The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research

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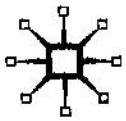

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Heritage in Multicultural Times

Cristóbal Gnecco

Heritage seems to be concrete and precise; at least, that is the lesson we learned from decades of relating the inherited past with the nation. Yet, the rhetoric of the homogeneous nation-state was replaced some while ago by that of the heterogeneous multicultural state. In multicultural times the meaning of 'heritage' is not that clear, although a sense of plurality is pervasive. Yet, in this chapter I will not try to fix and stabilize its meaning; rather, by interpolating the contexts in which heritage unfolds and where it intervenes, I will highlight its relationship with governmentality, humanism and the market. Further, I will explore the gains of destabilizing the dominant, multicultural conception of heritage, especially by positioning alternative conceptions of time, past, ancestors and life.

Heritage is a complex entity: ungraspable yet apparently concrete. It is indeed vague, not because of its materiality, which defies any vagueness, but because institutional discourses – those of the state, of academia, of multinational agencies – surround it with a mysterious aura, so powerful that its very understanding, its fixation in meaning, seems to be a doomed mission. But is that not what those discourses want, to elevate heritage to a quasi-mystical condition, to a symbolic centrality that everyone has to recognize and revere, no matter that its true meaning eludes us all? Heritage is supposed to be 'something' we share in the profoundest depths of our sociality, there where the most essential meanings lie, those that cement and even create collective life. But where are those depths, where do they reach to? Moreover, who are we, anyway? What is the condition that binds us together, what is the nature of such a binding that compels us to share? What is the nature of *us*?

The definition of a precise *us* (clear-cut, rounded, discrete) was the unfinished task of national projects. Although deliberately unfinished – modernity was a project and, as such, its very nature precluded its termination – the *national us* was relatively clear: a society of believers composed of unified, homogeneous individuals who shared a history and a future. The control of a precise, identifiable heritage to be shared by national citizens was an important part of

the governmentality of the nation-state (Hall, 2000). But the nation was shattered some three decades ago. Current times – variously called postmodern, trans-modern or post-industrial, but in any case multicultural[1] – show the coexistence, in the peaceful (but proven explosive) pacifism of multicultural relaxation, of identities formerly antagonistic and exclusive. A variety of genres and ethnicities is already part of the current landscape of the world, where heterosexual and national citizens once reigned. What can now be expected in terms of heritage, when the nation has been abandoned as an idea-goal only to be replaced by that amorphous thing, multicultural society? If the *national us* shared a heritage because there was only one to be shared, inherited from/by the national society and demarcated by the concerted working of historical disciplines, what kind of heritage does the *multicultural us* share? A sort of *umbrella heritage*, recognized and accepted as a common asset by everyone, no matter how diverse, and under which more specific, circumscribed and exclusive heritages thrive? If so, what does a plurality of heritages do to an idea that owed its very existence to its discreteness and exclusivity? Does it explode, enlarge or collapse it? In sum, what does 'heritage' now mean, now that it seems fuzzier than ever?

Heritage is bathed in a mysterious aura, a deliberate fuzziness that serves its mystification well. This is especially true nowadays, when most countries have adopted a global multicultural rhetoric, which carries on the pluralization of a heritage that was formerly relatively homogeneous. A counter-cultural reading of heritage could, then, entail the strenuous task of pinning down its meaning – or their meanings, if we think plurally. However, in this chapter I will attempt the more modest task of destabilizing its apparent stability – sturdily built by universal discourses. Two issues come to the fore in this purpose: first, the historicization of heritage; and, second, the disentanglement of the perverse union of heritage with the law. Historicization is well known to anthropology, where it has taken the form of introspection. Rabinow (1986) called it to 'anthropologize the West'; Chakrabarty (2007), 'provincializing Europe'. The purpose is the same: to situate a practice, a relationship, a meaning geohistorically and geopolitically; to show how they come to be, their happening. That we can do with heritage: to bring it back to its place of origin; to pluralize it; to take it away from the experts and from the possessive embrace of the state; to unveil the fetishist operation, its naturalizing intention.[2] Historicizing heritage means bringing home what appears to be removed, afar; pointing to its familiarity; locating and questioning the apparatus that fetishized it and reified it. To be sure, heritage does not fetishize or reify itself. Someone does it: museum officials; archaeologists; historians; legislators and their decrees; tourism and the market; transnational promoters of humanism.

And then there is the issue of the entanglement of heritage with the law, its utter complicity. Indeed, a fetishized and reified heritage (our heritage, the

heritage of all, national heritage, and the like) easily surrenders to the tight grip of the law. The legal apparatus is a naturalizing device that requires forgetting that the law is a historical artefact, just the codification of collective moral desires in specific times and places (but not in others). Law and heritage, however, are not conterminous. What forces them to occupy the same conceptual space? Why is heritage subjected to the rule of law? We are not just subjected to a wide and all-encompassing fetishism of the law; fetishism, as a law, is brought to heritage. Heritage is not discussed; it is regulated. Its regulation becomes a purely technical matter: it defines who can find it (the archaeologist on the excavation, the historian in the archive), who can embellish it (the restorer), who can display it (the museographer), who must watch over it (the police, officials of state agencies), who must protect humanist rights (transnational actors). This technical reductionism is not operational but ideological. Indeed, it helps to accomplish what Mauricio Pardo (2013) has called the 'regime of culturization', that is, the way semiotic dimensions are uprooted from social totalities – not only rhetorically but as lived experiences as well. In this case, culturization uproots heritage from origins, destinies, differences and power struggles; its historicity is thus veiled by its reification.

These two purposes – to historicize heritage and to disentangle its relationship with the law – will guide me through this chapter. I will start by (un)defining the indefinable. Then, I sketch the twofold role of heritage in multicultural times: as a commodity and as a device in governmentality. Both roles are supported, indeed legitimized, by a humanistic global discourse. I continue with contestations of heritage, coming from many fronts and aiming in different directions, only to close the arguments with a gloss on a UNESCO text.

(Un)defining what cannot be defined

Heritage is what we inherit and what we must hold dear, we are told. In legal terms, an inheritance is handed down from identifiable individuals, usually established by consanguinity. Yet, in the case of the abstract notion of heritage linked to national and post-national discourses, those individuals are ill-defined, if at all. Instead of precise individuals, we inherit heritage from abstract, ancestral entities, some of which were even foes of national pretensions – such as Indigenous societies in most Latin American countries, albeit in their pre-Hispanic outfit. Those entities had different stories, however.

In Europe, heritage was handed down from ethnic ancestors: the Gauls, the Germans, the Romans. In all other parts of the world, where archaeology and history were given to those poor peoples who lacked them, heritage was a more complex matter. While heritage discourses in Europe presented their own, ancestral 'savages' as proto-selves – in evolutionary terms, the primitive that eventually evolved into the civilized Westerner – in the Americas and

elsewhere, 'savages' were written about as the 'Other' external to modernity. In European countries, the denegation of coevalness to their own pre-civilized savages was a function of teleology: they were not part of modernity because they truly belonged to past times; their rhetorical existence (their presence in heritage narratives built upon *true* relics) and their eventuating into modern selves (their presence in national histories) were proof of the elapsing of progressive time. Heritage was there to witness that time had passed, but carrying along a continuous historical connection. In the Americas, the savages as Other (the paradigmatic Indians) were not part of that story: they did not evolve into the civilized self. In Latin America, national story-tellers, all members of elites that despised the Indians and considered themselves white, appropriated some Indigenous achievements as national heritage – carefully selected so as to mimic European civilization (gold work, domestication of crops, monumental architecture, religious life, centralized governments, even writing-like systems). This brutal paradox legitimized the disappearance of the Indians (something of the past) and paved the road to *mestizo* national ideologies – for which pre-Hispanic heritage was paramount.

Yet, although the entities from which we inherited heritage are vaporous at best, states and multinational agencies, such as UNESCO, have long embarked on defining it[3] – and such definition has varied through the years, from monument-centred to more encompassing totalities, including intangible cultural manifestations. The very act of definition (and its historical changes) should unveil its historicity, surely? Well, it does not. Heritage is routinely reified, brutally taken out of history. This is a curious paradox: something that is historical by definition (after all, it points to origins and continuities, to temporal processes) is de-historicized in its elevation to national (and post-national) symbol. Yet, reification did not prevent discursive coherence. Indeed, national discourses on heritage were relatively coherent – they had it clear what heritage was, what it served for, how to arouse the believers. But this may be changing, in spite of the apparently unbeatable grasp of the national rhetoric over heritage matters. Historical discourses related to the creation and functioning of national societies have lost momentum and significance given the emergence of multiculturalism, which has the main tenets of modern societies crumbling, especially the construction of unified collectivities (national societies) in terms of culture, language and history. In the last two or three decades, multiculturalism has set in motion profound changes, especially regarding the organization of society, which is now premised upon the coexistence of diverse constituencies – conventionally referred to as 'cultural diversity'.

If former national sovereignties were intentionally shattered by the global rhetoric of multiculturalism a while ago, their replacement is unstable, precarious. The fragmented sovereignties now taking over the scene of multicultural states are ill-defined. For instance, the all-encompassing dominance of

individual rights, a cornerstone of modernity, nowadays shares constitutional and legal provisions with collective rights, formerly ignored. The primacy accorded to the latter or the former, or their strained coexistence, is marred by hybrid pluralisms, usually rhetoric but hardly developed in practical issues.[4] How these fragmented sovereignties shape historical narratives is quite mysterious. Multicultural (i.e. post-national) heritage has apparently become a precise entity (especially because it is accessible in the commodity form) yet it remains strange: no one really has a clue about it. It looms over all, and yet it really is nowhere in spite of being everywhere, thanks to its overarching association with the market. But if contemporary heritage eludes definition – and in this elusiveness lies most of its appeal and symbolic power – the meaning of multiculturalism can indeed be pinned down.

The key words linking multicultural reforms are 'recognition', 'autonomy' and 'limits', especially with respect to ethnic groups. Recognition has been heralded, since the early 1980s, as the most important imprint of the new society. Indeed, as Charles Taylor (1994, p. 38) pointed out, there was a drastic shift from the politics of equal dignity to the politics of recognition:

> With the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else. The idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity.

Such recognition was not to be a mere statement, though: 'But the further demand we are looking at here is that we all *recognize* the equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their *worth*' (Taylor 1994, p. 64: emphasis in the original). However, what has become clear after almost three decades of multicultural policies worldwide is that Taylor's caveat was all but ignored: the multicultural conviviality of cultural diversity has not meant recognizing the worth of the different but merely its existence, which has thus been organized and, to a large extent, isolated. Real and lived inequalities have been masked by a phantasmatic diversity. The result is perversely violent: unbearable inequalities appear as desirable diversities.

Varying in intensity and scope, multicultural reforms tend to secure or to consecrate the territorial, legal, educational, administrative, fiscal and linguistic autonomy of culturally diverse groups. But, provided that autonomies of any kind within national borders were always the conundrum of modern political theory, multiculturalism made it sure that the autonomy it predicated was not meant to be the demise of the (relatively) cohesive societies that modernity had built with great difficulty. As a result, autonomy was consecrated, but

within limits. Charles Taylor (1994, p. 62) put it this way: 'Liberalism can't and shouldn't claim complete cultural neutrality. Liberalism is also a fighting creed. The hospitable variant I espouse, as well as the most rigid forms, has to draw the line.'[5] Recognition, autonomy and limits all work together, in a tense yet productive entanglement, to build the new post-national societies.

But one prominent symbolic field has been spared multicultural reorganization: history. Multicultural concessions establish a limit set forth by state policies. There are borders that autonomy (ethnic or otherwise) cannot cross: a claim to full national autonomy within the nation is one; history is another. History and heritage are still arenas – controlled by the state, by academic disciplines and by a deep and overarching sense of the nation – for the deployment of a collective 'us', which nevertheless becomes an increasingly blurred category in multicultural times. If modern history/heritage once had more or less clear relationships with nationalism, now its home is in utter disarray. If it used to administer discourses for dealing with an Other external to modernity, it now ignores what kind of discourses it administers, given that such an Other is no longer an exteriority but a constitutive interiority. Is it to keep telling the story of a homogeneous, static and disciplined 'us' even when constitutive Otherness strives to build itself in difference and disjunction and the cultural diversity widely espoused by multiculturalism thrives? Or, rather, is it to write a new (multiple, plural) story in which those Others formerly banished are also represented, those very Others currently struggling to find a place and a time, no matter that they do it claiming agendas that are utterly anachronistic for the West? In either case, the situation is quite complex for history/heritage. If it embraces the former, it would be asserting that multiculturalism may have arrived but nothing has really changed in historical matters.[6] If it champions the latter, that is, a multiple and plural story, whatever that may be, it would be sailing uncharted waters. That would not be a problem in and of itself, if it were not for the unwanted surprises, there in the deep unknown, lying in wait. For one thing, multiplicity would have two meanings: either different histories and heritages living side by side – which is a naïve utopia, anyway, given the operation of hegemony – or an encompassing history/heritage, somehow modelled in national discourses, under which several particularities would bloom. For the other, a radical Otherness may wish to explode whatever is left of national histories; in such a case, reconstituting the shattered whole would be a tremendous task, and most likely useless.

Whatever the outcome is (if there is an outcome, that is, because the stalemate can be dealt an eternal deferral in which the sense of the nation can linger and linger and linger), it cannot ignore that multiculturalism is not an innocent realignment of society. It has been widely criticized by those who think that it promotes cultural diversity but ignores the needs and expectations of the different (e.g. Žižek, 1998; Hale, 2002). Cultural diversity is channelled

to suit multicultural needs, mostly in a political vacuum. The multicultural celebration of diversity, which encourages the proliferation of local and specific identities, quite effectively serves to weaken more inclusive, binding and stronger identities. In a world of fragmented identities, no matter how strong they are individually, the system reigns.

Multiculturalism organizes cultural diversity, nominating and creating it from the state, multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the academy while the 'real' Otherness is repressed by its virtual reflection. It neutralizes the activism of 'the different' by imposing limits, legal and otherwise, and by delivering it to the market – which treats it as just diversity, controlled and promoted as authentic and pure. The distance between *diversity* and *difference* is thus the main multicultural limitation, both a characteristic and a symptom. In fact, the decades that followed the last world war, especially the last three decades, have witnessed the general abandonment of pejorative and stigmatizing categories (inferior, primitive and underdeveloped races) and the enlivening of cultural relativism (diverse cultures) that deactivates grassroots organizations, deracializes racism (but keeps it intact) and reifies/functionalizes differences (as diversity) to downplay inequalities. As Claudia Briones (2005, p. 22) pointed out, 'cultural difference emerges as a quasi-ontological property because social relations that recreate processes of alterization are presented and explained unlinked from the organization of capital and from international and national power'. The multicultural idea of diversity wants heterogeneity to be understood as 'a mosaic of monochrome identities' (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000, p. 33), eliminating historical specificities, processes of alterization, asymmetries and power relations.

As if this were not an almost insurmountable problem, multiculturalism is fraught with constitutive tensions, the most prominent of which are the contradictions between individual and collective rights, and the autonomy accorded to different symbolizations of society and life. Although the latter has been curtailed by the establishment of limits, it nevertheless remains potentially explosive. The 'solution' multicultural societies have adopted to solve these problems is deferral and, when circumstances are pressing, casuistry. Besides, it has been long posited that postmodernity – of which multiculturalism partakes as the current form of organizing society – has done away with historical consciousness. From Fredric Jameson to Zygmunt Bauman, from David Harvey to Beatriz Sarlo, most contemporary theoreticians of cultural logics signal that tradition and teleology are old narratives devalued by presentism. The past has disappeared as a continuation of experience, and history only survives as a façade, not as a meaningful attachment of people to times past.

Heritage in multicultural times is thus not linked to national identities as explicitly as it was before.[7] In their absence, a multicultural identity has still to come forward, if that ever happens – unless, of course, we accept that the

identity a multicultural society can exhibit is a sum of its parts. It cannot be linked to a historical consciousness, at least not in the way the nation conceived it. However, no matter how slippery heritage is nowadays in terms of identity and how removed it is from the historical, it seems to bloom everywhere. Jesús Martín (2000) highlighted a non-random coincidence: what he called a *memory boom* (tantamount to a *heritage boom*) began to occur just as the ethos of modernity languished. Appeals to past senses and meanings abound in advertising and the media; heritage parks are well-attended touristic attractions; and agents of patrimonialization are busy worldwide identifying possible targets. Nostalgia sells well. Heritage-related narratives, mementos and loci (landscapes, sites, even intangibles) are ubiquitous in a world that has dispensed with any temporal referent different from the present. Thus, if identity and the historical are not behind the heritage boom, what can be found instead? The answer, it seems, is the market and governmentality, backed by humanism, to which I now turn my attention.

Humanism, the market and governmentality: The multicultural faces of heritage

Humanism has been around for over five centuries. From its vernacular origin in southern Europe, it managed to spread its basic ideas all over the world: an optimism about the capacities of human beings, especially in reason, that brought humans to the centre of the stage (anthropocentrism displaced other beings, ever since confined to a natural world that was to be tamed by culture); a blind faith in the pacific resolution of conflicts; political unity and consensus; civilized debate and democracy; the search for an encompassing spirituality (as expressed in the arts, but also in an intimate and inner communication with the supernatural); the limits to religious power. Even though those ideas were put to the test, mostly in the twentieth century, humanism has survived the disaster. So much so, indeed, that it has become the unpolluted source to which the world should go back in order to restore harmony, peace and welfare. If modernity turned out to be an unfinished (and violent) promise, resorting to humanism would heal all wounds. This pervasive call, uttered by such ardent and influent supporters as Jean-Paul Sartre and Jürgen Habermas, has impregnated most philosophical debates in the last six decades and has received an almost universal adherence in the West. Yet, in 1966, shortly after the publication of *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault (1991[1966], pp. 35–6) stated:

> My job is to free us from humanism, once and for all; my commitment is a political work to the extent that all regimes, from the East and the West, have smuggled their bad goods under the banner of humanism... What irritates

> me of humanism is that it is also the parapet behind which most reactionary thought hides, the space in which monstrous and unthinkable alliances find support.

This statement seems surprising: who would dare raise a political project against an ideology touted as the only decent product of Western civilization, its true nature: libertarian, creative, democratic? Was Foucault referring to Marxist humanism, which sought to abolish the class society and, therefore, declared circumstantial the dictatorship of the proletariat? Maybe he was referring to the inter-subjective and situational humanism espoused by Sartre (1964), who called *négritude* a weak moment in a dialectical progression because it should not defy the ultimate goal of achieving a non-racial, non-sectorial society? In the second half of the twentieth century, before the advance of radical nationalisms (in Africa and elsewhere in the colonial world), humanism was the basic weapon of the apologists of transcendental ecumenism. However, such an ecumenism failed to answer basic questions: Where was it stated? By whom? By a democratic altruism that sought to circumvent the avatars of multinational order? Ecumenism was built on Western principles that sacrificed differences on the altar of consensus (or, more much frequently, in the violence of ideological imposition). It was precisely that ecumenical humanism to which Foucault was referring. Yet, the impact of his critique has been marginal – not to mention the impact of non-Western stands, articulated by anti-colonial intellectuals such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon.

Humanism still reigns, and it does so firmly in the heritage realm. Indeed, if national heritage was a symbol of the nation and if multicultural heritage cannot be a symbol of post-national societies, what is contemporary heritage a symbol of? This is when humanism enters the picture: heritage (especially if monumental, dotted with exoticism and nested in nice landscapes) belongs to humanity at large. A humanistic, universal identity comes to the fore to transcend the insurmountable contradictions that multiculturalism posed over national identities. A humanistic conception of heritage, handed down from multinational agencies, is operationalized at local levels by state institutions. Patrimonialization ensures that the rights of a few (all too often destitute local communities, who own landscapes, sites, rituals, etc., soon-to-be heritage) are extended to all from a concept of humanity that can only be logocentric; it ensures that resources (biodiversity, exoticism) are accessible to those who can access them (the privileged inhabitants of the First World, especially); it ensures the (mercantile) access of humankind to what were previously local resources.

This rapid sketch of humanism would not be complete without discussing the market. In the commoditized world in which we live, heritage is another commodity. For one thing, it has become an object of desire for the

multi-million-dollar tourism industry, which intervenes in shaping heritage policies worldwide. Heritage has become a market necessity. For another, its promotion and protection (two sides of the same coin) are routinely shown as functions of economic development, which, in due turn, is a fundamental part of the teleology of growth.[8] If countries ought to grow, they have to identify areas in which to do so. Tourism (and its attendant heritages) is an area that has received much attention because it is ripe for growing; in fact, the circumstantial coalescence of wealthy tourists, swift displacement and the expanding appeals of the exotic/the authentic (adequate holiday surrogates of the boredom and consumerism of day-to-day life in industrialized democracies) has not gone unnoticed by capitalist entrepreneurs. The assault of the market/humanism on heritage thrives on both exoticism and authenticity. The authentic, that which tourism seeks avidly, is not just required of material heritage; it is also required of the (human/natural) landscape that gives it meaning and enhances its enjoyment. The demand for authenticity and exoticism is an 'imperialist nostalgia', as was advanced by Renato Rosaldo. According to him, the agents of colonialism

> often display nostalgia for the colonized culture as it was 'traditionally' (that is, when they first encountered it). The peculiarity of their yearning, of course, is that agents of colonialism long for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed... a particular kind of nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed.
>
> (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 69)

A marketable heritage surrounded by the appealing aura of humanism is also a powerful device in governmentality.[9] The heritage controlled and promoted by multicultural states (with the support and legitimacy granted by global discourses) seizes the symbolic realms where cultural differences express themselves and from where they draw social and political strength. By turning them into marketable and reified heritages, multiculturalism accomplishes the deactivation of *differences* and the promotion of *diversities*, thus fragmenting and depoliticizing those symbolic realms. As Pardo (2013) has noted, this move was more clearly articulated in the last two decades with the attention given to so-called 'immaterial heritage'; by appropriating their heritage, the 'newly arrived from the margins' are subjected to regimes of governmentality and are 'drawn, one way or the other, to the orbit of the state and the market'. Local expressions 'supposedly undergo cultural revival by processes of democratization... but the people directly involved in the generation of such expressions are often marginalized, removed from the control of institutional processes despite their alleged main role' (Pardo, 2013, p. 17).

The joint venture of governmentality and the market has transformed the heritage realm: it has accelerated the pace of institutional processes aiming to turn sites, landscapes, foods and rituals into heritage loci of universal appeal, ready for the tourism industry and for symbolic control; and it has solidified the estrangement of heritage from identity, however defined. It is naïve, when not politically intentioned, to ignore this scenario of market and government interventions in historical heritage issues backed by a humanistic rationale. For instance, it seems naïve to point out that its more ardent disciplinary custodian, archaeology, helps 'people to appreciate diversity in the past and present and thereby to practice living more tolerantly in a multicultural society' (Little, 2012, p. 396). This overstatement is a deliberate hiding of non-disciplinary events affecting disciplinary practice. Stating that acquaintance with a market-besieged heritage helps people 'to appreciate diversity in the past and present' and to live 'more tolerantly in a multicultural society' is self-serving to the abstract interests of archaeology and heritage-related disciplines, but ignores lived experience. It may express disciplinary good intentions, but it unveils the arrogance of the self-designated custodians of heritage and, more importantly, portrays people (not to say heritage) as isolated from the events that impinge on their lives. It gives credence and support to the purported legitimacy of (post-) national discourses on heritage, routinely taken for granted. Indeed, it is widely accepted – institutionally, academically and even among society at large – that states and multinational agencies have the right (indeed, the obligation) to protect, promote and even define heritage; this right is accompanied by a thorough naturalization of institutional operations over heritage matters. Yet, what happens when such a right is challenged, when it is confronted by alternative conceptions of history, the past, the ancestors that undermine global heritage discourses from local practices?

The fall of the house of heritage (as we 'know' it)

What Smith (2006) calls the 'authorized heritage discourse', undergirded by dynamics of inclusion and exclusion policed by institutional heritage discourses, has been contested at the grassroots level. Such a contestation reveals that the national and post-national conceptions of heritage can only be imposed with a high dose of violence – symbolic and otherwise. Different conceptions of heritage – different conceptions of the past, of time, of life – now unfold in highly politicized arenas characterized by competing narratives and institutions. An increasing body of literature documents the struggle for key sites and narratives and the different positioning of the actors involved, in which local communities confront the establishment (museums, archaeologists, multilateral agencies). Cojti (2006), for instance, has shown how contemporary Indigenous communities in Guatemala are challenging the

state's appropriation of Mayan heritage, which benefits the political elite's form of nationalism as well as the international tourism market.

Yet, it is undeniable that a marketable heritage is alluring, especially (as happens so often) when the peoples living near or at heritage site(s) or landscapes are destitute. In situations in which deprived peoples eagerly engage heritage and the market,[10] the relationship is fairly uneven, an iteration of colonial times. At least those peoples should know, beforehand, what the consequences of such an engagement could be. They should know that community solidarity, no matter how fragile, can be endangered, as well as traditional ways of living and relating. The creation of locally based networks of information and activism for counteracting global heritage policies, mostly oblivious of the needs, expectations and worldviews of the local communities impacted, could be an important step in this direction, the final aim of which would be the positioning of alternative conceptions of heritage and the past. Counter-hegemonic activism that reads global heritage discourses from their local impacts also asks in what kind of ethics heritage experts are engaging. More often than not, they are aligned with multicultural ethics (global, politically correct, humanistic, logocentric, mercantile), which they help to promote while ignoring the known adverse consequences of patrimonial policies for local populations.

There is much to be learned from the way people outside the well-guarded gates of disciplinary knowledge engage time, materiality and life. The growing opposition to the humanistic/capitalist conception of heritage – espoused by mainstream archaeology, UNESCO, NGOs and state-run heritage agencies worldwide – cannot be ignored and ought to be accounted for. Such an opposition has been more clearly articulated by grassroots organizations concerned not only with the wrongdoings that an unchecked heritage wave can cause in local communities,[11] but also with the formulation of alternatives to mass tourism, top-down heritage policies and the related breaking of social bonds. A story I heard in southern Costa Rica, where the government and UNESCO want to bring the world-famous stone spheres of the Diquís Delta into the World Heritage List, is illustrative in this regard. It is a story about a lost sphere that goes, more or less, like this: there is a sphere in a lagoon that few have seen but whose existence has been known for quite some time. It is also known that, when it is found, great transformations will occur. Years ago the sphere started to surface. The chiefs consulted the spirits and the latter told them to cover it up, to hide it from the daylight. Interpretations differ as to what will happen thereafter: some still expect to find it as a sign of prosperous times. Others, in a millennarian mood, believe that when the sphere is found all will be over. This story is a powerful metaphor for thinking and feeling, for accepting that heritage is not a matter of distanced experts but of real lives and social bonds. It is a good metaphor to think over top-down conceptions of heritage, to confront

their institutional solidity – born of rhetorical violence. In *Through the Looking Glass*, Lewis Carroll (1932, p. 114) had Humpty Dumpty stating:

> 'When I use a word', Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less'. 'The question is', said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things'. 'The question is', said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all'.

That's all? But let us suppose that a multicultural heritage is indeed a plural heritage. Ashworth et al. (2007) put forth five models of plural heritages: assimilatory, integrationist or single-core; melting pot; core+; pillar; and salad bowl – rainbow – mosaic. Although they have in common the existence of more than one heritage, the first three manage to make irrelevant all but the dominant version. The last two give leeway for non-dominant heritages to express and even expand. The latter, especially, offers promising possibilities. It is besieged by inherent ambiguities, however, neatly embodied in the iconic Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which attempts 'to balance two, probably irreconcilable, ideas ... an infinitely extendable salad bowl of mutually accessible diverse cultural groups and, simultaneously, a central core of "Canadianness" based upon the concept of the biculturalism of the two "founding peoples"' (Ashworth et al., 2007, p. 184). For that reason, if a plural, horizontal and open heritage is to mean something beyond the harmless relativistic pluralism promoted by the politics of diversity, it can be found in the struggle for a radical Otherness. Rita Laura Segato (2007, p. 18) wrote on this, arguing that

> the fight of those social movements inspired by the project of a 'politics of identity' will not achieve the radical nature of the pluralism it intends to assert unless insurgent groups depart from a clear consciousness of the depth of their 'difference', that is, the proposal of an alternative world that guides their insurgency. I hereby understand such a difference not as with regards to substantive contents in terms of supposedly traditional, crystallized, still and impassive 'customs' but as difference on goal and perspective by a community or a people.

The radicalization of Otherness means the liberation of its force, restrained by the nets of cultural diversity. It means thinking of Otherness in its becoming, not as a subaltern category fixed, marked and subdued, but as an agentive category engaged in destabilizing what had become stable and normal. Because we dwell in naturalized worlds – created by the cultural, social, political and economic hegemony of a system, a class, a cosmology – trying to dwell in denaturalized worlds is not easy, but surely not impossible. We first have to make those worlds – liberating the discursive field from the omnipresence of Humpty

Dumpty. Thus, an oppositional strategy to the capitalist takeover of heritage is really at hand, after all. It does imply historicizing the concept and implementing what Gustavo Esteva called 'post-economic forms' based on networks of knowledge and action, 'coalitions of citizens for implementing political controls in the economy in order to reinsert economic activities into the social fabric' (Esteva, 1996, p. 73). Such a networking needs to understand how current (multicultural) global heritage policies are locally realized; it can do so by describing how different actors (communities, archaeologists, historians, heritage institutions at the national and transnational level) and narratives collide or articulate around various heritage meanings, some of which are decisively counter-hegemonic.

If a multicultural heritage were ever to emerge, it would have various colours and would invite various readings. As Stuart Hall (2000, p. 10) once put it regarding Britain, '[h]eritage should revise their own self-conceptions and rewrite the margins into the centre, the outside into the inside. This is not so much a matter of representing "us" as of representing more adequately the degree to which "their" history entails and has always implicated "us", across the centuries, and vice versa.' The first and foremost task is, thus, redefining the post-nation from differences upwards and not from diversities downwards.

Coda: Brief gloss on a long UNESCO text

A UNESCO (2004) report on the impact of tourism in Luang Prabang, a World Heritage Site in Laos, has an amazing opening statement (naïve, contradictory, brutally honest), which I want to quote at length and comment upon thoroughly because it is a perfect summation of the issues I have dealt with in this paper. I will indulge in splashing italics all over the text:

> The heritage of Asia and the Pacific is under threat. The passage of time and the effects of harsh climates render already-fragile places of culture and tradition ever more vulnerable.
>
> When coupled with neglect, poor maintenance, inadequate financial support, unregulated urban development, and the exponential growth of tourism, *the very survival of the region's most special places is at risk.*
>
> Archaeological sites, historic monuments, traditional towns and villages, cultural landscapes, handicrafts, rituals, traditional music and performing arts are all endangered.
>
> How has this happened? And what can be done to rescue *the disappearing cultural heritage* of the Asia-Pacific region?
>
> Both the physical heritage and intangible expressions of the region's history and culture are widely acknowledged to be of immeasurable value to its citizens. The heritage of Asia and the Pacific is also of immense interest and

appeal to visitors. It is on the basis of this appeal that the region's *tourism industry is founded and flourishes.* While the value of the heritage resources of the cultures of the Asia-Pacific region is unquestioned, this recognition is not always, or even frequently, translated into action to safeguard the heritage from decay, degradation or over-use. All too frequently, tourism has been the unwitting agent responsible for accelerating the demise of the region's heritage.

At its best, *tourism can generate the financial resources needed to invest in the rehabilitation of historic buildings and conservation areas. Tourism can help to revive dying or lost traditions, arts and cultural practices and can provide the impetus for artisans to continue their traditional crafts. Tourism can also provide new livelihood opportunities for large numbers of people in local communities.* Unfortunately *these positive impacts* are often negated by the unintentional destructive impacts of *tourism that rob a community of its ancestral heirlooms, undermine traditional cultural values* and alter the physical character of a tourism destination through inappropriate development and infrastructure.

In order to ensure that future generations are able to access their *authentic heritage* and, at the same time, to provide reason and motivation for visitors to continue to want to visit the Asia-Pacific region, all stakeholders must work together effectively to safeguard the wide range of heritage resources that exist across the region. Tourism can – indeed, tourism must – become a partner and a driving force for *the conservation of the tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage* of Asia and the Pacific. If tourism does not contribute to the preservation of the region's environments, cultures and traditions, then there will be no place for tourism in the future development of the region.

What strikes me most in this text is the explicit recognition of tourism as a guiding force behind heritage. Its enthusiasm is so overpowering that it misses the tautology it unfolds: tourism can generate the revenues necessary for protecting heritage which, in the end, is there to serve tourism. Tourism can also 'help to revive dying or lost traditions, arts and cultural practices' and can 'provide the impetus for artisans to continue their traditional crafts ... and new livelihood opportunities for large numbers of people in local communities'. This naïvety treats traditions, arts, crafts and cultural practices as mere marketable epiphenomena that can be re-enacted (for tourists, of course) in a social and political vacuum; it says nothing about the negative, destructive impingement of tourism on social bonds and non-Western cosmologies.

The text also recognizes that tourism can 'rob a community of its ancestral heirlooms' and 'undermine traditional cultural values'. The impacts of tourism on people can be so devastating that UNESCO now demands consultation with

local inhabitants in the process of nomination to the World Heritage List, a step that complies with Article 6 of the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention*: 'governments shall... consult the peoples concerned, through appropriate procedures and in particular through their representative institutions, whenever consideration is being given to legislative or administrative measures which may affect them directly'. Although this may be considered a step in the right direction (the direction of social justice), consultation is not a panacea in and of itself. When implemented in development projects in which great amounts of money are at stake (and, not surprisingly, transnational corporations are involved), consultation can be a simulation of respect and democracy while only being a formality besieged by corruption and threats. All in all, however, what matters to the text is heritage, not people. What matters most is the destructive impact of tourism on sites and monuments. It is this kind of reasoning, precisely, that can be countered in a militant opposition to the dominant conception of heritage.

Notes

1. Multiculturalism, the cultural logic from which the term 'multicultural' arises, is a contested term. It is premised upon the idea that societies are heterogeneous compositions of various cultures and thus dispenses with the modern conception of society as an integrated and homogeneous totality. Multiculturalism promotes, protects and even creates cultural diversity and establishes public policies to organize and channel its energy. Yet, it treats with contempt and condemns the cultural differences from which subaltern politics are predicated. As a result, the 'real other' is repressed by its virtual reflection. Slavoj Žižek (1998, p. 172) noted in this regard:

   > In multiculturalism there is a euro-centered and/or respectful distance with local cultures, taking roots in no particular culture ...multiculturalism is a negated, inverted, and self-referential form of racism, a 'racism with a distance': it 'respects' the identity of the Other, conceiving it as an 'authentic' closed community to which him, the multiculturalist, preserves a distance, made possible thanks to his privileged universal position.

   In the same vein, in this chapter I approach critically what multiculturalism has accomplished in the heritage realm.
2. Ethnographies of heritage have done a great deal in this regard since the groundbreaking works of Castañeda (1996) and Bender (1998).
3. UNESCO's *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage*, enacted in 1972, lists three types of cultural heritage (monuments, groups of buildings, and sites) defined by their 'outstanding universal value' from the points of view of history, art science, aesthetic, ethnology or anthropology. At least the criterion of 'outstanding universal value', whatever that is, defines heritage as appealing to a global worth. That is not the case when particular states come to the task of definition. The Colombian Act in charge of the matter (Ley General de Cultural 1997) is amazingly tautological: 'The cultural heritage of the nation is comprised by all goods and values that are expression of Colombian nationality...which possess a special

interest'. What for a multinational agency is 'outstanding universal value' for this country is just 'a special interest'.

4. Such is the case, for instance, with legal pluralism, consecrated in the constitutions of those countries that boast cultural diversity. In Colombia, the Constitution enacted in 1991 only mentioned it, but demanded its realization through a juridical co-ordination between the legal system of the state and those of cultural minorities. Two decades later, however, such co-ordination is non-existent and legal disputes between different systems are routinely dealt with case by case, normally resorting to territorial and cultural limits.
5. Legal autonomy, for instance, is granted to minorities with differential conceptions and practices of justice, at times quite apart from modern law; yet, such an autonomy can only be enacted within cultural and territorial limits; that is, it can only apply to certain individuals/groups and in certain places.
6. That assertion would be backed by the state, incoherently exhibiting its modern mnemonic apparatus intact, a strategy that would be utterly anachronistic were it not overtly calculated (central museums, for instance, are still national). The state continues to endow its material referents and build its narratives with universalized meaning; yet, it simultaneously condemns an inclusive identity. Legal jurisdictions establish the political legality of the state in the enactment of laws about heritage, which, in the end, regulate the enunciation of historical narratives. The latter endow expert knowledge (such as that of museums and archaeologists) with the right to establish and legitimate the apparatus of censorship that regulates the production and reproduction of heritage discourses.
7. There are notable exceptions to this statement, however. They are linked to extant national claims – mostly in particular cases of violent territorial and cultural confrontation arising from neo-colonial domination, such as the case between Palestine and Israel or between the Kurds and Turkey. They are also linked to diasporic communities seeking attachment to their original nationalities while living among peoples with other historical referents. In those cases, heritage can indeed be important for the forging of national identities struggling to find their ways through multicultural forests.
8. An extraordinary postmodern paradox is the existence of an overarching teleology (that of economic growth, modelled in biology) amid a non-teleological temporality that proudly brandishes presentism and the end of history.
9. I thank Mauricio Pardo for calling my attention to this issue.
10. A paradigmatic case in Bolivia can be seen in Gil (2011). This case and many others show that local communities engage this process by sharing what they consider their own heritage with an expanded public. Yet, such a humanistic sharing in the presence of the market is suspicious at best.
11. Cusco (Silverman 2006), in Peru, and the Quebrada de Humahuaca (Bergesio and Montial 2008), in Argentina, both on the World Heritage List, are good examples: while real estate speculation corners local inhabitants, tourism functionalizes them as craft vendors and as a part of an authentic landscape that tourists seek avidly in order to exoticize their experience of the unknown.

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