Ethnologies

ethn⦿logies

Patrimonial Reflections
From Burning Buildings to Bodies of Heritage

Valdimar Tr. Hafstein

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article

Résumé de l'article

L'auteur de cet article avance que la montée en puissance du patrimoine culturel représente peut-être l'exemple par excellence d'une réévaluation des pratiques et des objets culturels en fonction de l'opportunité qu'ils présentent pour des objectifs économiques et politiques. Il s'agit de la culture comme matière première : une nouvelle configuration dans laquelle la culture acquiert dorénavant une utilité dans tous les domaines, depuis la création d'emplois jusqu'à la réduction de la criminalité, de l'embellissement des villes grâce au tourisme culturel jusqu'à la résolution des différences et des conflits au sein de la population. Dans ce contexte, le patrimoine procure un langage audible mais flexible pour revendiquer la culture et poser des revendications fondées sur la culture. Il suggère que la *Convention pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel* de 2003 constitue l'indice d'une réforme des politiques mondiales en matière de patrimoine. Là où les précédents efforts de l'UNESCO se contentaient de documenter et d'archiver les expressions du folklore et de la culture traditionnelle, ses initiatives en matière de patrimoine immatériel visent à assurer la transmission et la persistance des pratiques traditionnelles in situ. Cela exige une intervention directe dans les communautés concernées. L'UNESCO embrigade le patrimoine immatériel en tant qu'outil de préservation des communautés, celles-ci représentant *le* bien social et moral que l'on pense menacé par la mondialisation. Le patrimoine immatériel apparaît comme un outil de production d'un sentiment fort (mais non exclusif) d'appartenance pour les membres des communautés culturelles au sein des États (et parfois à travers les États). Des groupes de population réifient leurs pratiques et leurs expressions en tant que « patrimoine immatériel » en même temps qu'ils se font les « sujets » de leurs communautés. Le gouvernement peut alors agir dans le domaine social par l'intermédiaire des communautés et au moyen, entre autres, de leurs politiques patrimoniales. L'auteur signale également que nombre de pratiques patrimoniales ont le corps pour objet central – elles font du corps un site de représentation. De fait, le patrimoine immatériel relève en grande partie de la façon dont s'incarne la culture et de la façon dont les corps deviennent dépositaires de la culture.

Patrimonial Reflections
From Burning Buildings to Bodies of Heritage

Valdimar Tr. Hafstein
University of Iceland

On 18 April 2007, fire laid waste to two buildings in the heart of downtown Reykjavík, Iceland. One of them, built in 1801 or 1802, housed a dance club called Pravda. It was the second oldest building still standing in Reykjavík. The other building, from 1852, had a restaurant on the upper floor, Café Romance, and a Kebab-joint on the ground floor. The fire engines were there within minutes after the fire broke out, followed in short order by reporters and camera crews. Two out of three TV stations interrupted their programming to bring hours of direct footage from the fire. To make television out of the crackling spectacle, reporters lined up interviewees on the main square against a smoking background of fire fighters hosing down the flames: from the fire marshal to the building owners, from historians to patrons of the burning dance club, and from the mayor of Reykjavík to anonymous passers-by, the audience was treated to the live reactions of each. To most of their interlocutors, reporters posed some variation on the question: "are we witnessing the destruction of priceless cultural heritage?" From the fire marshal to the mayor, everyone concurred that, yes, before our very eyes, the cultural heritage of the capital was going up in flames.

I sympathized with the clubbers facing their Disco Inferno, but I was more intrigued by the smoldering heritage; or rather, by the metamorphosis of house to heritage, as yellow flames licked the red Coca-Cola sign on the facade of the Kebab-shop. Born and raised in the capital, I live and work downtown and I pass by those buildings every day. This was the first time I heard anyone refer to them as cultural heritage. I knew they were old – relative to other buildings in Reykjavík, that is – but to the best of my knowledge, before these two buildings caught fire, no one ever spoke of them in the language of heritage. As smoke engulfed the city center, however, as flames burst through the roof and water spouted from red hoses,

all of a sudden the language of heritage rolled off everyone's tongue. Before the flames were doused, television audiences witnessed the mayor – in full firefighter's uniform – pledge to rebuild the house from the ground up, exactly as it had stood.

Something in all this was like a siren song for the folklorist in me: since the inception of the field, folklorists have been driving an ambulance from the scene of one cultural disaster to the next. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes, "the time of our operation is the eleventh hour" (1996: 249). Racing at breakneck speed, we arrive only to find we have come too late – the angel of history has always already wafted by and we are left to pick our way through the landscape of smoldering ruins in his wake (Anttonen, 2005; Dundes, 1969; Gamboni, 2001: 8). With my windows firmly shut to keep the smoke out, I sat glued to the television screen and tried to recall the significance of rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem. Is it a sign of the end times?

Destruction and preservation are surely two sides of the same coin, so it is no surprise that a fire should trigger a discursive eruption about heritage (Gamboni, 2001; Holtorf, 2010). In the weeks following the fire, intense debate raged in the papers, on the radio, and on television talk shows about cultural heritage, preservation, restoration, and about objects and buildings that suture the past to the present. Such discursive eruptions are not an everyday occurrence, to be sure, but neither are they particularly unusual. Heritage discourse is not all in the form of eruptions, however. It is not all fire and floods. There is also the steady purr of heritage claims, in and out of the public ear: urgent, melancholic, resigned or resistant, a variety of people regularly claim that this or that constitutes important heritage that we must preserve. Such heritage claims may not make the news, but they certainly make other sections of the paper.

Cultural heritage, it seems, is suddenly at every turn. That is not to say that buildings or practices referred to as heritage are not old. More often than not they are. What is new and remarkable is to speak of them in terms of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is itself not an old practice. Although the term was coined in the late 19th century, it only came into more general usage in the 1970s, and its usage only grew common in the 1990s, growing year by year to the present day (Björgvinsdóttir, 2009; Hafstein, 2006; Klein, 2006a).

In the last couple of decades, however, a vast number of social actors have seized upon the concept of cultural heritage in hundreds of thousands

of scattered places. The success of cultural heritage in this period is nearly without precedent. In a path-breaking work on *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, historian and geographer David Lowenthal compares the rise of heritage to a religious movement, proclaiming that "only in our time has heritage become a self-conscious creed, whose shrines and icons daily multiply and whose praise suffuses public discourse" (1998: 1).

Although Lowenthal's book is a classic in the nascent interdisciplinary field of critical heritage studies, it is perhaps better known for the fire-and-brimstone rhetoric of its critique of "the cult of heritage" than for any analytic concept or theorization that poses interesting problems or open up new avenues for serious research. One blind alley is its fundamental but all-too-easy distinction between history (science, genuine, truth) and heritage (religion, spurious, fabrication), which repeats the 20th century debates about authenticity, all too well known to folklorists (Bendix, 1997; Dundes, 1985; Handler and Linnekin, 1984; Timothy and Boyd, 2003). More importantly to my way of thinking, Lowenthal's religious analogy is not terribly useful for understanding what cultural heritage is, how it operates, or how people make use of it.

A more helpful comparison may be drawn to the environmental movement, organized around another powerful concept. A relatively recent invention, the concept of the environment has had a profound (if insufficient) impact on how we conceive of the material world and how we act upon it. There have long been rivers and oceans and atmosphere, of course, but the environment creates a connection between water pollution in a Mexican village and rising sea levels in Amsterdam; it ties together the depletion of cod stocks around Newfoundland and smog in Beijing. Most importantly, the environment creates a common cause for the people affected. There is no question as to whether or not the environment actually exists; it is a category of things, an instrument for classifying the world and therefore also for changing it. Categories of this kind have a performative power. They make themselves real. By acting on the world, molding it in their image, they bring themselves into being.

If the environment is one such category, cultural heritage is another. Much like the environment, cultural heritage is a new category of things, lumped together in novel ways under its rubric; things as motley as buildings, monuments, swords, dances, jewelry, songs, visual patterns, religious paraphernalia, literature, and woodcarving traditions. Again, like the environment, heritage does not seek to describe the world; it changes the world. Just like the environment, the major use of heritage is to mobilize

people and resources, to reform discourses, and to transform practices. Like the environment, then, heritage is about change. Don't be fooled by the talk of preservation: all heritage is change.

The magnetic field of heritage is so strong that we constantly risk being pulled in to critique on its terms instead of critiquing its terms. To pull out of its orbit, it helps to consider heritage as a particular regime of truth: the patrimonial regime, all at once material and ethical, economic and emotional, scientific and sensory (see Poulot, 2006: 153–181). It is a regime in rapid expansion, both across and within our societies. Although it is deeply implicated in industry and government, its rhetoric is primarily moral; speaking within the patrimonial regime, the moral imperative to conserve is self-evident.

While the patrimonial regime is among other things a formation of knowledge, replete with experts and professionals, journals and conferences, these are largely concerned with means rather than ends: with methods and priorities, or, more often, with particular projects of conservation. They respond to a growing sense of urgency in the face of what are believed to be grave threats of destruction. Rarely is conservation itself questioned or its urgency examined. As French historian Dominique Poulot observes, within the confines of an ethical discourse of heritage, a radical critique is most easily understood as iconoclasm or vandalism (Poulot, 2006: 157). In other words, the alternative to conserving is not *not* to conserve; the alternative to conserving is to destroy.

Yet the very prevalence of the patrimonial regime demands our critical attention. Barbro Klein warns that "a naive, uncritical, unhistorical, and untheorized understanding of cultural heritage" poses a danger in an era in which the modern boundaries between the cultural field, the political field and the market are blurring. "The term heritage is not innocent," Klein continues, and it is easy – but important – to agree that, "we must ponder its role in the ongoing worldwide remapping of ideological, political, economic, disciplinary, and conceptual landscapes" (Klein, 2006a: 74).

Many explanations have been put forward to account for the rising tide of heritage. Some say it bears witness to an intensified historical awareness, others associate it with the development of the tourist industry, and others yet see it as part of a nostalgic Zeitgeist, associated with the so-called cultural logic of capitalism. Other explanations include the rise of localisms and patriotisms in the face of globalization; longer life-spans and changing family relations; the mobility of individuals and the dispersion

of peoples in a deterritorialized world; the exoticization of the past in film and television; the gradual commodification of culture; and the list goes on (see e.g. Bendix, 2000; Björgvinsdóttir, 2009; Holtorf, 2006, 2010; Huyssen, 2000; Klein, 1997, 2006a; Löfgren, 1997; Lowenthal, 1998; Lumley, 2005; Mitchell, 2002: 179-205; Nora, 1989; Poulot, 2006; Smith, 2006; Turtinen, 2006; Yúdice, 2004; Žižek, 2000). No doubt, there is something to each of these explanations, though no one of them will account for all the various invocations of cultural heritage around the globe.

The rise of cultural heritage is perhaps the chief example of a newfound valuation of cultural practices and objects in terms of their expediency for economic and political purposes. This is culture as a resource: a novel configuration in which culture is now a central expedient in everything from creating jobs to reducing crime, from changing the face of cities through cultural tourism to managing differences and conflicts within the population (Yúdice, 2004: 9-13). In this context, heritage provides a strong but flexible language for staking claims to culture and making claims based on culture.

In an important book on *Uses of Heritage*, archeologist Laurajane Smith has argued that it is "no accident that the very discourses of 'heritage' and concerns about its loss arose in a period perceived to mark major social and cultural changes" (Smith, 2006: 100). Vastly increased public access to media has helped foster a public debate "about environmental, political and social issues" and Smith argues that a major factor in the recent prominence of discourse about and concerns for cultural heritage is that it represents "an attempt to deal with, negotiate and regulate change."

According to Smith, such concerns and debates are partly channeled into "a self-referential 'authorized heritage discourse', whose authority rests in part in its ability to 'speak to' and make sense of the aesthetic experiences of its practitioners and policy makers" and in part on "institutionalization within a range of national and international organizations and codes of practices." (Smith, 2006: 28). Smith's "authorized heritage discourse" corresponds by and large to what I have here termed the patrimonial regime. Indeed, its strong institutional matrix is a central factor in the rapid expansion of this regime. I have argued elsewhere (Hafstein, 2009) that the love affair of cultural administration with the patrimonial regime is due to a considerable degree to the principal instrument through which heritage is administered: the list (or register or inventory or schedule). Heritage lists are a convenient object for administrative logic: listing produces quantifiable results that defy the notorious difficulty of counting culture; and heritage lists are also politically expedient for they allow governments

to claim success in the cultural field when monuments and practices are listed on international rosters of merit, like UNESCO's World Heritage List (Schuster, 2002; Turtinen, 2006).

In fact, no discussion of the patrimonial regime is complete without reference to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which has been enormously successful in shaping national and local discourses and practices of heritage. Established in 1946, one of UNESCO's first accomplishments was to adopt, in 1954, the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, often called the Hague Convention for short (see Skrydstrup, 2009). In the half century following the adoption of the Hague Convention, UNESCO developed separate legal instruments and bodies for the protection of cultural property and the safeguarding of cultural heritage. The term and discourse of cultural property gained currency worldwide following the adoption of the Hague Convention in 1954, not the other way around. Likewise, the ascendancy of cultural heritage in recent decades only gained momentum in the wake of the adoption of the World Heritage Convention in 1972. Conversely, UNESCO is today best known for the World Heritage List associated with that convention (Di Giovine, 2009; Turtinen, 2006).

In 2003, UNESCO added to its legal arsenal the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, with a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Bortolotto, 2008; Hafstein, 2004; Kapchan, 2011; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006; Smith and Akagawa, 2009). In spite of its etymological roots in bureaucratese, the term "intangible cultural heritage," concocted in the assembly halls of UNESCO as recently as the 1990s, has rapidly gained acceptance following the adoption of the convention dedicated to safeguarding it. In this, it repeats the international success story of "cultural heritage" itself, propounded by the 1972 convention, not only as a term but as a system of values, a set of practices, a formation of knowledge, a structure of feeling, and a moral code.

Taken over from probate law, the concept of heritage (or, in Romance languages, patrimony) points to one of the metaphors for the nation: that of the family. Projecting onto the state intergenerational relations, obligations, and succession in the family, the republican nation-state carried over to the cultural sphere a dynastic model that it did away with in other areas of government. At the same time as it evokes an earlier model of the body politic, however, the notion of national patrimony democratizes what previously belonged to elites alone (Bendix, 2000). The idea of a

common cultural heritage transfers "the goods and rights of princes and prelates, magnates and merchants" (Lowenthal, 1998: 60) to the public at large; it throws open the doors of the Louvre to the throng in the streets outside (Poulot, 1997).

The simultaneous adulation of material signs of privilege and assertion of universal access reveals an interesting paradox in the patrimonial imagination. On the one hand, those castles, manors, monuments, crown jewels, and courtly fashions that figure most prominently in representations of heritage and which most money is spent on preserving, restoring, and exhibiting, all belonged to the few in a society where the many were downtrodden and destitute. Now as before, it is the many who pay for the maintenance of these outwards signs of class privilege. The difference, however, lies in the patrimonial valuation of these material signs, their consecration as "our" heritage, which urges the general population to identify with the facade of its own historical subordination, the visual markers of its domination. The present accessibility of these signs of privilege, albeit behind rails or in glazed cabinets, underlines and perhaps overstates the difference of contemporary societies from previous eras. Through an act of patrimonial imagination, identification with the symbolic armature of social distinction helps to foster the illusion not so much of classlessness as of universal inclusion in the ruling class, or at least inclusion for the museum-going, heritage-conscious middle classes who are most invested in the cultural field. This facility for fantasies of social climbing is an innovative feature of the patrimonial regime, for, as Regina Bendix has remarked, what distinguishes heritage from other ways of aligning the past with the present "is its capacity to hide the complexities of history and politics" (Bendix, 2000: 38).

Extending the scope of heritage to popular, vernacular culture – as the new notion of intangible heritage does – makes this more inclusive and encompassing heritage a matter of even greater public, national concern. In that same act, it helps constitute a national public that identifies as such. The national public may thus be said to constitute itself as a collective subject partly through a curious combination of snobbery and slumming – that is to say, it is partly defined through common investment in and common responsibility for "our palace" and "our folk dance."

According to Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of taste in his magnum opus on *Distinction*, based on French mass surveys from the 1960s, folk dance is "one of the spectacles most characteristic of middle-brow culture (along with the circus, light opera and bull-fights)." The "spectacle of the 'people'

making a spectacle of itself, as in folk dancing," Bourdieu hypothesizes, "is an opportunity to experience the relationship of distant proximity, in the form of the idealized vision purveyed by aesthetic realism and populist nostalgia, which is a basic element in the relationship of the petite bourgeoisie to the working or peasant classes and their traditions" (Bourdieu, 1984: 58). One of the signature traits of the heritage relationship in the contemporary era is its conflation of distant proximity to peasants (experienced through folklore and folk museums) with a distant proximity to aristocrats (experienced in manors and national museums). Spectacles of sanitized slumming combine with fantasies of social climbing to create a versatile instrument for social identification, one that claims our allegiance and channels our social imagination both upwards and downwards while leaving the impression that social hierarchies are a thing of the past, inciting nostalgia rather than resistance.

Whereas cultural heritage obscures class difference, it highlights cultural difference. Formed in all essential respects during the latter half of the 20th century, the patrimonial regime succeeds and partially supercedes the earlier regime of "national culture," the heyday of which was in the latter half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century (though to be sure it is still invoked to various extents in various places, now usually in conjunction with cultural heritage). If national culture was a tool for forging cultural differences along state borders while suppressing difference within the borders, cultural heritage is a more resourceful instrument for representing and orchestrating differences within the state as well as between states. The patrimonial regime presents a postmodern strategy for coping with difference as states slowly come to terms with the failure of the modern regime of national culture.

To be sure, heritage continues to be an important instrument for representing the nation, rallying citizens around a common identity and sense of belonging (Anderson, 1991; Anttonen, 2005; Bendix and Hafstein, 2009; Hafstein, 2007; Klein, 2006a; Mathisen, 2009; Hálfdánarson, 2001; Löfgren, 1989; Thompson, 2006). The uses of folklore for this purpose have been documented in a wide range of contexts (see, e.g., Abrahams, 1993; Anttonen, 2005; Christiansen, 2005, 2007; Dundes, 1985; Gunnell, 2010; Herzfeld, 1982; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Leersen, 2007; Ó Giolláin, 2000). However, it is more difficult now than ever before to imagine national monocultures, with intensified migration, the multiplication of diasporas, and the resurgence of regional identities and indigenous groups. The modern national subject came at a price: it glossed over difference; it

demanded allegiance to a uniform national culture and history, through selective oblivion, and at the expense of alternative loyalties.

It is no coincidence that it is under circumstances of intensified migration and visible difference that cultural heritage is all at once everywhere (see Klein, 1997; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, 2007; Littler and Naidoo, 2005, esp. Hall, 2005 and Khan, 2005). Cultural heritage creates a discursive space in which social changes may be discussed and it provides a particular language for discussing them (cf. Klein, 2006a; Rastrick, 2007). It enables people to represent their own understandings of their histories and identities. Yet at the same time, the terminology of heritage is a mechanism of power: it curtails expression by defining the sort of things that it makes sense to say (Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge, 2000; Hafstein, 2007).

It is under these conditions, at the dawn of a new century, that "intangible heritage" has emerged as an instrument in the production of a strong (but not exclusive) sense of belonging for members of cultural communities within (and sometimes across) states. Population groups objectify their practices and expressions as "intangible heritage" and at the same time they subjectify themselves as "communities." Government can then act on the social field through communities and by means of, among other things, heritage policies (Hafstein, 2011; Bortolotto, 2009; cf. Bennett, 2000; and Rose 1999: 167-196).

This parallels recent developments in environmental conservation, where there is now widespread preoccupation with community, and programs proliferate that devolve to communities the responsibility for putting environmental policy into practice. Political scientist Arun Agrawal has coined the term "environmentality" to describe this governmental rationality in which communities are interpellated as "environmental subjects" (Agrawal, 2005). Populations learn to conceive of their habitat as "the environment" and to appreciate the need for its conservation, and – through an infusion of expertise and in cooperation with state, non-governmental, and intergovernmental organizations – are charged with administering themselves and their environmental practices (e.g., Agrawal and Gibson, 2001; Li, 2001; McDermott, 2001; cf. Foucault, 1991).

Much the same may be said for the safeguarding of heritage and the "patrimoniality" that interpellates individuals and populations as "patrimonial subjects"; that teaches them to conceive of some of their practices and material culture in terms of heritage and to appreciate

the need to safeguard these; and, through cooperation with state, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations and experts, inducts them into the patrimonial regime. In an interview with the *World Heritage Newsletter*, Joseph King of ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property), argues that the "conservation of heritage can be a very important aspect" of development on the African continent. Even in "those places facing more serious problems," he continues, "conservation of cultural heritage can play a part (even if small) in improving the situation" (King, 2001: 2). Together with Jukka Jokilehto, chief of ICCROM's architectural conservation program, King explains this in greater detail in their jointly authored "Reflections on the Current State of Understanding" of authenticity and conservation in the African context. Here, they clarify that it may not always "be possible to insist on continuing traditional habitat as a 'frozen entity'" for "it may sometimes be taken as arrogance to insist on conservation of traditional ways of life if the population does not appreciate this." The question then arises, they go on, "of how to control and guide such modifications in life patterns?" In response, they urge that "the present community should be given every opportunity to appreciate and respect what is being inherited from previous generations." "This is a learning process," they explain, "which may require incentives and examples, and which is especially founded in a close collaboration between the population and authorities." The goal, they conclude, is to "identify ways to generate a cultural process that desires such heritage, and therefore takes care of its safeguarding" (Jokilehto and King, 2001: 38; cf. Mitchell, 2002: 179-205).

These directions are a fine example of how heritage-making and safeguarding serve as instruments for acting on the social field, to "control and guide modifications in life patterns" and to "generate a cultural process." They also underline that heritage is a transformative process. It transforms the relationship of people with their practices and, as a consequence, their relationship with one another (mediated through those practices). It does so by appealing to their civic duty and moral responsibility for maintaining a particular alignment between the past and the present, in which strong emotions and identities are invested. In this sense, heritage is a technology for acting on the social, giving rise to changed behavior (Hafstein, 2011; Smith, 2006; cf. Bennett, 2000 and Foucault, 1991).

The alignment of the past with the present is central in generating a cultural process "that desires such heritage." As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has noted, "the possession of heritage – as opposed to the way

of life that heritage safeguards – is an instrument of modernization and mark of modernity" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006). By cordoning off certain places and practices as sites of continuity with a cultural tradition or a historical past, everything else is in effect severed from that tradition and history. Inheriting marks the passing away of the social relations that heritage objectifies; it signals a radical disjuncture between the past and the present. Hence, to possess heritage is to be modern; it is a modern way of relating to the past. This past, as it is given material form in buildings, sites, and objects, or as it is performed in musical, dramatic, costume, or ritual heritage, is inevitably a product of the present that appoints, organizes, and represents it (Bendix, 2009; Berliner, 2010; Björgvinsdóttir, 2010; Klein, 2006a; Rastrick, 2007; Smith, 2006; Thompson, 2006; Tornatore, 2011).

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's theorization of heritage as a metacultural relationship to cultural practices (1995, 1998, 2006) is one of the more influential accounts of cultural heritage; her work formulates interesting problems and suggests fruitful approaches. In short, as a metacultural practice cultural heritage points beyond itself to a culture it claims to represent. Through this invocation of culture more broadly conceived, heritage practices refer themselves also to the social field: they call into play a collective subject such as family, community, ethnicity, or nation that shares the heritage and is defined by it. Such heritage practices are performative: they bring into being what they enact. Thus, heritage practices perform both culture and collectives – they lend substance and reality to social abstractions. Moreover, the performance of cultural heritage has clearly observable effects, tangible, for example, in the physical world of construction work and urban development, as well as in the cultural, economic, and social fields. It configures particular spaces as privileged zones of contact between the past and the present and as metonyms of the collective – as heritage sites, that is, be they old buildings, museum collections, festivals, dances, costumes, or foods.

Following Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, to recycle "sites, buildings, objects, technologies, or ways of life" as heritage is to give these things a new lease on life, not as what they once were, but as "representations of themselves" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 151). To label a practice or a site as heritage is not so much a description, then, as it is an intervention. In fact, heritage reorders relations between persons and things, and among persons themselves, objectifying and recontextualizing them with reference to other sites and practices designated as heritage. Heritage assembles previously unrelated buildings, rituals, paintings, and songs, and it constitutes these as

something to be safeguarded, i.e., acted upon through programs, schemes, and strategies carried out and evaluated by experts whose operations connect the calculations of authorities with the desires and ambitions of citizens.

Another hallmark of the patrimonial regime is the reflexive distance that the metacultural relationship introduces between the subject and object of heritage, between the inheritor and her cultural heritage. Thus conceived, heritage is transformative. It transforms people's relationship with their own practices, the ways in which they perceive themselves and the things around them. The conscious inheritor understands her practice differently than another who does not pause to consider, e.g., how her needle sutures the past to the present and, eventually, to the future, or how her craftsmanship transmits culture from one generation to the next. Heritage practices create distance between activities that are marked as heritage, on the one hand, and on the other hand everything else the same people do. Everything that is not heritage is therefore modern: in my native Iceland, football is a modern sport, as opposed to *glíma* (a traditional form of wrestling), which is considered a heritage sport, though the first organized competitions in Iceland in football and *glíma* both date from the early 20th century; Kentucky Fried Chicken and pizza are modern fare, as opposed to heritage foods like singed sheep heads, putrefied shark, and pickled ram's testicles. To have a heritage is to experience a distance from the things you consider to be your heritage; to have a heritage is also to be modern. This transformation is indicative of how the present relates to history. Indeed, heritage says more about us than it does about past generations or what they've left behind.

Many heritage practices take the body as their central objects – they turn the body into a site of performance (Kapchan, 2003, 2011). In effect, heritage is very much concerned with the ways in which culture is embodied and the ways in which bodies are cultured. This is plain to see in countless ethnic parades and in immigrant heritage (Klein, 2006b; Larsen, 2009; Gradén, 2009). Indeed, a central problematic in heritage is the relation between social practices, on the one hand, and kinship or heredity, on the other (Bendix 2000). If heritage is innovative, it is partly in so far as it represents a new way of constituting social collectivity around representations of culture and pedigree.

Of course culture and pedigree do not always make a neat fit. Thus, in June 2004, the *Reykjavík Grapevine* – a free English-language weekly – marked Iceland's Independence Day with cover art depicting a young

Figure 1. Cover of the Reykjavík Grapevine, June 2004. Cover art by Hörður Sveinsson and Hörður Kristbjörnsson. Courtesy of the Reykjavík Grapevine.

African woman in a traditional Icelandic costume. In many places I can think of, such cover art would not have raised an eyebrow, but in Iceland the cover made waves – that was the idea. The editor introduced the issue by recounting how difficult it had been to get a hold of a traditional Icelandic costume for the photo-shoot. Actually, very few people own such costumes, and in order to rent or to borrow one, people usually turn to the Reykjavik Folkdance Association. According to the editor, however, the photographer who went to Folkdance headquarters was turned down. The lady at the costume rental had expressed concern that the planned photo-shoot might be disrespectful to the national costume. The story made headlines. It even made the evening news. It was a public relations disaster for folk dancing. To be fair, I should add that, despite the editorial, there is some doubt as to whether the photographer's request was in fact flat-out refused at the costume rental (Björgvinsdóttir, 2009; Hafstein, 2006). Regardless, the point I want to make here is that externalizing culture in human bodies invites racist distinctions. In Iceland, it is difficult to get away from the whiteness of heritage.

The *Grapevine* cover and editorial bring into relief the politics of representation and beg the question of who speaks for heritage. They bring us back, in fact, to the social collectivities invoked by heritage practices. Communities are not monoliths. Whether they are local or diasporic, indigenous or national, communities are tentative attempts to organize social networks and draw boundaries around them (Noyes, 2003). If heritage practices are cultural representations of cultural representations, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests, then it is at this meta-level of representation that individuals and factions jockey for power over who can speak for the

community and who decides how it is to represent itself (e.g. Berliner, 2010; Bortolotto, 2009; Kuutma, 2009; Lowthorp, 2007; Tauschek, 2009; Tornatore, 2011). The stakes are not inconsequential; they concern how the collective subject – the *we* – is invoked and how its boundaries are drawn (Noyes, 2006). Authority over heritage and political power within the community are thus to some extent mutually translatable.

For that very reason, however, heritage practices are also ideal sites for challenging authority by contesting collective legacies. Thus, cultural heritage is not just a site for establishing and renewing hegemony by winning consent, structuring allegiance and orchestrating social networks around official metacultural representations. Cultural heritage is also a site of contestation, where individuals and groups display dissent, question structures of allegiance, and blur social boundaries. This is accomplished either by offering alternative representations of heritage (of Saami heritage, or gay heritage, or deaf heritage) or else by suggesting alternative metacultural relations to officially sanctioned representations (like the *Grapevine* cover in Iceland or, say, blowing up the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan). The former is a form of protest, the latter subversion.

Because heritage is a metacultural relationship – a reflexive relation to one's own practices – it sets the stage for its own subversion. The heritage relation is a dialogic process, one that creates a sense of distance by imagining a vista outside one's own self from where one may observe one's own customs and expressions with, as it were, an alien gaze – according to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the hallmark of heritage is "precisely the foreignness of the 'tradition' to its context of presentation" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 157). The distance that this introduces between the subject and itself enables the recognition of the collective subject of cultural heritage: the cultural "we." It enables us to speak reflexively in the first person plural: we Icelanders, we wrestle and we eat putrefied shark (regardless of the fact that many of us do neither), and, implicitly, we are white (though some of us are not).

At the same time, however, this distance allows for detachment; it opens up the prospect that we might imagine ourselves differently, that we might disrupt the official representation of who and what we are and what it is we do. As a reflexive, metacultural relationship to one's own practices, heritage sets the stage for the ironic subject – the self-conscious actor whose ironic stance measures her distance from the culture and collective identity that official representations of heritage attribute to her (e.g. Schram, 2009).

Figure 2. Plastic costume in the National Museum of Iceland. Artist: Ásdís Elva Pétursdóttir. Photographer: Áslaug Einarsdóttir. Courtesy of Áslaug Einarsdóttir, Ásdís Elva Pétursdóttir and the National Museum of Iceland.

Upon exiting the 20th century exhibit in the National Museum of Iceland, one is sent off with a work of art that is at once thought-provoking and tongue-in-cheek. It is a traditional Icelandic costume wrought in transparent plastic material, life-size, suspended in a glazed cabinet with the appropriate (plastic) headdress perched above it. Like the cover art of the *Reykjavik Grapevine*, the plastic costume experiments with our metacultural relationship to officially sanctioned heritage. For starters, its synthetic medium queries notions of authenticity. Its transparency blurs the boundaries between past and present. More important, however, is its hollow interior. The contours of hollowness open up to scrutiny the ironic subject and the distance that separates her from her heritage; the subject of heritage is, precisely, outside the vitrine looking in.

References

Abrahams, Roger, 1993, "Phantoms of Romantic Nationalism in Folkloristics." *Journal of American Folklore* 106: 1-37.

Agrawal, Arun, 2005, "Environmentality. Community, Intimate Government, and the Making of Environmental Subjects in Kumaon, India." *Current Anthropology* 46(2): 161-190.

Agrawal, Arun and Clark C. Gibson, 2001, "The Role of Community in Natural Resource Conservation." In Arun Agrawal and Clark C. Gibson (eds.), *Communities and the Environment. Ethnicity, Gender, and the State in Community-Based Conservation*: 1-31. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Anderson, Benedict, 1991, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* 2nd edition. London: Verso.

Anttonen, Pertti J., 2005, *Tradition through Modernity. Postmodernism and the Nation-State in Folklore Scholarship.* Studia Fennica Folkloristica, 15. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.

Ashworth, Gregory J., Brian Graham and John E. Tunbridge, 2007, *Pluralising Pasts. Heritage, Identity and Place in Multicultural Societies.* London: Pluto Press.

Bendix, Regina, 1997, *In Search of Authenticity. The Formation of Folklore Studies.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Bendix, Regina, 2000, "Heredity, Hybridity and Heritage from One Fin-de-Siècle to the Next." In Pertti J. Anttonen (ed.), *Folklore, Heritage Politics and Ethnic Diversity*: 37-54. Botkyrka: Multicultural Centre.

Bendix, Regina, 2009, "Heritage between Economy and Politics. An Assessment from the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology." In Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (eds.), *Intangible Heritage*: 253-269. London: Routledge.

Bendix, Regina and Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, 2009, "Culture and Property. An Introduction." *Ethnologia Europaea: Journal of European Ethnology* 39(2): 5-10.

Bennett, Tony, 2000, "Acting on the Social. Art, Culture and Government." *American Behavioral Scientist* 43: 1412–1428.

Berliner, David, 2010, "Perdre l'esprit du lieu. Les politiques de la transmission à Luang Prabang (Laos)." *Terrain* 55: 90-105.

Björgvinsdóttir, Bryndís, 2009, *Frá melankólíu til mótspyrnu: Menningararfur á Íslandi.* Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Iceland, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences.

Björgvinsdóttir, Bryndís, 2010, "Menningararfur sem ásetningur." *Skírnir: Tímarit hins íslenska bókmenntafélags* 2010(1): 100-120.

Bortolotto, Chiara (ed.), 2008, *Il patrimonio immateriale secondo l'Unesco. Analisi e prospettive*. Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato.

Bortolotto, Chiara, 2009, "The Giant Cola Cola in Gravina. Intangible Cultural Heritage, Property, and Territory between Unesco Discourse and Local Heritage Practice." *Ethnologia Europaea: Journal of European Ethnology* 39(2): 81-94.

Bourdieu, Pierre, 1984, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

Christiansen, Palle Ove, 2005, "Den folkelige kultur. Almuens nye betydning som dansk og national." In Palle Ove Christiansen (ed.), *Veje til danskheden. Bidrag til den moderne nationale selvforståelse*:124-153. Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels forlag.

Christiansen, Palle Ove, 2007, Folket – både fundet og opfundet. Folkets og folkekulturens rolle i dansk og europæisk nationalitet 1770-1900. In Palle Ove Christiansen and Jens Henrik Koudal (eds.), *Det ombejlede folk. Nation, følelse og social bevægelse*: 18-45. Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels forlag.

Dallen J. Timothy and Stephen Boyd, 2003, *Heritage Tourism*. London: Prentice Hall.

Di Giovine, Michael A., 2009, *The Heritage-scape: UNESCO, World Heritage and Tourism*. New York: Lexington Books.

Dundes, Alan, 1969, "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 6: 5-19.

Dundes, Alan, 1985, "Nationalistic Inferiority Complexes and the Fabrication of Fakelore. A Reconsideration of Ossian, the Kinder- und Hausmärchen, the Kalevala, and Paul Bunyan." *Journal of Folklore Research* 22(1): 5-18.

Foucault, Michel, 1991 [1978], "Governmentality." In Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality*: 87-104. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Gamboni, Dario, 2001, "World Heritage: Shield or Target?" *Conservation: The Getty Institute Conservation Newsletter* 16(2): 5–11.

Graham, Brian, Gregory J. Ashworth and John E. Tunbridge, 2000, *A Geography of Heritage. Power, Culture and Economy*. London: Arnold.

Gradén, Lizette, 2009, "Transatlantic Place Making. The Use of Swedish Bridal Crown as Heritage Performance in the United States." *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 65: 73-92.

Gunnell, Terry, 2010, "Daisies Rise to Become Oaks. The Politics of Early Folktale Collection in Northern Europe." *Folklore* 121(1): 12-37.

Hafstein, Valdimar Tr., 2004, *The Making of Intangible Cultural Heritage:*

Tradition and Authenticity, Community and Humanity. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.

Hafstein, Valdimar Tr., 2006, "Menningararfur: Sagan í neytendaumbúðum." In Hilma Gunnarsdóttir, Jón Þór Pétursson and Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon (eds.), *Frá endurskoðun til upplausnar. Tvær prófritgerðir, einn formáli, þrjú viðtöl, sjö fræðigreinar, fimm ljósmyndir, einn eftirmáli og nokkrar minningargreinar af vettvangi hugvísinda*: 313-328. Reykjavík: Center for Microhistorical Studies and the Reykjavik Academy.

Hafstein, Valdimar Tr., 2007, "Claiming Culture: Intangible Heritage Inc., Folklore©, Traditional Knowledge™." In Regina Bendix, Dorothee Hemme, and Markus Tauschek (eds.), *Prädikat "Heritage". Wertschöpfungen aus Kulturellen Ressourcen*: 75-100. Münster: Lit Verlag.

Hafstein, Valdimar Tr., 2009, "Intangible Heritage as a List: From Masterpieces to Representation." In Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (eds.), *Intangible Heritage*: 93-111. London: Routledge.

Hafstein, Valdimar Tr., 2014, "Protection as Dispossession: Government in the Vernacular." In Deborah Kapchan (ed.), *Cultural Heritage in Transit. Intangible Rights as Human Rights*: 25-57. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hálfdánarson, Guðmundur, 2001, *Íslenska þjóðríkið. Uppruni og endimörk.* Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag and ReykjavíkurAkademían.

Hall, Stuart, 2005, "Whose Heritage? Un-settling "the Heritage", Re-Imagining the Post-Nation." In Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo (eds.), *The Politics of Heritage. The Legacies of "Race"*: 23-35. London: Routledge.

Handler, Richard and Jocelyn Linnekin, 1984, "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious." *Journal of American Folklore* 97(385): 273-290.

Herzfeld, Michael, 1982, *Ours Once More. Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, 1983, *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holtorf, Cornelius, 2006, "Can Less be More? Heritage in the Age of Terrorism." *Public Archeology* 5: 101-109.

Holtorf, Cornelius, 2010, "Heritage Values in Contemporary Popular Culture." In George S. Smith, Phyllis Mauch Messenger and Hilary A. Soderland (eds.), *Heritage Values in Contemporary Society*: 43-54. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

Huyssen, Andreas, 2000, "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia." *Public Culture* 12(1): 21-38.

Jokilehto, Jukka and Joseph King, 2001, "Authenticity and Conservation: Reflections on the Current State of Understanding." In Galia Saouma-

Forero (ed.), *Authenticity and Integrity in an African Context. Expert Meeting – Great Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe, 26-29 May 2000*: 33-39. Paris: UNESCO.

Kapchan, Deborah A., 2003, "Performance." In Burt Feintuch (ed.), *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture*: 121-145. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Kapchan, Deborah A., 2014, *Cultural Heritage in Transit. Intangible Rights as Human Rights*. Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Khan, Naseem, 2005, "Taking Root in Britain. The Process of Shaping Heritage." In Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo (eds.), *The Politics of Heritage. The Legacies of "Race"*: 133-143. London: Routledge.

King, Joseph, 2001, "AFRICA 2009: Interview with Joseph King of ICCROM." *World Heritage Newsletter* 32: 2.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara, 1995, "Theorizing Heritage." *Ethnomusicology* 39(3): 367-380.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara, 1996, "Topic Drift: Negotiating the Gap between Our Field and Our Name." *Journal of Folklore Research* 33: 245-254.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara, 1998, *Destination Culture. Tourism, Museums, and Heritage.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara, 2006, "World Heritage and Cultural Economics." In Ivan Karp Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto (eds.), *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*: 161-202. Durham: Duke University Press.

Klein, Barbro, 1997, "Tillhörighet och utanförskap. Om kulturarvspolitik och folklivsforskning i en multietnisk värld." *Rig* 1-2: 15-32.

Klein, Barbro, 2006a, "Cultural Heritage, the Swedish Folklife Sphere, and the Others." *Cultural Analysis* 5: 57-80.

Klein, Barbro, 2006b, "More Swedish than in Sweden, more Iranian than in Iran. Folk Culture and World Migrations." In Bo Sundin (ed.), *Upholders of Culture: Past and Present*: 67-80. Stockholm: Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences.

Kuutma, Kristin, 2009, "Who Owns Our Songs? Authority of Heritage and Resources for Restitution." *Ethnologia Europaea: Journal of European Ethnology* 39(2): 26-40.

Larsen, Hanne Pico, 2009, "Danish Maids and Visual Matters. Celebrating Heritage in Solvang, California." *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 65: 93-109.

Leersen, Joep, 2007, *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Li, Tania Murray, 2001, "Boundary Work. Community, Market, and State Reconsidered." In Arun Agrawal and Clark C. Gibson (eds.), *Communities and the Environment. Ethnicity, Gender, and the State in Community-Based Conservation*: 157-179. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Littler, Jo and Roshi Naidoo, 2005, *The Politics of Heritage. The Legacies of "Race"*. London: Routledge.

Löfgren, Orvar, 1989, "Nationalization of Culture." *Ethnologia Europaea* 19: 5-25.

Löfgren, Orvar, 1997, "Kulturarvets renässans. Landskapsupplevelse mellan marknad och politik." *Rig* 1-2: 3-14.

Lowenthal, David, 1998, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lowthorp, Leah, 2007, "The Cultural Politics of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage in India: Kutiyattam Sanskrit Theatre." Unpublished paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society and the Folklore Studies Association of Canada in Quebec City.

Lumley, Robert, 2005, "The Debate on Heritage Reviewed." In Gerard Corsane (ed.), *Heritage, Museums and Galleries. An Introductory Reader*: 15-25. London: Routledge.

Mathisen, Stein R., 2009, "Narrated Sámi Siedis. Heritage and Ownership in Ambiguous Border Zones." *Ethnologia Europaea. Journal of European Ethnology* 39(2): 11-25.

McDermott, Melanie Hughes, 2001, "Invoking Community. Indigenous People and Ancestral Domain in Palawan, the Phillippines." In Arun Agrawal and Clark C. Gibson (eds.), *Communities and the Environment. Ethnicity, Gender, and the State in Community-Based Conservation*: 32-62. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Mitchell, Timothy, 2002, *Rule of Experts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nora, Pierre, 1989, "Between Memory and History. Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations* 26: 7-24.

Noyes, Dorothy, 2003, "Group." In Burt Feintuch (ed.) *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture*: 7-41. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Noyes, Dorothy, 2006, "The Judgment of Solomon. Global Protections for Tradition and the Problem of Community Ownership," *Cultural Analysis* 5: 27-56.

Ó Giolláin, Diarmuid, 2000, *Locating Irish Folklore. Tradition, Modernity, Identity*. Cork: Cork University Press.

Poulot, Dominique, 1997, *Musée, nation, patrimoine*. Paris: Gallimard.

Poulot, Dominique, 2006, *Une histoire du patrimoine en Occident*. Paris: Presses Universitaires De France.

Rastrick, Ólafur, 2007, "Menningararfur í fjölmenningarsamfélagi. Einsleitni, fjölhyggja, tvíbendni." In *Þriðja íslenska söguþingið 18.–21. maí 2006: Ráðstefnurit*: 333-341. Reykjavík: Sagnfræðingafélag Íslands.

Rose, Nikolas, 1999, *Powers of Freedom. Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schram, Kristinn, 2009, "Performing the North. Folk Culture, Exoticism and Irony among Expatriates." *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 65: 49-71.

Schuster, J. Mark, 2002, "Making a List and Checking it Twice: The List as a Tool of Historic Preservation." Working Paper no. 14, The Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago. http://culturalpolicy. uchicago.edu/publications.html

Skrydstrup, Martin, 2009, "Theorizing Repatriation." *Ethnologia Europaea. Journal of European Ethnology* 39(2): 54–66.

Smith, Laurajane, 2006, *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge.

Smith, Laurajane and Natsuko Akagawa (eds.), 2009, *Intangible Heritage*. London: Routledge.

Tauschek, Markus, 2009, "Cultural Property as Strategy. The Carnival of Binche, the Creation of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Property." *Ethnologia Europaea. Journal of European Ethnology* 39(2): 67-80.

Thompson, Tok, 2006, "Heritage versus the Past." In Fabio Mugnaini, Pádraig Ó Hélaí and Tok Thompson (eds.), *The Past in the Present. A Multidisciplinary Approach*: 197-208. Catania: Edit Press.

Tornatore, Jean-Louis, 2011, "Du patrimoine ethnologique au patrimoine immatériel. Suivre la voie politique de l'immatérialité culturelle." In Chiara Bortolotto and Sylvie Grenet (eds.), *Le patrimoine culturel immatériel. Enjeux d'une nouvelle catégorie*: 213-223. Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme.

Turtinen, Jan, 2006, *Världsarvets villkor. Intressen, förhandlingar och bruk i internationell politik*. Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis.

Yúdice, George, 2004, *The Expediency of Culture. Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Žižek, Slavoj, 2000, "Melancholy and the Act." *Critical Inquiry* 26(4): 657-681.