INTRODUCTION

Heritage and Belonging in Times of Political Polarization

Elisabeth Niklasson

We live in an era that sometimes seems void of nuance. The first decades of the twenty-first century have seen walls raised with words and barbed wire (McAtackney and McGuire 2020), and there has been relentless pressure to take sides. In Europe and the United States, just as in many other parts of the world, people have dug in their heels and have become increasingly reluctant to compromise on politically charged issues concerning the sharing of space, wealth and privileges. Not only populist politicians, but also celebrities, merchandise brands and even your next-door neighbour with campaign posters in their garden demand that you pick a side.

In this polarized present, the past too has become polarized. From different ends of the political spectrum, people have invoked the past to validate their stance on immigration, equality and security. At one end, people have cried 'diversity is our heritage', drawing on the past as evidence that our societies have always been in flux, and that we should therefore embrace difference and change. In parallel with these calls, voices have advocated for social justice, seeking to reclaim indigenous heritage once stolen or to rectify heritage narratives by toppling monuments that celebrate slavery and racial inequality. At the other end, people have cried for the protection of 'native' European heritage, using ancient monuments and narratives as evidence for ethnic and cultural continuity. Against dystopic visions of a fragmented present, these voices have argued for the return to an imagined pure 'we' by reinforcing boundaries to Others (Mudde 2007). And so, in the wake of European crises and enduring polarization in US politics, we have found heritage used as leverage for political calls both to halt and to embrace immigration, and both to resist and to further globalization.

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This volume confronts the polarized pasts of the twenty-first century. It pulls critical voices from different academic spheres into a conversation about polarization and political uses of heritage. These issues are present across the globe, but their characteristics and effects vary in important ways depending on where they arise (Somer and McCoy 2019). The authors in this volume start from liberal democratic settings in Europe and the United States, where social and political divisions are cut along similar axes (e.g. 'left' and 'right', pro- and anti-immigration), and where there has been a successive renationalization and culturalization of politics. A central aim is to understand better if and how particular pasts are activated or omitted in contemporary populist far-right rhetoric, and the claims to which this has given rise. While polarization inevitably includes at least two poles, the rise of populist parties and movement on the far right has been identified as one of the most salient factors in contemporary polarization in this part of the world (McCoy et al. 2018). It is also the pole from which some of the most dangerous claims to the past have emerged, fiercely rejecting visions of decolonized, equal and inclusive societies (de Cesari and Kaya 2019).

More than the claims to the past, however, we seek to understand the conditions that make such claims possible. To this end, the chapters in this volume address issues that extend both outward and inward from 'heritage', which is understood here as the production of the past in a given present (Harrison 2013a: 32). The authors show how ancient monuments and sites, bygone eras and political regimes, and even your genetic ancestry can become wrapped up in polarized political debates. Together, they pave the way for a better understanding of the role of the past in times of populism and polarization.

To ground this conversation, the following sections present the book's thematic framework, interrogating the links between notions of heritage, belonging and polarization. These sections also attempt to knit the chapters together, exploring their various viewpoints and interconnected arguments.

Heritage and the Western Grammar of Belonging

The question 'where are you from?' lies at the core of this book. It is, arguably, one of the most dangerous questions of our time. Depending on who is asking and what they really want to know, the answer can change the trajectories of human lives. Is it where you call home? What it says in your passport? Where your ancestors came from? What religion you subscribe to? Or is it your culture and ethnicity they want to know about? When asked from the comfort of your living room, perhaps as you swab for an ancestry DNA test

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or search for kin on genealogy websites, the question can spark curiosity and joy. When asked in a taxi, it can stimulate conversation. When asked at the border to the United States or the European Union, by someone fleeing war, persecution or poverty, the answer can be a matter of life and death. Because 'where are you from?' is also a question about where you 'belong'.

While closely related to the concept of 'identity' and often used in similar ways politically, 'belonging' is more affective and strongly linked to place (Anthias 2018; Lähdesmäki et al. 2016). Identity is wrapped up with ideas of becoming and 'the self', whether individual or collective (Giddens 1991). As such, it is contingent on and developed in relation to others, but not typically assigned by others. As argued by Floya Anthias (2018: 140), belonging 'asks about "to what" and "with whom" you are a member, where and by whom you are accepted and you feel attached to, rather than who you are'. When politicized, belonging can therefore be a powerful means to justify asymmetrical rules of acceptance based on sociospatial claims (Antonsich 2010).

Accruing over the centuries, such rules have shaped what can be called a *grammar of belonging* upon which the tacit membership criteria of Western societies still rest – a system that spatializes kinship and assigns worth based on predefined hierarchies. Heritage, so intimately tied to place, property and emotions (Smith et al. 2018), is central to this grammar.

Heritage is affective and selective. We often cherish heirlooms and muse on the fate of our forebears. Sometimes, we feel connected to times long-gone and peoples long dead, and care deeply about ancient places far away (Hannerz 2002). When the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris went up in flames in 2019, people from all over the world mourned (Russakoff et al. 2019). Heritage is also about who we *want to be* – as individuals, groups and nations. Monuments and traditions tend to align us with ancestors whose good sides we share and whose evils we ignore, drawing lines between my past and yours (Harrison 2013b; Lowenthal 1998, 2015). Because of its selective nature, David Lowenthal (2012) once said that if we want heritage to make sense, we have to believe, just like the Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, in 'as many as six impossible things before breakfast'. It requires that we forget most of history and cherrypick through the rest. In doing so, heritage often works to clarify rather than complicate pasts and to 'infuse them with present purposes' (Lowenthal 1998: xv).

Since the nineteenth century, most choices about what aspects of the past to remember and preserve for the nation have been purposeful and in the hands of elites and political leaders, assisted by collectors, scholars and heritage professionals (Díaz-Andreu 2007; Kohl 1998; Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Rowlands 1988; Silberman 1995; Trigger 1984). Basking in the light of past 'golden ages', Western nations have tended to highlight that which

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justifies contemporary orders, favouring sites that attest to pure or grand origins, and raising statues of chosen heroes reshaped in their own image (Anderson 1983; Smith 1997).

Firmly rooted in European modernity, colonialism and the ideology of the nation-state, these processes of selection and curation have helped build legitimacy and to persuade people that their blood, personhood and loyalty is tied to an ethnically bounded territory – a homeland worth dying for (Anderson 1983; Hamilakis and Momigliano 2006; Kapferer 2012; Kuutma and Annist 2020; Thomas 2004; Winter 2015). Historical monuments and archaeological sites became part of a system of thought that generated a meaningful difference between people based on origins and physical features, placing them on a ladder of civilization (Díaz-Andreu 2007; Herzfeld 2012). By fixing the Western self as the 'real' human against an external binary 'Other' (Said 1978), this system simultaneously shaped internal criteria for national belonging.

Over time, this curation of the past has grown into the present-day phenomenon of heritage, codified in national and international decrees that call for the protection and management of heritage 'assets' through formalized bureaucratic procedures (Bendix et al. 2013; Harrison 2013a; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Meskell 2015; Plets 2016). It is a phenomenon that has the power to turn 'the past' into 'The Past', bringing events, sites and objects into 'an arena from which selections can be made and values derived' (Macdonald 2013: 18). To include both the political and material aspects of heritage, researchers talk of these formalized values and practices as 'heritage regimes' (Bendix et al. 2013; Geismar 2015; Plets 2016). Within these regimes, heritage workers and researchers become intertwined with the current politics of the nation and with international agendas.

Today, national and international heritage regimes are increasingly adjusted to make room for diverse voices and participants, and to erase power imbalances in the selection and stewardship of heritage. More voices participate in the curation of the past, and heritage is not just a conservative force but also a tool to manage and mobilize social change (Hafstein 2012; Lafrenz-Samuels 2019). It has become a forceful vocabulary for international diplomacy, claims to land ownership, and minority rights, as well as an important economic resource for tourism and cultural industries (Lafrenz-Samuels and Rico 2015). Likewise, heritage practices are no longer only concerned with praising the 'victors' of history, but often seek to make people aware of past crimes and traumatic events. Dark or 'negative' heritage sites (Meskell 2002), such as prisons, slave markets and concentration camps, now stand next to monuments that celebrate supremacy, war and empire (Biran et al. 2011; Logan and Reeves 2008; Macdonald 2009).

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Instead of levelling the playing field, however, efforts to diversify and globalize heritage through instruments such as the UNESCO World Heritage List have often backfired, reproducing a Western logic (Meskell 2018). Many attempts to disturb celebratory notions of heritage have also fallen flat as they seek reconciliation in place of debate (González-Ruibal, Chapter 6 in this volume). Laurajane Smith has linked this to what she calls the 'Authorised Heritage Discourse', a 'hegemonic, self-referential discourse favouring monumentality, scientific objectivity, aesthetic judgment and nation building', that dominates Western heritage regimes (2006: 3). Going further, Michel Herzfeld (2004) argues that the whole societal project of heritage is still wrapped up in a 'global hierarchy of value'. Inherited from the European colonialist enterprise, it continues to reproduce the particularities of cultures based on an implicit measuring stick of value.

This reproduction is reinforced by the way in which heritage is marketed as a product for consumption, often using familiar tropes, stereotypes and cultural distinctiveness as selling points (Coelho 2019; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995). In the hierarchy of value, the grammar of belonging established in modernity is not only rehearsed, but it also consigns cultural differences to the past, removing them from contemporary politics and the realm of the disputable. Regina Bendix (2000: 39) warns that heritage may never escape its roots, since 'the apparatus which constructs and maintains things in the name of heritage is derived from Western, enlightened science', the 'ideology of heritage is derived from Western romantic nationalism', and the 'marketing of heritage is fuelled by Western capitalism'. Heritage, Bendix (2000: 39) suggests, 'is reflexive modernity's successor to Western colonial hegemony'. It therefore remains a loose gun even when repurposed for the goals of unity and social justice.

For these reasons, the curated past that we call heritage is still, in many ways, part of modernity's grammar of belonging. Heritage tends to historicize, spatialize and clarify differences, wrapping them in narratives of cultural continuity and packaging them for consumption. References to 'our common heritage' signal that, just like national citizenship, heritage is a membership organization with set criteria. These criteria remain skewed towards Western attributes. When understood in terms of heritage, the question 'where do you come from?' therefore inevitably carries the meaning 'where do you *rightfully belong*?'. When directed to those who lack cultural and physical invisibility in Western societies, the question already implies that they do not (Judt 2011).

It is no wonder, then, that in times of populism and political polarization, when emotions run high and questions of belonging enter the forefront of political debates, so too does heritage.

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Political Polarization, Populism and Heritage

The phenomena of political polarization, populism and heritage share many traits. They are each affective in nature and can be characterized as processes or strategies rather than 'things' that simply exist. To work out how they are interlinked, a good place to start is with the meaning of political polarization.

Whether due to the failures of (neo)liberal democracies (Mair 2013), to global conflict or to socioeconomic and generational gaps, most researchers agree that political divisions in Europe and the United States have grown exponentially over the last three decades. The term 'polarization' is generally used to describe the *movement* whereby these divisions amass at two separate ends of the social and political spectrum. It refers to situations where people grow more partisan and are compelled to pick sides on major points of contestation. These points are commonly built around oppositional pairs such as left versus right, religious versus secular, cosmopolitan versus nationalist, and the elite versus the people. Jennifer McCoy et al. usefully defines polarization as:

> a process whereby the normal multiplicity of differences in a society increasingly align along a single dimension and people increasingly perceive and describe politics and society in terms of 'Us' versus 'Them'. (2018: 16)

Research in the social and political sciences has shown that the polarization we see in the United States and Europe today is more affective than in previous decades, and that the dividing lines are increasingly drawn along a 'cultural value dimension' (McCoy et al. 2018; Oscarsson et al. 2021). This should be seen against the background of an accelerating 'culturalization of politics' from the late twentieth century onwards, where social and liberal democratic governments have tended to emphasize cultural rather than class-based socioeconomic issues as explanations for crisis and political instability (Brown 2006).

'Affective polarization' means that divisions have become characterized by a merging between people's stance on contested issues and their religious, cultural and racial identities (Hetherington and Rudolph 2018; Iyengar et al. 2019; Mason 2016, 2018). Divisions that used to be tied to specific questions, like war or abortion, have become bound to a wider sociocultural identity package. Evidence from the United States shows that Republican and Democrat voters are becoming less willing to marry or even socialize across partisan lines (Hetherington and Rudolph 2018; Iyengar et al. 2019). Lilliana Mason (2016) describes this as 'social sorting'. She argues that the more 'well-sorted' people are, the more consistent they

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are in their emotional reactions to political messages. Those with aligned racial, religious and political identities are exponentially more hostile towards outgroups (Mason 2016).

Morgan Marietta and David Barker (2019) identify the lack of trust in knowledge as one of the most toxic elements in this inwards alignment, driven by misinformation and the mechanics of social and news media. They show how people entertain only those ideas that match their values and then proceed to project those values into the public sphere. Like Mason, they find that extreme value positions correlate to factual certainty (see also Brubaker 2004; Sîrbu et al. 2019; Stroud 2011). The lack of trust in knowledge has also been shown to correlate with a decrease in actual political knowledge. Citizens in polarized countries, especially those with complex multiparty systems, more often miscategorize party positions on the left–right scale (Vegetti et al. 2017).

This emotionally reactive, sociocultural and distrustful polarization has made the cost of changing sides or entering into dialogue steep (McCoy et al. 2018). While polarization can certainly be productive and help address bottled-up issues, social injustices, and past wrongs that may require polarizing strategies to boost democratic participation (LeBas 2018), polarization becomes 'pernicious' if there is no will to compromise or interact. In such situations, a gridlock can occur that makes political consensus unattainable (Bäck and Carroll 2018; McCoy et al. 2018). Gridlock, in turn, can lead to democratic erosion, creating a favourable climate for thin-centred ideologies like populism, which separates society into 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' (Mudde 2007: 23, Mudde and Kaltwasser 2018). This tends to manifest in the election of contested populist leaders, like in the United States, Austria or Brazil, or in the concentration of power to small elite groups, such as in Turkey, Poland and Hungary (McCoy et al. 2018; Mudde 2019).

Importantly, populism is more than just a symptom. It can drive polarization by reinventing old 'rifts' that go back to the (re)formation of the nation-states and by matching them to present concerns (Somer and McCoy 2019). This is especially effective when trying to unite marginalized or fragmented segments of society by reviving 'a dominant cleavage around which other cleavages align' (McCoy et al. 2018: 18). Populists achieve this by using a rhetoric that suppresses 'within-group' differences 'into one single difference that becomes negatively charged and used to define the "Other"' (ibid.; see also Stolcke 1995). An example can be found in how previously disengaged or politically alienated populations around Europe have rallied to the common cause of anti-Muslim immigration. By supressing intergroup differences at the state and European levels with reference to a brotherhood of like-minded peoples that share a civilizational base – liberalism, democracy

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and Christian values – the far right has effectively mobilized Muslims as *the* 'Other' that overshadows all prior 'Others' (Brubaker 2017).

In Europe and the US, populist parties and movements on the far right have used such polarizing rhetoric, based in nativism, anti-elitism and authoritarianism (Mudde 2019), with considerable success. At once opposing and taking advantage of the late twentieth-century culturalization of politics, which led to a re-essentializing of ethnocultural differences under the umbrella of 'multiculturalism' and 'diversity' (Kaya 2019), they have reconfigured race as cultural belonging (see de Cesari, Chapter 1 in this volume). Many far-right populist parties argue that while foreign cultures are equal to their own, they are irreconcilable with and therefore a threat to the 'native' majority culture. In this cultural struggle, far-right rhetoric pulls on emotions of shame, anger, fear and nostalgia, encouraging people who feel stigmatized to draw self-esteem from that which feels safe and stable, like nationality and ethnicity (Salmela and von Scheve 2017; Wodak 2015).

It is within this nexus that polarization, populism and heritage meet and come to work along a similar axis, with interlinked triggers. They share momentum in the rifts of modernity, connected through emotion, crisis and identity-building – in the tendency to sort complex social realities into single dimensions of 'us' and 'them'. These links make heritage semiotically and emotionally accessible to polarizing strategies and rhetoric. They also make heritage a productive resource and rallying point for contested issues. This is particularly visible in the heated debates about how to deal with Confederate statues in the United States (Lafrenz-Samuels 2019; Lim 2020; Sinclair-Chapman 2018) and monuments that honour nineteenth-century slave owners in the United Kingdom (Lindsey and Smith 2021; Nasar 2020). They make it clear how processes of curation, and the ability of heritage to assemble social categories in material form, have contributed to both the creation and representation of the cleavages that fuel contemporary polarization. This also explains why heritage, when activated in a polarized climate, can escalate tensions rather than to defuse them.

But it is arguably in the reinvention of modernity's grammar of belonging, based on ethnonational origins, that we find the most toxic convergence (Appadurai 2006; Battle-Baptiste 2020; Kapferer 2012). Thinking back on the Bosnian War (1992–95) and the role of the past in ethnic conflict, Rydgren (2007: 240) observes that polarization tends to 'make ethnicity increasingly salient vis-a-vis other social categories'. He argues that there is a clear pattern among current nation-states – that when 'nationalist mobilization leads to a polarized situation in which the personal cost of interaction across ethnic boundaries increases sharply' (2007: 225, 240), people often turn to ethnonationalist master narratives to provide legitimacy and bring order to experience.

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The return to master narratives can be seen in how cultural racism and white supremacism continue to shape populist ideas of a uniquely European or Western heritage (de Cesari, Chapter 1 in this volume; Kennedy, Chapter 4 in this volume; Lähdesmäki 2019). It can be seen in how the Scandinavian far right invoke monuments and symbols linked to national origin narratives when arguing for anti-immigration policies (Niklasson and Hølleland, Chapter 3 in this volume), and in the political campaigns of the party Golden Dawn in Greece that cling to the legacy of ancient Sparta (Mac Sweeney et al. 2019). It can be seen in the local cultural policies of the National Front in France (now the National Rally), which fund medieval sites and festivals while axing multicultural initiatives (Almeida 2019). It is also present in the politics of the Northern League in Italy (now the League), which has long sought to reinvent a Celtic legacy that can attest to the 'pure' origins of their mythical homeland of Padania (Albertazzi 2006).

To confront such polarizing pasts while they are still unfolding is of great importance – not just to better understand what kind of society they help envision, but to figure out how polarization can be countered or turned into something productive, and what part researchers might have in it.

An Emerging Discussion

Research in the social and political sciences has identified a growing tendency of polarization to amass around cultural values and affective claims of belonging, where heritage is a key factor. Research in the interdisciplinary fields of memory studies and heritage studies, as well as in the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology, history and the classics, has long since identified this political importance of heritage, emphasizing its dual potential to contribute to wellbeing and social stability or lead to democratic erosion and tragic death.

The role of heritage in relation to identity, representation and ownership – especially linked to the question 'whose heritage?' – has been explored since the 1980s. The answers have helped us identify power inequalities and democratic deficits in heritage selection processes and policy, and in interpretation, found in everything from fights over the repatriation of ancient human remains to debates about climate change (e.g. Bendix et al. 2013; Colwell 2017; Källén 2013, 2016; Lafrenz-Samuels 2008; Lafrenz-Samuels and Rico 2015; Meskell 2015; Silverman 2011; Smith 2006). In the process, it has become painfully clear that our disciplines share conceptual and practical roots with the colonialist and nationalist projects of the nineteenth century and that these roots are still with us (Díaz-Andreu 2007; Hamilakis and Duke 2007; Kohl 1998; Kohl and Fawcett 1995), and that epistemic

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violence has left gaping holes in archaeological and historical narratives (Feuchtwang and Rowlands 2019).

The work to connect these insights on the 'politics of the past' to contemporary populism and to processes of political polarization has grown in the last decade, and we can see an emerging discussion with several important branches.

One branch has produced powerful accounts of heritage and archaeology's relationship with trauma and violence, dealing with polarizing situations like war and the refugee reception crisis in Europe and the United States (de León 2015; González-Ruibal and Hall 2015; Hamilakis 2018; Macdonald 2009; Silverman 2011; Sørensen and Viejo Rose 2015). Others have studied how populism, and the politics of memory, has reinforced or reconfigured ideas of heritage and belonging in Europe (Astor 2019; de Cesari and Kaya 2019; González-Ruibal et al. 2018; Hofmann et al. 2021; Jensen 2022; Kaya 2019; Niklasson and Hølleland 2018). This includes the role of the past in divisive discourses like Brexit (Bonacchi et al. 2018; Brophy 2018; Gardner 2017). Related to these discussions, archaeologists and anthropologists have scrutinized the uses of (ancient) DNA results in populist discourse and how they tend to 'rebiologize' cultural and physical differences (Blakey 2020; Frieman and Hofmann 2019; Hakenbeck 2019; Strand and Källén 2021). The role of the classical past in populism has also been explored. Researchers have examined everything from the use of classical symbols in extremist right-wing movements to the use of civilizational rhetoric in complex political settings like the European debt crisis (Herzfeld 2016; Hanink 2017; Mac Sweeney et al. 2019). Finally, the monument debate in the United States and Europe has led to a new investment in research on white supremacism, and fascist and colonial legacies (Bartolini 2019; Carter 2020; Lafrenz-Samuels 2019; Lim 2020; Sinclair-Chapman 2018).

This volume responds to and continues this important discussion from the conceptual springboard of belonging and political polarization. It offers texts that do not start from 'once upon a time', but from a tumultuous present where the past is an active political component.

The Chapters in the Book

The chapters in this book draw on the individual authors' established body of work and their professional experiences. From their situated viewpoints, they seek to reflect, discuss and explore the relationship between heritage, belonging and political polarization. They approach this relationship in multifaceted ways, through collective memories, archaeological sites, symbols, bodies and historical narratives.

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Out of the myriad points where the chapters connect, two conversations stand out as particularly salient. One has to do with the 'chicken or the egg' problem. It asks how heritage can be used as a *tool* by populist and far-right political actors to drive polarization on the one hand, and how heritage can act as an underlying *condition* for polarization on the other. The second is about the relationship between political polarization and the academic sphere, asking what role researchers have in enabling polarized pasts.

Chiara de Cesari opens the conversation in Chapter 1 by addressing cultural fundamentalism in right-wing populist movements. Drawing on interviews with right-wing populist supporters in several European countries, she describes how heritage and memories of colonialism come to function as an axis around which a polarizing rhetoric revolves. In the theory that guides their politics, she argues, cultural heritage is understood as a quasi-racial trait. It has therefore become a convenient way to speak about what they see as irreconcilable differences between peoples – a justification for why multiculturalism does not work. In official talk, racist references to 'Blacks and Arabs' are disguised by speaking of heritage aliens. She explains how this use of heritage is made possible through the reinvention of Western civilization as an overriding divide that blurs divisions between European nations and clumps Muslim countries together. Importantly, she points out, this is not just the work of right-wing populists; it has also been fuelled by the denouncement of multiculturalism in mainstream politics, and by the War on Terror after 9/11 that turned the 'clash of civilizations' and 'culture wars' into everyday jargon. Ultimately, she warns, this polarizing rhetoric has the potential to subject the minds and bodies of those deemed not to belong in Western societies to brutal forms of harm.

Cathrine Thorleifsson, who has carried out extensive ethnographic fieldwork among politicians and followers of far-right movements in Europe, continues the conversation in Chapter 2 by investigating how the past figures into political polarization in Hungary, where the divide between right and left has come to dominate the public sphere. She shows how the far-right Jobbik party has built a polarizing rhetoric around heritage symbols and ceremonies commemorating historic events. While the clash of civilizations theme highlighted by de Cesari figures as a backdrop, the old cleavage reinvented by the Jobbik party is that of Greater Hungary battling against oppressors and infidels on all sides. Framed by a narrative of innocence, Thorleifsson describes how politicians wallow in the memory of lost wars and territories, in Soviet suppression and Nazi assault, building a cyclical myth of victimhood. Recent 'attacks' by EU officials and the 'invasion' of Muslim migrants becomes the most recent example of this endless bullying. Then as now, Jobbik claims, a strengthening of ethnonationalist and heteronormative values is the only thing that can save the nation. Just

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like de Cesari, Thorleifsson shows how a polarizing rhetoric is generated by tapping into already-existing heritage and memories, re-aligning them to fit their own narrative of 'us' versus 'them'.

Adding to the discussion by de Cesari and Thorleifsson, in Chapter 3, Elisabeth Niklasson and Herdis Hølleland take a closer look at the role of the past in the policies and budget proposals of three populist right-wing parties sitting in Scandinavian parliaments. In line with de Cesari's argument about how heritage can hide racism under a mantle of culture, they argue that cultural heritage offers a more acceptable vocabulary for the populist right to rationalize the exclusion of 'unwanteds'. What makes it effective, they point out, is partly that it mirrors the way in which heritage is discussed in multiculturalist discourse, and partly that the curation of the past in Scandinavia is already tied to national origin narratives. More than a placeholder for 'race' targeting Muslims and minorities, the parties superficially dislocate heritage from their anti-immigration agenda. In policy, heritage is one of the few things that the parties argue 'for', wanting stronger state intervention and protection. Like Jobbik's myth of Greater Hungary, the past is kept innocent, providing a nostalgic contrast to dystopic visions of the present. This separation, the authors argue, and the caring image created by campaigning for archaeological sites, lends power to the exclusionary arguments of the populist right and makes their cultural policies hard to oppose. Who will refuse more funding for heritage? They warn that heritage, as a backdrop for polarizing rhetoric, risks erasing nuances in what it means to be Swedish, Danish and Norwegian, with serious consequences for those not considered to part of 'the common heritage'.

In Chapter 4, Rebecca Futo Kennedy brings the conversation back to the reinvention of the clash of civilizations after 9/11, where a Christian and liberal West is pitched against an Islamic and oppressive East. Starting from Zack Snyder's popular film *300* about the ancient battle between Sparta and Persia in 480 BCE, she explores the academic, public and political understandings of 'Western civilization', set against the background of political polarization in the United States. The film, which reflects and reinforces views of the classical past as pure and superior, is used to frame a discussion where Kennedy unfolds the genesis and uses of this misconceived image. Unpacking its relationship to orientalism, to the idea of the 'Greek miracle' and to Western identity, she identifies Western civilization as an origin myth for how the colonialist project created the modern world. Echoing Herzfeld's notion of a 'global hierarchy of value' and the observations made by de Cesari, and Niklasson and Hølleland, that heritage and culture has replaced 'race' in right-wing populist discourse, Kennedy explains how 'Western' has come to replace 'white' without changing the underlying racial logic. She links this back to political polarization, noting how stereotypical ideas of

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Sparta can be found in the conflation between ancient Persia and modern Iran, and in the ideologies of white supremacist groups in the United States that advocate for gun rights and the exclusion of non-white peoples.

In Chapter 5, Reinhard Bernbeck adds depth to the conversation by diving into the politics of memory in contemporary Germany, where he examines the 'polarization potential' of multilayered heritage sites. He weaves his argument by highlighting the simplistic and affirmative nature of Pierre Nora's famous concept *lieux de mémoire*, meaning 'sites of memory' that act as a social glue in society. To add nuance to this, he also uses the concepts of *lieux de discorde* and *non-lieu*, meaning material places that have a 'dispute value', and 'nonplaces' that are not meant to be remembered. Building on these, he articulates his own notion of *lieux brisés*, 'broken places', where material aspects and political connotations are jumbled together within a 'shattered stratigraphy'. He strips the layers of two such places that are linked to Germany's colonial past, the Halfmoon Camp in Wünsdorf, a Muslim prisoner-of-war camp from the First World War, and the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. Instead of the multivocality and instructive disputes to which these places lend themselves, he finds that many stratigraphic layers are deliberately silenced. In line with Thorleifsson's point about how the myth of Greater Hungary works to hide past atrocities and deny the victims their humanity, Bernbeck finds that the colonialist violence of the German Empire is downplayed at these sites – less by voices from the far right than by state institutions. Triggered by neo-Nazi activism, and in line with policy agendas, they tend to focus on the memory of the Nazi era to the point where it overshadows other wrongs in Germany's past. Ultimately, Bernbeck argues, the polarizing potential of these *lieux brisés* comes not from the extreme ends of the political spectrum, but from the suppression of public discord at its centre.

Continuing the conversation along the same lines, in Chapter 6, Alfredo González-Ruibal analyses the relationship between heritage and hatred in relation to the Spanish Civil War and the long dictatorship of Francisco Franco, a cleavage that still drives political polarization in Spain. Like Bernbeck, he notes the feelgood and clarifying nature of heritage, arguing that in light of the rise of right-wing populism, we have to pay more attention to the negative emotions that heritage provokes by studying not just 'negative heritage' (Meskell 2002), such as genocide memorials that are meant to disturb and make us learn from the past, but also sites that are built on false promises of reconciliation in conflicts that never really ended. The Confederate heritage in the United States is an example of the latter, he argues. The events in Charlottesville demonstrated how any threat to such heritage can trigger hatred and reveal that the legacies of oppression it really stands for is still alive. Turning to the Civil War memorial site of the Valley of the Fallen, he

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shows how heritage in Spain can be used to produce resentment in a similar way. The story of the massive neo-imperial site, which long housed Franco's remains, has been rewritten from one that celebrates the victors to one that mourns all who died in the war. Yet it only takes a small act of defiance, such as when González-Ruibal himself removed a bouquet of flowers from Franco's grave, to cause an outburst of hatred by the Spanish far right, exposing the old rift between Nationalists and Republicans in the process. Examining the encounter in light of his long experience doing Spanish Civil War archaeology, he finds that when heritage is used by right-wing populist movements, it does not just reflect hatred, but also intensifies polarization in society as a whole. It is therefore vital, he says, that monuments like the Valley of the Fallen are actively disturbed and defused by official means.

In Chapter 7, Chip Colwell takes the conversation in a new direction as he explores the relationship between belonging and political polarization in relation to the heritage of our bodies. He systematically considers how and why genetic ancestry testing has become such a potent answer to questions of personal and collective belonging. By analysing the stories that emerge from direct-to-consumer DNA tests in the United States and how they are used to mediate identity, he argues that DNA is a 'dangerous heritage' that can lead to polarized pasts. He illustrates that no matter who gets tested – a family curious about their pre-American ancestry, a politician like Elisabeth Warren seeking to verify her Native American roots or neo-Nazis aiming to prove their whiteness – to claim a heritage by way of DNA tends to link old notions of racial purity to contemporary questions of belonging. Colwell thereby highlights how processes of self-identification, akin to what political scientists calls 'social sorting' (Mason 2016), act as a condition for the mix-up of 'heritage' and 'race', a link identified by several previous voices in this conversation. The take-away message is that polarization may be driven by right-wing populism, but the logics and language they use, such as DNA, come straight from the cultural and political centre of Europe and the United States.

In a contribution that both expands and illustrates the points made by Colwell, in Chapter 8, Anna Källén unravels the connections and clashes between archaeology, genomics and politics. She starts from an explosive news story about the results of a Swedish research project that claimed, based on ancient DNA (aDNA), that half the population in a Viking Age town called Sigtuna had been immigrants. The story about the archaeological site was met with rage by anti-immigration activists and was eventually retracted and declared to be 'fake news'. To understand why the story caused such havoc and how aDNA studies can turn into a dangerous heritage, Källén sets out the circumstances. Linking up with Niklasson and Hølleland, she talks about the symbolic meaning Sigtuna holds in national

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origin narratives and how the news story landed at a time when right-wing populism was on the rise in Sweden. Against this tense background, she explains how the central idea of 'mixing' in aDNA research, combined with the tendency to apply cultural labels to ancient populations, can make it useful for political claims of belonging at both ends of the political spectrum. The story about the Sigtuna immigrants was a well-meaning attempt by liberal researchers to convince the public that the Swedish population was already diverse back in the day. In line with Colwell's argument, Källén shows that the problem with this claim is that the idea of mixing assumes there is such a thing as purity in the first place, or in this case 'Swedishness'. In the wake of the debacle, public trust in academia was weakened and the story became fuel for anti-immigration campaigns – the very opposite of what the researchers had intended.

In the concluding reflections, in Chapter 9, Michael Herzfeld picks up the key threads from previous chapters – on right-wing populism, on the reinvention of civilizational rifts and ethnoracial narratives of the nation, and the return to biogenetic representations of origin – and addresses the wider implications of heritage in times of political polarization. Moving between everyday expressions about the Greek language running 'in the blood' to the increasingly explicit policies of political parties and governments, he seeks to unpack the meaning of the term 'heritage' in order to show that even benevolent liberals may, in their critiques of working-class mores, lapse into the same exclusionary rhetoric as that of right-wing populist leaders. Strengthening the points made by several voices in the conversation, Herzfeld argues that both sides feed into the emergence of a new and toxic nationalism, based on radically anti-intellectual and anti-social claims reminiscent of those present in the run-up to the Second World War. Just as then, he illustrates, both sides reinforce racist doctrines as markers of high civilizational achievement.

Finally, most of the voices in this book also have something to say about the role of researchers in empowering polarized pasts and what can be done to counter or defuse political polarization. Several chapters locate mechanisms that drive polarization in academic traditions, and call for a heightened awareness among researchers. Kennedy points out that classical researchers and historians have long pretended that 'Western civilization' is a neutral term that has nothing to do with white supremacism. Political and racial connotations have been deemed external, derived from the appropriation of antiquity by radicals. This has begun to change, she notes, under the influence of archaeological and anthropological methods that have inspired more critical approaches and have helped create a richer image of the multiethnic ancient Greece. Still, it may be a while before it becomes a habit among classical scholars to question the underlying

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motives whenever the past is used to justify political standpoints. Likewise, de Cesari argues that researchers in the humanities must take questions of race and cultural racism seriously – that it is time to set aside the fear that political engagement would delegitimize us and harm our integrity. While such engagement may be difficult in a polarized climate where there is little support for and trust in academia, she insists that we must make our voices heard, especially when cultural fundamentalists use our own concepts as weapons.

Källén's chapter perfectly illustrates the difficulty of engaging in political debates. Her case study about the Viking Age town of Sigtuna is a lesson in how the readiness of researchers to provide facts that support liberal political ideas, in combination with the logics of aDNA research, can have the opposite effect. When communicating archaeological findings, she argues, scholars must avoid simplistic labelling, recognizing that human identity and culture is always unpredictable. Similarly, Niklasson and Hølleland show that the intention to be relevant to society, which guides national heritage sectors and much archaeological research, can become a slippery slope when political divisions in society grow. Considering the feelgood heritage policies of the far right, which favour symbolic national sites and traditions linked to national origins, they ask archaeologists and civil servants to be wary of gifts, and to resist the temptations that come with being in the political limelight. Instead, they argue, we need to side with those negatively affected by those policies.

Many chapters also offer tools to address polarization 'in situ'. Both Bernbeck and González-Ruibal highlight how archaeology can be used to disturb sacralized memories of war and colonialism. By excavating places that were not meant to be remembered, such as mass graves from the Spanish Civil War and sites with 'shattered stratigraphies' such as prisoner-of-war camps from the First World War, archaeologists can rouse dispute and yield multivocality. Archaeologists can also, as González-Ruibal demonstrated in Spain, elicit hatred by deliberately interrupting ceremonies of reverence at symbolic heritage sites. While provocation may sound counterproductive, González-Ruibal sees it as the first step in defusing heritage as a mechanism for polarization. Such acts of disturbance provoke a social reaction revelatory of repressed dynamics, he argues, making it possible to understand how heritage can work to conceal the 'hatred and authoritarianism that these monuments both reflect and activate' (González-Ruibal, Chapter 6 in this volume). When these dynamics are laid bare, it can facilitate depolarization. For this, Bernbeck and González-Ruibal both recognize that we need academic activism, but that this needs to be matched by political decision-makers who dare remove statues and order exhumations, and who welcome interrogation of anti-democratic pasts.

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Dangerous Heritage

> My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. (Foucault 1983: 231)

Taken together, the chapters in this book show that the relationship between political polarization and heritage is dangerous. Not that heritage is bad, negative, difficult or dark, but that it can be dangerous. Not that right-wing populists are evil, but that they can be dangerous. It is the *conditions*, the *actions* and the *consequences* of this relationship that make them so. As the chapters demonstrate, the most critical *conditions* are linked to the persistent grip of colonial taxonomies and territorially circumscribed ethnonational categories. The most polarizing *actions* are those that, based on these conditions, use heritage to align present concerns along rifts that go back to the (re)formation of nation-states: to ethnic conflict, civil war, world war and imperial suppression – actions that re-activate old boundaries between political camps, racialized groups, religions, or even 'civilizations'. The direst *consequences* lie in the question 'where do you belong?'. If modernity's asymmetrical grammar of belonging seeps through the cracks, erasing the nuances between 'us' and 'them', the criteria for membership in Western nation-states tighten. The world grows more dangerous for those who 'lose' the competition for recognition in society (Judt 2011) – for those characterized as disruptive, incompatible and politically exploitable by virtue of their 'heritage'.

That the relationship between heritage and polarization is dangerous does not mean we should discard it or that we should dismiss the peoples, sites and discourses that participate in it. As several voices in the book note, the act of silence by institutions and researchers in dealing with polarized pasts can make them even more dangerous. Instead, the relationship between heritage and polarization is an invitation to vigilant inquiry – to continuous and cross-disciplinary investigation that can facilitate research that is proactive (but not reactionary) and reflexive (but not navel-gazing).

We propose that the arguments and ideas presented here be used as a starting point for such inquiry. We hope it will be a book to think with, not merely to think about – a book that triggers debate and encourages the reader to search for the important questions, not ready-made answers. Knowing that heritage is not so much a mirror to the past as a world-making device, such inquiry always requires 'a sanguine approach to heritage in which the so-called critical stance is not just theorized in a rarefied sphere of scholarly lexical gymnastics, but practically engaged with' (Waterton et al. 2017). Only then can we begin to understand if and how the curation

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of the past can become a force of depolarization and social change, and what part researchers can have in it.

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