ABSTRACT: A series of essays exploring central terms and phrases in heritage studies raise issues of profound relevance for all of anthropology, taking very seriously the cognitive and political power as well as the rhetorical nature and transformative potential of language.

As co-editor Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels reminds us in the introduction to this new self-reflection on heritage discourse and practices, philosopher Richard Rorty argued that the mechanism of culture change is “a talent for speaking differently” (Rorty 1989, p. 7)—that is, for using language in new ways or using a new language. This is a good reason for the current (e.g. Vered Amit’s recent Thinking Through Sociality: An Anthropological Interrogation of Key Concepts, reviewed elsewhere in ARD) and recurrent (e.g. Raymond Williams [1976]) projects to identify, define,
and critique anthropology’s vocabulary. Some attempts, like that of Williams, amount to enhanced dictionaries or encyclopedias, while others, like the present work, consist of essays—some of an ethnographic nature—that stand on their own merits as anthropological scholarship.

More than most similar key-concepts books, this one recognizes and takes seriously the fact that language and terminology are a form of rhetoric; hence, as the introduction stresses, the contributors “explore the rhetoric of cultural heritage, and we do so in two respects. First, we ask how heritage acts as a kind of rhetoric (‘heritage as persuasion’), being mobilized creatively within a wide array of social, political, economic, and moral contexts where it gives persuasive force to particular standpoints, perspectives, and claims...[and] second, to have greatest efficacy such arguments must be made through existing institutional mechanisms and discourses, an existing ‘rhetoric of heritage’ that maps out the strength and range of possible uses and meanings within which cultural heritage can be mobilized” (p. 4).

For those not entirely familiar with the concept of cultural heritage, Lafrenz Samuels defines it as “something “some object, site, building, landscape, traditional practice) with historic connections that must be properly tended to, as well as the field of expertise that has developed around this care” (p. 3). Such a definition clearly indicates that at least often if not primarily, such heritage refers to some physical/material thing, although it can also include 'intangible' heritage like knowledge, dance forms, etc. This focus, while it is especially relevant to archaeology and museology (which are particular specialties of the publisher, University Press of Colorado), is also in keeping with anthropology's wider emphasis on materiality and embodiment. It also suggests a number of other crucial issues significant to anthropology, such as memory and memorialization, expertise, and the politics of making and preserving places and practices.

The volume, then, has a very self-conscious aim that “challenges and takes apart the reified character and foundational assumptions of key heritage categories and terms by demonstrating their alternative and open-ended possibilities” (p. 19). This is why, as the subtitle conveys, identifying rhetoric leads to
"redescription": the intent is not to leave the vocabulary unchanged in the process but to undertake a Rorty-ian difference in speaking. In a word, the essays want to see how redescription “might be channeled in the pursuit of visionary change” (p. 21). Accordingly, fifteen key terms are presented and critiqued, such as memory, place, rights, sustainability, and, to open the chapters, authenticity. Anna Karlstrom’s piece on authenticity is especially interesting because it presents a case—a temple in Laos—that resists standard Western and academic understandings of authenticity and preservation. The chapter finds local people intentionally destroying an old temple “so that the new temple, which was under construction, could be empowered and made ready to use” (p. 32). The significance is that for the Lao villagers, it “was not the actual building with its original murals that was considered authentic, making it worthy of preservation. Instead, the spiritual values—connected to and residing in the building—were, and still are, the heritage the villagers wish to maintain” (p. 33). This case is a profound challenge to established preservation practices, and to the very language of heritage and preservation, common to Western thought and practice.

Each of the contributions presents and attacks a key term in a similar manner, like Sigrid Van Der Auwera’s essay on civil society, which expands that concept to include actors who are usually excluded, namely rebel groups. Of course a central concept for all anthropology is cultural diversity, which Alicia Ebbitt McGill considers in regard to educational policies and national identity in Belize, where “the cultivation of Belizean citizens who are proud of their heritage is a state agenda” (p. 65) and therefore an explicit part of state rhetoric and of textbook materials. The troubling concept of cultural property is investigated by Alexander Bauer in terms of the repatriation of museum objects, who notes in the shifting language of cultural property a dualistic clash between cultural internationalism (which would allow museums to hold others' objects as part of a general human patrimony) and cultural nationalism (which encourages if not demands the return of objects to their 'rightful' national owners).

A theme running through the volume is democracy and democratization, the latter of which is examined directly in Cecilia Rodehn's essay, using museums
again to ponder, “how do we, the scholarly community, write about democracy and democratization processes? And in doing so, how do we become part of the process we are writing about?” (p. 95). The main upshot, beyond the diversity of democracies, is the relationship between the past and the future, with ‘democracy’ typically conceived as a future state toward which the present is a transitional state from the non-democratic past.

Three very interesting concepts (although not presented sequentially in the volume) are 'difficult heritage,' 'heritage at risk,' and 'intangible heritage.' Joshua Samuels aptly insists that not all heritage is necessarily pleasant (for example, battlefield or massacre sites) and discovers, through a case of formerly fascist sites in Sicily, that people's attitudes toward such heritage can range from horrified to indifferent or even nostalgic. Quite probably, there is a sense that all heritage is at least to some degree 'heritage at risk,' if only at risk from time and natural elements. However, co-editor Trinidad Rico offers a highly critical chapter questioning “the validity of 'heritage at risk' as a polarizing force in the definition of preservation urgencies, but also of heritage itself” (p. 158). Klaus Zehbe applies the surprising perspective of 'brain death' to the concept of intangible heritage, describing “how a particular heritage vocabulary or 'thought style'...evolved historically alongside the institutionalization of expert communities in the framework of UNESCO's standard setting instruments” (p. 181). He also introduces us to a neglected scholar of the sociology of knowledge, Ludwik Fleck, who was talking about Kuhnian-type processes and communities decades before Kuhn.

Other important terms explored in the volume include equity (Jeffrey Adams), memory (Gabriel Moshenka), natural heritage (Melissa Baird), place (Robert Preucel and Regis Pecos, featuring a case study of Cochiti Pueblo and the environmental and cultural damage done by a dam), rights (Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels, focusing on Tunisia), and sustainability (Paul Lane, raising the vexed problem of 'conservation' and pastoralism in East Africa and taking the notion of rhetoric particularly seriously). The volume close with a brief 'After Words' essay by Rico.

Although not all anthropologists may be centrally concerned with heritage issues, especially in their
archaeological and museum-emplaced forms, there is a great deal in *Heritage Keywords* that is relevant and valuable for anthropology as a discipline. Many of the issues and terms are shared widely across the subdisciplines, and the bigger questions of preservation (often couched as 'tradition' versus 'modernity' and present in practices like tourism), property, memory, and democracy are as important outside formal 'heritage studies' as inside it. Finally, the volume is exemplary in its commitment to language as a mode of thought and to rhetoric as a mode of language. Future studies of disciplinary vocabularies and key words—of which there will surely be many—should follow the example here and make serious note of the rhetorical effects of language in academia and national politics and of how, as Rorty taught, changes of thought and practice are often only possible through and as changes in speech.

References


Williams, Raymond 1976 *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.