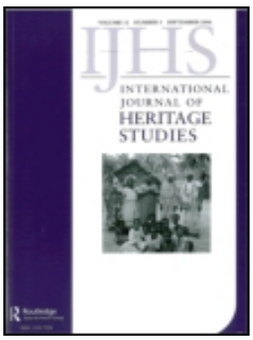

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In the spirit of self-mockery? Labour heritage and identity in the Potteries

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This paper focuses upon the Potteries region in Staffordshire, UK and offers an examination of the ways in which people living there are actively and critically engaging with processes of identity and meaning-making. The overarching aim of the paper is to extend the analysis of labour history originally developed by Smith (2006) in *Uses of Heritage* by examining the processes of identity and meaning-making at a range of museums/visitor centres. Like Smith's work, the paper rests upon the analysis of one-to-one social surveys with visitors to the Gladstone Potteries Museum. The questions asked were designed to capture a range of responses regarding motivations for visiting, understandings of heritage, identity and memory work, audience interpretations and the validation and/or rejection of intended messages.

Keywords: social history museums; identity; memory-work; experiences; affect; industrial heritage

Introduction

The linking of 'heritage' as a solution for overcoming economic depression and community fragmentation with areas suffering the effects of deindustrialisation has a strong presence in UK public policy. This therapeutic characterisation of heritage – as a means of procuring social well-being and cohesion – remains strikingly prominent, and is regularly cited in publications by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and English Heritage (see Waterton 2010). A central assumption underpinning this linkage is that those areas characterised as 'post-industrial' will be lacking in identity and cohesion *without* the implementation of explicit reclamation and regeneration policies and practices that target heritage or 'the built environment'. The Potteries, an area defined by industry and primarily remembered for its involvement in ceramics, iron, steel and the Staffordshire coalfields, is a place commonly brought to mind during such discussions, where it is imagined as lacking in self-worth, constructive identities and senses of belonging. Indeed, as a number of academics and policymakers have asserted, the Potteries has become 'a byword for obsolescence' (see Edensor 2000, p. 10), a culture that is 'self-mocking' (Cowley 1999, p. 7), and an area lacking in 'things for people to talk about' (Hansard 2007, c. 562). What is particularly unsettling about this characterisation is that very little academic work has ever been done on the Potteries as a region – sociologically or in terms of its

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heritage. More significantly, no empirical work has been done that incorporates a line of questioning that asks about the direct experiences of people living in the area. As a counterpoint to such arguments, this paper offers an investigation of how memory and identity are sought, articulated and inscribed upon a particular heritage space within the Potteries, using engagement processes communicated by visitors at the Gladstone Potteries Museum. This approach was chosen because, as Pitchford (1995, p. 36, cited in Pretes 2002, p. 440) notes, sites of heritage tourism can tell us as much about the messages a group wants to broadcast about themselves, their lived experiences and emotional lives in the present as it does about their history. Conceptually, this study takes its lead from the work of Laurajane Smith (2006) and, borrowing from her re-theorisation of heritage, suggests that important and meaningful cultural work *is* undertaken in this area, particularly in relation to its industrial history and not only in terms of understanding the past. The presumed absence of engaged heritage work in de-industrialised areas, I argue, stands at odds with the active and critical engagement isolated at the museum included in this study. Quite the contrary, this is a museum used by visitors to position themselves in the present, sometimes using its displays to critically engage with contemporary social and political issues of exclusion, while at other times using them to make sense of more mundane processes of negotiating self, home and community. In short, it is a history that still holds the capacity to evoke emotions that help people describe their experiences of place.

Heritage, the working classes and inclusion

The rationale for this study emerges out of three distinct narratives associated with the heritage literature:

- The prevalence of an authorised heritage discourse, as identified by Laurajane Smith.
- Heritage industry critiques, particularly those associated with Patrick Wright and Robert Hewison.
- Recent attempts to foster inclusion within the heritage sector.

All three narratives have combined to create a situation in which working class heritage is somehow seen as inferior, or operating *outside* of the parameters of what is accepted as heritage in a policy sense. This issue is compounded by the addition of a focus on inclusion, which appears to have adopted, whole-heartedly, Wright's (1985) and Hewison's (1987, 2009) intimations of a population duped by 'bogus' heritage. Here, the notion of heritage is exposed, curtailed, manipulated and then broadcast as some sort of symbol of the ideal 'nation' against which excluded groups are measured. An inability to mindfully engage with such an expression of heritage thereby becomes synonymous with the failure of certain citizens to live up to it. To flesh this argument out more fully, I start first and foremost with the theoretical spaces opened up by Laurajane Smith in *Uses of Heritage* (2006). Here, Smith introduced a dominant heritage narrative she termed the 'authorised heritage discourse' (henceforth AHD), which is characterised by the privileging of expertise, and driven by a responsibility to 'act for' and 'steward' a 'universal' past made up of grand, tangible and aesthetically pleasing sites, monuments and buildings. This materiality, the discourse asserts, needs to be 'conserved as found', as it is an inheritance belonging to future generations, a sentiment that thus limits the uses of heritage in the present to education, tourism and

rituals of nationalism (see Smith 2006, Smith and Waterton 2009, Waterton 2010). Consequently, the AHD constructs an idea of heritage that revolves around an unbroken relationship between past and future, with little negotiation within that relationship allowed for an active engagement with heritage in the present. Instead, people – as visitors, audiences and users – are assumed to take up a passive role, to which the benefits of heritage are demonstrated. Moreover, in England at least, this 'viewing' public has assumed the face of a particular and prioritised social group: the white, upper-middle and upper classes, a point, interestingly, that has been echoed in recent print media (see Monbiot 2009, Morgan 2010). This rendering of heritage, as Smith (2006, pp. 234–235) points out, works to disenfranchise and exclude those social groups who are patently *not* white and do *not* enjoy economic security.

Smith's discussion of an authorising heritage discourse itself emerges from earlier, disparaging, debates about heritage emerging in the 1980s. Leading the charge in England were historians Patrick Wright and Robert Hewison, and their respective publications, *On Living in an Old Country* (1985) and *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (1987). At the time, correlations between Thatcherism and critiques of the heritage industry were well documented, as was the remarkable rising popularity and concern for the past (Wright 1985, Walsh 1992, Samuel 1994, Barthel 1996, Strangleman 1999, Pendlebury 2000). In this, the polemic of Wright and Hewison was not so much a slighting of heritage but a reaction against the 'political project of Thatcherism' (Hall 1988, p. 1), which had initiated a strange and contradictory political strategy that seemed to revolve around concepts of 'enterprise' and 'heritage' (Hall 1988, p. 274, Corner and Harvey 1991a, 1991b). This reorientation, fuelled by strong, interconnected agendas of consumerism, commodification, individualism and patriotism, was underpinned by a desire to promote international economic competitiveness (Abercrombie *et al*. 2000, p. 436). Combined, the concepts of individualism, internationalism and patriotism offered up a difficult disjuncture for heritage. On the one hand, attempts were made to sponsor a new sense of value within society, while on the other – and at the same time – emphasis was placed upon tradition and continuity. Radical reform and the promotion of a regenerated economy were thus pitted against a conservative obsession with the past. Inherent within these critiques was thus a palpable reaction to Thatcherite drives towards making history a commodity or selling point (Samuel 1994, p. 266). These concerns underpinned almost entirely the responses offered by Wright and Hewison, who saw the rapid replacement of 'real' heritage experiences by manufactured, inauthentic and trivialising leisure facilities as a foregone conclusion of Thatcherite economics (McGuigan 1996, p. 122).

As a product of the market, heritage thus became a 'cosy or romantic ploy' used to dupe the visiting profile. However, as a number of recent scholars have pointed out, to assume that heritage is little more than an exercise in idealising nostalgia overlooks the more complex ways with which the past is engaged with in the present (Dicks 2000, 2008, Smith 2006, Hodge 2011). Indeed, this fetishising of nostalgia renders the 'act' of heritage as something tied up with the past, rather than explicitly acknowledging the relationship heritage has with the present (Dicks 2000). A central problematic emerging from this is that heritage 'visitors' are essentially precluded from any real sense of engagement that deviates from received and/or authorised messages. The consumption practices that frame this approach verge on the 'mindless', based as they are on the suggestion of inculcation and unquestioned communication (Strangleman 1999, p. 727). This overlooks the flexibility and ability – indeed, the *desire* – of what the tourism literature identifies as the 'mindful' or 'insightful' visitor

to question, test, reflect, accept or reject the heritage experiences they are visiting (Moscardo 1996, Poria *et al*. 2004, 2006). Instead, visitors are assumed to accept, naïvely and simplistically, the nostalgic representations and re-enactments set before them, a notion that fails entirely to capture the more nuanced experiences of a range of audiences.

My positive use of notions of mindfulness, while conceptually useful for advancing theoretical debates about heritage and its uses, is underpinned by a real concern with current policy orientations towards 'inclusion'. Although this term was initially introduced into the language of politics via the UK's New Labour government, it continues to preoccupy the policies pursued by David Cameron's Conservatives as well. Where the term features in both the British and international heritage literature, viewpoints tend to be polarised between claims that the heritage/inclusion dyad is either patronising and misguided or democratising and empowering (Mason 2004, pp. 49–50). More recently, the ground-swell of agendas surrounding 'inclusion' in Britain have linked up with the term 'cohesion', a move triggered by a number of highly visible political events, such as the emotionally-charged crisis over the influx of asylum-seekers, attempts to reconsider what 'Britishness' means, concepts of citizenship and issues of racism and tolerance. In this milieu, particular discourses have been called upon to make sense of changing social contexts and these, as Joseph and Roberts (2004, p. 4) point out, entail 'epistemological distortions' that work to favour certain social groups. Within the heritage context, those groups underrepresented have, unsurprisingly, tended to consist of ethnic minorities and the working classes. This is an important point, as it is these same groups – both of which are categorically 'different' from the white middle classes – that the AHD nominates as those requiring the proactive attention of heritage professionals to foster inclusion (Waterton 2010). The continued need to rehearse particular past formations (those cultural symbols of the white middle classes) may, then, be part of a wider attempt to both mobilise and privilege the assumed legitimacy of a homogenous national identity *against* recent calls for social inclusion. In short, the continued survival of a defence of, and nostalgia for, certain notions of heritage may well be part and parcel of a wider defensive move towards reclaiming a singular national past. Within this conceptual space, the AHD is able to mask its ideological underpinnings and utilise the tropes of 'inclusion' and 'cohesion' to target specific, underrepresented social groups and *actively encourage* the disinheritance of those aspects and experiences of heritage associated with them (after Caffyn and Lutz 1999, Ashworth 2002). While this process of obfuscation is inevitably shot-through with the complex posturings of power, Smith (2006) argues that it has not occurred without conflict. Here, she draws our attention specifically to attempts by marginalised groups to construct and celebrate an oppositional sense of heritage at industrial history museums – where the darker side of history is sometimes exposed. What follows, then, is an attempt to substantiate the observations made by Smith with the addition of a different genre of social history museum – those concerned with the creation of beauty within the grim circumstances of pottery manufacture in the Potteries.

The Potteries' industrial heritage: an introduction

The Staffordshire Potteries, located in the West Midlands region of England between Manchester and Birmingham, is the affectionate name given to the urban areas predominantly based in and around the conurbation of the 'city' of Stoke-on-Trent –

which is in reality the linear configuration of six confederated towns (Tunstall, Burslem, Hanley, Stoke, Fenton and Longton). The name 'the Potteries' is, quite literally, a reflection of the area's traditional industry – ceramics manufacture – which has left an indelible mark upon the social, cultural and political fabric of the city. That particular tradition of industry had been practised in the area since the fifteenth century and today, though the industry itself has all but disappeared, it is still a city strongly associated with prominent manufacturing companies such as Wedgwood, Minton, Spode and Royal Doulton. This association is also spatially articulated and remembered, as the city's landscape is dotted with derelict bottle ovens that haunt the city with their visual intimations of the past (after Edensor 2005). In addition to ceramic production, the area also includes significant coalmining and steel industries in its history, but it ultimately concentrated on the production of a single product – pottery – over any other (Jayne 2004, p. 201). As Jayne (p. 201) points out, this emphasis plays no idle role in the continuing disjuncture between 'bosses' and 'workers', with employment structures today still rehearsing a similar lack of clerical or managerial intermediaries, leading to the marginalisation of a range of business, financial and support industries. In other words, as Jayne (p. 201) goes on to argue, the contemporary economy continues to have 'an identifiable lack of middle-class representation and the consumption spaces of the city are dominated by working-class interests'.

During its industrial peak, the area was fuelled by a large and skilled workforce necessary not only for the production of ceramics as finished products, but in the associated mills, mines and canals responsible for the supply of raw materials. The ceramic manufacturing process called upon different skill-sets, revolving around the preparation of clay, shaping and assembly, firing and decorating. Collectively, these processes were responsible for the shaping of a peculiar urban landscape and skyline, dotted with the distinct shapes of the pot-banks, their cobbled yards and fiery, smoking bottle ovens. The area's lexicon is also littered with the strangely iconic language of the industry, with terms such as 'saggers', 'muffle kilns', 'bottom knockers', 'mould runners', 'bungs in the oven', 'slag heaps' and 'handle-makers' offering a flavour of this colourful terminology. Although not quite post-industrial in nature, deindustrialisation has signalled significant loss for Stoke-on-Trent. For example, the Staffordshire coalfield closures of the 1990s, completed with the cessation of the Trentham super-pit in 1994, culminated in a loss of some 15,000 jobs (Sekers 2009). This was compounded with the final phase of the folding of the Shelton Steel Works in 2002, which likewise saw a loss of 10,000 jobs in the area (Thomas and Hague 2000, Sekers 2009). The ceramic industry has also undergone a dramatic down-turn. Employment has been reduced by 50 per cent since the 1950s, and overseas outsourcing dominates most remaining ceramic manufacturing, with major companies such as Spode and Minton faced with administration (Jayne 2000, p. 22). It is thus an area witness to immense transformations in its industrial, geographical, social and cultural structures, the lingering effects of which continue to shape contemporary identity politics.

The data presented in this study emerges from material gathered at Gladstone Pottery Museum, a social history museum located in Longton, which represents an intermediate phase in the production process and rests on the site of a typical 'pottery', complete with bottle ovens and factory workshops. Here, skilled workers would have fashioned, fired and decorated their craft, often working in intense and dangerous conditions. The fieldwork for this project revolved around the collection of face-to-face, researcher-administered surveys and was timed to coordinate with the 'peak' tourism season at all three museums, commencing in May 2009 and concluding in October of

the same year. The survey instrument was relatively simple and mirrored exactly (for comparative purposes) that developed and used by Smith in her own research at industrial museums. In terms of design, the survey included closed questions that captured background measures and basic demographics (such as age, gender, occupation and so forth), as well as open-ended questions that sought to elicit responses that would reveal something about visitor attitudes, beliefs, feelings and opinions. All surveys were recorded,[1] transcribed and coded, with dominant themes highlighted, quantified and tallied for analytical purposes. In total, 294 visitors were surveyed. This paper, however, is concerned primarily with material gathered at the Gladstone Pottery Museum, which constituted 77 surveys. All extracts used from these surveys have been numbered with participant codes that sit alongside the museum code, 'GMA'. All extracts are also accompanied by an indication of the participant's age, gender and self-identified main household occupation.

Description of the site

Although nestled between the noise and bustle of the A50 and the A521, both well-trodden roads in the city of Stoke-on-Trent, the Gladstone Pottery Museum seems remarkably quiet upon first entering what is essentially a very small open-air museum. The remarkable pace of change over the entire area has rendered the museum space, to borrow from Edensor (2008), something of a haunting; a small trace of the past etched into a city that is struggling to regenerate. This sense of 'haunting' is intensified by the museum's muted auditory recordings of potters at work, as whispers and gasps in the background are piped into the displays, punctuated with the melodious striking of tools and the hissing and rumbling of machinery in action. Today, the open yards surrounding the site's numerous workshops are dusty and worn, scattered with visually perplexing objects and the intrusive texture of remaining bottle ovens, all of which are overlaid by a musty smell and an implicit if arrested sense of decay. Each lingering intrusion is a powerfully affective vestige that leaks into the present, working to summon up an imaginative impression of how this place once sounded and *felt*. It is here that visitors are asked to view the darker side of ceramic production, a side often hidden at many of the other museums in the area such as The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery and the Wedgwood Visitor Centre, which focus upon 'the finished product'. Instead, the grimness of this manufacturing industry is sensually imbued as visitors think and feel their way around the site amid the relentless and repetitive rhythms of machinery and the imposing closeness of the ovens.

Study sample

Tables 1 and 2 summarise the participant sample in terms of general demographics, employment data, level of education, holiday versus local visitors, national identity and cultural affiliation. Here, the sample of 77 visitors can be summarily characterised as having a slight leaning towards female (59.7 per cent) visitors over the age of 60 (44.2 per cent). In terms of occupation, visitors represented a variety of households, with higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations accounting for 31.2 per cent, intermediate occupations accounting for 16.9 per cent and routine and manual occupations accounting for 32.5 per cent of visitors. In terms of visitor trends based upon 'social class', this represents a higher than anticipated number of visitors from

Table 1. Profile of survey sample.

	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	31	40.2
Female	46	59.7
	77	**100**
Age		
Under 18	4	5.2
18–29	9	11.7
30–39	8	10.4
41–60	22	28.6
Over 60	34	44.2
	77	**100**
Occupation		
Senior managerial	3	3.9
Higher grade professional	15	19.5
Lower grade managerial/professional	6	7.8
Intermediate occupations/routine non-manual	12	15.6
Small employers/own account	1	1.3
Lower supervisory/technical	13	16.9
Routine	12	15.6
Unemployed/student	1	1.3
Retired	14	18.2
	77	**100**
Education		
'O' levels/GCSE/Equivalent	3	3.9
'A' levels/Equivalent	9	11.7
Undergraduate degree	11	14.3
Postgraduate degree	20	26.0
Technical qualifications	13	16.9
HND/HNC/Equivalent	13	16.9
No formal qualifications	4	5.2
Don't know	3	3.9
Missing/not answered/unknown	1	1.3
	77	**100**

routine and manual occupations, which measured at 14 per cent in a recent museum exit survey conducted for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in the UK.[2] The remaining 19.4 per cent comprised of students, unemployed or retired visitors. In terms of education, the sample returned a high proportion of university graduates, with 40.3 per cent of visitors nominating either under- or postgraduate degrees. Significantly, 71.43 per cent had travelled from home, with the remaining 28.57 per cent indicating that they were on holiday. Of the 77 people surveyed, 46.8 per cent self-identified as local to the area, with 79.2 per cent identifying themselves as either British or English. Interestingly, this visitor profile was more segmented when asked about 'cultural affiliation', which prompted only a small number of visitors to nominate British (3.9 per cent), with a not insignificant number specifying 'white' British/English (18.2 per cent). Finally, 52 per cent of all visitors to the Gladstone Pottery Museum were not members of any heritage organisations, with the remaining visitors nominating membership of English Heritage (10.4 per cent) and the National Trust (39.0 per cent); 3.9 per cent did not answer this question.

Table 2. Profile of survey sample.

	Frequency	%
Local		
Yes	36	46.8
No	41	53.2
	77	**100**
National identity		
British	49	63.6
English	12	15.6
Other	15	19.5
Missing/not answered/unknown	1	1.3
	77	**100**
Cultural affiliation		
British	3	3.9
English	17	22.1
White British/English	14	18.2
Stokie/Potter (specifically local)	5	6.5
Working class/Mining background	8	10.4
Other	16	20.8
Missing/not answered/unknown	14	18.2
	77	**100**
Reasons for visiting		
Recreation	19	24.7
Education	4	5.2
Aesthetic interest	6	7.8
Architectural/technical merits	3	3.9
To see the collection of items in the museum	4	5.2
The experience of seeing how working people lived in the past	30	39.0
Taking the children	3	3.9
To see a specific exhibition	1	1.3
Other	7	9.1
	77	**100**
Member of heritage organisation		
No	40	52.0
Yes, English Heritage	8	10.4
Yes, The National Trust	30	39.0
Missing/not answered/unknown	3	3.9
	77	**100**

Heritaging in working class spaces

Recent writers have drawn attention to the need to question why policymakers remain unmoved by the absence of traditional heritage visitors – the predominantly white, middle classes – in a range of working class and ethnic minority heritage spaces (Smith and Waterton 2009). To make this case, scholars have provided nuanced explorations of engagements with heritage in contexts other than those accepted as 'heritage' within the AHD. This work contributes to those arguments, though it is important to note that the data presented here contains a more muted sense of opposition than that produced by Smith in 2006. Nonetheless, while there is certainly an undercurrent of opinion that ties in nicely with the AHD at the Gladstone Potteries Museum, a still significant proportion of its visitors engaged in critical heritage work that speaks to a reanimation of heritage via processes of

affect, embodiment, memory and identity-work. For example, while 36.36 per cent of visitors suggested a meaning of heritage that conformed to the AHD, a considerable 32.47 per cent intimated that heritage was something more intangible and perhaps better understood in conjunction with expressions of local identity. This same number also nominated that their experiences of visiting the museum were overlaid with attempts to engage in active memory-work (12.99 per cent) or to feel empathy for and connection with people in the past (19.48 per cent). This provocation of memory-work may in part be explained with reference to the number of visitors who expressed personal affinity with the history captured by the museum, with 16.9 per cent specifically nominating a strong affiliation with either a working class background or a Stoke-based ('Stokie' or 'Potter') history. Significantly, 50.66 per cent of visitors felt that they were 'part' of the history they were visiting, with just over half of these visitors emphatic in their personal connection to the history on display. This was not, for the most part, an occasion wherein visitors saw themselves as outsiders *looking in*, seeking experiences and knowledge through the heritage of others. Rather, it was a moment of personal reflection:

> When I think about the history that I'm visiting here it's definitely local history. Stoke-on-Trent was and still is to an extent renowned for producing pottery, but it's also clearly working class in the nuts and bolts of it, you know. The day-to-day living was working class, even though management – as it is today – was probably middle class, so because it's working class the history represented here is bigger and wider than just the local history; it's history across the nation of working class people. . . . In terms of an aspect of my personal identity that this place speaks to, because I am originally from Stoke-on-Trent of course I love it because it celebrates what Stoke-on-Trent has been famous for. I identify with it . . . I do obsess about where plates come from even when I'm in a restaurant at the other side of the world. I like to know if it's Wedgwood or not, so it is quite a personal experience for me. But it's not all happy-clappy niceness; it's also being reminded of where working class grit and hard work can get you in the sense of achievement, so yeah, thanks. (GMA043: female, 30–40, teacher)

> Yeah, I think Heather got it earlier when she said we're Stoke born and bred. I mean we do, we have got parents and grandparents that have worked in the industry and we feel very much rooted in this, you know. It might be an old fashioned concept but, yeah. I mean, every time we go away, for example, wherever we are in the world, we always look at the pottery and see whether it did originate in Stoke. (GMA056: male, over 60, chartered surveyor)

Although clear markers of identity-work, there is something also 'performative' signalled in these responses, where intimations of identity become bodily expressed in terms of what 'the body' does as it remembers and performs identity in other contexts. The simple act of gravitating to the underside of crockery, turning it over and seeking out information on the manufacturer's name, just *to know*, is telling of a sense of pride in the skilled work associated with the locality and an identity rooted in that place. It is, then, a sense of identity that is sought first through mediated representations, filtered through visual creativity and then settled into a more intimate sense of self – even when the body is 'out of place' and not physically present in the geographical spaces of the Potteries. In addition to these 'not-in-place' affirmations of identity, there was also something potently powerful about the visit itself, in the capacity of the museum to *affect* memory:

> Well, I can relate to my grandfather, actually, who worked in a foundry and all my ancestors were working people, brass casters and iron casters and so on, so I can relate to all this really. … Yeah, almost everything in mine [history] actually, I think, yeah. Not my father, my father was a publican and a railwayman so I don't think he ever worked in this sort of environment but everyone else I can think of in my forbearers did, so yeah most of it actually. … I used to take my grandfather's lunch down to the foundry he worked in when I was a small kid you know, and went into the foundry so yeah, I can see all that. And we lived in back-to-back houses in Birmingham, so yeah, I feel very comfortable in here actually! [laughs] Yeah, I do. (GMA048: male, over 60, retired)

> Yes, some of the things, some of the machinery, brings back memories of when I was little, just after the war, they were still being used. So yeah, the whole um … it's an ongoing thing, really, isn't it? (GMA049: female, over 60, retired)

For these visitors, being-in-place was central for their establishment of a connection – through feeling, identity and memory – with their past. Indeed, in all four extracts, emotion and identity can be seen as mobile, embedded in notions of heritage as 'embodied practice' and 'experience'. This makes better sense when thought of with reference to work by David Crouch (2001, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2010; see also Selby 2010), as well as wider sociological debates that can broadly be defined as 'non-representational' theory (Thrift 2004, 2008). Using Crouch and Thrift, notions of embodied or bodily practice can be used to offer valuable insight into the range of ways heritage might be encountered and employed. The visitors quoted above, for instance, were visibly energised – with joy, rootedness or a sense of comfort – by their reawakened memories and attunement with the museum. This ability of the body to be affected draws attention to ideas of performativity and bodily practices, particularly those that take place within mundane, banal and everyday practices, which 'shape the conduct of human beings towards others and themselves in particular sites' (Thrift 1997, pp. 126–127). With this emphasis on 'bodily thinking', rather than 'simply thinking', notions of embodiment draw attention to the ways in which heritage users move and bodily engage with surrounding places, people and things (Crouch and Grassick 2005, p. 49):

> GMA069: I think it makes you realise how not that long ago, so what are we talking about? 100 years, Victorian times, how poor a lot of people were and how the living conditions were very, very poor and we forget that very quickly now. I think that this country is very critical of other countries, you know, child labour and what have you, forgetting that it was only 100 years ago that we had it! Children living in very, very poor conditions, infant mortality – dreadful rates, life expectancy – dreadful. It was only 100 years ago – here.
>
> GMA068: I was going to say, the thing that struck me is the life expectancy and child mortality … um … which have so vastly improved.
>
> GMA070: I think it's very easy to read about history and it just go in one ear and out the other. I think when you come and see it, practically, in a situation like this, I think it comes home to you more and moves you.
>
> GMA068: Yes, it helps to bring it home, and also to remember it as well, when you've been to a place like this. It's not something that you read, think and then forget about tomorrow.

GMA069: Yeah, it appeals to more senses than just your reading, it's. . .

GMA068: Yes, it's like a visual aid really. . .

GMA070: It's more than tangible, more hands on, in your mind, to retain it more and for longer I think and more colourfully.

GMA068: I mean when you look at the machinery and the buildings that were in use as recently as 1960, you know, it's very, very close past.

GMA070: And I mean we're not far from that era so we think our parents would have been there as adults and as children . . . um . . . like our mothers working in the mills and the grandmothers listening to that constant noise and understanding more the effect it had on them really.

GMA068: I moved to Crewe in 1958 and I can remember seeing the potteries for the first time and it was exactly as you see in those pictures . . . hundreds of bottle ovens and smoke, this is 1958, '59, '60 and then, of course, it disappeared and you almost forget. And now, seeing this, you think, yeah it did actually look like that when I first saw the potteries, 40, 50 years ago.

GMA070: And then, of course, it was just razed to the ground.

GMA068: And it's just disappeared and almost got forgotten about and this brings it back to the memory and brings it back to life. (GMA068: male, over 60 retired; GMA69: female, over 60, teacher; GMA070: female, over 60, teacher)

This exchange, while on the one hand an explicit attempt to work through, verbally, the site of memory before them, also demonstrates a corporeal expression – in bodily feelings and sensual engagements – through which these visitors animated the heritage space in which they found themselves. This visceral shift works to introduce a much-needed sense of agency, affectivity and subjectivity into heritage theorising, and offers a more nuanced understanding of the consequences, implications and outcomes of *doing* heritage. Understanding and placing the body at the centre of this conceptualisation, as sensuous, expressive, agentive and always in process, demonstrates that the bodily practices of everyday life cannot simply be turned off, but instead continue to respond to, and negotiate, feelings of identity. In these sites, especially, it is the body that lies at the centre of memories about the nature of manual work and how visitors perceive, embody and attempt to identify with such labour through museum displays.

While the museum may not have represented the specifics of a particular family history (though this was the case for 14.29 per cent of visitors) for all museum-goers, the recognisability and familiarity of the museum's narrative as 'local/regional' (29.87 per cent), 'industrial' (18.2 per cent) or 'working class' (10.39 per cent) meant that the museum was still able to satiate feelings of belonging. Perhaps this is the reason why so many visitors – although given an exhaustive selection of categories for interpreting their 'reasons for visiting' the site – overwhelmingly responded that they had come for the 'experience of seeing how working people lived in the past' (39.0 per cent). Coupled with the dominant response to the question 'How does it make you feel', which saw affective words like 'humbled' (33.77 per cent), 'proud' (9.09 per cent) and 'nostalgic' (9.09 per cent) emerge, this sug-

gests, as Smith (2006, p. 216) herself notes, that something *active* was occurring during these moments of visitation:

> I think it makes me feel … feel proud, proud to be a Stokey, because it is just … it's just so important. … So I feel proud that we've still got this one [indicates museum], you know, one place that we can come to and you can feel close to … close to your family, really … it just, it just feels like coming home, doesn't it? (GMA009: female, 18–29, teaching assistant)

> It's great to see it, you know, to be reminded. And it's empowering as you realise you can, you can do these things, really, or are capable of… (GMA018: female, 30–40, unknown)

> When I visit here I feel quite … I feel quite proud of what Stoke-on-Trent achieved and of pride also in working class people just, you know, making things go along year after year, producing skilled, high quality stuff. (GMA043: female, 30–40, teacher)

> Well yeah, nostalgia. … Grateful to be alive when we're alive today and as working class folk we would've worked in a place like this, you know, and it would've been very, very hard. I wouldn't be alive today, I'd be dead, yeah, 'cause it would've killed me, like it killed me grandfather, yeah? (GMA036: male, 40–59, occupational therapist)

> So, I think for me, it's like a feeling that all my … the people that – except my cousin Jean who was a figure painter – but all my family who have all died and they all worked in the pots, didn't they, it's like … yeah, it's a bit of nostalgia ain't it? Just a feeling of … well I'm glad I've come. … This is just a bit more personal because it touches on your life that you led as a child and you can remember. I can remember standing on the step when my Granny used to look after me and waving at my Mum – not my Mum, yeah, my Mum – and my Auntie off down the street with their turbans in their hair, going to work, you know, 'cos the factories were only just down the road from where they lived 'cos they were all in the same area. (GMA076: female, 40–59, electrician)

Somewhere within the process of walking through and talking about the site, taking stock of surroundings, thinking about one's place in history and coming to know a site of heritage through an individual or series of expressive encounters, heritage became not so much a material 'thing' or 'set piece', as is constructed by the AHD, but a cultural process and experience that evoked a multi-sensual and multi-imaginative reaction (Smith 2006). Rather than simply being observed, this sense of heritage was encountered, and in each moment it was refigured and reworked, subtly adjusting the lives of those involved in the process. No longer an objectified 'thing', the heritage represented in the museum was continually produced, re-produced and re-imagined, attaining a fluidity seldom recognised in a policy sense. It became an experience – certainly an active and self-reflexive one – that was done and *felt*, many facets of which emerge out of the haunting, atmospheric and mediatised spaces of memory produced by the museum:

> Here, you can hear the history, you can almost hear them walking about and what … you can almost feel them here, and you take that away and you've got nothing… (GMA009: female, 18–29, teaching assistant)

How does it make you feel to visit this place?

GMA032: Proud, proud.

GMA031: I'm very proud. I was watching that introductory film and I, I really wanted to cry at one point. . .

Because it was so touching?

GMA031: It is; it is. And you think, you know, in one way you're glad that, you know, the chimneys and the smoke and the awful atmosphere it must've had in those days has gone, but it's so sad now, what's happened to the Potteries, so sad. . . (GMA031 and GMA032: females, over 60, retired)

These types of response remind us that heritage engagements can also be intensely emotional, reflecting an observation made by Poria *et al*. (2003, 2004), who assert that heritage is about a want, need or desire to be exposed to, and involved in, personal experiences. This brings forward an important dimension often overlooked by conventional attempts to render heritage users passive receptors in need of 'education' and/or 'entertainment'. Indeed, as Poria *et al*. (2004, p. 21) point out, 'there [is] something else going on that has yet to be discovered'. In this context, a different heritage-user emerged from the 'mindless dupe' conjured by Wright and Hewison, one that was diverse and complicated, punctuated with emotions and imagination, and, importantly, entirely *present* within the heritage process, as the following exchange makes clear:

To whom is the history of the people who worked in this industry important?

GMA076: Future generations.

GMA075: To my kids and my grandchildren and me.

GMA076: Yeah, to be reminded of it all.

GMA075: Yeah, 'cos you soon forget . . . we forget.

So you come back to remember?

GMA075: Yeah.

GMA076: Yeah, it's been a good reminder. You can remember feelings as well can't you. You remember. . .

Ah, so as you're walking around its sort of. . .

GMA076: Yeah, oh I can remember that and oh I can . . .and like. . .

GMA075: Our Jean used to do that, Uncle Dennis used to do that. . .

GMA076: Yeah, different … and as we've been going round and talking to the different people who've been, like, making the flowers or whatever, they've been coming out with these different terms – fettling and lithographing and all that sort of thing – and, oh is that what? I'd heard the name and knew that someone in my family did that job but I didn't know what that job was.

GMA075: We didn't know exactly what they did.

GMA076: You know, I didn't know what a mould-maker was – well you could have a good idea of what a mould-maker was – or a mould-runner, I didn't know what a mould-runner was … um … lithographer, gilder, another one – I didn't know that was the painting around the edge of the … and the polisher, that's another one. So all these terms have all meant something.

GMA075: You know a pot man paints pots but you don't know as they've got paint mixers…

Yeah, it makes all the difference.

GMA076: Well, I don't suppose it did in our day, when I was a girl because it was all done somewhere else, I suppose, but I know what you mean, years ago, when people were mixing paints, yeah, I don't know. Would they have done it?

GMA075: I'd have thought so, I bet Doulton's have got them, when they were a modern factory, I bet they were always looking for new and better ways…

GMA076: Yeah, maybe.

GMA075: Of poisoning the workforce! [laughs] (GMA075: male, 40–59, electrician; GMA076: female, 40–59, electrician)

This distinctly personal and intimate flavour of engagement was also raised by other visitors, who more explicitly drew attention to the intensity of recognising and *owning* this heritage:

We'll we'd miss it, really. We'd really miss it if it wasn't here. Because it's our heritage, isn't it? (GMA003: female, over 60, power-station worker)

It feels almost a part, a part of us, it's like if this was, if this was ever knocked down or people were trying to destroy it I would have very strong viewings about it because we feel it belongs to us. You … our ancestors made this place what it is so, you know, it belongs to us really, we've all got a share in it if you like.(GMA009: female, 18–29, teaching assistant)

It should, you know what I mean … I think now there can't be many parts of the country where the collapse of an industry hasn't touched the local community. You could argue you could leave here perhaps with a tinge of sadness, you know, mourning for something that can't or will never be resurrected, not in this form anyway. (GMA004: male, 40–59, IT director)

The affective responses relayed here are not confined to the extreme, but may occur on any occasion on which an individual *does* heritage. Each time we attempt to make sense of the memories, emotions or impulses evoked through acts or places of heri-

tage, we enter the parameters of affect. To this end, it remains an intensely personal experience, regardless of its broader links to a range of sub-national and national identities. It compounds and integrates the realities of 'being' and 'doing', of understanding, imagining, thinking and feeling, such that we are textured and punctuated by 'being in place' with heritage. Although undoubtedly a prompt for triggering memories, utterances such as those above also re-characterise heritage as something that is reflexively constructed in, and about, the present (Crang 1996, p. 24). Indeed, as Graham (2002, p. 1004) points out, 'we create the heritage we require and manage it for a range of purposes defined by the needs and demands of our present societies'. For some heritage users, this may not be the critical engagement often recited in recent literature, and I hasten to add that this is no bad thing, but a more relaxed, leisured experience. For others, a more meaningful and critical self-awareness will occur. Either way, the moment of 'heritage' falls squarely in the present, within people, at that point when someone realises (or not) that they have been affected. Perhaps this effect, as McIntosh and Prentice (1999, p. 598) point out, will emerge from 'insights into something new, having enjoyed reliving memories … or having had fun', or as Smith (2006, pp. 304, 303) discovered, 'mark[ing] out those commonplace areas of life worthy of celebration', or 'passing on … feelings of comradeship, gratitude, injustice, kinship and belonging'. Whether the effect is pedagogic, hedonic or something else, the heritage user is responding in a way that extends beyond the cognitive, as a crucial part of the production and consumption of heritage occurs 'in place', actively (McIntosh and Prentice 1999, p. 607). Thus, the idea of embodiment introduced earlier becomes more straightforward – it happens all the time, after all. Indeed, much of what we do and know is rooted in our bodily reactions and activities (Johnson 1999, p. 81). It is, as Casey (1996, p. 21) suggests, how we come to translate space into place – it occurs through our own bodies. Likewise, Bourdieu (1990, p. 73, emphasis in original), makes the point that the:

> body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. What is 'learned by body' is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is.

Nonetheless, the ways in which bodies remember and perform in our daily lives is a difficult concept to attend to empirically. Capturing memory as embodied means watching for those moments in which meaning is rekindled, often unexpectedly, and usually in response to a confrontation with sights, sounds, smells. Visitors to the Gladstone Pottery Museum were asked to attempt to reflect upon their awareness in relation to themselves – what they felt, how they moved and how they responded – but these reactions were not always easy, or possible, to articulate. This was an issue I understood well, and triggered self-reflections upon my own experiences at Auschwitz (Auschwitz (I) and Auschwitz-Birkenau (II)) a few years previously, which had forced me to experience a multi-sensual and affective encounter I had not (indeed, could not have) imagined before being there. The way I felt, how I moved and the responses I acted upon were as much a part of the experience as my knowledge of its atrocities, harboured as they were within the brutal physicality of its buildings. It was a complicated and tense encounter, one that I came to understand better (though never totally) through these embodied experiences and, significantly, through my own terms and reactions. Importantly, I have since remained energised by what I witnessed at

that time, which makes the point that we need to take greater account of the capacity particular places or narratives have to evoke emotions and, moreover, frame and circumscribe visitor experiences.

As Olick and Robbins (1998, p. 126; see also Sutton 2000, p. 208) point out, memory is one of the planes upon which negotiations regarding different narratives of the past compete for dominance. This idea emerges from Foucault's (1977) conceptualisation of 'counter-memory', or those memories that contest or react against dominant discourses (Olick and Robbins 1998, p. 126). Sturken (1997, p. 9), too, argues for the centrality of memory, maintaining that it is memories that reveal 'the stake held by individuals and institutions in attributing meaning to the past'. Many of the people in this study used their visit to hold up the past, remember it and take issue with the incoherences that were revealed:

> GMA030: I think, I think personally how lucky we are today and how easy we have it in all fairness.
>
> GMA029: I just don't think you appreciate the sorts of sacrifices people went through really, and it was just a common part of their life, like five year olds working in the pits … it makes you think about our own little son. (GMA030: male, 41–60, education advisor; GMA029: female, 30–40, education advisor)
>
> The messages are about hard work, working-class people and if I was going to be controversial I would say how I think that's still true today, although it's different in terms of maybe more service industry than a hard kind of physical labour that we read about here at Gladstone, but I still think you know, the message is working class have for years, and still do, drive a country's economy, massively, and it's often understated. (GMA043: female, 30–40, teacher)

Kansteiner (2002), in his review of the conceptual underpinnings of collective memory, constructs an understanding of memory that draws upon three elements: first, he proposes that there is a range of different representations of the past; second, there are 'memory makers' who select and sustain particular examples of such traditions; and third, there are 'memory consumers' who use, dismiss or transform those representations in line with their own wants and desires (p. 180). Sometimes those uses will be affirmative, but in other instances they will be oppositional, and here at the Gladstone Pottery Museum a seam of dissonance and tension over the definition of heritage was raised:

> Yeah, because obviously being a member of the National Trust you visit very luxurious places and you think, my, how lovely it would've been to live here. And then you come to places like this and you see how hard people worked, how hard people fought for their rights, just for a fair wage, really, so I think, I think this place is a real monument to … [interjection by GMA010: The working class] … Yeah, the working-class, I really do. (GMA009: female, 18–29, teaching assistant; GMA010: female, 18–29, teaching assistant)
>
> And these aren't just, you know, some middle class art-school-trained people, these were ordinary working-class people who were trained, admittedly, in their craft, but produced beautiful things yeah, and it should be treasured and these people, the ordinary people who came to work every day at half seven and worked all day long on whichever pottery company it happened to be, these are the, I mean we often hear the names, Wedgwood,

> and we learn about the Wedgwood family and we learn about, you know, but what about the ordinary people? (GMA031: female, over 60, retired)

> I think it just reminds me that there were a lot of very rich people who benefitted from an awful lot of very poor people... (GMA011: female, under 18, translator)

> Heritage doesn't have to be rich people, Kings and Queens, that is not just heritage... (GMA009: female, 18–29, teaching assistant)

> I'm sick of hearing about Lord Lar-di-da or Lady this or that. The country focuses too much on country houses and all that and forgets that it was built on the blood of the working class. I think it's time we raised the profile of this history – it's horrible and dark and grimy but it happened. (GMA059: female, over 60, retired)

Remembering, recollecting and forgetting, in this way, all become part of the process of doing heritage – and critical self-reflection, by the same token, becomes a part of the process by which memory is enacted upon and put to use (Suleiman 2006, p. 8). Similar queries and flashings of emotion were captured by Smith (2006) at the social history museums dedicated to the mining past, in which rejections of the authorised heritage discourse were also palpable, but these explicit references were, on the whole, in the minority at Gladstone. More muted though they certainly are than the results discussed by Smith, these reflections still have important things to tell us about the nature and uses of heritage, and it is important to remember that the industry in question here is not the same as the mining industry. While both have rapidly declined, the pottery industry is not shackled with the same history of politics or violence resulting, of course, from the prolonged miners' strike of 1984–1985.

Conclusion

This research has attempted to challenge the presumed absence of engaged heritage work in de-industrialised areas, as so often espoused in the heritage literature and related public policies. To the contrary, this study has produced data that explores the way working class heritage becomes a device, imbued with meaning, used to trigger and guide a self-conscious dialogue between personal and collective memories. Heritage, based on this, is conceptualised in a way that confirms what Smith has argued: that heritage is more centrally about the creation of meaning, whether as a means to check or reinforce already held ideas, learn entirely new meanings or take away a subtly adapted meaning that has been re-worked or re-done in an active, cultural engagement. With this in mind, heritage becomes all the more firmly rooted in ideas of intangibility, rather than materiality as the AHD asserts. Certainly, objects, places, landscapes, monuments, buildings and so forth are implicated in many instances of heritaging – as mnemonic props – but these are not present on all occasions. Instead, heritage should be thought of as sensually-charged, with memory and remembering triggered by an array of sights, sounds, smells and emotions.

While the visitors represented here were not, on the whole, the museum-goers anticipated by social inclusion policy, this should not be read as an attempt to reify an idealised old working class culture. It should be read, rather, as a defence against ill-informed policymakers who seek to say that one person's heritage is more important than another's based upon lines of ethnicity or class, which is a political decision that risks seeing elements of working class heritage consigned to history. One way around

this is to step away from authorising narratives that inscribe certain tangible symbols as 'heritage' and re-imagine it along the lines initially suggested by Smith: as a cultural process of memory- and identity-work. Thus imagined, scholars with an interest in heritage can break away from outmoded, institutionalised definitions of heritage and engage with it in a more unruly sense, focusing instead upon the messy and often incomplete ways in which people try to remember things that link them (or not) to the past, remember those things they might know about it and commit to memory those things they have learnt or had forgotten. Embracing this idea of heritage also means self-consciously checking our own empathetic, sensual and emotional responses to heritage and the processes we go through as we try to remember how we felt, what we saw, smelt, touched, and how we re-remember those activities and experiences in our re-telling of the event. It is in this way that we can start to take a fuller account of the senses and emotions that are triggered, played with and are a product of heritage, acting as a conduit between past and present, implicitly encouraging different meanings and experiences to be re-worked and re-considered. Importantly, it will also allow us to grasp the ways in which they slide into, around and out of our being, through our capacity to be *affected*, through the values and meanings we explore, accept and decline, and through our decisions about what to remember and forget.

Notes on contributor

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Notes

1. All participants were invited to nominate whether or not they were happy to be recorded prior to participating. A handful objected and these surveys were captured in written form.
2. For further information on visitor profiles in museums, see the Renaissance Hub Museum Exit Survey 2009–10: http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/documents/HES_AnnualReport2009-10_FINAL.pdf.

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