

Dealing with difference: heritage, commensurability and public formation in northern New Mexico

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This article explores the relationship among heritage, commensurability, and public formation in liberal political philosophy and social scientific analysis, both of which are products of European modernity. Liberal multiculturalism highlights commensurable forms of difference that are equivalent, comparable, and subordinate to shared humanity and imposes rules such as secularism and rationalism to manage difference publicly. A liberal conception of heritage can therefore help to unite groups and maintain a democratic public sphere, but it can also be homogenising and colonialist. A tension between similarity and difference also exists in the social scientific study of heritage. I use an analytical definition of heritage to examine three sites in northern New Mexico (a historical monument, a cultural centre, and a museum) within a single framework, but doing so obscures the incommensurable differences between them. This is more than just an analytical problem. Western social science shares liberalism's universal aspirations and commitment to neutrality and relies upon the creation of a broad 'public' (humanity) made up of commensurable subjects available for cross-cultural comparison. I conclude that scholars may need to abandon 'heritage' as an analytical category if they want to begin to understand fundamentally different or hybridised ways of being in the world.

Keywords: commensurability; public formation; liberalism; anthropology; New Mexico

For anyone interested in the empirical study of heritage, the first step is to figure out where to look. I realised this when I began anthropological fieldwork on the politics of heritage development in northern New Mexico (in the south-western United States). I took it for granted that heritage is socially constructed. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998, pp. 149–150) puts it, heritage 'is a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past'. It depends upon technologies of display that objectify and decontextualise cultural practices and hold them up for inspection. I was therefore looking for a process, not a thing. However, I was not sure what I should include in my study and what I could ignore, since not everything that seemed relevant was explicitly labelled 'heritage'. To help locate my object of study, I defined heritage analytically as a way of packaging ideas about the relationship among culture, identity and the past. I was then able to focus my research on a few sites where I thought I could observe the social construction of 'heritage'.

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This methodological approach helped me to pull together a diverse set of examples for analysis but it had two related shortcomings. First, as soon as I constructed 'heritage' as an object of study, my research became something other than an investigation of how *New Mexicans* construct 'heritage'. I stepped out of the social context I wanted to learn about, a common scholarly practice that is often unconscious. Particularly when we are studying something that we think people (out there) have 'socially constructed', it becomes difficult to see that we too are contributing to its construction at the analytical level, even in our most deconstructive moments. Second, any time we lump together heterogeneous people, places or practices (in this case, under the sign of 'heritage') we run the risk of obliterating their distinctiveness. Even when I highlighted the differences between the sites I had assembled, the very act of assemblage implicitly emphasised commonality. Bringing these examples together within the same framework therefore suggested that their differences were commensurable (equivalent and comparable) and obscured the radical, *incommensurable* differences between them.

Interestingly, a tension between similarity and difference also exists in the relativistic conception of heritage that predominates in liberal democracies. According to this view, everybody has heritage, everybody's heritage deserves recognition and we can enjoy each other's heritage. The tension at this level, like the tension in my analytical framework, often gets resolved through hierarchisation: a celebration of commensurable differences that are subordinate to overarching likeness. Similar constructive and destructive dynamics are also evident. Just as an analytical conception of 'heritage' helped me pull together multiple sites, so too can governments, civic institutions and activists use heritage development as a way to pull together diverse groups. 'Heritage' can therefore help to maintain a democratic public sphere based on shared histories or respect for cultural difference. In excluding *radical* difference, it can also be homogenising and serve to reproduce colonial power relations.

This article explores the relationship between 'heritage' and (in)commensurability in social scientific analysis and liberal political philosophy, both of which happen to be products of European modernity. Examining the way liberals imagine heritage can help academics think more critically about our own use of the concept. More than just a technical problem that requires analytical sensitivity, pursuing 'heritage' as an object of study is embedded in the politics of difference. Western social science (and particularly anthropology, dedicated to the study of 'human beings') often demonstrates the same universalism found in liberalism. It is this universalism that makes cross-cultural comparison possible through the creation of a broad 'public' (humanity) available for social scientific analysis.

At the centre of the article are three sites (a historical monument, a cultural centre and a museum) that illustrate incommensurability on three levels. Seemingly incompatible cultural logics exist within each site (evidence of cultural hybridity), the three sites present perspectives that are mutually exclusive, and all three sites demonstrate forms of difference that a liberal conception of heritage cannot accommodate. The tension between likeness and difference among these three sites, I suggest, provides a space in which publics are created, maintained and contested.

Liberal publics, commensurability and difference

The populist, democratic conception of heritage that seems to be ascendant worldwide owes much to the pluralisation and relativisation of 'culture' in the early 1900s. As

part of their assault on nineteenth-century evolutionary thinking (which was overtly racist), American anthropologists drawing on German romanticism argued that 'culture' was something that all people had. The old Eurocentric equation of Culture with Civilisation thus began to give way to a world of many (equal) 'cultures'.

One advantage 'heritage' seems to have over 'culture' is its elasticity. The particular heritage of a cultural group may also be considered *national* heritage or even *world* heritage. The same cannot be said of 'culture', which tends to have more particularistic connotations. Such multivalent claims rely upon the liberal idea that subjects are at once representatives of distinct cultures, national citizens and human beings. This elasticity means that the discourse of heritage can be an effective tool for creating or maintaining publics on various scales. For example, in New Mexico people talk about Hispanic heritage and Native American heritage, but also about *New Mexican* heritage (a multicultural amalgamation). In places where relations between groups have been tense, expanding the scope of heritage discourses has the potential to create common ground and a more inclusive public sphere.

However, even if we reject the idea that we have the *same* heritage (that we have some cultural or historical experience in common), the very concept of heritage can provide the basis for public formation. The *form* of heritage may ultimately be more powerful than its *content*. Relativism often entails a higher level universalism. If you have heritage and I have heritage then we have something in common, even if we do not have the same heritage. We (the pronoun itself indicates commonality) are both the kind of subjects that 'have heritage', and we can relate to each other as such. Once again, this relativistic view of heritage thrives in liberal multicultural contexts, which is not surprising given liberalism's dual commitment to equality and individual choice. You and I both have the right to cultural difference because we are both human beings; our common humanity provides the space for our difference.¹ Relativising the content and universalising the form of heritage therefore highlights *commensurable* forms of difference, which are equivalent and comparable.²

If 'heritage' can serve as a discursive tool for creating, maintaining or expanding publics organised around commensurable forms of difference, it may come at the expense of alterity (irreducible difference). If what makes us unique is considered subordinate to shared forms of subjectivity (e.g., citizenship, humanity), then the content of our 'heritage' must be relatively superficial. Anthropologists sometimes challenge this view by noting that there is no generic way of being human – we are all socialised into particular cultures.³ And many people say that their particular commitments and ways of being constitute what is *most essential* to their identity.

The three cases I discuss below illustrate this argument about commensurability, but let me preview a few ways in which public celebrations of heritage might exclude radical forms of difference. First of all, heritage often relies upon a distinction between public and private that may not obtain in all contexts. The treatment of religion is particularly problematic in this regard. While the 'cultural' dimensions of religion may be welcome in the liberal public sphere, the 'religious' dimensions of religion must remain private. Liberal governments cannot endorse the fundamental principles of any particular religion without discriminating against others. Anthropologising religion (turning it into an object of cultural interest or an aspect of 'heritage') helps to make it safe for public recognition. Yet religion-as-heritage cuts out the core of religious belief, including its fundamental ontological principles.

This inability to publicly recognise radical difference is also apparent when it comes to views of time. When I included 'the past' in my definition of heritage I

hoped to avoid some of the problems Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992) has diagnosed in 'history'. Chakrabarty suggests that:

insofar as the academic discourse of history ... is concerned, 'Europe' remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call 'Indian,' 'Chinese,' 'Kenyan,' and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called 'the history of Europe'. (Chakrabarty 1992, p. 1)

This is because 'history' usually presupposes a linear, secular unfolding of time that inevitably confirms metanarratives of European origin (modernity, capitalism and so on), the pre-eminence of the modern nation-state (also a European invention) and a distinction between a bourgeois public and private sphere. Yet even the seeming neutrality of 'the past' in my formulation precludes the possibility that time is cyclical or sacred (two principles that run through the examples below) since such notions can have no place in a public sphere defined by Cartesian rationality and a national commitment to secularism.

The Cross of the Martyrs

At this point I would like to provide some historical background on New Mexico. However, it is impossible to give an objective and neutral account of the region's 'history'. In New Mexico Native Americans, Hispanos and Anglos⁴ not only disagree over the *content* of historical accounts (e.g., how to interpret Spanish colonisation), the *forms* through which people talk about the passage of time also vary significantly. Presenting a historical narrative that reproduces the conventions of Enlightenment historiography would therefore mean imposing a Eurocentric (and, in this case, specifically secular, Anglo American) worldview on a region where that perspective is sometimes but not always accepted. Fortunately, however, an overview of New Mexico history happens to be built into the first site I want to examine.

Several blocks north-east of the plaza in Santa Fe (the capital of New Mexico) a 20-foot-high white steel cross stands atop a hill overlooking the city (see Figure 1). Called the Cross of the Martyrs, it was erected in 1977 as a memorial to the Franciscan priests killed during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. A brick walkway, completed in 1986, winds up the hill from the street to the cross and along the way a series of interpretive panels presents a basic timeline of regional history.

I re-present this narrative as a local text, not as a bird's-eye view of New Mexico history. In fact, it will become clear that even this text suggests multiple, incommensurable interpretations. I have paraphrased and condensed the text of the first 19 interpretive panels.⁵

500 AD: Between 500 and 1400 New Mexico witnessed rapid social change and population movement.

1540: Francisco Vásquez de Coronado explored New Mexico.

1598: Juan de Oñate established the first Spanish colony in New Mexico.

1610: Santa Fe founded.

1680: 'Pueblo Indians ... revolted against the Spanish and succeeded in driving them completely out of New Mexico. During this revolt, twenty-one Franciscan priests and Friars lost their lives. The monument on this hill commemorates their martyrdom'.



Figure 1. The Cross of the Martyrs, with commemorative walkway visible winding up hill. (All photographs are by the author.)

- 1692: Diego de Vargas re-conquered New Mexico.
- 1712: First Santa Fe Fiesta.
- 1776: American independence.
- 1821: Mexican independence.
- 1848: The Mexican–American War began in 1846 and ended in 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ceded a vast territory including New Mexico to the United States.
- 1862: The Civil War reached New Mexico.
- 1876: American centennial.
- 1912: New Mexico became a state.
- 1926: The first time ‘Old Man Gloom’, a 40-foot effigy, was burned during the Santa Fe Fiesta.
- 1945: The first atomic bomb was developed in Los Alamos [north-west of Santa Fe].
- 1960: Santa Fe’s 350th anniversary.
- 1976: American bicentennial.
- 1982: Franciscan Father Reynaldo Rivera was murdered. ‘Ironically, Father Rivera was laid to rest on August 10th, the same date that the 21 Franciscan Priests and Friars lost their lives in the Pueblo revolt of 1680’.
- 1985: Santa Fe’s 375th anniversary.

The final, undated sign reads simply ‘TO THE FUTURE’.

The interpretive panels exemplify linear, chronological, secular historiography in its most straightforward sense (the kind of history produced in universities and endorsed by governments). However, examining the signs in relationship to the monument itself suggests that the historical narrative conveyed along the path is not straightforward at all. It literally leads not just ‘to the future’ but also *to the cross*. ‘The future’ and the death of Franciscan priests in 1680 become linked on top of the hill.

Far from conveying a linear account of history, then, the monument stitches together past, present and future (note the 1982 sign).

More fundamentally, the monument *sacralises* history. This becomes most clear when we consider the relationship between the Cross of the Martyrs and the Santa Fe Fiesta. The fiesta, which takes place every September and includes both religious and secular elements, commemorates Diego de Vargas's re-conquest of New Mexico in 1692 (see Grimes 1992, Wilson 1997, pp. 181–231, Horton 2001). Today the fiesta emphasises the peaceful coexistence of Indians and Hispanics. The first Cross of the Martyrs was dedicated during the 1920 fiesta and since then the fiesta has included a candlelight procession from the Cathedral of St. Francis of Assisi to the monument. Since at least the 1970s the procession has followed a mass at the cathedral and marked the conclusion of the fiesta on Sunday night (Wilson 1997, p. 209). These events help to transform the meaning of the Cross of the Martyrs and commemorative walkway. The procession sacralises space at the monument, and the mass sacralises time.

In 2008 a mariachi band led the procession from the church, followed by the Caballeros de Vargas (costumed men impersonating de Vargas and his entourage), the fiesta queen and her court (young Hispanic women elected to honorary positions), clergy, representatives of various civic and church organisations and members of the public (totalling at least 200 processants altogether). The September night air was cool; the long line of people carrying candles picturesque. People prayed the rosary as we walked. Once we reached the cross, a short prayer service at the monument concluded the evening.

In writing about Catholic processions in northern New Mexico, Sylvia Rodríguez (2006, pp. 102–103) explains that 'every procession is a kind of topographic inscription rite. Procession makes place and sacralizes space'. It 'traces a specific path in space and gives meaning to the particular territory it traverses'. The procession to the Cross of the Martyrs passes through downtown streets and then up the hill along the commemorative walkway. Especially at this time, but during regular time too, the interpretive historical panels that line the trail might evoke the Stations of the Cross, a series of images depicting the Passion of Christ. The devotion associated with the Stations of the Cross originated in the thirteenth century with St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan order. St. Francis Cathedral in Santa Fe, like many Catholic churches, includes the Stations of the Cross. The images in the cathedral and the interpretive panels along the trail differ in appearance, number and significance, and I have no evidence that processants associate the two. Nevertheless, both the sacred images and historical signs mark spatial and temporal progression toward the cross, and there is no question that the procession sacralises a path that otherwise appears to be secular.

The transformation of the monument's meaning was more profound and explicit in the mass that preceded the 2008 procession. The service was a celebration of the Mass of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Father Patrick Shafer began his homily by observing how strange it was that the cross – an instrument of capital punishment – had become the symbol of Christianity. Only God could transform the cross into a symbol of life, redemption and triumph. Between 1598 and 1680, he continued, horrible things happened in New Mexico. After the Pueblo Revolt, Diego de Vargas's re-conquest in 1692 was relatively peaceful. God turned a violent event of usurpation and violation into a celebration of love, fidelity and commitment. In New Mexico, the cross came to symbolise not military conquest but peaceful coexistence. Shafer concluded by urging the congregation not to let the celebration of peace and

reconciliation end with the fiesta. During the fiesta clergy often redirect people's attention from the Spanish colonial past to the present and future, generalising the fiesta's themes. In multiple religious services I have heard them pray for reconciliation between races, classes, genders and creeds; between natives and immigrants (both legal and illegal), and between straights and gays.

Shafer therefore associated the Cross of the Martyrs with God's intervention into and transformation of human history on three occasions. It symbolised Christ's crucifixion and resurrection; the 'peaceful' re-conquest of New Mexico in 1692 (which displaced and transformed both the brutal colonisation of New Mexico that began in 1598 and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680), and the promise of God's *future* Kingdom, when peace, love and justice will prevail. On Sunday evening, at the Cross of the Martyrs, the link between the cross and 'the future' thus became eschatological. If the cross represents the telos to which history progresses at the monument, it symbolises not just the continuation of history but the *end* of history. Christianity triumphs not only in the short term, but ultimately in the long term. (In the case of New Mexico, one wonders if this implies the ultimate triumph of colonialism too.)

At the Cross of the Martyrs, two streams of time (chronological time and God's time) are intertwined, and incommensurable conceptions of history coexist. This intermixing of the sacred and the secular has raised questions about the separation of church and state enshrined in the US Constitution. In 1985, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, which owned most of the hill, and the Santa Fe Fiesta Council, which owned the quarter-acre immediately around the cross, deeded their land to the City of Santa Fe so that the city could use public funds to help construct the commemorative walkway and maintain the monument. The American Civil Liberties Union objected to this transaction and threatened to sue the city unless it halted the walkway construction and removed the cross itself. Defenders of the project claimed that the monument was 'historical', not 'religious', but the issue was finally resolved when the city returned the land around the cross to the Fiesta Council, taking it out of the public domain (Santa Fe New Mexican 1986a, 1986b, Terrell 1986a, 1986b). This technical solution notwithstanding, the Cross of the Martyrs continues to reveal a relationship between religion and public commemoration that challenges the secular character of 'heritage'.

The Española Misión

The second site I want to examine provides another example of the sacralisation of history and raises more questions about the treatment of religion in public 'heritage' projects. The city of Española lies 25 miles north of Santa Fe. In the 1990s the mayor of Española spearheaded the creation of a 'tricultural' plaza space that would promote the city's cultural identity.⁶ The crown jewel of the plaza project is the Misión-Convento, an adobe building completed in 1996 (Figure 2). The Misión is a representation of the first Christian church in New Mexico, which was built in 1598 about five miles north of present-day Española. The other half of the building (the Convento) has been used for office and retail space.

Unlike the structure it was modelled after, the Misión was not built as a church (although it looks like one). In fact, its function is explicitly non-religious; a point the city had to clarify in the face of legal opposition. In 1992 a former state Supreme Court justice backed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) charged that the planned Misión violated the constitutional separation of church and state. A lawyer for the city responded, 'This is not going to be a consecrated church. It's a museum ... In



Figure 2. The Misi3n (right) and Convento (left) on the Espa3nola plaza.

the late 16th century, chapels served as a community center and played an important part in many of New Mexico's plazas' (cited in Roy 1992). In subsequent statements the city made it clear that the Misi3n would be a museum for religious art, not a church. The ACLU backed down, stating that so long as the Misi3n was non-denominational and no religious services were held there, they would not oppose the project (Roy 1993).

The church/state issue came up again in 1998, when the US Postal Service was looking for an image to use on a stamp commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Spanish colonisation of the Southwest. The agency feared that Native Americans might object to an image of a conquistador and that an image of a church might be interpreted as promoting Christianity. An acceptable solution finally emerged: a photograph of Espa3nola's brand new Misi3n-Convento, a public building that was officially secular (Amick 1999, pp. 177–179).

Separating the Misi3n's religious, cultural and historical meanings proved to be difficult, especially since these spheres are not distinct in northern New Mexico. New Mexicans often feel compelled to present themselves using conceptual categories ('religion', 'culture', 'history') that do not adequately capture local understandings. For example, the cross sitting on top of the Misi3n was a potential lightning rod for controversy. One supporter of the plaza project told me that he and two other men (including the mayor) went to the plaza early one morning to install the cross surreptitiously. Bernabe Romero, the building's architect, made no apologies: the cross was historical, he told me, and was thus justified.

The city's claims that the Misi3n was a museum were finally substantiated in 2003 when a permanent art exhibition was installed in the interior. However, rather than clarifying the meaning of the building, this intriguing project further complicates it.

The focal point of the project is five elaborately carved wooden frames modelled after *reredos*, altar screens that stand at the front of churches and contain paintings of saints (Figures 3 and 4). Unlike traditional *reredos*, however, the striking altar screens in the Misión frame not images of saints but 18 paintings of historic churches in northern New Mexico and 12 paintings of scenes from New Mexico history. The patron saints of the churches are represented by sculptures that stand next to their respective paintings. The historical scenes depict some of the turning points in New Mexico history (including Spanish exploration and settlement, the Pueblo Revolt, the reconquest, trade with the United States and statehood) as well as scenes from everyday life.

Clare Villa, the director and lead artist of the *reredo* project, told me that the interior of the Misión ‘obviously bolsters people’s religion, and it bolsters the Christian religion ... because all the stuff in it is Catholic’. But the reason for this is not that the city endorses Catholicism. ‘The museum is highly leaning towards the Catholic religion, but it’s leaning that way in a historic way because historically you can’t change history’, Villa explained. ‘Those are the folks that came in. And so those are the churches they built’. By now this argument (it is historical, not religious) should sound familiar. The project not only historicises but also anthropologises religion, turning it into an object of cultural interest. The art and ritual of New Mexico’s ‘folk’ Catholicism quickly attract anthropological interest. Villa noted that everything in the Misión is religious, but that it is *ethnically* religious (implying that it is worthy of public interpretation and governmental recognition).

However, if the Misión-Convento secularises religion, it simultaneously sacralises history by placing paintings of churches and historical scenes within a religious



Figure 3. Reredos inside the Misión.



Figure 4. Reredo with saints mounted on wall.

context. Framed by the reredos, the paintings become objects of veneration. I asked Villa if the art project turns the Misión into a shrine to local churches. ‘Yeah, definitely’, she answered. ‘That’s a good way to put it.’ While churches are normally thought of as holy places to begin with, featuring them inside the Misión both incorporates their holiness into a museum setting and recasts the secular study of history as a religious enterprise. The Española Misión thus complies with the constitutional separation of church and state by emphasising the cultural and historical (rather than religious) significance of churches in northern New Mexico, but then reincorporates that history into a religious framework, reclaiming the sacredness of churches and advancing an implicitly Christian historiography of New Mexico. Far from keeping church and state separate, then, the city of Española seems to have accomplished the double recognition of religion: religion is history (and is thus fair game in public projects), but then history becomes religion. The Misión project thus begins and ends with religion, all in the name of ‘history’. It destabilises the very concept of ‘heritage’ as an innocuous and apolitical object suitable for public recognition by challenging the conceptual distinctions and constitutional principles upon which cultural recognition relies.

In fact, in some ways the Misión-Convento functions like the antithesis of a heritage site. Richard Lucero, the former mayor who came up with the idea for the plaza, told me that the Misión is neither a church nor a museum. ‘What it really is, is a compass.’ Lucero envisions the Misión as a place where visitors can come to learn something about New Mexico history before heading into the countryside to discover in person the churches and chapels that are represented there. The Misión ‘wasn’t

supposed to be a destination point, it was just a point to send people to a destination'. If the social construction of heritage entails objectifying culture, identity and the past and holding them up for display, then heritage productions tend to be self-referential. They draw attention to themselves and offer themselves up for viewing. Yet the Misión turns visitors out. It ultimately diverts attention away from itself and shirks the status of a heritage destination. In this way, the Misión-Convento may not only be a subversive heritage site but also an *anti-heritage* site.

The Poeh Museum

My final example also illustrates a sacred understanding of time, but one that differs significantly from the previous two examples. Pojoaque Pueblo, the smallest of the six Tewa Pueblos, lies between Santa Fe and Española. The centrepiece of the Pueblo's recent cultural revitalisation efforts is the Poeh (rhymes with 'go') Cultural Center, a complex of neo-traditional adobe buildings that includes art studios, gallery space and a museum (Figure 5).

Upon entering the Poeh Museum, which opened in 2005, visitors receive headsets with an audio guide to the main exhibit, Nah Poeh Meng (Our Continuing Path). The commentary features a narrator and the voices of named individuals from Pojoaque and surrounding Pueblos telling stories and interpreting Tewa culture and history. In the hallway outside of the exhibit, the narrator greets visitors in Tewa, then explains 'Poeh means path, and this museum is an interpretation of the path that our people have travelled to get to this point in our cultural history'. A single path winds through



Figure 5. The Poeh Museum.

the first five rooms of the exhibit. Each of these rooms is fairly small and presents a different outdoor scene. Constructed environments include landscape features, buildings, plants, animals and people (Roxanne Swentzell of Santa Clara Pueblo sculpted the figures). Vivid murals by Marcellus Medina (Zia Pueblo) blend seamlessly with the three-dimensional elements in each room, extending the scenes to the horizon. Walking through the exhibit one has the feeling of being a giant walking through a spectacular movie set. Yet the apparent visual simplicity of the exhibit belies a much deeper cultural meaning.

Nah Poeh Meng does not look anything like a traditional Western art, history, or anthropology exhibit. Most remarkable is the complete absence of writing anywhere in the exhibit. Visitors are given one sheet of paper when they enter the museum that conveys a present-tense narrative corresponding to the different rooms in the exhibit, but all other commentary is oral. This decision to privilege orality over writing powerfully conveys a Pueblo sensibility and subverts the Eurocentric equation of writing and history. The exhibit expunges a reconstructed Pueblo world of writing and reclaims oral interpretations of Pueblo histories.⁷ The structure of the exhibit also presents an understanding of time that most Westerners would find unfamiliar. It combines a linear path through time and a cyclical view of time that emphasises the continuous incorporation of the past into the present. Each of the four rooms in the middle of the exhibit represents not only a period in Pueblo history but also a season and time of day.

The first room (Emergence) is dark and cave-like; water trickles down one of the walls. 'The People emerged into a world that is warm with thick air that permeates the environment and is nurturing like a womb. The earth is in its primeval state with stars twinkling above an environment untouched by human creation. No season exists at this time or in this place' (unless otherwise noted, all quotations come from the written notes visitors receive upon entering the museum).⁸ The oral commentary includes stories about water and Avanyu (Water Serpent) and about the need for proper living.

Winter/dawn. A little stream with running water and a pathway marked with bare human footprints connect this and the next three rooms. Murals depict a snowy landscape dotted with bison, elk and rabbits. A figure in the foreground prepares to throw a spear, and a woman in a cave with a baby on her back kneels by a fire. 'In the winter, we are at the beginning of our life.' People live in caves, hunt and gather wild plants. 'Winter is also the time of storytelling which serves to teach our language and keep our memories alive.'

Spring/morning. People are living in semi-subterranean pithouses, fishing, gardening and playing games. We hear about fishing, gambling and a child's naming ceremony; pure people become clouds. 'We follow our Poeh, like the Avanyu or Water Serpent, which returns every spring to nourish and revive our fields as we begin to domesticate some of our food sources such as corn.'

Summer/midday. People are living above ground. The room portrays individuals grinding corn, weaving, making pottery and tending crops. Corn, beans and squash are the staples of this agricultural economy. In the audio commentary, people talk about work and play and traditional gender roles.

Autumn/evening. On one side of the path we see Pueblo ceremonial life in full bloom. People are performing a harvest dance, and a ladder leads into a kiva, or ceremonial room. On the other side a Catholic priest is whipping a bent-over Indian in the foreground while the church behind them burns. One Indian shoots arrows into a priest who is hanging beside the church while others shoot fleeing soldiers.

It is in the autumn of 1540 when the intruders arrive from the South ... Even as we celebrate our bounty, they inflict their will by taking our stored food, our woven clothes, our homes, while imposing their religion and politics on us. The Spaniards kill our people with disease, encroachment and taxation, even as we try to accommodate them. Thus, in 1680, we are forced with no alternative but to drive them away for our own salvation.

Commentators discuss the Pueblo Revolt at length. Although the Spanish return and 'our lives are changed drastically, we remain insistent on living as Tewa people...' The narrator concludes: we go through the seasons of our lives, then back again.

In the final room of the exhibit we find ourselves inside a modern Pueblo home. The stream and footpath have ended, and there are no longer any indications of the season or time of day. In the centre of the room a boy sits on the floor with a remote control in his hand, watching television. The room is filled with traditional Pueblo art, Catholic iconography, family photos and modern appliances. The overall effect is to confirm that modern Pueblo people maintain distinctive cultural identities but are also integrated into a larger society. On the television a series of news clips about Pojoaque's recent tribal gaming efforts runs on a loop. The clips, which visitors hear through the headset, and the fact that the boy is watching them, evoke proud self-determination and a commitment to cultural survival. 'Yet, this same boy must be taught to speak the Tewa language, make pottery, sing the songs and dance the dances of his forefathers and foremothers.' The written guide to the exhibit concludes: 'In this contemporary period, we live in the past and the present simultaneously; we are who we have always been and we carry our past within us.'

The cyclical understanding of time conveyed through this exhibit radically differs from a linear view of 'history'. A linear stream of time *is* represented in the exhibit, and visitors may be left wondering about the implications of the contemporary room, which seemingly exists outside the cycles and interconnectedness of the previous rooms. Perhaps the tension between these two understandings of time is one of the challenges modern Pueblo people face. In any case, the exhibit's emphasis on orality, storytelling, cultural survival and the incorporation of the past into the present disrupts Eurocentric historiography and the stories of inevitable decline that Westerners have told about indigenous peoples for 500 years.

Conclusion

The Cross of the Martyrs, Misi3n and Poeh Museum each represent and help to constitute publics. The group processing to the Cross of the Martyrs, for example, was but one manifestation of a public that exists all year round. The monument and commemorative walkway are important landmarks for Catholics in Santa Fe, particularly Hispano Catholics for whom the martyrdom of Franciscan priests in 1680 remains a touchstone. These publics do not always conform to, and sometimes exist in opposition to, the norms of a liberal public sphere. In this sense they can be described as 'subaltern counterpublics' (Fraser 1992). The cross on top of the Misi3n may technically be 'historical', but it is also the sign of (and a beacon for) a Christian public that defies liberal distinctions between church and state, public and private. And although the Poeh Museum is open to *the* public, it clearly addresses itself to a *Tewa* public too. The entire oral commentary reconstitutes a community brought together through storytelling that is different from (even at odds with) a normative Western public tied to written texts.

None of these sites, however, are entirely counter-normative; they all exhibit cultural hybridity. It is not simply the case that Hispanos and Pueblo Indians in New Mexico think about religion and time in ways that are incommensurable with secular, state-sanctioned conceptions of heritage. Sometimes they do and sometimes they do not. Hispanic Catholics in Santa Fe and Española are not generally illiberal, and the Poeh Museum makes it clear that it is possible to be Tewa and modern at the same time. Incommensurable perspectives – secular and sacred, linear and non-linear – coexist *within* each site, evidence of New Mexico's social complexity.

There are also incommensurable differences *between* the three sites. It is hard to reconcile the treatment of the Pueblo Revolt at the Cross of the Martyrs and the Poeh Museum, for instance. Conceptions of time are also mutually exclusive: the Cross of the Martyrs and Misión advance a Christian historiography (even eschatology) while the Poeh Museum incorporates a non-Christian, cyclical view of time.⁹

The language of 'heritage' can help to bridge these differences, promote collective action and create larger, more diverse publics. The first way to do this is to emphasise commonality. For example, the Cross of the Martyrs, Misión and Poeh Museum all demonstrate sacred understandings of time and the enduring significance of the past (particularly the Spanish colonial past). These shared characteristics, among others, begin to point to a *New Mexican* heritage. 'Heritage' can also bring people together through a respect for their *differences*. Ironically, though, a relativistic celebration of difference also subsumes difference within likeness. Within a liberal framework, then, emphasising commonality and celebrating difference both ultimately assume shared identities.

Liberals are unable to recognise radical difference not only because of their commitment to equality (we are all the same) but also because of their commitment to individual choice (we all have the right to be different). Stanley Fish's critique of liberal multiculturalism helps to elucidate this double bind. Fish (1997, p. 384) distinguishes 'boutique multiculturalists', who consider differences to be subordinate to essential humanity, from 'strong multiculturalists', who recognise differences as fundamental and adopt tolerance as their first principle. Both are unable to come to terms with difference. Strong multiculturalists eventually encounter groups that are themselves intolerant and must therefore choose between condemning the groups or tolerating intolerance. Either way, their political position becomes incoherent. 'The strong multiculturalist takes difference so seriously as a general principle that he cannot take any *particular* difference seriously' without discriminating against others. The only solution, according to Fish, 'is to speak not for difference in general but for *a* difference, that is for the imperatives of a distinctive culture even when they impinge on the freedom of some other distinctive culture' – but this is to abandon multiculturalism altogether. In New Mexico, it is difficult to accept, at the same time, the most fundamental claims about time at the Cross of the Martyrs *and* at the Poeh Museum. To bring these sites together under the sign of 'heritage' thus requires excising (or abstracting) what makes each of them most meaningful.

Communities must therefore weigh the benefits of public recognition and coalition building in the name of 'heritage' against the risks of a restrictive political framework that excludes incommensurable forms of difference. My three examples suggest that there is room for negotiation here. Even when the logic of 'heritage' becomes hegemonic, alternative, subversive meanings may survive.

If 'heritage' has both constructive and destructive potential at the level of social relationships and political action, I am more sceptical about its sustainability as an

analytical category within critical academic discourse. Near the beginning of this article I proposed an analytical definition of heritage that allowed me to draw together and examine three sites within a single framework. Although this approach was productive, and objects of study are always constructed, I inadvertently obscured the radical differences between the sites by emphasising what they had in common (in their form if not their content).

This is more than just a technical problem resulting from insensitive categorisation. Even as an analytical category 'heritage' carries political baggage. Anthropology and other social sciences are, like liberalism, a legacy of European modernity and the Enlightenment, and they demonstrate the same universal aspirations. The idea that 'heritage' is something that everybody has and that we can study cross-culturally relies upon an even broader concept – the 'human being' – with a distinctly Western history. That category, after all, is also socially constructed; its conceptual development during the Enlightenment pre-dates its naturalisation in nineteenth-century biology. The comparative study of 'heritage' therefore also presupposes a public made up of commensurable subjects. Furthermore, so long as social scientists remain committed to secularism, neutrality and a linear conception of time, we (like strong multiculturalists) will be unable to take any particular difference seriously. (Note my unwillingness to go to the wall with the Catholics at the Cross of the Martyrs and proclaim, here and now, the future coming of Jesus Christ or, alternatively, to argue for a Tewa conception of time.) Chakrabarty's critique of 'history' may therefore apply equally to 'heritage': 'Europe' becomes the inevitable subject of all heritages, even non-European ones. Scholars committed to deconstruction and decolonisation may ultimately find it necessary to abandon 'heritage' as an analytical category if they want to begin to understand fundamentally different or hybridised ways of being in the world.

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Notes

1. For two theories of liberal multiculturalism, see Kymlicka (1995) and Taylor (1994). Kymlicka's assertion that individuals should have the right to 'choose' their culture is indicative of the problematic conceptualisation of 'culture' in these liberal theories.
2. A number of critics have noted the exclusionary effect of the idea that the bourgeois public sphere would be a space where people could bracket their status differences and come together for rational critical debate (e.g. Calhoun 1992). The very notion of temporary equality and bracketed inequality reflects the presumption of commensurable forms of difference that I am outlining here.
3. At the same time, however, the universal category 'human being' lies at the very heart of anthropology, as I note in my conclusion. For a good example of this paradoxical view of the human (we are all the same and we are all different, or our difference is what we all have in common), see Geertz (1973).
4. The nomenclature for New Mexico's various ethnic groups is notoriously problematic, especially for Spanish-speaking people whose ancestors came to New Mexico before it was

- part of the United States. Many of these people object to being called Mexican American or Chicano because they consider themselves to be culturally (and sometimes racially) Spanish. The history of identity politics behind this debate over ethnonyms is beyond the scope of this paper. I use 'Hispano' and 'Hispanic' but recognise their inadequacy.
5. For a more thorough analysis of the commemorative walkway, see Guthrie (2007).
 6. For a more thorough discussion of the Española plaza project, see Guthrie (2005, pp. 205–276).
 7. Vernon Lujan, the director of the museum, told me that the curators realised that people learn in different ways and therefore wanted to present information visually, orally and textually.
 8. I quote from the version I picked up on 9 June 2008. When I revisited the museum on 22 May 2009, the wording of the handout had been slightly revised.
 9. It may be difficult to reconcile Catholic and Pueblo perspectives, but Christianity has been an integral part of Pueblo communities for centuries (consider the presence of both Tewa and Catholic objects in the contemporary room of the Poeh Museum). Whether these perspectives are compartmentalised or syncretised, their coexistence is further evidence of hybridity. While I have mostly been concerned in this article with homogenisation, it is also important not to polarise New Mexican identities or ignore cultural integration.

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