Introduction

GLENN HOOPER

While the term "heritage" conjures up for many people an almost bewildering range of impressions, some of them a little vague, many of them comforting and pleasurable, the meanings conveyed can provoke various and often unexpected outcomes. Associated with identity, ownership, or possibly a sense of belonging, heritage can sometimes work like an opiate, a balm to be clung to in times of social, technological, or political upheaval. Although this benign interpretation of heritage can certainly act in the interests of social cohesion, focus communal energies, and distil complicated and often contested histories into manageable units, there are times when heritage can also appear more divisive and threatening. When clothed in the language of public history, for example, heritage suggests accessibility, tolerance, and inclusivity, and connects not just with the thoughtful care of a nation's visual and material culture but also with a form of narrative healing.[1] Yet for all the reassurance engendered by this particular interpretation—the idea of a widespread and collective enterprise to which all are invited—not everyone is convinced. Indeed, in the case of British heritage it is often suggested that while many people associate heritage with a set of traditions and an identifiable belief system, there are many others who connect it with unapologetic triumphalism and detect in the term a sense of privilege, complacency, and power. In the 1980s, at the height of the British heritage boom, writers such as Robert Hewison were scathing in their view of heritage as a reactionary sop promoted by local councils as a way of either compensating for lost glories or endorsing recent ones in the South Atlantic.[2] Unsurprisingly, many detected in this interpretation of heritage an almost tribal identity from which they felt excluded, while their alternative histories and cultures remained unacknowledged, vilified, or worse. Throughout the 1980s heritage was often seen as a way of cordoning off and defining cultural limits,

putting in place barriers that made a sense of belonging available to some, while simultaneously keeping it firmly out of the reach of others.[3]

Heritage at the Interface is an essay collection that engages with many of the issues raised by critics over the past thirty-odd years, drawing on heritage examples in the United States and Canada, Europe and Australia, and including case studies from Mauritius, China, Turkey, and India. Unsurprisingly, no overriding impression that might turn the multiplicity of heritage sites into a palliative, no identifiable model to which all may subscribe, emerges from these pages. Heritage as construed in a Tibetan village is markedly different from the version espoused on the former battlefields of the Somme; the drivers behind heritage tourism in Derry are distinct from the motivations governing heritage development in Mauritius; the complexities of heritage identity implemented in Northern Italy are rather differently constructed in South Wales. That said, several transnational themes do materialize, revealing commonalities and connections across cultures and jurisdictions, and suggesting that the lively controversies alluded to above have played out in many countries where heritage has been discussed, promoted, and commodified. Gathered here are the sensitivities of local communities in Northern France, in Chinese-occupied Tibet, in the South Tyrol, and along sections of the Maine–New Brunswick border, some of whom must deal with the complexities of dark heritage, the frustrations and disappointments of UNESCO listing, and the challenges of accommodating minority groups into already intricate local narratives. Although in each of these essays heritage is rather differently conveyed and analyzed, shared experiences nevertheless arise; the dynamic interplay of identity, the complexities of (be)longing and place, and the fluid network of classifications beset by the demands of tourism are common to the work of several chapters.

Of the various charges laid before heritage in the 1980s and 1990s one criticism in particular seemed to stand above all others. Described by Tom Paulin as a "loathsome collection of theme-parks and dead values," a kitsch and unsavory debasement of historical accuracy, Paulin's association of heritage with industry made its already established insufficiencies all the more appalling.[4] Not only did heritage lack an intellectual edge, happily engaged in popular interpretations that demanded little intellectual engagement from its audience, it aligned historical and cultural heritage with advantageous money-making and profit, taking something of substance and making it tawdry and debased.[5] The gallery and museum, the stately home and castle, as well as the visual arts, architecture, and design—all were consumed by the heritage industry, to be steadily commodified, marketed, packaged, and sold. While such criticisms were presented with feelings of mounting despair and a level of incredulity not often seen within the

museum and wider cultural sectors, not everyone was disheartened. Although Raphael Samuel agreed that it "seemed quite plausible" to think of heritage as reactionary, to see it as "Thatcherism in period dress," he also insisted that heritage "was one of the few areas of national life in which it is possible to invoke an idea of the common good." Since it was capable of appealing to different political and ideological factions, heritage was better understood as a sort of "chameleon . . . constantly metamorphosing into something else" rather than a fixed and knowable entity focused exclusively on profit.[6] Yes, it was relatively easy to dismiss and vilify heritage, he conceded, but its contribution to a more inclusive interpretation of national culture was in little doubt. The modest initiatives that have recently emerged, including the small-scale and community efforts at reviving forgotten or disregarded histories, the contemplation of industrial heritage, the museums that emphasize labor rather than aesthetics—all of these projects bring something new and vibrant to the heritage story.[7]

Something of the promise identified by Samuel—the local and popular heritage initiatives, the improved levels of inclusion and engagement—may be found in several of the chapters presented here, though they are especially emphasized by Bella Dicks, Roshi Naidoo, and myself. For example, in the course of Dicks's chapter we are reminded that heritage is frequently validated by institutions and individuals who have attributed to it cultural value, an acceptance that is subjective and often negotiated, and which can lead to a sense of empowerment and renewal. However, such approval, argues Dicks, is established less on the basis of an acknowledged and widespread agreement about a known thing, site, or narrative, but rather is the result of a complicated nexus of contemporary needs and demands, and of a process of selection that can be both potentially conflictive and exclusive. Whether in state-sponsored museums or local heritage centers, heritage is *made* rather than simply identified, an idea that positions heritage as constantly evolving, and as part of a negotiated rather than settled process. In the classificatory and literal transformation of a site from "history" to "heritage," from "past" to "cultural visitability," we discover heritage to be an enabling but also fluid, partial, and provisional process. Like Dicks, Roshi Naidoo also sees heritage as a complex process of negotiation, and in a review of contemporary music heritage she considers the ways in which music contains not just the ability to entertain but to offer fundamental insights into theories of identity, belonging, and tribalism. These tangled emotions and allegiances, so often a part of heritage nomenclature, are interrogated as sites of agency and as possible instances of radical subjectivity. Where British heritage has steadily consumed popular music and its protagonists into a historical appreciation frequently shorn of political possibility, Naidoo reinstates the potential of agency

and subjectivity, seeing in popular music heritage an ongoing and developmental rather than consensual narrative. Whether in a South Wales mining center, in a deprived Portuguese village, or among the once youthful visitors to a popular music exhibition, Dicks and Naidoo demonstrate how heritage is actively constructed and invested, something also developed in my own chapter on local developments in Derry/Londonderry. In a discussion of recent museum and heritage initiatives in what was once one of Ireland's most troubled cities, I acknowledge the difficult but still necessary ways in which heritage has contributed to the ongoing peace process and to improving community relations. Emanating from among working-class constituencies as often as from council- and government-approved museum departments, I argue that such developments demonstrate the potential of heritage to engage and stimulate. I share Dicks's view that heritage is to be made, is propulsive, and is ongoing; with Naidoo I concur that heritage has the capacity to enable agency, subjectivity, and a more fluid sense of identity.

Throughout this volume national identity issues are discussed in relation to a number of conservation and heritage management concerns drawn from experiences in Mauritius, Turkey, and Germany. In these case studies we read about communities who feel marginalized, or whose belief systems go unacknowledged, or who find themselves in the midst of a drive for moral and racial purity. These are the moments where interface takes on a quite literal, often confrontational hue. Even if it is not foregrounded in these chapters it forms a steady backbeat to the main narrative, especially where identity is sometimes contested and complicated by myriad management, legal, and conservation systems. In many of these instances the interface is distinct, impermeable, resistant, and even physical. For example, in Johanna Mitterhofer's chapter attention is focused on a small German-speaking town in Northern Italy where heritage had once stimulated dissension and suspicion, but has more recently been used to increase understanding among communities where historical wariness has frequently predominated. Despite the ongoing problems facing citizens, Mitterhofer highlights the potential of heritage to heighten dialogue among culturally heterogeneous societies, thereby demonstrating the advantages of a more pluralistic approach that emphasizes heritage *communities* and the people-centered initiatives of the Faro Convention.[8] Like Mitterhofer, Emma Waterton also focuses on the relationship between identity and heritage and, via a series of structured and semistructured interviews based around the Australian Kakadu National Park, seeks to understand the processes by which past narratives become normalized by way of the experience of heritage tourism. From Waterton's research, including follow-up interviews conducted some months later, we read

of visitors who not only connect the site to contemporary notions of national identity but also—though not always unproblematically—to the wider history of colonial contact. As with the residents of Mitterhofer's Tyrolian town who are currently negotiating a path through the thicket of heritage interaction, Waterton's visitors recognize in the term "heritage" both a sense of belonging and a simultaneous disavowal of others. Nevertheless, in the narrative interstices, between "us" and "them," both essayists see in recent heritage developments the possibility for recognition, acceptance, and greater levels of understanding.

Whatever the challenges, and despite being validated and excoriated in equal measure, heritage has become an increasingly important part of public discourse. Moreover, the steady absorption of heritage in the form of community museums and interpretive centers has helped alleviate unemployment, engender greater levels of social inclusion, and contribute to the regeneration of landscapes, urban and rural both. Heritage has also become increasingly central to the tourism offer, and may now just as easily be seen as a set of opportunities for self-expression, as an integral part of the wider leisure industry rather than an amalgam of historical facts and classifications.[9] In Lee Jolliffe's chapter we read about the development of cultural tourism along the eastern North American transborder Passamaquoddy region of Maine and New Brunswick, a region where there are often cultures and communities in common, and where heritage is being creatively combined so as to produce greater insights into binational and other shared forms of identity. In her analysis of the cross-border partnership of cultural projects across the US-Canada border Jolliffe highlights an example of the kind of collaboration that is required for binational heritage initiatives, as well as the sorts of advantages they can bring. Moreover, from the examples she cites heritage increasingly appears as a multiplicity of artistic forms and expressions, as a more loosely defined, inclusive, and evolving process rather than something obsessively focused on an agreed set of historical and cultural referents. Indeed it might truthfully be argued that it is precisely this loosening up of the term, a reorientation of what it might be and allude to, that has led to the official recognition of intangible heritage, with UNESCO formally establishing a list of intangible cultural sites in 2008, and thereby heralding a complete reassessment of heritage values.[10] No longer an automatic reference to landscapes or examples from the built environment, many of which are of a Euro-American cast, heritage is now presented as more inclusive and diverse, and much more evenly distributed around the globe. Dance and song, puppetry and falconry, crafts and oral culture, the opportunities for global communities to feel part of the celebration of heritage have been transformational and radically inventive.[11]