On Heritage Ontologies: Rethinking the Material Worlds of Heritage

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ABSTRACT

This piece aims to serve both as a commentary on papers in this special collection as well as a more general observation of recent developments within the emerging interdisciplinary field of critical heritage studies. It explores a series of key theoretical influences which come together, with various emphases, across the collection. This exemplifies a developing strand of research which focuses on material and ontological approaches to heritage. In doing so, this piece aims to consider the implications of these approaches for critical heritage studies more generally. [Keywords: Heritage, critical heritage studies, discourse, materiality, assemblage theory, actor network theory, ontology, worlding practices]

Introduction

This special collection on "New Materialities and the Enactment of Collective Pasts" comes, as its title suggests, at a key moment for the emerging interdisciplinary field of critical heritage studies, and for anthropological engagements in and with it. For too long a field defined by technical observations regarding *how*, *where*, and *which* heritage is to be conserved rather than *why*, the shift within heritage studies to emphasize its discursive effects represented a welcome critical move. Nonetheless, it could also be characterized as an emphasis which has come at the expense of an exploration of the corporeal and ontological implications of the material worlds of heritage (e.g. see also Pétursdóttir 2013, Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016, Byrne 2014). This piece aims to serve both as a commentary on papers in this special collection as well as, more broadly, a commentary on recent developments within critical heritage studies which seek to address themselves to this apparent deficit. Moreover, it explores a series of theoretical influences which come together, with various emphases, across the collection. These exemplify an emerging strand of research within critical heritage

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studies which draws on what I have elsewhere characterised as "material-discursive" or "relational ontological" approaches to heritage (see Harrison 2013a, 2015). I first reflect in general terms on the significance of each of these theoretical influences, and then aim to draw out three particular areas of synergy between specific groups of papers which relate to these themes to suggest some ways in which certain concepts might be elaborated in relation to them. But before I do this, I present a brief summary of the field of interdisciplinary critical heritage studies to emphasize the relevance of this collection and the new approaches the authors, and others, are currently engaged in developing.

What is "Critical Heritage Studies"?[1]

The rapid expansion of officially designated heritage objects, places, and practices throughout the world over the past 40 years in the wake of the 1972 World Heritage Convention and its progeny, has created new industries, professions, and a wide range of intellectual speculation (for recent summaries of developments, see Meskell 2013, Geismar 2015, Meskell 2018, and chapters in Meskell 2015a, and Brumann and Berliner 2016). Uzzell colorfully describes heritage studies as "the lovechild of a multitude of relationships between academics in many disciplines, and then nurtured by practitioners and institutions" (2009:326). For this reason, heritage has often been perceived to be compromised by its contingent relationship to other areas; conservation, tourism, and the leisure industries in particular. Historians have tended to see the heritage industries as popularizers of history at best, and as the peddlers of "bad" history at worst (e.g., Lowenthal 1985, 1998). Architectural historians and archaeologists have voiced disquiet about the simplification of questions of authenticity and meaning in the interests of popular education and political expediency in relation to heritage. Sociologists and those writing from a cultural studies perspective have pointed to a reverence for selected material aspects of the past as an integral characteristic of late-modern societies. Geographers have approached heritage through the lens of urban

studies and planning, and its relationship to processes such as regeneration and gentrification. Ecologists, biologists, and natural geographers have been concerned with concepts of biodiversity and ecological sustainability. Heritage studies as a discipline does not, therefore, emerge naturally from any single current academic field. Consequently, it is a broad and heterogeneous academic domain, covering research into what we choose to conserve and why, the politics of the past, the processes of heritage management and how it is articulated across unequal relations of expertise and power, and the relationship between commemorative acts and public and private memory, with links to policy making and some of the most pressing political, ecological, economic, and social issues of our time.

Yet all of this prompts the question: "Why might we be interested in delineating a 'field' of interdisciplinary heritage studies at all?" In the past, heritage has tended to be explored from particular, highly specialized, clearly defined subject positions that have discouraged an exploration of heritage as an overarching contemporary global phenomenon. Archaeologists have been interested in the conservation of archaeological sites and objects; historians in the promotion of accurate public history; anthropologists in the relationship between heritage and tradition; geographers in natural and cultural landscapes; biologists and ecologists in the conservation of plant and animal species. Furthermore, the way in which heritage has been driven largely by compliance with municipal, state, and national legislation, and has become caught up in processes of the production of local, regional, and national identity and cultural economies, means that we have tended not to look across national borders to explore areas of common concern. The challenge of Indigenous and other minority and non-Western peoples in applying alternative models to the definition and methods of management of both cultural and natural heritage (particularly in suggesting the absence of distinction between these two categories—e.g. see Bird-Rose 1996) has provided another important and, in its own way, highly specialized perspective in this diverse assemblage of

ideas. And yet scholars have rarely considered forms of heritage conservation practice in comparative perspective. I would argue that our contemporary global responses to heritage—whether the desire to conserve a historic landscape, an animal species, an endangered language, or a small scatter of prehistoric stone artifacts—are ultimately driven by a common series of concerns that relate to the experience of globalization and the conditions of late-modernity and its attendant "endangerment sensibility(s)" (cf. Vidal and Dias 2016; see further discussion in Harrison 2013a, 2016; Rico 2014a, 2015a). As Christoph Brumann notes in an endnote to his article in this issue, designating a field of critical heritage studies should not necessarily imply taking a moral position on whether heritage is "good" or "bad," but rather, should be concerned with observing, understanding, and explaining its operations and effects. In thinking of heritage broadly, as a series of distinct yet related fields of practice, it should similarly be concerned with thinking through the relationships of different forms of heritage and conservation practices and their impacts on one another.

While one of the main academic criticisms of heritage has concentrated on the dominant focus on the conservation of tangible objects and buildings at the expense of intangible cultural values, it could be argued that both official practices of heritage and academic heritage studies have actually increasingly distanced themselves from material "things" and have become dominated by a focus on the discourse of heritage. For example, in *Uses of Heritage*, Laurajane Smith (2006) draws on critical discourse analysis to chart the connection between power and the language of heritage, showing how the discourses of heritage both reflect and create a particular set of socio-political practices. She suggests we can use the structure and messages embodied in the language surrounding heritage to understand the dominant discourse of heritage "and the way it both reflects and constitutes a range of social practices—not least the way it organizes social relations and identities around nation, class, culture and ethnicity" (2006:16). It is this dominant discourse that she terms the

"Authorized Heritage Discourse" (AHD). Smith's work has been very important in drawing attention to the knowledge/power effects of heritage, and the concrete ways in which power is caught up and exercised through the exhibition and management of museums and heritage sites, a concern that has emerged as central to the interdisciplinary field of critical heritage studies. Smith (2004, 2006) and others (Harvey 2001, Dicks 2003) have criticized UNESCO's definition of heritage as residing in monumental, tangible "things," suggesting instead that heritage should be understood as a process or series of discursive practices (see also Dicks 2000; Byrne 2008, 2014).

While acknowledging its key role in producing a field of critical heritage studies, one criticism that could be levelled at this focus on the discourse of heritage is that it does not always produce accounts that adequately theorize the role of material "things" in the complex set of relationships in which human and non-human agents, heritage objects, places, and practices are bound together in contemporary worlds (see further discussion in Harrison 2013a). I would suggest that the combined effect of a tendency within heritage studies to focus on issues of the politics of representation (see also Vargas-Cetina 2013); an increasing emphasis on "intangible" heritage in a reaction against UNESCO's early emphasis on the monumental and tangible; the marketing of heritage as "experience"; the increased use of virtual media in the exhibition and interpretation of heritage; and the recognition that heritage often acts discursively as a governmental apparatus, has meant that heritage studies scholars have increasingly appeared to deprivilege the affective qualities of heritage. While Smith's advocacy of critical discourse analysis (2006; see also Waterton, Smith, and Campbell 2006)—a development of discourse studies that explicitly attempts to move beyond the reduction of discourse to "text"—cautions against such an approach, nonetheless it seems important to bring the affective qualities of heritage "things" and their attendant performativity more squarely into the critical heritage studies arena (e.g., see recent work by

Waterton 2014; Smith and Campbell 2015; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton, and Watson 2017). This move resonates, for example, with Rico's (2015b) recent querying of the way forward for a critical heritage studies which has disarmed and contributed to a critical redescription of heritage's authorizing discourses. Such an approach should not be viewed as inconsistent with a consideration of the discourse of heritage and its knowledge/power effects. Indeed, it would also draw on other important recent developments in the exploration of the socio-material effects of the politics of world heritage (e.g., Brumann 2014; Meskell 2013, 2014, 2015b, 2018; Meskell et al. 2015; Winter 2014, 2015) and a consideration of the relationship between heritage, cosmopolitanism (Meskell 2009, Geismar 2015), and processes of sacralization and secularization (e.g., Byrne 2014, Rico 2014b) at a range of different scales (Harvey 2014, Baird 2017).

Heritage, New Materialities, and New Ontologies

I have suggested that the pieces in this collection exemplify the influence of a particular set of theoretical perspectives which have found increasing significance within recent critical heritage studies scholarship. These can be summarized as follows.

1. A particular materially focused reading of what have come to be known as the "later" works of Michel Foucault, many of which have only recently appeared in English translation for the first time, in particular *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2010) and *Security, Territory, Population* (2009), which elaborate on the concept of governmentality and the various apparatuses (*dispositifs*) by which it operates;

2. An emphasis on more symmetrical approaches to understanding the distribution of different forms of agency across heterogeneous networks which include both human and other-than-human actors and which takes its

cue from Latourian Science Studies (e.g., Latour 1993, 1999, 2005) and Actor Network Theory more broadly (e.g., Latour and Woolgar 1979; Latour 1987, 1993, 1999, 2005; Law and Hassard 1999);

3. A Deleuzian language of assemblage, as elaborated upon in the work of Manuel DeLanda (2006) and others, which helps focus attention on the range of heterogeneous elements—objects, people, places, practices, pronouncements, bureaucratic apparatuses—that are brought together in "heritage assemblages" (cf. Bennett and Healy 2009; Macdonald 2009; Harrison 2013a, 2013b), like museums and heritage sites, and the varied and dispersed ways in which they function;

4. A concern with ontologies, "worlding" practices (c.f. Barad 2007) and multiple modes of existence (c.f. Latour 2004, 2013; Descola 2013), which connects with the broader "ontological turn" within anthropology and cognate fields (e.g., Alberti et al 2011; Holbraad and Pederson 2017; Holbraad, Pederson, and Viveiros de Castro 2014; Kohn 2015; Povinelli 2012, 2016; and for heritage Breithoff and Harrison 2018; Harrison 2013a, 2015, 2017; Harrison et al 2016).

I see these four key sets of theoretical influences articulated across the collection, and critical heritage studies more generally, in three specific ways.

Heritage and Practices of Social Government—The Transactional Realities of Heritage[2]
The first concerns the relationship between heritage and practices of social government, which I refer to here (drawing closely on Bennett, Dibley, and Harrison 2014 and Bennett et al. 2017) as *the transactional realities of heritage*. Several of the articles in this special collection touch on a process which Michel Foucault (2009:109) termed "the

governmentalization of the state," where relations come to be "established between political rule and other projects and techniques for the calculated administration of life" (Miller and Rose 2008:69). These papers explore questions which arise from the ways in which governmental practices might be understood to operate not only directly, but also indirectly, through the actions of non-state actors and other heterogeneous assemblages composed of human and non-human participants. The more obvious and direct operations are discernible in and through the administrative practices of heritage in and by the state—for example through the listing of national heritage sites, and the emphasis on historical narratives which articulate the origin myths of those practices which determine the boundaries between citizens and non-citizens (e.g., Anderson 1983). But these governmental practices also often operate indirectly, in the ways in which certain knowledge practices provide mechanisms for acting on both individuals and populations through forms of expertise which, even though outside of the bureaucracy of the state, nonetheless influence the ways in which the state and its populations are conceptualized and organized (see Bennett 2013, 2014; Bennett, Dibley, and Harrison 2014; Harrison 2014). Hill's description (this issue) of the heterogeneous range of state and non-state actors involved in heritage related activities in and around Havana's Plaza Vieja exemplify very well the indirect governmental practices I have in mind here.

In this, the collection resonates with collaborative comparative work undertaken with colleagues Tony Bennett, Fiona Cameron, Nélia Dias, Ben Dibley, Ira Jacknis, and Conal McCarthy regarding the history of different forms of early to mid-20th century anthropological collecting practices and their relationship with practices of social government (see Bennett et al. 2017). One of the concerns which drove this collaborative investigation was to consider the various transactional realities which have been established in the relations between specific anthropological collecting practices, the associated rationales for ordering population which emerged from these anthropological collecting practices, and the particular

modes of governing which these rationales for ordering population have facilitated. A number of such transactional realities emerged from our investigations into various forms of anthropological, archaeological, demographic, and other forms of social scientific collecting practices in the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries across the Anglophone and Francophone contexts with which we were concerned. "Race" and "culture" are two such transactional realities which have held long and persistent traction across a number of different national contexts (see Bennett 2013). Nonetheless, there are a number of others, such as "morale" in relation to the work of Mass Observation in the UK (Harrison 2014, Dibley and Kelly 2015), and "the dying native" narrative in relation to late 19th century Indigenous census-making in Canada, the US, and Australia (Rowse 2014). What has been clear from our historical investigations is that such transactional realities have their own trajectories—they shift, adapt, modify, wax, and wane across a range of different political and social contexts—but such shifts are almost always recognizable in the simultaneous reorganization of the collecting, ordering, and governing practices which come to work the interface between governors and governed.

We take the concept of transactional realities from Michel Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2010) in which he notes that:

> Civil society is not a historical-natural given…it is not a primary or immediate reality; it is something which forms part of a modern governmental technology…Civil society is, like madness and sexuality, what I call transactional realities. That is to say those transactional and transitional figures we call civil society, madness, and so on, which, although they have not always existed are nonetheless real, are born precisely from the interplay of relations of power and everything which constantly eludes them, at the interface, so to speak, of governors and governed. (2010:297)

Tony Bennett (2013:44–45; 2014) has suggested that one of the important roles of 20th century anthropology in this respect has been in producing what he terms "working surfaces on the social," that is, in producing transactional realities which provide distinctive discursive and technical means by which populations might be differentiated and by which specific forms of action on those differentiated populations might be mediated as a function of the relations between governors and governed. This is particularly the case in understanding anthropology's role in colonial contexts, understood broadly in our case as two connected but distinct sets of relations—one spatial and one political. The first concerns a regional distinction between the metropole and colony, and the role of anthropology in the production of similarly organized relations within metropolitan powers between the capital city and its various hinterlands. The second concerns the distinction, between those mechanisms of governing that work through the forms of freedom they organize and those which operate coercively. These are most clearly apparent in the divisions that colonial governmentalities work through in designating sections of colonized populations as subject to directive forms of rule in which they are denied the attributes deemed necessary for liberal subject-hood: that is, the capacity to practice a responsibilized freedom. These transactional realities, Bennett notes, relate to the specific logics of particular colonial contexts, and as such, work towards the production of different governmental rationalities which are concerned with different ways of acting on the social. As such, these transactional realities and their associated governmental rationalities can be seen to exist as a function of specific configurations of practices of collecting, ordering, and governing (see Bennett et al. 2017).

There are two sets of relationships which emerge from this discussion that I think have relevance to pieces in this special collection, and to critical heritage studies more generally. The first is the relationship between different transactional realities of heritage—"Intangible Cultural Heritage" and "Indigenous Heritage," for example—and liberal forms of

subjecthood. And the second are the ways in which *particular* transactional realities are related to *specific* governmental rationalities that are produced through *precise* collecting and ordering practices. It seems to me that the elaboration of different categories of heritage and their appropriate means of management are each accompanied by their own associated notions of responsibilized freedoms, alongside the establishment of specific limits on those freedoms (e.g., limits on change to heritage fabric, authorized versus non-authorized conservation practices, etc.). The contemporary transactional reality of "Indigeneity", for example, makes an interesting case in that it provides distinctive discursive and technical means by which populations might be differentiated, and by which specific forms of action on those differentiated populations might be mediated, which, under the new taxonomy of "Intangible Cultural Heritage", is accompanied by its own distinctive collecting and ordering practices which help to sustain it. Nonetheless, in its relationship to concepts of self-determination, Indigeneity remains fundamentally tied to (neo)colonial notions of liberal forms of subjecthood. In the case of Australia, for example, self-determination for Indigenous peoples was simultaneously a progressivist state modernizing project and one in which new categories of colonial-liberal subjecthood were generated.[3] As Gillian Cowlishaw has noted, "while the state ostensibly tried to hand Aboriginal people control over their own domain, it did not in fact relinquish anything. The success of this policy depended on Aboriginal people wanting the ends determined by the state, and in a sense they did" (1998:165). The success of self-determination, like other liberal formations, would exist in its ability to raise its targets (in this case, Aboriginal Australians) above the threshold to facilitate their practice of responsibilized freedom. These new forms of self-management were to be realized by way of the recognition, if not valorization, of specific forms of cultural difference which were constructed around a notion of communities as culturally and geographically bounded entities. Spatially, these entities were conceived of as geographically remote from

metropolitan centers. Politically, they relied on a notion of cultural difference which was at once both relativist and abstract. While "culture" was seen as a form of "glue" holding such groups in bounded autonomy, it also constituted an impediment, or at least a series of limitations on the exercising of responsibilized freedom, which, on an individual level, Aboriginal people would be required to overcome (see also Povinelli 2002). Within the context of the simultaneous development of Australian multiculturalism, "self-determination" employed notions of cultural relativity which were directed implicitly towards delineating Indigenous and immigrant peoples, as those who had no culture or race, with "White Australians" as the neutral opposite. I would suggest we see similar effects in relation to Intangible Cultural Heritage, which is held to be the preserve of particular groups which become the targets for specific modes of self-management in which the notion of responsibilized freedoms is manifested through the emphasis on community co-management, but in which clear limits are placed on those freedoms in relation to various technical documents relating to the appropriate ways of managing particular forms of heritage, reporting mechanisms and so on. We might think of Intangible Cultural Heritage as a form of biopolitics in its focus on minority peoples themselves as the literal *embodiments* of heritage (Harrison 2013a).

Michelle Bigenho and Henry Stobart (this issue) suggest we need to look beyond superficial neoliberal readings of heritage in finer grained, more nuanced, and contextual understandings of the roles which heritage plays in its translation by specific communities in specific places, and the ways in which we might also see the performance of particular modes of heritage as forms of strategic essentialism. Nonetheless, there is also clearly a sense in which the local enthusiasm for UNESCO sponsored programs of intangible heritage declaration and protection also involves forms of self-regulation and processes of reorganization and differentiation of population which will nonetheless facilitate particular

practices of social government in which these same Indigenous populations will become targets for bureaucratic programs of sociotechnical and biopolitical management. These issues are also relevant to Walter Little's (2009) discussion of the contradictions between local residents' and artists' heritage aesthetics in Antigua within what he describes as the larger political and regulatory apparatuses of the state, tourism, and UNESCO.

Heritage Assemblages/Heritage *agencements*

My second point relates to the concept of heritage assemblages or what I call heritage *agencements*.[4] I've outlined some of the specific ways in which I think assemblage theory is helpful in relation to heritage and museums in my book *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (2013a) and in the introduction to the edited volume *Reassembling the Collection* (2013b; see also papers in Bennett and Healy 2009, and especially Macdonald 2009). In *Collecting, Ordering, Governing* (Bennett et al. 2017), we proposed the term "anthropological assemblages" as a means of engaging with the ways in which, "in their early 20th century forms, anthropological museums operated at the intersections of different socio-material networks: those connecting them to the public spheres of the major metropolitan powers, those linking them to the institutions and practices of colonial administration, and those comprising the relations between museum, field, and university." (2017: 5) With regard to the last of these, Bennett (2013) has proposed the concept of "fieldwork agencement" to refer to the immediate forces—transport systems, the mediating roles of missionaries or colonial administrators, the technologies of filming or recording, the use of tents as locations in close proximity to but distinct from "the field"—which together organize the fieldwork situation. Key to Bennett's concept is a stress on the distribution of agency across the relations between human actors (anthropologists, Indigenous "subjects," and "informants") and non-human actors, particularly in focusing on the role of the various technical instruments and devices (film and sound recording instruments, cameras, callipers, anthropometers, etc.) which,

depending on how "data" are defined, determine how they are collected and processed (see further discussion in Bennett et al. 2017).

Paraphrasing but expanding on the concepts of anthropological assemblages and fieldwork agencements we present in Bennett et al. (2017; see also Bennett, Dibley, and Harrison 2014), one could posit the existence of "heritage assemblages" which operate in relation to "heritage recording agencements," which might encompass:

1. the whole set of relations and processes, from origin and conception, which condition heritage experts' routes to, conceptions of, and modes of entry into "the field" (in which the endangered object of heritage is situated, either in situ or ex-situ), including the role of specific definitions and discourses of heritage within such processes in specifying both the forms of endangerment and the appropriate means of intervening in that condition;

2. the relations between heritage experts and the other agents—human and non-human—in the more immediate fieldwork contexts in which data are collected and subjected to initial organization and interpretation;

3. the routes through which these heritage experts and their assembled materials (site recordings, photographs, field notes, observations, plans and maps, etc.) return to "base" (whether to a local field office, state government heritage agency, or office of an international NGO), the mechanisms through which the materials and data they have collected are subjected to institutionally specific processes of ordering and classification; and

4. the manner in which such materials and data are connected to the institutions and networks through which, whether in the public sphere, in relation to the tasks of bureaucratic administration, or those of social management, heritage is

governmentally deployed, by either state or non-state actors, to intervene within and bring about changes in the conduct of specific populations.

The complicated operations of such heritage recording agencements are perhaps helpful in making sense of the regimes of expertise which make up the conflict between "archaeological" and "intangible" forms of heritage which emerge in Fernando Armstrong-Fumero's article (which he terms an "ontic" distinction or institutional "bubble") which official forms of heritage conservation practices place between objects and the practices in which they are bound up. As an aside, it is interesting to think of both sets of practices he describes as ones which work the surface of objects, blurring the boundaries between objects and their surfaces in significant ways, in which one set of autochthonous practices involving the burning of candles are replaced with another set of "conservation" practices—both of which are deeply reverential even though one is constructed as "religious" and the other as "secular" or rational. (It is no mistake that Alois Reigl called heritage the modern cult of monuments.) Matthew Hill's (this issue) and Christoph Brumann's (this issue) papers equally engage the notion of heritage assemblages as ways of accounting for the distributed operations of power and the complicated directionality implied in studying the cause and effect of heritage politics whilst also maintaining a sensitivity to the ways in which objects, people, and things are nonetheless all implicated in these processes in various different ways.

Heritage as One or More Overlapping Ontological Fields
Finally, I see some common concerns in thinking of heritage as one or more overlapping ontological fields or domains of practice. Hill's, Brumann's, and Bigenho and Stobart's (this issue) articles most clearly articulate these issues in their explicit concern with exploring alternative ways of "worlding the city" (Hill), with the World Heritage List as a form of "world-making" (Brumann), and in the role of heritage in "reproducing worlds" in Bolivia (Bigenho and Stobart), but an interest in heritage ontologies more or less underpins all of the

papers presented in this issue, even if only implicitly. Many of the papers describe contrasting or conflicting ontologies which emerge through what Latour (2013:95) refers to as "conflicts between the different sets of felicity and infelicity conditions" or "category mistakes," which he suggests constitute precisely the focus *for*, and subject *of*, an enquiry into different modes of existence. These category mistakes and their affects appear in a number of the accounts presented here. I have previously made reference to the concept of heritage *domains* to draw attention to a tendency for different fields of heritage practice to operate relatively autonomously, with each of these domains specifying particular objects of conservation and accompanying methods of management (Harrison 2015). Each of these domains applies its own specific techniques for identifying, collecting, conserving, and managing the endangered object and the factors which are perceived to threaten it. In so far as heritage is generally tasked with preserving its endangered object for the "future," and each of these domains is concerned with establishing its respective conservation targets as both objects of knowledge and fields of intervention, these different heritage domains can be said to be actively engaged in the work of assembling and caring for the future (see Harrison et al. 2016). Conflicts across and between these domains provide insights into the ways in which each constitutes a set of distinctive worlding practices.

We might think of these domains of heritage or modes of heritage making as particular ontologies of heritage, in the sense that they are concerned with different categories of being and different ways of assembling futures (this is a concept I develop more fully in Harrison 2015; see also Breithoff and Harrison 2018; Harrison 2017; Harrison et al. 2016). Fundamental to understanding the value of this concept of heritage ontologies is the recognition of ontological plurality—drawing our attention to the different worlding and future assembling capacities of different heritage practices which operate simultaneously and independently of one another. The notion of heritage ontologies is, I think, helpful in

beginning to think through some of the ways in which different domains of heritage and their associated practices are implicated in composing multiple modes of being, and how those multiple modes of being work towards the production of multiple specific *futures* (Harrison et al. 2016). This realization is liberating in the sense that it provides us with multiple templates with which to imagine alternative futures *for* heritage, and future alternatives *to* heritage—those which do not seek to dichotomize "natural" and "cultural" heritage, perhaps, or those which are more attuned to work with, rather than against, processes of change (e.g., DeSilvey 2006, 2014, 2017; Holtorf 2015; Rico 2016; Dawdy 2016).

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I would suggest that what unites all of these papers and others which exemplify this emerging strand in critical heritage studies, is the acknowledgment that a focus on discourse, drawing on documentary sources and official statements alone, is not helpful in accounting for the diverse ways in which heritage objects, places, and practices (and I refer here not only to those "intangible" practices which might be designated as forms of heritage themselves, but also to the practices of designation, curation, and management which co-create these different forms of heritage as both objects of knowledge and fields of intervention—see further discussion in Harrison 2017) *are themselves* active players in assembling presents, in composing worlds, and in designing futures. In this, these new material and ontological approaches shine a light on the ways in which "things" and their affective dimensions can become a new area of focus for critical heritage studies, and thus explore important connections between heritage and other contemporary issues of political, social, or ecological concern. In doing so, the articles begin to break new ground in carving out a distinctive, "material-discursive" approach to heritage studies, a move which not only acts as a corrective in enrichening critical heritage studies, but which also has the potential to

offer us new templates for imagining and designing alternative heritage futures and the common worlds which might be articulated amongst them.

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