

This chapter discusses the theoretical foundation of the dissertation and the approach to heritage.

# CHAPTER

Dissonant Heritage

# 3.

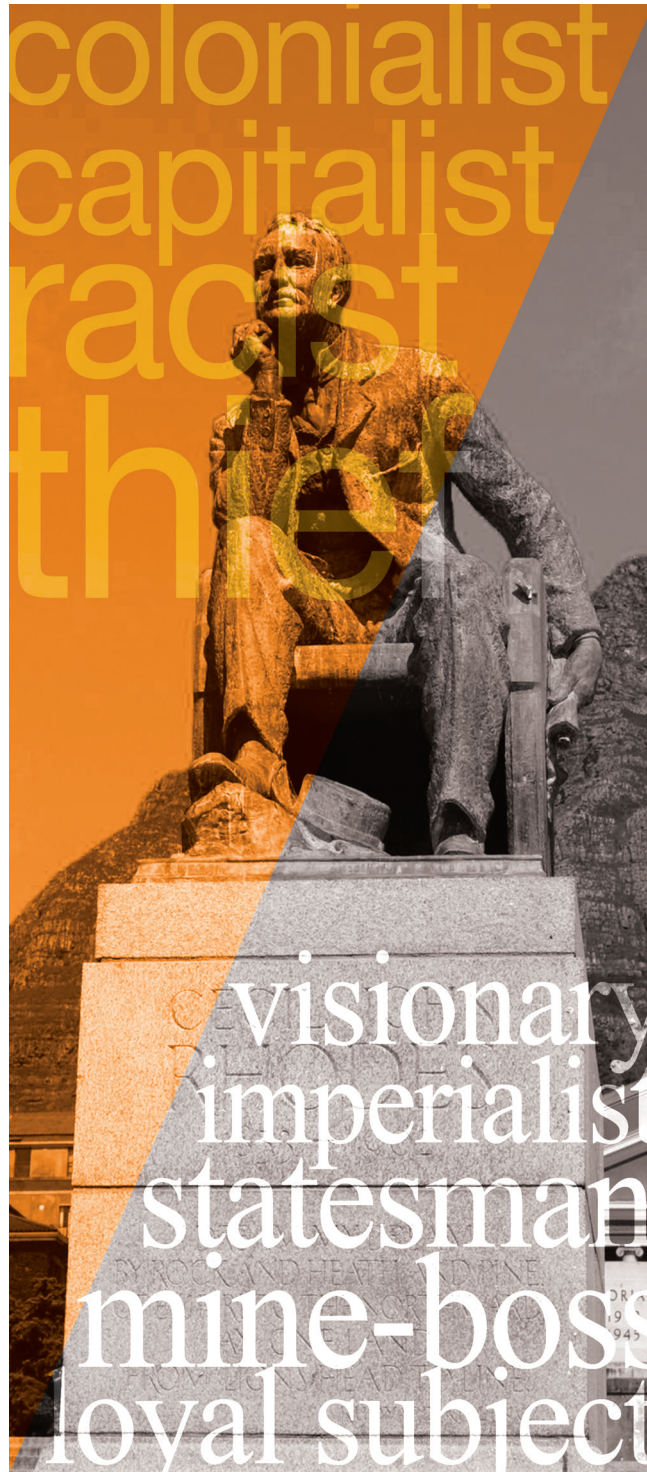


Figure 3\_1 Statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town, adapted [image online] available at: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7f/UCT\\_Cape\\_Town\\_-\\_Statue\\_of\\_Rhodes.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7f/UCT_Cape_Town_-_Statue_of_Rhodes.jpg) access on: 2016-10-22

The aim of the following chapter will be to give this dissertation a theoretical foundation from which to start the general investigation. The theoretical discourse that will be used is that of dissonant heritage, a term defined by Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996). It is chosen as it forms the basis of all discourses thereafter dealing with heritage that is contested or in disharmony with its contemporary context, and covers a broad spectrum of subject matter ranging from archaeological artefacts to monuments, from culture to tourism.

Dissonant heritage will only be discussed as far as it applies to the specific context of the Pretoria Magistrate's Court.

Since heritage is a broad term which has been defined in various ways in the past, Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996:6) aim to define heritage so as to cross the divide between the various opposing views. Their definition is that:

*'It (heritage) is thus a product of the present, purposefully developed in response to current needs or demands for it, and shaped by those requirements. It makes two sorts of intergenerational links, both of which are determined by the present. The present selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future.'*

According to Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996), heritage is more reliant on a

subjective interpretation of the past as on objective factual history. They go on to state that place making and heritage communication in that place, is reliant on coding. Dissonance occurs when the encoders, usually government agencies, are far removed from the decoders, the general public. Furthermore, this code is usually embedded in heritage objects that are designed to be robust and last for long periods of time, further removing the encoder from the decoder through time.

Dissonance in turn is defined by Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996:20) in the following manner:

*'Dissonance in heritage involves discordance or a lack of agreement and consistency.'*

The term also holds close to musical theory where it describes the disharmony between notes and thus in cognitive theory it will point to:

*'a state of psychic tension caused by the simultaneous holding of mutually inconsistent attitudes or the coexistence of a lack of consonance between attitudes and behaviours.'*

Thus, two factors becomes apparent and implicit in the application of this theory:

Firstly, that heritage is not a passive by-product of history but a deliberate product



Facts



Selective attempt to describe and to record.



Product of contemporary use or the enforcement of ideology.



Intentional choice in a systematic process.



*'all heritage is someone's heritage and therefore logically not someone else's...'*

Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996:21)

Figure 3\_1 1652 in the Cape, adapted [image online] [https://usercontent1.hubstatic.com/535668\\_f1024.jpg](https://usercontent1.hubstatic.com/535668_f1024.jpg) access on: 2016-10-22

Figure 3\_2 Riebeeck bill, adapted [image online] <http://www.andrewcusack.com/net/wp-content/uploads/nwrand1.jpg> access on: 2016-10-22

Figure 3\_3 Riebeeck statue, adapted [image online] [http://www.rdm.co.za/incoming/2015/04/01/jan-van-riebeeck.jpg/ALTERNATES/crop\\_607x325/Jan+van+Riebeeck.jpg](http://www.rdm.co.za/incoming/2015/04/01/jan-van-riebeeck.jpg/ALTERNATES/crop_607x325/Jan+van+Riebeeck.jpg) access on: 2016-10-22

created. This creation process inevitably leads to a selection process in which some are included and others excluded. Thus simply stated:

*'All heritage is someone's heritage and therefore logically not someone else's:...'*  
(Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996:21))

Therefore, inevitably disinheritance occur with inheritance and although the creation of a universal inheritance is illogical and the solution far from simple, the theory guards against inactivity and advocates a deliberate approach.

Secondly, dissonant heritage is a universal phenomenon and either actively or latently present. Thus this approach cannot just be relegated to the obvious contexts but needs to be present in all heritage engagements.

Concerning architecture, which Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996) group with place products or place heritage, both physical (relic) and metaphysical (memory) the following tensions might arise:

1. The diversity of heritage elements assembled might contain non-heritage components and is meant to serve a wide variety of consumers.
2. Because of this diversity of components, the place product might be multi-sold as some parts appeal to some while other parts appeal to others.

3. This might lead to multiple interpretations of the same place product.

4. Lastly, the place product is usually placed within a spatial hierarchy that creates confusion as to which scale meaning is marketed and at which scale it is sold. This scale may refer to a local context as well as a global setting.

#### **DISSONANT MESSAGES**

*'all heritage contains implicitly or explicitly value-laden messages'*  
(Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996:27))

These inherent messages can be conveyed in several different ways that will lead to dissonance. These are:

1. Contradictions, where there might be conflicting messages within a single artefact.
2. Failure to transmit may lead to the understating or complete silence on the inherent messaging, thus leaving the consumer to deduce their own interpretation or drawing on unintended interpretations.
3. Obsolete transmissions of messages happen in context where the artefact no longer relates to the values and objectives of the current society, and thus becomes irrelevant.



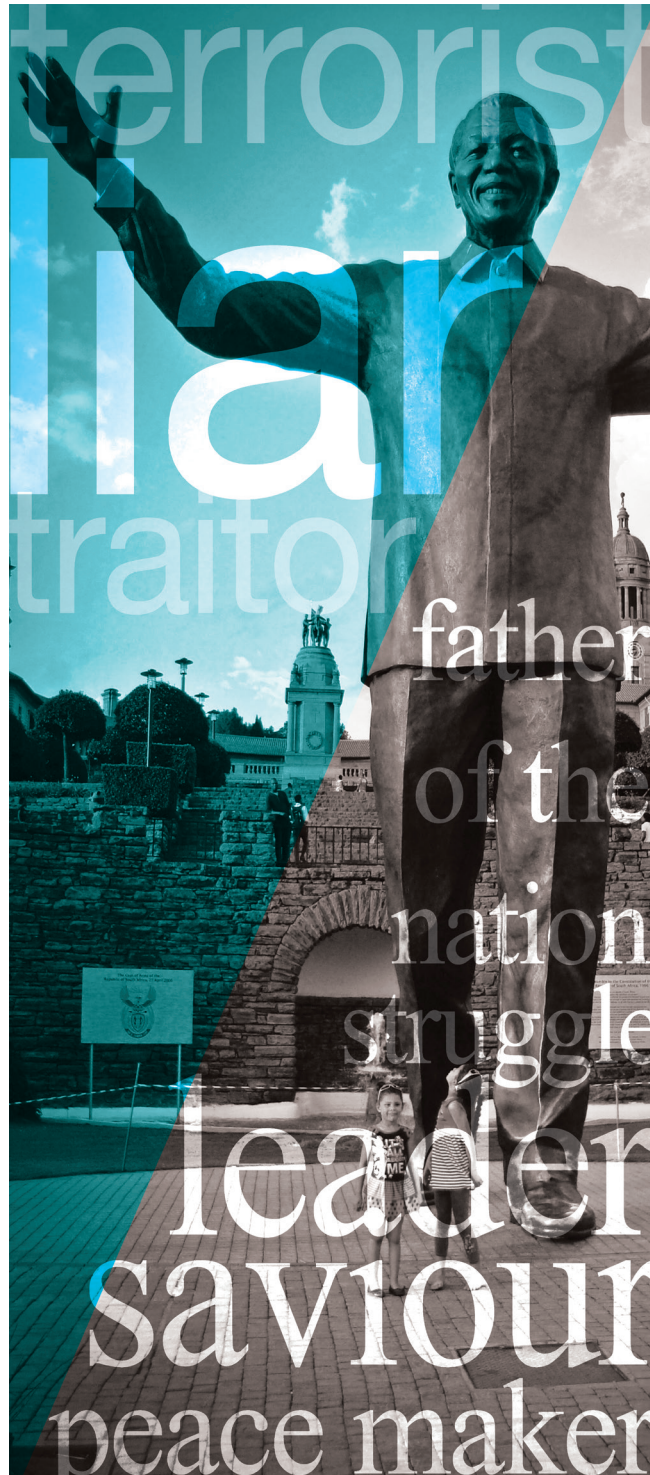


Figure 3\_4 Statue of Nelson Mandela at Union Buildings, adapted [image online] <https://lillyloompacom.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/mandela-scale.jpg> access on: 2016-10-22

4. The undesirability of the message might represent history that hurts and thus cause dissonance by its mere presence. This might cause dissonance between perpetrators and victims of the same heritage.

As previously discussed, this process of heritage creation inevitably leads to disinheritance of those who are excluded. According to Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) this disinheritance can manifest itself in the following ways:

1. In the case of mutual indifference, the heritage aspect can be celebrated by one group separate from another, while posing no threat and in many cases remaining totally unnoticed.

2. With tolerant acceptance two distinct groups remain completely separate with their own social organisation and versions of history, while mutually contributing to the larger state or society. This concept is based on mutual understanding but not mutual participation.

3. With mutual association and participation all spheres of society participate in the celebration of the others' heritage without threatening or being threatened by the heritage expression.

Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996) concedes that addressing disinheritance in a context where unequal political or economic structures existed or still survives, complicates the mitigation process but states that mitigation is none the less possible.

#### **DISSONANCE IN THE COURT**

Concerning the Pretoria Magistrate's Court, the apparent dissonance exists firstly and most apparently in the classical nature of the building. This classical stylistic expression is universally associated with the west and in a post-colonial context with colonialisation. Since the 19th century this particular style has also universally been associated with civic buildings and particularly the law. Therefore on mere appearance the first points of dissonance are formed and are clear undesirable messages that are transmitted.

Secondly, a less apparent dissonant element exists in the layout and functioning of the old court. While the contemporary judicial system advocates the principles of transparency, accessibility, democracy and restorative justice, the spaces and layout of the Pretoria Magistrate's Court has become obsolete in its current context and therefore communicates another point of clear dissonance.

Although these aspects of the heritage are present, not all of it is negative. The classical ordering of elements symbolises the order that is needed in the judicial system in order for it to function. The stylistic expression of the building also affirms it in its civic presence and position within the city, and adds the necessary gravitas to the court and its function.

Thus although it is not the position of this dissertation to take an absolute restoration approach to the existing building, it is also





Figure 3\_5 Pretoria  
Magistrates Court

not an option to completely eradicate the existing fabric. This dissertation recognises the opportunity that exists to engage the building in order to extract the negatively-instilled message and attempt to instil and add in its place a contemporary expression of what the justice system could be and how it should develop into the future.

Furthermore, it is the opinion of this dissertation that heritage needs to be engaged in order to re-instil contemporary value and meaning in order to make it relevant in its current contexts and to its current users.