

MAKING MEANING OF HERITAGE LANDSCAPES:
THE POLITICS OF REDEVELOPMENT IN HALIFAX, N.S.

by

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Abstract

My research is concerned with uncovering the political and cultural ideologies implicit in the maintenance and reproduction of heritage landscapes. Employing a mixed methods approach involving textual analysis, participant observation and expert interviews, I study debates over development and heritage in Halifax, Nova Scotia and their material outcomes. Proposals for development in the city's downtown see the formation of "textual communities," groups that share a similar reading of landscape, planning texts or heritage, that face off in public hearing, in court rooms and in the media. I identify two such communities, one which sees the heritage aesthetic as an important marker of place-based identities, the other which considers heritage flexible and secondary to economic growth. I draw on theoretical insights by scholars of the new cultural geography who view landscape as a text through which cultural processes are negotiated. I also consider theorizations of the concept of "heritage," and the production and consumption of heritage through processes of gentrification. In Halifax, the heritage aesthetic is to be found in symbols, styles and objects that reference the maritime and naval activity that was central to the city's founding and expansion as a British military defense centre. Following Duncan and Duncan (2004: 4), I argue that "landscape as an aesthetic production acts as a subtle but highly effective mechanism of exclusion." The modes of representation and forums of debate through which the urban landscape and its heritage resources are maintained, reproduced and transformed are controlled by politically and economically powerful individuals and special interest groups. The majority of the city's residents, however, are excluded from these debates. I conclude that gentrification appears to be the compromise between pro-heritage and pro-growth forces

because it simultaneously offers the promise of economic reinvigoration and the maintenance of heritage resources. Meanwhile, this historic downtown becomes an increasingly exclusive “boutique landscape of consumption” (Reid and Smith 1993).

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List of Abbreviations

HAC- Heritage Advisory Committee

HRM- Halifax Regional Municipality

MPS- Municipal Planning Strategy

NSURB- Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board

PAC- Planning Advisory Committee

PIM- Public Information Meeting

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Heritage and Development in Halifax

Most Canadian cities, especially those with an imposing physical site, a distinct culture and language, and a historically defined core of older structures, maintain a unique sense of place. Moreover, each poses a fascinating intellectual dilemma, juxtaposing a sense of continuity, stability, and persistence, if not inertia, with a feeling and appearance of rapid social and economic change. (Bourne and Ley 1993: 17)

Just south of Citadel Hill, in downtown Halifax, sits a city block that exhibits a curious juxtaposition. Immediately opposite the street level entrance to the National Historic Site, a gridiron fence contains an assortment of brick and wooden buildings arranged unassumingly on manicured grounds. For passers by walking to the financial quarter or the waterfront, this property is a mystery. Its rhododendrons bloom in springtime, just like at the Public Gardens, two blocks away, and distract attention from the decommissioned canons that laze about the lawns. This place is Royal Artillery Park, formerly a part of the Imperial Fortress of Halifax. Created in 1797 as military barracks to accommodate British soldiers stationed in the city, the park has maintained some of its original functions for over two hundred years. Still today, these buildings, which house a mess hall, administrative offices and small number of residences, are owned by the Canadian Armed Forces. Also part of the complex is the Cambridge Military Library, named after former Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, the Duke of Cambridge. Opened in 1902, it houses a collection of "leisure books for the 19th century gentleman" (Comiter and Pacey 1988: 118) that were transferred to Halifax from the British garrison at Corfu in 1864. Royal Artillery Park, though distinguished with heritage plaques, is a place which is often overlooked.

On the other side of the block, abutting the rear of the military property, is an altogether different type of urban space. Doyle Street, which runs only for this one block,

is home to a collection of boutiques that occupy the ground level of a two-storey structure. A wine cellar, an upscale Italian delicatessen, a home décor shop and a gift and candy boutique subtly jostle for the attention of purpose-driven shoppers. Above these shops sit exclusive condominiums with back windows looking out on the artillery grounds. New and old collide, but they don't clash.

The contrast between Royal Artillery Park and Doyle Street is indicative of the tension resulting from the necessity to reserve a place for history in the post-industrial city, while simultaneously recognizing the capitalist imperatives of accumulation and development. The buildings in the military compound are protected under the Nova Scotia Heritage Properties Act, while the adjacent commercial and residential properties are not. Nevertheless, the new buildings seem complementary to their older neighbours in scale, design and materials. In historic cities, such as Halifax, the aesthetic context for development weighs heavily in favour of heritage. Residents and visitors who view this heritage landscape, which is in fact maintained and reproduced for their gaze, absorb a particular version of history. Most of them probably do not recognize that there are gaps and silences in the stories the built environment tells about the past. In Halifax, and in many other cities, heritage is only really negotiated and contested in a space marked out by urban economics and visual pleasures where preservation and growth lie at opposite ends of a caricatured spectrum; Doyle Street is the middle ground. What is left out of the equation? Whose stories are not being told?

This thesis examines the latent exclusions in the production and maintenance of the heritage landscape in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Contests over urban space in the city focus upon the tension between a narrowly conceived notion of heritage, associated with

the city's history as a naval outpost of British Empire, and a profit-oriented development ethos. Opposing "textual communities" (Stock 1986), one which views heritage as an important marker of place-based identities, the other which considers heritage flexible and secondary to economic growth, debate the merits of proposals for downtown development projects in political forums and in the media. Points of contention relate mostly to the height of the proposed buildings and their potential visual impact. For heritage activists, modern high-rise buildings threaten heritage resources, such as the views from the Citadel Hill, a former defence fortress that is now a national historic site, and the low-rise 19th century streetscapes of downtown. In this view, the meaning of the city and its appeal for locals and tourists is derived in part from references to the past. For developers, on the other hand, historical continuity connotes stagnancy. By preventing redevelopment, they argue, the city appears backwards and provincial. Planners and politicians are forced to negotiate these competing interests but, as I will demonstrate in this thesis, they fail to question their legitimacy.

Drawing on scholars such as Duncan and Duncan (2004: 25), for whom landscapes "can evoke powerful images and sentiments, helping to constitute community values and playing a central role in the performance of place-based social identities and distinction" I argue that the landscape in Halifax is imbued with heritage significance that tells stories about the past which are incomplete. The city's history is rife with stories of empire, conquest and defence against "others" and today's valued heritage reflects this. There is little discussion of objects of heritage that do not reference the history of Halifax's role as a centre of British military defence, despite the fact that the city has been home to other ethno-cultural groups, including indigenous Micmac, African Nova

Scotian, French and German groups, since it was founded in 1749. Drawing on the work of W. J. T. Mitchell (2002) and the Duncans (1988; 1990; 2004), which is attentive to the implications of power in landscape, I question the links between the economic and political privilege of the actors who control the built environment in the present, and which and whose versions of history it expresses. I seek to reveal how the exclusivity of municipal processes where the texts of the city are read and written (Dear 1986; Duncan 1990) becomes naturalized through the aestheticization of visual objects and historical processes (Duncan and Duncan 2004). I argue that a limit case of such aestheticization is evident in efforts to overcome stultifying, two-sided debates with a pro-gentrification initiative on the part of a growth coalition led by a heritage planner and a small number of architects and business owners.

1.1 Writing Halifax into Geography

The research that led to this thesis was begun in part in response to a recognition that there are very few critical geographical writings on urban processes in Halifax. What has been written on the city is uncritical and limited in time-frame and scope. Ironically, this lack is perhaps due in part to the geography of the city: while the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is regionally important as a transportation hub and a centre for research and commerce, it remains peripheral to global circuits of capital and people that have been the subject of much recent scholarly inquiry in the discipline (see K. Mitchell 2004). Nevertheless, the city is changing and geographers with an interest in Canada's cities have yet to scrutinize its recent growth and accompanying pangs.

Several prominent volumes in the geographical literature on Canadian cities include discussions of Halifax (for example Nader 1976; Bunting and Filion 1988;

Bourne and Ley 1993). While they provide good overviews of the social and economic geography of the city, they need updating. Another source is Cameron and Aucoin's (1983) insightful portrayal of the Halifax political landscape in the 1960s and 1970s. Ley's (1996: 89) seminal book on the rise of "the new middle class" and gentrification in Canadian cities uses this account to support his finding that the city's South End undergoes the most intensive social and economic upgrading of any Canadian centre in the 1970s. Millward (1988) also examines gentrification in the city, but his quantitative, atheoretical approach leaves much to be desired.

Geography aside, there are a number of well-known historical accounts of Halifax. While they offer engaging tales, books such as Raddall's (1971) *Halifax: Warden of the North* (Raddall 1971) and Akins' (1973) *History of Halifax* are often one-sided and occasionally racist, and contribute to the historical mythology which I here seek to deconstruct. Other books make no pretension to historical completeness, but rather speak about the meaning of the past in the present. For example, Jensen (1968), The Heritage Trust of NS (1971), Pacey (1979) and Pacey and Comiter (1988) provide inventories of heritage resources and some discussion of the reasoning behind preservation efforts. However, these books focus almost exclusively on British colonial heritage and contain almost no discussion of social marginalization. Also, they rarely provide adequate answers to their own questions concerning the underlying meanings of heritage. Significantly, anthropological and sociological studies of the communities of Africville (Clairmont and Magill 1987) and Halifax's working class North End (Erickson 1986) contain very little discussion of British heritage.

1.2 Making Meaning of Heritage Landscapes

In addition to contributing to the scant geographical literature on Halifax, I also hope that this thesis may contribute to an understanding of the relationship between heritage and landscape. Specifically, I aim to draw attention to the exclusionary practices associated with the production and maintenance of heritage landscapes. As I show in Chapter 2, scholars have argued that the adoption of any culturally dominant form of heritage implies disinheritance to those who do not subscribe to, or are not represented in, its frames of reference (Shaw and Jones 1997; Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000). Similarly, important contributions to the vast literature on landscape draw attention to how the meanings of the material surface of the world can be made to include or exclude (Daniels 1993; K. Mitchell 2004; Duncan and Duncan 2004). Despite the commonalities between approaches to these two objects, or cultural productions, few have studied the “heritage landscape,” as such. It is possible that this is merely a semantic difficulty, as landscapes are almost always historical and are often implicitly treated as objects of heritage (W. J. T. Mitchell 2002), but scholars in these two geographical sub-fields have not yet meaningfully engaged one another’s vocabularies,¹ and geographers interested in heritage, especially, have not purposefully taken up the theoretical framework offered by the “new cultural geography.” I hope to show that in contests over urban space where the aesthetic appeal of relics from the past comes into question, it may be appropriate to consider how a landscape, and not only discrete objects of the built environment such as buildings and views, is imbued with heritage significance.

The geographical literature on gentrification is also relevant here. Numerous studies have suggested that gentrifiers are attracted to older neighbourhoods by, among other things, the appeal of a heritage aesthetic (Jager 1986; Ley 1996; Shaw 2005).

¹ An important exception is Duncan and Duncan (2004).

However, many scholars who discuss the consumption of heritage through gentrification view references to the past rather unproblematically.² I aim to show that when considering the role of the heritage aesthetic in gentrification, it is helpful to query socio-historical processes and events, and to understand how such meanings may be distorted and manipulated as they are made 'heritage.' In this case, the rhetoric which encourages upgrading through heritage (or historic) preservation perpetuates historical and contemporary exclusions at the same time as it renders them invisible. Effectively, gentrification transforms heritage into a shallow commodity and effaces the complexity of historical processes. The heritage landscape thus becomes a backdrop for individualized consumer practices (Ley 1996).

There are limitations that should be made clear from the outset. Although I am interested in gentrification, I do not set out to prove that it is taking place by empirically documenting it. Rather, I am attentive to the significance of discourses of gentrification, one aspect of an emerging geography of gentrification (Lees 2000), and growth coalition pro-gentrification rhetoric (Wilson and Mueller 2004), within a discursive field dominated by heritage interpretation. For my purposes, articulating the impact of discourses of gentrification on meanings of heritage is more important than explaining the political economy of gentrification (see Smith 1996; Ley 1996) or its effects, such as displacement (see Smith and Williams 1986).

Similarly, although I am interested in exclusionary practices associated with maintenance and reproduction of heritage landscapes, it is beyond the scope of this project to give a detailed account of who is excluded. By scrutinizing what is readily

² For an exception, see Shaw's (2005) discussion of the implications of colonial heritage aesthetics in gentrifying neighbourhoods of Sydney.

apparent—real conflict between opposing “textual communities”—and by probing the meanings of interpretations of the heritage landscape, I question the form and content of the planning process: Why have discussions over downtown development been dominated by the same cast of characters for the past thirty years? Why are few visible minorities, young people and poorer residents of the city represented in these discussions? Does the ubiquitous naval and military heritage accurately reflect the various social histories of this city? Such questions may begin to be answered with a critical evaluation of the place of heritage in the planning process, and the origin and significance of the meaning of heritage expressed in the built environment.

1.3 Methodology

An important idea that came out of the decades-old “cultural turn” in geography has to do with the researcher’s approach to representation. From the enlightenment project, academics had inherited a method and approach concerned with uncovering facts and representing them with vigorous accuracy. Mimesis was, and still is, a faculty of the modernist scientific project. Its work is to uncover facts in the world and make them legible so that others may read them and build upon them to discover still more facts and contribute to a growing corpus of knowledge. In social science and, some argue, natural science (for example Latour 1987), the mimetic model of representation is unsatisfactory because it fails to recognize that knowledge is produced in a particular socio-political context. For Duncan and Ley (1993), academic research can overcome the crisis of representation when the researcher adopts the role of interpreter. Thus, he or she not only represents the world but also theorises the site of his or her representation—the disciplinary setting, the relation with the research subjects, and other issues regarding

interpretation. Here, translating the world is not merely a matter of representing it, but also reflecting upon the process of interpretation inherent in representation (Duncan and Ley 1993).

I believe that a sensitivity to the politics of representation is useful in social scientific studies of the city. It is not difficult to fall into a trap of false objectivity, especially when one has the experience of being embedded in an institutional context or in the field. To the extent that my research questions were informed by theory and disciplinary norms, they may have also been prefigured by such norms. For instance, some of my initial research questions were off the mark because they were heavily influenced by readings and did not respond to the local context I examined. I was also forced to recognize and understand site-specific biases in another sense. Having lived in the city that I chose to study, I had pre-formed opinions on some planning issues. For example, when I began, my sympathies lay with the heritage advocates. As my research progressed, however, and I began to recognize that in some ways heritage and its uses speak to "bogus history," (Hewison 1987) I found myself becoming less and less supportive of their efforts. I also came to recognize that much of my prior knowledge of debates over development came from media accounts that exaggerate antagonisms, oversimplify complex issues, and use language unreflexively for the sake of reader interest. I had, like many others, read such accounts uncritically and formed opinions prematurely. Remaining conscious of such questions of interpretation, I recognize that my knowledge, and that of the actors I study, is situated in local institutional and

municipal spaces and is most effectively put to work through reflexive and open-ended research³.

During my time in the field I engaged in a variety of research activities, both highly structured and unstructured. My research methods are a combination of textual analysis and ethnographic human participation. "Texts," for me, include written texts but also visual texts, such as illustrations, and even the landscape itself as text (Duncan 1990; Barnes and Duncan 1993). Hence, I visited the archives and city planning department in search of relevant documents, but I also visited the physical sites of contested development and scrutinized visual representations of the landscape in tourist literature and artists' renditions. The components of my research involving human subjects consisted of interviews as well as participant observation. I interviewed individuals who are publicly involved in debates over development in Halifax and I observed the workings of municipal processes in a variety of forums. The aim of the interviews was to probe for information and candid opinions that are distorted in media accounts or left out entirely, while the goal of participant observation was to gain knowledge of actors controlling urban change in the institutional sites where contests over heritage landscapes are played out.

In terms of textual analysis, I found it useful to consult the written texts that document struggles over the heritage landscape and inadvertently play a part in constituting it discursively and materially (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Duncan and Duncan 2004). There are two daily newspapers in Halifax, the *Chronicle-Herald* and the *Daily News*, and one alternative news weekly, *The Coast*, in which city planning issues

³ For a good discussion of the benefits and pitfalls of adopting reflexivity as a research strategy, see Rose (1997).

are regularly reported. I gathered articles from these three sources dating back roughly to 2002, limiting my search to articles relating to three major cases of contestation (explored in Chapter 4), as well as articles on the Barrington Street Historic District initiative (discussed in Chapter 5). I also consulted articles in local business magazines that regularly report development issues. As I collected articles in print sources it became clear to me that newspaper reporting is far from neutral; beyond the usual journalistic rhetoric of reporters, I came across blatantly one-sided editorial pieces written by both developers and heritage people. From the HRM Planning and Development services I gathered planning documents such as the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS), land use by-law documents and official planning reports on recent development proposals and maps of view planes and zoning areas. Though only certain sections of the policy documents come to bear upon matters of heritage and development, the role of the planning text in regulating urban change is an important consideration. As Michael Dear argued in the 1980s, attention to planning texts is crucial to an understanding of the city in the postmodern era (Dear 1986) and, I would add, to studies of the geography of heritage.

Further written texts that I consulted were minutes of City Council meetings and those of two committees, the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) and the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) for downtown. These minutes were gathered from the municipal clerk's office and from online sources. In addition, I read minutes from public information sessions pertaining to the three sites of contested development which form my case study, and transcripts from the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSURB) hearing sessions that I was not able to attend in person. It is at these meetings where the

MPS is interpreted and where much of the work of imbuing the heritage landscape with meanings, and then naturalizing these meanings, is accomplished. Each of these planning sites is designed to provide a forum for public discussion and debate. I found, however, that the setting seemed to create only the opportunity for two points of view to be expressed, one in support of heritage preservation, the other in support of development.

Interviews constitute the second major component of the methodology in this study. For Crang (2002), interviews are a part of the “new orthodoxy” for qualitative research in human geography. Beyond this simple platitude, the format of the interview and the selection of interview subjects are important considerations. My decision to gather data through semi-structured interviews with elites was informed by the work of others in scholarship on landscapes and urban change (for example Caulfield 1994; Duncan and Duncan 2004; K. Mitchell 2004). I agree with Caulfield’s (1994: 153) contention that in an open-ended interview, “a researcher is better able to develop a grasp of the systems of meaning and understanding that inform respondents’ points of view and also to have greater confidence in the internal validity of interview data than is possible when using more highly structured techniques.” I interviewed elites because I share Duncan and Duncan’s (2004) interest in the ways in which the complicity of politically and economically powerful individuals and groups enables structures and networks of exclusion. I also agree with Hughes and Cormode’s (1998; quoted in Duncan and Duncan 2004: 34) assertion that “it is important to know more about and critically engage with, the people who are most influential in shaping” contemporary landscapes of power. Though some recent work by scholars who use feminist and ethnographic approaches has compellingly argued that social and economic disparities can be framed through accounts

which carve out a space for those “others” who are relegated to the margins, qualitative research focusing on elites can also serve to articulate inequalities (Crang 2002: 648). While understanding functions of exclusion is important to my project, giving voice to individuals and groups who are excluded is beyond the scope of my research.

In August, 2005, I conducted a series of thirteen interviews with prominent figures in debates over the heritage landscape. I interviewed roughly the same number of “heritage people” and pro-development individuals. The heritage activists with whom I spoke are mostly employed in academia as researchers or professors, or are retired, and devote their spare time to preservation initiatives and participating in local politics. The pro-development individuals that I interviewed are business and property owners, a lawyer and a local business leader. Among the respondents were also three city planners and one private planning consultant. The names of potential interviewees were gathered from newspaper articles and websites. I contacted these people via email, sending them a one-page consent form outlining my research project, requesting an interview and ensuring confidentiality. In most cases I met with the interviewee within a week of initial contact. The interviews lasted between one and two hours and took place at the respondent’s place of work or in a public setting, and in two cases, in the respondents’ home. I prepared by writing a series of potential themes and questions and by gathering pertinent information about my respondent’s involvement in local debates. I did not tape record the interviews. Retaining an exact audio record of what was said was not useful to my project. Instead, I scribbled a few notes, and then wrote a detailed recollection as soon as possible after the meeting.⁴ I did not find that my ability to record pertinent, surprising or useful responses was inhibited by my decision not to record interviews. Although I did

⁴ Western (1992) and Feldman (2000) employ a similar method.

experience difficulty accessing some individuals, problems around language and power, which Schoenberger (1991) suggests are common in interviews with elites, did not arise. This could be due to the fact that my interviewees presumed that I shared their views and experiences of the topics under question.

Another staple research method in qualitative social science is participant observation. For Geertz (1973) who is a major influence on the cultural geographers who inform my work (for example Duncan 1990; Duncan and Ley 1993) the researcher's real work is interpretation, and participant observation is one of a battery of ethnographic methods that one can use in "thick description." The aim here is to look beyond the surface of place, processes and relations in an effort to understand how their significance is constructed. I engaged in participant observation on five occasions. I attended a public meeting of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, a presentation made by the Barrington Street Heritage Advisory Committee, two sessions of the appeal of City Council's decision on the Midtown Tavern proposal at the NSURB and a City Council public hearing on the Tex Park development proposal. At these meetings I was able to observe actors who control urban change in the institutional sites where discourses of heritage, identity and change are developed and conferred with legitimacy. I was attentive to the physical locations of these meetings, to the race⁵, age and appearance of those in attendance and to what was said, by whom and to whom. I saw the same people at several of these gatherings but, interestingly, there were very few young people and racial minorities present. I base my assumption that planning meetings lack representation partly upon my observations of what one might term "markers of identity"—the skin

⁵ I am conscious of the intellectual baggage associated with the use of the term 'race.' Although it has been shown that racial categories are socially constructed, they are nevertheless powerfully and meaningfully mobilized (see Pred 2000).

colour, dress, and demeanour of attendees. Needless to say, it is risky to correlate such visual cues with social class, and I am wary of drawing premature conclusions.

Nevertheless, the observations that I made on these occasions contribute to my hypothesis that conflicting groups of elites dominate so-called "public" forums and that the exclusivity of the municipal process is made to appear natural. When I consider the possibility that the absence of "others" may be a by-product of the focus on the tension between opposing discourses of heritage and development, I wonder how the debates might play out differently.

In addition to reading articles, policies and documents, conducting interviews and attending meetings, I found it useful to visit the physical sites that are contested. Though I have lived in Halifax for most of my life, I rarely stop to take in streetscapes, admire the "much talked about" (Pacey 1979: 31), view of the harbour from Citadel Hill or notice the contrast between old buildings and new. Reading the cultural geography literature on landscape provided me with the idea that visiting the contested sites would contribute to my understanding of the issues at play. One of my respondents, a heritage planner for the city, insisted that mounting the ramparts at Citadel Hill and looking out in the direction of the ocean gives one a wonderful sense of the history of this city. The views from the Citadel are of course, one of the most hotly contested objects of heritage under scrutiny. I visited the fortress on a sunny summer's day and, having finagled a free entry for research purposes, waded through a throng of tourists, past the sentries in period military garb, to the lookouts. Standing high above the city, I found that I could see clearly for kilometres in every direction. Though the visit to the Citadel did not evoke feelings of

pride and belonging, it did contribute to my understanding of contested heritage resources.

I am concerned with constructions of place and identity that come about through interpretations of history and growth. My research is not quantitative: I am not concerned with housing market data or measuring spatial indicators of the transition to a new middle class. To do qualitative research of this nature is to position oneself both within and outside the texts wherein the various meanings of the city are negotiated and contested. In “returning home,” so to speak, and turning a critical eye to processes of urban change that I had taken for granted, I found myself situated both within and outside of the discipline, both within and outside of the communities and places that I studied. It is from this liminal space that the methodology and purpose of my project are elaborated.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The remainder of the thesis is structured into four chapters and a conclusion. The following chapter lays the theoretical groundwork for the rest of the thesis. I consider insights from a number of disparate geographical literatures that fall broadly under the banner of the “new cultural geography” and suggest that fruitful work may come from bridging gaps between them. I argue that the interpretive framework of cultural geographers, which is attentive to discourse, exclusion, signification and conflict, may be usefully put to work in studying the production and maintenance of the heritage landscapes, and that it may also add insight to our understanding of heritage in gentrification. Chapter Three provides a brief history of Halifax. I suggest that the establishment of the city as a naval base and defence centre in the 18th and 19th centuries was dependent upon the creation of a real and imaginary geography in which the British

occupied the centre, and others were relegated to the periphery. The elaboration of the idea of built heritage in the 20th century depended upon the reproduction of this exclusionary geography. Today, the most valued heritage resources in the city reference British military and naval history and frequently become objects of struggle. Chapter Four documents disputes over the reproduction of the heritage landscape. I examine the context and content of three contests over proposed high-rise developments in downtown Halifax. Plans to redevelop the Brewery Market District, the Midtown Tavern, and the former Tex Park lot, more than any others, have elicited debate over the relative importance of maintaining the heritage landscape. These are the first proposals for high-rise development in Halifax's CBD⁶ since the 1980s and their acceptance or refusal will likely have a significant visual and economic impact in the city. More importantly, an exploration of the politics of development surrounding these projects may contribute to an understanding of the reproduction of the exclusionary geography of the heritage landscape. Chapter Five examines an initiative to designate a downtown Halifax street a historic district. I focus upon discourses through which pro-gentrification rhetoric is mobilized. Through this initiative, heritage associated with British military history recedes and is replaced by a consumer-oriented heritage aesthetic. The concluding chapter underscores the process through which culturally dominant forms of heritage—especially in evidence in landscapes that reference colonial or imperial history—are produced and reproduced and can result in disinheritance. In order to better understand this process, geographers who study landscape and gentrification, would do well to further investigate the construction of meanings of heritage.

⁶ There has been some construction in recent years in areas of downtown farther west from the waterfront and Citadel Hill.

Chapter 2: Interpreting Heritage Landscapes

The word myth is as dangerous and difficult to handle as the word heritage. You will appreciate that if I describe something as a myth, that does not necessarily mean that that it is untrue. Simply, that it is true in a special sense, in that it has truth for a great many people, and this general belief gives it a contemporary validity. It may contain elements that are unhistorical, or ahistorical, but it adds up to a cultural truth. It may indeed contain a great deal of historically accurate and factually testable material, but this is transformed into a touchstone of national, local, even individual, identity. (Uzzell 1989: 17)

In this chapter I outline theoretical insights which are relevant in making meaning of heritage landscapes. I draw variously from three geographical literatures associated with heritage, landscape and gentrification respectively. Although they have at times intersected in the “new cultural geography” under the auspices of a common interest in interpretation, representation, aesthetics and exclusion (for example Shaw 2005), these subfields have remained curiously separate. I aim to bring them into correspondence by pointing out their similarities, but also by noting how they may more meaningfully intersect.

I begin by reviewing the so-called “new cultural geography,” which is attentive to “theory which problematizes description, and to interpretation which queries pattern” (Ley and Duncan 1993: 11). Following Duncan and Duncan (1996: 577), I believe that the cultural framework is useful in that it opens up “the various subfields within geography, such as economic or political geography, and their objects of study to a greater consideration of cultural and historical specificity.” Perhaps the most successful and celebrated examples of this are studies of landscape as a cultural production (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Duncan 1990; Daniels 1993; Duncan and Duncan 2004). As I will demonstrate, the authors of these studies share an interest in how language is used strategically to give shape to the material world, and how materiality then plays a

role in constituting social relations. I go on to give an overview of central themes in a burgeoning subfield associated with heritage studies (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Shaw and Jones 1997; Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000) and suggest that research into heritage may benefit from the “greater cultural and historical specificity” (Duncan and Duncan 1996) afforded by the interpretive framework used by cultural geographers to study landscape. I end by arguing that studies of gentrification which include discussions of heritage would benefit from considering this concept in a more critical light.

2.1 The “New Cultural Geography”

Over the past quarter century, there has been much discussion among human geographers about the relative importance of culture to geographical processes, and how best to study it. An important reference point is Duncan’s (1980) critique of the Anglo-American tradition of viewing culture as a self constituting ontological category, and using this concept to study spatial differentiation and population diffusion. In the decade following Duncan’s contribution, there emerged a “new cultural geography.” Informed by theoretical concerns in anthropology and cultural studies, its scholars turned their attention to questions of interpretation and representation to probe the taken-for-granted depths of the social world beyond its deceptive surface. Exemplified in volumes by Ley and Duncan (1993), Cosgrove and Daniels (1988), Barnes and Duncan (1992) and Jackson (1989) this approach sought to inform social, economic and political processes and inequalities with attention to the “inner workings” of culture. These thinkers were especially wary of the structural determinism of positivist and realist analyses which, they argued, neglects individual agency (Duncan 1996; Duncan and Duncan 2004).

By turning so radically from the traditional form of naïve empiricism, often associated with the Berkeley school, the “new cultural geography” was ripe for criticism. An important challenge came from Mitchell (1995), a cultural geographer himself, who argued that Duncan and others had not escaped the tendency to reify culture. He called for increased attention to how the *idea* of culture is mobilized as ideology, to how culture is produced and reproduced, but was perhaps more set on introducing Marxist class analysis to landscape studies. Responses to Mitchell’s challenge did much to elucidate the purposes of cultural geographers and the place of other explanatory concepts in their analytical framework. Mitchell (1995: 112) writes: “like ‘race,’ ‘culture’ is a social imposition on an unruly world.” In response, Duncan and Duncan (1996) point out that Mitchell recognizes that ideas about race “are reinforced by very clear intellectual and material practices,” (Mitchell 1995: 110) but he fails to see that the same is true for culture. Jackson (1996: 572) adds, “as with the concept of ‘race,’... the concept of ‘culture’ cannot explain; it is the thing to be explained” (Jackson 1996: 572). As a signifying system (Williams 1973; Duncan 1990), as a “level, domain, idiom or medium” (Jackson, quoted in Mitchell 1995: 105), culture is that through which the material world and social relations are given meaning. A focus on culture then, need not come at the expense of economics or politics, but rather can add to our understanding of these ideas (Duncan and Duncan 1996: 577).

Prominent volumes have noted the privileged position afforded to vision in cultural geography (Duncan 1990; Duncan and Ley 1993). They have also convincingly argued that immediate access to knowledge through observation is impossible and that the researcher, who is more of an interpreter, must always look beyond the visible surface

of the material world in an attempt to grasp its meaning. In an oft-cited anti-ocular polemic, Martin Jay (1986; quoted in Duncan 1990: 14) wrote “what is ‘seen’ is not a given, objective reality, open to an innocent eye, but is an epistemological field constructed as much linguistically as visually.” Not only is the visible order clothed in the systems of meaning that society has unwittingly created, it also plays a constitutive role in establishing meaning and structuring social relations. The study of heritage landscapes—exceptionally visual cultural productions—is well-served by the interpretive approach which seeks to understand how the meanings of the visible realm are constructed by actors working within a variety of enabling and constraining structures and institutions.

2.2 Reading Culture in Landscape

Numerous cultural geographers have studied landscapes both in an attempt to make sense of specific historical and social formations, (Daniels 1993) and also to create a more generally applicable methodology (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Duncan 1990). What these endeavours share is an interest in what landscape does, “how it works as a cultural practice.” Here, “[landscape] doesn’t merely signify or symbolize power relations; it is an instrument of cultural power” (W. J. T. Mitchell 2002: 1). Since I am wary of assigning landscape agency, I am more attentive to what human agents *do* with landscape: how powerful actors read the landscape and how the ways in which landscapes are maintained and reproduced naturalize and gloss over important socio-historical depths.

Landscape is often analyzed with the use of metaphors of reading and writing and rhetorical devices. In this view, borrowed from literary theory, landscape is a working

text which “encourages the reader to carve it up, to rework it, to produce it” (Duncan and Duncan 1988: 119). Barnes and Duncan’s (1992: 5) concept of text is useful. Beyond written texts, it “includes other cultural productions such as paintings, maps and landscapes, as well as social, economic and political institutions.” According to Duncan and Duncan (1988: 120), landscapes are “highly intertextual creations of the reader, as much as they are products of the society that created them.” This point can be taken to signal the impossibility of a discrete reading, that he or she who reads landscape necessarily refers to other written and pictorial texts in order to make sense of it. Cosgrove and Daniels (1988: 1) write, “To understand a built landscape... it is usually necessary to understand written and verbal representations of it, not as ‘illustrations,’ images standing outside it, but as constituent images of its meaning or meanings.” Duncan (1990) famously demonstrates how the interpretation of religious texts guides the production of a highly symbolic urban form in the Kandyen Kingdom. He also argues that the built environment plays a constitutive role in reproducing social and religious hierarchies.⁷ In present-day western secular societies, planning texts are often the focus of interpretive debates that have a bearing upon urban landscape (see, for example Kenny 1992, or McCann 1997). In spite of the rhetoric of landscape, most people fail to recognize its relationship with various texts in different contexts. They read the landscape non-discursively (Duncan and Duncan 2000) and are not attentive to its social implications.

⁷ Don Mitchell (1994; quoted in Duncan and Duncan 2004: 25) disagreed, arguing that landscapes “retain their ontological status in geography as evidence and as reflection of social and cultural processes rather than as determinants in these structures.” Mitchell’s stance, surmise Duncan and Duncan, would call for a Marxian analysis of class relations. Like them, I believe that such an analysis would oversimplify the complexity of the relationship between the production and consumption of landscape.

Landscape imagery is important to constructions of place and identity. For Daniels (1993), representations of the British countryside and American frontier are central to concepts of national identity in England and the United States. He writes: "The symbolic activation of time and space... gives shape to the 'imagined community' of the nation. Landscapes, whether focusing on single monuments or framing stretches of scenery, provide visible shape; they picture the nation" (Daniels 1993: 5)⁸. To this W. J. T. Mitchell (2002: 20) might add that it is only Western countries with a history of imperialism that consciously use landscape in foundational mythology. He argues that landscape, with its associations of sight and surveillance, was an instrument in subordination and colonization, thus contributing to European nationalisms. As Duncan and Duncan (2004: 4) argue, landscape is also significant at the local scale, where identity is formed in part in opposition to an outside. Here "a seemingly innocent appreciation of landscapes and desire to protect local history and nature can act as subtle but highly effective mechanisms of exclusion."

Although landscape "never [has] a single meaning," (Duncan 1990: 182) actors work to stabilize its meaning for strategic purposes. This work often involves conflict between groups of individuals who read the landscape, or the texts that guide its production, differently. A group with a shared reading forms a "textual community," understood by Stock (1986: 295) as, "the union of literates and non-literates around the message of a text, written or spoken, with subsequent implications for behaviour." In Western rural and urban settings, conflict between textual communities may arise when a landscape is threatened with change. Such communities are usually composed of elites

⁸ See B. Anderson's seminal work (1983) for a discussion of the construction of nation as "imagined community."

who benefit from financial and political resources: “certain types of small, affluent and relatively homogeneous communities are able to mobilize enough economic and cultural capital to create landscapes that have the power to incorporate and assimilate some identities while excluding or erasing others” (Duncan and Duncan 2004: 25). For powerful individuals and groups, landscape may become a possession (ibid: 25), and become imbued with value. W. J. T. Mitchell (2002: 14) asserts that landscape functions “as a special sort of commodity that plays a unique symbolic role in the system of exchange-value. Like money, [it] is good for nothing as a use-value, while serving as a theoretically limitless symbol of value at some other level.” For example, notes Mitchell, a property with a view is generally worth more than one without, though the view has no intrinsic value or use. Though Mitchell does not express this explicitly, the “other level” to which he eludes is the aesthetic.

Duncan and Duncan (2004: 31) more clearly elucidate the significance of the aesthetic value assigned to landscape in lived social and cultural relations. The aesthetic impulse is an “immediate, unarticulated response to art or nature, or to whatever one adopts an aesthetic attitude toward.” Though it is learned, it is made to appear natural. Bourdieu’s (1984) work on social distinction is helpful here. His thesis, substantiated by extensive empirical evidence, is that class determines a predisposition to aesthetic taste. He found that class-determined influences, including cultural and educational capital, are strong predictors of taste in music, art and other objects of sensual pleasure. Most importantly, as emphasized by Duncan and Duncan (2004), is that once learned, aesthetic taste is internalized and becomes a habitus (Bourdieu), a sort of personal (though shared) paradigm, that is assumed to be natural (Duncan and Duncan 2004: 31). Eagleton’s

(1990) work outlines how the aesthetic attitude works on a social plane as a middle class or bourgeois ideology, but that it simultaneously depends upon a very personal, internalized response in the body of the subject. Duncan and Duncan (2004: 33) go further, suggesting that the aesthetic can be viewed as the most effective form of hegemony, in Gramsci's sense of "consensus across classes achieved without coercion," because it refers to nothing but itself.

Conflict between "textual communities" over landscapes is frequently analysed in terms of discourse. According to the literature on discourses, they play a role in shaping meaning and understanding for those who subscribe to them. Discourses are "sets of capabilities people have... sets of socio-cultural resources used by people in the construction of meaning about their world and their activities. [They are] NOT simply speech or written statements, but the rules by which verbal speech and written statements are made meaningful" (original emphasis, O'Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 193). A fruitful study of discourse is attentive to power relations: to how certain discourses dominate ways of seeing the world, and subordinate others. Conflict between discourses is said to play out on a discursive field. Duncan (1990: 16), drawing on Foucault and Eagleton, writes:

The term discursive field here refers to a range of competing discourses constituted by a set of narratives, concepts and ideologies relevant to a particular realm of social practices. For example, one could say that there are discursive fields within law, medicine, or religion. Discursive fields may also be centered around central organizing concepts within a society, such as kingship... There may be a stable discursive order in which competing discourses coexist in some degree of mutual incognizance or in an uneasy syncretism.

Like Duncan (1990: 17) I do not reject the possibility of "real resolvable conflict between those subscribing to the terms of different discourses." But unlike Duncan, I am doubtful

that contestatory discourses achieve much success when they come up against those that are supported by institutions and powerful and wealthy agents.

So far, I have outlined several components of the theoretical framework employed by cultural geographers in recent studies of the production and maintenance of various forms of landscape. Attentiveness to how landscapes are read and represented, to their meanings in constructions of place and identity, and hegemonic tendencies of aestheticization and cultural conditioning across a variety of scales allows the researcher to probe the hidden meanings of the visible surface of the world. The next section will reveal that many of these same concerns are relevant in studies of heritage and that the commonalities in approaches to heritage and landscape as “cultural productions” are numerous and readily evident.

2.3 Heritage Studies in Human Geography

As of late, “heritage” has been experiencing somewhat of a resurgence. Various levels of government, non-governmental organizations, for and not-for profit groups are interested in defining and protecting, producing and selling objects of heritage. Part of the recent growth in the popularity of heritage is reactionary; fear of immigration and loss of cultural traditions in some Western countries has enabled the success of neo-conservative social and political movements that use “heritage” to play off collective nostalgias for the past. National political parties espousing conservative values have garnered considerable support in Western European countries such as Austria and France, as well as in the US and Canada. Interest in heritage is also growing at a more innocuous level. Steven Spender (quoted in Lowenthal 1985: 50) wrote: “Americans treat history as though it were geography, themselves as though they would step out of the present into the past of

their choice.” Cultural industries and institutions have responded by making it possible for consumers of heritage to virtually step into or live in the past of their choosing. Though the rhetoric of local heritage organizations, which champion initiatives such as conservation districts, demolition controls and design standards, may seem less overtly political, racist, or exclusionary than that of nationalist movements, the two impulses share much in common.

Within the discipline of geography, a subfield interested in making sense of this emerging geography of heritage has developed over the last two decades. Exemplified by the work of a few interdisciplinary scholars (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Graham, Tunbridge and Ashworth 2000), who draw on classic texts from heritage studies (Lowenthal 1985; Hewison 1987; Uzzell 1989), heritage has remained on the sidelines of more mainstream geographical debates. Graham et al (2000: 4) note, “hitherto, the geographical debate on heritage has remained uneasily poised between being an addendum to tourism studies and forming an isolated self-sustaining discipline.” This, I argue, in spite of the fact that much of what preoccupies these geographers is relevant to cultural geography more generally.

Like landscape, the concept of heritage, suggest Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000), emerged in tandem with notions of modernity. In Europe, the cradle of the modern world, the emergence of various strains of nationalism was contingent on a recognition of the past. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 2) have argued that the modern nation state grew out of a “contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant.” They indicate, however, that the past is not a repository of

social and cultural truths, rather it is one of “invented traditions.” Edward Said (2002: 245) deftly explains: “the invention of tradition is a method for using collective memory selectively by manipulating certain bits of the national past, suppressing others, elevating still others in an entirely functional way. Thus memory is not necessarily authentic, but rather useful.” He continues: “the art of memory for the modern world is both for historians as well as ordinary citizens and institutions very much something to be used, misused and exploited, rather than something that sits inertly there for each person to possess and contain.” Accepting a basic definition of heritage as “the contemporary use of the past,” one could view *heritage* as “a primary instrument in the ‘discovery’ or creation and subsequent nurturing of a national identity” (Graham, Tunbridge and Ashworth 2000: 12). Thus, at the national scale objects of heritage may include symbolic attachment to landscape (as shown above), or shared cultural or linguistic traditions. The success of one national identity— “imagined community”— to the exclusion of others is made possible in part by the recognition of a common heritage.

A similar relationship between heritage and identity is evident at the local scale. Local heritage, for my purposes *urban* heritage, is more closely equated with objects in the built environment: historic buildings, monuments and public spaces together form landscapes which are meaningful to individual and collective identities (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000). Urban heritage is most often controlled and reproduced by politically and economically powerful agents and special interest groups. Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000: 14) write: “the will to conserve was the obsession of a passionate, educated and generally influential minority and the social, educational and political characteristics of heritage producers have changed little since the turn of the

century.” Although every individual may partake in a collective “heritage” associated with the places and communities to which he or she belongs, its meanings and uses are not always collectively or democratically determined. Thus, certain identities and places are celebrated and while others may be marginalized or subordinated.

The elaboration of a local heritage is dependent upon the selection and elevation of particular objects. The process of selection implies exclusion; when one object is selected another is not. Graham et al (2000: 24) go so far as to suggest that “the creation of any heritage actively or potentially disinherits or excludes those who do not subscribe to, or are embraced within, the terms of meaning defining that heritage.” Not only does the creation of heritage imply disinheritance, there may be numerous heritage interpretations of the same object: “today the same place or building can be variously viewed as a homely landmark, a relic of imperial oppression or a tempting commercial opportunity” (Shaw and Jones 1997: 3). This tension has been articulated as “heritage dissonance” (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996) and is locally played out in the spaces of urban governance according to the interpretation of planning strategies and by-laws. Its central question asks which heritage resources should be recognized and protected, and hence valued.

While many documented cases of “dissonance” result from efforts to correct historical injustices (see for example, Shaw and Jones 1997), others perpetuate them. For instance, in cities where the built environment references a legacy of colonial occupation and dispossession or other forms of social marginalization, the recognition and preservation of buildings and places that are significant for local indigenous populations or marginalized groups (Shaw 2005), including ethnic and racial minorities, women and

homosexuals, has emancipatory potential (Dubrow 1998). For Sandercock (1998), the task is to make those who have been made invisible, visible once again. In contrast, dissonance can focus upon resources that are constructed by and reflect the dominant culture. Graham et al (2000: 13) explain:

National park agencies in the wider world of European settlement have been instrumental in the creation of cultural heritage, not least through establishing the hegemony of Eurocentric imaginings of place at the expense, for example, of the landscape representations particular to the cultures of indigenous peoples.

In Western post-industrial cities, heritage dissonance may not even acknowledge indigenous interpretations. In such settings, as is the case in Halifax, dissonance may result from competition between groups of elites with differing interpretations of the relative importance of protecting a building or, perhaps more interestingly, a landscape.

Instances of conflict over heritage demonstrate a complex and multi-faceted relationship between economics and preservation. This relationship has been articulated in different ways. Authors of policy-oriented heritage conservation literature, for example Larkham (1996: 3), subscribe to a classical economic model which fails to take into account issues of cultural identity and politics which lie at the heart of heritage dissonance. In this view, capitalist development and heritage preservation are inherently incompatible. This reasoning assumes that every parcel of urban land is destined to be developed to its highest and best use and that preserving a building intact removes it from a productive cycle of capital accumulation. It is invoked to justify interventionist measures such as heritage preservation statutes on the one hand and "cost versus benefit" analyses on the other, all within the prescriptions of municipal planning law (Hoehn 1997).

Geographical studies of heritage often articulate a more nuanced relationship between heritage and capital than policy-oriented literature. They argue that, the value of heritage, not unlike that of landscape, is derived from its cultural symbolism. Lowenthal (1979) suggests that objects, styles or buildings gain value as they age, acquiring an “antiquarian” (old) or “decayed” look. The attraction of tourists to this look is well-documented (see Hewison 1984; Urry 1989; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1990). Urry (1989: 3) famously deconstructs the *Tourist Gaze* which, he suggests, “is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience.” Objects of heritage which are “unique” or “typical” of a place or region become commodities to be exploited in the tourist market. In England, for example, heritage is the first feature to appeal to tourists (Urry 1989: 51). Furthermore, heritage attracts individuals and groups who wish to experience the past every day. Old and devalued houses are revalued and come to mark the social identity and distinctiveness of their inhabitants (Ley 1996; Graham, Tunbridge and Ashworth 2000). The accoutrements of a heritage-oriented lifestyle refer to the past while shrouding the distasteful modern world (Hewison 1984).

The work of scholars in the geographic subfield of heritage studies shares much in common with those recent studies of landscape that are informed by theoretical insights from the “new cultural geography.” Although they reference many key texts, authors of studies on heritage do not fully adopt the interpretive and analytical framework employed in recent insightful research into cultural productions. Doing so may prove fruitful. For example, the selection and elevation of objects from the past could be considered through textual analysis (Duncan 1990); studies of heritage dissonance could also identify communities subscribing to competing discourses associated with different readings of

heritage; furthermore, the symbolic value of heritage might be understood as a product of the aesthetic faculty, where a learned response is made to seem natural (Eagleton 1990; Duncan and Duncan 2004). A critical and theoretically informed understanding of “heritage” could then be put to use in other areas, such as studies of gentrification.

2.4 Heritage as ‘Décor’: The Example of Gentrification

Gentrification has been an important topic of study in geography since the 1970s. The term, ‘gentrification,’ was originally used by Ruth Glass in 1964 to describe white-painting (renovation) and rehabilitation in residential quarters of London, England. Since then, geographers have advanced complex, contradictory and intersecting explanations of gentrification and numerous accounts of its social impacts, through case studies of neighbourhoods in North America and Europe. Two major strands of thought emerged from academic discussions of gentrification in the 1980s and 1990s. The first, demand-oriented, explains gentrification in terms of the consumption patterns of gentrifiers. Using Bourdieu’s Marxist theory of class distinction, scholars focused upon the agency of consumers and the ‘new middle class,’ for whom lifestyle and housing location, aesthetics and décor are important markers of class identity and distinction (for example Ley 1993; Ley 1996). The other major camp focuses on supply. Here, state institutions and real estate trends create the setting for an advancing frontier of profitability. The rent-gap theory, advanced by Smith (1996), offered an economic model for predicting where reinvestment would occur. More recent interjections in gentrification studies include critiques of geographers’ treatment of the topic and academic divisions resulting from allegiances to differing theoretical frameworks (Bourne 1993; Lees 2003). Lees (2003), for instance, has called gentrification debates a “theoretical logjam,” resulting in

a synthesis of supply and demand arguments. Lees and others express an open call to engage in the geography of gentrification, proposing comparative research⁹ and studies of global city gentrification, minority gentrifiers and discourses of gentrification.

Numerous geographers have commented on the relationship between heritage aesthetics and gentrification (Zukin 1982; Jager 1986; Woodward 1993; Ley 1993; Shaw 2005). "Heritage," broadly defined, is relevant when one considers where gentrification takes place, and who is involved. A generic "ideal-type" of gentrification would involve successive waves of middle-class home-buyers investing in properties in older inner city neighbourhoods that suffered from disinvestment during post-war urban restructuring resulting from, among other influences, the shift from a manufacturing to service-centred economy. A number of factors, relating to consumption, class and identity influence the decision to invest in a gentrifying neighbourhood, including the aesthetics of inner city housing options. Historic homes, in various states of disrepair, attract buyers who see in them potential value. The process of filtering (Berry 1982) is reversed not only through renovation and rehabilitation, whereby surfaces are cleaned and fixtures replaced, but also through a cultural revisioning: "It is the aesthetic eye that transforms ugliness into a source of admiration, that reshapes common, scorned, and used objects into icons of desire" (Ley 1996: 310). Thus, what is antique or decayed is endowed with symbolic value as heritage (Lowenthal 1979), and the past finds contemporary use. In inner city neighbourhoods, new developments may equally be designed to reference the historic context of their surroundings. In such cases of new-build gentrification (A. Smith 1989),

⁹ Gentrification in US cities has been revanchist presented as a movement of middle classes rebelling against effects of Keynesian economic policy in the inner city. In contrast, Canadian gentrification, in cities such as Vancouver and Toronto has been framed in a much more positive light as an emancipatory, "back to the city movement" (for example Caulfield 1994). For a discussion see Slater (2004).

heritage is pastiche, and though not as “authentic” may be appealing for the same reasons. In either case, however, the past appears as décor, its historical meanings and context partly or wholly evacuated.

Many geographers studying gentrification have not fully embraced a critical understanding of “heritage” as advanced in the heritage studies literature. As such, they are not attentive to the marginalization and exclusion that could result from the celebration of a culturally dominant form of heritage, although they may draw attention to the class dimensions of its celebration and consumption. Here heritage is a given; there is little interest in heritage dissonance and disinheritance, issues that are important in critical studies of heritage. Questioning the taken-for-granted meanings of heritage may not always be warranted, but it is sometimes crucial. Shaw (2005), for instance, reveals that the gentrification of neighbourhoods of Victorian terrace houses in Sydney is tinged with reminders of dispossession and lasting social exclusion and disenfranchisement of aboriginals. The same may be true in other former colonial contexts. Where heritage is in evidence as an object of cultural capital, and especially when it appears as an aestheticized and thus depoliticized object in processes of gentrification, it is important to read it critically. This is not necessarily an easy endeavour. As Ley shows, when heritage is but décor, its meaning is unproblematic. In fact, it perhaps means nothing at all:

You can have it all, the world is on offer behind a display window, history as accessible as a beckoned waiter. It is there for our enjoyment, our pleasure. This is consumption with *style*, requiring a performance from the purchaser as well as the vendor, a flaunting of the canons of good taste, a mutual celebration of the product. (Ley 1996: 298)

Following the lead of Shaw (2005: 17), for whom “the remembrance of specific versions of history in cities around the world, brings with it the capacity for malevolent

escapisms, strategies for retreat from the realities of everyday life and the pathologies of poverty and dispossession,” the task is to be attentive to the selection, elevation and distortion, and perhaps ultimately the effacement, of moments and objects from the past through gentrification. I am interested in the relationship between discourses of gentrification, heritage preservation and growth, and what their material outcomes mean to historical memory, not only for those who participate in the resulting “boutique landscape of consumption,” (Reid and Smith 1993) but also for those whose histories are forgotten in its creation.

2.5 Conclusion

The above discussion sets the conceptual frame in which I examine the production and maintenance of the heritage landscape in Halifax. Although theory is here set apart from empirics, I do not wish it to recede as *décor*, as in the next chapter theory becomes grounded in the context of the processes I examine in Halifax. I will not always refer back to ideas that I have introduced here, so the reader must carry them along. Especially important to draw from this theoretical discussion is an understanding of the imperative to go beyond the observed surfaces of landscape and heritage, to question their taken-for-grantedness, in order to gain an insight into social inequalities, historical injustices and the exclusivity of municipal process. For example, a celebration of “place” begs the question, whose place? If, as I will show, competing groups of elites control the production and maintenance of the heritage landscape that serves, so we are told, to give this place and the people living here a distinct identity, then what role do others play? And, indeed, do others have a “place” in the imaginative geography of this city? In the chapters that follow, I will explore how an ongoing conflict over landscape between two

culturally dominant discourses related to preservation and development, an instance of heritage dissonance, is overdetermined, undermined and ultimately absorbed by a discourse encouraging a consumer-oriented heritage-sensitive form of development.

Chapter 3: Making the Heritage Landscape: Rereading the Historical Topography of the Imperial Militarist Gaze

In this chapter I will begin to question the taken-for-granted meanings of the heritage landscape by turning a critical eye to the dominant historical narrative it is made to express. Using as a point of departure the founding of Halifax in 1749, and following through to the 21st century, this chapter focuses upon the centrality of military defence to the city's transformation from barren coastline to outpost of British Empire to the regional capital it is today. While naval activity and the extension of the defence complex were essential to the establishment of city and integral to its growth, the ways the resulting historical landscape is represented, read and written do not tell the whole story. In order to understand the meaning of the heritage landscape in the present, I return to important moments in history and important locations in the city to ask the question: how might this be read differently? I am especially attentive to the spatial exclusion and pre-emptive subversion of perceived threats to the colonial military order. I also focus upon the hidden motives and driving forces behind the elaboration of heritage which elevates the geography of defence and surveillance.

In the 18th century, British settlers were able to establish and maintain control in the region thanks in part to their ability to relegate racial and cultural "others" to the margins and to build a cultural hegemony. Later, concurrent with the emergence of a pattern of "prosperity in time of war and stagnation in time of peace" in the 19th century (Nader 1976: 30), the military landscape began to take on a symbolic value beyond that of its practical use. In the 20th century, the official history of military defence and the unofficial history of spatial exclusion were written into the policies of a modern planning apparatus which grew out of citizens' response to post-WWII period renewal projects.

Since the 1960s, planning policies premised on balancing the needs of capitalist development with preserving a singular British military heritage have been instrumental in determining the lay of the land in this city. This focus has served to impoverish others' heritage in much the same manner that the social, economic and political development of the city has subordinated and marginalized ethnic and cultural groups identified as "other."

3.1 Revisiting Halifax History: 1749-1939

Accounts of Halifax's early history read like swashbuckling tales, glorifying the passions and actions of hyper-masculine heroes. Histories such as Thomas Raddall's (1971) *Halifax: Warden of the North* are celebratory to a fault. They depart from a premise that "a complete British community, to be known as Halifax, came into being under the able direction of Governor Cornwallis" (Borrett 1948: 10). True enough, Halifax was founded in 1749 by Cornwallis under orders from the Crown of Britain "to establish British prestige in North America" (Borrett 1948: 23). A population base and military presence were needed in order to consolidate British power in the region. The Acadian territory, previously controlled by the French, had been ceded to Great Britain under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, yet the British had not had a reason to settle it. When the French regained control of a strategic fortification at Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island in 1748 through the terms of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, a British settlement and military station on the Atlantic coast became "indispensable" (Akins 1973: 4). A site midway along the Atlantic coast, benefiting from a large harbour and several topographic features suitable for fortification, was chosen for a new military port. In order to populate the settlement, advertisements offering free land and compensation

for relocation to Nova Scotia were posted in London to overwhelming response. Over 1500 people volunteered to cross the Atlantic (Akins 1973: 5), joining a crew of hundreds of military officials and other recruits, to settle in the new city laid out near the water on the eastern slopes of a drumlin hill, a relic of ice age glacial activity.

In Raddall's (1971: 22) account, Cornwallis is described as "a handsome military bachelor of thirty-six who... was anxious to distinguish himself in Nova Scotia," and "incorruptible, ... an aristocrat to the fingertips, ... conscious of his dignity and inclined to be cool and ceremonious." In order to "make" Halifax, the British, led by Cornwallis, imposed a highly militarized urban order on a land that was the summer hunting and fishing grounds of the indigenous Micmac¹⁰. A grid of streets "named in honour of the patrons of the expedition and leading British statesmen of the day" (Raddall 1971: 28), was laid out. Defence posts were selected and forts were constructed on the summit of the central hill, later named Citadel Hill, and at other strategic locations including George's Island and Point Pleasant.¹¹ Another symbol of British imperialism came later, in 1801, when the Duke of Kent had a clock tower built on the hill. The town clock (see figure 1), visible from the harbour up George Street, was designed to give her majesty's subjects the convenience of knowing and following a fixed schedule (Akins 1973: 221).

Raddall does not admit, nor do Akins (1973) or Borrett (1948), that the establishment of Halifax required the violent imposition of an imperial geography, complete with new conceptions of nature, time and space, and highly dependent on "sight and surveillance" (Bunn 2002: 128). Various acts, such as clearing the land of vegetation

¹⁰ The Micmac retreated to inland areas in the winter to avoid harsh cold winds off the Atlantic.

¹¹ Ironically, the only attacks the British ever experienced at Halifax were invasions by the Micmac people whose land they occupied. Unwilling to stoop so far as to declare battle with "Indians", Cornwallis offered a reward for their scalps.

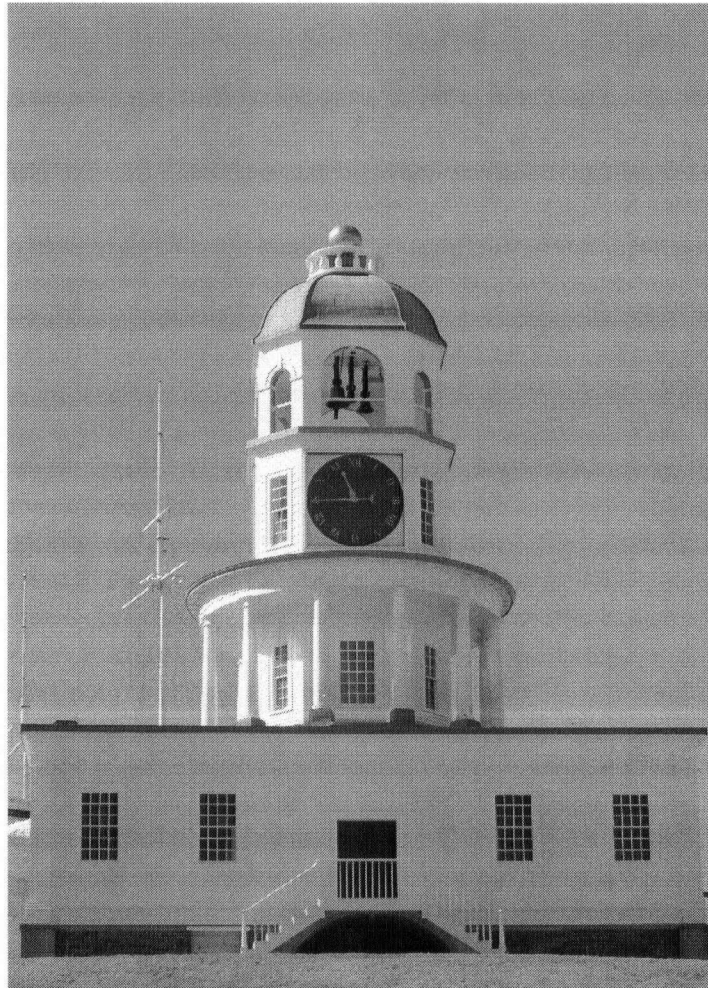


Figure 1 Halifax town clock (1801): a highly visible temporal order. (Photo by author)



**Figure 2 “The Founding of Halifax” (1925 by Charles William Jeffreys)
(Source: www.canadianheritage.org)**

and planting a union jack on the summit of the central hill, are celebrated in foundational myths expressed in images and writing (see figure 2). This sort of mythology makes it appear as though Halifax was created where before there were no signs of human habitation, and is designed to inculcate residents with feelings of pride and belonging. Not only does this privilege colonists, it “disappears” the others from history and erases their relationships to land and place. From the beginning, the success of the city was contingent upon the visibility of British colonizers, and their hegemony depended upon what Duncan and Duncan (2004: 29) term the “spatial exclusion of potential resistance.” The first to be excluded were “savages” who, since they lacked enlightened conventions of property and capitalist exchange, were not entitled to the land (Raddall 1971).

Not unlike the Micmac, groups who arrived in Halifax in the early history of the city were marginalized geographically, socially and economically with respect to the dominant British. As Halifax grew into an important trade post and defence centre in the late 18th century and saw periodic influxes of migrants from New England and continental Europe, it became increasingly important for the British to consolidate their cultural hegemony. One way they achieved this aim was through the regulation and codification of city space. Ethnic and cultural groups identified as “other” were carefully monitored, relegated to particular areas both within and outside of the city, and in some cases, forcibly removed. They were also denied participation in what Li (2004: 28) terms the “representational space of normative and symbolic order.” The central city, visually dominant, was the domain of the British.

The French Acadians, who lived off the fertile soils of the Annapolis Valley, were violently expelled from the province, beginning in 1755, for failing to pledge allegiance to the British. The few that remained after what has come to be known as “The Great

Expulsion” were kept at bay, except for the purpose of trade. In the city, “suburbs” were built on the fringes of the central street grid to house growing numbers of immigrants from continental Europe. Germans, mistakenly called Dutch after *Deutsche*, were confined to a neighbourhood they named Gottingen that had grown up to the north of the Citadel under the watchful eye of military command posts on the summit of the hill. When the German population became too large, and hence a threat to British dominance and control, new arrivals were redirected to Lunenburg, eighty kilometres away (Raddall 1971: 40).

Almost from the time it was settled, Halifax was home to a sizable black population. The city had ties with plantations in the Caribbean and was implicated in slave trading routes. As early as 1791 the city census counted 422 “black people” out of a total population of 4867 (Akins 1973: 103). Slavery was gradually prohibited in Nova Scotia beginning in 1792 (Raddall 1971: 40) and around this time the number of blacks in the province, already notable, increased dramatically. Among the newcomers was a group of over five hundred insurgent slaves from Jamaica, the Maroons, who arrived in 1796. They were directed to Preston, outside of Halifax, where they would work in the fields and build a settlement, but their impiety was too much for the British. Raddall (1965: 122) writes: “for years the nocturnal forest about Preston rang with Voodoo chants and orgiastic laughter, and the townsfolk of Halifax and Dartmouth heard dreadful whispers of their rites.” In 1800 the Maroons were sent much further afield, to Sierra Leone, following on the heels of a group of over 1200 black loyalists who left for Africa voluntarily (Clairmont and Magill 1987: 27). Though it was a haven for blacks who were exploited and tortured at points south, such as the Maroons, the city never really allowed the former slaves and or their descendents to integrate with or contribute to the British

military-cultural hegemony, nor did it allow them to share the space of the central city. They were regarded as a curiosity and a good source of cheap, though not free, labour, and relegated to spaces on the periphery of the city. Clairmont and Magill (1987: 39) write: "one of the best indicators of the marginal status of blacks is the fact that throughout the years most have been clustered in isolated rural areas or on the fringes of white towns and cities."

If the city's periphery was occupied by "others," its centre was a space distinguished by British military purpose. As the primary defence centre on the east coast of the British colony, to be confederated in 1867, Halifax required a highly militarized topography, the focal point of which was the Citadel fortress. At the outbreak of every war, troops mounted the Citadel ramparts prepared to respond in case of a surprise attack.¹² Over the years, however, the Citadel and other defence structures gradually became less practically important. British troops were eventually relieved of duty in most Canadian centres around 1870-1, although they remained stationed on Citadel Hill until 1906 (Nader 1976: 35). The unnecessary expense of maintaining a British military station in what was already an independent commonwealth country may speak to the growing symbolism of the fort. W. J. T. Mitchell (2002) and Duncan and Duncan (2004) might argue that the use value of the fort was being superseded by an aesthetic value. As early as the late 19th century, artist renditions of the Citadel Hill view were portrayed on postcards (Pacey 1979) and by the time British troops withdrew, the fortress was already a tourist attraction and city landmark. In 1951 the Department of National Defence

¹² The ability not only to see one's enemy, but also to monitor activity in the surrounding area, has been essential to the success of Halifax. When V-day celebrations turned violent under the shadow of Citadel Hill in 1945, order was restored in part thanks to the visibility of a police presence on the hill (Judith Fingard, NSURB Midtown Tavern Hearing.)

decommissioned the fortress entirely and it was designated a national historic site. Interestingly, it is not only the physical site that was endowed with symbolic value. Perhaps more important to historical memory were the views from the fortress, the same fields of vision that served to defend the city against attack and ensure order within the city.

In presenting what are made to appear as unbiased accounts of “the way things came to be,” histories of Halifax make the founding and growth of the city, and the violent tools used in this endeavour, appear natural and necessary. Such readings gloss over instances of brutalization and exclusion to leave evocative and heroic imagery of personage and event unencumbered. They contribute to the historical mythology that privileges heritage that celebrates colonial settlement and militarism over other experiences of the city’s past. For instance, discussions over the place of Citadel Hill in Halifax’s history and the relative importance of preserving the views as a heritage resource do not make reference to spatial exclusion and other colonial tactics which secured the “imperial gaze” (W. J. T. Mitchell 2002). Rather, the heritage landscape, as viewed from Citadel Hill, is considered to have unquestioned aesthetic value and to reference a cherished history of military heroism. Until now, the only challenge to the place of the Citadel and British military history in the heritage imaginary has come from capitalist development imperatives.

3.2 Revisiting Halifax History: 1939-Present

From the beginning, Halifax grew in fits and starts. Following rapid population growth due to influxes of British Loyalists from New England in the late 18th century and battles in the early nineteenth century, such as the Napoleonic wars (1793-1815), the latter half of that century saw the importance of “the foundation city of English-speaking

Canada” (Clairmont and Magill 1987: 19) wane. If it was an indispensable trade post and defence centre, this perhaps only became evident during periods of war. The regional economy was deeply dependent on the economic opportunities afforded by military activity. In fact, historians have shown that periods of population growth and economic expansion in the city match those of Britain, and later Canada’s involvement in major armed conflicts. Nader (1976: 28) writes, “throughout its history, indeed Halifax has been more dependent on national and global affairs... than on serving its hinterland with a typical range of urban services.”

Following the traditional model of economic growth in Halifax, the Second World War caused a swell in population and an increase in economic activity. The population grew from 70000 to 130000 between 1939 and 1942 (Borrett 1948: 22), indicative of the highest rate of growth in the city since confederation (Nader 1976: 37). Fortifications in and around Halifax were manned with soldiers prepared for the eventuality of a German attack. The naval yards were abuzz as men (and some women) arrived from across the country to board ships destined for combat on the other side of the Atlantic. Construction activity increased as homes were erected to house the new arrivals.

The boom of war, however, was temporary and artificial. Once the war ended and reality set in once again, the short-lived economic optimism faltered. Pacey (1979: 21) writes, “nowhere in Canada was the fear of a post-war slump more keenly felt. Even before the war had ended, plans for the future prosperity and modernization of the city were set in motion.” The war had only served to gloss over the fact that the city had been struggling since the 1860s when investment capital was withdrawn and redirected to centres of growth westward, in the Great Lakes Region (Cameron and Aucoin 1983: 172). Banks had relocated their headquarters to central Canadian cities and “the

expanding western frontier shifted capital from Maritime resources, such as fish, to prairie wheat" (Nader 1976: 33). Indicative of the slow growth, Halifax fell from 6th to 16th in the population ranks for Canadian cities over the course of the century leading up to 1970 (Cameron and Aucoin 1983: 169). The faltering war economy, combined with regional restructuring was the cause of a pessimism that incited action at the level of the local state.

In the 1940s through the 1960s local politicians and business people identified the need to stimulate growth in this city which only seemed to prosper during times of war. They began to scrutinize urban ills, such as areas with substandard housing and social problems, simultaneously embracing the prospect of renewed expansion in the construction and real estate sectors. The wheels were set in motion for urban renewal practices of the sort that had swept North America and Europe. Renewal would simultaneously stimulate the economy, creating jobs and other opportunities, while modernising and beautifying the urban landscape, so the argument went. City Council formed a special committee on public housing and slum clearance to investigate the possibility of relocating the city's poorest residents to public housing and redeveloping the dilapidated areas cleared in their wake (Pacey 1979). Consultants and urban experts were brought to the city to apply policy knowledge and expertise developed elsewhere and, following their recommendations, a number of large scale and controversial renewal schemes were undertaken. These projects changed the look of the city and contributed to the local economy; they also indirectly resulted in the fomentation of the heritage preservation movement. An acknowledgement and exploration of the context and outfall of two mid-twentieth century renewal initiatives will help provide insights into the meaning of heritage in the city. It will become clear that in Halifax, "heritage," as it is

known today, was constructed in part as a reaction against a modernist planning regime that was perceived as a threat to the symbolic value of objects of British colonial heritage. Meanwhile, the threat that urban renewal posed to poor, historically marginalized, largely black communities was imperceptible.

3.3 Renewal and Heritage: Exhibit A

Gordon Stephenson, a pre-eminent professor of urban planning from the University of Toronto, was commissioned by the city in 1956 to propose growth and renewal strategies. In his report (1956), Stephenson recommended that a number of residential areas be targeted for renewal. One area, our first example, was a section of eight square blocks just east of Citadel Hill in the old city centre. According to Stephenson's (purely quantitative) research, this was the area with the highest incidence of illness, juvenile delinquency, police and fire responses, in addition to the worst quality housing, in the city. The report recommended relocating 1600 residents to new, modern public housing projects in the city's North End, razing the old dilapidated structures vacated by the residents, and expropriating the lands for a single large-scale development project. Neither the relocation nor the subsequent redevelopment of the lands was entirely successful. Pacey (1979: 25) writes:

Stephenson had made the classic mistake of blaming the social ills of the area on the buildings. Instead of recognizing and remedying the root of the trouble, Stephenson merely succeeded in shifting the poverty to a new location and creating a second problem in its wake.

The projects that housed the displaced residents now have a high incidence of violent drug related crime and are highly racialized in the local media and the imaginative

geographies of the city's residents and visitors¹³. Nevertheless, the city did succeed in making urban poverty less visible and freeing up a prime parcel of downtown real estate. Once this land, "the central redevelopment area," was cleared, it remained vacant for several years while the city struggled to attract a developer. Finally, in 1965 a group of local investors formed Halifax Developments Limited and submitted a proposal for the site that the city found to be consistent with its vision of urban growth. The ground was broken for Scotia Square and on the 18-acre parcel of land rose a concrete office complex with a mall, hotel, parking garage and several apartment buildings attached. This was a large project, in fact "the first time that a single developer had been given the responsibility for the total redevelopment of an urban renewal district in Canada" (Nader 1976: 49).

The Stephenson Report and the subsequent construction of Scotia Square caught the attention of local residents, many of whom were young urban professionals associated with newly formed neighbourhood groups centred in the gentrifying South End (Pacey 1979; Ley 1996). They were not so much concerned with the unequal power relations associated with relocation or the fact that many of the residents implicated were black, but that the view from Citadel Hill, the former centre of military command, was being encroached upon. Furthermore, they were aware that the historic street pattern of the old town, laid in 1749 when the city was founded, was disrupted to create a large footprint for the new development. Indeed, maps of the city in the early 1950s show downtown streets that ceased to exist in the 1960s (see Pacey 1979, for example). Ironically,

¹³ In the summer of 2004 visiting US Navy personnel were warned to avoid the area surrounding these housing projects, citing dangerous drug activity and violent crime. Local merchants and residents, and even some members of City Council, angrily refuted this warning (Lambie 2004), claiming that it unfairly cast their neighbourhood in a negative light and amounted to racist discrimination. In 2005, Statistics Canada found Halifax to have the highest violent crime rate of any Canadian city. Subsequently, in early December residents of the North End, where the projects are located, marched, not to protest false stereotypes, but to promote an end to violence in their neighbourhood (MacDonald 2005).

Stephenson's report had signalled the importance of Citadel Hill and the human scale of the streets and buildings to the city's character. His report had noted that Citadel Hill "dominates the Halifax skyline" and is "a marvellous feature in the heart of the city" (Stephenson, quoted in Pacey 1979: 24). This was not reflected in the city's interpretation of his recommendation. The Scotia Square development was a massive concrete super-block that noticeably impacted upon the visual effect of the Citadel.

3.4 Renewal and Heritage: Exhibit B

The second case of renewal and relocation lies in stark contrast to the politics of anti-development that would grow out of Scotia Square. It is an infamous case of racist urban policy that has been much studied by sociologists and historians and has received international attention from human rights organizations¹⁴, but remains a source of racial tension today. The story is well known: the residents of Africville, a small, isolated, black settlement that lay almost entirely off the city's administrative and public services grids, were moved from their homes into public housing in order to make way for a bridge approach. Africville's population had grown from a core of eight families that settled on the far northern end of the Halifax peninsula in the mid-nineteenth century to approximately 400 in 1964 (Clairmont and Magill 1987: 38). Its residents were mostly poor, uneducated labourers who were the descendents of former slaves that arrived in Halifax in late 18th and early 19th century. Some of them owned houses on deeded property, but in many cases there was no formal mechanism of property conveyance.¹⁵

¹⁴ In March, 2004, a report by the UN's special investigator into racism cited the absence of reparations for the damage wrought on Africville residents as a result of the relocation as an example of contemporary racist urban policy in Canada (McLaughlin 2004).

¹⁵ Unacknowledged by the city at the time, the lack of property entitlement was due in part to a history of racist urban policy. Unlike the first British settlers and subsequent waves of migrants from New England, the earliest freed blacks to arrive in Halifax were given land, but not the right to sell it (Clairmont and Magill 1987: 35-6)

Though Africville residents petitioned the city for sanitation facilities and other basic services, their requests fell on deaf ears. In the mid-twentieth century climate of urban renewal, Africville was identified as an urban ill that no simple band-aid solutions would remedy; the urban liberal welfare rhetoric posited that expert opinion could do no wrong. Stephenson (1956) had recommended that residents be rehoused, stating “the city is a comprehensive urban community, and it is not right that any segment of the community should continue to exist in isolation” (Stephenson, quoted in Raddall 1971: 328). Action was not taken for years, however, perhaps due to the isolated location of the settlement. Only after a visit from another expert consultant named Albert Rose, in 1963, was the relocation planned. Rose viewed the Africville situation as impossibly hopeless:

... my impression was that, in the Canadian context, this was the worst urban appendage I had ever seen. I was overwhelmed by the visual context of the physical surroundings. It seemed to me that the thing was a bottomless pit; that you could pour in fantastic resources and you have no base upon which to rehabilitate; that if you were to build back a viable community you would really have to start from scratch. (Rose, quoted in Clairmont and Magill 1987: 142)

The city entered discussions with Africville community leaders and a few concerned citizens from outside the settlement. Eventually, a deal was brokered whereby the relocation would take place gradually, in consultation with social workers. Residents were relocated between 1964 and 1967. Many moved to nearby public housing complexes in the North End of the city, the same ones that housed people displaced by the downtown redevelopment, while others entered the real estate market, renting or buying properties. Not all agreed to leave, however, and the final remaining residents were forcibly removed from their homes.

The history of Africville is interesting to consider in the context of discussions about planning and development in Halifax because of what it tells us about the dominant historical narrative. The relocation was, and still is, justified by conservative ideologues

as a simple example of rehabilitation necessitated by progress. In this view, residents suffering from a lack of basic services and living on the margins of society were relocated to better living arrangements and integrated into the city. The fact that Africville's poverty and segregation were partially caused by the exclusion of blacks from the social and economic networks, and the very physical space of British imperialism, is not often considered. To this day, former residents of Africville and their descendents struggle to come to terms with the fact that their place, decrepit and poor though it was, had been dismantled to make way for a road and a park. In spite of this, Africville's undoing didn't register on the radars of middle class residents concerned with heritage preservation, nor did the relocation of poor, largely black, residents of what would become the "central redevelopment area". Significantly, the construction of a high-rise that blocked the views from Citadel Hill did.

There have been efforts to repair the damage wrought on HRM's black communities by institutional and environmental racism dating back to the late 1700s. The city has been discussing reparations with former residents of Africville for a decade. Despite such initiatives, subtle aversive racism (Pred 2000) continues to affect the city's minority residents. For instance, when metropolitan amalgamation took place in 1996, the boundaries of some formerly distinct villages and hamlets were redrawn and erased. Parts of East Preston, a place name that connotes "poor" and "black" in the minds of many city residents, were absorbed by the neighbouring bedroom suburb of Lake Echo (Kimber 2006). The fact of the existence of places like Preston says much about racism and segregation in itself; groups of former slaves were settled in marginal rural areas so that they would not be visible in the city. But, as evidenced in Africville, the marginal spaces carved out for black Nova Scotians became "communities" and "places" nevertheless,

and have come to evoke the heritage of these people. Despite this, objects of the built environment in places like Africville and Preston do not register on the radars of agents and groups that confer heritage significance. When asked why not, a city heritage planner that I interviewed noted that history that is visible is valued and protected as heritage. The CBD is visible to visitors and residents and hence its concentration of heritage resources. My respondent also pointed out that the provincial heritage preservation programmes are voluntary, and that property owners and community members must take the initiative to enlist their valued places.¹⁶ A question to ask, then, is why the residents of these settlements that have been in existence for up to two hundred years do not seek out such programmes? To begin to answer this question, and to understand other contemporary instances of racism and racial inequalities, it is necessary, at the very least, to reread the historical geography of the city with attention to various forms of spatial and social exclusion.

3.5 The Battle of Citadel Hill

When the city had successfully rendered the social problems of the downtown and Africville neighbourhoods invisible by moving them from a decrepit “visual context” to shiny new apartment complexes, it inadvertently created a new set of issues to deal with. In the 10 years between 1968 and 1978 the municipal government struggled to reconcile business and development interests with the growing concerns of citizens and community groups interested in heritage preservation. In the context of social and economic upgrading in the South End and Central Halifax, community organizations were formed to check the decisions of the municipal government. Ley (1996: 242) points out that liberal-minded councillors were elected in these districts and brought the issues of their

¹⁶ My respondent did cite the case of a Baptist church in a black community on the outskirts of Halifax that had recently been given a heritage designation, but this is one of only a few such examples.

“community-oriented” constituents before City Council. These changes in local politics gave city planning a more prominent position on the local agenda. Scotia Square had been built in the absence of a long-term vision for city growth. This fact, combined with pressure from community organizations and individuals, laid bare the need for a planning framework that would allow the elaboration of policies that would guide development and growth in the city.

In 1969 Nova Scotia, following the lead of other provinces, had passed the Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act. This act required municipalities to devise land-use and development plans and to establish an appeal process whereby municipal development decisions are accountable to the citizens they affect. Local government officials in Halifax were forced to move towards designing a planning framework. To this end, the city held a conference to gather input for the elaboration of a municipal plan. The “Encounter on Urban Environment” took place over a week in 1970 with extensive media coverage of daily town hall meetings on a variety of topics. Experts were once again brought from away to comment on the city’s character, its identity, its economy and to critique its weaknesses. This time, citizens spoke up as well. Cameron and Aucoin (1983: 173) write: “there was a pervasive sense of pride—pride in the city’s heritage, in its tolerance, and—perhaps the critical change—in its future.” There was change brewing in the city “a community was coming awake.” This community, however, perhaps did not accurately reflect the social realities of the city. According to Cameron and Aucoin (1983: 172), the individuals who successfully inaugurated community-based activist politics in the city were largely newcomers to the city, academics and professionals who had moved to Halifax “because it was not a ‘boom town’.”

In the meantime, the danger of high-rises encroaching upon the views from Citadel Hill became a pressing issue in its own right. Until Scotia Square, it was taken for granted that the view, though changing, would remain a constant reminder of Halifax's history for those residents who value it. Critical interest in the view protection grew, however, when a few outspoken residents with an interest in history voiced opposition to the effect of high-rise development on the experience of visiting Citadel Hill. A local historian named Louis Collins wrote an opinion piece in a local newspaper stating: "The view has always been of particular interest to me personally... the panorama is talked about all over North America and I think it should be preserved" (quoted in Pacey 1979: 31). It is unclear whether this opinion is substantiated; most likely, the view is talked about by people who have had the luxury of experiencing it while in Halifax on holiday or business. Collins' remark is indicative of a tendency to universalize the aesthetic appeal of landscape and ignore its political implications (Mitchell 2002, Duncan and Duncan 2004). No one seemed to mind, however, and he went on to become the director of a landmarks commission that was established with the aim to protect heritage resources such as the Citadel views. The commission encountered its first defeat when a newly elected City Council approved a high-rise addition to a low-rise hotel at the foot of the hill in 1971. While the Encounter of Urban Environment was fresh on people's minds, the city had not yet developed a plan that would determine what sort of development is appropriate in downtown Halifax. This only served to add grist to the mill. Subsequently, studying how to best protect the views, balancing both the economic concerns of developers and aesthetic concerns of a certain heritage-minded public, became an important item on the agenda of local planners.

In 1972 a member of the City's planning staff named Alec Watson was assigned the special task of devising a strategy to regulate building height in relation to the view planes from the Citadel. His study produced two reports that received little interest from politicians and the business people. Watson's ideas were, however, taken up by heritage activists and community associations from elite South End neighbourhoods. Watson's analysis departed from the premise that all development impacts negatively upon the view from the Citadel, which provides "environmental pleasure" to citizens and visitors alike and is important insofar as it is unique and historic. According to Pacey, a heritage activist who chronicled development debates, Watson's major contribution was to identify particular locations from which the viewer can enjoy a vista of the harbour and its Islands (see figure 3). It was arcs of view, view cones, from these locations that eventually became candidates for view protection (Pacey 1979). At the time the reports were written, however, the local political climate was still tainted by business interests and Watson's efforts were dismissed. Politicians were convinced that preventing development within triangular view planes downtown would slow economic growth and cost the city potential tax revenue. Since Watson's findings had not been well received by council, another report by the director of Planning Services made its way into the hands of the city manager. A study by C. E. Babb, dubbed "The December Report," was concerned not with the impact of development on views, but with the impact of potential view protection on development. This concern was exactly the reverse of that advanced in the Watson report. While Watson had argued for the protection of views as heritage resources that are important to the city and the enjoyment of residents and visitors, Babb feared the negative economic impact of view protection.

These opposing arguments were mobilized and modified over the years leading up to the adoption of view protection by-law in 1974 that would later be integrated into municipal plan required by the Municipal Government Act. Members of City Council, citizens' groups, heritage groups, landowners and the business community became aligned with two distinct opposing factions. Those pressing for height controls were interested in preserving the views for their symbolic importance and aesthetic appeal. Their opponents insisted that restrictions on development infringe upon rights of property owners and prevent economic growth. Reports, meetings, discussions and media coverage intensified and every new view protection proposal, each accompanied by a map of downtown criss-crossed by triangular view segments originating from Citadel Hill, was scrutinized and critiqued by its author's opponents. Pacey's (1979) book, *The Battle of Citadel Hill*, provides a detailed, although not unbiased account of these debates. The final outcome was declared a victory for the preservationists (Pacey 1979: 119), although considerable concessions were made in both directions. The new regulations prevented high-rise development within 10 view planes, similar to the arcs of view earlier proposed by Watson, emanating from points around the summit of the hill (see figure 4). Significantly, these arcs of view were selected because they were essential to the military defence system established by the British (Paul Dunphy, Tex Park public hearing). It was from these locations that the imperial gaze surveyed, ordered and administered the city (Bunn 2002); yet, the colonial ideology of how the Citadel ensured safety from attack and prevented strife within was perpetuated falsely.

In 1975, efforts to elaborate a planning policy text were finally set in motion. A municipal planning committee was established, and the result of its efforts, the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS), took effect in 1976. Its policies reflect, in part, ideas that were

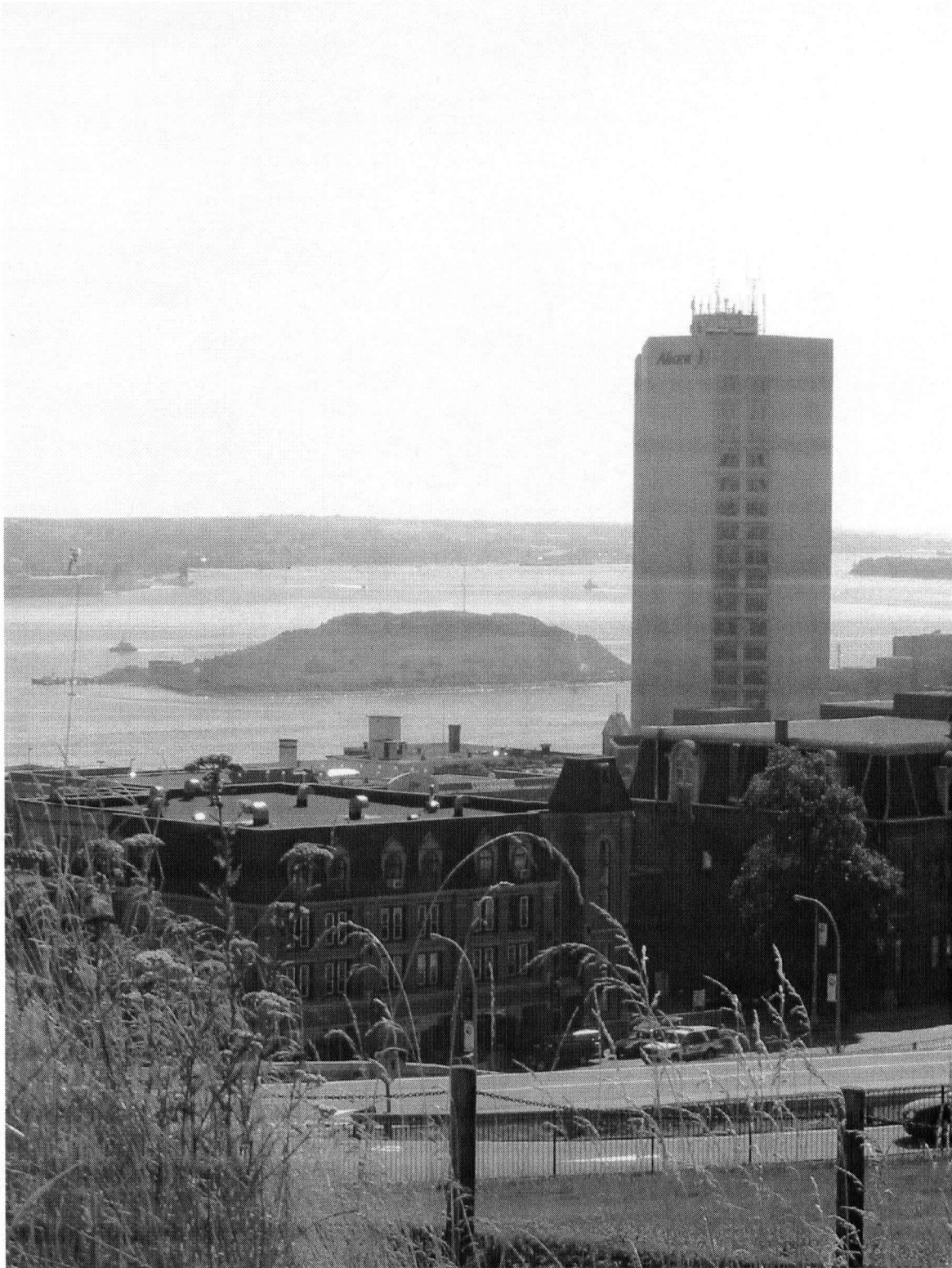


Figure 3 View of George's Island from Citadel Hill Ramparts. The high-rise building to the right was built after the introduction of protected view planes but is cited as an example of the necessity of negotiating height and scale throughout the downtown core. (Photo by author)

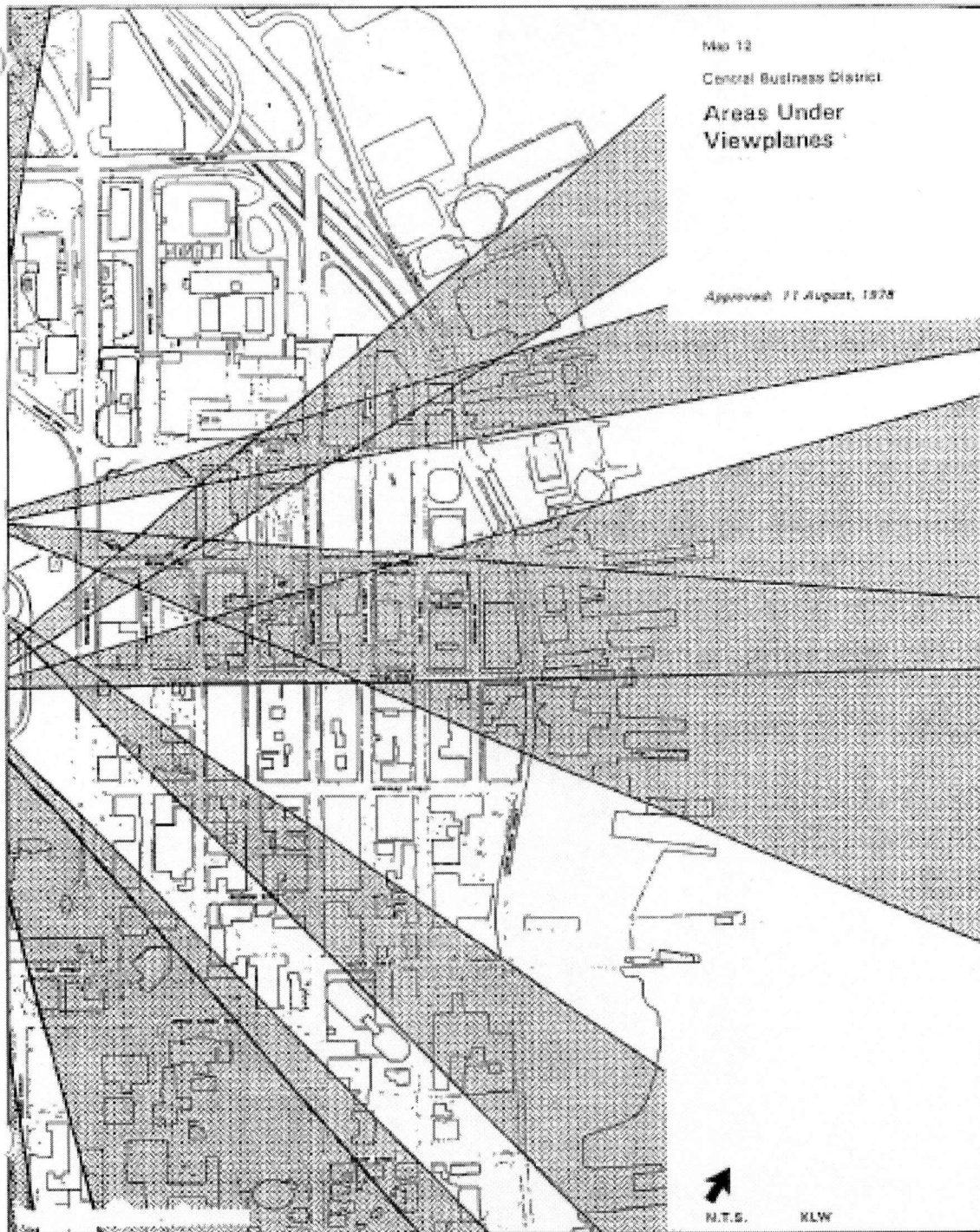


Figure 4 Map of protected view planes emanating from Citadel Hill. (Source: HRM Planning and Development Services), 1975.

debated at the Encounter on Urban Environment. The overall objective of the strategy is indicative of the breadth of the planning endeavour. The MPS “sets forth statements of policy with respect to present and future land use, transportation facilities, service facilities (schools, parks, open spaces) budgeting and citizen participation” (HRM 1976: 1). Topics cover a broad spectrum of ideas related to economic and social development, preservation, city identity and character, resources and management.

Heritage is the object of a number of policies in the MPS. The citywide objective for heritage resources is, “the preservation and enhancement of areas, sites, structures, streetscapes and conditions in Halifax which reflect the City’s past historically and/or architecturally” (HRM 1976: II-23). The views from Citadel Hill are explicitly identified as heritage resources: “The city shall continue to make every effort to preserve or restore those conditions resulting from the physical and economic development pattern which impart to Halifax a sense of history, such as views from Citadel.” Other heritage policies relate to the protection of buildings and streetscapes under the province’s heritage properties act. Judging from the content of planning debates over the last thirty years, however, the Citadel views are the most valued heritage resource in HRM.

The structure of the view protection and heritage policies more generally is inherently ambiguous and negotiable. While within the view planes regulations are clear, development outside of the triangular planes is subject to policies that contain language that is ambiguous. For instance, development must be “complementary” in the “vicinity” of Citadel Hill. Since 2001 a number of proposals for development outside of the protected view planes have renewed Pacey’s (1979) “Battle of Citadel Hill.” The ambiguities of policy language, along with differing views of city identity, aesthetic taste,

heritage and community, are revealed in debates over development. In these debates various texts including the planning documents, historical images and illustrations, as well as the text of landscape itself, are read and rewritten by actors who delimit their meaning and import. The tension is mostly limited, however, to perceived threats to relics of British colonial heritage. The value of this heritage goes unquestioned.

3.6 Conclusion

Most of the work of identifying and preserving heritage, and of maintaining and reproducing the heritage landscape, centres upon resources and sites that are located within the CBD and are highly visible to locals and visitors. This speaks to the fact that the production and reproduction of the meaning of heritage in Halifax has depended upon the relegation of “others” to the margins through history. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Micmaq, the French and the Germans were successively excluded from imaginings of the city as an outpost of British Empire. In the 20th century, social engineering schemes threatened and destroyed the built heritage of African Canadians, but their plight was ignored in the increasingly wealthy, white Anglophone city. Only when the visibility and pre-eminence of objects of British colonial history was compromised did a heritage movement foment and take action. The symbolic value of the heritage landscape grew as it became increasingly rarefied. In debates over development in the 1970s, and again this decade (1995-2005), heritage is disinheritance (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000). A citywide imaginary community that embraces the British military aesthetic is an illusion held by those who fight for the preservation of such heritage resources as the views from Citadel Hill. Meanwhile, contests over heritage and development—instances of heritage dissonance—are not about “others” heritage. Rather, they are about

balancing the needs of post-industrial capital accumulation with a singular heritage aesthetic. The built environment of downtown, suffused with military history, is visible, hence it is valued and protected. "Others" are not visible because colonizers led by Cornwallis, and then the city's elite, pushed them to the margins so as to consolidate control, and order and regulate the region and its people.

Chapter 4: Maintaining the Heritage Landscape: Competing Discourses of Growth and Preservation

Over the past five years, a number of proposals for redevelopment in downtown Halifax have renewed debates that first emerged during the 1960s urban renewal regime. This time around, construction is indicative of stable growth in the local economy. Unlike the post-WWII boom, city officials and financial players are not seeking to kick start a faltering economy or to realize a modernist urban vision. Rather, a real windfall caused by the expansion of the off-shore oil industry has resulted in job growth¹⁷ and optimism in the real estate and construction sectors, and has made downtown redevelopment a profitable venture. Simultaneously, as part of a new regional plan, which is set to come into effect in 2006 (HRM 2005C), the city is attempting to curb urban sprawl, increase the number of residents living in central Halifax, and revive formerly the bustling downtown shopping district. The combination of these factors has resulted in a number of proposals for large-scale redevelopment projects in the downtown core since 2001. Despite the regulatory force of the MPS (and forthcoming Regional Plan), or perhaps as a result of it, the same questions about heritage preservation that were first asked in the 1960s, after planning missteps such as Scotia Square, are being revisited. The existence of an idea of “heritage,” diametrically opposed to that of growth, means that the redevelopment process is inherently conflictual. More than in the preceding decades, I would argue, “heritage” is internalized by actors in contests over urban change, and considered in absolute terms. Here, it is taken for granted that objects of heritage—views, streetscapes, buildings, monuments and public spaces—mean something to the

¹⁷ In 1999-2000 the offshore oil and gas industry in Nova Scotia contributed five billion dollars to the economy and employed 29 000 people (Government of Nova Scotia, Department of Finance, Press Release 2002).

character of the city and the identity of its residents on the one hand, and that construction and expansion are fundamental to the city's success on the other.

In order to reveal how an exclusionary concept of heritage is supported by the municipal planning process and competing discourses of preservation and growth, this chapter examines three contentious proposals for high-rise development in downtown Halifax. Plans to redevelop the Brewery Market District, the Midtown Tavern and the Tex Park property have been contested by two distinct groups with differing interpretations of the heritage landscape. In each case, developers prepare plans that they hope will be accepted by city council, only to have them challenged by individuals and groups, mostly members of the city's middle and upper middle classes, who believe that modern high-rise development damages the city's heritage resources, that it spoils the heritage landscape. In public meetings and hearings, at City Council meetings and in the media, opposing readings of heritage, city landscape and planning texts are advanced and supported by members of the city's political and economic elite. I focus on these three proposals because they provide good evidence of the irreconcilability of competing discourses within a discursive field which allows only for a limited amount of contestation (McCann 1996: 644). While each plan is received differently based on its design, location and expected visual impact, all three have resulted in conflict in which the meanings of the heritage landscape are taken for granted. These accounts also reveal how by emphasizing the aesthetic dimensions of heritage, the actors who maintain and reproduce the built environment also control the meanings and values it is made to express. For Duncan and Duncan (2004), such readings of landscape are made to function

hegemonically, naturalizing and universalizing interpretations of history, place and identity.

The chapter begins with an overview of the planning process. These procedures lie at the centre of a discursive field which is dominated by the interpretation of policies which state the unquestioned value of the heritage landscape, but allow for aesthetically “complementary” development. Next is a discussion of opposing heritage and development “communities” which sketches their defining characteristics and outlines their principal arguments and aims. Following this is an examination of debate surrounding the recent redevelopment proposals. Through these cases I aim to show that the reproduction of the heritage aesthetic in the landscape “acts as a subtle but highly effective mechanism of exclusion” (Duncan and Duncan 2003: 7), perpetuating the historical cycles of segregation and marginalization that were explored at length in Chapter 3.

4.1 The Planning Process: Making the List, Checking it Twice

In Halifax, proposals for developments that exceed the “as of right” limits imposed by planning by-law may only be approved through the adoption of a legally binding agreement between the developer and the city. In such cases, the property developer may offer to include desirable features that would not otherwise be required in exchange for the ability to exceed planning provisions. In order to allow for increased height, for example, a development agreement could include a public plaza or parking facility, gardens, or special design features. The ultimate aim is to have City Council accept the terms offered in the proposed agreement. Before this happens, it must pass a number of bureaucratic hoops. A draft written by a developer is scrutinized by a number

of groups and individuals before it is even seen by City Councillors. First, a member of the city's planning and development staff reviews the proposal and writes a recommendation for its approval or rejection based on the policies in the MPS. If a development proposal risks affecting neighbouring heritage buildings or heritage resources, such as the view from Citadel Hill, it must also be examined by the city's heritage advisory committee (HAC). Finally, a planning advisory committee (PAC) composed of planners, politicians, landowners and citizens from the city district where the proposed development is to be built comments on the proposal. The recommendations of the HAC and PAC are then reviewed by councillors who may then call a public hearing to gather further input before finally voting "yay or nay" on the development agreement.¹⁸

This elaborate review system is in place to ensure that council approves or rejects development proposals according to the guidelines laid out in the MPS. At the final outcome the onus is on the city to approve only those proposals that reasonably fulfill the meaning and intent of the MPS (City Planner, Tex Park public hearing). Planners have suggested that the fact that the planning strategy does not contain clear guidelines with respect to the height and location of high-rise buildings is both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, the meanings of somewhat ambiguous policies may be explored at length through the review process, and the merits of proposals may be considered individually. On the other hand, debate often becomes marred in semantics. I agree with both views:

¹⁸ Until recently, the final decision to enter a development agreement was put to a small number of councillors who represent constituencies in which or around which the site of development is located. These "community councils" were designed as an efficient way to ensure that planning decisions reflect the will of the citizens they affect. Following seemingly ineffective or biased decisions by the community council that decides development issues downtown, the system has been modified to allow large-scale development proposals to be voted on by all of City Council (Dorey 2005).

the openness of the policy language can be useful, but it can lead to inefficiency. A much greater problem exists, however, and this is inherent in the planning process itself.

Regardless of how planning policies relating to heritage are interpreted, they reflect historical injustices by focusing on a narrowly conceived aesthetic associated with British military history. They allow debates to be dominated by actors benefiting from political and economic privilege to the exclusion of others. Thus, following Duncan and Duncan's (2004) take on agency and structure, I scrutinize the relationship between actors and discourses within the structure laid out by the municipal planning framework.

4.2 "Yay or Nay?"¹⁹

The heritage preservation movement in Halifax has changed very little since it began over thirty years ago. In one sense, this is good: heritage advocates are passionate and devoted to their cause and they have the time and resources to monitor development activity in the city and successfully challenge proposals that they deem incompatible with the heritage landscape; developers are increasingly aware of the limits of planning provisions and the necessity of legitimizing their projects within larger social spheres; planners have become adept at negotiating the concerns of these two groups within the framework laid out in policy documents. In another sense, this continuity may be problematic. Debates have focused on the same issues since the 1970s; the protection of the heritage landscape and the prominent place of Citadel Hill in the city's skyline remain contentious today. These issues have become so ingrained in the planning process that no one questions their legitimacy. But, indeed, is such a challenge even called for? When

¹⁹ At the City Council public hearing for the Tex Park development proposal a woman turned to me to begin a conversation and her first words were "Yay or nay?"

one considers the role of heritage people and developers in the reproduction of the heritage landscape, it appears necessary.

One of my respondents, a city planner who has reviewed proposals for a number of downtown development projects, stated that the central figures in anti-development struggles have not changed much over the years. He recalled reading newspaper articles about development when he was a boy in the 1970s and seeing the names—Pacey, Ruffman, McCulloch—of people that he frequently comes in contact with today. If the PIMs, public hearings and City Council sessions of the 1970s were attended by a wide range of self-styled activists, many of them students and young professionals originating from the newly gentrifying neighbourhoods of the South End (Pacey 1979), the same meetings today are dominated by an old guard composed of a core of individuals whose projects and aims arguably hold less widespread appeal than they once did, but who perhaps are more economically and politically powerful than they once were. Who are “heritage people,” and why do they invest so much, both figuratively and literally, in preservation? Remaining conscious of the impossibility of a direct correspondence between visual observation and knowledge, it may be possible to delineate a number of characteristics common among “heritage people”.

After reading in the heritage studies literature (Hewison 1984; Lowenthal 1985) that heritage as a cultural production was first scrutinized by British scholars in British settings, I was not surprised to find that many “heritage people” in Halifax are first or second generation British Canadians. The city’s most important heritage resources are, after all, relics of a British military defence system. At a meeting of the heritage trust of Nova Scotia, and public hearings and in interviews, I noticed that many defenders of

heritage speak with British accents. A city heritage planner that I interviewed also acknowledged that many heritage advocates are of British descent. She admitted, although this had not previously occurred to her, that there could be a link between this cultural "heritage" and the desire to preserve relics of the colonial past. It had occurred to a developer I interviewed, on the other hand: he lambasted "nosy British bastards," for meddling in others' affairs (interview with author). Although I was unable to acquire detailed information about when these British Canadians settled in Halifax, it is possible that many of them arrived with a wave of professional émigrés in the 1960s and 70s when Halifax was developing, according to Cameron and Aucoin (1983: 172) into a "community both orderly and genteel," and that they were drawn, in part, by the physical character of the city.

Heritage activists obviously share an interest in protecting built heritage in this city. This impulse may be evident in their consumption patterns. Perusing a stack of letters urging City Council not to accept the terms of the Midtown proposal, I noticed that a number of the letter writers stated that they resided in historic homes. For example: "We have been residents of Halifax since 1973 and we have owned 3 heritage homes here" (private correspondence with City Council) and "I am writing as a member of the general public and as a member of the heritage community... I have owned and occupied several heritage buildings in Halifax" (private correspondence with City Council). Other letter writers did not explicitly state that their homes are protected by heritage designations, but had return addresses located in the middle class and upper middle class neighbourhoods of south end and central Halifax where colourful Victorian homes line treed streets. The same is true of a number of individuals who spoke against the Tex Park

development proposal at the City Council hearing, where members of the public must state their name and home address by way of introduction. Following the thesis that the aesthetics of home décor is an expression of identity (Pratt 1981), one might argue that heritage homes are markers of class and status, and that the people who live in them value heritage. Purchasing and maintaining a historic home in Halifax requires substantial capital investment. Those who can afford such expense are educated professionals, often academics, health professionals, or researchers, whose tastes, following Bourdieu, mark social distinction.

I saw substantial proof of this during an interview with a heritage advocate who has played a central role in a number of battles to preserve historic buildings and views. Though his profession (he is a retired naval captain) may be atypical of the heritage community, it is nevertheless fitting given his interest in naval heritage. I was invited into the respondent's heritage home for the interview and inside I found myself surrounded by relics from the past: everything on display—furniture, art work, china—right down to the drink I was served, seemed to be a historical artefact. I asked my host about a prominently displayed photograph of an ancient-looking stone house. He explained that this was his summer home in Port Hood, Cape Breton: “my wife and I have a thing for old houses that are eclectic and falling apart.” When we sat down to talk, he expressed pleasure at seeing a young person interested in heritage preservation (most devotees to the movement are retirees or near retirement) and kidded, “you are my kind of people.” He assumed that I share his views and that I am a member of the “heritage community.” Although this respondent suggested that he believes that the greater city public is

supportive of his cause, he was nevertheless excited by the prospect of another heritage activist in his midst.

In contrast with supporters of heritage, developers and their sympathizers seem to be a less homogeneous group. I hesitate to suggest that they share common social characteristics, for instance educational or economic backgrounds. They do, however, seem to work overwhelmingly in business occupations and real estate, and have similar views with regard to urban development. Collectively, they argue that heritage preservation is holding the city back, and that by preventing large scale development projects in the downtown core, the city appears backwards and provincial. Referring to the Brewery District development proposal (discussed below), Bob Mussett, an executive with a local firm, told a group of business leaders “that developers cannot let special interest groups continue to go unchallenged in their efforts to keep the city core looking the same way it has for decades” (Proctor 2004). A newspaper editorial encapsulates the sense of frustration that, we are told, many developers feel: “if the low-rise cafe crowd wants to be able to see the harbour from every block must come to grips with the fact that if their favourite cafe is to stay busy, and therefore open, more than two dozen people must be able to find housing nearby” (Stephenson 2003). Despite their stated interest in creating a vibrant, livable downtown, developers and pro-growth advocates are driven by economic imperatives that, so the neo-classical economic model tells us, are opposed to heritage preservation. It is perhaps for this reason that developers appear to be suspicious of heritage advocates.

When asked for their opinions on conflict between heritage and development interests, a number of my interviewees gave an interesting response; they felt that conflict

is not “black and white,” that there are occasional sympathies across boundaries, and that the media is partially responsible for constructing a dichotomy and attenuating conflicts that are not as intense as they are made to seem. This is true. Articles with titles such as “Both Sides Now” (Adams 2005A), “What’s Your Vision?” (Adams 2005B), and “Towering Debate” (McKinley 2005), exaggerate antagonism for the sake of reader interest. However, conflict is not only a construct of media representations, it is built into the very structure of the planning apparatus where the ultimate question is “yay or nay?” Given the nature of the discussions, their meaning to economy, place and identity, the people who are impelled to respond are the city’s elite.

4.3 Case No 1: Brewery Debacle

No one person owns the market. We are custodians, holding, molding and passing it along to be changed as needed... The market has always reflected the reality of the people in it, but today we can shape it to our liking as never before. Today, the market controls its own destiny. (Kilcup 1998: 14)

The Brewery Market District is a large city block near the waterfront in downtown Halifax which comprises a complex of historic and modern low-rise buildings, parking lots and open spaces. The “Brewery” refers to the Alexander Keith’s Brewing Company which has operated here in one form or another since the 1820s (HRM 2003A). Today the buildings house a number of restaurants and shops, offices for engineering, advertising and architectural firms and the once-weekly, Saturday morning, Halifax Farmer’s Market. This market, the oldest in Canada, was established in 1750 and was held in a number of different locations, including the basement of the Halifax Police Headquarters, before moving to the brewery in 1982²⁰. The Farmer’s Market occupies a

²⁰ A detailed account of the long and complex history of the Farmer’s Market is outside the scope of this thesis. Some key moments, however, are worth mentioning. The Market was funded and administered by the city until the late 1960s at which time, in a climate gradual devolution of municipal responsibilities, the

maze of rooms and halls throughout the brewery complex that only swing into action on Saturday mornings. Another tenant is the Keith's Brewery. Though commercial brewing operations are no longer performed here, the company maintains a shop and traditional brewery that is open to the public for tours and beer tastings.

The buildings, the institutions they house, and streetscapes that surround them are some of the oldest in the city. A number of structures in the brewery district are registered heritage properties, and are guarded against substantial renovation and destruction (Nova Scotia Heritage Properties Act). These include the central Brewery building, which features exposed ironstone walls and original carriageways leading to Water Street. Though it was modified with the addition of a modern in-fill building and the creation of a central atrium, it retains many of its original features. Keith Hall (1863) (see figure 5), the brewer's former residence, is located on the west side of the block and is also protected. In addition, the streets surrounding the Brewery Market District contain some of the best examples of nineteenth century architecture in the city including Government House (1800) and the Black-Binney residence (1819).

The Brewery buildings were acquired by a property development company called Halkirk²¹ in 2002. The new owners insisted that they had no plans to develop the site, though they admitted, "we see potential there" (Erskine 2002A). The same year Halkirk applied to enter a development agreement with the city. Condominiums, a hotel, commercial space and townhouses were proposed for the parking lots surrounding the

relationship was severed. Between 1916 and 1969 the market had been housed in a purpose built structure on Market Street. This structure was demolished as part of the downtown renewal strategy that led to the construction of Scotia Square. At the same time it lost its permanent home, the Farmer's Market was forced into self-sufficiency (Kilcup 1998).

²¹ Halkirk is the name of the Scottish village where Alexander Keith was born in 1795. The developer pays symbolic homage to the history of the site and the man who first made his fortune there.

core historic buildings (Erskine 2002B). The draft development agreement, consisting of architectural drawings, engineering reports and a site plan, was reviewed and commented upon in a number of forums. City planners, the HAC, the District 12 Planning Advisory Committee and concerned citizens provided feedback to the community council whose vote would decide the fate of the project. Initial responses seemed to reflect the architects' painstaking efforts to incorporate "heritage" into their designs. The only contentious component of the plan appeared to be "The Alexander," (after Alexander Keith) a 27-storey condominium tower. It seemed that this out-of-place high-rise was reason enough to reject the proposal. Following advice from heritage activists, who commented that the 27-storey tower would impact negatively on "the character of the city" (Philip Pacey speaking at Public Information Meeting, minutes in addendum to HRM 2003A: 44), the community council voted against the proposal. Subsequently the developer reviewed its plans and submitted a scaled down version of the proposal for a section of the city block (Erskine 2005). This smaller building is currently under construction.

The architect for the Brewery proposal is Duffus, Romans, Kunzins and Rounsefell, a well-known local firm that has worked on several projects where "heritage," as a matter of design, materials or scale, features prominently. Notably, Duffus Romans' architects worked on the Historic Properties, a waterfront redevelopment that saw old storehouses saved from destruction, renovated and transformed into a festival marketplace similar to Faneuil Hall in Boston²². I interviewed

²² This important episode in planning history in Halifax was one of the first scores for heritage preservationists. Today the main tenants of the historic properties are craft shops, restaurants and galleries that cater to summer tourists and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University. These two uses

a senior architect with Duffus Romans at the firm's offices in the Brewery complex. Sitting in a comfortable boardroom surrounded by centuries-old exposed stone walls, my respondent spoke about his practice. He referred to his firm's work as "contextual." By this he meant that his projects draw from and reference their physical and visual context. In historic cities such as Halifax, noted my respondent, contextual design is usually synonymous with high quality construction materials and architectural conservatism. For the Brewery redevelopment, Duffus Romans architects worked very closely with the MPS, following the plan clause by clause to ensure that the proposal conformed with all of the relevant policies. Specifically, the new buildings were designed to respect the scale of the "wooden city." Horizontal lines were carried through from the old Brewery building to the new structures. These buildings were meant to mimic the visual context of their surroundings and to complement pre-existing features of the landscape.

The one element in the plans that seemed anomalous, that seemed not to complement its context, was the twenty-seven story tower. In the view of the developers and their supporters, the slender high-rise set back from the street would not significantly detract from the historic character of the area or diminish the quality of life of residents nearby. From a policy perspective it was not anticipated that the tower would pose a problem because it was to be situated outside of the protected view planes and relatively far from the base of Citadel Hill. The structure was also there for a reason. Following a basic premise of urban economics, the tower, "a planning tool," was needed in order to balance profit with preservation (Cantwell 2003). Open spaces, plazas and the low-rise

create a curious juxtaposition of tourist kitsch, that plays off of folkish imagery of maritimicity, and art school avant-garde.

heritage buildings would be preserved thanks to the transferral of their density rights to the tower.

When publicized, the project was met with an interesting mélange of support and opposition. The list of speakers at a public information meeting in 2002 includes the names of the pre-eminent heritage activists and developers in the city. At the meeting, a number of people argued that the redevelopment would contribute to downtown revitalization (PIM minutes in addendum to HRM 2003A). One speaker referenced a MacLean's magazine article citing Lower Water Street, where the Brewery District is located, as "one of *the* places to live in Canada" suggesting that redevelopment projects would further increase the profile of the district. At the same meeting, detractors of the project argued that the proposed high-rise was aesthetically inappropriate. One heritage activist called the tower "Alexander the Great," while another rejected the idea that the tower could serve as a "planning tool," saying the developer is "not doing us a favour". A member of the Community Association of the middle and upper class South End called the height of the building "excessive" (Erskine 2002B), while a heritage advisory committee member went to far as to call it "offensive" and added, "we talk about preserving the streetscape and maintaining the integrity of heritage buildings... How then can we justify the inclusion of a 27-story tower?" (Power 2003). While people who spoke up in favour or against the proposed redevelopment disagreed on the matter of the high-rise, they all seemed to share the view that the low scale, heritage-sensitive components of the plan, more aligned with Duffus Romans' famous "contextual designs" were permissible and desirable. In the end, the report prepared by planning staff deemed The

Alexander “out of scale” with surrounding heritage buildings. As a result, when it came before Council, the whole project was shelved.

Since the rejection of the initial proposal, construction has begun on Salter’s Gate, a scaled back version of the original project consisting of only one low-rise building housing condominiums and a hotel, and an outdoor plaza. A full archaeological survey was required on the site before the foundation could be laid. According to my respondent at Duffus Romans, this survey uncovered 21 large features and 50 000 artefacts (some as small as shards of ceramic material). The conservationist ethos of the architect and developer is evident in plans to incorporate, quite literally, relics from the past unearthed on the site, into the design of the new building. Once the building is complete, some of the artefacts will be displayed in glass cases in the condominium lobby (interview with author). In addition, stones from an old foundation unearthed by archaeologists will be laid into the wall of the façade of the new building at street level. My respondent indicated that the blending of old and new would generate interest for the pedestrian, enhancing the sense of history of this new building. The plans for Salter’s Gate were praised by heritage people, one of whom thanked the development team “for not developing another icon” (Pugsley Fraser 2005). The special treatment of archaeological materials Salter’s Gate appears to be designed to appease any potential resistance to the proposal. It amounts to the selection and elevation of objects from the past for the benefit of people who see in them symbolic value (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000).

A question that was posed in debates over the merits of the original proposal is what will happen to the Halifax Farmer’s Market if the redevelopment goes ahead? The answer to this question provides interesting insights into the relationship between

heritage and cultural capital. The Farmer's Market is a significant component of the local economy and the cultural life of Halifax. Though it may not generate the same revenues as supermarket chains and franchises, it is one of the few places in the city where one may buy exclusively locally produced goods. Contrary to the festival marketplaces of revitalized waterfronts in cities across North America, of which Halifax's Historic Properties are an example, the focus is not on an international spectrum of foods or a postmodern pastiche of consumable items and architecture, designed to attract tourists and locals to spend money in the city centre. Locals and tourists do spend, but in so doing they support local business. An economic impact survey conducted by the market management in 2003-2004 found that an average of more than ten million dollars is spent annually at the market (Halifax Farmer's Market 2004). Profits go directly to the vendor who, in most cases, is also the owner of his/her small business. The Farmer's Market contrasts with an upscale development across the street from the Brewery buildings on the waterfront. Bishop's Landing is home to a number of high-end shops and restaurants catering to summer tourists and locals who live in the expensive apartments above the shops. Promotional material for Bishop's Landing emphasizes the luxurious lifestyle offered in the development: "Bishop's Landing offers the finest of everything- international-award winning architectural design, prestigious views of Halifax Harbour and all its naval activity and access to some of the most prestigious shops and restaurants east of Montreal." According to promotional materials, it also features "Georgian-styled architecture, with subtle facades to reflect the historic and existing structures in the area" (Southwest Properties 2004).

When Halkirk's plans to develop the Brewery Market district were announced, the Farmer's Market's management and vendors were quiet. They had been assured that space would be provided for the market in the new development. The project architect that I spoke with suggested that the market brings a certain cachet to the Brewery District. The area is attractive in part because of its air of history and importance to city residents. Echoing this, a prominent member of the Market management that I interviewed also spoke of the Farmer's Market's unique appeal. He spoke of "market people" being diverse and characterized the market itself as "spontaneous" (interview with author). Here, the heritage surroundings of the market become inextricably wound up in the sense of localism and the acquisition of cultural capital afforded by participating in the market's economy. Several respondents to the Farmer's Market Economic Impact Study (2004) indicated that they hoped the development plans would leave the Saturday market intact. One woman said that the stone walls of the Brewery building give the place a sense of history (interview with author). What hasn't been considered by the market management or the developer is how the Farmer's Market might be further commercialized and gentrified by the upscale, heritage-referenced buildings around it. Though the market has always been a place for everyone, its products increasingly include luxury food items and expensive handcrafts that appeal to a more limited clientele²³. Indeed, more and more it could come to resemble the upscale boutiques across the street at Bishop's landing where an international array of foods, fine wines, and expensive goods are on offer.

²³ The member of the market management that I interviewed admitted that he has noticed the market attracting more upscale client-base over the years.

The relatively low-key debate surrounding the Brewery Market Development tacitly accepts the prospect that the gradual heritage-conscious redevelopment of the district will see it become a “consciously stylized and historicized node” (Crilley 1993: 247) for the benefit of the privileged social strata that might afford to live in the resulting “boutique landscape of consumption” (Reid and Smith 1993). The micro-economies of the Halifax Farmer’s Market are likely to be appropriated and reconfigured by developers seeking to profit from the cultural cachet of labels such as “local” and “organic.” All of this is acceptable because the one element in the proposal that was inconsistent with a vision of the city expressed in ambiguous planning policy and that was a threat to the heritage landscape, the high-rise tower, was toppled. Meanwhile, the idea of heritage espoused by the developer and expressed in the contextual architecture of the successful Salter’s Gate development, “a muted sandstone affair that will provide a ‘backdrop’ to its historic neighbours” (Erskine 2005), is embraced.

4.4 Case No. 2: Midtown Manichaeism

This is the year 2005, and things are growing. We can’t go back, that’s for sure.
(Submission from the public at Midtown decision appeal hearing, Nova Scotia
Utility and Review Board, May 2005)

The debate concerning the Brewery District development was relatively harmonious because the developers and architects had taken pains to incorporate a pre-conceived notion of “heritage” into designs for the site. The same cannot be said of plans for a proposal to build a 17-storey hotel on the site of the Midtown Tavern (see figure 6), two blocks from the base of Citadel Hill. The approval, appeal and subsequent rejection of this development proposal saw the coalescence of two groups espousing contradictory

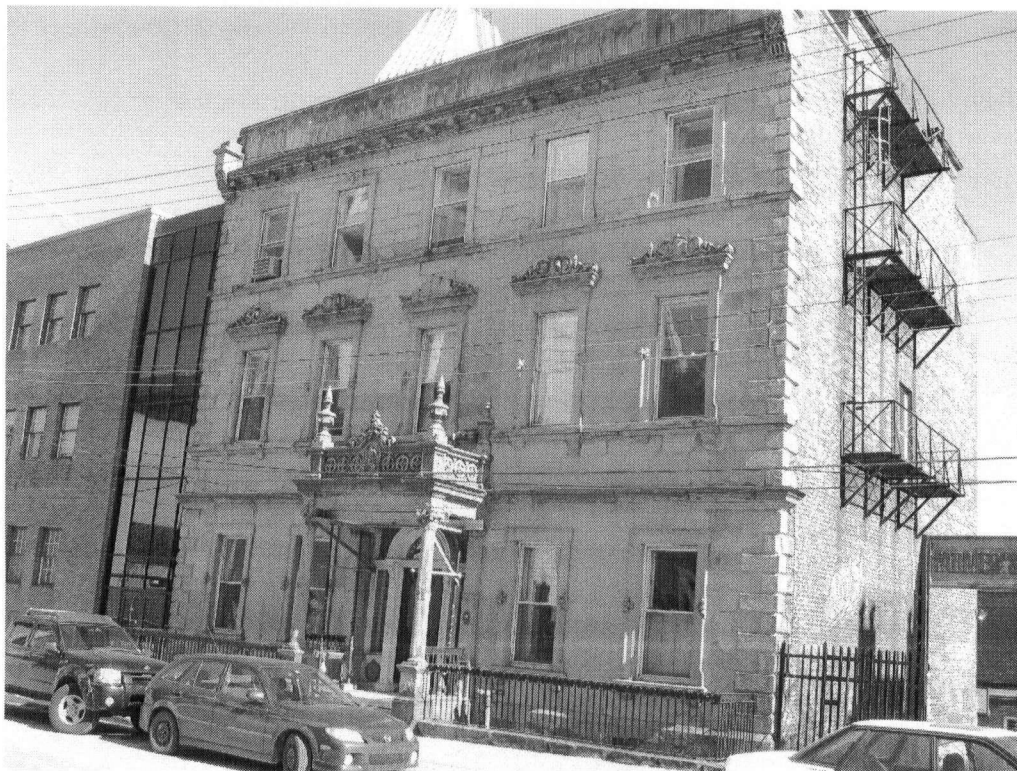


Figure 5 Keith Hall (1863), Brewery Market District (photo by author)



Figure 6 The venerable Midtown Tavern (Photo by author)

interpretations of landscape and heritage, of property rights and community responsibilities.

When the proposal for the Midtown development agreement was presented to city planning staff for review, the planners had little trouble deciding a recommendation for City Council. The question at hand was whether or not a 17-storey hotel on the plot of land where the Midtown Tavern currently sits would conform with the sections of the MPS relating to the protection of heritage resources. Here, two objects of heritage significance come into play: nearby buildings protected by the heritage properties act and the views from Citadel Hill. The MPS states that the city shall preserve those conditions “which impart to Halifax a sense of its history, such as the views from Citadel Hill” (HRM 1976: 6.2). It also states that there should be a “generally low to medium rise character of development in the area of approximately four traditional storeys immediately adjacent to Citadel Hill and increasing with distance therefrom” (HRM 1976: 6.3.1) Staff planners found that although the proposed high-rise would not infringe upon the view planes protected by land-use by-law, it would not reflect the historic and traditional scale of development in this area (HRM 2004E: 6). Furthermore, the Brunswick Street streetscape, which includes registered heritage properties, would be altered by the presence of a modern high-rise looming immediately adjacent. The planning report recommended the city refuse to enter into a development agreement with the Midtown Tavern and Grill Ltd. Both the HAC and the PAC also reached the same conclusion; the nature of the development—high density, hotel—along with the design and the materials, were appropriate for the surroundings, but the height and scale of the proposed building were not.

When the matter came before the Peninsula Community Council for a public hearing, recommendations against the proposal fell to the wayside. Somehow, the MPS policies and the recommendations of city planners and other experts seemed not to matter to the councillors as much as the context surrounding this particular case. At the City Hall hearing, proponents of the plan lauded the owners of the tavern, the Grant family, for their long-standing commitment to the sports community (interview with author). The Grants and their supporters, who wore green baseball caps in solidarity, made passionate appeals to the councillors, including the submission of a petition with over 800 signatures. Their efforts paid off. Addressing the crowd, councillor Blumenthal suggested that the good character of the developers weighed in their favour and that the provisions of the MPS, which are nevertheless outdated, should be disregarded. He said:

You know, I was mixed up when I came down here tonight. And listening to both sides, we hear a lot of heritage people, and we hear a lot of ordinary people. So one thing that struck me was the idea that heritage is not just buildings. It's people, culture. ... everybody I speak to, whether it's in Florida or anywhere else, they talk about the people the Maritimes. Maritime hospitality... I don't want it to be like Toronto. I don't want it to be like Montreal. I don't want it to be like London. And I don't want it to be like Washington, DC or Boston. I want it to be Halifax. But Halifax is in the position now where we've got a chance to grow or we've got a chance to stagnate, and it worries me... MPS or no MPS, I'm looking for the idea of Halifax. (Councillor Blumenthal, HRM public hearing, July 12th, 2004.)

At the public hearing, the community council voted 3-1 to accept the terms of the development agreement offered by the Midtown Tavern. At this early stage, the conflict seemed to be about interpreting relative importance of the MPS to heritage and development decisions.

For heritage people, this decision came as a shock. Planning policies that had been developed through participatory planning process twenty years prior had been

dismissed in a political sleight of hand. Offended individuals and groups lost no time launching an appeal of the city's decision at the NSURB. The Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, the Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage, and Paul and Joyce McCulloch were the official appellants. The quasi-judicial hearing took place over the month of May, 2005 before the review board. Over the course of several weeks of sessions, arguments were made for and against the city's decision, the proposed hotel, and heritage preservation more generally. Throughout the proceedings, lawyers questioned presenters, including expert witnesses and members of the public, and board members presided over the affairs from a raised head table. Presentations from expert witnesses and members of the public covered a range of topics including economic impacts, wind and shadow effects, and the historical significance of the views from the Citadel. The main issue, however, was the whether or not the potential visual impact of the hotel high-rise on the heritage landscape was permissible within the policy framework of the MPS. On this score, the hearing was a "modern theatre of control" (Peace, quoted in McCann 1996) where other issues and debates were excluded.

A number of people who spoke against the Midtown Tavern proposal at the NSURB hearing argued that heritage has a public dimension and that a community of citizens benefits from its preservation. Lars Osberg, an economics professor from Dalhousie University, argued that when a public good is negatively impacted upon, "the well-being of the members of the community diminishes. Precisely because a public good is available to all members of the community, each and every member of the community suffers a diminution in their well-being when a public good is not produced or not produced in sufficient quantity" (NSURB 2005B). Similarly, a heritage advocate who

was present during the hearing had this to say during an interview session: “private development is very much a matter of public concern” (interview with author). He said that his participation in efforts to reverse the Midtown Tavern decision is a form of community service. This type of argument could be used to diffuse charges of exclusivity and elitism, but in this context, it lacked persuasive evidence. As anyone who surveys the social landscapes of the historical and contemporary city recognizes, its population does not make up only one community. Heritage, as expressed through panoramic views, is perhaps only meaningful to a slim minority of city residents.

For the Midtown Tavern developers, community is linked to entitlement and rights. The possibility of developing the property on which the Midtown Tavern sits has only been made possible by the formation of a community of individuals offering both moral and financial support. My respondent suggested that the owners of the tavern chose not to sell their business and remain involved in the development because they wanted to maintain the sense of community that had developed in the establishment in the fifty years it has been operating. He said that patrons, mostly downtown office workers and sports fans attending events at the nearby hockey arena, overwhelmingly supported the idea of developing the property. A community had coalesced around the idea that the Midtown owners and their financial backers should be allowed build on their property, within reasonable limits imposed by planning policy, and that the concerns of heritage people are self-righteous and petty. Further to this, the proponents believe the “heritage community” is composed of “nosy British bastards” who interfere in business that is not their own. My respondent said of the heritage activists: “they don’t care about the history

of this place, the people who work here, or the character of the Midtown Tavern” (interview with author).

Other arguments raised by the appellants tied “heritage” to the character of the city, and to place-based identities. Judith Fingard, a local historian, drew direct links between Citadel views and Halifax’s military history. For her, this history is something to celebrate. She called the Citadel a “military presence” that has patrolled the city from its inception, both protecting against invasions and promoting peace at home as well. She said “a city without a past has no future, and a city without a history has no future. This history is absolutely fundamental for a city of this nature” (NSURB 2005B). A city of “this nature” is likely one that has relied heavily upon military activity for its economic livelihood. Another speaker, the owner of a heritage property, recalled the words of Anthony Tung, a heritage preservation specialist who had recently spoken in the city: “Hitler found the best way to destroy the spirit of Warsaw was to destroy its architecture.” She then proceeded to quote from Shakespeare’s Richard III, drawing comparisons between the potential change in Halifax’s landscape and the defeat of England (NSURB 2005B). These arguments once again fall into the trap of a false claim to universality. They assume that the heritage resources under question have widespread appeal, specifically that British colonial history resonates with many people. They fail to recognize, however, that the heritage resources under question speak to the historical marginalization of “others,” such as Micmac, French, German and Black populations.

The Midtown supporters expressed a different view of heritage. A witness who spoke for the proponents suggested the pleasure of a reversal of viewing positions, arguing that the upper floors of the new building would offer unprecedented views of the

Citadel (NSURB 2005B). A member of the development team that I interviewed was concerned that the heritage of his establishment wasn't being taken into consideration. He said that the business was no longer as profitable as it had been and that the proposed development would ensure its continuation. The character or "sense of place" of the Midtown Tavern, in contrast with that of the city, said my respondent, is not derived from its physical surroundings so much as the personalities of staff and patrons (interview with author). The new hotel would include a new Midtown Tavern that would have an ambiance and menu, but most importantly, a crowd, similar to the original. For the owners of the Midtown Tavern, this was a form of heritage preservation. Midtown sympathizers also suggested that the juxtaposition of new and old, of a modern high-rise next to a low-rise 19th century building does not detract from the sense of history imparted to the viewer. The architect's description of the project explains: "the reflective nature of the glass will mirror the surrounding context, especially the nearby Citadel and the historical buildings along Brunswick Street" (HRM 2004D). This is the sort of language embraced by postmodern architects who employ pastiche and facadism in their designs (see Jameson 1991). The proponents of the development, perhaps because they stand to gain from the project, believe that heritage is flexible and that it is not incompatible with a "modern" urban landscape.

Another point of contention in the Midtown hearing was the expected economic impact of the high-rise development. Proponents of the project argued that the construction of the hotel would create jobs and contribute to the local economy. An interviewee said that the new hotel would also respond to a need to increase the number of hotel rooms downtown (interview with author). In contrast, opponents of the Midtown

proposal insisted that the economic impact of the development would be a negative one. The presence of the building would detract from the visual pleasure of visiting Citadel Hill, so the logic went, and could result in an overall reduction in tourist visits.

Further evidence of the opposing interpretations of the potential impact of the proposed hotel tower on the urban landscape is apparent in a comparison of the visual presentations made before the NSURB. The appellants' mock-ups of the view from Citadel Hill show the Midtown tower as a black geometric figure obtruding violently in an otherwise unassuming collection of low-rise buildings (see figure 7). The developer's images, on the other hand, show the building itself, slightly smaller than in their competitor's images, as a sleek high-rise matching its surroundings (see figure 8). Both images appear designed to elicit a particular response in the reader.

The final outcome of the hearing at the URB was declared a victory for the heritage groups that had appealed the city's approval of the plan. The decision was based almost exclusively upon the fact that the purpose and intent of the MPS had not been carried out (Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board 2005). It was determined that the hotel would have a negative visual impact on the heritage landscape. Though it would not protrude into the protected view planes, it would nevertheless damage the experience of surveying the city and the harbour from Citadel. Heritage activists called this a substantial victory that would send a message to other developers that development is not acceptable on properties near Citadel Hill, or adjacent to historic buildings. Subsequently, the developers have decided to appeal the NSURB decision at the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, indicating their hope that the original approval of the proposal may be restored.



Figure 7 The Midtown Tower as envisioned by heritage activists, spoiling the heritage landscape
(Source: The Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia)



Figure 8 The Midtown Tower as envisioned by the developers, complementing the heritage landscape
(Source: StudioWorks Architects)

4.5 Case No. 3: Tex Park Tango

In 2003 a five-storey parking garage located in the CBD of Halifax was decommissioned and a new facility was opened down the block. The old Tex Park garage lay vacant until the spring of 2004 when it was demolished and a tender for its sale was announced by the city. The property was sold to United Gulf, a development company based in Bedford, NS, for over 5 million dollars. In late 2004, United Gulf unveiled its plans for the site. They had asked project architects, Toronto firm Hariri Pontarini, to design a building “the world would notice.” The resulting effort is a pair of glass towers, dubbed “the twisted sisters,” rising above a base podium to a height of 87 metres or 27 storeys. In the architect’s vision, the positioning of the buildings in relation to one another, and in relation to the nearby harbour, is meant to evoke the sails of schooners in the harbour, a mere three blocks, in a play of glass and concrete. Beyond local cliché, the design is supposedly “elevated,” by reference to Klimt’s famous painting *The Embrace*, in a performative dance that “is denaturalizing to the sky” (observed at the Tex Park public hearing, February 2006).

The proposal was unveiled at a public information session in January, 2005 to mixed reviews. City planning staff and the heritage advisory committee have since provided comment, and the proposal has been debated in a public hearing before City Council. The city planning department recommended that the city accept the terms of the development agreement. The HAC, on the contrary, rejected the proposal, saying that the scale and the design of the buildings are incompatible with nearby heritage buildings on Barrington Street, that the towers will dominate the skyline and block views from Citadel Hill.

This project has received some public support because it is architecturally challenging and, as a number of commentators have suggested, interesting. Supporters of the project believe that the high-rise will stand out as an example of unique postmodern design in a downtown that has very few, if any, examples of good contemporary architecture. They see an opportunity to successfully integrate new and old. A local planning professor commented: "This isn't Amsterdam. There are some holes that need to be filled, and simply filling them with makeshift replicas of these historic buildings that end up being of much lesser quality than the original buildings is not doing our city any justice at all" (McKinley 2005). In a sense, this proposal seems to be an attempt to move beyond the old arguments about compatibility and complementarity that cause replicas, such as Salter's gate to be constructed. The planner's report notes:

The proposed building avoids the use of grey concrete which has been common to many tall buildings in Halifax. Several traditional materials (stone, copper and glass) are used instead. These materials are used in a way which does not mimic or replicate traditional architecture but which is, nevertheless, complementary. (HRM 2005B: 8)

It is also clear of other planning requirements; it is not under a view plane and it is also not in the general vicinity of Citadel Hill. The building will, however, be substantially taller than heritage properties, and will stand out as the tallest structure in the CBD.

The project's detractors, many of the same cast of characters that appeared before the board at the NSURB for the appeal of the Midtown Tavern decision, and who challenged the tower proposed for the Brewery Market, believe the building is inappropriate for the local context. The Heritage Trust has suggested that the proposed building "threatens" heritage in the area, and that "The massive, twisted glass towers would dominate the modest detailed character" of Barrington Street (Lightstone and

Lipscombe 2006). A comment by Peter Delefes, a representative of the Heritage Canada Foundation and former president of the Trust, clearly articulates the focus on aesthetics: "In this case it's not a building, but rather it's the view and the impact it's going to have on the heritage buildings" (Lightstone and Lipscombe 2006). Another argument suggests that the towers will not age well. A self proclaimed "community activist" compared the design to the modernist architecture of the 1960s and 1970s which quickly became outdated and impractical (PIM minutes addendum to HRM 2005B). A heritage advocate that I interviewed suggested that the towers are too tall, not because they are near Barrington Street, but rather because no high-rises above a certain height should be permitted downtown. He insisted that he is not against high-rises per se, but that they should benefit the public and fit in with their surroundings, as is the case with Toronto's City Hall (interview with author). Presumably, a tall building that "fits in" is surrounded by other tall buildings. A woman who sits on the HAC also believes that the proposed buildings are too tall for the surrounding heritage context. She said "Halifax is desperate for development; we want it and we need it" but that this doesn't mean that we should settle for inappropriate development (interview with author). Ron Schofield, speaking at a public information session where the proposal was unveiled in January, 2005, said:

[It] is a great building and a great addition to any city but not Halifax. People come here because of heritage, not because we are modern. This building does not fit with Halifax. [I] am impressed with the buildings of the last couple of years and the effort to fit in the buildings with stone or brick. [I] do not see any of that here and do not think this is the kind of building for Halifax. It would ruin the look of Halifax (PIM minutes addendum to HRM 2005).

Schofield seems to suggest that the aesthetic of the Halifax landscape is characterized by architectural style and material that is defined as "heritage." When he says that "we" are not modern, he projects the impressions and aspirations of members of the heritage

“community” upon the entire city. For heritage-minded groups and individuals, the proposed “twin towers” are unacceptable because they are incompatible with the heritage landscape.

Supporters and detractors of the United Gulf proposal for the “Twisted Sisters” had a chance to face off in front of City Council at a public hearing on February 28th, 2006. The turnout was so great that a second room was opened to accommodate the crowd. Here, activity in the council chambers was displayed on closed circuit television screens. Submissions from the public were split equally between supporters and detractors of the project. The evening began with a comment from heritage activist Howard Epstein, a representative of the Nova Scotian Federation of Heritage, lawyer and provincial MLA for the NDP. In a passionate plea he argued that City Council should reject the proposal because as an icon and city landmark, the building will detract from the visual impact of Citadel Hill. The first speaker in support of the proposal called the building “an architectural masterpiece,” and added that the city “should define itself as something more than the ‘Warden of the North.’” Over the course of the evening the Twisted Sisters were called “perverse,” “intolerable,” “inappropriate,” but also “unique,” “necessary,” and “artistic.”

Overall, responses to the Tex Park proposal indicate some strong support from the general public, but perhaps even stronger opposition. Supporters insist that old and new can coexist without damaging the sense of heritage that imparts to Halifax its identity. In this postmodern sensibility, the play of the buildings- their twists and turns, the symbolic reference to wind and sails, and their contrast with the scale and material of historic buildings, is an engaging criticism of the stultifying heritage preservation movement.

Conversely, heritage people see in the Tex Park proposal another example of a developer's desire to extract the greatest possible profit from a piece of land, disregarding the consequences for the larger community. Once again, two textual communities, advancing opposing visions of heritage aesthetics, debate the merits of a development project that will impact the urban landscape. Once again, debate concerning the aesthetic dimensions of the project including its height and postmodern architecture, obscures other issues. Images of the projected ground level retail spaces for the new development show the logos of luxury retailers Gucci and Chanel (see figure 9). Although these labels

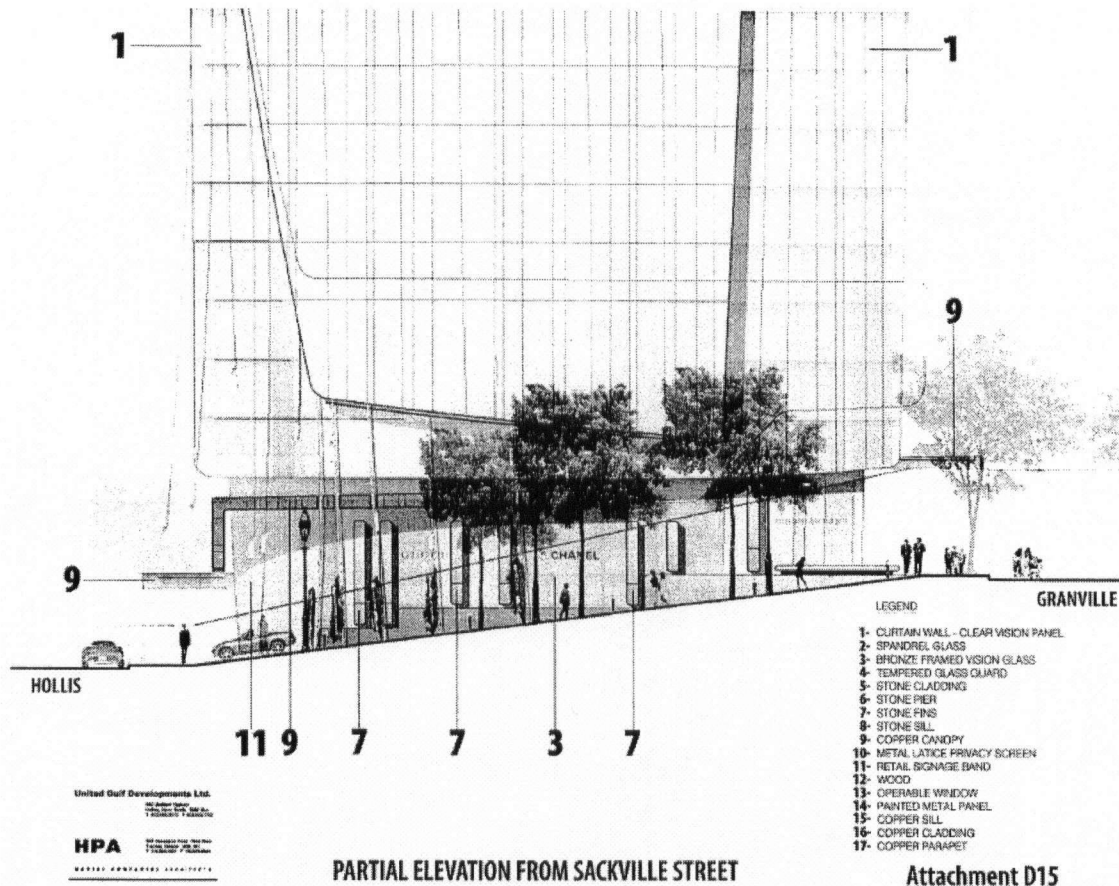


Figure 9 Architect's rendering of Sackville street façade of Tex Park development proposal (source: HRM 2005)

are unlikely to open boutiques in Halifax, the fact that the architect chose to include them is telling. This development is meant to appeal to an upscale clientele for whom the heritage landscape is but a backdrop for urban living. Although there was a large turnout at the City Council public hearing where this proposal was discussed, the crowd was uniformly white and well-dressed. Absent from this "public response" were voices who might go beyond the constructed dichotomy of "yay or nay," preservation or development, to question the meaning of the heritage landscape and the structure of the planning process.

4.6 Conclusion

The "Battle of Citadel Hill" has reignited. At issue are not only the views from the Citadel, but the meaning and importance of the heritage landscape to the city's character and the identities of its residents. In 1979, Pacey wrote that "the battle was to be an uphill struggle, of 'David and Goliath' proportions, with citizens pitted against the powerful and wealthy elements of the community" (Pacey 1979: 43). It is unclear exactly who these "citizens" are. Pacey seems to suggest that they come from a wide spectrum of economic and social backgrounds, that they express the views of the majority of residents, and that they have the best interests of the "community" in mind. Not only does she assume "citizen" is a social category, she implicitly differentiates between citizen and developer, implying that property owners and economically powerful individuals do not share the same interests and concerns as everyone else. It may well be that "heritage people" and developers are at irreconcilable odds and that they naturally fall into competing factions, hence their postmodern "battles." Yet, who is left behind here? Who doesn't appear in this picture at all? Elizabeth Pacey's account of the burgeoning preservation movement in

1970s Halifax is not unbiased. Her use of the term “citizen” takes much for granted and left much unsaid. The citizens concerned with heritage are largely white, middle-class, educated, professional home-owners from the South End of the city. They speak up for a community of others that cannot necessarily be embraced within their terms of reference. Proposals to develop the Brewery Market District, the Midtown Tavern and the vacant land upon which once stood the Tex-Park parking garage have seen a familiar cast of characters advance a similar set of arguments in planning meetings, public forums and in the media. Discussions focus upon how to negotiate a space for capitalist development within a planning framework that values the heritage landscape. It is taken for granted that the heritage landscape is meaningful, valuable and beautiful.

In the post-industrial historic city, heritage is an idea, an initiative, a call to arms that allows the dominant historical narrative to occupy the centre while histories of the poor, minorities, and the dispossessed are relegated to the periphery. In Halifax the heritage landscape is reproduced through a planning process that effectively creates two sides in every argument, excluding alternative points of view. The most important heritage resource, the panoramic views of the harbour and the city from the fortress on Citadel Hill, blatantly references the military and colonial history of the city. These views enabled the British to protect the city from intrusions, whether native, French or German, and thus served to consolidate British power and cultural identity in this “outpost of empire.” Today, the views, along with buildings, streetscapes, monuments and public spaces, are protected from destruction, from change even, because of the threat that this would seem to pose to the maintenance of place-based identities and the tourism-based economy. High-rises threaten British military identity because they risk overshadowing,

quite literally, the fortress on Citadel Hill, and dominating the skyline. Heritage activists argue that every time a high-rise is constructed in Halifax, a part of history is diminished or lost. From a pro-growth perspective, history isn't lost, rather capital and ground rent are gained. Neither side recognizes that other city communities are absent from these debates, nor asks why.

Chapter 5: Resolving Heritage Dissonance through Gentrification: The Case of the Barrington Street Historic District

The past isn't quaint when you're in it. Only at a safe distance, later, when you see it as décor, not as the shape your life's been squeezed into. (Margaret Atwood, quoted in Ley 1996: 299)

Contestations over the production of the urban landscape in Halifax, NS find peculiar expression in plans to designate a central downtown street a historic conservation district. A quasi-growth coalition championing the cause of the district has the difficult task of mediating between conflicting interests, of negotiating capitalist accumulation with heritage preservation. The district is framed as a way to revitalize the downtown core while balancing the interests of business and heritage. Boosters are quick to argue that the designation will not prevent the street from growing and changing, but that it will simultaneously reinvigorate or reconstruct a sense of place that has been lost: "Honouring the past and anticipating the future - it's a balancing act that will occupy Barrington Street and the rest of HRM during the next decade and beyond" (*Halifax Daily News* Editorial 2006). The creation of the historic district, however, is a thinly veiled attempt to gentrify a central city shopping street that has suffered from disinvestment since post-industrial restructuring began in the 1950s. Although this effort seems to present a resolution to the stultifying debates over heritage and development that characterize the downtown planning process, it succeeds only in deemphasizing the colonial and militarist inflections of Haligonian heritage and replacing them with a consumer-oriented heritage aesthetic.

I begin this chapter with a brief history of the rise and fall of Barrington Street and an inventory of some of its historic architecture and landmarks. I go on to examine the emergence of plans to revitalize the area by marking it out as a "special district." I

show that the steering committee in charge of planning the district, supported by newspaper reporting and marketing schemes, carefully crafts and projects the image of a dying neighbourhood in need of resuscitation. I argue that although it is designed to appeal to heritage and development interests, the initiative undermines both preservationist and economic imperatives. However, using examples of retail gentrification that has already occurred on the street, I suggest that the tension between these imperatives is obscured, in a sense resolved, by the aestheticization of the consumer landscape.

5.1 Barrington Street in Context

Barrington Street is the central artery of downtown Halifax. Named after Viscount Barrington of Ardglass, a Secretary of War for the British cabinet in the 18th century, it was one of the original streets laid out when the city was settled in 1749. Running north-south midway between the harbour front and the base of Citadel Hill, Barrington Street has long been a centre of civic life and commercial activity in the city. This wasn't always the case. In its first decades the street, designed to accommodate institutional uses such as military training and drills, was peripheral to the waterfront (Ekistics 2003). It was not until much later that the rhythms of the civilian population, which had been centered to the east on Water and Granville Streets, moved up the hill to Barrington. With the inauguration of the first horse-drawn street car route in 1866, shops began to open the length of the street. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many buildings "some flamboyant, others more modest, some grand at six storeys, others more traditional at three storeys" were constructed (Comiter and Pacey 1988: 86). Jewellers, book stores, clothing shops, theatres and department stores occupied these new buildings and people

flocked to them from the newly expanding residential sections of the city. An electric streetcar replaced the horse-drawn system in 1906 and the importance of the street, both in the imaginary geographies of the city's residents and in real economic terms, continued to grow.

Today a walk along Barrington Street takes the visitor past some of the most important buildings and monuments in the city, and through what Pacey and Comiter (1988: 86) call "one of the longest and most fascinating heritage streetscapes in Canada." Beginning at the North End of the street, under the shadow of the modernist monolith of Scotia Square one encounters City Hall (1888) and St. Paul's Church (1750), the oldest standing Protestant church in English-speaking Canada and the first public building in Halifax, flanking Parade Square, the largest open space in downtown. This block forms a curtilage, a unity of open space and buildings, that has changed little in over a century²⁴. Further south along the street sits a series of low rise structures that is arguably one of the most significant collections of nineteenth century commercial buildings in Canada (interview with author). Among these structures the Forrester Building (1822), constructed in the Georgian style, is the oldest commercial building in the city. Others display Victorian, Italianate, Chicago and Art Deco influences and many were designed by local architects. The southern boundary of the commercial district on Barrington Street is marked Government House (1800), the residence of the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, and Saint Matthew's Church (1857).

In the 1960s, the pre-eminence of Barrington Street as the city's main street began to wane. The Halifax Shopping Centre opened a few kilometres away on the edge of the

²⁴ It was described thus in a presentation on the subject of Barrington Street for the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, May 2005.

peninsula in 1960. As the largest enclosed mall in Eastern Canada, it attracted consumers from Halifax and surrounding areas with offers of free parking and indoor comforts (Halifax Shopping Centre promotional website). As Nader (1976) points out, Eaton's relocated to this mall in 1962, leaving Barrington Street without a department store. This resulted in a shift in the balance of retail activity in the city from the CBD to the suburbs. Indicative of this trend, in 1966 "the CBD accounted for only 16 per cent of metropolitan retail sales... a proportion which was below that of all similar sized metropolitan areas in Canada" (Nader 1976: 46). When Scotia Square opened in 1969 (see Chapter 2), it attracted some shops and services that catered to office workers in the area, but the rest of Barrington Street continued its slow decline. Further retail abandonment took place as Birk's Jewellers, Tip Top Tailors and Zeller's closed their doors (*Barrington Street Historic District Property and Business Owner's Guide*²⁵ 2005). Pawn shops, second hand clothing and record stores, and greasy spoon diners filled the void left in their absence. Meanwhile, with the expansion of motorized public transit, Barrington Street became a channel for noisy and polluting buses (Pacey and Comiter 1988: 86). While commercial and pedestrian activity decreased along Barrington Street, many of the old shop fronts, some empty, others occupied, remained intact.

5.2 Selecting and Elevating: The Barrington Street Historic District

Let's not bring the old Barrington Street back. Let's bring a new Barrington Street forward. (*Halifax Daily News* Editorial 2006)

As early as the 1970s Halifax City Council began to scrutinize Barrington Street and consider schemes to encourage its revitalization. In the 1980s and 1990s planners and heritage activists argued that the historic character of the area, evident in its large

²⁵ From hereon, this title will be abbreviated to *Barrington Street Historic Guide*.

collection of 19th century buildings, should be preserved, and the idea of a conservation district was advanced. "Study after study" (Smulders 2006) commissioned by city argued that a historic district would protect the heritage streetscape and provide an overall context for economic revitalization. After dragging its heels for years, City Council finally formed a steering committee in 2003 to chart a course of action. The group, headed by a city planner and including business owners and politicians, met regularly in late 2003 and 2004 to discuss goals and objectives, as well as the eventual content of the district legislation (interview with author). In early 2005, heritage district planner Bill Plaskett, the man at the administrative helm of the initiative, began presenting the committee's findings to the public for comment. Currently (January 2006) the draft of the historic district plan is under review by City Council and a response is expected by May, 2006. In addition to performing public consultations, the steering committee has worked closely with the Downtown Halifax Business Commission, as well as heritage advocates and business owners from the area.

A seemingly simple question that has been posed of the steering committee, the answer to which could have notable consequences, is what will the district be called? The most common monikers for conservation districts reference "history" or "heritage." My respondent indicated that the steering committee has carefully considered the name of the district because the types of businesses, consumers and visitors that it will attract depend in part upon marketing strategies and the image the district conveys. In the US, noted my interviewee, the label "historic district" is more common: it has connotations of transformation and movement; history continues and cities evolve to reflect this. "Heritage district," on the other hand, argued my respondent, connotes stagnation,

conservatism, and a “living museum” metaphor. This image, he suggested, could be less attractive to business, although it may be attractive to tourists and locals (Urry 1989; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000). The very simple matter of nomenclature- a historic versus a heritage district- is indicative of the weighing of competing interests in the district planning process. A consultant’s report published in 2003 used the term “Heritage District” (Ekistics 2003) but the steering committee has since embraced the label “Historic District”. For heritage advocates, this potentially alienating gesture speaks to the underlying business-oriented motivations of the initiative.

Preserving a historically significant district is framed as an alternative to the demolition and renewal schemes of the 1960s and 1970s. Here, economic revitalization is a principal objective. The introduction to the *Barrington Street Historic Guide* (2005: 1) explains:

So, increasingly, many of the cities of the world developed another solution. Instead of bull-doing the past wholesale they began to select ‘Historic Districts’ to restore and renovate, modernizing but at the same time keeping the scale and attractiveness of old architecture. At first this was simply a ‘heritage’ project. But soon it was discovered that by breathing new life into an old district, they were not only restoring the district’s buildings and preserving its character, but they were also making it economically viable. People came back to enjoy the cafés and the attractive walking areas, and to live in renovated living spaces. Elegant stores returned to the centre, and art galleries, theatres and restaurants followed. The downtown was alive again.

In opposition to the total plans of modernist planners and architects, of which downtown Halifax has examples, revitalization through the designation of a heritage or historic district occurs gradually, involves many people and depends upon the support of stakeholders.

Fittingly, the two major components of the proposed historic district legislation negotiate heritage and business interests. All business and property owners in the district, which would run from City Hall (1888) to Government House (1800), would be required to comply with new design *standards*, but would also be offered *incentives* for compliance. The standards fall into categories such as “signs and awnings,” “additions,” and “façade alterations” (*Barrington Street Historic Guide* 2005). The purpose is to work towards consistency at the level of the entire street, to have all buildings, new and old, contribute to a streetscape with a particular aesthetic. Currently there are no design standards for non-registered buildings on Barrington Street and only registered heritage properties may receive municipal, provincial and even federal funds for façade improvement, conservation advice, and other projects. In the proposed district, grants, tax freezes, preferential leasing and other incentives would be available to all property and business owners (*Barrington Street Historic Guide* 2005).

5.3 Public Reaction

Reaction to the plan has been mixed. Though the project aims to protect the architectural fabric of the street, not all heritage advocates support it. Similarly, though the district designation endeavours to stimulate economic growth, members of the business community, including property owners and developers, have voiced opposition. I heard reactions to the plan in a variety of different forums including interviews, a public presentation of the Heritage Trust of NS and a public presentation by the Heritage District Steering Committee.

A number of my interviewees were critical of the historic district initiative. A self-proclaimed heritage activist suggested that the draft policies are filled with too many

compromises. She believes that the proposed demolition controls are not stringent enough. Currently, the NS Heritage Property Act stipulates that a designated heritage building may only be demolished a year after an application has been submitted to the municipality. Under the proposed regulations, the wait time would be increased to two years. This increased delay is designed to deter developers from targeting heritage buildings for redevelopment. The policy would be stricter still, suggested my respondent, if the city was not so interested in revenue from property taxes.

At a public meeting held in the bowels of the provincial Natural History Museum in May, 2005, heritage planner Bill Plaskett had a difficult time convincing his audience that he is working for their cause. This talk was one of a series hosted by the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia on a variety of topics relating to built heritage. There was an air of scepticism in the auditorium as Plaskett presented his research on the street and how to protect it. Although the meeting was officially open to the public, it felt closed. A scan of the audience provided a view of a white crowd with a median age of over 50. Many people seemed to know one another and also to be very knowledgeable on the topic under scrutiny; factual inaccuracies were corrected with heckles. At one point the presenter asked the audience for help, to which someone called out of the darkness, "Betty²⁶ should be able to answer that...where is she?" Others chuckled and added, "Yes! Where is Betty?" Questions posed of the heritage planner included demands for clarification of the contentious demolition control, and queries as to why the proposed district is not larger. There was a sense that the presenter is not a member of this community, that he does not share its aims and visions.

²⁶ I later learned that Betty is the nickname of Elizabeth Pacey, the historian who wrote *The Battle of Citadel Hill* (1979).

In contrast with preservationist arguments, some developers believe that the proposed regulations are too strong. At a public presentation of the steering committee's work in July 2005, a man who owns property in the area asked "what if another building is never constructed along Barrington Street?" He expressed worry that strict preservation guidelines will negatively affect the value of his property. The owner of a heritage property housing restaurants and bars has had difficulty refinancing his assets because, he says, the ability to acquire a mortgage for a centrally located property is based partially on its redevelopment potential. It appears that many developers and property owners are less than supportive of what they perceive as strict regulations in the historic district plan. The economic incentives seem to offer little consolation. Although the steering committee attempts to balance heritage and development interests in the plan for the Historic District, it has failed to garner substantial support from either of these groups. Instead, support comes from a small number of retail operations and local residents who embrace the prospect of heritage conscious economic revitalization.

5.4 Urban Revival: The Ecological Metaphor

Wilson and Mueller (2004) explore newspaper reporting of gentrification and neighbourhood revitalization in St. Louis, MI with the aim of contributing to an understanding of the connection between growth coalition rhetoric and gentrification. They discover that neighbourhoods in need of intervention are represented as "dying or diseased" in newspaper reporting. They write: "people are implored to imagine 'ailing' communities in desperate need of astute middle-class intervention" (Wilson and Mueller 2004: 283). Newspaper representations of districts "in trouble" set up a logic that serves

to justify gentrification. The solution to decay is clear: middle class investors must play the role of benevolent saviours of sick neighbourhoods.

In Halifax, the same rhetoric is evident both in the marketing of the district and, to a lesser extent, newspaper reports documenting the project. The language that is used to support the historic district project is carefully selected and tailored to convey a particular message. A public awareness campaign used the slogan, “Have a Heart, HRM. Bring Barrington Back,” with accompanying graphics showing a heart monitor signal jumping back to life (see figure 10). Accompanying this biological imagery is a plea for the



Figure 10 Growth Coalition Promotional Material

viewer to contact their local City Councillor to urge them to support the proposed district. “Have a heart” postcards were distributed at shops and businesses in the downtown core and newspaper ads directed readers to “www.bringbarringtonback.com.” Here, “revitalization” means quite literally “to restore life to.” The idea is that Barrington Street is ill and flagging and that it can be reinvigorated, that its heart beat may be restored, through the intervention of government, business and consumer awareness. Newspaper articles less explicitly equate the street with a living organism, but readily contrast the potential of Barrington Street with its current trajectory: “Without unique and attractive shops, services and other destinations, Barrington will be just another stretch of slow-moving traffic during rush hour. It's well worth HRM's while to make the street more

than that” (*Halifax Daily News* Editorial 2006). The president of the Downtown Halifax Business Commission, Paul MacKinnon, is quoted in a daily newspaper as saying: “The people of this city deserve a downtown with character. Barrington Street is the key. Revitalize Barrington Street and you revitalize the downtown.”²⁷

The marketing imagery that portrays Barrington Street as an ailing heart patient through a “living organism metaphor” is designed to consolidate support for the proposed district. If members of the public respond positively to the marketing strategy and laudatory newspaper reports, then the plan is more likely to be accepted by City Council. The marketing rhetoric, however, detracts from the details that concern heritage groups and property owners. It also serves to obscure the central aim of the historic district designation: to gentrify Barrington Street. The next section will examine the pro-gentrification discourse surrounding the plan.

5.5 Going Up Country, Downtown

The veneer of revitalization thinly disguises efforts to gentrify Barrington Street. The heritage planner I spoke with readily admits that he envisions a gentrified shopping district. He speaks of retail wars between malls and big-box stores in the suburbs and small, locally owned boutique stores downtown. Whereas suburban shopping aims to provide the largest selection of goods for the lowest price, he argued, downtown shopping offers unique items for niche markets and “might appeal to high end buyers,” who live in urban neighbourhoods near downtown (interview with author). In order to compete against the goods and selection offered elsewhere, downtown shopping districts must offer something different. According to my respondent, this something is a “retail

²⁷ Paul MacKinnon, quoted in “Bring Barrington Back,” Barrington Street Historic District Press Release (June 23rd, 2005).

experience” that includes amenities, atmosphere and proximity: “after shopping you can go out and eat in a nice restaurant and then you can go to the theatre—you can do all of this on foot” (interview with author). The director of Downtown Halifax Business Commission, Paul Mackinnon, made a similar comment: “What we hope to do is create a vibrant shopping experience that you can't get at the malls or Bayers Lake, and then market that to retailers ... We're not talking Wal-Mart here, we're talking boutiques and interesting shops” (Paul MacKinnon, quoted in Smulders 2006). The aesthetic of historic commercial spaces (exposed brick walls and intricate mouldings) also contributes to the “retail experiences” that the historic district’s boosters envision in the street’s future. When asked who the retail spaces of Barrington Street are for, my respondent admitted that they are probably for the wealthier residents of the city, but that the public spaces of the street, much improved through façade renovation, are for everyone. These arguments support Ley’s (1996: 299) claim that “personalized retail experiences” of gentrifying inner city areas are an alternative to Fordist regimes of mass consumption, and suggestion that the practices of urban consumers amount to expressions of class-based identity (Ley 1996, Mills 1993). The heritage aesthetic embraced in the gentrified shopping district of Barrington Street is clearly designed to appeal to middle class consumers who can afford to buy the expensive products sold in boutiques, and for whom such products become positional goods.

Advocates of the historic district can already envision the future of Barrington Street. Thanks to the work of architect David Garrett and a small number of supportive business people, a few historic buildings have already been restored in the manner that the steering committee had hoped they would. The Brander Morris Building (1906) at

1566 Barrington Street (see figure 12), designed with classical and Chicago-style influences, housed four different furniture stores before falling into disrepair. In 2002, Garrett, Terry Iwaskiw, the president of Toronto-based Up Country Furniture, and partners planned and financed a restoration. The building was renovated, its layers of finish peeled back to reveal original columns and brick walls. It now houses an Up Country outlet, which occupies the first two floors, and Spirit Spa on the third floor. For the steering committee, “this building’s success is a template for Barrington Street as a whole” (*Barrington Street Historic Guide*).

In the case of the Brander Morris Building, the property and business owners took the initiative to integrate the heritage aesthetics of the physical space into the retail ventures it houses. At Up Country, “the building’s large front windows showcase the store’s elegant urban-inspired furniture. A vintage globe presides over a sleek contemporary couch—a symbol of the company’s modernist philosophy.” According to store manager Donald Kerr, Iwaskiw “seeks out heritage buildings” (Carter-Flinn 2005: 26). Up Country’s philosophy is in keeping with the steering committee’s vision of the Historic District as a boutique district where shoppers not only buy goods, but also partake in aesthetic experiences and contribute to a symbolic economy. The store’s products are expensive and depend upon an urban-heritage context, not to mention the distinctive tastes of their clientele, for their appeal. Upstairs, the owners of Spirit Spa share a similar reading of aesthetics and urban revitalization. Owner Linda Brigley commented that her spa “is about rejuvenation and renewal, and we wanted to do some urban renewal project as part of our development” (Rosen 2003). She also points out:



Figure 11 Former National Film Board Building (1907) (left; photo by author)



Figure 12 Brander Morris Building, Up Country Canada and Spirit Spa (1906) (photo by author)

“our business is to beautify and rejuvenate our clients, so we envisioned a space that also beautifies and rejuvenates” (Carter-Flinn 2005: 26). Spirit Spa has been featured in a number of magazines including *Enroute*, *Homemakers* and *Spa* and, as the owners of the business would have it, is contributing to the transformation of Barrington Street into a fashionable destination. Next door, all that remains of a building dating from 1907 is a crumbling façade (see figure 11). It was occupied by the National Film Board until it was destroyed by a fire in 1990. Now, etched with graffiti and frequented by homeless people seeking shelter, it is one of the targets of the Barrington Street revitalization.

Today’s Barrington Street, though on the path to its destiny as a historic shopping district, has many undesirable tenants. When the anchor stores left the street in the 1960s, their spaces were filled with an assortment of greasy spoon diners, record stores, and used book and clothing stores. The heritage planner that I interviewed points out that Barrington Street was not meant to house these types of stores, and that its prominent position as a shopping destination for the region should be restored. When asked how some of the businesses that don’t conform with the plan’s vision for the street may be replaced with ones that do, my respondent suggested that displacement may be encouraged. As leases for inappropriate tenants expire, the district’s committee will recommend that they not be renewed. New ventures, attracted through a retail recruitment strategy, will replace old. My respondent cited as an example a billiards supply store, “Dooley’s Pro Shop,” and a billiards hall occupying the street level space of 1651 Barrington Street. My respondent believes that the store front of these businesses is too wide and offers little of interest to pedestrians. Furthermore, I would add, the popular appeal and gritty symbolism of billiards is not in keeping with the image the historic

district hopes to convey. In place of the Pro Shop, my respondent would like to see the storefront partitioned into smaller spaces housing independent boutiques and cafes.

Concerns over design standards and urban economics aside, not everyone I spoke with readily endorses the gentrification of Barrington Street. A cultural planner who sits on the city's HAC worries that downtown commercial activity caters to a select few:

As a citizen of Halifax, the shops that are downtown are not the kind that I want to or am able to shop in very regularly because of the cost. Barrington Street must have more diverse shops and services, for more people, if it is to come back to life. People who live in suburban developments are even less likely to shop downtown if it is financially inaccessible." (Interview with author).

This view was not shared by other people that I spoke with. A number of my respondents stated that transforming Barrington Street into an upscale and unique shopping district is the only option for the street. Without explicitly referring to gentrification or endorsing the historic district project, the heritage advocate that invited me into his home for an interview demonstrated his acceptance of this form of upgrading. He said that he likes places that are enjoyed by people with "good taste" and, in the same breath, referred to gay friends in his downtown neighbourhood who keep him in "haircuts and lattes."²⁸ Others believe that gentrification, as they understand it, is not happening downtown, but rather in areas where residential upgrading of single family homes—more traditional "white painting"—is taking place, such as sections of the North End. For the majority of my respondents, as well as city officials and commentators, the historic district does not beg questions about exclusivity and retail displacement, but rather about the stringency of conservation standards and the limits of property owners' rights.

5.6 Gastown come Haltown

²⁸ Numerous geographers have investigated gentrification in gay neighbourhoods where there are large numbers of childless double earner households.

In keeping with the municipal government's tendency to look to other cities for guidance in matters of policy development, the steering committee evokes examples of successful historic districts elsewhere. There is a pervasive sense amongst the boosters of the plan that if this type of initiative has worked in other cities, then why not here? Scott Colwell, who runs a cafe in a Barrington Street building that his family has owned for more than a century, commented in a local newspaper that one can "look anywhere in the world and this really works... [It] can happen here" (Smulders 2006). This view is shared by urban critics and consultants, such as heritage expert Anthony Tung who, after a tour of the city, told planners and officials that the city only retained a "patchwork" of its historic integrity (interview with author). He went on to contrast Halifax with historic cities such as Warsaw which have invested heavily in preservation and rebuilding. The planners and business advocates working on the project look closer to home, to Canadian examples for guidance. Perhaps the most oft-made comparison is with Vancouver²⁹:

In the 1960s, as the city expanded, the entire run-down area [of Gastown] came close to demolition. But community groups drew attention to the historic character of Gastown, and pushed for revitalizing the area. Modern developers became interested in getting involved... In 1971, Gastown was designated a Historic District. Gastown today boasts a rich variety of retail stores and restaurants and is one of the city's most popular tourist attractions. (*Barrington Street Historic Guide* 2005)

This uncritical account leaves much unsaid.

Like Barrington Street, Gastown was the historic heart of its city. Dating from the 1890s, the district was once the centre of a booming industrial town. In the 1950s and 1960s, as the city grew outwards, Gastown suffered from disinvestment and neglect and became a skid row. In 1966 the city proposed a renewal scheme called Project 200 which

²⁹ Ironically, "heritage people" compare Halifax with Vancouver to make a different point. They speak of the "Vancouverization" of the city resulting from high-rise construction. Here, Vancouver is associated with an urban aesthetic that is incompatible with Halifax's heritage landscape.

would replace the ailing neighbourhood with modern high-rise office towers and a freeway. In response, community opposition galvanized and the project was abandoned. In the years following the defeat of Project 200, Gastown was “beautified” through various city led initiatives and was declared a historic conservation district in 1971. Subsequently the area became a gentrified shopping area. Today a website run by the Gastown Business Improvement Society declares that the 300 block of Cordova Street in Gastown is the “burgeoning hub of fashion of Vancouver.” Just around the corner, the 200 block of Abbott Street is also “the new hub of fashion in Vancouver... [where] Young designers and savvy buyers come together to create an eclectic scene not found anywhere else in the city” (Gastown District Website 2005). A quasi frontier of reinvestment inches eastwards into the poorest neighbourhood in Canada and first wave gentrifiers—investors and individuals entering the property market—take a gamble on forging into the urban wilds.

There are marked differences in the socio-historical and political climates which gave rise to plans for Gastown and Barrington Street. In Halifax the initiative receives little in the way of grass roots community support and there is no immediate threat of demolition as there was in Vancouver. Nevertheless, the fact that Halifax planners draw comparisons between the two districts speaks to their blatant endorsement of gentrification.

5.7 Conclusion

Despite the best efforts of the steering committee and the growth-coalition rhetoric of the Downtown Halifax Business Commission, support for the Barrington Street Historic District is not as strong as predicted. Neither of the two groups that exert

the biggest influence over planning issues in the city, “heritage people” and property developers, fully supports the project. Heritage advocates consider the proposed legislation too lenient, while the business community regards stricter preservation standards as an infringement of property rights. Though the plans for the district attempt to balance the conflicting interests of these groups, providing a setting for economic revitalization while recognizing the importance of the historic integrity of the built environment, neither camp is entirely satisfied. Meanwhile, in an effort to navigate this inevitable tension, the committee planning the district has shed the constraining baggage of “heritage,” with its associations of British military history and maritimicity, in favour of the more flexible and malleable imagery of “history.” The result is, or will be, a gentrified shopping district where restored buildings serve as décor for the consumption practices of the middle and upper classes.

Once again, the two-sided nature of the planning process, which seems to balance only preservation and accumulation, has served to obscure other important questions. No one has questioned the ethical implications of actively encouraging gentrification and retail displacement on what is historically Halifax’s “main street.” Gentrification is portrayed as the only solution to an “undesirable present” (Wilson, Wouters and Grammenos 2004). Barrington Street will be no living museum or investment venture, but nor will it be a place where the masses come to shop and promenade as it was at the turn of the 20th century. Instead it will be a place of stylized consumption and “modern” urban living for a professional consumer class.

Chapter 6 Concluding Remarks

In this thesis I have sought to unsettle the hegemonic discursive field of planning and governance that allows for the reproduction of an exclusionary geography of conquest and marginalization in Halifax, NS, through the maintenance of a heritage landscape imbued with the symbolism of a distorted past. To the contemporary observer, there is little visible heritage in the central city that does not refer to British history. From the Citadel view planes, to the public spaces around City Hall, to the grand buildings of Barrington Street, the heritage landscape reflects the power and centrality of the British military experience. However, it does not tell the whole story. In the 18th and 19th centuries cultural and ethnic groups which posed a threat to British pre-eminence were relegated to the periphery of the city and excluded from civic life and city-building. Today this exclusionary geography is reproduced as all but the city's elite are absent from municipal decision-making processes. The planning process creates a context in which the competing interests of politically and economically powerful individuals are considered valuable and worthwhile, while alternative viewpoints are excluded. By not only representing the content of debates over heritage and development, but also by drawing attention to how the meaning and legitimacy of this form of heritage is constructed, this thesis has sought to open up a space for alternative readings of the heritage landscape.

I hope to have demonstrated the usefulness of the theoretical framework of the "new cultural geography" to heritage studies. If the visible world is clothed in meanings that are produced and reproduced through cultural processes, understanding it calls for increased attention to how significance is constructed. Here, the heritage studies literature

could benefit from greater attentiveness to the dual role of agency and structure. Whereas previous accounts clearly state the meaning of heritage to constructions of individual and collective identities (Hewison 1987), and show equally well the roles of political, social and cultural agencies and structures in creating and supporting heritage (Graham, Tunbridge and Ashworth 2000), they do not discuss the work of actors in giving meaning to heritage. Given the recognition of heritage as an object of cultural capital, as an aesthetic production which can be a “touchstone” of individual identity (Uzzell 1989), a critical assessment of its role and functions in society cannot but consider agency. By scrutinizing not only the planning process whereby the lay of the land is determined, but also readings of the heritage landscape and the impulses and sentiments attached to them, I have attempted to provide a fully developed analysis of “heritage dissonance.”

A critical review of Barrington Street historic district initiative demonstrates the ways in which heritage dissonance, exclusionary and hegemonic though it may be, may be further impoverished through aestheticization and consumerism. As Ley (1996) suggests, individuals who encounter history in gentrifying spaces regard it as little more than a style or object of desire. Stepping into the renovated retail spaces of Barrington Street to shop is a form of “malevolent escapism” (Shaw 2005) from an “undesirable present” (Wilson, Wouters and Grammenos 2004) which is a luxury for those few who can afford the goods and services on display in this gentrifying historic district. The rhetoric which encourages revitalization through gentrification is meant to assimilate those two competing discourses, preservation and growth, which dominate municipal debates in the city. Although the readings of the city, heritage landscape and planning texts that are debated in contests over development, such as those examined in Chapter 4,

do not respect the complexities of social and cultural realities in this city, the reading wherein heritage is but “décor” for individualized consumer practices, is perhaps one step further in the wrong direction. Hence, future studies of gentrification which discuss the meaning of heritage would do well to consider this concept in a critical light.

My research has provided insights into the role of planning texts in negotiating the tension between growth and continuity. In Halifax, the MPS underscores the heritage significance of the landscape, defining it as an economic asset in the tourist market, and as a cultural resource. It also betrays an intrinsic bias in favour of the culturally dominant form of heritage. In the MPS, for example, Citadel Hill is afforded iconic status and planning provisions prevent new development from infringing on sightlines from the summit of the hill. There is room for interpretation, however, as much of the language of city planning policy documents is somewhat ambiguous. The domain of contestation, heritage dissonance, does not allow the significance of heritage resources to be questioned. Instead, it asks whether the aesthetic impact of “modern” high-rise is acceptable in the context of the heritage landscape. Following geographical scholarship which emphasizes the importance of historical memories such that give rise to “heritage” in the construction of nation (Daniels 1993, Said 2002) and place (Duncan and Duncan 2004), relics of the past, including views, are valued because they are meaningful. The problem is that this form of “heritage” fails to account for the complexity of cultural and social processes and formations through history. In fact, the policies that form the basis of planning and development decisions are the direct result of a political movement spearheaded by community associations composed of middle class homeowners. The first step in opening up municipal processes to a greater number of communities and

individuals is recognizing the monotony of and predictability of “heritage dissonance” in this city and asking why other heritage resources are not valued.

Like McCann (1997) and Duncan and Duncan (2004) I consider the spaces of municipal planning and governance to offer fruitful opportunities for the study of exclusionary practices associated with creating and maintaining landscapes imbued with culturally potent meanings. It is in these spaces that conflicts between textual communities, groups who interpret texts of planning, history and landscape differently are played out. As I have shown, in cities such as Halifax, the landscape is unique in that it is elevated and distorted as heritage and put to use for a variety of purposes. There is more work to be done on the intersection between landscape and heritage. Other Canadian cities, such as Kingston, Ontario, and Quebec City, Montreal and Vancouver, have concentrations of buildings and spaces and monuments that carry a particular symbolic value associated with their connection to the past. Further investigation into the meanings of these heritage landscapes in the planning process, and the work of actors in constructing these meanings, is needed in order to understand contemporary cultural processes in historic cities.

Epilogue

In late 2005 the Armour Group, the Halifax Waterfront Development Corporation and partners unveiled a proposal to redevelop a central parcel of land on the Halifax harbour front known as Queen's Landing. Current uses of this land include parking facilities, a boardwalk, an aging maritime history museum and a number of seasonal tourist shops and snack bars housed in small buildings designed to look like fishing shacks. This location is significant; not only is it the approximate geographical heart of the waterfront, but it also lies at the foot of George Street, the central east-west artery of downtown. This street rises from the harbour, is interrupted for a block at the Grand Parade, and then continues its direct path to the clock tower at the foot of Citadel Hill. The proposal calls for a development that would do justice to such a symbolic location. The plan's focal point is a new naval heritage interpretation centre which includes a dry-docked antique Corvette ship. The Queen's Landing development is designed to be a "star" attraction on which Armour Group's principal had this to say: "We have many goals as part of this development district. At its core, the No. 1 is to try and create a star attraction. Governments use that term to describe a location that changes people's sense of place both locally and internationally" (Mellor 2005). If this proposal is constructed, how will it impact the heritage landscape of downtown Halifax? More importantly, will the celebration of heritage referencing military be embraced, or challenged? Hopefully the stories and narratives that I have presented in these pages may inform discussions provoked by such future proposals for development.

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