelihood of becoming a commodity (Appadurai 1986: 13). It is less clear, however, that *dualchas* is a 'possession'. First, it does not refer to specific objects or a body of material culture. Second, rather than being something owned by persons –



and thus separable from them – it is, rather, in the words of Dwelly (above), a ‘disposition’. That is, it is a quality of persons – their ‘character’, ‘nature’, ‘temper’. As such, it hardly seems to be the kind of thing to be available for sale or exchange.

This distinction – between possession and disposition – might seem slight, especially in light of the argument that I made in [Chapter 1](#) that in Europe persons are widely conceptualised in terms of a Lockean forensic model in which property is thoroughly entangled with personal identity. Yet, I suggest, it is precisely because property can be detachable that certain predicaments of the European memory complex occur – such as the Estonian ghosts discussed in the previous chapter; and it also accounts for some of the often rather bizarre arguments of economic anthropology. In addition, it is part of the reason why commodification is such a concern, as I discuss further below. What the example of *dualchas* shows, however, is that heritage does not need to be understood and acted in this way.

*Dualchas*, then, is a particular way of being or going about things. As such, it might be manifest in particular social relations and encounters. This includes in relations of contact with ‘outsiders’, about which there is a good deal in *The Skye Story*. However, rather than corrupt or dilute ‘heritage’, as a proprietorial model might have it, these interactions manifest or even produce *dualchas*. *The Skye Story* has no problem with showing Gaels making use of outside agencies or practices. Primary origins are not what matter. What does matter is the disposition involved, and how other things or events are related to through it. Note here too that one meaning of *dualchas*, according to Dwelly, is ‘hire, wages, dues’. From a perspective that sees heritage and economics in different, and even opposing, spheres, this appears strange – a mere homophone perhaps. If we understand it, however, as a particular way of going about things that endures over time, and that looks to past practice as a model for the future, then it is explicable that one term might cover both of these. It is also perhaps not so strange if we follow Keith Hart’s argument that money should be recognised as a means of forming and maintaining social relations, and also carrying symbolic values, rather than reified into a distinct, supposedly impersonal realm (2005). At least some concerns over commodification stem, then, from beginning with a model in which money/the market/commodities are regarded as antithetical to other kinds of supposedly less superficial values. Hart provocatively suggests that this model is widely held by anthropologists because ‘they don’t like money and they don’t have much of it. It symbolises the world they have rejected for something more authentic elsewhere’ (2005: 160). It is, of course, not only anthropologists who hold this model – though we are perhaps especially susceptible to the lures of alternative rewards (cf. also Bendix 2008). Indeed, as Hart observes, it is part of a dualism between market and home – one the space of wage-labour and the other of more personal relations – that is widespread in the West (2005: 166). As we see here, a version of this dualism thoroughly infuses debates about commodification and heritage in the European memory complex.



## History, myth and story

Thinking about heritage as a disposition also opens it up to questions about who is relating to it and from what particular position: of whose disposition is a particular account a manifestation? This is evident, I suggest, in an emphasis on *positioning* – or vantage-points – in Donald's carefully differentiated use of the terms 'history', 'story' and 'myth'. As he explains, the exhibition was not only aimed at tourists but also at:

the people. It's for the ordinary person who lives on a croft, really... It's aimed at a lot of people, you know, whoever's interested in their history and in their culture who wants to get a wee bit extra from what they would get in most of the story books... We find that a lot of [local people] are not well versed in their history... There's an awful lot of myths told about their history. So we feel that ... somebody had to deal with them.

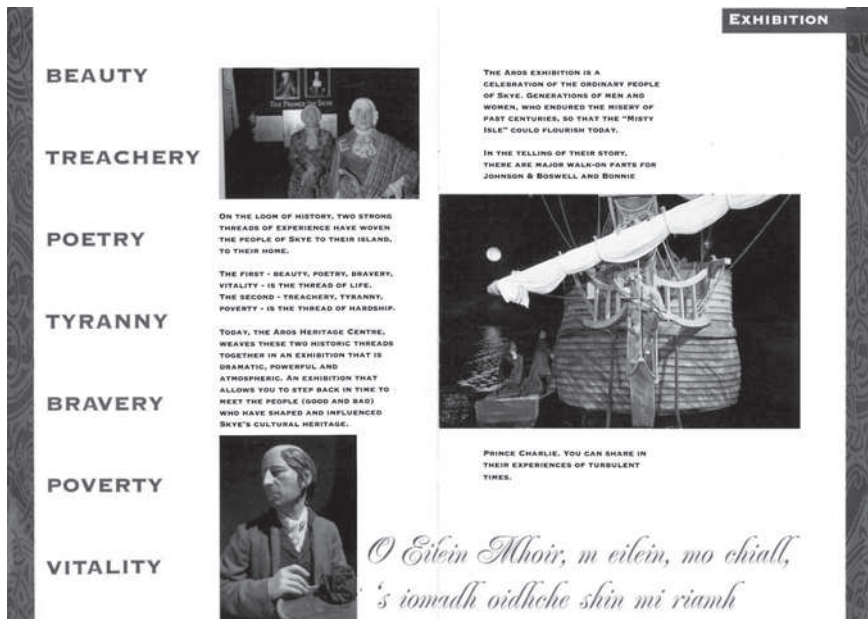
History, according to this account, is told through different 'stories' – accounts from different vantage-points. He says:

The story we tell is very different from what is told elsewhere in Skye, especially Dunvegan Castle [ancestral home of the MacLeod chiefs] and Clan Donald [home of the MacDonald chiefs]... It is a very different story, told from a different point of view.

Although he expresses some respect for these centres, and although his description of all of the different versions of the past as stories might appear relativist – each manifests its own particular disposition – his use of the term 'myth' shows that he does not regard all equally. Myths are incorrect histories in his account; and part of the aim of *The Skye Story* is to provide *truer* alternatives to those told in Skye's more aristocratic heritage venues. All might be products of their dispositions but some can still be factually wrong.

One example of this is how the popular topic of Bonnie Prince Charlie is represented in *The Skye Story*. Rather than depicting the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, led by the Prince, culminating in the Battle of Culloden (1746), as a near triumph of Scotland over England, with the Prince a Highland hero, it is portrayed as a disaster for Highland people. A reconstructed scene of the Prince's sojourn in Skye shows him at the inn where his identity was revealed. This happened, according to the exhibition's account (which Donald tells me is based on some of the little sound evidence available), because the Prince refused to share a drinking cup – as was Highland custom – thus betraying his aristocratic and foreign identity.

In its revelation of usually untold 'stories', the exhibition goes further still. It argues that the Clan chiefs – MacDonald and MacLeod – failed to support the Jacobite rebellion because they had been bribed into inaction for fear of



**FIGURE 5.1** Pages in a leaflet about *The Skye Story*. The image in the lower left of the leaflet shows the innkeeper MacNab recognizing the Prince's true identity as he refuses to share the drinking cup. The image to the right is of the slave ship. Copyright: Aros; reproduced courtesy of Donald MacDonald, Aros

the revelation of their complicity in a 'slave trade' – in which Skye peasants were sent to America as slaves. The most dramatic section of the exhibition is a reconstructed part of a slave ship – referred to as 'The Ship of the People'. The choice to focus on activities labelled 'slavery' is an especially powerful means of conveying the reprehensible nature of the activity to visitors, partly because of the parallel historical cases elsewhere – 'multidirectional memory' as Michael Rothberg (2009) would put it – which are thereby evoked. Countering the image of the Clan chief as a paternalistic benefactor is not only a historical matter, however. The role of such chiefs as major landholders, sometimes in conflict with local people (most of whom are tenants of such landholders) over how land should be used, is a continuing one. As such, it is clear that heritage here is far from 'dead and safe', as Hewison characterised it (1987: 144; and see previous chapter) but is, rather, part of a continuing playing out of certain dispositions that have also manifest themselves in the past.

This aim and conception of history also has bearing on the conceptualisation of authenticity. As with the idea of *dualchas* and manifest in the lack of attempt to include real old objects in the exhibition, authenticity here is not about origins or provenance. Instead, it is concerned with the truth to a disposition and to the story – and vantage-point – that deserves to be told. As Donald emphasised to me, the quality of the *research* undertaken for telling this story – for providing this

particular history – was especially important. This, and its capacity to tap into a popular but usually relatively hidden history, is what constitutes authenticity here. Authenticity is a kind of integrity of being and doing things in a certain way. As I argue further below, this is a central way in which authenticity is understood in the European memory complex, though it is not the only one.

## Authenticity

According to Gilmore and Pine, authenticity is ‘what consumers really want’ (2007). It is also remarkably stretchy. As I noted above, the idea that commodification *in itself* renders heritage inauthentic is odd, for usually marketing, advertising and so forth are considered *extrinsic* to the objects, events or persons that authenticity claims are being made about. More commonly, authenticity is thought of as *intrinsic* to the thing – about actual origins, factual histories and the fabric or stuff from which it is made, all of which might be ‘authenticated’ (the verb itself highlighting this particular understanding). This is an ‘objective’ conception of authenticity. When Donald emphasises the importance of ‘getting the facts right’ and the role of research and expertise, he is attempting to set this objective model as the frame for judging authenticity. He does so in awareness both of the fact that this is a dominant, respected means of judging authenticity and also that *The Skye Story* might be judged in other ways – as an inauthentic, commoditised cultural form.

The ethnography of Europe is rich in examples of battles over the authenticity of heritage. These make it abundantly clear that what is at stake is rarely just incorrect facts. They also show that commodification is only sometimes what is at issue. Rather, if heritage is shown to be inauthentic – if it is not what it purports to be – then this throws the authenticity and legitimacy of the related social identity into question. To question the authenticity of somebody’s heritage is generally regarded as equivalent to casting aspersions on their identity claims and usually too, on other qualities, such as their truthfulness. Disputes over the authenticity of heritage – which are often bound up with questions of what is worthy of conservation – are, thus, almost always simultaneously identity contests, battles over whose identity will be projected into the future. This often leads to high passions over matters such as whether a particular building or site should be preserved or not, as shown by examples such as disputes over the restoration of buildings to Venetian or Turkish styles in the Cretan town of Rethemnos (Herzfeld 2001), whether and how to restore parts of the villagescape in Monadières (Hodges 2010) or whether to restore or reconstruct back to pre-Socialist times in post-Socialist Europe, as for example, in the case of the rebuilding of the former *Schloss* on the site of the GDR Palace of the Republic in Berlin (Binder 2009).<sup>10</sup> Such disputes variously mobilise ideas about origins – which is older or ‘who got there first’ (one version of authenticity), or about aesthetics – what is more ‘in keeping’ with the ‘atmosphere’ of the place (another version of authenticity). But they are all simultaneously also political:

which past – and whose – will endure? Moreover, they can also determine access to resources – and tourists – as Mary N. Taylor argues in an analysis of Hungarian folk dance revival movements (2009). This is not to say, however, that ‘authenticity’ is simply a label that can be instrumentally applied however participants wish, with the most powerful group winning out. As we will see further below, there is more to authenticity than this, which is why it is so central to the memory complex and memory phenomenon.

### ***Real versus fake heritage in Pogoni***

An important first point to make here is that it is not necessarily the case that each ethnically distinctive group will seek to make its mark on the city or landscape – that all will want *their* pasts to predominate and be judged as most authentic in order to assert their identity with place. This is a particular, if common, model of heritage and authenticity that is not universally deployed. Sarah Green’s intricate discussion of considerations of heritage and authenticity in the town of Delvinaki in the Pogoni region of Greece, close to the Albanian border, shows this well. Although the town was divided into three different neighbourhoods, each of which consisted predominantly of one particular group – Vlachoï, ‘ordinary Greeks’ and gypsies – there was a shared ‘strong disinclination to mark differences’ (2005: 237) as this might be socially divisive. A result of this, however, was that the town was unable to make claims based on the more locally distinctive cultural heritage that is usual in applications to the EU for cultural heritage developments. Rather than applying to the EU for money for a specific cultural heritage, then, Delvinaki made an application for general restoration of ‘a generic kind of cultural heritage... It was a “just Greek” kind of cultural heritage’ (ibid.).

That did not mean, however, that the authenticity of cultural heritage was uncontested. On the contrary, there was much disagreement over developments to make the town appear more ‘traditional’ and thus more appealing to tourists. For some inhabitants, including the town’s mayor, to do so was ‘fake’ (2005: 243). This stemmed partly from a mixed set of understandings about modernity and modernisation more generally, which, for some, including the mayor, entailed ‘progress’ and ‘radical change’, whereas for others would be slower processes that would, finally, ‘emerge from the pores of those who had lived their “authentic” traditions’ (2005: 247). For the latter, authenticity and tradition were precursors to proper modernizing development. For the mayor, however, ‘possessing “authentic” tradition depended ... on people’s being “properly” modern: only such people would be able to recognise the “real tradition”’ (ibid.) – as opposed to the ‘fake’ versions being put in place by heritagising programmes.

Here authenticity acts as an axis between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ – a dualism related to that between ‘heritage’ and ‘market’. Modernisation that entails restoration to an apparent past seems to be especially unsettling, resulting in the considerable reflexivity over authenticity among Delvinaki inhabitants.



**FIGURE 5.2** Church in the Pogoni region having plaster removed to restore it to a more 'traditional' state. The plaster was applied in earlier years to 'modernize' the church. Photograph and caption courtesy of Sarah Green

What we see here too is a struggle over identity and authenticity, played out not through 'ethnic' or related categories but through ideas about tradition and modernity themselves. Only some people, according to the mayor at least, will be sufficiently modern to recognise the authentic, which includes the legitimately ersatz. The detail of this struggle shows that what is involved is not a straightforward instrumental use of the term 'authenticity' but a more complex attempt to comprehend and shape what is involved in the unsettling social changes underway, and the new forms of authenticity and of social differentiation that emerge in the process.

### ***Reflexivity – re-living the Indian in Europe***

It is not surprising that there should be so much reflexivity over authenticity as the memory phenomenon throws up dilemmas of what might or might not be considered genuine. Rather than being a definition ready-made for application, 'authenticity' is itself shaped, nuanced and often repeatedly contested in relation to the specific contingencies of practice that people face. This is an ongoing process in which these various understandings themselves have consequences – for social differentiations, practice and the heritage produced. Nowhere is this more so than in the case of historical reconstructions or re-enactments.<sup>11</sup>

Petra Tjitske Kalshoven shows this with particular insight and subtlety in her in-depth ethnography of Indianist groups in Germany, Belgium,

France, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and the UK (2010, 2012). While reconstructions of this sort are often thought to be about an attempt to copy or imitate Native American life, Kalshoven shows that more complex calibrations of authenticity are practised. Indianists know full well that any kind of complete replication of Native American life would be impossible, but authenticity remains important to them. How they understand this is in terms of attempting to 're-live and re-experience' that life. (The German-speakers use the terms *nacherleben* and *nachempfinden* (2010: 66).) This 're-living' is understood as more authentic than imitation, which would be a surface, 'mere dressing up' activity, regarded as 'insincere' by serious Indianists, who locate authenticity instead in an honest and serious 'quest for knowledge' (2010: 69), and 'a feeling of connectedness to these [Indian] cultures' (2012: 168). Differentiations between Indianist groups, and members of groups, still take place, as they variously engage in this quest. For one group, for example, the wearing of Wellington boots in wet weather may be an acceptable compromise within the larger aim of reliving Indian life in a field of teepees, while for another it is evidence of that group's not taking the aim seriously enough. Importantly, Kalshoven emphasises that these matters are not just argued about but for the most part are embodied in practice. Indianism itself entails 'sensuous practice' in which the body 'becomes a prime tool for enquiry into the material cultures of the past' (2010: 61). For this reason, there is often



**FIGURE 5.3** Dog Soldiers Society, Indian Council, 2004. Photograph courtesy of Petra Tjitske Kalshoven



considerable striving for accuracy in learning traditional craft techniques. While as far as possible this also entails using natural materials of the kind that Native Americans might have used, compromises are made and modern substitutes sometimes made. But this does not compromise their quest for a sincere attempt to seriously engage with the past. This possibility is what attracts Indianists to become Indianists. Authenticity thus matters to them deeply.

Kalshoven's work puts strong emphasis on the sensory, embodied and material dimensions of engagement with the past, showing authenticity as thoroughly embedded in practice. It shows too that Indianists cannot – in their own terms – count whatever they please as authentic. They must also contend with what is known about the traditional life that they try to relive and the materials that are available to them. In the next section, I continue this interest in the place of the material and sensory in relation to authenticity, returning also to questions of commodification and standardisation.

## Real food

What we might call 'edible heritage' is the subject of a growing ethnographic literature, some of which has been mentioned in [Chapter 2](#) (in relation to wine) and [Chapter 4](#). As discussed in the latter, food is materially and sensually evocative, a powerful 'conveyor' of memory through its synaesthetic effects. Moreover, the fact that it is produced in a particular location gives it a charged link with place. Yet at the same time it is often relatively mobile, though this depends in part on what it is made from and the availability of techniques such as refrigeration and transport. All this makes it a form of heritage that is potentially especially available for the market – and for struggles over authenticity both as part of what might sell a product and as 'something else'.

### *Artisanal authenticity: Grand Cru chocolates in France*

In a lively account of the way in which makers of Grand Cru chocolates in France disparage Belgian and mass-produced chocolates for their lack of authenticity, Susan Terrio highlights the way in which certain qualities – such as relatively low sugar content – come to be defined, in contradistinction to the other kinds of chocolate, as characteristics of 'authentic' high quality chocolate. She includes discussion of her own induction by a master chocolate-maker into appreciating the qualities of the authentic product and becoming able to distinguish these from those that the Grand Cru makers count as inauthentic. Her nervousness about getting this wrong and showing herself up as lacking proper taste and discernment, and her search for clues as to what the correct responses would be, show well how shared understandings of what is authentic can be transmitted. She also shows how features of the making of the chocolate become part of notions of authenticity. In particular, she argues that craft products,



unlike mass-produced commodities ... do not require significant cultural work on the part of consumers to be moved from the realm of the standardized, impersonal commodity into the realm of personalized gift relations ... Craft products do this cultural work for consumers; they make visible both a particular form of production (linking the conception of a product to its execution) and its attendant social relations... Produced in limited quantities, using traditional methods and/or materials, they evoke uninterrupted continuity with the past.

(Terrio 1996: 71)

In other words, there are certain qualities of the production methods of these particular chocolates – or, as she also refers to it, of the ‘historicity of these goods’ (ibid.) – that make them especially amenable to becoming part of authenticity discourse. What is at work here is a contrasting of different kinds of *things* as carrying different kinds of histories and social relations – and an attendant relativity of authenticity. I will return to this point below.

First, however, let me note that Terrio’s account helps to articulate what it is about craft and artisanal products that makes them especially appropriable into discourses of authenticity. This is widespread in Europe, and indeed elsewhere; and more recently has become part of the ‘Slow Foods’ movement too – as part of what Grasseni refers to as ‘the timescape of authenticity’ (Grasseni 2005). As Terrio explains of the chocolates, it is because they are positioned as part of a mode of production that is regarded as somehow separate from – and even counterposed to – the world of the market and mass-production that they readily fit authenticity criteria. Rather than being part of the cold, rational relations of the market, they are presented as coming from a different world of more personalised forms of exchange. Of course, they are in fact thoroughly part of the market but there is enough in the way in which they are made, and in their actual histories, to position them as though they are not. How much this is invented or draws on actualities varies considerably and the image and discourse of authenticity – for example through presentation as artisanal craft products – are drawn upon in the marketing of numerous types of products. In UK supermarkets today many fruits, vegetables, eggs and cheeses, come in packaging which names the particular farmer whose farm the product comes from; and this is often accompanied by a photograph of him (the farmer is always a rugged male, usually wearing a waxed outdoor jacket, perhaps with cows in the background) in an outdoor setting. The consumer is thus presented with an ostensibly more personalised relationship with the producer. This personalisation is a performance of the authenticity of relationship between producer and consumer.

### ***Ironies of authenticity: slow foods and the standardisation of local products***

There are, however, often ironies in the production of the appearance of the craft or personalised product. UK supermarkets are notorious for making life hard for many smaller farmers, wielding such financial power that they are able to offer very low prices for goods; and they often prefer to buy stock from larger suppliers who are able to ensure more continuous, large-scale and cheaper provision. Both Alison Leitch (2003) and Cristina Grasseni (2005) have identified some of the ironies of the Slow Food movement, founded in Italy in 1996 (Grasseni 2005: 80). Focusing on *lardo*, cured pork fat produced in the village of Colonnata in the Carrara marble-producing area of Italy, Leitch traces the transformation of what was previously a peasant food, despised by sophisticates, to gourmet delicacy as part of the wider European and Slow Food prizing of local and traditionally produced foods. As often happens with a rise in status, commercial copying ensues – and this has been the case with *lardo*. To protect their product, traditional producers attempted to acquire European Denomination of Protected Origin (D.O.P.) status. This required, however, that they use certain standards of hygiene, including non-porous implements in the production process; but to do so would require abandoning the use of marble, due to its porosity. And marble is locally understood as vital to preparing *lardo*, not only for perceived material effects on the pork fat but also, in an interesting material analogy, as its symbolic correlate – white and hard and produced in the area. *Lardo* is simply not *lardo* if not made using the local white stone. In local terms, it is made *inauthentic* if severed from its traditional production in the way that the European Denomination status requires.

In the Auvergne, France, Simone Abram (1996) also observes how EU hygiene requirements alter the production of Cantal cheese in ways that make it less ‘authentic’ to its producers. In Cyprus too, Gisela Welz and Nicholas Andilios (2004; Welz 2007) chart how EU hygiene standards and procedures, and rules about what ‘authentic’ halloumi cheese should contain (in terms of proportions of different types of milk) have driven out small-scale producers in favour of factory production. Ironically, the new ‘guaranteed regional-typical’ halloumi is no longer typical of different parts of the island but a standardised product of Cyprus as a whole.

Even in contexts in which the aim is to reclaim *regional* diversity, as Bernhard Tschöfen (2008) discusses, the workings of the EU food quality assurance systems may have the effect of both reducing intra-regional diversity and also standardizing how regional difference is presented. In fieldwork in Italy among Alpine dairy farmers who make taleggio cheese, and also among participants at many events connected with the Slow Food movement, such as food fairs and exhibitions – including ‘the Milan “Expo of Taste” [and] the Turin “Slow Food Salon”’ (2005: 79), Cristina Grasseni charts the ‘great amount of *creativity* [that] is required to restore “tradition” and to transform it into a commodity-

heritage' (2005: 83). As her fieldwork shows, the ways in which distinctiveness is marketed are increasingly 'through *visual* and narrative strategies' (2005: 84), especially the presentation of locality. This itself, however, is often standardised into clichéd images of, for example, the alpine valley. Far from reclaiming diversity, what results is what Grasseni describes as a 'standardisation of sensory experience' (2005: 86).

Evident in these cases, then, is the market, in conjunction with hygiene regulations, reshaping products, often not in ways that their producers (and sometimes even their consumers) might wish. This is a complex and contradictory process that can lead to differentiation, as when 'heritage foods' are 'rediscovered', or/and standardisation. As we have also seen here, it is a field in which versions of the market-heritage dualism come into play, as in contrasts between craft- and factory-production. They frequently do so, moreover, as local producers themselves emphasise the caring personal, work and material conditions in which their products – unlike those of mass-production – are crafted. At the same time, however, the authenticity value of being outside the market is itself a marketable resource, deployed not only by the local producers but also larger corporations as part of ongoing appropriations and reappropriations that contribute to the dynamism of 'tradition'.

### *Authentic ethnics*

As a final example in this section, let me take the case of 'Turkish' products in Germany, for these show well some of the complexities involved, including relocations of authenticity and related shifts in social relations. The *döner kebab*, as it is usually called there ('donner kebab' being the usual English transliteration), is widely regarded in Germany as the archetypical – and authentically traditional – Turkish food. Introduced by a growing Turkish population into Germany in the 1960s, the *döner* (as it was often abbreviated to) quickly became 'the number one fast-food' (Çağlar 1995: 216), Germans were attracted to it partly by its qualities, but also by its marketing as traditionally Turkish. Stalls selling *döner* would present themselves as Turkish and exotically ethnic, through 'touristic Turkey posters, ... souvenirs from Turkey, and colorful lights' (1995: 217). Yet, as Ayşe Çağlar points out, the food product sold in Germany was not quite like anything on offer in Turkey; the revolving spit of meat was a new innovation and eating meat in bread in this way was not common in Turkey. Moreover, the sort of bread, *pide*, used was normally only available at Ramadan. For Turks living in Germany this prompted a shift in the kind of *pide* that they themselves used at Ramadan: a novel variant being produced only at this time of year (1995: 214).

For non-Turkish Germans the *döner* (symbolically and literally) fed into their pre-existing readiness to seek out and consume authentic ethnic food, partly as an enactment of multicultural openness. Indeed, *döner* came to fill this role to such an extent that the term could be used to express multiculturalism



**FIGURE 5.4** Döner and pizza and pasta: multicultural snack food outlet in Berlin, 2012. Photograph by Sharon Macdonald

(1995: 221). There is, of course, an irony in the fact a product specially adapted to the local market becomes the symbol of acceptable difference. Ironies continue too, as Çağlar argues, as the Turkish population seeks to mark its difference less, through use of English names for their snack-bars – such as McKeBab – or seek to move their product up-market, perhaps through more generalised marketing as middle-Eastern, as part of attempts to avoid derogatory images of Turkishness.

In more recent years, there seems to have been further diversification. On the one hand, *döner* have become just one foodstuff in snack outlets that offer a range of foods, as shown in Figure 5.4. At the same time, however, there has been an emergence of more up-market Turkish restaurants sometimes presenting themselves as ‘Anatolian’ or choosing personalised names (e.g. *Osmans Töchter* – *Osman’s Daughters*) that will not necessarily register as Turkish by possible customers. Other anthropologists have also reported a more recent recasting of Turkish products. Berlin’s Kreuzberg area has a substantial population with Turkish roots and its Turkish Market has begun to be included in tourist guides as a place to visit to see the ‘real life’ of contemporary multicultural Berlin. In 2008, however, the market’s name was changed, to *Bi-Oriental Markt*, thereby managing to tap into ideas about Turkish food as ‘healthy’ that Çağlar also discusses (‘bio’ means ‘organic’) as well as their exoticism (Kaschuba 2008: 41). As Wolfgang Kaschuba observes, this self-referential use of ‘Oriental’ is not, however, just conforming to tourists’ fascination but is also



**FIGURE 5.5** Oriental ambience in a Berlin café. Photograph courtesy of Silke Helmerding

a purposeful reappropriation of an originally ‘othering’ term (ibid.). Using the term ‘Oriental’ is also more usefully encompassing of other kinds of migrants – ‘Arabs’ and ‘Russians’ in the case of Berlin – than is ‘Turkish’, as Alexa Färber points out in a rich discussion of the expansion of water-pipe – *hookah* or *shisha* – cafés in Berlin over the past decade. Some of these present as ‘authentically Arabian’, as one owner emphasised to her, explaining that this meant no alcohol and no belly dancing (Färber 2012: 340); and they cater especially for their local Muslim populations in areas which lack chi-chi coffee shops. Others, however, especially in more mixed and fashionable areas, such as Kreuzberg, make no claims to traditionality or authenticity. Within a generalised ‘Oriental ambience’ they serve up new flavours of tobacco alongside alcohol to their mainly young cosmopolitan clientele (p.342).<sup>12</sup> As Kaschuba argues, this ethnic hybridity is what is now considered authentic urban culture (2008: 39). No longer located in the unchanging tradition of bounded communities, this is authenticity short-term-memory style. For a better grasp of how and why such new forms can also be considered authentic, and more widely how the term authenticity can encompass so much (but not just anything), I make a brief journey into its own history.

### **Authenticities of things and persons**

The Greek word, from which the current term, as used in many European languages (including English, German, French, Spanish and Italian), originated, meant somebody who does something by their own hand. Initially, this included,

intriguingly, suicide or the killing of a relative (Knaller 2007: 10). This sense of 'original do-er' or 'perpetrator' later became partially broadened to incorporate notions of both wider authorship and also authority, though the specific sense of suicide or murder of relatives was lost. According to Susan Knaller, who tracks the use of the word across several fields and centuries, it came to mean genuine, as opposed to counterfeit, only in the eighteenth century, when it was initially used especially in relation to music. Later that century, its relatively juridical senses were supplemented by a use of 'authenticity' to refer to expressions of 'sincerity, naivety, intimacy, transparency, sensitivity and moral sense' (Knaller 2007: 18, my translation). In a conceptual rather than etymological exploration, Lionel Trilling suggests an understanding of authenticity as not simply encompassing or supplementing 'sincerity' but as partly displacing it in what he sees as a significant 'revision of moral life' (1971: 1). Where sincerity entailed a 'congruence [of] avowal and actual feeling' (ibid.) – the sincere person would speak and act in accordance with what they truly felt – Romanticism, compounded later by psychoanalysis, opened up the possibility that one might not know one's 'deep', possibly 'dark', inner self. The authentic, thus, might be 'dark' or even 'mad'. What resulted was an often tortured concern with how to fulfil the requirement to seek, know and express this self; as well as with what form of social and political life could best encourage and accommodate this (Berman 1970/2009). This was all even further pressing, as Marshall Berman argues in his exploration of writings on authenticity in the late eighteenth century, in the face of social change, especially social mobility, and especially as prompted by the growth of capitalism.

An examination of past uses of 'authenticity' highlights, then, a range of meanings, including: the author of, being undertaken with authority, not counterfeit, and a particular moral sensibility. They also apply, variously, to things – for example, to music and art works – and to persons. Susan Knaller argues, however, that it is only in the late twentieth century that there comes to be a use of 'authentic' as part of a mutually reinforcing application to things and people; as in, for example, 'this is an authentic Picasso' and 'Picasso is authentic' (2007: 23).<sup>13</sup> In a blurring of subject and object, the authenticity of the painter reinforces the authenticity of the painting, and vice versa. In addition, 'authenticity' can also refer both to human generality – which makes it attractive to normative and universalizing discourse – and to 'the incomparable individual' (2007: 21). This allows for the paradox of claims both that authenticity is a general quality and that it is always unique. This stretchiness, together with the fact that a use of the term in one context may carry inflections of its use in others, has contributed to what Knaller calls an 'authenticity industry' (2007: 7). It also, we might add, makes it especially likely to be subject to dispute; those arguing perhaps not being fully aware of the different senses in which they are deploying the term. The synchronicity of the authenticity industry with the heritage industry, as part of the broader memory phenomenon, speaks to the fact that heritage has not only been an especially active domain of authenticity discourse, but also been a



key mode of relating and making comparable unique people and things, past and present identities, and, as such, a major producer of ‘authenticity’.

The ethnographic studies above variously show the mutually reinforcing traffic between authentic people and authentic things that Knaller describes. The idea that Alpine farmers have produced taleggio cheese as part of a longstanding tradition and that the cheese contains particular kinds of milk (in this case, from the ‘tired’ cows that give it its name) mutually reinforces the authenticity of both; as does the idea that people with their roots in Turkey are producing an authentic product, using distinctive techniques and ingredients. For the most part, authentic things or practices are invested with long histories and seen as embedded in either continuing or past ways of life and social relations. In the case of the new urban authenticity, however, the bi-directional mapping of people and things still operates – this cultural mixing of people and products is the real Berlin. These new senses – allowed by authenticity’s malleability – do not, however, displace those concerned with tradition and ‘old things’ (see [Chapter 6](#)) and they still seem to promise ways of life and objects that are superior to their ‘less authentic’ alternatives.

### ***Social and object relations of authenticity***

In an interesting analysis that tries to understand why people are still drawn to what they consider authentic – and why it cannot be just anything – Siân Jones suggests that we think about it in terms of ‘networks of relationships between people, objects and places’ (2010: 195) – networks that can extend back into the past too. This contention is based on her in-depth archaeological-anthropological research on the Hilton of Cadboll monument, a late eighth-century Pictish cross-slab in the village of Hilton of Cadboll, Easter Ross, Scotland. Since 1921, the upper part of the cross-slab has been in what was then the National Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh, now absorbed into the Museum of Scotland. Following unsuccessful campaigns by people in Easter Ross to have the stone ‘repatriated’ to them from Edinburgh, a full-size reconstruction was carved and erected in the village in 2000. In the following year the original lower part of the stone was unearthed close to where its replica counterpart stood – and debates ensued about whether or not this join the rest of the cross-slab in Edinburgh. Not surprisingly, perhaps, authenticity was frequently invoked in these debates, as in earlier ones. It was so both through direct uses of ‘authenticity’ and related terms such as ‘genuine’ as well as through affectively charged references to the meaningfulness of the slab, which might be made through talking about it as a person and referring to its social relationships – e.g. as an ‘ancestor’ (2010: 199; 2011).

Authenticity, she suggests, is attributed especially to things or relationships that are able to make connections – not only social but also material (e.g. the identity of the stone in the museum and in the village) and historical, linking past and present. In the case of Easter Ross, she argues that the historical experience of dislocation, especially during the Highland Clearances of the late eighteenth





**FIGURE 5.6** Lifting the rediscovered base of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab in the village of Easter Ross. Photograph courtesy of Siân Jones

and nineteenth centuries, contributes to local people's desire for a locally placed monument that endures over time. The monument, in other words, affords the particular kinds of connections – especially, though not only, temporal – that those she studied were predisposed to seek. Although she does not put it in quite these terms, we might conceptualise this through Weiner's notion of 'symbolic density' (1993)<sup>14</sup> – the authentic is, perhaps, conceived as part of dense networks of meaningful connections. But not anything can do this. Only some objects have sufficiently rich histories and also material qualities – in this case, for example, the cross-slab's intricate designs that are open for comparison and also artistic emulation – to do so. And only some are likely to be able to make the specific connections that particular people might seek or be pleased to discover.

This discussion also raises the question of the particular qualities of different kinds of materials. The fact that the monument discussed by Jones is made of stone means that it has a particular kind of materiality – it is relatively durable, capable of persisting over time.<sup>15</sup> Stone is a substance at once thoroughly natural, from a particular location and often easily identified with a specific geography; and it is usually ancient. Yet it can also be shaped and weathered by natural processes; and cut and inscribed – usually requiring substantial effort – by

human ones. Once altered, stone is not easily altered back. In consequence, natural and human shaping and inscriptions endure over time. Smaller stones are transportable, though relatively heavy, compared with many other substances, for their size. Larger stones are more cumbersome to move and may be immobile if part of a cliff or building. As such, stone is often resistant to moving far beyond its original location (though sometimes it does so). All of these various features of stone's materiality make it physically and practically amenable to certain authenticity practices (e.g. scientific dating; presence in a landscape over time); and also metaphorically resonant in particular ways (e.g. notions of durability or immobility). The fact that monuments are so often made of stone is not only a practical matter. At the same time, however, it is important not to assume that forms made of stone are necessarily regarded as monumental tangible heritage by those involved. Jones's study highlights that it is as much the relationships and stories brought together by the cross-slab that she discusses that matter to those involved. Likewise, in a discussion of Sámi sacred stones, Stein Mathisen (2010) points out that although these look like durable monuments to outsiders, to the Sámi they are sacred spirits with whom Sámi engage in ongoing relationships.

### **Relativities and authenticating authenticity**

While durability – a particular form of temporality – of materials is undoubtedly one significant feature that is drawn on in many European discussions of the authenticity of things, it is certainly not an invariant, as examples above, such as the qualities of food, make clear. In heritage debates, the Japanese emphasis on the continuity of form rather than material durability – at least in relation to buildings – has become an iconic (and perhaps not entirely accurate) case of an alternative conception of authenticity (Cox and Brumann 2010); and this has been significant in informing more complex understandings of authenticity and heritage in heritage management. The challenging case was Japanese temples made of wood, which were usually substantially restored annually, meaning that their materials were certainly not ancient or original (see also Jones 2010; Meyer-Rath 2007). The temples' authenticity lay instead in their location and being reproduced true to form, by traditional methods. At a conference organised by Japanese heritage officials and held in Nara, Japan, in 1994 to discuss the World Heritage Convention definitions of authenticity that had prevailed up to that point – and that put emphasis upon originality and persistence of materials – this example contributed to prompting a more expansive approach to authenticity, recognising that 'it is ... not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria', and declaring instead that 'heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong' (Nara Document on Authenticity 1994).<sup>16</sup>

This relativistic stance struggles, however, with the fact that heritage management – in matters such as selecting for World Heritage listing and so forth – requires some sort of basis on which to operate (see also Strasser 2007).<sup>17</sup>

At issue here too is what Knaller describes as a central ‘paradox’ of authenticity, namely that on the one hand it relates to that which is supposed to be unique and, as such, incomparable, and on the other that it is a universally applicable attribute, and thus capable of being deployed across many cases (2007: 20–21). The fact that it allows this theoretically impossible comparing of the incomparable (unique) is, she suggests, a further reason why ‘authenticity’ has come to be so widely used. But it still does not eliminate problems in operationalising that comparison through lists and rankings. What the document proposes to do so is to refer to the ‘credibility and truth of related information sources’ (Nara Document on Authenticity 1994). In other words, authenticity is to be established through the expert knowledge attached to an object or practice. This need for expert substantiation to make heritage valid has led to a growth of experts engaged in producing documentation. Anthropologists too sometimes find themselves called upon to provide further expertise (see the Tauschek example below), especially with reference to intangible heritage, where evidence of networked relations into an ‘authentic’ community and tradition may be sought.

The other difficulty that the Nara document acknowledges is that while the cultural diversity of evaluations of authenticity and of heritage is recognised, one feature of heritage management, especially since the second half of the twentieth century, is a globalising, transnational development in which heritage is regarded as not just belonging to the specific group of people where it is located but to humanity as a whole. As the Nara document puts it: ‘the cultural heritage of each is the cultural heritage of all’ (ibid.). To accommodate this potentially awkward dual or multiple ownership (and responsibility), the Nara document proposes the following scaled approach:

Responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it. However, in addition to these responsibilities, adherence to the international charters and conventions developed for conservation of cultural heritage also obliges consideration of the principles and responsibilities flowing from them. Balancing their own requirements with those of other cultural communities is, for each community, highly desirable, provided achieving this balance does not undermine their fundamental cultural values.

(Ibid.)

Making this work in practice, however, is part of the difficulty here. In part this is due to the prevalence of the model of distinctively individuated heritage and identity – heritage as ‘cultural property’ that signals individual distinctiveness (Welsh 1997) – as discussed in previous chapters. Markus Tauschek (2007, 2010, 2010a) provides discussion of this in relation to the successful attempt by the Belgian town of Binche to have its carnival listed by UNESCO on its ‘Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity’ list – an



**FIGURE 5.7** Masked figures in the Binche carnival. Photograph courtesy of Markus Tauschek

achievement that it announced to the world with a neon sign. Following the listing, a proposal was made by some of the presidents of societies that had been involved in the carnival to remove the stipulation that participants should be Belgian citizens. Their argument was that as the world was now globalised, town inhabitants of other nationalities, who might well have lived in Binche for decades and participated in other town activities, should not be excluded. The fact that the carnival was now official *world* heritage was evidence of the fact that the heritage was *global* and that it had received UNESCO accreditation as such. But the president of one organisation, who contacted Tauschek to request his assistance, argued that this would run counter to the ‘nature’ – and ‘purity’ – of the tradition itself. Insisting he was not xenophobic, this president argued that ‘carnival had “always” been “protected” from outside influences and that must remain so’ (2007: 217). In the language of the Nara document, the exclusion of outsiders was part of a ‘fundamental cultural value’ of carnival – an argument that is similar to that made by Greenwood about the Basque *alarde*. In the end – at least, by the time that Tauschek completed his research – this argument that the ethnic integrity of carnival should be maintained had won out.

As Tauschek notes, however, in practice exceptions had long been made, usually without this even being remarked upon. This is a useful reminder too, as ethnographic work is unusually able to reveal, that what goes on in quieter contexts, outside the noisier world of disputes or public pronouncements, may be rather different from official pronouncements. This does not mean that the

public or official does not matter – on the contrary, it often does and deeply, and it may shape and constrain what goes on elsewhere. But it is not the whole story, and without knowing what else might be involved we may easily misunderstand what else is at stake.

★ ★ ★

In this chapter we have looked at some of the concerns over commodification and authenticity that have informed heritage debates, and have given attention to some of the insights that ethnographic studies in Europe can bring to these. Questions of economics are never far from discussions of heritage (see also Eriksen 2004). As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett puts it: ‘The moment something is declared heritage, it enters a complex sphere of calculation’, in which processes of *valorisation* (e.g. heritage listing) are followed by those of *valuation* (e.g. working out the income from increased tourism) (2006: 193), which can in turn lead to further valorisation, further valuation and so on (2006: 195). Regina Bendix discusses this in terms of ‘the elaboration from cultural practice to resource’ (2008: 116) and argues that this is not necessarily negative – local actors, as we have seen in some of the cases above and as she discusses with reference to examples including Corsican polyphonic singing, may be well aware of this and seek it out (see also Bithell 2003). Doing so, as Donald at *The Skye Story* discussed above, argued, does not necessarily mean a diminution of meaning and significance for those involved. The presence of the market does not itself necessarily bring a loss of authenticity. But awareness of this risk – a risk of who will control what happens with heritage in future – is what so often leads to heightened authenticity discourse and practice as a means of enabling participants to establish and demarcate a boundary between what they count as ‘true to itself’ and what they do not. How and where this is drawn is not constant – though certain features, as we have seen, recur – and may be the subject of disagreement. That being able to make this distinction matters to people is shown by the ubiquity of concerns – in relation to numerous diverse practices – with authenticity.

The successful expansion and marketing of heritage brings people from elsewhere – either to become inhabitants or as visitors. This is part of heritage’s ‘sticky’ quality (Macdonald 2008). Many ethnographic studies in Europe have described a preoccupation with questions of *belonging*, which is typically played out through discourses of insiders and outsiders, and that is especially prevalent in localities in which long-term inhabitants feel that they are being forced to change their ways to meet the demands of tourists or when they fear they may be supplanted due to processes such as gentrification.<sup>18</sup> Encounters at a local level are often structured through the memory of past histories of relationships with ‘others’ of various kinds. In the Isle of Skye, for example, locals (variously self-referred to as ‘Skye people’ or by the name of the locality) might make reference to the history of bureaucratic intervention in the area (‘the Highland Board’) or

even to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Highland Clearances in dealing with those they dubbed 'strangers' (which included tourists). The original article that I wrote about the *Aros* centre on Skye began with the following joke, versions of which I heard told many times by local people:

There was an old woman [or man] living in township X. One day a couple of tourists come by and start asking her questions. 'Have you ever been outside this village?' they ask. 'Well, yes. I was at my sister's in [neighbouring township] not so long ago.' 'But you've never been off the island?'. 'Well, I have, though not often I suppose.' 'So, you've been to the mainland?' She nods. 'So you found Inverness a big city then?' 'Well, not so big as Paris, New York or Sydney, of course ...' she explains, going on to reveal that she has travelled to numerous parts of the globe.

(Macdonald 1997a: 155)

A longstanding experience of feeling patronised by those coming from other places informed such jokes. As I wrote then:

This is one of a large repertoire of jokes which highlights local people's awareness of touristic images of themselves, their ability to play along with those images, and their enjoyment of subtly disposing of them. It also highlights the conceit of tourists who assign local people only the role of object of the tourist "gaze" (Urry 1990).

(Macdonald 1997a: 155)

I haven't heard this joke in more recent years, however, though this may be just because I have only spent shorter amounts of time in Skye. But it may also be because it has been dated by an explosion of popular travel that means that we are more likely to expect everybody everywhere to have spent time away from their birthplaces. Cosmopolitanism in the peripheries is no longer a surprise, either to those who live there or those who visit. Questions about the structuring of relations between different kinds of inhabitants, and the relatively mobile and relatively, perhaps temporarily, immobile remain pertinent, however, as do those of the economics of authenticity and cultural tradition. What heritage presents is the paradoxical promise on the one hand of a world that can transcend economics, and, on the other, a hopefully golden economic opportunity. This is, in part, what makes it such an expanding and compelling presence today, as we will see further in the chapter that follows.