

A 'metamorphosis of perspectives on the past'¹: A Study of The Hyde Park Barracks 1975-2012

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¹ Robert Aldrich. *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 6.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation of the site history of the Hyde Park Barracks since 1975 when the decision was made to restore the historical fabric of the building for use as a museum. Paramount to this enquiry is the understanding that historic buildings are always in a process of change, both physically and conceptually.² This study will argue that a ‘metamorphosis of perspectives on the past’ at this site has been shaped by cultural, political and economic development over time and a quest of modern identity.³

² Paul Eggert, ‘The Conservator's Gaze and the Nature of the Work’ *Library Trends* 56 no.1 (2007), p. 100.

³ Robert Aldrich. *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 6.

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Introduction

Historic buildings are always in a process of change, both physically and conceptually.⁴ The evolution of a site's fabric, use and conceptualization reflects a 'metamorphosis of perspectives on the past' influenced by cultural, political and economic development over time.⁵

This thesis is an investigation of the site history of the Hyde Park Barracks since 1975 when the decision was made to restore the historical fabric of the building for use as a museum. A site history presents an ideal study of this process of 'metamorphosis' at historic sites, and reveals the way in which a highly selective attitude towards history has been applied by heritage-makers in the quest for an inclusive and palatable modern Australian identity. My aim is to understand how heritage has shaped this site through an examination of the management, promotion and popular conception of the Barracks and its history since 1975. Paramount to this study is the understanding that the act of creating, promoting and negotiating heritage status functions as a powerful tool in the process of asserting modern and historical identities.

The Hyde Park Barracks, built in 1817-1819 under the patronage of Governor Lachlan Macquarie, has served many different functions. Initially built for the purpose of convict accommodation, the complex was built by convict architect Francis Greenway

⁴ Eggert, Paul, 'The Conservator's Gaze and the Nature of the Work' *Library Trends* Vol. 56.1 (2007), p. 100.

⁵ Robert Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 6.

as part of Macquarie's monumental, grand vision of Sydney.⁶ Following the end of transportation in 1848 the site was used as a Female Immigration Depot, then as a Female Asylum for the destitute women of Sydney, before a long history of use as law courts and government offices from 1887 – 1975.⁷ Across this lived history of the sites' use various changes were made, with alterations and extensions gradually changing the fabric and subsequent experience of the original, simple axial design.⁸

Initially renovated by the Government Architects branch of the Public Works department from 1975, the site has been run as a public museum under the control of the Powerhouse Museum (formerly known as the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences) from 1983 – 1990 before coming under the authority of Sydney Living Museums (known as the Historic Houses Trust until mid-2013). Over this period of 38 years the conservation, interpretation and presentation of the Hyde Park Barracks as a public institution and museum about history has continuously undergone significant change. The history of this site as a public museum is complex, with various interests, values and perspectives transforming the building's relationship with its history through changes in cultural policy as well as evolving debates about heritage and national identity.

This site is uniquely useful in understanding the invention of history through the process of heritage production in the interest of identity politics. The Hyde Park Barracks has been a focal point in the development of the heritage industry in

⁶ Betteridge, Margaret, *The Royal Mint and Hyde Park Barracks Museum Project. A Report prepared for inclusion in the Archaeological Report*, (Historic Houses Trust NSW, June 1981), p. 16

⁷ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management* (Historic Houses Trust NSW, September 1990), p. 25.

⁸ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management*, p. 25.

Australia. The interpretation and presentation of the Barracks has shifted in line with changing attitudes and guidelines towards conservation ethics and heritage principles through an intense period of debate and development.

This enquiry follows the development of heritage studies from the 1970s onwards. Interdisciplinary contributions from the fields of history, archaeology, sociology, and later contributions from the fields of museum studies and geography have developed a broad body of literature focused on understanding the framework of heritage. In order to situate this study within this context of developing ideas it is necessary to draw on the insights of the eminent theoriser of heritage, the historian David Lowenthal. Through a large body of work of developing ideas from the 1970s to the present, Lowenthal has identified the distinction that 'History seeks to convince by truth, and succumbs to falsehood. Heritage exaggerates and omits, candidly inverts and frankly forgets, and thrives on ignorance and error'.⁹ He also acknowledges the flexibility of heritage in that it is perpetually reshaped and moulded for changing needs and values, because 'only a heritage ever reanimated stays relevant'.¹⁰ In short, the success of the public image of a heritage site is underpinned by the requirement that it be "socially sustainable" in reflecting the universal values of its invested community.¹¹ In this line of thinking heritage is the carefully chosen cultural legacy of a community or nation, its relationship to historical fact underlined by the reality of manipulation and fabrication.¹² His insights are extremely valuable in understanding the development of both international and local guidelines on

⁹David Lowenthal, 'Fabricating heritage' *Australian Folklore* 14 (1999), p. 73.

¹⁰ David Lowenthal, 'Fabricating heritage', p. 73.

¹¹ David Lowenthal, 'Fabricating heritage', p. 73.

¹² David Lowenthal, 'Fabricating heritage', p. 73.

heritage management and the evolution of the concept of 'authenticity' as a heritage value.

Drawing on Lowenthal's conceptualisation of heritage, the relationship between national identity and heritage can be seen to be shaped by the social, political, cultural and ideological concerns of communities, whereby heritage status and promotion is utilised in order to construct and/ or maintain national identity.¹³ The concept of national identity is relatively recent, of course, with 19th and 20th century building of the modern nation-state, defined on a very particular set of colonial ideals and Victorian values.¹⁴ In the wake of globalization identities are no longer ascribed but achieved, and the act of articulating, reinforcing and contesting heritage is a powerful tool in this process of challenging long held national identities and asserting new modern identities.¹⁵ Through a study of the Hyde Park Barracks it is evident that whilst often heritage reflects national identity it can also assist in shaping it. The relationship between the two is therefore complex and multi-faceted.

Most overtly, this study of the changing heritage of the Hyde Park Barracks draws on Robert Aldrich's 2005 book, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories*. Aldrich draws on the prevailing French school of thought about heritage or *patrimoine*. He draws on the ideas of Roland Barthes that buildings represent epochs, and on Pierre Nora about buildings as *lieux des memoires*, or sites of memory that can be 'read' to comprehend both historical and

¹³ Lindsay Weiss, 'Heritage making and political identity' *Journal of Social Archaeology* 7 no.3 (2007), p. 417.

¹⁴ Lindsay Weiss, 2007, p. 414.

¹⁵ Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage' *Journal of Material Culture* 11 no.7 (2006), p. 10.

present-day issues.¹⁶ Looking at sites connected with France's colonial past, Aldrich sets out to investigate the ways in which the imperial vocation was 'consciously mapped on to the built landscape', and the ways in which the French collectively have remembered and commemorated their imperial deeds, or sometimes failed to do so.¹⁷ Differing ideas of collective memory and national identity have been espoused at these sites over time: initially, nationalist fervour gave way to postcolonial shame and omission, and now a 21st century conceptualisation of identity seeks to be more inclusive and conciliatory in line with the views of an increasingly united Europe.¹⁸ Through this study he argues that the evolution of those sites since the end of the colonial period reflects 'the metamorphosis of perspectives on the past', whereby the French have made great, and often ambiguous efforts to come to terms with what has become an uncomfortable colonial past.¹⁹

This study of the Hyde Park Barracks will take a similar approach to that of Aldrich in its analysis of a 'metamorphosis of perspectives on the past'. However the perspective will be broader, looking not just at vestiges and memories of the colonial history of the site in a purely post-colonial perspective, but also its meaning in modern Australia as a multicultural, largely urban society. It will look to encompass a wider postmodern perspective, drawing on the influences of globalisation, greater

¹⁶ Robert Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories*, p. 1.

¹⁷ Robert Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories*, p. 6.

¹⁸ Robert Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories*, p. 334.

¹⁹ Robert Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories*, p. 6.

mobility and identity politics as well as postcolonial angst. In this way the changing conceptualisation of the Barracks' history over time can be seen to be a measure and tool through which Australia has attempted variously, and sometimes ambiguously, to come to terms with its past. It is through these attempts that Australians have contested and articulated a new cosmopolitan Australian identity.

In order to undertake this study I have made use of a broad range of primary material. Institutional records such as museum plans, management and conservation plans as well as annual reports and institutional newsletters from both the Powerhouse Museum and Sydney Living Museums have been extremely useful in understanding the attitudes behind the different and sometimes conflicting stances on the interpretation of the fabric of the site. The underlying biases of each interpretation are exposed and often understood through their comparison and, interestingly, the distinct similarities in their intentions and broader aims (in spite of the actual outcomes) become apparent. This type of evidence often makes reference to key contemporary debates and issues that prompt further research.

Early annual reports have been useful in their reporting of visitor numbers to the Hyde Park Barracks from year to year which was useful in gauging the success of various exhibitions and acceptance by the public. While visitor surveys and comment books would have been very useful to understand the relationship between personal and collective experiences, these were unavailable. Institutional blogs provided the best sources of public feedback through their interactive online format. Whilst the blogs must be noted to be popularly unsuccessful with only few comments made on

posts, the given responses are diverse, presenting evidence of a range of public expectations and responses to the site and its heritage.

Promotional material such as brochures, exhibition pamphlets, magazine and newspaper advertisements and postcards provided evidence of the selected symbols and images of heritage, designed to promote deliberate and distinct feelings of nostalgia and identification. Their evocative language and imagery are clearly designed to provoke emotive and sensual responses, and are thus useful for drawing out the impact that curators have sought to achieve. These documents are easily available, if not online then at their respective archives.

Newspaper accounts have also been very useful, including feature articles and letters from the public. From these accounts the public nature of debates about heritage conservation can be seen to have peaked in the 1980s and 1990s, with nostalgic and postcolonial attitudes featuring prominently. These newspaper items have been integral in terms of situating the developments at the Hyde Park Barracks within a broader movement of heritage mania.

An interview with the architect, David Turner, who played a role in the restoration of the Hyde Park Barracks from 1970 under the Public Works Office, was useful in contextualising and grounding these debates in his lived experience of the site. In reflecting back on his role at the site Mr Turner was able to give a unique professional perception of the sites placed within the broader, somewhat contentious landscape of heritage management since the 1970s. This oral history of

the site was, of course, selective, drawing on his personal attitudes toward heritage, negative reflections on the changing guidelines of the Burra Charter, and a critical view of the 'commodification' of the Barracks since the 1990s.²⁰ But this selectivity was itself useful in demonstrating the contentious debate around the meaning of heritage at this time.

Perhaps most interesting has been my comparison of various exhibition reviews published in journals and newspapers with my own site inspections conducted over the course of 2013. Through personally experiencing the spatial dimensions of the site and interrogating the historical displays I have come to appreciate the sensory quality of the site in addition to the overt educational experience. In comparing this experience to that described by others I have been able to fully comprehend the flexibility of the experience and its subsequent malleability as a focus of heritage.

Although the Barracks only housed convicts from 1819-1848, occupied later by immigrant and destitute women, district courts and offices, the interpretation of convict heritage has been the dominant theme presented to tourists.²¹ Chapter One aims to deconstruct the emergence of convict history in order to understand the forces that have contributed to this representation of history at the Hyde Park Barracks. The growth of social history as well as the implications of a national hobby of genealogy will be shown to have had a great impact upon the promotion of convict history at the Barracks. Underpinning all this, a crisis of modern Australian

²⁰ *Interview with David Turner*, Former Architect for the Public Works Department, Carried out by Alexandra Boukouvalas, (Interview in author's possession), Tuesday, September 3rd, 2013.

²¹ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan 1990*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales (1990), p. 24.

identity will be argued to have been the basis of the emergence of convict history at the Barracks. This chapter will draw the conclusion that traditional nationalist identities and modern identities are simultaneously reflected, promoted and contested at the Hyde Park Barracks, an idea that will be drawn out further in later chapters.

Chapter Two will outline that throughout the building's history as a museum, contrasting opinions have been held on how to portray "accurately" and "authentically" the Barracks as a heritage site. A study of management and conservation plans will demonstrate a distinct change in these attitudes over time. Whilst the conservation stance of the Barracks' in the 1970s and 1980s was focused on restoring the building to its original 1819 state, in the 1990s a decision was made to conserve all fabric remaining for the latter history of the building up to 1975. This chapter will explore how authenticity, linked as it is with identity, is always in a state of flux.²²

Chapter Three will explore 2 different modes of conceptualising the space of the Hyde Park Barracks in order to understand its role as a place of public interaction with the past. Space has been described as 'relational, dynamic, contingent' in character, something that is constantly 'in the making'.²³ As the heritage theorists Steve Watson and Emma Waterton argue, 'Sites are never simply locations. Rather

²² Deepak Chhabra, 'Positioning museums on an authenticity continuum' *Annals of Tourism Research* 35 no.2 (2008), p. 428.

²³ David Crouch, 'The Perpetual Performance and Emergence of Heritage' in Emma Waterton et al., eds., *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), p. 61.

they are sites for someone and of something'.²⁴ The space of the Hyde Park Barracks, its spatial character were conceptualised in differently according to changing perspectives over time.

The spatiality of the Barracks' as a heritage site can be analysed through contemporary notions of the 'public sphere'. Drawing on the ideas of museum theorist - Jennifer Barrett, much can be gained from analysing museums as part of the public sphere where 'performance' is paramount, which reveals aspects of the public culture, encourages intellectual interactions and facilitates debate.²⁵ In this sense, the changing relationship of the Hyde Park Barracks and its history is indicative of the role and "performance" of the Barracks as a public space for discussion and dissemination of ideas. The use of the Hyde Park Barracks as a museum functions as a way of ascribing modern identities through a very public, value-laden representation of history and institutionalisation of a collective public culture and heritage.

In addition, drawing upon theory of geography, archaeology and art, perceiving space as landscape will allow us to draw out richer understandings of the way in which the changing relationship between history and heritage at the Barracks is an inherently spatial and visual process. Changing perspectives and values of the past can be extrapolated through an understanding of the temporality and contested nature of landscape.²⁶ Architects, geographers and archaeologists have theorised landscape differently over time in accordance with different approaches and

²⁴ Watson Steve, Waterton Emma, *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), p. 11.

²⁵ Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, (Massachusetts: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), p. 163.

²⁶ Bender, Barbara, 'Stonehenge: Contested Landscapes' in Barbara Bender ed., *Landscape Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), p. 275.

methodologies, with an underlying assumption of as space as 'socially constructed and constitutive of social relations' rather than a 'passive backdrop of action'.²⁷

Reflecting on this evolution of community attitudes about Australia's convict past a final conclusion will be drawn about the nature heritage and identity as seen through an institutional history of the Hyde Park Barracks.

²⁷ Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough, *Envisioning Landscape: Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (California: Left Coast Press, 2007).13.

Chapter One: Convict Chic

Bruce Tranter and Jed Donoghue have identified that convict history has, in the past, been a neglected aspect of Australian history,²⁸ neither embraced nor promoted.²⁹ There has been a great shift in the representation of Australia's convict heritage since the 1960's, with themes of shame, fascination and heritage coming to shape a new popular history.³⁰ The success of heritage sites such as the Hyde Park Barracks demonstrates that whilst Australia once viewed its convict origin with shame, today it is celebrated as an integral foundation of the national character and identity. Although the Barracks only housed convicts from 1819-1848, occupied later by immigrant and destitute women, district courts and offices, the interpretation of convict heritage has been the dominant theme presented to tourists.³¹ The increasing influence and popularity of convict history can be seen in the changing significance of the museum from 'a museum of New South Wales history' under the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in the 1980s, to a 1990s stance as 'a museum of itself' under the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales.³² Whilst the convict era habitation of the building was certainly a feature of the 1980s interpretation of the site, its increasing influence and populist potential was further realised in the 1990s and capitalised on. This chapter aims to deconstruct the emergence of convict

²⁸ Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage' *Journal of Material Culture* 11 no.7, (2006), p. 9.

²⁹ Bruce Tranter, Jed Donoghue, 'Convict Ancestry: a neglected aspect of Australian Identity', *Nations and Nationalism* 9 no.4, (2003), p. 573.

³⁰ Grace Karskens, 'Banished and reclaimed: Examination of representations of Australia's convict heritage at the Hyde-Park-Barracks-Museum, Sydney' *Meanjin* 60 no.4 (2002), p. 26.

³¹ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan 1990*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales (1990), p. 24.

³² *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan 1990*, p. 8.

history in order to understand the forces that have contributed to this representation of history at the Hyde Park Barracks.

Analysis of the growth of social history since the 1960s will be undertaken in order to demonstrate how the previously unheard convict voice was brought into the Australian public consciousness and increasingly held up as the fount of nationhood. This will reveal the way in which social history has featured heavily in exhibits at the Barracks. Emphasising the everyday lives of convicts, these exhibits, through their construction of nostalgic parallels between past and present emotively link the lives of convicts with contemporary museum visitors. These exhibits thus encourage the visitor to identify with the convict past and build their conceptions of contemporary Australian identity around it.

The emergence of family history in the 1960s, and its escalation in the digital age must also be understood as a vital component in the rise of convict history. In response to this the Barracks has drawn its heritage stance around the expectations of an Australian public fascinated with genealogy. Through interactive media and experiential tours and attractions the need for visitors to identify with a convict heritage in a personal way has been a key facet of the museum experience.

Finally, a crisis of modern Australian identity will be argued to have been the basis of the emergence of convict history. This anxiety about the past and its implications for the future will be demonstrated to be at the very crux of the heritage espoused by the Hyde Park Barracks since 1975.

Social history and Nationalism

This movement, coined 'convict chic' grew alongside the developing heritage industry, as academics, governments and communities debated what sites and accounts were worthy of national legacy.³³ As new processes of heritage preservation and management were introduced, the physical evidence of the convict experience took on sacred, reverent importance.³⁴ In this way, over the past 30 years convict sites have been heritage listed and subsequently invigorated with 'convict chic', increasingly embraced and enthusiastically attached to concepts of 'Australianness'.³⁵

Attention from historians shifted in the 1970s and 1980s in line with the developments in the field of social history. A movement of history 'from below' undermined conventional political history and offered the possibility of novel approaches, sources, topics and methods.³⁶ Underlined by the pressures of modernity, the discipline of history sought to revise traditional accounts of the past through study of the ordinary, the everyday, the 'objectively familiar' in order to reveal new, nuanced meanings.³⁷ This popular history dislodged the 'cultural bind of

³³ Peter Emmett, 'Convictism: Hyde Park Barracks and the Antipodean Gulag' *Historic Environment* 10 no.2 (1993), p. 26.

³⁴ Grace Karskens, 'Banished and Reclaimed: Examination of representations of Australia's convict heritage at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum, Sydney', p. 27.

³⁵ Bruce Tranter, Jed Donoghue, 'Convict Ancestry: a neglected aspect of Australian Identity', p. 573.

³⁶ Frank Bongiorno, "'Real Solemn History' and its Discontents: Australian Political History and the Challenge of Social History' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 56 no.1 (2010), p. 2010.

³⁷ Raymond Evans, Clive Moore, 'Pursuing the Popular in Australian History' *The Journal of Popular Culture* 33 no.1 (1999), p. 3.

inferiority' to in an aim to create a 'window into past and present lived experience or even into the national soul'.³⁸

The developments in this discipline over the 1960s and 1970s came to the broader public attention with Robert Hughes' 1987 best-selling book 'The Fatal Shore'. The previously unheard voice of the convict was imbued with new meaning and became conflated with the aims of a new nationalism. Historians such as Hughes highlighted the 'dark underbelly' of Australian cultural history, revealing attitudes of anti-authoritarianism, homophobia, working-class egalitarianism and upper-class contempt, historical amnesia and anxiety that had influenced the omission of convict history and become part of its psychological legacy.³⁹ The anti-transportation movement of the latter 19th century with its moralistic politics was identified as the source of Australian shame towards its convict origins, with historians such as Babette Smith arguing that the anti-transportation campaign drew upon and intensified existing prejudices of a uniquely self-conscious population, the power of which endured as a 'national amnesia' well into the 20th century.⁴⁰ This movement of reassessment of the convict past successfully sought a more authentic and multi-layered human dimension in deconstructing the political agendas and moral assumptions of the anti-transportation rhetoric, reflecting and further facilitating a new Australian nationalism.⁴¹

³⁸ Raymond Evans, Clive Moore, 'Pursuing the Popular in Australian History', p. 3.

³⁹ Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore* (London: Harvill Press, 1987), p. 1.

⁴⁰ Babette Smith, *Australia's Birthstain: The Startling Legacy of the Convict Era* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2008), p. 1.

⁴¹ David Andrew Roberts, 'Beyond the stain: Rethinking the nature and impact of the anti-transportation movement' *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 14 (January, 2012), p. 209.

The museum has been dominated by a series of long-running exhibitions on convict history. The long running 'Convict Sydney' exhibition, billed as 'the biggest ever of convict related objects and pictures' is based around a broad range of social themes from food and leisure activities to corporeal punishment.⁴² Running from September 2010 until December 2015 the exhibition presents the convict-era history of the Hyde Park Barracks as a vital component of Australian heritage. A social history approach focuses on what convicts did rather than what was done to them.⁴³ Through exhibits on aspects of social history such as convict craftsmanship and family life the visitor is drawn to make connections with a past that is relevant to their own experiences. Experiential elements of the exhibit such as a giant map of 1820s Sydney on the ground floor on which visitors are encouraged to 'wander the streets' of convict Sydney allows them to feel a part of the history and build their own connections to it.⁴⁴ In a similar way, the encouragement of visitors to lay in convict hammocks and peep through the night guards' observation holes whilst hearing the soundscape of voices echoing off the whitewashed walls creates a multi-sensory, empathetic experience of identification with the past.⁴⁵

Special temporary exhibits such as 'Convict Love Tokens' held in 1998, draw emotional responses from visitors in order to foster empathy and identification with the past. In this exhibit tragic stories of love and loss are communicated through the display of letters and keepsakes kept or made by the convicts as love tokens from

⁴² Michael Welch, 'Penal tourism and the 'dream of order': Exhibiting early penology in Argentina and Australia - Punishment and Society' *International Journal of Penology* 14 no.5 (2012), p. 597.

⁴³ Grace Karskens, 'Banished and Reclaimed: Examination of representations of Australia's convict heritage at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum, Sydney', p. 27.

⁴⁴ Pamphlet: *Convict Sydney* (Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2013).

⁴⁵ Geraldine O'Brien, 'Layer by layer it's the feel of history' *Sydney Morning Herald*, (5 October, 1991), p. 3.

their distant homelands. For example, a piece of infant clothing presented alongside the harrowing story of the child's death from falling into a pot of boiling water presents an emotive and macabre past.⁴⁶ These tangible memories of the past, when accompanied by their stories produce deep emotional responses about the past. This mobilisation of popular social history has played a key role in highlighting the previously unheard convict voice in the popular Australian consciousness and participated romanticising the convict experience as a fount of nationhood. Emphasising the everyday lives of convicts, these exhibits, through their construction of nostalgic parallels between past and present emotively link the lives of convicts with contemporary museum visitors. These exhibits thus encourage the visitor to identify with the convict past and build their conceptions of contemporary Australian identity around it.

Family History and the Digital Age

As the line between scholarly and popular narratives of the past is increasingly blurred in the modern age, so too is the line between history and memory.⁴⁷ Driven by a desire to shape identity through an understanding of personal heritage, the genealogical pursuit sees new value in the past. Family history serves the cause of democratising the subject of history, challenging the control of the academic elite and allowing the wider public to invest in history that serves the idea of a legacy or heritage of past peoples and events. Through the rise of family history in the 1960s

⁴⁶ John McPhee, 'A penny for their thoughts' *Sydney Morning Herald*, (30 January 1998), p. 13.

⁴⁷ Robert S. Wolf, 'The Historian's Craft, Popular Memory, and Wikipedia' *Writing History in the Digital Age* (2012), < <http://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/crowdsourcing/wolff-2012-spring/>>, accessed 1st July, 2013.

onwards, convict history took on newfound significance as a heritage worthy of pride.

The rise of convict chic is largely indebted to the unprecedented flow of information that has characterised the modern age. The digital revolution of knowledge production and consumption must be seen as a key force in this elevation of convict history, having provided fresh momentum and unprecedented new capabilities to historians of the convict experience. Digital technology has given the public an unprecedented opportunity to participate in the practice of, and influence the direction of popular history. The early 20th century historian, Carl Becker accurately noted that “the history that lies inert in unread books does no work in the world”, that the most successful history is “living history” or “Everyman’ history” that is affirmed in the contemporaneous memory of the greater public.⁴⁸ The internet has become a stage for the creation and proliferation of this popular history.

Prior to the digital revolution convict records were largely concealed from the Australian public, initially purposefully withheld in the political service of concealing the “convict stain” from history, and later, when finally opened to the public in the 1970s and 1980s limited by slow analog tools for searching at official state archives that often excluded all but academics.⁴⁹ The digitisation of these documents, which has improved in quality and reliability over time, has opened the practice of researching primary source material to the wider public. Where once the study of

⁴⁸ Carl Becker, ‘Everyman His Own Historian’ *The American Historical Review* 37 no.2 (January 1932), p. 234.

⁴⁹ Lucy Frost, ‘The Politics of Writing Convict Lives; Academic Research, State Archives and Family History’ *Life Writing* 8 no.1 (2011), p. 26.

convict lives could require incredible time, patience and travel as well as research expertise, the advent of digitisation of archives has significantly changed the nature of enquiry into the early Australian past. Unprecedented access and search ability of convict records in digital archives and databases, driven by the new online possibilities for genealogists and family historians, has made a significant contribution to public history in Australia in highlighting the long concealed experience of the convict.⁵⁰ In this challenge to the elitism of the academy, a once-passive audience is able to shift from consuming to constructing history, filling in gaps left by official history and actively participating in the historical process.⁵¹ In this way the digital has played a clear role in the rise of convict history through enabling the Australian public to shape a digital narrative about the past based upon living memory.

The history at the Hyde Park Barracks has been shaped in this way in an attempt to connect to its visitors through a direct appeal to the genealogical pursuit. The Australian Convicts Database, a digital tool for researching names, ships and dates of convicts sent to Australia has been a feature of the barracks display since 1990.⁵² Under a bold storyboard that asks 'Who do you think you are?' visitors are given the opportunity to participate in genealogical research on site.⁵³ The questioning 'Who do you think you are?' draws the imagination in this environment to consider the intricacies and modern layering of identities through which the individual and the

⁵⁰ Tanya Evans, 'Secrets and Lies: The Radical Potential of Family History' *History Workshop Journal* 71 (Spring 2011), p. 59.

⁵¹ Tanya Evans, 'Secrets and Lies: The Radical Potential of Family History', p. 55.

⁵² *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan 1990*, p. 31.

⁵³ *Site Inspection of the Hyde Park Barracks*, carried out by Alexandra Boukouvalas, June 1st 2013.

nation are conflated in complex ways. The significance of this, particularly in the 1990s before the emergence of Web 2.0 and greater access to the digital realm, is that visitors are able to link personal identity with collective national memories, fostering a sense of self grounded in a certain idea of nationhood and founding legacy. In this way the history presented at the Barracks has built on the established connection of family history and convict history, drawing out conclusions about both collective and individual identities.

The Crisis of Australian Identity

Graeme Davison has argued that Australia is a society with ‘a strong sense of the past, but with only a weak sense of history’.⁵⁴ In a broader national spirit of ambivalence and cultural inferiority, Australian history has been seen over time as ultimately of less importance than the ‘sweeping global saga’ of British Imperialism.⁵⁵ Building on these long held anxieties of cultural and historical inferiority, the late 20th century contestation of the traditional Euro-centric historical landscape brought forth a broad questioning about the nature of the Australian past. The historian Hilary Carey observes that shame about Australia’s origins is not restricted to convict beginnings, that unease about convictism has been matched by recent regret and guilt about the treatment of Australia’s indigenous peoples.⁵⁶ In the awakening of Indigenous rights movements and postcolonial perspectives historians sought to shape a new cultural heritage that reflected the growing public unease and shame of

⁵⁴ Davison, Graeme, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin 2000), 1990, p. 28.

⁵⁵ Raymond Evans, Clive Moore, ‘Pursuing the Popular in Australian History’, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Hilary M. Carey, ‘Clerics and the Beginning of the Anti-Transportation Debate in Beyond the Stain: Rethinking the nature and impact of the anti-transportation movement’ *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 14 (January, 2012), p. 2012.

the traditional white settler account of the past. The historian David Andrew Roberts conflates the vilification of convicts with repressive treatment of Aboriginal heritage, arguing that both are 'great emblems of Australia's ignoble and dehumanising past'.⁵⁷ In the context of the Bicentennial celebrations of 1988 euro-centric veneration of the settlement of Australia was matched by a powerful Day of Mourning that decried the First Fleet as an invasion. This 'cocktail of patriotism and outrage' caused great unease within the Australian public, prompting the need to reshape the past in a more comfortable historical legacy.⁵⁸

The History Wars of the 1990s and early 2000s saw these issues hotly debated and played out publicly in the media. As historians began to debate the nature of frontier violence in the early colonisation of Australia, debates in politics and the media grew to debate the legitimacy and character and legacy of British settlement in Australia.⁵⁹ The authority of traditional Australian history was greatly damaged in the public eye through this contestation and a crisis of Australian identity came to a head as people desperately reached for an acceptable narrative in which to invest.

The conservative ideology underpinning the elevation of the white, male convict must be situated as part of a broader movement by the political right for a less contentious, more comfortable and honour-worthy Australian History to restore the perceived disruption of balance by the challenge of the 'black armband' view. In light

⁵⁷ David Andrew Roberts, 'Beyond the stain: Rethinking the nature and impact of the anti-transportation movement', p. 214.

⁵⁸ Murray Sayle, 'Where Convicts are Chic and the Past Looks Good' *Far Eastern Economic Review* 139 no.4 (January, 1988), p. 46.

⁵⁹ Bongiorno, Frank, Mansfield, Grant, 'Whose War was it Anyway? Some Australian Historians and the Great War' *History Compass* 6 no.1 (January 2008), p. 62.

of this increasing unease of postcolonial Australian, the embrace of convict history has been an attempt at historic catharsis as means of dealing with increasingly widespread cultural guilt. In casting convicts in the role of passive victims of British transportation and identifying with them in the national psyche, the history of the Australian nation becomes a positive narrative of overcoming British oppression. The 'everyday Australian' is, in this way, liberated from a position as oppressor and embraces heritage in a new way. This also serves to mediate the contested landscape of heritage in light of increasing multiculturalism, uniting a fragmented, multi-ethnic populace in popular memory of hard work and courage in a foreign land.⁶⁰ This is fitting with the understanding that 'national narratives supplant the complexities, ambiguities and divergences found in societies with notions of belonging, cohesion and unity which appeal directly to historical understanding'.⁶¹

In this way, the conflicting memories of white Australians, Indigenous Australians and migrants were negotiated under the collectively palatable and powerful 'pioneer legend'.⁶² Coined by John Hirst in 1978, this concept highlighted the nationalist celebration of pastoralists and farmers in a discourse that 'celebrates courage, enterprise, hard work, and perseverance' and encourages reverence of the past.⁶³ The convict came to embody "the values of the Australian Bush, the egalitarian Australian ethos" as a means of building a nationalist masculine Australian identity

⁶⁰ Mette Bligaard, 'The Image on Denmark: Museums as Sanctuaries of Identity' in J. D. Fladmark ed., *Heritage and Museums: Shaping National Identity* (Aberdeen: Donhead Publishing, 2000), p. 293.

⁶¹ Carl Gavin, 'Few of the Sins of the Fathers: Whiteness and the Hero in Australian Popular History' *Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the Construction of an Identity* (Melbourne: Melbourne University, 2006), p. 280.

⁶² John Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend' *Australian Historical Studies* 18 no.71 (1978), p. 316.

⁶³ John Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend', p. 316.

that is more inclusive, emphasising Australians on the left of politics such Labor men, bush workers, trade unionists, publicans, nationalist poets and writers.⁶⁴ Convicts are rehabilitated in this heritage as quintessential 'Australian Battlers',⁶⁵ venerated as brave, inventive and resourceful.⁶⁶ The accessibility and relevance of this narrative has served both commercial and nation building imperatives and built a strong historical consciousness in the Australian mindset.⁶⁷ Popular acclaim of and insatiability for these grand narratives has driven the proliferation of these populist themes of hero-worship and unity and comfort in an honourably-perceived past.⁶⁸ The new convict hero is cast as a triumphant figure over the tyranny of British oppression and adversity in general.⁶⁹ In this redemptive discourse Australia becomes an El Dorado of opportunity, 'the working man's paradise'.⁷⁰

The presentation of history at the Hyde Park Barracks as Dark Tourism seeks to come to terms with this anxiety about the past and subsequent crisis of identity. Presenting this uncomfortable past as Dark History has enabled stakeholders to bring forth new themes of endurance and redemption that modern Australians can invest in. Michael Welch has identified the way in which penal tourism feeds not only on a human 'curiosity and fascination with the infliction of punishment' but is also popular due to

⁶⁴ Marilyn Lake, 'Introduction: What have you done for your country?' in Marilyn Lake et al., eds., *What's Wrong with Anzac? The militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010), p. 19.

⁶⁵ David Andrew Roberts, "'The Knotted Hands That Set us High": Labour History and the Study of Convict Australia' *Labour History* 100 (2011), p. 37.

⁶⁶ Murray Sayle, 'Where Convicts are Chic and the Past Looks Good', p. 50.

⁶⁷ Carl Gavin, 'Few of the Sins of the Fathers: Whiteness and the Hero in Australian Popular History', p. 284.

⁶⁸ Carl Gavin, 'Few of the Sins of the Fathers: Whiteness and the Hero in Australian Popular History', p. 284.

⁶⁹ Carl Gavin, 'Few of the Sins of the Fathers: Whiteness and the Hero in Australian Popular History', p. 285.

⁷⁰ Murray Sayle, 'Where Convicts are Chic and the Past Looks Good', p. 47.

its showcasing of 'practise previously hidden behind closed doors, including prisoner abuse, torture and execution'.⁷¹ The Hyde Park Barracks has thus shaped its heritage in this fashion, appealing to this popular fascination with dark history and the macabre. Themes of violence and transgression give an idea of historical justice being done. A thematic display entitled 'Template of Cruelty' places transportation within a global context, drawing on examples across time and place to highlight similarities in a broader perspective.⁷² The visitor is drawn to associate and connect images of guards, prison garb, shackles, anonymous faces and bleak shores with desolation and exile around the world.⁷³ Launched by a spokesperson from Amnesty International, the exhibition suggests that transported criminals of the Hyde Park Barracks can be identified with modern political prisoners.⁷⁴ This transnational perspective reinforces a 'trope of victimology' in Australians' sense of past, through which convicts remain victims of a brutal system.⁷⁵ The visitor is thus positioned to reconsider the national past, to invest in a far more palatable heritage.

This presentation of convict history as dark history garnered much interest and criticism in the media, leading to a debate about the extent and nature of violence in the colony and whether the dark history created at the Hyde Park Barracks was

⁷¹ Michael Welch, 'Penal tourism and the 'dream of order': Exhibiting early penology in Argentina and Australia - Punishment and Society', p. 584.

⁷² Grace Karskens, 'Banished and Reclaimed: Examination of representations of Australia's convict heritage at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum, Sydney', p. 30.

⁷³ Grace Karskens, 'Banished and Reclaimed: Examination of representations of Australia's convict heritage at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum, Sydney', p. 30

⁷⁴ Grace Karskens, 'Banished and Reclaimed: Examination of representations of Australia's convict heritage at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum, Sydney', p. 33.

⁷⁵ Michelle Arrow, 'That History Should Never Have Been How It Was: The Colony, Outback House and Australian History' *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 31 no.7 (Spring, 2007), p. 56.

balanced or gratuitous.⁷⁶ Critics argued that the ‘abruptness’ of the ‘stomach churning’ displays constituted an overzealous manipulation of the past that corrupted history in the service of commercialism.⁷⁷ A stylistic photograph of a whipped and bleeding male back used in posters and brochures to promote the reopening of the museum in 1999 was heavily criticised and ultimately withdrawn.⁷⁸ Described in the extreme as ‘pornographic, erotic and sadomasochistic’ the image drew ire from the Royal Australian Historical Society amongst others as overly sensational.⁷⁹ Although floggings were certainly a reality at the site, the prominence and stylistic violence of the image seems to have overemphasised its significance. This debate demonstrates yet another layer of contestation and anxiety about the nature of Australia’s colonial past. The argument is not really about historical accuracy, rather, it concerns the way Australians want to remember their connection to Britain. In this way the Barracks has made a contribution to the hotly contested debates about Australia’s settlement and in this example could perhaps be seen to have overstated the violence of the British regime.

In appealing to these sensationalist expectations of dark tourists the managers of heritage at the Hyde Park Barracks have sought to shape its authenticity with cultural anxieties about the convict past in mind. Interrogation of these exhibits

⁷⁶ Geraldine O’Brien, ‘Flogging poster gets a bit of a backlash’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, (9 August, 1991), p. 13.

⁷⁷ Linda Young, ‘Exhibition Review’ *Australian Historical Studies* 25 no.99 (October 1992), p. 329.

⁷⁸ Geraldine O’Brien, ‘Flogging poster gets a bit of a backlash’, p. 13.

⁷⁹ Geraldine O’Brien, ‘Flogging poster gets a bit of a backlash’, p. 13.

demonstrates that heritage and its associated rendering of identity are situated in the expression and poetics of spacing.⁸⁰

Reading the growing influence of convict chic at the Hyde Park Barracks allows for an understanding of the influence of deconstructed readings of traditional white Australian history with the emergence of identity politics from the 1960s.⁸¹ The evolving dominance of convict history at the Hyde Park Barracks in this light can be seen as an attempt at redefinition of nationhood and national identity in a period of historical crisis.⁸² As Australia has come to consider its legacy and shape new ideas in the face of the disorientation of the modern age, it has looked to embrace a unifying palatable symbol of identity and national pride in the convict. In this way the plight of the convict has come to be thought of as intrinsically Australian. This relatively new national narrative can be seen to increasingly dominate the heritage stance of the Hyde Park Barracks, functioning as a repository of identity.⁸³

⁸⁰ David Crouch, 'The Perpetual Performance and Emergence of Heritage' in Emma Waterton et al., eds., *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), pp. 62.

⁸¹ Carl Gavin, 'Few of the Sins of the Fathers: Whiteness and the Hero in Australian Popular History', p. 280.

⁸² Carl Gavin, 'Few of the Sins of the Fathers: Whiteness and the Hero in Australian Popular History', p. 284.

⁸³ Carl Gavin, 'Few of the Sins of the Fathers: Whiteness and the Hero in Australian Popular History', p. 280.

Chapter Two: Authenticity and the debates on fabric, conservation and presentation at the Hyde Park Barracks

There have been various stances on the authenticity of the material fabric of the Hyde Park Barracks and the way in which it should be presented and experienced. These shifting ideas of authenticity suggest that ideas of heritage are inconstant and tied to fluid concepts of identity. Sociological theorists of cultural heritage have linked the quest for authenticity to a longing for identity.⁸⁴ The changing stances on authenticity held by the Hyde Park Barracks Museum over time have shifted in line with global shifts in the heritage industry; from 'a paradigm of aesthetics to a paradigm of representation (which deeply transforms the valuation as well as the valorisation of the heritage); from cure to prevention; from centralised decision making and funding to local support; from top-down to bottom-up; from the undervaluing of local distinctiveness to its vigorous affirmation'. As such, the development of the Hyde Park Barracks marks the move since the 1970s of conservation from 'being just about things, to being about people as well as things, and about the ways in which people use those things in the present as mnemonics of

⁸⁴ Deepak Chhabra, 'Positioning museums on an authenticity continuum' *Annals of Tourism Research* 35 no.2 (2008), p.428.

what they call their cultural memories and to construct visions of what they see as their collective identities'.⁸⁵

The way in which the Hyde Park barracks Museum and its curators have grappled with presenting varying perceptions of authenticity reflect the current culture and influence of ruling power relations, and through this, an evolving response to an 'identity dilemma' in the collective Australian consciousness.⁸⁶

Ultimately, the ideal of authenticity concerns the way in which and the degree to which the fabric and associated history of a site can be construed as credible or truthful.⁸⁷ As the theorist of heritage, Deepak Chhabra has argued, authenticity is in a state of constant flux.⁸⁸ In this chapter I will assess the evolving status of authenticity at the Hyde Park Barracks in order to reveal underlying issues about heritage and identity. The role of nostalgia in the development and practice of heritage principles will be examined in order to understand the broader professional context in which decisions about material authenticity were made and debated. Through this examination it will become evident that in instigating, contributing and responding to many of these debates the Hyde Park Barracks has been somewhat of a trailblazer in the development of the heritage industry in Sydney.

The approach to the fabric of the site and understanding of its significance in the 1980s will be compared with that of the 1990s until the present. A distinct change will be seen, as whilst the 1980s conservation stance focused on restoring the

⁸⁵ 'UNESCO and Heritage: Global Doctrine, Global Practise' in Helmut Anheier et al., eds., *Heritage Memory and Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 2011), p 51.

⁸⁶ Deepak Chhabra, 'Positioning Museums on an Authenticity Continuum', p .442.

⁸⁷ Knut Einar Larsen, *Nara Document on Authenticity* (Japan: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1-6 November 1994), p. xxii.

⁸⁸ Deepak Chhabra, 'Positioning Museums on an Authenticity Continuum', p. 442.

building to its first phase of occupation and with its primary focus on the site's convict history, since the 1990s there has been a distinct desire to preserve not just what had previously narrowly been dictated as the authoritative 'historical material' but also the 'wear and tear of time' as part of a buildings 'historic time line'.⁸⁹

Beyond this great shift, the demands of modern museum management, including provision of modern museum facilities and realities of commercial sustainability, pedagogical imperatives and visitor expectations will be seen to have given weight to changing interpretations of historical integrity and authenticity of the Barracks' long and complicated history. In an increasingly competitive tourism market the Hyde Park Barracks has made efforts to define the authenticity of the site in a way that is relevant to and reflective of the varying expectations of both local and international tourists as consumers of its heritage. In making these necessary compromises, also significant are the means by which the museum has attempted to engage visitors in authentic experiences of the site and subsequently build authentic senses of its past.

This study of the evolving interpretations of authenticity at the Hyde Park Barracks reveals that through selective presentation of narratives of the past and carefully considered shaping of 'authentic' experiences, museums play a role in the construction and consumption of personal and shared identities. They both reflect and influence the ways in which individuals and communities choose to remember the past, and play a key function in the process by which 'certain memories are used

⁸⁹ Starn, Randolph, 'Authenticity and Historic Preservation: Towards an authentic history' *History of the Human Sciences* 15 no.1 (2002), p. 11.

by groups to articulate a collective identity and how such identities are embedded in a sense of place'.⁹⁰

Nostalgia

Perspectives about the authentic significance of the Hyde Park Barracks have evolved significantly from 1975 to the present, alongside the growth of the new and rapidly flourishing heritage industry. The primary driving force underpinning these developments must be understood as a nostalgic response to the concerns of modernity and crises of modern identities. As the 'driving force of our times', nostalgia has had a substantial role in attitudes towards built heritage and its protection.⁹¹ The eminent authority on nostalgia and its relationship with authenticity, David Lowenthal has identified nostalgia as a type of 'sentimental longing' of the human condition, an attitude that has evolved alongside changing attitudes about heritage over time, and has been the major influence upon them.⁹² He argues that nostalgia has played a strong role in the formation of policies and attitudes about built heritage, its authentic representation and its protection.⁹³ Following from this he argues that from the 1970s nostalgia for a romanticised past drove the growth of the heritage industry and was characterised by 'millennial angst', fuelled by threats of resource exhaustion, ecological and cultural collapse, nuclear annihilation and global identity confusion.⁹⁴ The development of the Hyde

⁹⁰ Sheila Watson, 'History Museums, Community Identities and a Sense of Place' in Simon J. Knell et al. eds., *Museum Revolutions: How museums change and are changed* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 160.

⁹¹ Catherine M. Cameron, John B. Gatewood, 'Seeking Numinous Experiences in the Unremembered Past' *Ethnology* 42 no.1 (Winter, 2003), p. 58.

⁹² David Lowenthal, 'Nostalgic Dreams and Nightmares' *Change Over Time* 3 no.1 (Spring, 2003), p. 33.

⁹³ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 2.

⁹⁴ David Lowenthal, 'Nostalgic Dreams and Nightmares', p. 33.

Park Barracks Museum and its conservation stance has taken place across this period of intense development and debate about the practise of heritage conservation.⁹⁵

In Australia from the 1970s, increasing anxiety over the 'national hobby of demolition' instigated by the construction boom from the 1950s to the early 1970s, fostered a new obsession with historical preservation by professionals and in the public consciousness alike.⁹⁶ There was a sense of urgency to protect and preserve vestiges of the past in response to the perceived 'robbery' of heritage in previous decades.⁹⁷ A 'booming nostalgia craze' saw commentary about physical traces of the past and the role that they should play become an issue of populist significance.⁹⁸ The past, accessible through built heritage became recognised by industry and government as 'the foreign country with the healthiest tourist trade of all', and great efforts were taken to capitalise culturally and economically.⁹⁹ Sydney in this period was decried a 'cannibalising town'¹⁰⁰, controlled by 'rampaging modernists'¹⁰¹ by supporters of heritage, whilst they were simultaneously labelled 'the bunny-rug brigade' and 'heritage mafia' by politicians and developers who accused the growing heritage movement of 'cultural insecurity'.¹⁰² New South Wales governments dealt in this period with the competing demands of an increasingly heritage-conscious public attitude and the market-driven demands of developers and infrastructure.

⁹⁵ David Lowenthal, 'Patrons, Populists, Apologists: Crises in Museum Stewardship' in Lianne Gibson, John Pendlebury eds., *Valuing Historic Environments* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), pp. 29.

⁹⁶ D. N. Jeans, Peter Spearritt, *The Open Air Museum: The cultural landscape of New South Wales* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), p. ix.

⁹⁷ D. N. Jeans, Peter Spearritt, *The Open Air Museum: The cultural landscape of New South Wales*, p. ix.

⁹⁸ Catherine M. Cameron, John B. Gatewood, 'Seeking Numinous Experiences in the Unremembered Past', p. 56.

⁹⁹ David Lowenthal, 'Nostalgic Dreams and Nightmares', p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ David Marr, 'The Fall And Rise Of Sydney', *Sydney Morning Herald* (12 May 1999), p. 19

¹⁰¹ David Marr, 'The Fall And Rise Of Sydney', p. 19

¹⁰² Geraldine O'Brien, 'A Bunny Bites Back, But Sartor Misses The Point' *Sydney Morning Herald* (7 April 2001), p. 10.

Through the intensity of these debates and the publicity they garnered, historical buildings came to be seen as 'tangible relics of the past', as 'fetishized' forms of public memory, taking on a newfound importance in the cultural consciousness.¹⁰³ The idea of authenticity, an offspring concept of romanticism, held newfound importance in this growing cult of 'pastness'.¹⁰⁴ Nostalgic rendering of certain selected pasts came to dictate the relationship of surviving fabric of the past with its history in the public eye. In this way material culture, particularly built heritage sites and their contents became a vehicle through which a carefully conceived cultural heritage has been shaped and managed; a means through which the documented history of heritage sites could be employed, and, indeed manipulated to create a new role for sites as loci of identity creation and affirmation. The rapid increase in importance and popularity of colonial history, a phenomenon which will be discussed in further detail in later chapters, came about through deliberate fostering of nostalgic yearnings for contemporary national identities and came to weigh heavily upon government, industry and public attitudes towards heritage and conservation in this period.

The hotly contested significance of the debates about restoration of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music that dominated debates about heritage in 1998 reflects the passionately held views of stakeholders in heritage disputes over this period. Debate about the heritage significance of the site arose surrounding the planned

103 Jane Lydon, 'Driving by : Visiting Australian colonial monuments', *Journal of Social Archaeology* 5 (2005),p. 110.

¹⁰⁴ Knut Einar Larsen, *Nara Document on Authenticity*, p. 19.

refurbishment of the building and was principally concerned with the significance of the building as a site of colonial heritage in light of its 1820s architecture and archaeologically unearthed colonial road. It was argued on one side that the site should be reevaluated, not as a music school, which it had been since 1915, but primarily as a locus of colonial heritage and therefore, a site of national founding.¹⁰⁵ Opponents argued that the preoccupation with the early nineteenth century phase of the site was highly selective, and should be seen secondarily to the site's significance as a conservatorium with fabric from all phases of occupation; from 1915 to the 1960s additions deemed to be of value.¹⁰⁶ This valuation of changes to the building up to the 1960s additions came through an understanding of the unselfconscious lived history of the site during this period, with additions and alterations to the fabric based on functional needs of the site in its use as a conservatorium of music. Public protests and newspaper campaigns saw these issues conflated with nationalist sentiment and nostalgic rendering of a historic legacy, with the public becoming increasingly concerned with what was identified as 'our heritage'.¹⁰⁷ This particular case represents the competing notions of what constituted heritage in the context of these broader debates; a selectivity based on perceived taste, relevance and aesthetics grounded in nostalgic renderings of authenticity of fabric.

'Purists' versus 'Trendies'

¹⁰⁵ Diane Collins 'Critics Taking A Very Selective View Of History' *Sydney Morning Herald* (21 December 1998), p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ Diane Collins 'Critics Taking A Very Selective View Of History', p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ Diane Collins 'Critics Taking A Very Selective View Of History', p. 13.

It was in this context of debate about the significance and role of heritage buildings that the conservation of the Hyde Park Barracks and its transformation into a museum came about. Having been slated for demolition at various points since the 1930s, the State Government made the decision to keep and 'restore' the Hyde Park Barracks in 1975.¹⁰⁸ The structure that had been decried in the sixties as an 'eyesore'¹⁰⁹ came to be widely venerated as 'The Parthenon of Australia'.¹¹⁰ Central to the public debate about this process were competing notions of what constituted valuable heritage and by what means it should be preserved and managed. Claims of historical significance, relevance, aesthetics and taste competed for prominence.¹¹¹ At the height of public outcry the debate in the press was simplified into a 'purists' versus 'trendies' row about the significance of the building and what role it should play as a heritage site in the modern city of Sydney.¹¹² Although both camps supported the restoration of the façade of the building to its 'genuine Georgian elegance', the 'purists' took a position of 'where it was as it was', arguing that the interior should be faithfully restored in the same way to resemble its colonial phase of occupation, that 'the place itself is museum enough' and the addition of modern amenities and museum facilities was inherently damaging and wrong.¹¹³ In accordance with this line of argument the site would be preserved as a snapshot of a certain phase of its occupation, frozen in time in a highly nostalgic restoration of its

¹⁰⁸ Margaret Betteridge, *The Royal Mint and Hyde Park Barracks Museum Project. A Report prepared for inclusion in the Archaeological Report*, June 1981, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Alan Prowd, 'LOST HERITAGE' *Sydney Morning Herald*, (30 December 1991), p. 8.

¹¹⁰ Peter Emmett, 'Convictism: Hyde Park Barracks and the Antipodean Gulag' *Historic Environment*, 10 no. 2, (1993), pp. 26-30, p. 26.

¹¹¹ D. N. Jeans, Peter Spearritt, *The Open Air Museum: The cultural landscape of New South Wales*, p. ix.

¹¹² Lance Norman, 'Purists versus Trendies in Sydney's Barracks Row' *Financial Review* (Wednesday, 9 July 1980), p. 36-37.

¹¹³ Lance Norman, 'Purists versus Trendies in Sydney's Barracks Row', p. 36.

colonial use. The 'trendies' conversely argued that the building should hold a modern day purpose relevant to the lives of contemporary Sydneysiders, that it should be used as a 'hub' that reflected the broader social history of Sydney in a state of the art modern museum complete with modern amenities.¹¹⁴ The initial renovations carried out from 1975 by the Public Works Department appeased the sentiments of the highly nostalgic purist camp, stripping away additions that post-dated the convict use of the site. However, the 1980 announcement that the Hyde Park Barracks would be converted into a museum of New South Wales history under the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences reflected the contemporary developments of the heritage industry, taking in the perspectives of the 'trendy' camp into a new understanding of heritage significance underpinned by a requirement of community relevance.

An evolving concept of Authenticity

Beyond these very public debates, an understanding of the formation and evolution of national and global authorities of heritage preservation and management is crucial in appreciating the changing attitudes towards an authentic representation of its past. Authenticity arose as a concept in the meeting of the Second Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings at Venice in 1964, commonly known as the Venice Charter. The charter set out good architectural conservation practice and principles and became the 'canonical text of a modern heritage boom'¹¹⁵, stating that the aim of restoration is 'to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic

¹¹⁴ Lance Norman, 'Purists versus Trendies in Sydney's Barracks Row', p. 36.

¹¹⁵ Randolph Starn, 'Authenticity and Historic Preservation: Towards an authentic history', p. 3.

documents'.¹¹⁶ In practice the ambiguity of the concept of authenticity and its dependence on the socio-cultural context of individual sites came to be debated at length within the industry, culminating in the revision of these guidelines in the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity where questions were raised as to the 'degree of universality notions of authenticity and integrity... could realistically attain'.¹¹⁷ In Australia, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) established guidelines of conservation philosophy and practice in the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance, known as the Burra Charter in 1979.¹¹⁸ Revised throughout the eighties and nineties the Burra Charter's enduring tenet is 'the idea that what is significant about the site or precinct is retained and preserved'.¹¹⁹ These national and international guidelines have had great impact upon the way the history of the Barracks as a significant site has been interpreted and presented.

The fabric of the site has been treated differently in two contrasting interpretations throughout its institutional history. The museum's first incarnation under the authority of the Powerhouse Museum, then known as the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in the 1980s, emphasised the first phase of the buildings use as a convict barracks, whilst the approach taken under the authority of the Historic Houses Trust from the 1990s onwards has undertaken a broader interpretation of the site's significance to include material up until 1975. These two stances on the

¹¹⁶Article 9' *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (1964), <<http://www.international.icomos.org/publications/hommedecin.pdf>> accessed June 1, 2013.

¹¹⁷ Yudhishthir Raj Isar, 'UNESCO and Heritage: Global Doctrine, Global Practise', in Helmut Anheier et al., eds., *Heritage Memory and Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 2011), p. 50.

¹¹⁸ Martin Davies, 'Cultural Tourism, History, and Historic Precincts' in Michael Hall et al., eds., *Heritage Management in Australia and New Zealand: Visitor Management, Interpretation and Marketing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 191.

¹¹⁹ Martin Davies, 'Cultural Tourism, History, and Historic Precincts', p. 192.

material authenticity of the Hyde Park Barracks reflect not just the changing tenets of conservation practice over this period, but also a shift in cultural memory in the greater Australian consciousness as a new, modern national identity was shaped and articulated.

The approach taken by the Powerhouse Museum then known as the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences saw the site's prime significance as 'the oldest and most handsome public structures in New South Wales'.¹²⁰ It had been listed with the National Trust under the reasoning that:

This important colonial building is regarded as probably Francis Greenway's finest work. It is beautifully detailed and proportioned and is a fine example of civic design as it was conceived by Greenway and Governor Macquarie to be a key element in a grand town plan of important public buildings. It still forms a vital component in the College, Macquarie and Queen's Square Precincts containing many fine 19th century buildings.¹²¹

This focus on the architectural design and aesthetic value of the site and its connection with the British colonial system of convict transportation dominated promotion of the site throughout the 1980s. The aesthetic of the site as one of few remaining British monumental-scale buildings pervaded discussion about the significance of the building and was presented as the drawcard in promotional material throughout the 1980s. The building was venerated as 'the Parthenon of

¹²⁰ *Annual Report 1981*, (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 1981), p. 10.

¹²¹ *Hyde Park Barracks – former convict barracks and former district courts, National Trust of Australia (NSW) Listing proposal NTN.05*, (September 1978).

Australia¹²², and described in promotional material as ‘the elegant Barrack’.¹²³ This framing of the site as ‘a masterpiece of Georgian architecture with an important surviving colonial interior which displays many examples of traditional colonial building technology’¹²⁴ constructed a highly selective and nostalgic valuation of the site as a legacy of British authority. The frequent connection with ‘Governor Macquarie’s Sydney’ packaged up a grand, monumental, British understanding of heritage, reflecting contemporary attitudes of aesthetics, monumentality and authenticity.¹²⁵ In this way conceptions of national identity and its British links were actively promoted through a distinct colonial rendering of authenticity. When the restored site was opened in 1984 it was described as an ‘elegant and secluded setting’ that provided a ‘pleasant retreat from the bustle of Sydney’.¹²⁶ This approach of constructing a grand, distant past that contrasts starkly with the perceived negative aspects of the present served the nationalist aims of Australia in the lead up to the 1988 Bicentenary celebrations. The historian, Peter Spearritt has revealed the contentious nature of the years leading up to, and during the celebration of Australia’s colonial beginnings, Australians came to question who they were and how they saw their past.¹²⁷ Growing anxieties about the nature of Australia’s settlement by the British saw growing contestation of the nationalist celebration from groups such as those who supported Aboriginal Land Rights

¹²² Margaret Betteridge, *The Royal Mint and Hyde Park Barracks Museum Project. A Report prepared for inclusion in the Archaeological Report*, p. 1.

¹²³ Margaret Betteridge, ‘The New Elegant Barrack’ *Heritage Conservation News* 3 no.1 (Autumn 1984), p. 10.

¹²⁴ *Annual Report 1984* (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 1984), p. 7.

¹²⁵ Pamphlet: *Macquarie’s Sydney* (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 1988).

¹²⁶ *Annual Report 1984*, p. 7.

¹²⁷ Peter Spearritt, ‘Celebration of a nation: The triumph of spectacle’ *Australian Historical Studies*, 23 no.91 (1988), p.3.

recognition and those who began to increasingly push for Republicanism.¹²⁸ This growing discomfort and shame of the past greatly threatened the success of Bicentenary celebrations and prompted a nationalist impulse. In the face of this questioning of the British origins of Australia heritage makers sought to foster positive, celebratory memories of the past through the reinvigoration and promotion of colonial vestiges of the past such as the Hyde Park Barracks. From this type of approach it is clear that the most distant, grandest, most foreign past, as compared with the discomfort and growing shame felt contemporary cultural environment, was considered most 'historical', the most desirable legacy of the nation. This is fitting with the argument given by theorists of tourism studies, Deepak Chabra, Robert Healy and Erin Sills, that 'perceived authenticity' can often be equated with popular 'nostalgia for a real or imagined past', a past that is imagined and desired to be a relatively simpler, symbolic foundation of identity.¹²⁹ A colonial heritage was in this way constructed to serve the contemporary demands of nationalist identity politics.

In line with this focus on the colonial phase of the buildings occupation, the 1975 approach to the restoration of the Hyde Park Barracks by the Department of Public Works in preparation for its conversion into a museum focused almost exclusively on the fabric of this first building phase. The architecture of the building was heralded as the 'prime exhibit'¹³⁰ whilst the latter phases of occupation were cursorily acknowledged but not celebrated.¹³¹ From the original refurbishment by the Building,

¹²⁸ Peter Spearritt, 'Celebration of a nation: The triumph of spectacle', p. 4.

¹²⁹ Deepak Chabra, Robert Healy, Erin Sills, 'Staged Authenticity and Heritage Tourism' *Annals of Tourism Research* 30 no.3 (2003), p. 705.

¹³⁰ Margaret Betteridge, *The Royal Mint and Hyde Park Barracks Museum Project. A Report prepared for inclusion in the Archaeological Report*, p. 12.

¹³¹ Pamphlet: *The Hyde Park Barracks. Reception for the Patrons of the Powerhouse* (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, October 30, 1983).

Construction and Maintenance branch of the Public Works Department, through to the works undertaken by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, the attitude ruled that only the 'original' buildings and fittings were worth saving and of ultimate significance. This nostalgic transformation of the building was undertaken in a process through which 'old techniques and materials' were revived to enable a 'thorough and authentic restoration'.¹³² Through extensive refurbishment and renovation these works sought to return the site as close as possible to its original design, circa 1820. Additions that post-dated the Greenway design such as exterior courtyard partitions, the entry veranda and a series of buildings mainly on the eastern and southern sides of the compound that had been erected between the 1880s and 1943 were removed.¹³³ The interior of the main building was more or less gutted, with partition walls, doorways, fireplaces, bathrooms, false ceilings and linings removed in order to recreate the convict period layout of the basic four rooms and hallways per floor.¹³⁴ Following the removal of the remaining structures and features that post-dated the convict-era use, a great deal of reconstruction was undertaken in attempt to 'recreate a sense of the original buildings and compound landscapes'.¹³⁵ The southern perimeter wall and south western corner wall were rebuilt on the alignment of the former walls according to the original plan. This had been a contentious addition, with the final agreement between architects and heritage consultants that the perimeter walls were not only 'part of Greenway's

¹³² *Annual Report 1982* (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 1982), p. 7.

¹³³ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management* (Historic Houses Trust NSW, September 1990), p. 26.

¹³⁴ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management*, p. 26.

¹³⁵ *Hyde Park Barracks Management Plan* (Historic Houses Trust NSW, 2010), p. 17.

vision' but also necessary for 'containing' and 'secluding' the site in order to recreate a more authentic 'sense of place' separate from the traffic and urban jungle of surrounding Sydney.¹³⁶ In accordance with the requirements of the Burra Charter, the surface of the sandstone used to reconstruct the walls was treated so as to subtly be distinguishable as modern additions 'in the spirit' of the original.¹³⁷ Brickwork and mortar pointing were patched, the shingle roof cladding was reinstalled, sills, windows and joinery were replaced with 'period' reproductions and interior floorboards and structural beams were artificially reinforced where possible and carefully replaced in situ.¹³⁸

The 1980-81 final recommendations by the archaeologists' report for subsequent conservation works show a shift in attitude, stating that:

A building as it stands at the time of its final vacation by occupants is an integral whole... It is therefore, a corollary that no one part of this building should have undue emphasis at the exclusion of others... This is an acknowledgement of the integral value of each component.¹³⁹

A new attitude was emerging that the practice of preservation of a static time period imposed a false concept of time and experience.¹⁴⁰ At this point however, this was inapplicable to the exterior as all architectural additions had been demolished.¹⁴¹ The

¹³⁶ *Interview with David Turner*, Former Architect for the Public Works Department, Carried out by Alexandra Boukouvalas, (Interview in author's possession), Tuesday, September 3rd, 2013.

¹³⁷ *Interview with David Turner*.

¹³⁸ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management*, p. 26.

¹³⁹ Wendy Thorpe, *The Hyde Park Barracks - Archaeologists Report* (The Historic Houses Trust NSW, 1980-81), p. 33.

¹⁴⁰ The Mint Project, The Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2009, p. 7.

¹⁴¹ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management*, p. 33.

great majority of interior alterations had also been removed and only fragmented remaining evidence could be conserved.¹⁴² Since much fabric that post-dated the early colonial period had been removed, the site now operated under the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences with a very limited ability to focus on any fabric post-dating the original Francis Greenway design.

Interestingly, community responses to the strict restoration of the site to its early colonial character were varied. Some local visitors were critical of the selective approach, drawing on living memory of the sites use up to 1979 in their assessments of its authenticity. This can be seen in the remarks made by an elderly male visitor upon the museums official opening in 1984.¹⁴³ As he walked into a second floor room and took in the whitewashed walls, exposed structural beams, newly uncovered 19th century floorboards that recreated the 19th century barracks he lamented to the group, 'Until this restoration this was a very important court room', reflecting on a landmark trade union case that he had attended and arguing that 'the history had been ripped out' in favour of convict history.¹⁴⁴ Through these remarks made to other visitors in a guided tour, the man assessed the site from his own experiences grounded in lived history of the 20th century use of the building as law courts. Examples such as this demonstrate that a broader interpretation of the fabric of the Barracks was needed in order to fully encompass the history of the site, and that through engaging the community with a past in living memory a site can achieve greater relevance. In this way, the distant, nostalgic colonial past is shown to be at

¹⁴² *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management*, p. 33.

¹⁴³ Quoted in *Interview with David Turner*.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in *Interview with David Turner*.

odds with some visitor perceptions of authenticity. This is evidence that a more inclusive approach was required in order to fully appreciate the complexity of experiences and community perspectives of the Barracks.

When the site was transferred to the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales in 1990 a broader approach to the fabric of the Hyde Park Barracks was taken. In presenting its approach as a clear break from that of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences it was articulated that:

The Trust brings a different philosophy to the HPB based on a more critical focus on the place itself, its social uses and related historical themes. The philosophy and methodology of heritage conservation has been the focus of constant debate in the past decade, especially since the Burra Charter has been applied to specific conservation projects... Indeed the HHT has revised its conservation approach on several properties in the light of changing professional and public opinion. This is part of the very process of conservation of places and debate about its methodology and practise.¹⁴⁵

The 1990 Museum Plan states that, 'The unconscious lived history of the Hyde Park Barracks stopped in 1975', and that, as such, 'preoccupation with Greenway's design and Georgian style'... 'is only one aspect of the experience of all who confronted it'.¹⁴⁶ Critical of the 1980s restoration process, the plan concluded that it, 'says more about architectural detailing by various government architects than about personal

¹⁴⁵ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁶ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management*, p. 35.

marks of occupants on the place'.¹⁴⁷ The Historic Houses Trust viewed the 'layering of social use' from the Barracks original construction, through to the conclusion of its use as District Courts as authentic fabric.¹⁴⁸

In this new valuation of the site the Trust was at the forefront of development of the concept of authenticity and stimulated much debate.¹⁴⁹ This approach of preserving the layers of social use was formalised in the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity, through which the term was broadened to include 'conservation of cultural heritage in all its forms and historical periods'.¹⁵⁰ In expanding the test of authenticity, the Nara Document allowed for valuation of sites such as the Hyde Park Barracks to 'encompass new aspects and a wider range of values'.¹⁵¹ The interpretation of the appropriate and significant fabric in the reincarnation of the Hyde Park Barracks Museum under the Trust in this way reflected changing attitudes towards representing a richer, more comprehensive history of heritage sites, moving beyond their simply earliest or aesthetically grandest manifestations.¹⁵²

From extensive analysis of the remaining fabric of the now much depleted structure, the 1990s 'stewardship approach' to the site determined that whilst the primary significance lay in the site's use as a convict barracks and female immigration depot and asylum, all periods of occupation would be respected as part of its story.¹⁵³ This

¹⁴⁷ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management*, p. 34.

¹⁴⁸ *Hyde Park Barracks Museum Plan: Incorporating analysis and guidelines on conservation, interpretation and management*, 1990, p. 34.

¹⁴⁹ Geraldine O'Brien, 'The Barracks' Walls are Starting to Talk' *Sydney Morning Herald* (24 July 1990), p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ Knut Einar Larsen, *Nara Document on Authenticity*, p. xxii.

¹⁵¹ Nora J. Mitchell, 'Evaluating authenticity of Cultural Landscapes' in Knut Einar Larsen ed., *Nara Document on Authenticity*, (Japan: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1-6 November 1994), p. 380.

¹⁵² Martin Davies, 'Cultural Tourism, History, and Historic Precincts', p. 194.

¹⁵³ *Hyde Park Barracks Management Plan* (Historic Houses Trust NSW, 2010), p. 38.

valuation of the sites 'historic time line' saw the exterior maintained, the first floor interiors adapted into an exhibition space with stark white walls, the second floor painted to resemble the buildings during its life as a court of law and the third floor as a reconstruction of the convict dormitories.¹⁵⁴ Throughout levels 1 and 2 the Trust's policy of 'letting the walls speak' was fulfilled through the open display of paint scrapings, lifted floorboards to reveal archaeological discoveries, exposed beams and a ghostly unattached handrail.¹⁵⁵ The different layers of fabric were intended to be experienced together as if 'peeling it back, like an orange'.¹⁵⁶

The evolution of these two interpretations of material authenticity at the Hyde Park Barracks has been caricatured as 'rampant reconstruction' and 'epicurean empiricism'; a 'fantasy' of high taste and culture compared with 'warts and all fragmentation'.¹⁵⁷ The change over time is indicative of a changing concept of heritage and national identity, through which heritage as 'homage to (British) architecture, monuments to the acquisition of (British) taste, cairns to mark the completion of the (British) imperial plan and the transportation of (British) civilisation' has been reassessed.¹⁵⁸ Over this period of time this British legacy has been challenged and broadened as the Australian public have come to embrace the experiences of diverse people as being significant to their collective heritage and identity. Whilst the 1980s conservation stance focused on restoring the building to its first phase of occupation with the primary focus on the site's convict history, the 1990s saw changing ideas of heritage conservation, with a new idea that all fabric

¹⁵⁴ *Hyde Park Barracks Management Plan* (Historic Houses Trust NSW, 2010), 2010, p. 17.

¹⁵⁵ 'Closure Threats Go', *Sydney Morning Herald*, (August 11, 1989), p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ 'Closure Threats Go', *Sydney Morning Herald*, (August 11, 1989), p. 8.

¹⁵⁷ Peter Emmett, 'Convictism: Hyde Park Barracks and the Antipodean Gulag', p. 28.

¹⁵⁸ Peter Emmett, 'Convictism: Hyde Park Barracks and the Antipodean Gulag', p. 29.

remaining for the latter history of the building to be considered in the overall authentic interpretation of the Barracks and its history. Since the 1990s there has been a distinct desire to preserve not just what had previously narrowly been dictated as the authoritative 'historical material' but also the 'wear and tear of time' as part of a buildings 'historic time line'.¹⁵⁹

Tourism and Authenticity

These changes in conservation practise have also been matched by a period of new economic pragmatism.¹⁶⁰ During the 1990s neoliberal impulses of economic fundamentalism, neo-assimilationist social agendas, privatisation of infrastructure and of risk and nostalgic politics came to increasingly weigh in on cultural institutions.¹⁶¹ In an increasingly competitive tourism market the Hyde Park Barracks has made efforts to define the authenticity of the site in a way that is relevant to and reflective of the varying expectations of both local and international tourists as consumers of its heritage whilst maintaining its integrity. The diversity of expectations of tourist 'consumers of heritage', together with the need to forge a unique niche within the competitive cultural tourism market of course has the potential to subvert a true rendering of the authentic past. The commercialisation of heritage sites, notably the Rocks has been lamented by critics as 'Disneyfication' since the 1980s.¹⁶² It was in this spirit that the imaginatively reconstructed dining area of the current 'Convict Sydney' exhibition aimed at educating schoolchildren has

¹⁵⁹ Randolph Starn, 'Authenticity and Historic Preservation: Towards an authentic history', p. 11.

¹⁶⁰ Martin Davies, 'Cultural Tourism, History, and Historic Precincts', p. 192.

¹⁶¹ Cathy Greenfield, Peter Williams, 'Limiting Politics: Howardism, Media Rhetoric and National Cultural Commemorations' *Australian Journal of Political Science* 38 no.2 (2003), p. 297.

¹⁶² Graham Brown, 'Marketing a Sense of Place' in Michael Hall, Simon McArthur, eds., *Heritage Management in Australia and New Zealand: Visitor Management, Interpretation and Marketing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 133.

been deplored as ‘pure fantasy’.¹⁶³ Having covered the simplicity of the originally whitewashed walls with a colourful mural depicting a vibrant convict scene and captions of convict poetry and songs, the display is shaped by the imperative of stimulating the imaginations of schoolchildren rather than strictly reconstructing the site to its historical character.¹⁶⁴ However, whilst the Hyde Park Barracks Museums have employed strategic management and marketing techniques, the adoption of these principles has not been to the detriment of the sites overall authentic experience. The curators have maintained the accountability of the social institution by balancing the desire to educate and the need to entertain, fulfilling the requirements argued by Diane Barthel that, ‘a truly successful approach to authenticity is inevitably brought about by elements of compromise’.¹⁶⁵

Experience, Reality and Authenticity.

The means by which the museum has attempted to engage visitors in authentic experiences of the site have aimed to open a dialogue between the fabric of the site and the consumer through which multiple authentic senses of its past are evoked. In consideration of the argument by sociological theorists Elizabeth Carnegie and Scott McCabe , that ‘objects have no meaning in isolation from human activity’, it is clear that through experiential techniques of presentation, visitors are directed and encouraged to engage with the site on a level that transforms the hard ‘fact’ of the physical fabric into a ‘living’ heritage that feels real and is thus accepted as

¹⁶³ *Interview with David Turner.*

¹⁶⁴ *Site Inspection of The Hyde Park Barracks, Carried out by Alexandra Boukouvalas, Saturday, June 1st, 2013.*

¹⁶⁵ Diane Barthel, *Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historical Identity*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), p. ix.

authoritative.¹⁶⁶ The experiential design of the Hyde Park Barracks has utilised the layout, lighting, audio and visual apparatus and performative tools of re-enactment differently over the course of its life as a museum in order to achieve this spatial sense of 'reality'.

Upon the Museums initial opening in 1884 the entire third floor was used as a reconstruction of the convict dormitories.¹⁶⁷ The exposed roof beams and simple limewashed walls the identical rows of empty hammocks, the absence of artificial lighting and the concealment of modern fixtures and amenities created a type of theatre that enabled the fabric to 'touch' the public and to engage them in an affective experience through which they would be educated and inspired.¹⁶⁸ The stark Spartan uniformity of the arrangement, as well as the views and vistas that visitors could behold whilst laying in a hammock or gazing through a window were designed to enable individual visitors, with their own understandings, beliefs and conceptions of identity to gain deeper insights, even empathy, and connection into the past in their own authentic ways.¹⁶⁹ Through these experiential techniques of conveying history a dichotomy occurs because the distinction between the real and unreal is suspended and the individual is simultaneously educated whilst their expectations are appeased.¹⁷⁰ This 'living window' into the past, however, only

¹⁶⁶ Elizabeth Carnegie, Scott McCabe, 'Re-enactment Events and Tourism: Meaning, Authenticity and Identity' *Current Issues in Tourism* 11 no.4 (2008), p. 357.

¹⁶⁷ Postcard: *The Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney*: Photo of reconstructed 'Hammock Room' showing the convicts' Spartan accommodation.

¹⁶⁸ Kate Gregory and Andrea Witcomb, 'Beyond Nostalgia: The role of affect in generating historical understanding at heritage sites' in Simon J. Knell et al., eds., *Museum Revolutions: How museums change and are changed* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 266.

¹⁶⁹ Catherine M. Cameron, John B. Gatewood, 'Seeking Numinous Experiences in the Unremembered Past', p. 68.

¹⁷⁰ Stuart Hannabuss, 'How real is our past? Authenticity in Heritage Interpretation' in J.D. Fladmark ed., *Heritage and Museums: Shaping National Identity* (Aberdeen: Donhead Publishing, 2000), p. 352.

allows the audience distanced ‘glimpse’, in its narrowness, creating a romantic, nostalgic vision of the past.¹⁷¹

The 1990 Museum plan acknowledges that at heritage sites there is a ‘gap’ between the surviving fabric and the truth of the lived culture of the past and outlines its approach through which this gap will be left to the imagination of the visitor. Thus the visitor as ‘witness to present traces of the past’ is given the power to ‘reconstruct the lived experience of those who dwelt in that place in another time’.¹⁷² This is achieved not through a simplistic, populist interpretation of ‘the props and paraphernalia of a designer’s dream’ but through ‘the evocative display’ of the sources themselves through which visitors are invited to sensually and imaginatively build their own authentic impressions of the past.¹⁷³ The experiential design of the Hyde Park Barracks since then has utilised the layout, lighting, audio and visual apparatus and performative tools of re-enactment differently over the course of its life as a museum in order to achieve this spatial sense of ‘reality’.

Whilst part of the third floor space has been maintained in the 1980s approach of reconstructed convict dormitory, the other part of the floor has since been cleared of all hammocks and is presented as a vast, empty open space. The existing fabric is laid bare, save for a number of life-sized silhouettes of human figures with convict records printed upon them.¹⁷⁴ Beyond the 1980s approach of inviting the visitor to inhabit a ready-made narrative, and to make it their own, this new approach creates

¹⁷¹ Kate Gregory and Andrea Witcomb, ‘Beyond Nostalgia: The role of affect in generating historical understanding at heritage sites’ in *Museum Revolutions: How museums change and are changed* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 274.

¹⁷² Hyde Park Barracks Management Plan, 2010, p. 41.

¹⁷³ Hyde Park Barracks Management Plan, 2010, p. 41.

¹⁷⁴ Site Inspection carried out by Alexandra Boukouvalas, June 1st, 2013.

‘an affective response of alienation and disorientation’ which requires them to produce their own interpretative narratives as a means to fill the ‘gaps’.¹⁷⁵ Such an approach is fitting with Stuart Hannabuss’ definition of successful and authentic interpretation of heritage is ‘able to transcend the artificiality of the tourist now, and tap into deeper sentimental and spiritual roots.’¹⁷⁶ This detached distancing is a means by which the Hyde Park Barracks has been able to balance the expectations of visitors and imperatives to entertain with their requirement to not just serve as, but also be perceived as ‘reliable vehicles’ of public illumination about the past.¹⁷⁷

Together, the evolving ideas of the authentic fabric of the site and the ways in which it should be interpreted and received demonstrate the way in which ‘people use those things in the present as mnemonics of what they call their cultural memories and to construct visions of what they see as their collective identities’.¹⁷⁸ As the dominant national identity has come to be challenged by the agency of new, previously unheard voices, changing ideals of authenticity reflect the emergence of a broader social memory of Australia’s past and a changing conception of Australian heritage in line with the formation of new modern identities. As the criteria by which authenticity is judged has changed over time compromise between viewpoints has been inevitable and it is inherently clear that authenticity is always in a state of flux.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Kate Gregory and Andrea Witcomb, ‘Beyond Nostalgia: The role of affect in generating historical understanding at heritage sites’, p. 269.

¹⁷⁶ Stuart Hannabuss, ‘How real is our past? Authenticity in Heritage’, p.. 354.

¹⁷⁷ David Lowenthal, ‘Patrons, Populists, Apologists: Crises in Museum’, p. 30.

¹⁷⁸ Yudhishthir Raj Isar, ‘UNESCO and Heritage: Global Doctrine, Global, p. 51.

¹⁷⁹ David Lowenthal, ‘Managing the Flux of Authenticity’, *Nara Conference on Authenticity*, (Japan: UNESCO World Heritage Center 1994), p. 369.

Chapter Three: Conceptualising Historical Space

As Steve Watson and Emma Waterton argue, 'Sites are never simply locations. Rather they are sites for someone and of something'.¹⁸⁰ Conclusions drawn about the changing relationship of history and heritage at the Hyde Park Barracks and its implications must be grounded in an understanding of what it is that constitutes this site. That is to say, what is at the essence, the underlying meaning of the place beyond the stated cultural significance. Such an understanding challenges us to question the very nature of that very broad, empty term, 'site'.

Space has been described as 'relational, dynamic, contingent' in character, something that is constantly 'in the making'.¹⁸¹ As such, the space of the Hyde Park Barracks must be understood to have been conceptualised in different ways from different perspectives over time. We must look beyond this very neutral rendering of the space simply as a 'site' to understand the meaning and evocation that substantiates it. In this chapter I will be exploring the spatial history of the Hyde Park Barracks through two concepts of space; first as a public sphere, a 'civic laboratory' of public engagement and interaction with the past as part of a public discourse, as a place of public 'performance' through which visitors are seen to be active

¹⁸⁰ Steve Watson, Emma Waterton, *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), p. 11.

¹⁸¹ David Crouch, 'The Perpetual Performance and Emergence of Heritage' in Emma Waterton et al., eds., *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), p. 61.

participants in the shaping of the past.¹⁸² Secondly, I will examine the site as a landscape of heritage operating within the broader urban and cultural environment of Sydney, taking in to account the way that the visitors use and manipulates this space to fit with the needs of an ever changing modern urban community.

Public Sphere

One such way of theorising this site is as a space of the public sphere. A theoriser of museum studies, Jennifer Barrett has conceptualised museums as spaces of the public sphere.¹⁸³ The term 'public sphere' was articulated by the cultural theorist, Jurgen Habermas, described as a 'realm of social life' through which 'citizens behave as a public body' through the free and collective formation and expression of public ideas and opinion.¹⁸⁴ In the 21st century, the public sphere has become an intangible, quintessentially democratic 'institution' which assumes its form through participation of people in democratic discourse.¹⁸⁵ Jennifer Barrett has taken this abstract concept and applied it to the physical space of public museums. In noting that for Habermas the public sphere was seen to occur at a physical place, be it an eighteenth century coffee house, reading group or public square, Barrett argues that the public sphere is not only social but spatial.¹⁸⁶ Public museums are realms of the public sphere in their function as 'social sites or arenas where meanings are

¹⁸² Joanne Maddern, 'The Battle for Annie Moore: Sculpting an Irish American Identity at Ellis Island National Monument' in Niamh Moore et al., eds., *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), p. 52.

¹⁸³ Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ Jurgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere' *New German Critique* 3 (Autumn 1974), p. 49.

¹⁸⁵ Jurgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere', p. 49.

¹⁸⁶ Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, p. 40.

articulated, distributed, and negotiated, as well as the collective body constituted by and through this process'.¹⁸⁷

Museums are then places in which there is a 'performance' of the public sphere, places of public culture, intellectual development and places for facilitating debate.¹⁸⁸ 'Performance' in this sense refers not just to performative techniques of museum education such as re-enactments, but also 'performances' of ideas about heritage and identity through visitors' active interaction with exhibits. In line with this we must explore how the Hyde Park Barracks as a public museum operates as a place of 'performance' of the public sphere, as a public space for the discussion, development and dissemination of ideas.

These are places at which individuals and groups are able to not just be educated about the past from above, but also actively participate in a dialogue about the past, with the opportunity to articulate and project their individual and collective conceptions of heritage and identity through the act of visiting the museum. Through this conceptualisation of the space as 'public sphere', the Hyde Park Barracks is seen to be both dynamic and passive in its shaping of the past. It serves as an environment through which visitors can 'actively modify their relationship with culture, by enhancing their knowledge, piquing their curiosity, by honing their critical judgement'.¹⁸⁹ Through the provision of an opportunity to learn, assess and challenge the past in a free, accessible environment visitors experience the museum as an open forum of ideas and perspectives through which a public discourse is created.

¹⁸⁷ Jennifer Barrett. *Museums and the Public Sphere*, p. 41.

¹⁸⁸ Jennifer Barrett. *Museums and the Public Sphere*, p. 163.

¹⁸⁹ James Bradburne, 'The Poverty of Nations: Should Museums Create Identity?' in J. D. Fladmark ed., *Heritage and Museums: Shaping National Identity* (Aberdeen: Donhead Publishing, 2000), p. 387.

This role of the site as public sphere has become more overtly realised since the 1990s with the influence of postmodernism and cultural pluralism shaping a new concept of the 'post-museum' that took on more overtly inclusive roles as dynamic 'contact zones' of cultural participation.¹⁹⁰ When our 'site' is conceptualised as a public sphere, museum initiatives such as the Hyde Park Barracks Domes Restoration Project carried out over 2010/2011 can also be identified as performances of the public discourse. The main aim of the project was to reconstruct the domed roofs of the two guardhouses, removed in the 1850s, that had been situated on either side of the central gateway.¹⁹¹ This project can be seen as not only a restoration project, but also an opportunity for public engagement with history and heritage issues. The inclusion of experiential attractions, interactive media and direct community consultation in this project facilitated a public sphere through which citizens could articulate, expand and challenge their ideas about the past.

The stated reason for the restoration of the Domes was their significance as an 'understated symbol of a period of time in which Australia was developing the beginnings of nationhood beyond its function as a penal colony'.¹⁹² It is interesting that the Domes were seen to be representative of nationalist sentiment and part of a celebratory cultural legacy of the nation's founding. This legacy is extremely questionable in light of the fact that the Domes are really an enduring symbol of the power and authority of this former Imperial penal institution, that they were designed as part of a physical barrier to control people and at the time of their

¹⁹⁰ Jennifer Barrett. *Museums and the Public Sphere*, p. 111.

¹⁹¹ Scottc, 'Welcome to the Blog for the Hyde Park Barracks Domes Restoration Project' *Hyde Park Barracks Domes Restoration Project*, Tuesday 6 November, 2010, < <http://blogs.hht.net.au/domes/?p=52>>, (Blog accessed 10 June, 2013).

¹⁹² Nicole Canham, 'What's in a Dome?' *Hyde Park Barracks Domes Restoration Project*, Monday 11 October, 2011, < <http://blogs.hht.net.au/domes/?p=581>>, (Blog accessed 10 June, 2013).

construction had no practical or symbolic function of nation building. In this way the Domes project participates in the process of redefining heritage to meet the demands of the modern age. The Barracks must then be seen as a kind of workshop in which ideas about the nation and shifting concepts of identity are shaped.

Alongside this top-down dissemination of knowledge, however, various forms of community engagement supported questioning and engagement with the past. Public talks were given by project architects and artisans about 19th century construction techniques, family events recreated 'period' drama, and visitors were able to physically climb the domes scaffolding to create their own unique experiences and speak to the builders to learn about construction during the reconstruction process.¹⁹³ This accessible and inviting public worksite in the Barracks courtyard enabled interaction between visitors, tradespeople, heritage experts and site staff that produced complex exchanges and negotiations about the nature of the Barracks' history and its heritage significance, a democratic performance of the public sphere.¹⁹⁴ The public were also involved in the project through a comprehensive blog that detailed the process and invited feedback on questions of heritage and conservation and were invited to contribute to the festivities of *Domes Day* in 2011 by decorating individual shingles that were built into one commemorative sculpture.¹⁹⁵ To coincide with this event in October, 2011, 140 people were interviewed about their opinions on the architecture of Sydney, the importance of heritage conservation and their reflection on the significance of the

¹⁹³ *Annual Review 2010/2011* (Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2011), p. 26.

¹⁹⁴ Jennifer Barrett. *Museums and the Public Sphere*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁵ Nicole Canham, 'Domes Disaster' *Hyde Park Barracks Domes Restoration Project*, Wednesday 19 October, 2013, <<http://blogs.hht.net.au/domes/?p=588#comment-654>>, (Blog accessed 10 June, 2013).

Domes project. The responses given in these interviews vary greatly: from the nostalgic, 'the more buildings that look like this and the less that look like the new Westfield the better': the jingoistic nationalist, 'It shows how lucky we are'; and the foreign, 'I'm surprised about the history and would be proud to maybe one day become a citizen'.¹⁹⁶ These insights, representative of rich and varied modern identities demonstrate the ability of the site as public sphere to function as a space in which, and to which visitors respond, and in engaging with it, articulate and develop ideas about the past alongside fellow citizens.

Through these inclusive platforms the Hyde Park Barracks has played the role of a public forum, a space where a multitude of voices are heard, explored and compared through a conscious supporting of questioning and exploration. Rather than simply imposing ideas of culture and heritage top-down in the traditional pedagogical process of knowledge production and consumption, the museum as public sphere encourages and draws upon the public discourse in its construction of the past.

Historical Landscapes

Conceptualising the space of the Hyde Park Barracks Museum can go beyond this understanding as a realm of the public sphere. Seeing the space as a historical landscape allows us to draw out richer understandings of the way in which the evolving history of the Barracks has been an inherently spatial and visual process. Changing perspectives and values of the past can be extrapolated through an understanding of the temporality and contested nature of landscape.¹⁹⁷ Architects,

¹⁹⁶ Nicole Canham, 'What's in a Dome?', <<http://blogs.hht.net.au/domes/?p=581>>.

¹⁹⁷ Barbara Bender, 'Stonehenge: Contested Landscapes' in Barbara Bender ed., *Landscape Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), p. 275.

geographers and archaeologists have theorised landscape differently over time in accordance with different approaches and methodologies, with an underlying assumption of as space as 'socially constructed and constitutive of social relations' rather than a 'passive backdrop of action'.¹⁹⁸ The authority on landscape, Barbara Bender has made the key observation that,

In the contemporary western world we 'perceive' landscapes, we are the point from which 'seeing' occurs. It is thus an ego-centred landscape, a perspectival landscape, a landscape of views and vistas.¹⁹⁹

Through an exploration of how the Hyde Park Barracks has been 'viewed' and 'perceived' we can reach an understanding of 'site' not simply as location, but as subjective space within a social and spatial context.²⁰⁰ Defined by vision, and interpreted by the mind, landscape is thus a cultural construct through which values are ascribed to land.²⁰¹ In following with Bender's conceptualisation, the changing stance on the significance and substance of the Barracks' history attitudes about its heritage can be seen as a result of the fact that 'the landscape is never inert, people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate and contest it'.²⁰² There is a temporality to this concept: the landscape is perpetually in a process of change and perceptions of it are shaped by ways of understanding unique to a certain time and place.

¹⁹⁸ Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough, *Envisioning Landscape: Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (California: Left Coast Press, 2007), p. 13.

¹⁹⁹ Barbara Bender, 'Introduction' in Barbara Bender ed., *Landscape Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), p. 1.

²⁰⁰ Barbara Bender, 'Introduction', p. 1.

²⁰¹ Ken Taylor, Jane L. Lennon, 'Introduction: Leaping the Fence' in Ken Taylor et al., eds., *Managing Cultural Landscapes* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

²⁰² Barbara Bender, 'Introduction' *Landscape Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), p. 3.

The term 'landscape' is used and defined in various different ways, each of which are useful in interrogating the Hyde Park Barracks as a heritage site. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the architectural landscape is underpinned by aesthetics and the politics of taste. Evocation of this landscape is seen as variously beautiful, grand, monumental, Georgian, colonial and central to 20th century nostalgia about the past. The term 'landscape' is most usually associated with landscape art. A form of representation that was established in fifteenth century Europe, landscape art, also known as perspective art, freezes time on canvas, representing the environment as it empirically appears to be, locating the viewer as outside the picture, outside the spatial relationship depicted.²⁰³ The geographer, Julian Thomas argues that landscape art presents the world from the gaze of the outsider, and so what is depicted takes on the passive role of object, 'represented, manipulated and alienated, denied any agency of its own'.²⁰⁴ Reflecting on this, it seems that the Hyde Park Barracks has been seen, particularly in the nostalgic conservation mania of the 1980s not just as an aesthetic vista, but also as a passive landscape that has had contemporary political and social meanings conferred upon it.

Seen as an aesthetic landscape, the Barracks is shown to have social and political meanings placed upon it through the emphatic promotion of it as one of the 'oldest and most handsome buildings in New South Wales'.²⁰⁵ Since the 1980s, the idea of 'beauty' has been a major, if not the most significant factor in the promotion of

²⁰³ Julian Thomas, 'The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape' in Barbara Bender ed., *Landscape Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), p. 21-22.

²⁰⁴ Julian Thomas, 'The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape', p. 22.

²⁰⁵ *Annual Report 1984* (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 1984), p4.

heritage at the Hyde Park Barracks.²⁰⁶ A distinct perspective of the aesthetic landscape of the Barracks, and connected nostalgic renderings of heritage have been institutionalised by promotional material throughout the life of the building as a public museum. In the vast majority of pamphlets, exhibition brochures, guidebooks, and postcards from the 1980s through to the present the eye is drawn to a bold image of the façade of the Barracks. Photographs of this image are taken from a low angle to emphasise the grand scale and imposing authority of the site, and hand drawn illustrations foster nostalgic, 'ye olde' understanding of place through the use of sepia and black and white tones. The monumental size and symmetry of these commonly reproduced images of grandeur are emphasised through the front-on perspective, and the subsequent first response of the viewer is a reproduction of one dominant meaning or vision of heritage. Thus, the Barracks, rendered as an enduring emblem of beauty and British Imperial 'taste' is shaped as an aesthetic landscape to promote positive perspectives of the colonial period. Emma Waterton, drawing on the landmark theory of sociologist, John Urry, that 'identity almost everywhere has to be produced partly out of the images constructed and reproduced for tourists', highlights the way in which brochures and promotional material of the tourism industry effectively package and symbolise, via a collection of set images, a particular understanding about heritage. At the Hyde Park Barracks this understanding of landscape has been underpinned by 'recurrent emphases on aesthetics, monumentality and authenticity'.²⁰⁷ In this way the past is 'branded' in the visual

²⁰⁶ David Marr, 'The Fall and Rise of Sydney' *Sydney Morning Herald* (12 May, 1999), p. 19.

²⁰⁷ Emma Waterton, 'Branding the Past: The Visual Imagery of England's Heritage' in Steve Watson et al., eds., *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), p. 158.

imagery of this aesthetic landscape of heritage in order to serve a particular political rendering of the past.²⁰⁸

The Barracks is also seen as a part of the greater landscape of Macquarie Street. This heritage landscape, framed as an 'historical precinct' comprises of a collection of colonial-era buildings such as Sydney Hospital, The Mint, St James' Church, and of course, the Hyde Park Barracks. The precinct was most heavily promoted leading up to the Bicentennial celebrations of 1988 as 'Australia's greatest thoroughfare' in which the 'architectural treasures' of 'Sydney's finest buildings and monuments' could be found.²⁰⁹ The placing of the Barracks within a broader landscape of heritage serves to reinforce the aforementioned imagery of nostalgic grandeur, seen as part of a 'historical precinct' the meaning of the place and its past is further defined as old and grand through the 'artificial divide' of the landscape of Macquarie Street from the rest of the modern urban environment, the old juxtaposed with the new.²¹⁰ In engaging with this landscape the community is able to define who they are and find meanings in the present through this process of comparison. The perceived uniqueness of the landscape and its identity-value is in this way established as relative to 'other'.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Emma Waterton, 'Branding the Past: The Visual Imagery of England's Heritage', p. 155.

²⁰⁹ Pamphlet: *Macquarie Street* (Public Works Department New South Wales), c. 1983.

²¹⁰ Martin Davies, 'Cultural Tourism, History, and Historic Precincts' in Michael Hall et al., eds., *Heritage Management in Australia and New Zealand: Visitor Management, Interpretation and Marketing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 194.

²¹¹ Yaniv Poria, 'The Story Behind the Picture: Preferences for the visual display at heritage sites' in Steve Watson et al., eds., *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), p. 226.

Viewed as part of the broader urban landscape of Sydney, the Hyde Park Barracks takes on significance as both a marker and facilitator of community and belonging. The use of this space as a venue for public events and spectacles situates it as part of a broad pattern of social interactions between the urban landscape of city and its inhabitants. In this sense, the Barracks as a landscape is viewed within larger contexts of community and identity; it has an urban function and meaning in contemporary Sydney.²¹² Charles Waldheim has noted the cultural potential of urban landscapes as ‘the medium through which the contemporary city might be apprehended and intervened upon’.²¹³ A vast and varied calendar of events that are not only educational, such as family fun days and school holiday events, but also cultural events unrelated to the heritage of the site have been hosted by the Hyde Park Barracks throughout its life as a public museum.

Non-heritage related events such as the *Festival of Sydney* and the *Vivid Light Festival* held at the Hyde Park Barracks provide an opportunity for visitors to socialise and participate in the cultural life of Sydney and in doing so, build new meanings and memories around the space. This can be seen quite literally at the annual *Vivid Light Festival* during which images are projected on to the façade of the Barracks in a light show, literally layering new, modern ideas upon the old. The use of the Hyde Park Barracks in these festivals, alongside a large program of events and spectacles at various other Sydney landmarks, highlights the Barracks’ significance as a feature of

²¹² Nora Mitchell, Robert Z. Melnick, ‘Shifting Paradigms: New directions in cultural landscape conservation for a twenty first century America’ in Ken Taylor et al., eds., *Managing Cultural Landscapes* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 242.

²¹³ Charles Waldheim, *The Landscape Urbanism Reader* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), p. 1.

the urban landscape. Through this, the Barracks plays a role in the experience of urban culture and must be understood as a place in which the modern city is expressed and lived out. It therefore functions as a space in which cultural repertoires or ways of being and acting come to give new meaning to the space within the contemporary community of Sydney.²¹⁴

Through use of the space to stage these popular cultural spectacles the landscape of the Barracks is part of a cultural relationship of the urban environment of Sydney and its people. It can then be seen as not just a place of heritage and conferred meanings about the past, but is also as a place where the community is created and reinforced through the coming together of people to celebrate, socialise and participate in cultural events. Use of the site in this way brings the space to life not just as a legacy of the past, but in made relevant to contemporary life. A new sense of value is added, shaping a modern landscape of heritage. This use of the space gives it new layers of meaning, building new collective experiences and memories of the urban landscape of Sydney and fosters community and belonging through a continuation of the timeline of use of the site. The landscape in this way integrates community aspirations and social interests within the politics of place and it plays a role in the building of the future cultural landscape.²¹⁵ In contributing to defining the shape of

²¹⁴ Donald Horne 'Broadening The Idea: Talking about culture without talking about 'culture'' *Overland* 174 (2004), p. 95.

²¹⁵ Nora Mitchell, Robert Z. Melnick, 'Shifting Paradigms: New directions in cultural landscape conservation for a twenty first century America' in Ken Taylor et al., eds., *Managing Cultural Landscapes* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 242.

the future, the landscape both shapes and is shaped by the urban identity of Sydney and its public.²¹⁶

The interrogation of the Hyde Park Barracks as a historical landscape reveals it beyond the perspective of the past in terms of aesthetics and conservative sensibilities, but as something political, dynamic and contested, something constantly open to renegotiation.²¹⁷ As communities evolve, so too does their use and construction of landscape. As a historical landscape, perspectives of the Barracks' past have been contested and negotiated over time in line with the changing requirements of rapidly developing modern identities. Barbara Bender's argument that landscape is comprised of a complex system of interactions rather than any consistent one way flow is helpful in understanding how a multitude of varied cultural and social perspectives have challenged established perspectives and shaped the changing construction of the Barracks.²¹⁸

Examining the Hyde Park Barracks as a historical landscape enables us to understanding the changing presentation of the site's history over time as part of the continuously contested and evolving nature of landscape. A great emphasis on the Barracks history as a Women's Immigration Depot between 1848 and 1886 came forth in the 1990s as a distinct change from the earlier dominance of the early, male convict history of the 1980s interpretation. This change was due in part to the rise in popular influence of social history and women's history, but is also due to the

²¹⁶ Alissa North, *Operative Landscapes: Building Communities through Public Space* (Munich: De Gruyter, 2013), p.11.

²¹⁷ Barbara Bender, 'Stonehenge: Contested Landscapes', p. 276.

²¹⁸ Barbara Bender, 'Stonehenge: Contested Landscapes', p. 276.

growing movement of commemoration of the Great Famine (1845-1852) both in Ireland and amongst the Irish diaspora.²¹⁹ What had only been cursorily presented in the 1980s has, over time, come to be a prominent feature of the museum's display with a vast exhibit devoted to the historical experience of these girls and women. Through these evocative displays diasporic identities have played a role in shaping the historical landscape. This is best seen in the installation of the Australian Monument to the Great Irish Famine into the southern perimeter wall of the Barracks in 1999.²²⁰ At the opening ceremony, Richard O'Brien, the Irish Ambassador said, it was an 'occasion for Ireland and Australia to share together a memory from our common heritage' but it was also 'a powerful contemporary image of humanity and indeed also, a challenging vision for the future'.²²¹ As such, the site has become an important landscape of Irish diasporic identity, hosting a calendar of events each year.²²² Beyond this, the story of triumph of the Irish in spite of great adversity has been mobilised as a parable of Australia.²²³

Nationalist identities of the past can become irrelevant in the face of mass migration and the globalisation of culture, just as new transcultural and transnational identities are formed.²²⁴ Museums have to accommodate the temporality of landscapes as they shift to fit changing demographics, seeking to include multiple audiences

²¹⁹ John Crowley, 'Constructing Famine Memory: The Role of Monuments' in Niamh Moore et al., eds., *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), p. 55.

²²⁰ Perry McIntyre, 'The Great Irish Famine Memorial at Hyde Park Barracks' *History* (December 1999), p. 2

²²¹ Geraldine O'Brien, 'Barracks stone marks the end of the longest voyage' *Sydney Morning Herald* (Mon 31 August 1998), p. 17.

²²² Perry McIntyre, 'The Great Irish Famine Memorial at Hyde Park Barracks', p. 2.

²²³ John Crowley, 'Constructing Famine Memory: The Role of Monuments', p. 64.

²²⁴ Joanne Maddern, 'The Battle for Annie Moore: Sculpting an Irish American Identity at Ellis Island National Monument', p. 52.

attached to very different, and sometimes conflicting definitions of heritage.²²⁵ The prime example of this is seen at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York, where the identity of the migrant has been shaped by an inclusive national heritage of change, movement, adaptation and process.²²⁶ As in Ellis Island, the biographies of Irish immigrant women have been mobilised by the Hyde Park Barracks in evocative displays of their clothes, belongings and letters to draw emotional attachment from visitors and symbolise the building of a new nation through hard work, self-sacrifice, bravery and noble suffering of individual immigrants.²²⁷ Whilst a nationalist identity based on ethnic and geographic ties has lost its relevance in contemporary multicultural Australia, the Hyde Park Barracks has played a role in creating a new, accessible modern national narrative of Australia as a land of new beginnings. These female immigrants have been held up as mothers of modern Australia, as nurturing symbols designed to unite and define the diverse migrant identities of the nation across time.

In this way the museum functions as a civic laboratory, creating new hybrid forms of geographical identity and history.²²⁸ Through the presentation of a history of migration as a founding moment in Australia's history there is a comforting implication for the diverse population of the present and in light of anxieties about migration in the future, that migration is a positive factor in the heritage and future

²²⁵ Julian Thomas, 'The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape' in Barbara Bender ed., *Landscape Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), p. 213.

²²⁶ Julian Thomas, 'The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape', p. 215.

²²⁷ Joanne Maddern, 'The Battle for Annie Moore: Sculpting an Irish American Identity at Ellis Island National Monument', p. 52.

²²⁸ Joanne Maddern, 'The Battle for Annie Moore: Sculpting an Irish American Identity at Ellis Island National Monument', p. 52.

of the nation.²²⁹ The site, in reflecting Modern Australian identity is thus shown to have been shaped by contemporary concerns and attitudes about migration.

From this consideration of the Hyde Park Barracks as both public sphere and landscape it is clear that sites are not simply locations, but 'sites for someone and of something'.²³⁰ This is fitting with Christopher Tilley's contention that identity is always palatial in character as places are generative of social norms and in this sense, places, like people, have agency.²³¹ Thus the Hyde Park Barracks must be seen to be 'intimately connected to history, the past, and hold out the promise of a desired future'.²³²

²²⁹ Julian Thomas, 'The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape', p. 214.

²³⁰ Steve Watson, Emma Waterton, *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past*, p. 11.

²³¹ Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction: Identity, Place, Heritage and Landscape' *Journal of Material Culture* 11 no.7 (2006), p. 21.

²³² Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction: Identity, Place, Heritage and Landscape', p. 21.

Conclusion

The relationship between identity and heritage must be understood to be built on a process of strategic construction, whereby presentation can involve selectivity and deliberate omission. Christopher Tilley notes that traditional identity is an invented concept, that identities are carefully constructed according to particular arbitrary criteria.²³³

It can be seen through this clear focus on Australia's colonial history that the construction of national identity has focused on a "fleeting moment" in the history of the nation, a point of stasis from which to look toward the future and can be imagined as a romantic, honourable time.²³⁴ This is fitting with Graeme Davison's perception of a generalised 'then' and 'now' history, through which a use of the past plays 'the good old days' against the difficulty of the present.²³⁵ In this way world heritage can use the past to govern the present just as it can assist the present to govern the past.²³⁶

As a result of this strategy and process of building national identity through world heritage, nostalgia for the past is generated in a process that John Urry highlights is felt most at a time of discontent, anxiety or disappointment.²³⁷ This can be clearly seen in the contestation and discontent that surrounded events such as the

²³³ Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage' *Journal of Material Culture* 11, no.7 (2006), p. 12.

²³⁴ Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage', p. 9.

²³⁵ Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin 2000), p. 166.

²³⁶ Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage', p. 9.

²³⁷ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Society* (SAGE Publications: London 1990), p. 109.

Bicentenary Celebrations and the heated History Wars of the 1990s and 2000s. As Australians came to see their established colonial heritage with unease and shame a movement for its reinvigoration with new meanings and feelings came to the fore. Disenchantment with today can therefore be seen to be used as an incentive to look nostalgically at yesterday, with public institutions such as the Hyde Park Barracks using heritage to construct a refuge in the past, building national identity rooted in a comforting history.²³⁸ In a world of growing universalisms this process, through its promotion of contrast brings forth desired ideas of exclusivism. In this way the relationship between national identity and heritage can be one of ideological strategy through which a static, stable moment in the past can be used to manipulate the present.

Nationalist identities of the past can become irrelevant in the face of mass migration and the globalisation of culture, just as new transcultural and transnational identities are formed.²³⁹ In this way the museum functions as a civic laboratory, creating new hybrid forms of geographical identity and history.²⁴⁰ Through analysis of this function it has become clear that heritage, which is generally seen to support contemporary notions of national identity, has the additional feature of reflecting new and often distinctly different, modern identities. Heritage has been shown at the Hyde Park Barracks to engage with traditional nationalist renderings of identity as well as responding to an urban, multicultural modern Australia. It is interesting that these differing identities intersect and contest one another at different points.

²³⁸ Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (Yale University Press: London 1997), p. 386.

²³⁹ Joanne Maddern, 'The Battle for Annie Moore: Sculpting an Irish American Identity at Ellis Island National Monument' in Niamh Moore et al., eds., *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), p. 52.

²⁴⁰ Joanne Maddern, 'The Battle for Annie Moore: Sculpting an Irish American Identity at Ellis Island National Monument', p. 52.

It is important to note that the relationship between national identity and heritage is problematic and can be subject to change over time. The consciousness of a nation grows and develops over time, and as their concepts of universal values change so too does their stake in world heritage. The rise of convict history at the Hyde Park Barracks is fitting within a broader acceptance in the past 20 years as colonial history has been transformed from a British traditional narrative to one of 'convict chic', increasingly embraced and enthusiastically attached to concepts of 'Australianness'.²⁴¹

As Urry notes, people are no longer only interested in seeing great works of art and artefacts from very distant historical periods, but are "increasingly attracted by representations of the 'ordinary'".²⁴² This ideological shift from a focus on the grand narratives of history to the value of social history of everyday people has impacted on Australia's concept of identity and subsequently informed its heritage stance.²⁴³ It is apparent that this shift is resultant of not just post colonialism and multiculturalism, but also of greater globalization and the opening up of the world by technology, creating through rapid change a need for redefinition of the self and, in turn, the nation.²⁴⁴ This demonstrates that identity is an 'unfinished game', an organic concept that detours and deviates along with the population.²⁴⁵ As such the relationship between history and its heritage can be understood to be underlined by the greater demands of national identity, in an ongoing process.

²⁴¹ 'Convict Ancestry: a neglected aspect of Australian Identity', *Nations and Nationalism* 9.4, (2003), 2003, pp. 573.

²⁴² John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Society*, p. 130.

²⁴³ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Society*, p. 130.

²⁴⁴ Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage', p. 8.

²⁴⁵ Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage', p. 8

It is clear that modern identities and heritage are inextricably linked. An assessment of the the management, promotion and popular conception of the Hyde Park Barracks and its history since the 1975 demonstrates the way in which developing ideas and debates dictate the way modern identities choose to shape history and are also impacted by it. Debates over the heritage of the site and its accuracy, as well as the changing role of the site as a public museum and World Heritage Site play out in the more recent growth and acceptability of a “Convict Chic”, as various Australian stake holders attempt to secure an authentic and popularly acclaimed heritage.

This reveals how modern identities are no longer ascribed but achieved, and the act of creating and promoting heritage status seems to function as a powerful tool in this process of asserting identity. Issues of authenticity, identity, and memory have shaped the representation of the site in the thirty years of its use as a Museum, tourism destination and heritage site.

More closely, the way in which the Barracks has engaged with its convict history through the display of convict fabric, exhibits on convict life and public programs reflects to a great extent the fluidity and flexibility of historic sites and the processes which shape their conceptualisation and representation.

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