Overcoming the Preservation Paradigm: Toward a Dialogic Approach to Rock Art and Culture

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This essay critically analyzes how contemporary marks on rock are differentially valued through deployment of the terms graffiti *and* vandalism, *and links those evaluations to the preservation paradigm. Vandalism is a normative category relying on presuppositions regarding the value (or lack thereof) of marks on rock. Preservation, a concept implicated in the salvage paradigm, essentializes culture and assumes that the authenticity of sites is maintained by freezing them in their (pre)historic condition, discouraging an understanding of rock art sites as spatially-grounded, asynchronous dialogues. If rock art sites are forums for such dialogues, their "essence" becomes not* the *culture or cultures which made the rock art, but the* relationship *between those cultures.*

For those interested in rock art—by which is generally meant "prehistoric" or "historic" indigenous marks on rock—few things are more upsetting than graffiti: the familiar array of names, dates, initial-filled hearts and often-crude images that deface indigenous rock art sites. Such graffiti are, in effect, equivalent to many other forms of vandalism of rock art, such as bullet holes, paint, chalk, abrasions or scratches on indigenous elements. Contemporary graffiti at rock art sites interfere with aesthetic appreciation, degrade the archaeological value of the resource, and disrespect the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples.

As a researcher in the fields of rhetoric, intercultural communication, and critical/cultural studies, I am interested in exploring the contemporary status of rock art sites and motifs and in interrogating the contemporary structures which mediate their interpretation and valuation. This essay is an effort to think through, critically, the ways in which various marks on rock are differentially valued through the deployment of terms such as *graffiti* and *vandalism,* how that process of differentially valuing

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various marks is both grounded in and constitutive of an ideology of preservation, and how the ideology of preservation limits possibilities for understanding rock art. In questioning the ideologies and practices carried out in the name of preserving and protecting rock art, however, I am *not* arguing for a reduction in preservation and protection efforts. In no way are the arguments here intended to license additions or alterations to rock art sites, or to encourage acts in violation of laws such as the Archaeological Resource Protection Act or ethical guidelines such as those promulgated by the American Rock Art Research Association (ARARA).

Vandalism and *graffiti* are normative, not descriptive, categories relying on presuppositions regarding the relative value of marks on rock. The discourse of preservation carries implicit and explicit systems of value by which marks on rock are deemed to constitute archaeological, cultural, or historic *resources* versus *graffiti* or *vandalism.* These systems of value constrain and enable the ways in which rock art can be understood. Specifically, guided by the work of James Clifford (1987, 1988), I critically analyze the "preservation paradigm" through the lens of the "salvage paradigm" which dominated much of twentieth-century anthropology. *Preservation,* a concept implicated in the salvage paradigm, assumes that the authenticity of a site is maintained by "freezing" it in its (pre)historic condition, a view which is contrary to the possible function of rock art locales as sites for dialogue, as forums for cross-cultural expression. The ideology which grounds and guides preservation efforts perpetuates a particular set of assumptions about rock art sites, the nature of their value in relation to past and present cultures, and the nature of "culture" itself.

Critical examination of the discourse of rock art preservation, specifically an interrogation of the meanings, functions, and assumptions behind the labels *vandalism* and *graffiti,* offers an alternative lens for interpreting rock art sites, especially those which contain both (pre)historic "rock art" and contemporary "graffiti." Such a reinterpretation is grounded in issues central to communication studies, anthropology, and archaeology: specifically, an essentialist view of culture which affects the theorizing and analysis of cross-cultural dynamics. Challenging the essentialist view of culture embedded in the preservation paradigm enables the development of different models for understanding the communicative dynamics of rock art.

I begin by framing the essay in relation to critical examinations of cultural resource management (CRM) and a rhetorical understanding of value, and then outline the preservation paradigm and its attendant ideology of cultural authenticity. With this basis, I discuss a variety of rock art sites in order to identify the operation of systems of value regarding "prehistoric," "historic," and contemporary, as well as indigenous versus non-indigenous rock art. Finally, I use the relationships between these asymmetrically valued marks to articulate an alternative view of rock art sites, a view based in the dialogic nature of culture.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Despite its characterization as "simply the technical processes concerned with the management and use of material culture perceived by sectors of the community as significant" (Smith 2004:6), CRM is an institutional practice guided by ideologies and, in enacting those ideologies, makes them materially consequential. Specifically, scholars have analyzed not only CRM's relationship to archaeological theory and practice, but its social consequences and implication in structures of power. Laurajane Smith (2004), for example, examined CRM (or CHM, cultural heritage management) in the context of both the U.S.

and Australia, demonstrating how archaeological expertise and CRM practices mediate indigenous claims to cultural identity, land, sovereignty, and nationhood (see also the essays in Mathers et al. 2005).

Joseph Tainter and Bonnie Bagley argue for the need for self-reflection by CRM regarding its practices because "cultural resource managers do not merely perceive, record, and evaluate the archaeological record. To the contrary, they apply a set of mostly unexamined assumptions, biases, and filters to privilege certain parts of the record, and to suppress the rest" (Tainter and Bagley 2005:69). There is a need, therefore, "to expose and debate the assumptions underlying significance evaluations" (Tainter and Bagley 2005:59). Their position is grounded in an awareness that "cultural resource managers do not so much *discover* the archaeological record as, unconsciously but actively, they *shape* and *produce* it" (Tainter and Bagley 2005:69; emphasis in original). Rejecting a simplistic positivist epistemology, these authors argue that cultural resources do not exist as pre-packaged containers of information, but are constituted by archaeological and CRM practices and discourses. Unconscious assumptions about archaeological significance and value do not only have the potential to distort understandings of cultural resources; such assumptions, embedded in taken-for-granted ideologies, determine what will be labeled and treated as a valuable resource.

Published materials relating to protecting, preserving, and conserving rock art, many of them in previous volumes of *American Indian Rock Art* and other ARARA publications, reflect the view that CRM is primarily a technical endeavor. Publications on rock art preservation in the U.S. focus on important, practical issues such as guidelines for site visitation (Bock and Lee 1992), guidelines and techniques for site recording (Bock and Lee 1992; Loendorf 2001; Mark and Billo 1999), balancing rock art protection with recreational activities (Childress 2004; King 2002), research into degradation due to natural processes (Dandridge and Meen 2003), techniques for graffiti removal (Dean 1998; Pilles 1989), educational efforts to reduce vandalism (Pilles 1989; Sanger 1992), and conservation management in general (Loubser 2001). At least three self-contained publications also address conservation, preservation and cultural resource management in relation to rock art (Conservation and Protection Committee of the American Rock Art Research Association 1988; Crotty 1989; Lee 1991).

Graffiti and vandalism are the primary focus of rock art preservation. First, rock art is preserved by erecting a variety of barriers to access, including secrecy about site locations, area or road closures, passive or psychological barriers, and physical barriers (e.g., fences). Second, site monitoring, be it by the staff of land management agencies, volunteer site stewards, tour guides or others, is a key component in site preservation. Third, education can be provided on-site either in person or through pamphlets or signs, at visitors' centers, or through schools or community organizations. Fourth, signs and other forms of education, while focusing on the value of rock art as both archaeological resources and cultural heritage, also emphasize relevant laws and potential penalties for defacing rock art. Education about these laws, as well as direct efforts at enforcement and prosecution, also contribute to site preservation. Fifth, graffiti removal and other forms of restoration serve, in part, to deter further vandalism. Sixth, site recording preserves the "database" before vandalism occurs and can be used to document the extent of vandalism when it does occur.

This essay extends the critical examination of CRM into rock art preservation, while adding to the rock art literature by examining the implications of assumptions embedded in the

discourses and practices of rock art preservation. Concerns over the infusion of contemporary, unconscious assumptions and ideologies into the interpretation of (pre)historic indigenous rock art are frequently mentioned in the literature. While relatively few researchers have systematically investigated such importations in substantial depth, such self-reflexive and self-critical analyses are important for the ongoing development of rock art interpretation. Important examples include Hays-Gilpin's (2004) work on gender, Schaafsma's (1997) discussion of the secular/sacred distinction, Whitley's (2001) articulation of the tensions involved in using science to study the sacred, and Smith and Blundell's (2004) critique of phenomenological studies of landscape. This essay extends these and other important works by examining how the ideology and practice of preservation perpetuates certain assumptions about the nature of rock art, assumptions which are difficult to identify because rock art preservation is not explicitly understood as connected to rock art interpretation except insofar as preservation enables interpretive work in general by maintaining rock art sites. I argue that the discourse and practice of rock art preservation encourages some interpretive frameworks over others. This essay continues the process of critically analyzing unexamined assumptions embedded in rock art interpretation by exploring the value assigned to different marks on rock.

VALUE

A naive understanding of value assumes that value inheres in objects, that it is an inherent property of things. However, as rock art itself makes abundantly clear, value is relational and variable—not an intrinsic or fixed quality of a thing. For some, the value of rock art resides in its aesthetic qualities. For some, its value is as a target. For others, the value of rock art is in its status as part of their own or others' cultural heritage and/or spirituality. For others still, its value resides in its status as an archaeological resource, a container of information about past cultures.

The value of something can vary from person to person, social position to social position, discipline to discipline, culture to culture. In addition, value is rhetorical: it is attributed to objects or actions through discourse, and different discourses can assign competing or differential values to the same object or action. For example, interpretive signs such as those at Buckhorn Draw, Utah, explicitly assign different types and levels of worthiness to additions to indigenous rock art sites: instances of (pre)historic indigenous repainting or added pecking are assigned positive archaeological value, contemporary graffiti are defined as vandalism and hence assigned negative value, and contemporary restorative treatments (e.g., removing, filling in, or otherwise "disguising" graffiti) are labeled "improvements" and assigned positive aesthetic value. Importantly, while value is relative, some systems for assigning value are taken as more authoritative than others. For example, government agencies use specific value systems as a basis for material practices (such as prosecuting vandals)—hence, in pragmatic terms value is not "simply" relative or subjective but is socially produced and contested as well as institutionally enforced.

AUTHENTICITY AND THE PRESERVATION PARADIGM

The value assigned to marks on rock is closely linked to the discourse and ideology of preservation. The outlines of this ideology are identified by Clifford (1987,1988) in his discussion of the "salvage paradigm." The salvage paradigm in American anthropology includes the "salvage ethnography" of the early twentieth century, museum collections,

and, I argue, the preservation of rock art sites. As Clifford (1987:121) writes, "the salvage paradigm, reflecting a desire to rescue 'authenticity' out of destructive historical change, is alive and well." In this paradigm, *authenticity* is a central concept, and "is produced by removing objects from their current historical situation" (Clifford 1988:228). "Authenticity in culture or art exists just prior to the present" (Clifford 1987:122). The underlying assumption is that indigenous cultures cannot survive contact with the "modern" world; therefore, as soon after contact as possible, these cultures must be "collected" and thereby "preserved" in their "authentic" state, a state which by definition must be pre-contact. This "implies a rescue of phenomena from inevitable historical decay or loss. The collection contains what 'deserves' to be kept, remembered, and treasured. Artifacts and customs are saved out of time" (Clifford 1988:231).

This paradigm is predicated on a particular understanding of culture: "Expectations of wholeness, continuity, and essence have long been built into the linked Western ideas of culture and art" (Clifford 1988:233). Culture is reified, viewed metaphorically as an organism that cannot survive radical environmental shifts, loss and/or replacement of substantial elements, or radical hybridization. "The culture concept accommodates internal diversity and an 'organic' division of roles but not sharp contradictions, mutations, or emergences" (Clifford 1988:338). Fragmentation and disjuncture are incompatible with this view of culture, their presence signifying the death of the organism (culture). As an alternative, Clifford (1988:11) argues that "identity is conjunctival, not essential." Identity and culture are not discrete things, but relationships, intersections.

While rock art preservation differs from salvage ethnography (insofar as rock art itself can persist long after the originating culture vanishes or is forgotten) and collecting (literally, insofar as rock art is generally not portable, though a metaphoric sense of collecting certainly applies), I argue that the same ideology operates in rock art preservation. In addition, Clifford's replacement of "essence" with "conjuncture" provides an alternative frame, not just for culture and identity, but for understanding rock art sites as forums for spatially-grounded, asynchronous dialogues. When material culture is treated (i.e., constituted) as an informational resource that can provide insight into the culture which produced and used it, and culture itself is understood as a fixed and singular essence analogous to an organism, then the meaning and significance of material culture is also fixed and singular. Therefore, following Boyd et al. (2005), essentialist notions should be rejected in CRM in order to allow for new interpretations. As Lay ton and Thomas (2001) argue, preservation is intimately linked to the notion of an archive, of material culture as an archaeological resource. Questioning the essentialism embedded in dominant Western conceptions of culture—the notion of (especially "primitive") cultures as pure, clearly bounded and organic—destabilizes the foundation of the "authenticity" of cultural resources. While some discussions (e.g. Smith 2004) have focused on the important differences between cultural *resources* and cultural *heritage,* both labels perpetuate the essentialist view of culture embedded in the discourse and practice of rock art preservation.

VALUING MARKS ON ROCK

The lines drawn in the preservation of archaeological resources are ideological and based in systems of value. Systems for assigning value to various forms of expression on rock, in operating from an essentialist view of culture, deny value to post-contact and non-indigenous marks at rock art sites generally

regardless of who made them or with what intent. Through this discussion, I hope to clarify the (potentially) conjunctural quality of rock art sites as locales for dialogues between multiple cultures and different eras. To do so, I move through a crude typology of rock art dialogues, places where marks from different times coexist and interact. Under each type of dialogue, I discuss a number of rock art sites and motifs for illustration. I do not advance my interpretations of these sites and motifs as definitive; their purpose is heuristic, thinking through the implications and possibilities of valuations of diverse marks on rock.

"Prehistoric" Indigenous Marks from Different Time Periods

Many indigenous rock art sites are constructions of multiple points in time. Rock art motifs that interact with existing imagery are common, the most obvious case being superpositioning, wherein newer motifs are placed, in whole or part, over motifs which, due to relative patination or other factors, are assumed to be older. The first type of rock art dialogue, therefore, is the co-existence of multiple elements from different points in time, but all elements are presumably "prehistoric" or perhaps historic but still indigenous in origin. Superpositioning is the "strongest" form of this general case insofar as the newer elements directly "degrade" or "interfere" with the older ones in ways not dissimilar to some acts of contemporary graffiti and vandalism. However, there is no theme of loss in the rock art literature regarding superpositioning—such cases are treated as rich sources of data for relative dating and the interaction of multiple cultures or rock art styles. This is largely consistent with the preservation paradigm insofar as the superimposed elements are indigenous and "prehistoric" or early in the "historic" period.

(Pre)Historic Indigenous and Historic Non-Indigenous Marks

Disjunctions between the ideology behind the preservation paradigm and the practice of CRM in legal and bureaucratic contexts can be illustrated through the examination of sites which exemplify the second type of rock art dialogue, involving both (pre)historic indigenous elements and historic, non-indigenous elements. One such site is on the west side of Death Valley National Park (DVNP). In the transition zone between a small mountain range and a Joshua tree-covered flat, several rock outcrops along a wash are peppered with indigenous, presumably "prehistoric" petroglyphs. Images of mountain sheep predominate. A search of other canyons and suitable rock outcrops in the immediate vicinity failed to reveal additional rock art—i.e., the petroglyphs appear to be localized. This could be for a number of reasons: perhaps this was a favored travel route for those groups who made the rock art, perhaps the wash was used by game animals (and therefore hunters), perhaps a small seep was the only water in the vicinity, perhaps there were nearby habitation areas, and/or perhaps it was selected as a site for ritual activity.

As with many other rock art sites in DVNP and elsewhere, there are historic signatures in close proximity to indigenous motifs. A number of names and initials are concentrated near a possible seep, with dates including 1905,1907, 1908,1916,1947 and 1994 (some of these are superimposed on or occur on the same rock surface as indigenous petroglyphs). A little further up the wash, just beyond a concentrated area of indigenous rock art, is another name, Bill Key, dated 1895 and accompanied by a well-made mountain sheep motif (clearly different in style from the indigenous sheep motifs). The second obvious occurrence of contemporary graffiti (i.e., less

than 50 years old) in the area is just below this historic sheep motif, separated from it by a crack in the rock: the initials "TG" dated [19]95. The 1995 inscription is close to the 1895 signature and motif, but not to any (visible) indigenous rock art, so it directly violates an historic, Euro-American panel, not an indigenous, (pre)historic one. Nevertheless, setting aside matters of degree, both the historic and the contemporary signatures are violations of the integrity of the indigenous rock art. However, as historic resources, the 1895-1916 (and even the 1947) "graffiti" in DVNP could be granted the same protection as the prehistoric, indigenous rock art in the same area or even on the same rock (Lee 1991; Price 1989).

Given all of the wonderful rock media in the immediate and broader vicinity of the DVNP site, why has this particular area become a concentration for historic signatures? If the indigenous choice of this locale was formed by environmental factors—natural travel routes, water sources and/or game activity—then the presence of non-indigenous historic peoples in the same area can be similarly explained. But the historic signatures were not made casually or in passing. Even with modern, metal tools, such as a miner's hand pick, substantial time and effort was put into the 1895,1907 and 1908 signatures. Whether these historic marks were made in conscious and specific response to the indigenous marks is unknown, but it seems clear that these inscriptions were produced, broadly speaking, in response to the indigenous inscriptions. I would argue that the earliest historic marks (the 1895 signature and sheep) might have never been made in this place if it were not for the (pre)historic rock art. This interpretation is supported by the producer's choice to peck a mountain sheep motif, as they are by far the most frequent motif at the site (where there are at least 150 mountain sheep petroglyphs).

Marks on rock seem to invite the placement of more marks (Silver 1989). A maxim of graffiti prevention—whether in urban sites or at rock art sites—is that the best way to stop more graffiti is to remove any graffiti as soon as possible (Dean 1998; Lee 1991). One way to interpret this is that graffiti removal (more directly, the actual or apparent lack of graffiti) sends the "message" that a site has value and should be respected, whereas the presence of graffiti sends the "message" that a site is not valued. However, there is a broader, less loaded interpretation of this phenomenon: marks invite marks, statements invite response. That is, setting aside particular judgments about the value of one mark on rock versus another type of mark on rock, the motivation for placing marks where others have been placed is *dialogue* (which can include both hostile and friendly relations between the utterances which make up that dialogue). As Silver (1989:12) states, "When one really studies the graffiti [at rock art sites], one finds that people start to answer each other, just as they do in public restrooms." The result of this ongoing set of responses to existing inscriptions is a fascinating, mysterious, and localized dialogue, traces of conversation over time between multiple groups occupying the same place. Dialogues of this type are somewhat unique in that, like face-to-face conversation, the interlocutors must occupy the same physical space but unlike face-to-face conversation, not at the same time.

(Pre)Historic Indigenous Marks and Contemporary Non-Indigenous Marks

This notion of place-bound (spatially but not temporally-grounded) dialogues may be more palatable to some when confined to the second type, in which indigenous and non-indigenous but historic elements occur together at a rock art site. The third type, however, is an equally valid case of such a

dialogue: contemporary additions to (pre)historic indigenous rock art sites. Here, the arbitrariness of the relevant laws, or their underlying logics, comes into play. Graffiti of a certain age becomes "historic" and its (perceived/ascribed) value changes, at least in institutional CRM terms. However, while the specific line is arbitrary, the general concept driving it is grounded in a system whereby increasing value adheres to material traces as they recede in time from the present. They become "historic resources" rather than "vandalism." How are such lines enacted by those engaged in rock art preservation and restoration? One guideline is the "50 year rule," as reflected in Pilles's (1989) discussion of graffiti removal at some rock art sites near Sedona, Arizona, in which everything post-1940 was removed, everything pre-1920 was left untouched, and marks from 1920-1940 were expunged on a case-by-case basis.

The coexistence of contemporary and (pre)historic, indigenous marks is the paradigm case of graffiti as vandalism, the circumstance which causes the greatest concern among those interested in rock art preservation and which garners the most press attention. While I do not advocate the addition of contemporary marks to rock art sites, my argument is that it is myopic to dismiss or devalue these marks as *simply* or *only* vandalism. Instead, there are cases in which, like the 1895 signature and its attendant sheep in DVNP, post-contact marks are clearly made in response to indigenous marks, perpetuating a dialogue that is not necessarily radically dissimilar to that involved in cases of indigenous superpositioning. Careful examination of contemporary graffiti can reveal something about the nature of cross-cultural dialogue at rock art sites.

A mark recently added to the Land Hill petroglyph area near St. George, Utah, demonstrates one form of "responsiveness" to indigenous elements. The initials "LB" were lightly but broadly scratched into the patina just above an indigenous element, geometric in design, that is itself possibly an echo of ceramic or textile designs. This mark received local and statewide media coverage, where it is depicted as one of many acts of vandalism carried out by a group of partying teens who have subsequently plead guilty to their offenses. Like many other modern graffiti, this mark appears to stress personal identity (Murray 2004). Close attention to the "LB," however, shows that its general form—the "B" is nestled inside the "L" and is made with two triangles, not two semi-circles—roughly imitates the indigenous geometric design below it. Whether or not this was a conscious design, it is a kind of responsiveness, if for no other reason than that the technique used to produce the graffito encourages angular over round shapes. Importantly, even if the element was made without destructive intent, as a non-hostile response to the indigenous mark, it still constitutes destruction of the resource values of the panel and merits negative moral judgment and possibly legal action.

However, what is potentially missed by dismissing this mark as simply or only vandalism, or as the destructive act of a drunken and ignorant teen, is the way in which elements at rock art sites call forth responses from others, and in doing so shape those responses. Rock art is a relatively unique medium: like writing, for example, it is time-binding but, unlike writing on portable materials (such as paper), not space-binding. It is, in a sense, the opposite of many electronic media, such as the telephone, which allow for synchronous conversation across distances (space-binding but not time-binding). Rock art sites, therefore, can be understood as sites for dialogue between people separated by days, years, centuries, or even millennia, but the turns in those dialogues all occur in the same place. Rock art sites are locations for dialogues between peoples and cultures

separated by time. If we understand rock art locales as sites for such ongoing dialogues, their "essence" becomes not *the* culture or cultures which made the rock art, but the *relationships* between these marks, peoples, cultures, and eras. This is not simply an argument that rock art sites can "contain" information about more than one culture—I am suggesting that an important, even defining, trait of some rock art sites may be that they are both a record of, and an ongoing site for, dialogues, and hence relationships, between cultures. The preservation paradigm, focused on notions such as purity, essence, wholeness and continuity, both guides and is perpetuated by efforts at rock art preservation, and works against a full recognition and positive valuation of the dialogic/relational quality of rock art sites as well as cultures themselves. As Clifford (1988), Bakhtin (1981) and many others have argued, both individuals and cultures come into being in dialogue with others, by borrowing from and adapting the cultural forms of others, by both responding to and being responded to. The possibilities of rock art interpretation shift when we move from *what does this element or panel from X culture mean?* to *what were (and are) the relationships among the peoples and cultures who engaged in such a place-bound, long-term dialogue?*

Another effort to take graffiti seriously is Murray's (2004) essay "Marking Places." In arguing for valuing contemporary marks as a form of cultural expression and marking of the landscape, Murray points out that today's graffiti is tomorrow's archaeological record. However, my point is not only that contemporary marks at rock art sites will become tomorrow's rock art. The relationships among and between various marks are not only valuable cultural resources, but suggest a different way of looking at cultures: not as slowly-changing, integrated, organic wholes, but as defined by their intersections and relationships, by conjuncture and dialogue.

The "Disney panel" at Joshua Tree National Park can help clarify this distinction. The information in circulation about this panel varies in many of the details, but the best information I have obtained indicates that in the late 1950s this cave-like rock formation containing indigenous rock art was "enhanced" by adding both modern petroglyphs and bright, modern paints for use in a film being shot in the area (Daniel McCarthy, personal communication 2006). Directed by Walter Perkins, *Chico the Misunderstood Coyote* was subsequently aired on *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color* in 1961 and was released theatrically outside the U.S. in 1962 (MSN Movies 2006). Although not entirely consistent with the information otherwise available about this panel (i.e., whether the petroglyphs absent the paint were indigenous or modern), the official interpretive sign at the site states that the petroglyphs "have been traced over with paint. This type of vandalism prevents others from seeing the petroglyphs in their original form. Please help us by reporting any vandalism you observe."

In spite of inconsistent information regarding the extent and nature of the indigenous versus contemporary motifs at this site, as well as the Park Service's role in and reaction to the additions, all accounts agree that there was some indigenous rock art at the site before it was altered for the film. Any such use of cultural resources and cultural heritage evidences enormous disrespect for Native Americans. But it is a response and, therefore, dialogue (dialogue is not always warm and fuzzy). This site could be seen as a valuable historic resource (the defacement is approaching 50 years old, after all) that records something about the culture which produced it, including attitudes toward indigenous cultures and their material traces (e.g., rock art).

This panel is not simply a record of two or more cultures who marked the same place in different ways for different reasons. It is a

place-bound dialogue between these groups. This site is a material record of the interaction between multiple cultures: at a minimum, the culture(s) which produced the indigenous rock art and the culture which added to and / or painted them over for the purposes of producing a film. Is that record of cultural interaction, and of the attitudes of one culture towards the material traces of another, a resource of lower value than a "pristine" (indigenous only) site? More importantly, how are these cultures interrelated, made interdependent by this ongoing exchange of marks? Clearly, the contemporary marks demonstrate a dependence on others' marks, of the use of others' marks to define, shape, and perpetuate one's own culture and /or identity—a central quality of dialogue (Bakhtin 1981).

Contemporary Indigenous Marks and (Pre)Historic Indigenous Marks

A fourth type of rock art dialogue is contemporary indigenous additions to (prehistoric sites: acts which would be (if not for the Native status of their makers) or are (depending on one's point of view) considered acts of vandalism (a case with additional legal complexities, e.g., the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978). Inscription Point, on the Navajo Nation, provides an example, as documented by Weaver et al. (2001). Here, in addition to contemporary graffiti, several individual petroglyphs have been abraded and obliterated, including masks and copulation scenes (although not all masks and copulation scenes at the site have been so erased). Most visibly, a large serpent image has been altered with a metal chisel or similar instrument. Various possibilities suggested in published literature (Bock 1989; Weaver et al. 2001) as well as by staff of nearby Wupatki National Monument and local rock art avocationalists include the obliteration of ancestral Puebloan motifs by non-Puebloan Native Americans, the obliteration of sexual and serpent imagery by Christians (Native or otherwise), and the intentional obliteration of specific images by or at the instruction of a local, Native healer. Without assuming that any of these or other explanations are correct or incorrect (none are presented publicly as definitive or confirmed), the case provides the opportunity to identify and discuss other forms of dialogue, in this case not by Westerners but by members of indigenous groups, some or all of whose cultural ancestors produced rock art at Inscription Point. As with the other cases discussed here, however, my purpose is to use the site as a heuristic, not to make definitive claims about specific marks.

In the eyes of many, these acts clearly constitute vandalism. Weaver et al. (2001:149) describe the acts as "scratching, abrading or chiseling out specific motifs in an attempt to completely destroy the images," an attribution of intent consistent with the dictionary definition of vandalism but not necessarily a conclusion warranted by the physical evidence itself or entirely consistent with some of the stories circulating about the nature and intent of these acts. These acts are clearly utterances in an ongoing dialogue both within and between the various indigenous groups who have (and possibly continue to) produce rock art at Inscription Point. As Weaver et al. (2001:141) conclude, the marks at Inscription Point have been made for at least 2,000 years by at least three cultural groups.

In particular, while abrasions have completely obscured several motifs (masks and copulation scenes), the chiseled serpent is a potentially different story. The serpent image, while heavily chiseled and missing some of its previous detail, retains its basic shape and outline, as evidenced in Mark and Billo's (1999) before and after photographs. Weaver et al. (2001:149) describe the large serpent as having "been chiseled out of the rock" and include this act under the umbrella of "recent

vandalism and destruction of rock art" at Inscription Point. However, cases of superpositioning as well as the re-pecking of petroglyphs or repainting of pictographs have been identified at many (pre)historic rock art sites, and the traces of these acts are treated by researchers as valuable aspects of the archaeological record. Indeed, repetitive pecking has created large holes in many petroglyphs, as in the case of a Puebloan female anthropomorph and many other motifs at Chevelon Steps, Arizona (Kolber 2000), holes which could also be seen as "destroying" or at least "degrading" the original motifs. Again, this is a valuable record of cultural practices, and in some cases may involve the actions of more than one culture. These acts, in one sense, also "destroy" (pre)historic motifs but are positively valued, whereas the chiseling of the serpent image at Inscription Point is not presented as a case of re-pecking or other form of (destructive) alteration—it is simply vandalism, pure destruction.

Dialogues can be conflictual as well as harmonious. In the cases of (pre)historic superpositioning, repecking, and repainting found elsewhere, such acts may have been in harmony or hostility with the original glyph; they may have been appropriations with malevolent, benevolent, or neutral motives. From the traces on rock alone, I am not confident we can determine the nature of the relationship between the original and the imposed marks, their meanings, and their affiliated cultures. But the existence of the dialogue seems clear. A focus on preservation, grounded in a model of cultural essence, diverts attention (or at least positive valuation) away from these dialogues, at least as they have recently occurred and will continue to occur in the future, and in doing so may blind us to dialogic or relational, as opposed to essential or self-contained, qualities of rock art.

These relationships are a part of the dynamics involved in rock art, but the discourses and practices of preservation divert attention away from the potential centrality of those relationships to both rock art sites and the cultures involved. A clear example of how an essentialist, not conjunctural, view of culture operates in evaluating rock art vandalism is found in the following comment made during a panel discussion of rock art protection in relation to the issue of contemporary Native peoples making marks at rock art sites: "I would have to look at it in terms of what indigenous group was there and whether these are the descendants of that particular group who are doing it in terms of some sort of a ritual associated with their traditional religion.... But if they're doing it to some other descendants' rock art, then I think they're basically vandalizing it" (Ritter in Bock 1989:84). However, if done (prehistorically, acts of superpositioning, re-pecking and the like are cast positively in terms of their value as a resource, a repository of knowledge—even if the original intent may have been hostile or destructive.

CONCLUSION

In preserving traces of cultures past, what constitutes preservation depends on how culture is understood. If culture is viewed as an essence, a thing whose purity is endangered by interaction with other (Western, modern) cultures, then efforts to "freeze" sites in their current condition "make sense." That is, the view of culture embedded in the preservation paradigm is one of the "conditions of possibility" (Foucault 1972) for the discourses and actions of rock art preservation. If, on the other hand, culture is viewed as conjunctural, defined by the relations between various groups and world views, then culture's "essence" exists in the dialogues within and between cultures. Rock art sites are often forums for

dialogues between cultures separated by years, centuries, and even millennia. As with individuals, the identities and qualities of cultures are constituted in dialogue with others (Bakhtin 1981). In "preserving" rock art sites, the traces of these past dialogues are maintained, but are at the same time transformed into something which should not be engaged in their place. While this retains the traces of the (pre)historic dialogue, it encourages a view of a single rock art motif, panel, site, or style as a container of information about a culture as opposed to traces of the relations and interactions between cultures—relations and interactions that are part of constituting those very cultures.

Rock art is valued for the knowledge it can provide, the questions it can help answer, about (pre)historic cultures. Rock art is thus constituted by the discourse of the preservation paradigm as a container of knowledge to be preserved until it can be "mined" by experts, implicitly encouraging rock art to be interpreted in one set of ways as opposed to others. In addition to shedding light on embedded assumptions and thereby opening up possibilities for interpretation within rock art studies by reframing the significance of rock art as part of a relationship rather than a thing, working with the specificity of rock art as a relatively unique genre of discourse can also help develop conjunctural models of culture.

The addition of contemporary graffiti to indigenous rock art sites is vandalism. But its illegality, its violation of the ethical codes of organizations like ARARA, and its interference with what we each value about rock art sites should not lead us to see it *only* as a detraction from the knowledge to be gained from rock art. A careful examination of contemporary marks added to rock art sites can teach us something about the nature of rock art as a medium, about cross-cultural dialogue and about the very nature of culture. We should be explicit and conscious about why we want to protect and preserve rock art, and at the same time reflect on how the very same assumptions that lead us to denounce graffiti may interfere with our ability to make sense of a variety of rock art's dimensions and functions.

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