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HERITAGE AS A CULTURAL PROCESS

The aim of this chapter is to explore new ways of understanding the nature of 'heritage' and the 'work' that this concept does. The last chapter identified the dominant discourse of heritage, and argued that this discourse constitutes the idea of heritage in such a way as to exclude certain social actors and interests from actively engaging with heritage. Not only does this discourse frame heritage audiences as passive receptors of the authorized meaning of heritage, it also creates significant barriers for active public negotiation about the meaning and nature of heritage, and the social and cultural roles that it may play. Consequently, most attempts at public or community inclusion into heritage programmes are inevitably expressed in assimilatory terms, in that excluded community groups become 'invited' to 'learn', 'share' or become 'educated' about authorized heritage values and meanings. Although there has been significant criticism about the nature of heritage, centred on the critique of economic commodification, this criticism shares all too much conceptual space with the authorized discourse. Although this critique does significantly contribute to the account of what the AHD does, it does not tell the whole story (Urry 1990: 112; Samuel 1994). Subsequently, we are left at a theoretical impasse – how might a sense of heritage be constructed that is both more inclusive of alternate discourses, and provides a framework for analysing the use of heritage beyond that already identified within the heritage industry critique?

To explore this issue, this chapter commences from the premise that 'heritage' is not a 'thing', it is not a 'site', building or other material object. While these things are often important, they are not in themselves heritage. Rather, heritage is what goes on at these sites, and while this does not mean that a sense of physical place is not important for these activities or plays some role in them, the physical place or 'site' is not the full story of what heritage may be. Heritage, I want to suggest, is a cultural process that engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present, and the sites themselves are cultural tools that can facilitate, but are not necessarily vital for, this process. Harvey (2001: 327) defines heritage as a verb related to human action and agency, and

suggests that it is a process concerned with the legitimization of the power of national and other cultural/social identities. Indeed, the idea that heritage is a cultural process is not new in the literature; Bella Dicks, for instance, has suggested heritage may be understood as a culturally-defined communicative practice (2000a, 2000b), and David Lowenthal (1985) has argued that heritage is a way of acquiring or engaging with a sense of history. However, what exactly people 'do' – subjectively and culturally – at heritage sites or with the concept of heritage itself, is as yet an under-theorized issue in the literature. Subsequently, the aim of this chapter is to explore a range of insights and concepts that may, when taken together, have a useful synergy when applied to understanding 'heritage'. These concepts will then be used in later chapters to frame and analyse the various and diverse ways that heritage is used. This framework is important as, by moving us beyond the AHD, it aims to open up conceptual space to not only recognize competing heritage discourses, but also to engage with the new and different ways they constitute 'heritage', and the significance that these may have for developing a more holistic understanding of the uses and nature of heritage in contemporary societies.

Heritage as experience

Before the conceptual heritage suitcase is repacked, however, I want to unpack it a little bit more and outline a particular experience that led me, as someone trained originally in archaeology, to reconsider my adherence to the dominant and framing concept that heritage *is* a material object or site. In 1999, while undertaking research work (reported in Chapter 5; see also Figure 2.1) in northern Queensland, Australia, senior Indigenous women from the Waanyi community approached two colleagues and myself to be involved in a project they were developing. The Waanyi Women's History Project aimed to get Waanyi women's concerns about their heritage, and the sites that they had cultural custodianship over, onto the local land management agendas. The women considered that, as women, their concerns had not been given adequate attention or legitimacy by governmental land management agencies. Many of their cultural heritage sites fell within the boundaries of Boodjamulla National Park, which was at this time moving to joint management between the Waanyi community and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. It had become vital to the women for them to secure a strong voice in these negotiations. As has been detailed elsewhere (Smith et al. 2003a, 2003b), our invitation to participate as heritage archaeologists was, in part, a move to grant authority to the project: if experts were involved, then government agencies would more likely pay attention. However, it was the Waanyi women who determined the nature, specific aims and outcomes of the project. Two field seasons were undertaken during 2000, ostensibly, at least as the archaeologists involved in the project understood,

Figure 2.1 Waanyi Women's History Project (A. Morgan).

to record women's heritage sites. However, as the project unfolded we spent much of our time recording oral histories and these, rather than the site recordings, became a central feature of the project.

What was interesting for us was that for the Waanyi women these oral histories were perceived to be as much their heritage as the sites we had intended to record. More significantly, however, it became obvious that it was important for the women to recite and record these histories, not at home over a table, but in their cultural territory or 'country'[1] and, where relevant, at the appropriate cultural site. Passing on the oral histories and traditions was, for the women, an act of heritage management, as this heritage was being recorded and preserved as recordings. However, in also passing on histories and traditions to the younger Waanyi women who were present, the project became itself an act of heritage. Heritage was not the site itself, but the act of passing on knowledge in the culturally correct or appropriate contexts and times. The sites and the 'country' we were in were more than *aide-mémoire*, but rather, following Samuel (1994), were 'theatres of memory'. That is, while the sites, and indeed the whole Boodjamulla landscape or country, did play a mnemonic role, they also provided background, setting, gravitas and, most importantly, a sense of occasion for those both passing on and receiving cultural meaning, knowledge and memories. While the sites were intrinsically important to the women, it was the *use* of these sites that made them heritage, not the mere fact of their existence.

In addition to oral history recordings, a significant amount of time was spent fishing during the project. At first, this was difficult for archaeologists trained in a certain work ethic to accept. However, for the women, simply being in their cultural landscape, being 'in country', was to experience a sense of heritage. For many of the women involved, the project offered a rare chance to visit their country or cultural territory. Almost all of the women lived some distance from Boodjamulla, and had to be flown to the park by light aircraft due to the hazards and time involved in driving long distances in far northern Queensland. In addition, although many of the elderly women taking part in the project were related, or had known each other since they were girls, many had not seen each other for lengthy periods due to the difficulties and costs involved in travelling in the region. Just being in country and having the time to enjoy 'just being there' was significant. It allowed women to not only affirm a sense of their historical and cultural identities, but also to network, meet and renew old friendships and pass on news about mutual friends and relatives. This socializing was also knitting together a sense of community, sometimes frayed by geographical separation, in a place that symbolized certain cultural values and meanings and at a time that was politically important to them.

What emerged from this project was a sense that heritage had to be experienced for it to be heritage and that, moreover, it *was* the experience (Smith et al. 2003a: 75). What also becomes apparent is a sense of the importance of memory, remembering and of performance. While women were affirming a sense of their gendered cultural identity at Boodjamulla, it was both culturally and politically important to reinforce its value by locating it in a particular place of performance. The Waanyi women undertook a range of heritage acts or actions that in themselves conveyed and carried meaning, but took on particular force because of the context in which they occurred. These acts, or performances, not only concerned keeping cultural heritage and knowledge alive by passing on their meanings and values to younger women, but also involved asserting a sense of their identity as Waanyi women both for themselves and the audience in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Heritage also involved acts or performances of remembering, not just performances of remembering in terms of recounting oral histories, but also in embodying that remembering. Taking time to fish was, in part, a needed break during the project from oral history recording, but it also allowed time to reflect and to experience and re-embody those memories and acts of remembering in the cultural landscape of Boodjamulla. New memories were also being created, which was especially significant for the younger women who were gaining new collective memories passed on from the elder women, but everyone was also gaining new memories through the process of being at Boodjamulla whilst also negotiating new meanings about what it meant to 'be' at Boodjamulla. In this sense, then, heritage as experience meant that

heritage was not static or 'frozen in time', as the conservation ethic tends to demand, but rather was a process that while it passed on established values and meanings was also creating new meanings and values. Ultimately, this project also illustrates the degree to which different conceptualizations of heritage stand outside of the dominant discourse. Although we had little conceptual role to play in the development of the project, it was the presence of archaeological 'experts' that facilitated an awareness of this project within government agencies – that helped make at least one of the audiences pay attention. Our expertise was used as a commodity to broker the legitimacy of the project, precisely because the project stood outside of the dominant, and to a certain extent androcentric, concepts and values embedded in the AHD.

This example identifies a range of concepts such as 'identity', 'power', 'memory', 'place' and 'performance', amongst others, which need elaboration and consideration. The following sections explore a reworking of the idea of heritage around these themes.

Heritage as identity

The association between heritage and identity is well established in the heritage literature – material culture as heritage is assumed to provide a physical representation and reality to the ephemeral and slippery concept of 'identity'. Like history, it fosters the feelings of belonging and continuity (Lowenthal 1985: 214), while its physicality gives these feelings an added sense of material reality. As Graham et al. (2000: 41) state: 'heritage provides meaning to human existence by conveying the ideas of timeless values and unbroken lineages that underpin identity.' How the links between identity and heritage are developed and maintained, however, is an area that has not had much scrutiny in the heritage literature. The sorts of 'identity work' that people actually do at heritage sites, and how these links are constructed and maintained, are often assumed and unproblematized in the literature (Urry 1996; Bagnall 2003; McLean 2006).

Certainly, the representational and symbolic value of heritage in constructing and giving material reality to 'identity' is well recognized, although analysis of the way heritage is thus used is often articulated in terms of national identity. A great deal of critical attention has been paid to the ways in which the ideologies of nationalism and national identities have been consciously and unconsciously articulated and legitimized in terms of heritage (Diaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Meskell 2002, 2003; Crouch and Parker 2003; Carrier 2005). This focus is a consequence of the way the AHD both constructs the idea of heritage and the official practices of heritage, both of which stress the significance of material culture in playing a vital representational role in defining national identity. Indeed, as identified in Chapter 1, the AHD was itself both constituted by, and is a constitutive discourse of, the ideology of nationalism. In identifying 'national heritage', the 'nation' is

symbolically and imaginatively constituted as a real entity (Brett 1996: 156). In heritage literature and practice the monumental, the grand, rare or aesthetically impressive is most often identified as being quintessentially representative of national identity. However, Billig (1995) draws our attention to the banal and the vernacular, arguing that it is often the commonplace symbols and everyday activities and habits that work to continually 'flag' or remind people of their national identity. While his argument draws on a range of practices and habits, he also shows that it is the banality and frequency of various symbols, the flag on the government building being the most obvious, that work to unconsciously remind and identify. To some degree the pervasiveness of the nationalizing discourse of heritage has itself become banal in the sense that Billig uses the term. The everyday ubiquities, and thus banalities, of nationalizing heritage through increasing leisure and heritage tourism activities, even at its most monumental, has perhaps facilitated and helped drive the heritage industry critique.

The process that Billig (1995) identifies may also work on a sub-national level in helping members of particular social, ethnic, cultural or geographically regional or local groups to define their sense of identity. Specific communities also use the same symbolic elements to define and constitute who they are – and who they are not – and to adhere to particular sets of group values and habits. Brett (1996: 8–9) uses Bourdieu's idea of 'habitus' – the ideational environment that reflects durable dispositions and values that defines individual and group conduct, taste and expectations and helps to ensure regularity in new situations – to develop this link between identity and heritage. As modernization erodes customs and expectations, Brett argues, individuals and communities are forced to re-articulate and recover a sense of the past and to affirm or renegotiate a sense of habitus. It is important at this point, however, to draw a distinction between authorized or received and subversive expressions of identity. The heritage industry critique has stressed the degree to which heritage often propagates received notions of identity, both at a national and class level. Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital is an influential one in the heritage literature, and one that facilitates a sense that received identity dominates the heritage process. Heritage is identified as part of the cultural capital that may be invested in to help identify a person's membership to a particular social group or class, but may also require a particular attainment of cultural literacy to ensure that the meanings and 'messages' believed to be contained within or represented by various heritage forms may be read and understood. However, heritage may also be actively used to reject or contest received notions of identity, and the dominance of the cultural capital thesis tends to obscure the possibility of subversive uses of heritage (Graham 2002: 1004).

As much of the globalization literature proclaims, however erroneously, the end of the nation state, critical attention has begun to focus more assiduously on expressions of sub-national, and particularly 'local', constructions of

identity and the role of heritage (Inglehard and Baker 2000; Berking 2003). Greater critical analysis of how specific class identities are articulated and communicated through heritage has emerged from this (Bruno 1999; Dicks 2000a; DeBlasio 2001; Linkon and Russo 2002; Macdonald 1997; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998), how ethnic and cultural identities are defined in multicultural contexts (Hayden 1997; Knecht and Niedermüller 2002; Littler and Naidoo 2004, 2005), how gender and sexuality is identified (Butler 1993; Holcomb 1998; Dubrow 2003) and how regional and local communities, amongst others, articulate a sense of identity (Derry and Malloy 2003; Jones 2005). What emerges from this literature is a much greater sense of conscious agency in the expression of identity than is found in the literature that has focused on the nationalizing uses of heritage. This may in part be an expression of the way in which the AHD focuses and frames research in this area, or a real element associated with these types of identity formations (see chapters in Part III). However, the articulations of identities, which often stand in opposition to nationalizing and other received identities, and to the AHD itself, must require an active sense of construction and expression.

The issue of agency and heritage audiences will be discussed in more detail below; however, it is useful to consider here the active way in which heritage is used in 'identity politics'. As Crouch and Parker (2003: 405) show, heritage is used as a legitimizing discourse in constructing and maintaining a range of 'identities'. Heritage can give temporal and material authority to the construction of identities, especially if the heritage in question has been recognized as 'legitimate' through state-sanctioned heritage management and conservation practices, and/or through the research attentions of experts such as archaeologists, historians, historical architects and so on. The interplay between authorized and subversive identities is quite revealing about the work that the AHD does in helping to de-legitimize and legitimize certain forms of identity. In earlier work, drawing on a critical reading of the Foucaldian thesis of 'governmentality', I documented how certain archaeological conceptualizations of 'heritage' became embedded within heritage or 'cultural resource' legislation and the state-sanctioned heritage management process in both the United States and Australia (Smith 2004). I argued that in governing or regulating the political and cultural legitimacy of Indigenous cultural identity, policy makers and state bureaucracies used specific archaeological knowledge about the nature and meaning of Indigenous heritage. In this way, those things that archaeologists objectified as 'material culture', and those things that Indigenous people were identified as treating subjectively as 'heritage', became resources of power in struggles over the legitimacy of certain claims to sovereignty, land and other economic and social resources that Indigenous people made in wider political negotiations with the state. They became resources of power because claims to cultural identity often framed the political legitimacy with which policy makers

viewed wider claims to sovereignty and economic and social justice. Although this work focused on quite specific and explicit conflicts over identity claims, and was concerned with the power/knowledge consequences of archaeological expertise and the specific use this is put to in state agencies, it offers some insights for the current project of understanding how heritage is used in much more diffused ways.

There are three points I want to draw on from this previous work. The first is that expert knowledge and experts are not simply another interest or stakeholder group in the use of heritage. Expert values and knowledge, such as those embedded in archaeology, history and architecture amongst others, often set the agendas or provide the epistemological frameworks that define debates about the meaning and nature of the past and its heritage. One of the ways this is actively done is through the whole process of cultural heritage management, wherein wider social debates about the meaning of the past, and its utility for the present, are relegated to bite-sized and manageable chunks by reducing them to specific debates over the meaning, 'ownership' and/or management of specific sites, places or artefacts. A second, and related, point is that experts often have a vested interest in maintaining the privileged position of their knowledge claims within both state apparatuses and wider social debates about the meaning of the past. The position of privilege ensures that they are not treated as just another stakeholder but as stewards for, and arbitrators of, debates over the past. In turn, this helps to facilitate access to sites, artefacts, places and other resources that are part of the database of these disciplines. The ability to possess, control and give meaning to the past and/or heritage sites is a re-occurring and reinforcing statement of disciplinary authority and identity.

The third point relates to the governmentality thesis itself and the idea of a heritage 'mentality'. The governmentality thesis argues that expert knowledge in the social sciences can and has been mobilized by bureaucracies to govern the 'conduct of conduct' of populations (Foucault 1991). Intellectual knowledge becomes incorporated into the act of governing populations and social problems by 'rendering the world thinkable, taming its intractable reality by subjecting it to the disciplined analyses of thought' (Rose and Miller 1992: 182; see also Dean and Hindess 1998; Dean 1999). Subsequently, particular social problems become 'amenable to interventions by administrators, politicians, authorities and experts' (Rose 1993: 289). This process is based on liberal modernity and its emphasis on rationality and the universality of knowledge. In this process, expert knowledge about the meaning and nature of the past, and the heritage objects that represent that authorized and universalized past became useful in defining populations. These may be Indigenous populations as I have already documented (2004), or they may be national or a range of sub-national populations. The application of 'rational' expert knowledge renders any social problems or debates over the legitimacy of certain identities it may govern as 'non-political'.

Specifically, identity debates are reduced to debates over 'ownership' issues – 'who owns the past', a recursive theme in the heritage literature, is a discursive devise that hides the more politically significant and charged issue of 'control'. Who controls the past, or who controls the meaning and value of heritage, is a much more unambiguous question for examining the identity politics of heritage, and as such it is often made more tractable and open to regulation by reducing it to technical issues of owning and possessing. What the governmentality thesis does here, however, is highlight the degree to which we can conceptualize heritage as a 'mentality', or in Graham's (2002) terms 'a knowledge', for regulating and governing identity claims and making sense of the present.

The AHD constructs not only a particular definition of heritage, but also an authorized mentality, which is deployed to understand and deal with certain social problems centred on claims to identity. Heritage is, in a sense, a gaze or way of seeing. Urry (1990) identifies the institutionalization of the 'tourist gaze' and the way this gaze constructs reality and normalizes a range of touristic experiences. As Hollinshead (1999: 10–11) points out, the idea of the gaze has an intellectual debt to Foucault, and refers to the ways different professions learn to see and how this may be used to govern others. For Hollinshead, as for Wright, Hewison and others, authorized heritage becomes a form of social control (1997: 186). However, what happens when, as Coleman and Crang (2002b) point out, those gazed upon gaze back?

As I identified in terms of Indigenous identity politics those gazed upon, or subjected to the governance of certain 'mentalities', are not passive, and can and do use heritage in subversive and oppositional ways. Although the Foucaldian idea of governmentality only theorizes the process in which bodies of expertise and knowledge deploy power, it is often those very resources of power that are then utilized to contest received knowledge and, in this case, identity. Heritage thus becomes not only a tool of governance, but also a tool of opposition and subversion. Heritage can therefore be understood as an important political and cultural tool in defining and legitimizing the identity, experiences and social/cultural standing of a range of subnational groups as well as those of the authorizing discourse. However, it may also be an important resource in challenging received identity and cultural/social values. This latter use of heritage is often undervalued, but is as important and significant as is its use in constructing and validating identity. How this is undervalued is evident in the often strident criticism of the phrase 'identity politics'. This criticism becomes particularly disparaging when minority groups overtly and self-consciously engage in identity politics. However, this criticism is simply revealing of the extent to which the identity politics played out as authorized heritage is so naturalized and taken for granted. It is also indicative of the political power of the politics of recognition. As Nancy Fraser (2000) argues, recognition or misrecognition of identity and cultural values is politically powerful and harmful. In the

so-called 'culture wars' in North America and other post-colonial countries, the ability to validate identity is as important as the ability to challenge and overthrow misidentification. This ability is no less significant for other subaltern groups whose self-perception may be at odds with, or sits entirely outside of, received ideas of their heritage and identity.

In summary, the theoretical task then is to construct a sense of the links between heritage and identity that recognizes the various nuanced ways identity is constructed, reconstructed and contested. As I am suggesting here, the links between heritage and identity can be expressed in any number of ways: actively or passively within the AHD (Chapters 4 and 5), or in active and self-conscious opposition to the AHD (see Chapter 8), or in ways that are less self-conscious and are constructed without reference to or outside of the AHD (see Chapters 6 and 7). In complicating the issue further, no community, group or individual aligns themselves to a single identity. Individuals have layered identities and may belong to any number of 'communities', further any community may within itself have layers or a range of sub-community identities (Corsane 2005: 9). It is also suggested that these identities need not necessarily be constituted or symbolized by the monumental, and that even the grand narratives of identity such as those of nation and class may be built upon the commonplace or banal. Further, it is argued that these constructions are by their nature political, in that they often involve the deployment of resources of power and prestige.

Heritage, it is argued above, has power as a legitimizing or de-legitimizing discourse. However, there is another dimension to the political power of heritage. This power rests within the naturalization of heritage as material object. Material heritage objects are symbolic not only of identities but also of certain values. Heritage may be embodied as objects of desire and prestige in and of themselves, not because of any inherent value, but in so far as the symbolic ability to control desired, fetishized and prized objects reinforces not only the identity, but the power of the identity of the nation, group or individual in possession (Weiner 1992; Lahn 1996). The materiality of heritage is itself a brutally physical statement, at least within the confines of the AHD, of the power, universality, objectivity and cultural attainment of the possessors of that heritage. The physicality of heritage also works to mask the ways in which the heritage gaze constructs, regulates and authorizes a range of identities and values by filtering that gaze onto the inanimate material heritage. In this gaze, the proper subject of which *is* the material, a material objective reality is constructed and subjectivities that exist outside or in opposition to that are rendered invisible or marginal, or simply less 'real'.

The intangibility of heritage

In recognizing the subjectivities of heritage, it becomes necessary to destabilize the idea of the 'objectivity' of heritage. This needs to be done both in