

‘GREENWASHED: IDENTITY AND LANDSCAPE AT THE CALIFORNIA MISSIONS’

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Abstract: *This paper explores the relationship of place and identity in the historical and contemporary contexts of the California mission landscapes, conceiving of identity as a category of both analysis and practice (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). The missions include twenty-one sites founded along the California coast and central valley in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The missions are all currently open to the public and regularly visited as heritage sites, while many also serve as active Catholic parish churches. This paper offers a reading of the mission landscapes over time and traces the materiality of identity narratives inscribed in them, particularly in ‘mission gardens’ planted during the late 19th and first half of the 20th century. These contested places are both celebrated as sites of California’s origins and decried as spaces of oppression and even genocide for its indigenous peoples. Theorized as relational settings where identity is constituted through narrative and memory (Sommers 1994; Halbwachs 1992) and experienced as staged, performed heritage, the mission landscapes bind these contested identities into a coherent postcolonial experience of a shared past by creating a conceptual metaphor of ‘mission as garden’ that encompasses their disparities of emotional resonance and ideological meaning.*

Keywords: *California mission, garden, postcolonial, narrative, conceptual metaphor, sacred, secular, heritage, identity, cultural memory*

Introduction

Archaeologists tackling questions about the relationship of landscape and identity are challenged not only by the problematic nature of identity itself, but also by the complex web of human and institutional relationships inscribed in and embodied by place. These challenges are exacerbated in prehistoric settings with their paucity of contextual sources, but in contemporary heritage sites the task of seeking to understand constructed and negotiated identities is conversely almost overwhelmed by the vast amount of text, images, material culture, and ethnographic evidence, as well as the broader political discourses associated with the sites. Archaeology offers valuable insight into understanding identity at contemporary heritage sites, however, in the investigation of the materiality of place. Not only do archaeologists pay attention to the material patterning of sites, but also the discursive practices through which heritage sites are produced and consumed (Shackel 2001; Shackel and Gadsby 2011; Smith and Waterton 2009). They theorize this material patterning in ways that probe the deeper conceptual metaphors and narratives of sites, as well as the ideologies they reify (Meskell 2002a). This reading of the California mission landscapes investigates identity mediated through heritage sites by taking a semiotic approach to their narrative, staging, and performance. I argue that the mission landscapes bind contested identities into a coherent postcolonial experience of a shared past, despite the disparities of meaning and emotional resonance implicated in the missions’ colonial history.

Historical Background

The California missions are well-known sites and symbols of the state’s history. Constructed from 1769-

1823 along the California coast and inland valley from San Diego to Sonoma, the twenty-one missions were the primary vehicle of Spanish colonization of the western coast of North America. The mission system was overseen by the Franciscan Order with support from military presidios stationed strategically along the coast, and its purpose was the salvation through baptism of California’s indigenous peoples while also claiming the territory for Spain. In colonial times 127 Franciscans served in Alta California, nearly all of whom were born and educated in Spain. A relatively small number of missionaries were posted at each mission and served as members of their religious order under a President of the California missions. Indian officials, called *alcaldes* and *mayordomos*, who helped oversee the social control and labor at the missions, were selected by the padres and elected by the neophytes (Hackel 1997). The economic premise of the vast missions was to create self-sufficient agricultural and ranching enterprises that, in theory, would eventually be returned to the native peoples. Mexican independence (1821) followed instead, and California subsequently became an American territory with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) and a state in 1850. The missions were ultimately restored to the Catholic Church in 1865 (Hackel 2005; Monroy 1990). Today all the missions are open to the public, and some, such as San Juan Capistrano, are among the most popular tourist sites in California. At present, all but two of the missions are owned by the Catholic Church; most are local parishes, one a seminary, and one the University chapel on the campus of Santa Clara University. Two of the missions, San Francisco Solano (in Sonoma, CA) and La Purísima, are California State Parks. Some are relatively wellpreserved, others wholly reconstructed or reimaged, and many a blend of the two. For example,

Mission Santa Clara has seen five different church buildings in three locations. The current mission, constructed in 1929 after the 1835 structure was destroyed by fire, is a loose interpretation of the earlier building (Kimbrow and Costello 2009, 198-201). In contrast, San Juan Bautista and Santa Barbara have much of their original architecture intact. In addition to the clergy leadership and parish administrators, the missions have varying organizational structures for staffing and managing tourist experiences at the sites. Some, such as San Juan Capistrano and San José, are run by private not-for-profits, while other missions are operated by the parish with volunteer docents. The two California State Park properties have professional staff as well as affiliated friends groups.

Scholars such as Kevin Starr (1973; 1985), Phoebe Kropp (2006), David Hurst Thomas (1991), Edna Kimbro and Julia Costello (2009) have argued that the missions, like many heritage sites, are multivalent. They are 'symbols of the heritage of California's Native American, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo-American peoples, [that] resist any simple, single interpretation. (Kimbrow and Costello 2009, 4).' In contrast to the complexity of this two and a half century history, the contemporary mission landscapes convey a relatively simple rendition of that history in the form of the mission garden. Where the colonial landscape was distinctly utilitarian, the romanticized colonial revival gardens created in the late nineteenth and twentieth century were patterned after the centuries-old European tradition of patio gardens, versions of which are found in monasteries, palaces, and residences around the Mediterranean (Brown 1988; Kryder-Reid 2010). These mission gardens are antithetical to the colonial landscape in many regards. Where the largely arid colonial mission landscape was brown and dusty unless irrigated, today's gardens have luxuriant green lawns, intersecting paths, and the vibrant colors of cascading vines and edged flowerbeds. Similarly, while today's gardens appear largely empty save for the visiting tourists, the colonial missions were busy, teeming places. They were occupied by the neophytes (baptized Native Americans) who lived and worked there, the Franciscans who oversaw them, the soldiers who enforced Spanish rule, as well as traders, travelers (including non-mission Indians), and visiting locals from nearby pueblos. In sum, the contemporary landscapes create a setting for the missions that reads beautiful, peaceful, timeless, vacant, and natural, and they mask their colonial legacy as sites of labor, violence, and oppression. The gardens also avoid altogether colonialism's contemporary consequences of injustice, dispossession, and cultural genocide. This study explores how the dominant narrative of the mission landscapes confirms the key tropes of the romanticized 'Spanish fantasy heritage' (Deverell 2001; Kropp 2006; McWilliams 1946; Thomas 1991) and affirms the values celebrated in church, state, and national discourses. It also investigates how the performance of the space by visitors leaves open the possibility of resistance to that narrative and the imposition of alternate readings.

Theorizing Identity and Heritage

Bringing the question of identity into this reading of the landscape raises several interesting theoretical issues and offers an opportunity to explore a central question of this volume, namely how can landscape help us understand the processes and narratives of identity formation? Heritage as it is framed at the missions, however, is not simply about identity labels or even a sense of affiliation, connectedness, or cohesion. Instead identity is, as Brubaker and Cooper (2000) remind us, a

category of practice...used by "lay" actors in...everyday settings to make sense of themselves, of their activities, of what they share with, and how they differ from, others. It is also used by political entrepreneurs to persuade people to understand themselves, their interests, and their predicaments in a certain way, to persuade certain people that they are (for certain purposes) "identical" with one another and at the same time different from others, and to organize and justify collective action along certain lines (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 4-5).

Furthermore, because this constitution of identity is a social process, not just an intellectual practice, its analysis offers the opportunity 'to explain the processes and mechanisms through which what has been called the "political fiction" of the "nation" -- or of the "ethnic group," "race," or other putative "identity" can crystallize, at certain moments, as a powerful, compelling reality (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 5).'

The mission landscapes are ideal spaces in which to examine this constitution of identity, particularly in the highly controlled and interpreted spaces of the mission garden. Margaret Sommers' (1994) theorizing of identity and narrative is useful for deconstructing these designed landscapes because it 'builds from the premise that narrativity and relationality are conditions of social being, social consciousness, social action, institutions, structures, even society itself; the self and the purposes of self are constructed and reconstructed in the context of internal and external relations of time and place and power that are constantly in flux (Sommers 1994, 621).' She identifies particular patterns of relationships that she terms relational settings, and she argues that 'Identity-formation takes shape within these relational settings of contested but patterned relations among narratives, people, and institutions...[that] have a history... over time and space (Sommers 1994, 626).' Similarly, in his writings about the social practices of collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs has noted that for a belief of the past 'to be settled in the memory of a group, it needs to be presented in the concrete form of an event, a personality, or a locality (Halbwachs 1992, 200).' The California missions, some of the most popular historic sites in the state and visited by hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, are such a locality and such a relational setting. As Lynn Meskell has argued, archaeological materials are potent tools in the political discourses of modern life as objects that can be 'mobilized and deployed in identity



Figure 1. Vintage postcard of Mission Santa Barbara, c. 1911

struggles....and the reproduction of social inequalities (Meskell 2001, 189).' In this light, the mission gardens are both the products of a particular and highly politicized rendition of the colonial California past and they are producers of that narrative deployed through the discursive heritage practices ranging from fourth grade model making to vintage postcard collecting (Figure 1).

An important aspect of the discursive heritage practices that have shaped the mission gardens' place in cultural memory is their consumption as tourist destinations and the embodied experience of place. As Dean MacCannell argues, tourism, like other phenomena of cultural productions, has two basic parts: the 'representation of an aspect of life' or 'an embodied ideal' and 'the changed, created, intensified belief or feeling that is based on the model (MacCannell 1976, 23-4).' More specifically, heritage sites, memorials, and monuments are made meaningful not because of their architecture or iconography, but by those who consume them. Whether that consumption is through the gaze, procession, performance, the exchange of word or gesture, the meaning of the sites is constituted through their reception. For more than a century the missions have been visited and consumed as a place to experience the California story. For example, a 1929 newspaper report describing the guides at Mission San Juan Capistrano who 'tell the story in soft voices with a lingering Spanish accent...and...in their picturesque costumes of Spanish-California days, obligingly pose by the lily pool, gazing at the old sundial, smiling under the old Mission arches, silhouetted against the roses and the hollyhocks, or standing by the ruins of the ancient church (Anonymous 1929, 8).' Even those involved in the mission restorations articulated this sense of narrative. When discussions of an appropriate design for La Purísima Mission grounds became heated, a member of the planning group asserted

that to 'lay out a garden for which there is neither historical nor archaeological evidence would be doing violence to La Purísima's story (Ewing 1936).'

This performance of identity narratives at heritage sites is critical because the power of cultural productions like mission tours lies in the fact that participation 'can carry the individual to the frontiers of his being where his emotions may enter into communion with the emotions of others (MacCannell 1976, 26).' The personal enactment of communal heritage rituals reifies the broader narratives in fundamental ways that capture imagination and emotion, as well as intellect. For example, John McGroarty, author of such paeans to California as *The Mission Play* (1911), *California: Its History and Romance* (1911), and *Mission Memories* (1929), that 'there is no place in all California which clings to the past with an affection so notable as that which characterizes the Place of the Sacred Garden (McGroarty 1909, 247).' Similarly, William Henry Hudson, who published a series of sketches of the missions, eulogized the affective experience of visiting the missions: 'A tender sentiment clings about them -- in their enclosures we breathe a drowsy old-world atmosphere of peace.... These things have a subtle and peculiar power -- a magic not to be resisted by anyone who turns from the highways of the modern world to dream among the scenes where the old padres toiled and died (Hudson 1901).' As in Victor Turner's (1969, 1977) conception of ritual where the individual moves through stages of separation, liminality, and reintegration to reach a renewed sense of 'communitas,' a visit to the missions may result in a sense of connection to others perceived to share the same heritage. This pattern of separation, liminality, and reintegration into *communitas* in Turner's understandings of rites of passage (1969) and his subsequent extension of the concept 'liminoid' situations and non-religious

experiences (1977) is useful for understanding tourism as secular pilgrimage. MacCannell argues that connecting through the rituals of cultural productions to a shared, communal understanding can reinforce existing symbols or connotations, thereby adding 'ballast' to a society by 'sanctifying an original as being a model worthy of copy or an important milestone in our development (MacCannell 1977, 26).' Alternatively, it can also have the opposite effect and 'establish a new direction, break new ground, or otherwise contribute to the progress of modernity by presenting new combinations of cultural elements and working out the logic of their relationship (MacCannell 1976, 26).' The missions' legacy both as the symbolic birthplace of California and as sites of conquest leaves them wide open for disparate and even contentious responses. Yet, the general impression recorded by travel writers of the 1930s and bloggers today is of charming, peaceful retreats.

The critical juncture of identity and landscape at the missions, therefore, is that the gardens 'green wash' the past, recasting the colonial sites as beautiful, peaceful places to be revered as the beginnings of California civilization. The term's implied connotations of whitewashing and brainwashing are indicative of both the political appropriation of the past imbricated in the mission gardens and the power of the landscape to naturalize ideology in ways that are nearly incontestable. Much as William Deverell has argued that the appropriation of a Mexican past by an increasingly Anglo-dominated Los Angeles society deployed a 'cultural whitewashing' (Deverell 2004: 251), the mission gardens reference a European, White tradition distinctive from both the indigenous use of the landscape and from the original functions of the mission landscapes. This appropriated landscape design tradition has complex associations, however. Visiting the missions may inculcate a sense of belonging and inclusion, whether expressed as a connection with a distinctly California identity, a Catholic identity, or simply as a participant in the practices of cultural tourism. An experience at the missions may conversely yield a sense of outrage at the unacknowledged legacy of tragedy and loss, historical guilt, and exclusion for those who do not see themselves represented in the spaces or are troubled by the lack of critical history in the mission interpretive programming. As at other sites of contested histories (Hodgkin and Redstone 2003), visitors to the missions sometimes express the ambivalence of recognizing both legacies simultaneously. For example, a blogger in 2008 wrote of her own conflicted feelings: 'First, one cannot help but be in awe of the beauty and what the missionaries obviously believed. Then I consider how horrific the consequences to our Native Americans and their culture and I am saddened (Suzanne 2008).' It is this tension -- the legacy of a triumphalist colonialism grappling with the consequences of dispossession and oppression -- that the mission landscape attempts to resolve. To understand how the missions work in material and ideological ways as tourist destinations and cultural productions, this analysis looks at the staging of visitor experience, specifically movement, narrative, and multisensory

performative experience. This deconstruction of the spaces also identifies the conceptual metaphors, narratives, and underlying ideologies that structure visitor experiences at the missions.

Narrated heritage

The serial presentation of the mission story unfolds through discrete architectural spaces along a structured route that leads visitors to key purveyors of the narrative - the didactic museum, the hallowed nave, the Spartan padres' quarters, the somber cemetery, and the beautiful courtyard gardens (Figure 2). The exhibit narratives in these museums outline the history of the missions and celebrate particular achievements of illustrious persons associated with the missions. As might be expected, these narratives are told largely from the perspective of the missions' current proprietor, which is the Catholic Church in all but two instances. These museum displays are executed with varying degrees of professionalism, but all have similar artifacts associated with the Native American 'prehistory,' the colonial mission history, and more recent restoration and parish growth. The raw ingredients of the Native American story (stone tools, plants, and baskets) stand in contrast to the development of new technology (olive presses and firearms), new skills (books and musical manuscripts), and new belief systems (religious artifacts). The key themes are the courage and sanctity of the founding padres, the success and productivity of the missions at their height, and the valiant efforts of the church over the years to maintain and restore the sites. Pedelty's analysis of the exhibit at Mission San José summarizes the typical celebratory interpretation and their presentation of Spanish-Indian relations as a teacher-student or 'benevolent mentor' paradigm in which the Indians 'sanctioned their own subordination as willing catechists and hungry students (Pedelty 1992, 83).'

The main messages conveyed in the exhibits' rendition of mission history are of two cultures becoming one. Different mission museum exhibits vary in how they account for that eventuality. As Dartt-Newton cogently analyzes, these narratives often obliterate native history, whether framing it as extinction (describing them as 'dying off') or assimilation (a conspicuous absence from the historical timeline following secularization) (Dartt-Newton 2009, 2011). Yet while their fate is ambiguous, the overall plot line is consistent. Civilization, with its associated qualities of progress, reason, culture, and technology, is victorious over the indigenous which is associated with the static, emotional, wild, natural, and 'frozen in time (Hill 2000).' The distinctions between the two cultures are exaggerated and commodified in the exhibits' presentation of artifacts ostensibly signifying their contrasting technologies, languages, and lifeways. Those differences become blurred over time until the images and objects become the familiar, recognizable California mission story personified in the buildings' ruin, restoration, and rebirth. The history of the missions through time is presented as the inevitable course of progress, the growth of faith communities, and restora-

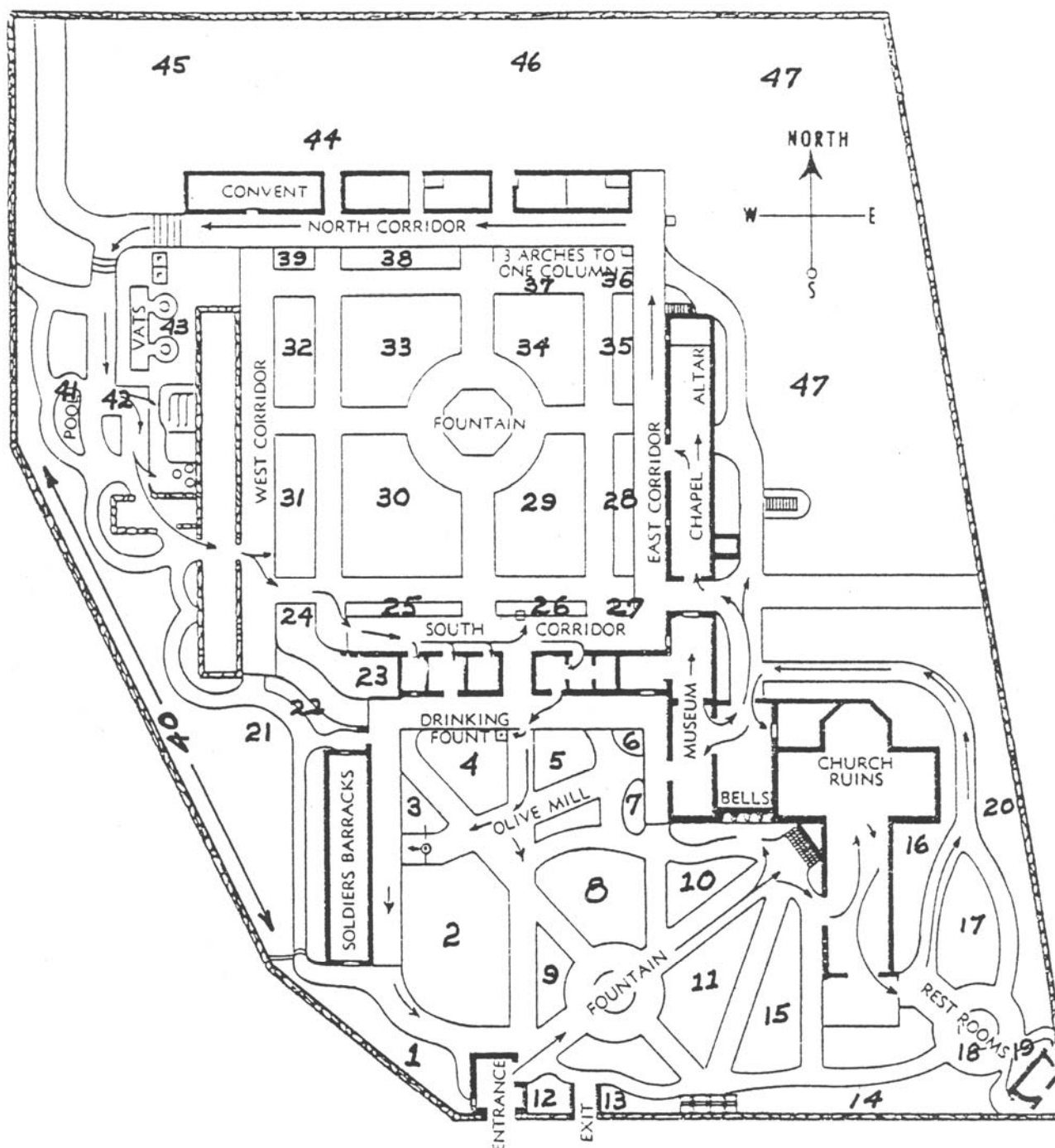


Figure 2. Mission San Juan Capistrano plan with suggested tourist path indicated by arrows (Chapman 1982: 67)

tion of buildings. It is the story of civilization, and it is good.

After going through the introductory exhibits, the visitor exits at most missions into an inner courtyard of the site where generally three choices are presented: visiting the church, walking the corridors, and visiting whatever dwelling and work rooms are open for viewing, or exploring the ornamental gardens in the center of the courtyard (or exterior forecourts, depending on the mission layout). Regardless of the exact sequence, the drama of a visit culminates as one enters the reconstructed mission nave. There, the visitor encounters

an atmosphere unlike the museum spaces. Textures of cool tile and rough stucco, scents of incense, the flicker of votive candles, and a rich religious iconography ranging from ornate western altarpieces to simple neophyte-painted wall decoration all evoke the sanctity and mystery of thousands of services and centuries of worship. The church furniture -- pews, pulpit, lectern-- is a permanent footprint of the liturgical dramas played out in these spaces. The impression of privileged access to a sacred space is accentuated by signs asking visitors to keep their voices low and men to remove their hats and further reinforced by the generally subdued comportment of other visitors exhibiting the appropriate contemplative

postures of the mission tourist. The atmosphere of these inner sanctums is charged with a converging reverence for the historic and the religious. This interpretation differs somewhat from Thomas Bremer's (2001) analysis comparing Mission San Juan Capistrano and the Mormon Temple Square in which he polarizes religious vs. secular historical readings of the sites. While he notes that the mission may operate as a 'hybrid space' combining religious practices and the 'desacralized practices of tourism,' he also argues that the educational mission and 'unchallenged authority of ...site managers' 'overwhelms' the devotional practices and suggests that the profane essentially trumps the sacred at these sites. I argue instead that visitors are critical consumers and are able to create their own meaning, whether it be pilgrimage, research, or pleasure.

After the subdued lighting and atmosphere of the churches, visitors exiting the cool naves are met with the brightness and vivid colors of the courtyard gardens. The gardens convey a cultivated, domesticated beauty ideally suited to a monastic sanctuary of contemplative prayer, obedient service, and dutiful learning. They appear to be the living legacy of the noble Franciscan founders, and they leave little room to imagine the days of working, gaming, dancing, and eating that once filled the mission courtyards. Visitors are free to move about the gardens and pay attention to whatever catches their eye, but the essential premise of the ornamental design continues the ideological narrative of the exhibits. The mission story articulated through the gardens is quintessentially one of civilization. That which was wild is now cultivated, orderly, and wholly domesticated. That which was emotional and irrational is now allied with study of plants, scripture, and history. That which was 'other' is now distinctly western with direct referent to centuries old European gardening traditions. The landscape of coercion, labor, and violence is rendered a peaceful, beautiful, ornamental garden. The power of the landscape then is that it enacts in material form the conceptual metaphor of the missions. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have argued, 'metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action.... The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:3).' The narrative and imagery that has reframed history of California colonialism as the birthplace of civilization incarnated in a garden is not merely a metaphor, but a form of practice realized through restaging spaces of colonialism as gardens and through the embodied experience of those spaces.

Staged heritage

Understanding the missions as immersive environments performed and animated by people requires deconstructing both their narratives and the ways in which heritage is staged at the sites. The visual and structural logic of the landscape has the power to guide movement, structure sequence, and spur the emotional arcs of narrative. Landscapes can create multisensory

experiences by amplifying or muffling sound, directing the gaze, encouraging or repelling touch, and even inviting taste. Rhys Isaac (1982) and Dell Upton (1986) have productively applied this concept of landscape as an interactive stage to illuminate the ways in which the social world is constituted. Isaac's Pulitzer Prize winning book *The Transformation of Virginia*, for example, followed half a century of political and social revolution in colonial society by viewing social life 'as a complex set of performances, [n]ot only words but also settings, costumes, and gestures' enacted in the arrangement and rearrangement of social space (Isaac 1982, 6). Upton similarly investigated eighteenth-century Virginia society by focusing on the architecture of parish churches, but his study also ranged across cultural practices as diverse as courtroom behavior, landscape gardening, and dancing to reveal the patterns and significance of cultural change. In his analysis, these ritual, judicial, and domestic sites were all 'part of a network of dynamic spaces, each of which used similar means to create differing, but complementary symbolic environments (Upton 1986, 199).'

The California missions have similarly been crafted as social stages. The mission architecture was originally designed with both neophytes and visitors in mind. For the native peoples working and living in them, the missions' architecture of surveillance, the spaces that shaped communal gatherings, processions, and formations, and the highly regularized schedules were disciplining practices that helped maintain order and productivity. The colonial 18th and early 19th century mission churches were also self-consciously public buildings, and their architecture invested heavily in facades, bell towers, campanarios, and other highly visible architectural features that proclaimed their presence for miles (Kryder-Reid 2007). The landscape similarly had a public face. While the infrastructure was largely utilitarian, dedicated to agriculture, husbandry, and the related processing of crops and animals, the placement of the few ornamental elements in the landscape suggest that the Franciscans desired to create a favorable impression on those viewing the missions from the outside, as well as to maintain order among those residing and working there. For example, fountains or *lavanderías* were positioned in front of Mission Santa Barbara and San Luis Rey.

Mission administrators have been designing the landscape with visitors in mind since their restoration to the Catholic Church in 1865. From the first mission garden created at Mission Santa Barbara in 1872 to twentieth century gardens modeled after it at Mission San Juan Capistrano (1915), San Fernando (1921), La Purísima (1935), and other missions, the garden designers have attempted to shape public perceptions of the sites (Kryder-Reid 2010). Furthermore, these post-colonial landscapes were not just about presenting an attractive façade to the world; their designs embedded the missions in a larger field of referents signaling a European landscaping tradition that allied the missions with the gardening practices of white, wealthy estate owners as

well as with the romanticized narratives. As Phoebe Kropp (2006) has argued, this 'Spanish Fantasy Past' purveyed a nostalgic version of California's origins with potent political and ideological undertones. Fashioned in the cultural landscape of roads, houses, and marketplaces, the resulting racialized understanding of regional identity was promoted through both a spatial and a temporal segregation where Mexican and Indian Californians resided in the past and are located in an Anglo-American present only as artifacts.

Critical to the staged interplay of space and narrative is the role of simulacra and authenticity in framing the mission tourist experience. A simulacrum, as Jean Baudrillard (1988a) and others have argued, is not a copy of the real, but becomes truth in its own right, the hyper real. The import of the mission gardens replicated at each site is not simply that they perpetuate a romanticized reproduction of the past but that they have become a referent in their own right. They have become their own hyper reality (Eco 1986). The original mission garden was constructed at Mission Santa Barbara in 1872-3, and was looked to as a model when restorers and preservationists at other missions sought an 'appropriate' landscape to go with their renovated buildings (Kryder-Reid 2010). Mission administrators have continued to build mission gardens, even in the most limited settings. Mission San José, for example, is a two-thirds scale reproduction of the original mission building and includes a fountain and lawn in its tiny lot. The impulse is not confined to early twentieth century colonial revivalist impulses either. In the 1990s Mission San Rafael was raising money to create a new mission garden. Such simulacrum becomes its own 'social finality,' that 'gets lost in seriality' and eventually 'simulacra surpasses history (Baudrillard 1988b, 138).' The tension of the simulacrum and authenticity at the missions is not simply that the romanticized reinvention of the missions as gardens is the antithesis of their colonial era predecessors, but that they are visited as heritage sites, purported to be preserved and protected survivors of an earlier time. Tourists understand that many architectural features have been repaired and renovated or even, such as with Santa Clara and San José, wholly reconstructed, but the landscapes' association with an authentic past is more complicated and merits further investigation.

One aspect of the complexities of this staged, fabricated heritage (Lowenthal 1998) has been the need to balancing protecting the missions against the deteriorating effects of erosion, earthquakes, and other threats while still maintaining a picturesque charm and ancient patina. For example, a travel writer recounting a visit to Mission San Diego in 1930 noted, 'Would it not be a fine thing were there some way to preserve these ruins just as they are, so much more romantic and suggestive of past greatness are they than any effort at restoration can ever make them? But adobe bricks disintegrate rapidly when exposed to the weather, and unless the buildings are restored, what little remains of many of the Missions will soon have vanished (Moore 1930, 6).' Another visitor to San Luis Rey commented even more pointedly, 'The church building

has been fairly well restored, and it would be hard to say just why the exterior is not more pleasing, but certainly robbed of that something wherein lies the charm of these lovely old missions at their best. For one thing, her make-up is unquestionably on the vivid side for one her age (Gunthorp 1940, 34).'

Most prominent in this staging of heritage as a surviving artifact has been numerous examples of preserved 'ruins,' such as the 'nineteenth arch' at Santa Ines (Figure 3). These intentionally crafted, artfully sited features signal both the processes of aging and the enduring presence of original, authentic features. The trope mirrors the deployment of ruins in the English landscape park design (Hunt 1994) and the rural landscapes of southern Maryland (King 2012). The incorporation of ruins is simultaneously a tribute to the continuity of heritage and homage to the poignant passage of time. If mission heritage presumes the recollection of peaceful, beautiful, simple times of selfless priests seeking to bring a better life to indigenous cultures, then, logically, the space is expected to look simple, beautiful, and old. In this metaphor of mission as garden, the colonial legacy is both frozen in a distant past far removed from contemporary consequences and transformed into a beautiful, timeless, and natural setting. As David Lowenthal has noted, 'Heritage everywhere thrives on persisting error (Lowenthal 1998, 9).'



Figure 3. The 'nineteenth arch' at Mission Santa Ines



Figure 4. Restrooms with artificially distressed stucco in the forecourt of Mission San Miguel

history that ‘seeks to convince by truth, and succumbs to falsehood,’ heritage ‘exaggerates and omits, candidly invents and frankly forgets, and thrives on ignorance and error (Lowenthal 1998, 7).’ The selectivity of the mission landscapes privileges a narrative honoring the achievements and sacrifice of the padres, and it stages that past in a vaguely historic monastic garden. Contemporary visitors often use the metaphor of being ‘transported back in time’ to describe their experience of the mission grounds, and this sense of stepping back is part of the reifying power of these greenwashed spaces. The impact is not simply a didactic text or a docent reciting facts; the landscape itself presents an immersive, pervasive experience that looks, smells, and feels authentic.

An even more telling example of the simulacra of staged heritage is attempts to create an effect of aging by applying a failing stucco veneer over adobe. The technique is common in modern decorating, and one can see examples in ‘Spanish style’ fast food restaurants or find tips on the internet for creating distressed stucco walls in the home. In the setting of the missions, however, the effect is more revealing. At sites such as Mission San Miguel where the public restrooms in the forecourt have a distressed stucco finish (Figure 4), the technique is presumably intended to help the newer construction blend in with its surroundings. Presenting modern restrooms as aging structures might call into question the authenticity of all of the architecture, and yet San Miguel’s late twentieth century bathroom, as implausible as it is, draws little attention. In fact, in the mission courtyard the restrooms stand on one side of a forecourt while at the other end is the mission church, newly restored following the 2003 earthquake with retrofitted seismic reinforcements such as mesh and tie rods. In the forecourt between the two structures is a fountain with the failing adobe treatment, beds of

struggling cacti, an artfully placed wooden cart, and dusty meandering paths. The anachronistic garden appears no less appropriate than the antiqued restrooms because both confirm the narrative of the sites as beautiful, sacred relics of another era. The explicit narrative at the site emphasizes the importance of the original and the authentic. The capital campaign case statement for San Miguel’s ongoing restoration, for example, argues the value of the site as ‘an educational beacon’ noting that the mission

serves as a gateway to our nations [sic] history and ancestors. Many remark that visiting Mission San Miguel is like taking a trip back in time. This observation is unique to Mission San Miguel not only because of the original frescoes and authentic artifacts on site, but also because the town of San Miguel itself is a quite, [sic] rural community and remains deeply-rooted in its history (Mission San Miguel).

Mission San Miguel raises the question, why don’t more visitors challenge the contemporary veneers, whether architectural or landscape? Is the distressed stucco convincing camouflage or are visitors not particularly interested in the historical authenticity of the architecture or accuracy of the interpretations as long as they meet their expectations of what mission heritage looks like?

The illusion of age takes on ever deeper significance with the use of historic objects and industrial remains in the landscape in ways that reposition notions of indigeneity, labor, and time. While much of the infrastructure required to support extensive agricultural and industrial operations at the colonial mission sites was destroyed by encroaching development of the extensive original landholdings, some features, particularly those associated with the padres near the main church, were preserved or reconstructed. Other remains, such as those more closely



Figure 5. A reconstructed *carreta* laden with barrels is a focal point in a flower bed at Mission San Juan Capistrano

associated with neophyte life and housing, were demolished or their crumbling adobe ruins plowed under or paved over. As Mark Pedelty (1992) has pointed out, this selective reconstruction has resulted from the choices of mission restorers and administrators to preserve those aspects of the mission system that related to their own interests, while marginalizing or even destroying elements not considered to be part of their own heritage such as Indian burial grounds and living quarters, as well as features not compatible with their view of mission history such as the soldiers' barracks or whipping posts. Similarly, Deana Dartt-Newton's study of mission museum exhibitions found the same pattern of paternalistic interpretation and a consistent relegation of Indians to a distant time devoid of agency (Dartt-Newton 2009, 2011). This dichotomy of selective preservation has resulted in some interesting treatments of industrial features that are integral to the history of native labor and the industrial production at the missions. In some cases, such as the tanning vats at San Gabriel, the features were incorporated into the general garden plan, and at some, such as at San Luis Rey and La Purísima, the *lavandarias* became the focal points for new gardens.

This incorporation of utilitarian features into the mission garden persists in contemporary designs as well. For example, at San Buenaventura the well is hung with potted ferns and the barred windows decorated with colorful window boxes. Portable artifacts such as mill grinding stones at San Diego and *manos* and *matates* at San Luis Rey are placed as artistic accents in the gardens. At San Juan Capistrano, a reconstructed *carreta* laden with barrels is a focal point in a flowerbed and a wheelbarrow is used as a planter (Figure 5). The translation of these industrial features and tools of the colonial era into decorative garden elements is a ubiquitous practice, and yet it generally escapes comment

by either the garden interpreters or visitors. The interpretive sign at the *lavanderia* at Santa Barbara, for example, includes the following text: 'Please treat this historic structure with respect as the achievement of the Chumash people who lived and worked here in Mission time. Landscaping around this *lavanderia* features native and colonial period plant varieties...historic rose varieties are found interspersed with mission period cacti and perennials [sic].' An olive press at San Buenaventura is bedecked with pots of hanging ferns. Even the bells that signaled the discipline of time in their call to work, meals, and rest during the missions' early days are, in today's gardens, used as ornamental lighting, edging along paths, and hung as if they were oversized wind chimes (Figure 6). Time and labor, in these symbols, are collapsed as artifacts, both fake and real, and are repurposed as garden ornaments. The garden is historicized by its association with the relics, while the evidence of the labor on which the missions were predicated is rendered ornamental and the laborers are effaced altogether.

The erasure of the labor it took to sustain the colonial missions is perpetuated in the contemporary landscape. Evidence of the infrastructure to maintain the gardens such as tools, work sheds, irrigation systems, and hoses, are hidden from public view. Furthermore, whereas the monk in the garden was a dominant motif of mission visual culture historically, today's laborers are as invisible as their native predecessors. Several of the more prosperous missions, such as Santa Barbara and San Diego, have hired commercial landscape crews to maintain their grounds. The workers trim, weed, edge, and water, and then move on to their next job. Little evidence of the labor required to create lush, verdant gardens, especially in the arid parts of the state, is left behind. Geographer Don Mitchell has argued that the



Figure 6. Bells hanging in the *corredo* of Mission San Antonio de Pala

beauty of the California landscape with its Edenic imagery has been possible only because of generations of migrant laborers (Mitchell 1996). This gulf between the material production of the landscape and its appropriated imagery is paralleled in the mission gardens. The original Native American laborers were succeeded by an assortment of others, volunteer and paid, who helped shape the landscape. Many of these peoples' names are lost to history as is so often the case with workers of the land. At San Juan Capistrano, for example, the grounds were being tended as early as the late 1880s, but documents reflect only the architectural restoration efforts. At the missions that became parish churches, care for the grounds fell to the volunteers and the minimal staff, such as the 'gardening angels' at Mission San Juan Capistrano and the rose garden guild of Mission San Antonio de Padua. Some missions, such as San Diego and Santa Barbara, contract landscaping companies to maintain the gardens. Even missions run by the State Parks rely on volunteers to help interpret and maintain the gardens. La Purísima, for example, is supported by a non-profit organization called 'Prelado de los Tesoros de La Purísima' that helps raise funds, recruit volunteers, train docents, and advocate for the park. For tourists visiting the missions, however, this labor remains largely hidden. Upon close inspection, an observant visitor can see the spigots and nozzles for irrigation systems and on certain days crews can be seen trimming vines or cleaning fountains, but for the most part the gardens seem to just exist effortlessly in the rich soil and bountiful sunshine. The fertile productiveness and beauty of these miniature Edens are predicated, like the broader agricultural landscape of California, on the invisibility of the labor that is indispensable to its very existence.

The symbolic annihilation of labor in the mission landscape comes into sharpest relief with one of the strategies deployed to interpret Native Americans in the

mission landscapes. At least four of the missions, including San Juan Capistrano, La Purísima, San Francisco, and Santa Barbara, have built reconstructed native dwellings or *kiichas* on the mission grounds. Here too the simulacra of the demonstration huts objectifies and distances native history. The bent pole and reed-covered structures have minimal interpretive signage and little associated domestic material culture. They are single examples rather than the clusters that housed extended families. As has been argued regarding the interpretation of Native history in the mission museums, the dwellings only nominally register native peoples in the landscape, and then only in a 'pre-contact' past. They reinforce 'essentialized homogenous notions of Indianess which inadvertently contribute to the invisibility of coastal Native peoples (Dartt-Newton, 2009, v).' At San Juan Capistrano signage next to the *kiicha* focuses on the construction and materials of the structure, describes accommodations for inclement weather, and explains that the stones positioned in front of the dwelling were used to grind acorns for food preparation. The sign also acknowledges that the replica was built 'by the local tribe under the leadership of Tribal Chairman, Anthony Rivera, as a recent project celebrating those with ancestral ties to the Mission (Interpretive sign, Mission San Juan Capistrano, April, 2008).' The landscaping around the *kiicha*, however, creates an entirely different impression. Ornamental edging frames the dwelling and it is surrounded by beds of roses and other vibrant flowers that position the *kiicha* as yet another ornamental focal point in the garden (Figure 7). At San Francisco, the dwelling stands in the densely planted cemetery, near the statue of Junípero Serra. At Santa Barbara, the short-lived reconstructed dwelling stood in the corner of a parking lot behind the chain link fence. The presentation of these *kiicha* focuses on the domestic sphere and 'daily life' rather than the institutional scale of the missions agricultural and herding operations. The almost empty



Figure 7. A reconstructed kiicha in the forecourt of San Juan Capistrano

structures accompanied by only a few stumps or a stone fire circle gesture to the activities that took place in these spaces while giving no insight into the circumstances and conditions for the neophytes. They also avoid altogether the violence, sexual and otherwise, or the other coercive exercises that structured their residents' existence. These reconstructed dwellings sitting in the middle of gardens not only objectify and distort the scale of native peoples in the colonial missions, but they parallel the visual practices of Orientalism. As Said has written of the imaginative geography of Orientalism, it tries 'at one and the same time to characterize the Orient as alien and to incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager and actors are *for* Europe, and only for Europe. Hence the vacillation between the familiar and the alien. ...the figures of speech associated with the Orient. ...are all declarative and self-evident; the tense they employ is the timeless eternal; they convey an impression of repetition and strength; they are always symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent' (Said 1979, 71-2). The familiar domestic residence is indicated, and yet the rough, round tule covered huts stand in stark contrast to the finished and furnished architecture of the mission.

In a parallel to the placement of native dwellings, some missions have also attempted to register the presence of indigeneity through planting 'native plant' gardens and propagating 'heritage plants'. These horticultural efforts relate to broader interests in heirloom varieties, local food, slow food, and other expressions of an intentionality about food and nutrition that looks nostalgically to home canning and gardens as an antidote to agricultural factory production, genetically modified crops, and a general sense of isolation and dispossession from food production. The symbolism in the context of the mission landscapes, however, is more complex. One aspect is the preservation and interpretation of historic

specimens as relics or survivors of an earlier time. These specimens, such as the historic grape vines at San Gabriel, the pepper tree at San Luis Rey, and the olive at San Antonio de Padua, are interpreted with signage identifying the species, the estimated age, and some of them also add a note such as 'planted by the padres' or 'the first pepper tree in California,' or, as at San Gabriel, naming it the 'Ramona Grape Vine, 1774.' By highlighting and interpreting these specimens as ancient relics, the plants become artifacts in themselves and, like the industrial features, are valued for their age and symbolic origins of California's agricultural industry, rather than as indicators of the labors and lives of the native people who tended and harvested them. Similarly, while the impetus to plant 'native plant gardens' such as the one in the front border at Santa Barbara (no longer under cultivation) and in the central courtyard of San Francisco Solano in Sonoma seems to have been a desire to register the native peoples in the landscape by interpreting native plants and their pre-Columbian uses, the impressions they create for visitors are more complicated. While limited signage identifies the plant names and explains some of their traditional uses for cooking, utilitarian, or medicinal purposes, the arrangement of the plants in beds with edging, intersecting paths, and labels mirrors the same domestication of the wild Indian metaphor that pervades the dominant mission narrative.

Performed heritage

The architecture, landscape, artifacts, plants, and festivals, that together frame the mission experience for visitors is therefore both a product of distinct ideological perspectives on the history and significance of the missions and also a social stage for the performance of that narrative. It is important to note that outside of the formal museum exhibits there is little interpretative text

so that for the most part, touring a mission is a free-choice learning, visitor-driven experience. As Julia King has noted, the ‘creation of bounded spaces believed to signify past times and past worlds is a modern practice increasingly prevalent in our times. In these new spaces, history becomes conflated with material objects and practices, which in turn become privileged for the unmediated access they presumably give to the past (King 2012, 4).’ The seeming lack of didactic interpretation at the missions increases the power of the narrative because visitors are rarely conscious of the subtle use of stagecraft to create atmosphere, fix symbols, and guide them through the spaces. Like an interactive stage set, visitors (who become the actors) move along routes that establish a sequence, rhythm, and flow of the experience of space in time. Paths, doorways, gates, and corridors guide and constrain movement while the placement of objects and features invite bodies to pause and assume the classic gestures and poses of a dutiful observer (Figure 8). The stage directs the gaze, hiding some elements and accentuating others, framing distant views and encouraging close inspection. The senses of hearing, touch, taste, and smell are stimulated to accentuate the experience of another time, a space apart.



Figure 8. Visitors stop to look at a statue of Junípero Serra at Mission Dolores, San Francisco. Sculpted by Arthur Putnam and placed at the mission in 1918, the statue is one of a series of allegorical figures originally commissioned to depict the history of California for the San Diego estate of E. W. Scripps

Just as it once operated in the colonizing landscape of the mission Indians, these techniques of controlling movement, registering time, framing vision, and stimulating senses are part of the disciplining force of the landscape that shapes the tourist experience.

Another aspect of performed heritage at the missions is propagating, planting, and tending ‘heritage plants.’ The idea of engaging with the mission history by planting historic plants is a longstanding one. When the king and queen of Belgium visited Mission Santa Barbara in 1919, the *New York Times*, (October 13, 1919) reported, ‘After mass, the party filed into the mission church yard, where the king planted a cypress and an orange tree to memorialize his visit there.’ Similarly, when Mission San Juan Capistrano offered seeds from their gardens for sale in the shops, they sold well and staff members commented that ‘people liked the idea of planting something that had come from the mission in their own gardens (Sorenson 2008).’ A leader in this effort more recently has been the ‘Huerta Project’ at Mission Santa Barbara. In a partnership between the mission and Santa Barbara City College’s Career Horticultural Program, volunteers have been identifying surviving ‘refugee’ plants from mission days and propagating them in a *huerta* on the mission grounds. Since December 1998 volunteers have collected cuttings and stone fruits from surviving species such as olive, mission era grape varieties, apricot and plum, and lilac. By rooting cuttings of plants such as pomegranate, rose, and grape, and grafting the stone fruit species onto mature modern cultivars trees, the *huerta* now boasts more than 400 historic era plants (Figure 9). Like the native plants’ gardens, however, the historical significance of the horticultural experiments continues to privilege the Spanish colonizers. In his summary of the heritage plants program, Jerry Sortomme, who co-founded the project with Mission curator Tina Foss, conveys the evocative prospect of heritage species when he asks readers to ‘Imagine re-growing plants genetically identical to those raised by the mission padres (Sortomme 2008).’ Coverage in a local newspaper, the *Santa Barbara Independent*, similarly notes, ‘A project is underway ...to recreate the *huerta*, or garden, where the friars cultivated the food and utilitarian crops they relied on’ (Hayes 2007). While the article elsewhere acknowledges the labor of Native Americans in constructing the missions, the notion of the padres tending their gardens continues to be a powerful image. In the *huerta*, as in the other landscapes of the mission, interpreting the lives of the Native Americans at the missions is minimized in deference to the colonizers’ experiences. The work of these volunteers to preserve and propagate historic species is commendable, they do not conceive of their work as engagement with the political production of heritage at the missions. The planting plan and interpretation of the *huerta* garden at Santa Barbara is predicated on prevailing winds, sun, and places to create micro climates against the hillside. The fact that it is located in the area of the former neophyte adobe residences or that the specimens such as the orange tree planted in the mission’s courtyard, from which they are



Figure 9. Santa Barbara Huerta Project containing more than 400 historic era plants

taking grafts, is part of a 140 year old landscape design history in its own right is not germane to the organizers' conception of their work. Just as the *kiicha* dwellings and the *manos* and *metates* are divorced from their historical context and repositioned in the ornamental settings of the gardens, so too are these historic plant specimens objectified as botanical material relevant for their age, but not their associations with colonialism's imposition of agrarian subsistence and labor practices.

Counter narratives

The dichotomy of wild versus civilized that operates as a deep conceptual metaphor in the gardens does not entirely account for their complex presentation of California's colonial legacy or how visitors negotiate this mediated landscape. The power of the mission landscapes lies in their mutability enacted by those who live on, work in, and move through them. Their significance is constructed, not inherent, created in the performance of the space by social agents. As Dydia DeLyser (2005) has argued, tourists have long been important participants in the constitution of a romanticized appropriation of Southern California's Spanish history. It is important to recognize, therefore, that the consumption of the mission landscapes has always had distinct audiences. Just as in colonial times the neophytes moved through and

perceived the landscape in very different ways than the colonizing explorers, soldiers, and priests, so too do the contemporary audiences have different perceptions and practices. Furthermore, recognizing the interests of these contemporary constituents is vital to understanding the evolution of the contemporary mission landscapes. In addition to the tourist audiences described thus far, the missions also serve as the spiritual home for the faith communities associated with the parishes and institutions that own and administer the mission sites. Also, within the various Catholic-owned sites there are a variety of traditions that have similarly shaped the production and consumption of the mission landscapes.

The California Park Service missions are in a very different position than the Catholic-owned missions, but are nonetheless fraught with the tensions of interpreting sacred and secular history. When the team was planning the landscape design at La Purísima in the early 1930s, the governmental agencies involved were very careful to keep a respectful distance from any connotations of promoting Catholic iconography, theology, or interests at the site in either their educational programs or their landscape reconstructions. While excavations revealed a small masonry circular feature that Hageman interpreted as the possible location of a cross noting that it 'was made exactly as though someone had planted a post, and filled around it with pieces of tile, rock and mortar to make it secure' (Hageman and Ewing 1991, 8), the feature was not immediately reconstructed. When a local Catholic parish proposed holding a midnight Christmas Mass in the newly restored church in 1936, the Advisory group and Park Service authorities scrambled for a response that would maintain cordial relations with the local church but preserve their separation of the state park from sectarian interests. Their last-minute diplomatic response denying permission to the priest cited the fact that the State Park Commission that would need to rule on such policy matters was not meeting until January and that 'the Mission is not far enough completed for such as event (Penfield 1936).' The Advisory Committee recommended that educational plans for the mission downplay the religious history of the sites, stating that the 'institutional side of Mission life is fully as interesting to the visitor as the religious, and should be more fully stressed.' Even as various plans for a dedication ceremony for the restored mission were being debated, all agreed that, whatever the specific program, it must be 'kept entirely non-religious (Fleming 1936).'

Such tensions of sacred and secular narratives persist. The contemporary site administrators navigate the separation of church and state largely by ignoring the faith-based associations of the missions. Writer Richard Rodriguez's memoir includes an account of his visit to San Juan Capistrano. Rodriguez writes of how, after he entered the Serra Chapel, he knelt 'to say a prayer for Nancy -- a prayer that should plead like a scalpel.' His meditation was soon interrupted by 'camera flashes at the rear of the church.... A group of tourists has entered the sanctuary to examine the crucifix; one of them laughs. I cross myself ostentatiously, I genuflect, I leave the chapel

(Rodriguez 1992, 123).’ Rodriguez also criticizes the ‘Protestant’ restorations of La Purísima, and its marginalization of Catholic history where preservationists ‘have so diligently divorced place or artifact from intention that they become handmaidens of amnesia. A secular altar guild that will not distinguish between a flatiron and a chalice, between a log cabin and a mission church, preserves only strangeness (Rodriguez 1992, 125).’ This collision of behavior and attitudinal expectations exemplifies the tensions of the missions’ operations as historical and religious shrines for the visiting public and as places of work and worship for the local community. Part of the complexity of the mission landscapes is that they have had two distinct audiences since their return to the Catholic Church in 1865. While visitors, tourists and other ‘outsiders’ came, stayed a short time and left, the missions have also had local constituencies who resided and worshipped there. This dual audience still exists as the missions serve as a temporal and spiritual home for those who live, worship, and are educated there and as a destination for school children on field trips, people on retreat, and tourists on vacation. Within a single landscape, these different audiences, each heterogeneous in their own right, negotiate meaning and memory.

The dual audiences are registered in the landscape itself in explicit designations of public and private space and in more subtle inclusive and exclusive operations of the landscape design. Spatially and ideologically the mission landscapes are intersecting public and private stages predicated on the roles of the social agents. Just as captives traversed the landscape gardens of Monticello and Gunston Hall differently than the planter gentry and their guests, so too at the missions do the resident religious, mission staff, laborers, and parishioners move in a different landscape than the tourists (Upton 1988; Epperson 2000). Signs and barrier chains explicitly restrict access to private areas while other divisions are more subtly managed (Figure 10). For example, the modern Stations of the Cross at Santa Barbara and Santa Ines are off to the side of the missions and out of the direct path of most visitors but available for the personal piety practices of the parishioners. The dual audiences negotiate the landscape through temporal control as well as spatial segregation. For example, churches are closed to tourists during services, and at San Juan Capistrano, religious processions take place in the garden after public hours (Nieblas 2008). At San Gabriel, a lighted cross, used in processions, is stored in a corner of the garden until needed (Figure 11). Not only are devotional spaces restricted, but other aspects of the daily life of the sites are hidden from view as well. The tools and equipment of the laborers who maintain the gardens are packed onto trucks or tucked into tool sheds hidden away from public view. The benches, tables, and grills used for parish festivals are stacked away so that open spaces can be available for school groups. Even more subtle are the landscapes that are in the open and yet not visible if one does not know how to read them. The shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe at San Gabriel may appear to be a display of colorful tile or collection of Catholic kitsch to some



Figure 10. A sign indicating a restricted area at Mission San Luis Rey



Figure 11. A lighted cross is stored in a corner of the garden at Mission San Gabriel



Figure 12. The shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe at Mission San Gabriel



Figure 13. Italian statuary placed in the Mission San Antonio de Pala imported from Italy by the Vernona Fathers who serve the parish

but a sanctified place of prayer and solace to others (Figure 12). Murals, such as those painted on the convento walls at San Gabriel, are loaded with religious imagery and references to local people and landmarks that are inscrutable to the outsider. There are also variations on the inclusion of religious iconography distinct to the traditions of the particular order at each mission. The Vernona Fathers (also known as The Camboni Fathers) at Mission San Antonio de Pala continued to bring back Italian statuary and ornaments to bring a flavor of 'the old country' to their southern California mission garden (Jackson 2008) (Figure 13). In imagery and in practice, these embellishments created not just a pleasing aesthetic, but a distinctive image of home.

This distinction between the public/tourist and private/local landscape is recognized locally and mapped virtually. Most missions structure their web sites into distinct parish-related or historic-mission related information either as separate pages tabbed on the main page or completely distinct sites. For example, the San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo Mission site front page welcomes visitors to 'a place of worship, education, history, and art' and invites people to 'choose a destination below to start your journey' by clicking a tab for either 'Parish,' 'School,' 'Museum,' or 'Store.' This

virtual landscape extends beyond parish websites. For example, the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program supports a wiki page for former pilgrims where they can share their ongoing reflections and spiritual journeys following a mission pilgrimage, as well as continue the fellowship formed during the tour.

Perhaps nowhere is this multivalence of mission materiality more evident than in the consumption of the Serra statues at the missions. The convention of the lone priest in the garden that figures so prominently in the mission visual culture has been perpetuated in the contemporary mission gardens with an initiative to place a statue of Junípero Serra at every mission. Serra statues were erected in several of the early twentieth century mission garden designs, such as San Juan Capistrano and San Fernando, but more recently a campaign to place statues of Serra at every mission and at other sites significant to Serra's life was undertaken by William H. Hannon, a southern California real estate developer. Hannon died in 1999, but a foundation in his name continues to sponsor essay contests about Serra and to carry on Hannon's philanthropic support of Catholic schools, hospitals, and other organizations. Hannon's intent in the placing the statues was to 'promote the spirit and contributions of Father Serra (The Hannon

Foundation web site).’ The bronze sculptures stand in various positions in the mission landscapes. At Mission Santa Ines, San Gabriel, San Rafael, San Antonio de Padua, and at Santa Barbara, the statue is positioned near the main entrance. At other missions the statue is in a garden, as at Santa Cruz, San Buenaventura, Carmel, San Diego, and Mission Dolores. The statues are typically blessed and dedicated when they are placed at a mission. Hannon was a proponent of Serra’s canonization, and he held his Catholic allegiances openly. But in other respects, the figures are more multivalent. Hannon, for example, saw a connection between his own profession and Serra’s noting, ‘The man was the first real estate developer in Los Angeles if you think about it. Serra helped to settle what is now the Valley. It’s important to remember where we came from (Rimbert 1998).’ The sculptures’ contexts suggest a certain ambiguity. In the front of missions they stand as welcoming doorman and sentry and also lay proud claim to the valorized founder, regardless of the controversy surrounding his legacy and canonization process. In the gardens the figures become both ornament and owner, referencing the same visual tradition as the frocked friars in the postcards. They stand as silent, static costumed interpreters performing the presence of the sites’ principle historical actors. They also participate in the construction of the exotic other for touristic consumption of the sites in their role as the frocked figure from another time or religion. It is not uncommon to see tourists posing for photographs as they stand next to Serra. The meaning of the reception of these statues is difficult to assess. In some respects they are consistent with other devotional art in that people engage with them directly. At Mission Santa Barbara, an offering of flowers was laid at Serra’s feet (Figure 14). Other examples are more idiosyncratic. The Hannon Foundation web site recounts that when the statues were placed in schools, ‘At dedication ceremonies, where a school’s student body often was assembled, William would encourage the children to rub Father Serra’s toe for good luck. He would tell the children, “After all, he walked all across California, so those toes are lucky; maybe rubbing his toe will help on your next big test (Hannon Foundation web site).”’

If the missions gardens are relational settings for the performance of communal memory and identity, it must be recognized that the process of identity formation is every bit as complex as Brubaker and Cooper maintain. As longstanding and pervasive as the practices of consuming the missions are, there is evidence, of the subversive use of the landscape albeit in subtle traces such as skepticism about the dominant narrative, recasting of symbolism, and resistance to touristic practices. If visiting the missions is performing heritage, then the most powerful form of resistance is to boycott them. An interpreter at the one of the missions told me of a good friend of native descent who refuses to set foot on the mission grounds because she finds them so abhorrent and painful. Other resistance is found in the subversion of the proscribed uses of the spaces. Almost as soon as it was completed, the supervisor of the Memory Garden at



Figure 14. Serra statue at Mission Santa Barbara with an offering of flowers was laid at its feet in 2013

San Fernando received complaints about a man ‘who persists in washing his dogs in the fountain,’ an unseemly and entirely unacceptable use of the fountain dedicated, as inscribed on its plaque, to preserve ‘the colorful and picturesque atmosphere of the early California missions (Kalix 1923).’ At almost every mission there is evidence of graffiti scratched into the soft, yielding surface of the adobe. In covered areas, such as the passageway into the inner courtyard at San Antonio de Padua, the graffiti dates back more than 100 years. At San Luis Rey’s secluded lavanderia graffiti is commonly added (Figure 15). Less physical, but no less significant, is the ideological critique in written accounts of the missions. In his account of his family’s tour of the missions, writer Geoff Boucher prefaces his relatively celebratory travel article with the comment, ‘And what a history it is -- framed by both the holy and the horrible, marked by moments of individual altruism and mass greed.’ He embarked on the trip acknowledging the subjectivity of the mission story in which ‘fourth-grade teachers filter out many of the harshest details and, at the missions themselves, [and] the Roman Catholic Church emphasizes the good works and California achievements (Boucher 2008).’ And yet, in the end of his article Boucher affirms the pleasure and value of visiting the missions, ambiguity and all.



Figure 15. Graffiti inscribed into the adobe wall of Mission San Luis Rey's lavandería

Conclusion

The mission gardens' role in the constitution of identity is significant for a number of reasons. First, they demonstrate the pervasive and enduring emotional attachment to heritage sites. Whether with romanticized sentimentality or sadness, pride or condemnation, people care deeply about the missions. This affective import of heritage landscapes is critical to both their pervasive influence across disparate populations and their longevity across generations. Second, these are spaces that engage the senses and the imagination; they are distinctly pleasurable, sensual, and evocative spaces (Turkle 2007). Third, the mission landscapes are and have always been informed by complex political and social agendas and must be recognized as an effective instrument of a particular heritage narrative. Fourth, the inscription of this particular rendering of the past in the medium of plants, ruins, and an immersive garden setting creates a powerful form of engagement with identity narratives that is, at the same time, remarkably difficult to recognize and pierce. Finally, this intersection of the realms of materiality and imagination that have been integral to the construction of the meaning of the mission landscapes is neither inalienable nor inevitable. Conceding that the material world establishes the structure of our existence and that landscapes are one of the media through which we negotiate our positions in the world, the power of landscape in the context of identity still lies in the active, personal human encounters with space where the relationship of past and present is constructed and contested.

The ongoing relevance of the missions will be determined, therefore, in how stewards of the sites deploy these potent, multivalent spaces to engage visitors in the deeper structures of the narratives. The potential of the missions is to be not merely beloved shrines but

instruments of critical exploration of the past. A critical approach to the mission gardens offers an opportunity for engaging new audiences, provoking conversations about colonialism's ongoing consequences, and tackling the hard questions of mission heritage. This notion of the social responsibility of museums and heritage sites is the essence of their enduring social value (Chapell 1989; Meskell 2002b; Shackel 2001; Silverman and Ruggles 2007). The potential of the missions to be places of critical inquiry and civic discourse lies in inviting visitors to explore the frictions of celebration and injustice, beauty and brutality, that are inscribed so subtly in the landscape. The opportunity is to invite people to explore how the gardens came to be and how the greenwashing of the past influences their experience at the missions.

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