
Analyzing Heritage Traces in Media Texts

The French documentary “*Australie: Le grand livre des Aborigènes*” (Australia: The Great Book of the Aborigines), and an episode of Arte’s “*Enquêtes archéologiques*” (Archaeological Investigations) series, which presents an archaeological investigation of Aboriginal petroglyphs (rock engravings) in northwestern Australia¹, offer an excellent starting point for illustrating how to conduct a sociosemiotic analysis of the way in which certain media texts are bearers of heritage traces, and identifying how tipping points in heritagization methods can occur.

This documentary illustrates the development of *media publicization* (on television and the Internet), where documentaries are a much less traditional form of promoting material heritage than exhibitions or books. Moreover, since this publicization focuses less on the objects themselves than on the archaeologists’ research process in interpreting the engravings as traces of their world of origin, the documentary highlights the importance of the *production of knowledge* which characterizes archaeological heritage: it is in fact the archaeological investigation that serves as a basis for the recognition of the heritage character of the engravings and therefore the need to apply for their inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List (UNESCO 2021). It is therefore the bearer of the two levels of traces mentioned in the introduction. The primary level is of potential *heritage traces* constituted by the engravings from the moment their interpretation is initiated, and the secondary level concerns *traces of social practices* from this interpretation carried out by

¹ This documentary is the 17th episode of the first season (2016–2017) of the *Enquêtes archéologiques* series (a second series of 10 episodes was broadcast in 2018–2019). The list of episodes is available at: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enquêtes_archéologiques [Accessed January 24 2022].

archaeologists. Even before being publicized by the documentary, this interpretation fed into various media texts aimed at the scientific community and the bodies involved in World Heritage List inscriptions (the Australian government and UNESCO experts). However, these scientific or administrative texts echo other scientific texts dealing with the study and heritagization of the Aboriginal material culture, which either supports the archaeological approach and its method of heritagization or proposes a different approach; this introduces de facto a bifurcation towards a new method of heritagization.

1.1. The documentary, a media publicization text

The short TV format (26 min) of this documentary is part of the encyclopedia (in Eco's sense) of Arte's audience, since it corresponds to a category of program focusing on civilizations or heritage (monuments, villages, landscapes, gardens, etc.); this is strongly represented on this channel under the headings "Travel and discovery" or "History", or even "Science", which, moreover, remains accessible for a few weeks on the channel's website. I will begin by analyzing it in order to show how it constructs a relationship between audience and engravings through publicizing their interpretation. It has the advantage of being a mediatized mediation, between the archaeologists who worked on the engravings and the audience of the documentary, and is hosted by a presenter who is an expert in the field, archaeologist Peter Eeckhout.

1.1.1. An original form of publicization: mediatized mediation

The use of a presenter who is an expert in the field can be found in many other documentary series about heritage, for example: *Villages de France*, with photographer Emmanuel Laborde, *L'Héritage de Rome*, with photographer Alfred Seiland, *Paysages d'ici et d'ailleurs*, with science journalist Raphaël Hitier², *Jardins d'ici et d'ailleurs*, with landscape architect Jean-Philippe Teyssier DPLG, or *Habiter le monde*, with philosopher Philippe Simay³. The principle of an actor who is both a narrator holding the narrative thread and a representative of the interpretive activity of the audience is thus quite common. This actor plays the *mediator* role between the audience and the object in an in situ visit. The difference is that the producer of knowledge, who, most of the time, is not present in the latter case, is present here; therefore, the mediation involves three actors: the mediator (in this case, Peter Eeckhout), the producers of knowledge (in particular, the archaeologists) and

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the objects (the engravings and their environment). However, the *Enquêtes Archéologiques* series goes even further in this communicational logic, since Peter Eeckhout is a Professor of Archaeology at the Free University of Brussels, specializing in pre-Columbian civilizations. As stated in the series credits, he goes out to meet colleagues so that they can present the excavation site, their work and their findings⁴.

This episode opens with a presentation that establishes the relationship between the narrator (for the narrative)-mediator (for the communicational structure) Peter Eeckhout, and the audience: having identified the region of the excavations (Dampier archipelago in northwest Australia) and swiftly outlined the purpose of the episode⁵, we see him arrive onsite, identify some engravings, refer to their importance, meet the protagonists (the archaeologists), and explain how the presence of the petrochemical plants behind him threatens their existence, before turning to face the audience.

Positioned as narrator, Peter Eeckhout explains to the audience what he discovers: engravings, archaeologists' activity, environment, mobilized lateral knowledge, etc. From the beginning of the presentation, the audience is therefore invited to share the view that the narrator is engaged in a *cognitive quest*, whose ultimate ideological and practical stake is an evaluation of the heritage nature of the engravings (should they or should they not be protected). As long as viewers have at least a minimal knowledge of the world of archaeology and heritage, they will recognize the implicit question behind the presentation given by Peter Eeckhout, which serves as a background for interpretation of the documentary by the audience: "Does the nature, and above all the value of the engravings, as brought to light by knowledge, justify protecting them by restrictive measures?". The future action strategy (in other words, the narrative framework of the episode) is thus established in a world of reference which is both that of archaeological research (interpreting relics) and heritage (does the value of the relics imply their conservation?); to put it another way, a cognitive program whose focus is whether or not the status of an object is to be recognized (i.e. a sanction, in the narratological sense).

4 This credit sequence is at the beginning of each episode: "My name is Peter Eeckhout. I'm an archaeologist and I'm going to take you out into the field across the planet. We will meet other archaeologists. Together we will follow their investigations and their latest discoveries. A great journey through time and history".

5 "In northwestern Australia, in the Dampier Archipelago, archaeologists are deciphering one of the greatest history books ever written by man. A story carved in stone that may well disappear. Here, millions of years ago, the earth created this strange cluster of red rocks. In this rugged landscape, Australia's first inhabitants, the Aborigines, left their footprint. There were to be a million patterns engraved here over time for 50,000 years. A unique heritage, now under threat".

The documentary begins with a title sequence that is common to the entire series, presented with a voiceover by Peter Eeckhout – against [a series of scrolling images of an excavation site]⁶: “My name is Peter Eeckhout, I’m an archaeologist, etc.”; then a presentation, still in voiceover, of the site with which the episode is concerned [geographical location and presentation of the topic of the documentary: map of Australia, then an aerial view of the archipelago, then views of engravings]⁷; and, finally, the title of the episode [“*Australie : Le grand livre des Aborigènes*”].

Three image sequences (A) follow. From this point on, the documentary alternates between live speech in interviews and voiceover for the commentary.

(A.i) Presentation sequence of the engravings: commentary that develops the topic stated earlier [during Peter Eeckhout’s arrival and image of engravings].

(A.ii) Presentation sequence of the archaeologists and their work, with an initial commentary – on [shot of rock clusters with archaeologists working]; then an initial discussion with the archaeologist Jo McDonald; then, again, a commentary that sets out the issues in the documentary: the threat posed to the engravings by industry; the colonists regarding the Aborigines as savages and not having tried to learn their history. However, petroglyphs are indices to the Aborigines’ way of life and how it has stood the test of time – with [engraving of arrival of the colonists and photos of the Aboriginal way of life].

(A.iii) Sequence showing meeting with an Aboriginal park warden (Kenny Diamond⁸), who describes the various types of information given by the engravings for Aborigines.

Box 1.1. *The three opening sequences of the documentary*

⁶ I have put the description of the image accompanying the commentary in square brackets.

⁷ The commentary sets out the substance of the documentary; so, despite its length, I will quote it in its entirety: “Ah! this is extraordinary: we can see here, engraved on the rock, this big fish, and then right next to it, quadrupeds, we find these pretty much everywhere in this range of great massifs that are literally constellated with what we call petroglyphs. It is an extraordinary place, we find lots of species represented, past, present, kangaroos, emus, etc. It’s the largest concentration in the world of this type of relic. It’s quite simply extraordinary. But you only have to turn around to realize the problem: chemical and fertilizer factories, which not only gradually eat away at the territory occupied by the petroglyphs, but also, unfortunately, release contaminants that significantly affect the environment. For five years, archaeologists have been working tirelessly to decipher this great book of stone. Because, thanks to these petroglyphs, we have a little-known history that Jo McDonald and her team intend to retrace. That of the Australians from their arrival on the continent, fifty thousand years ago, up to their colonization by Europeans”.

⁸ Hoping not to make a mistake in the transcription of the name... .

Peter Eeckhout's position is both functional and communicational: he is the narrator reporting on the archaeologists' quest for knowledge, and the mediator between archaeologists and audience. For the audience, he appears as a subject engaged in a quest for knowledge. Mediation is not only about knowledge, but about the activity of discovery. Due to this, he appears as a central *figure* who is positioned at the articulation between the syntagmatic dimension (the editing of the documentary) and the pragmatic dimension (the negotiation between text and reality). On the one hand, he is Peter Eeckhout, a human being who has an authoritative status in the scientific field as a university professor of archaeology, and who went to an excavation site in Australia, where he was filmed; he is the one to whom the enunciating instance⁹ delegated the task of presenting to viewers the way in which the archaeologists have interpreted the engravings. On the other hand, in the documentary, he is *in representation* in the form of the narrator-mediator-subject who ensures the continuity and coherence of the articulation of the sequences and all the elements that make up the documentary, thus participating in its textual cohesion.

This *figure*, at the articulation between the editing of the documentary and the pragmatic position of mediator, is an interesting case of enunciative construction of a documentary that is focused neither on the relics, directly on the archaeologists, nor on a reconstruction of the past. But with this figure, the documentary plays, in a particularly marked way, upon the boundary between reality (the place, the actors and the activity) and media text (image, discourse, narrativity and enunciation); it thus sets itself apart from a work of fiction, in order to maintain the authenticity of what is shown and the veracity of the knowledge (Schall 2010; Schall and Lemaître 2010; Flon 2005, 2015).

The chief consequence of this interplay between reality and media text is that the documentary is a bearer of traces of social practices, in the same way as a reportage can be. I am leaving aside the fact that it is, by its structure, form and content, the trace of its own production; however, it is above all, at a first level, as I described above, the *inscription* of a singular mediation practice toward the audience by Peter Eeckhout. As proposed by the documentary's opening, any viewer who has an interest (a "predilection", as Yves Jeanneret would have said) for the subject or for this type of program will interpret these traces as the representation of real actions and concrete objects. All these traces are conditions for a successful reading, in particular by identifying the viewer with the Peter Eeckhout figure as the subject of

9 The presupposed recipient of the documentary whose role is taken on by all the participants who have negotiated their cooperation to bring the series into being, and, within it, this episode: television channel, production company, probably Peter Eeckhout, the archaeologists visited, the university, etc.

the quest. By slipping into the position of model viewer, this real viewer will *interpret* this complex media text as a cognitive quest that the mediator embarks upon with the archaeologists. The figure of Peter Eeckhout therefore represents me in what I could do if I were out in the field to undertake the activities that make it possible to answer the big question that the initial presentation presupposes (in other words, “can the nature and value of the object, as brought to light by knowledge, justify protecting it?”). In order to be able to answer, I would therefore have to follow Peter Eeckhout in his cognitive quest that focuses on a second level: the traces of the practice of interpretation of engravings by archaeologists. This is the figure that ensures continuity, based on the pragmatic guarantee of the authenticity of the portrayal, between Peter Eeckhout the “scientific authority” and Peter Eeckhout in representation: it shows, explains and comments on the quest of the Australian archaeologists, which, from the moment I take on this representation, means that I can regard the documentary as a publicization of the production of scientific knowledge and not as a fiction.

However, this quest by the archaeologists ultimately leads to establishing in what way the engravings are traces of the social practices and culture of the Aborigines¹⁰.

1.1.2. *Interpreting the traces of a social world*

The sequence of meeting the Aboriginal park warden, placed at the beginning of the documentary, is used as an exemplification of the archaeologists’ survey among the Aborigines to collect the memory of the purpose of the engravings, their function (ritual, utilitarian use, etc.) and the importance the engravings have for them¹¹. However, this Aboriginal memory does not help us to gain an understanding of the *raison d’être* of the engravings, of their use through time. This kind of knowledge presupposes an interpretation of the various indices they contain, and this involves making use of lateral knowledge as a rule for interpretation. The quest, in other words the narration of the processes used by the archaeologists and the unfolding of their investigation, gives a summary of this process of interpretation, intended to bring to light its scientific and heritage stakes; this also enables us to read its semiotic nature.

10 This semiopragmatic process brings to mind *mutatis mutandis*, the process analyzed by Soulaiges (2005) on the topic of television news, following Verón (1983). The difference is that in the documentary, to avoid reconstructing Aboriginal life fictionally, it is the discourse of the archaeologists or the commentary of Peter Eeckhout that describes it.

11 As we will see in section 1.3.1: as a mark of the realization of the meaning these have for them.

The archaeologists' scientific quest provides the opportunity to present a relatively complex example of the interpretation of traces, due in particular to the nature of engravings which are *inscriptions*, and not just objects whose use – and therefore meaning – could be (relatively) easily established. In the documentary, with the exception of the maps, the engravings are almost exclusively figurative, but nevertheless remain enigmatic, because of their location, the presence of sequences, superimpositions, or certain complex compositions. For archaeologists, the interpretation of engravings cannot therefore stop at simply identifying what they depict; such an identification of motifs can only constitute a first descriptive step that is useful in creating an inventory and providing a basis for interpretation.

Each sequence recounts the activities through which each of the two archaeologists, Jo McDonald and Ken Mulvaney, solved an interpretive challenge posed to them by the engravings:

(B.i) Ken Mulvaney, to date the engravings and describe them.

(B.ii) Jo McDonald, to understand the change in the Aborigines' territory that occurred with the rise in water level as a result of the end of the glaciations, 20,000 years ago, and thus to confirm the existence of two ways of life, before and after this change in environment.

(B.iii) Jo McDonald, to find, on Rosemary Island, indices to the way of life of the peoples before the rise in water levels.

(B.iv) Jo McDonald, to interpret the engravings depicting water points during this period.

(B.v) Jo McDonald, to interpret the stone structures indicating a partially semi-sedentary lifestyle after the rise in the water level.

(B.vi) Jo McDonald, to interpret the shell clusters on West Intercourse Island, relics of semi-permanent gatherings.

(B.vii) Ken Mulaney, to interpret the engraving depicting the first English ship to anchor in the bay of Enderby Island in 1818.

Box 1.2. *The seven sequences of interpretation of the engravings*

To understand what they mean, it is necessary to know their *raison d'être*, which involves linking them to the practices in which they occur, to resituate them in their world of origin, in the history of the Aboriginal way of life and culture: the *social life of engravings* is only one element in the life of the people that produced and

used them¹². From that point on, the quest for the meaning of the engravings would take the form of an investigation into the history of the Aborigines. This investigation forms the heart of the documentary (its second part) that unfolds in seven sequences (B).

How can the interpretation of indices help build knowledge about the Aborigines? In order to answer, we must return in detail to each of the interpretation sequences to understand its process.

In the sequence (B.i), the archaeologist Ken Mulvaney cross-references the recognition of world objects, enabling him to categorize the petroglyphs with the material characteristics of the engravings; these enable us to assess their wear and tear as an indication of their age. On the basis of these two indices, he uses the second to move on to a relative temporal classification¹³. This allows him, given the number of petroglyphs available, to identify the existence of a contrast between the species depicted (“old” vs. “recent” species). However, we can immediately see that at this stage, such a conclusion has only inference value (abduction), since he has no rule available to him that can explain the contrast.

The whole question is therefore what hypothesis corresponding to this rule could be formulated? In the second part of the interview, Ken Mulvaney recounts how he hypothesized – from the fact that the oldest of the engravings depicted terrestrial animals, some of which had disappeared, and the most recent depicted marine animals – that the change in the fauna depicted was probably due to a change in the environment (shifting from terrestrial fauna to marine fauna). “The petroglyphs thus suggest that the Aborigines experienced a radical change in environment. So what happened?” asks Peter Eeckhout, following up this hypothesis. This actually corresponds to a new abduction (a “meta-abduction”, as (Eco 1992 [1990], pp. 264–265) would say) advancing a rule that explains the first two levels of inference (distribution of species in two periods, the distribution being inferred from the state of wear of the engravings). If this rule is confirmed, the previous two levels of inference will be too.

12 Jo McDonald, answering the question of whether engravings are fundamental to understanding ancient Aboriginal culture: “Yes, rock art shows us how men lived in this part of Australia for 50,000 years, because a recent excavation tells us that they arrived here 50,000 years ago. It is crucial for us to be able to document this period in order to understand how people lived here. Over time, people carved the things that mattered to them in stone”.

13 “So, we can date them relatively thanks to their wear and tear. The older they are, the more they have been eroded; the more recent they are, the more contrast they have” (Ken Mulvaney).

The consequence is the start of the quest for an adjuvant giving epistemic competence (the rule), which makes it possible to validate the chain of previous abductions. This second sequence (B.ii) takes place in the excavation house. The audience learns from Peter Eeckhout that scientists have actually established the existence of a climatic change 20,000 years ago¹⁴. The meta-abduction is therefore not only a valid hypothesis, but it is a verified hypothesis, because it is based on a robust rule, on scientifically established knowledge. The knowledge contributed by this allows Jo McDonald to model the evolution of the environment in the region studied¹⁵, namely that the end of the Ice Age led to a rise in sea level, which itself caused a profound change in the environment¹⁶ to which humans had to adapt. However, the quest that has been initiated does not stop there, because while the result does indeed fulfill the role of adjuvant in terms of the quest for knowledge on climate change, it raises the question of the precise consequences of this change on the way of life of the Aborigines of this region, and on this depends, ultimately, the validation of the interpretation of the difference between the engravings of old species and those of new species. It thus turns into a (new) quest for indices about the Aborigines who lived before the rise in water level, then those who lived after it, in order to reconstruct their history.

Sequence (B.iii) takes place on one of the islands (Rosemary Island), which are the part of the former desert that remained protruding when sea level rose, and is therefore apt to give indices to the way of life before the rise in sea level. The presence of face engravings, identical to those found on the island, located very far away from the former, indicates that the Aborigines were not attached to a territory

14 Opening commentary by Peter Eeckhout: "Through an underwater prospecting operation, and an extensive LIDAR campaign, airborne laser detection technology, scientists have established that the Aborigines of this region lived through the last Ice Age, as a consequence of which, 20,000 years ago, sea levels rose". There are two documentaries that detail this change, where it appears that this knowledge results from investigations on several points in Australia (*Australie : L'aventure des premiers hommes*. 1. *Les grands nomades*; 2. *Les grandes inondations*).

15 "As you can see, the coastline is far away. Then we have hills that turn into islands. You can see how the coast advances over time. When men arrived in this region 50,000 years ago, the coast was 160 km away from where it is today" (Jo McDonald).

16 Peter Eeckhout summarizes the confirmation of the hypothesis as follows: "The territory of the Aborigines of this part of Australia has therefore been transformed. Between 50 BCE and 20,000 BCE, it was a desert. Then the sea rose, and this desert became a string of islands 6,000 years ago. This is the transformation that is illustrated by the petroglyphs".

and traveled great distances¹⁷. The reason suggested by the archaeologist for these journeys could be the scarcity of drinking water in a desert with a particularly dry and arid climate.

Sequence (B.iv) presents an investigation, conducted at the site of the face engraving, which reveals the existence of an ancient water point, now dried up. The interpretation of two traces, which form a clue, enables us to establish the link between the face engraving and existence of the water point, and leads to new inferences about the Aborigines' way of life. The first of these traces is the presence of a "calcium carbonate crust" in the ancient water hole, that it was possible to date¹⁸. This knowledge is produced by deduction, which makes the rule of the existence of drinking water very likely (bearing in mind what archaeologists have learned elsewhere from present-day Aborigines and from other archaeologists)¹⁹, raising a new question which is answered by the second trace: the existence of engravings depicting "maps" that locate water points. Peter Eeckhout summarizes the archaeologists' reasoning, which is based on knowledge provided by other researchers:

These water holes, now vanished, were thus essential to these great nomads in order to survive in the desert. But how could they locate them in this vast territory? It was again the petroglyphs that put the archaeologists on the path. These sets of circles were deciphered with the help of Aborigines in the 1970s. Several have been found on the mainland.

Jo McDonald then shows him, on the sketched reproduction of one of these "sets of circles", how to "read" them as a map²⁰.

17 Peter Eeckhout's synopsis: "Jo has shown that in this desert, before the rise of the water level in 20,000 BCE, the Aborigines were not attached to a territory. They traveled vast distances. She is now able to confirm this, because archaeologists have discovered faces, perhaps the oldest depictions of humans on the planet, several thousand kilometers from here, in the Queensland region. Identical faces have been identified in central Australia; and Jo has found the same depictions carved into the rocks of the region".

18 Jo McDonald gives the following interpretation of this: "There must have been springs and a water hole. We had this crust analyzed. It dates from 38,000 BCE. This means that this water hole was active long before the rise in sea level. That's why people used to travel around in the desert until this point".

19 The other documentary, *Australie : L'aventure des premiers hommes*, gives an idea of this.

20 "You can see here; they have depicted different types of water holes: here there was water permanently; those were less permanent; and these were certainly places where there was water only after the rains. These places had different names. And in traditional songs, the lyrics tell us how the ancestors used to move from one hole to another" (Jo McDonald).

Thus ends the two sequences (B.iii and B.iv), which are at the center of the interpretation, because they have made it possible to reconstruct the way of life of the Aborigines before the rise in sea level. Subject to definitive confirmation of the differences in terms of fauna, the connection between the world of origin of the petroglyphs and the history of the Aborigines is on the way to being established.

Answering the question of how the Aborigines were able to adapt to the new environment after the rise in sea level is the subject of sequences (B.v and B.vi). The investigation, using the same technique as before of interpreting the material traces, reveals a progressive semi-sedentarization of the groups. First of all (sequence B.v), the excavation of temporary habitats from more than 8,500 years ago shows the emergence of the beginnings of collective life. Next (sequence B.vi), a gigantic cluster of shells on another island (West Intercourse), dating from the last 4,000 years, indicates that the local tribes used to meet up periodically. Peter Eeckhout concludes this last stage: “Now attached to their territory, Aborigines will go on to live according to the principles of ‘Dreamtime’, in harmony with their new environment, for six millennia. An equilibrium that will be swept away by a cataclysm, the traces of which Ken found on the island of Enderby”.

Sequence (B.vii) begins with the interpretation of an engraving that depicts a boat similar to the one (the *Mermaid*) on the painting by the Englishman Phillip Parker King, which arrived in Enderby Bay in 1818. At this point, the quest for knowledge on how to interpret the engravings and how to reconstruct the Aborigines’ ancient history is complete. Moreover, it is by commenting on archival documents that Peter Eeckhout summarizes the disaster for the Aborigines brought about by colonization: the behavior of the colonists, dispossession of their lands, the Flying Foam massacre (1868), and, finally, the threat that hangs over the petroglyphs today²¹. Then we come to the final sequence (C), which presents the conclusion drawn by the archaeologists from their investigation as a whole.

Semiotically speaking, the interpretation of engravings is what Eco calls a semiotic production through “recognition”²²: the meaning (the semiotic relationship,

21 On this question of conservation, see a relatively recent point on the destruction caused by the chemical industry (Bednarik 2017).

22 “A recognition process takes place when a given object or event, product of human nature or action (intentionally or unintentionally), made among the facts, is interpreted by a recipient as the expression of given content, either according to a correlation already foreseen by a code, or according to a correlation established directly by the recipient. This act of recognition makes it possible to identify the object as a footprint, a symptom or a clue” (Eco 1978, p. 167).

or semiosis) is operated by the receiver²³. If these engravings were made by unintentional printing on a malleable medium, they would be footprints; however, they are intentional and moreover interpretable by recognition, and are therefore *inscriptions*. However, the conditions, resources and methods of recognition are by no means the same for the archaeologists and the Aborigines.

Concluding sequence (C) – this sequence takes place on a sacred site of standing stones, which has become the memorial to the Flying Foam Massacre (1868). It opens like the others, with a commentary by Peter Eeckhout – [with a shot of the arrival on the site]; the two archaeologists, Jo McDonald and Ken Mulvaney, explain why they feel they must commit themselves to obtaining recognition of the necessity of applying for inscription of the archipelago site on the UNESCO World Heritage List²⁴.

Box 1.3. *The concluding sequence*

The latter can compare (at least) the two occurrences, current and past, with a type (Eco 1992 [1990], pp. 249–250), since they possess both the practice of the occurrences and the type through their culture. These occurrences are therefore, for them, a form of *writing*, as shown by the example of the maps in which there is knowledge of the rules of arranging components to enable a representation of space.

23 By analogy with the linguistic sign, they could be considered as “formants” (which Jeanneret qualifies semiologically as “*ferment*”) for which the interpreter is responsible for creating the content plan. According to another approach, less focused on linguistics and more communicational, Jeanneret (2020, p. 185) explains that the trace has a dual dimension, material and indexical. This conception makes it possible to get out of the difficulty inherent in the approach of the Peircian index, which is understood as a type of relationship to the referent, and *especially* as a type of sign; a difficulty that I had not picked up when combining under this term the materiality of the trace and the semiotic function of the index.

24 I quote in full from their discussion, which sets out the heritage purpose of their work: [Jo McDonald]: “This place really gives meaning to what we do, meaning to archaeology. And I consider that it is my responsibility as an archaeologist to use my learning and my knowledge as a scientist in defense of a place as fantastic as this. I really enjoy working there, you know, but I also feel a sense of responsibility”. [Peter Eeckhout]: “But how can we protect this jewel?” [Ken Mulvaney]: “We have here a place of universal importance, because nowhere else in the world is there such a high concentration of petroglyphs as in this archipelago. Petroglyphs that are, moreover, associated with sacred monuments like this. And I really believe that the Australian government has an obligation to present this site to UNESCO in order for it to be classified as a World Heritage Site. This is the only way to preserve it for future generations”.

For the archaeologist discovering them, they are essentially an enigma. While recognition of shapes (depictions of animals, for example) leads to the view that the engravings are indeed of intentional human origin, there is no question of interpreting them as writing, since their *raison d'être* has not been established: in this case, the rule that will permit their interpretation is therefore to be constructed. In order to do this, once they recognized them as such, with the significant incompleteness of their figurative dimension, the archaeologists initially called upon the memory of the Aborigines to learn more about the experience, the type and the rules of arrangement²⁵. This approach was essential in order to understand the writing and to read the maps, but also to get an idea of the status of the different types of engravings. Then it was necessary for them, as we have just seen above, to implement processes of abduction and analysis of indices by cross-referencing several sources²⁶; this allowed them to periodize the production of the engravings (according to their greater or lesser antiquity) and to define a certain number of the lifestyle features of the Aborigines explaining these indices. Therefore, being obliged to decipher inscriptions, they approached these as symptoms of changes in the Aborigines' environment²⁷. Proof of this is the final analysis of the second change in the environment, which is more tragic than that of the rise in water level: colonization, of which the risk of the definitive disappearance of the engravings is only one of the secondary consequences; these are social, industrial and political, all of which provide the motivation to apply for inscription on the World Heritage.

On balance, it can be said that the archaeologists' analysis causes the engravings to function according to three complementary forms of semiotic function: (i) as a *depiction* of objects of the world, provided that the discoverer has available in their encyclopedia the features that permit recognition of the engraved form; (ii) as *inscriptions* intentionally left by humans in stone for other humans to "read"; (iii) as *an interpretation* of the indices they bear, such as their presence in a particular place, as noted by the archaeologist.

Through a recognition of an intentional trace used to signify something (as an inscription), of the spatial and temporal context in which they are found (place, medium and time when they are seen), of the mobilization by the model viewer of an encyclopedia, of the importance of the activity and the experience in which the

25 What Schaeffer (1987) calls, with regards to photography, the "knowledge of Archè".

26 This is found in Ginzburg's analysis of the indices, contrary to the reference that is often lazily made to an "index paradigm" that he himself has in any case rediscussed. See on this point Jeanneret (2020, pp. 189–202).

27 For a discussion of the approach to sources as symptoms rather than footprints of the past, see Morsel (2016).

latter is engaged when they apprehend them, the first two modalities of meaning above are indeed part of what Roy Harris (1993) defines as a *writing*.

In the present case, this writing builds on a salience between the object and its medium²⁸, but also on an interest from an interpreting subject. The object must first set itself apart from its environment, which is the case as soon as it is recognized as an unintentional trace. However, it must also have features that make it a trace that can be interpreted; in other words, it should have potential meaning for an interpretant.

1.2. Specificities of archaeological heritage

While I refer the earlier analyses to the sociosemiotic formalization of the heritagization gestures set out in the introduction, the first two levels (i.e. the first two layers of traces) that make up the documentary refer to two gestures that seem not to follow each other in the heritagization program (even though they have a circular causal relationship): the production of knowledge and its publicization. If in fact we stick to the ideal typical program of heritagization (the narrative schema of the transformation of gestures), publicization focuses on objects that have already been declared part of the heritage. In this case, it would be the promotion of the engravings, or the territory where they are located (e.g. in the form of tourist promotion of the place where they are to be found, after their inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List)²⁹, which would drive the publicization.

What is unusual here is that publicization is not focused on the heritage object, but on its archaeological study and what that study tells us, as a consequence, about the production of knowledge. It is no real surprise that the practices are more complex than the schema that operates the ideal typical reduction. Therefore, the process of heritagization does not take the form of a succession of completed gestures but involves interactions between various practices that take place at various times, the gestures being fragmented and incomplete. This phenomenon can be observed especially in archaeology, where research is long, complex and subject to readjustments, depending on discoveries, the development of interpretation tools and the knowledge produced. Nevertheless, publicization of the production of knowledge (and not of the heritage object, as such) draws attention to the heritagization process itself and the specificities that it involves in archaeology.

28 What Leleu-Merviel (2017) calls “diaphoria”. This is because they depict figures (animals, faces, diagrams, etc.), the engravings stand out against a background (the rock) and have features that attract attention and that first pose the question of their presence and thus of their potential significance (Schapiro 1982 [1969]).

29 Like the *Petroglyphs of the Tanbaly Architectural Landscape* in Kazakhstan (inscribed in 2004). Available at: www.whc.unesco.org/fr/list [Accessed 20 February, 2022].

1.2.1. Knowledge on the life of engravings

We should remember first of all that the publicization effected by the documentary *Australie : Le grand livre des Aborigènes* is, like all publicization, primarily aimed at creating in the audience an impression of discovering new things. Even if viewers feel that the answer to the question of the conservation of engravings is justified by their value, the narrative structure of the documentary builds up suspense in terms of how to achieve it. Hence, the focus is on the archaeologists' steps to describe the existence and values of engravings and to understand their use by the Aborigines, so that the heart of the documentary is the story of a reconstruction of the past history of the engravings. If we look at the heritagization of the engravings, the knowledge produced by archaeologists is a *scholarly representation* of the engravings that introduces a separation between two moments in time: a reconstructed initial past social life, and their present-day life dominated by the risk of their disappearance. Between these two moments was a period of neglect, during which they were no longer used and began to be damaged or partially destroyed, which ends exactly with their archaeological study.

This scenario of two lives corresponds faithfully with that of archaeological objects³⁰. The starting moment of the second life begins with the initiation of heritagization: the simple fact of regarding the object as a trace, if only to save it from possible disappearance, produces a temporal break between the previous life and a new life marked by a potential existence as a heritage object, even if the first life happens to carry on to some extent after the acquisition of this status³¹.

From a heritage point of view, nowadays Aboriginal engravings belong definitively to the past, since today's Aborigines no longer produce them, as suggested by the Aboriginal warden interviewed in the documentary, who explains that they were created and used by his ancestors. This first life of *full usage* ended with the colonization that deprived the Aboriginal community of the Dampier

30 I am borrowing the concept of "social life" from the work presented in *The Social Life of Things*, edited by Appadurai (1986). In addition to its introductory chapter ("Introduction: Commodities and the politics of value"), I draw upon three other chapters: naturally, the classic "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process" (Kopytoff 1986), but also "Varna and the emergence of wealth in prehistoric Europe" (Renfrew 1986) and "Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics" (Geary 1986). On lifecycles in archaeology, despite their differences, three approaches lead to similar conclusions: Pomian (1981), Eco (1993) and Hammad (2015, pp. 172–175).

31 We will see a little later that this division between life according to heritage status and pursuit of the earlier life corresponds to the dividing line between archaeologists and contemporary Aborigines.

Archipelago of the lands that enabled them to live, and which led to the Flying Foam massacre, the engravings having at that point lost both their usage and their meaning.

In this particular case, the new life of the engravings thus begins with their discovery by the archaeologists. In the documentary, the archaeologists clarify that they started working on the engravings five years ago. This means that they more or less “found” them, at least in their form of material reality, because for one reason or another (for instance, the existence of lateral knowledge), they decided to study them, having the intuition that this set of engravings presented a certain scientific and social interest, and therefore deserved a new approach³². Whatever the date on which the study of the engravings began, the documentary shows that it is the knowledge of the first life (the production of the scholarly representation) that confirmed the heritage value of the engravings. Hence, its interest in understanding the *archaeological heritagization* mode, since it allows us to share (by a shortcut) the interpretation process leading from the discovery of remains, potentially heritageable traces, to the recognition of an exceptional heritage value composed of *epistemic, social and memorial* values that warrant, according to archaeologists, the status of a *heritage object*.

As all these values have their origins in their first life; the engravings undoubtedly have an autographic mode of existence in their new life, insofar as their value is intrinsically linked to the history of their production, as established by archaeology. We could certainly imagine that, for reasons such as ritual, for example, an Aboriginal group would carve new ones; this would then be a new period in the life of the engravings calling for a specific approach, as is the case for

32 In their 2011 draft report for the Australian Heritage Council, McDonald and Veth (2011) speak of 35 years of research and write that “this part of the Pilbara coast has been subject to decades of intensive archaeological investigation” (p. 22). A swift exploration of the “Australian Rock Art Bibliography extracted from the Rock Art Studies bibliographic Database for the Years 1841 to 2018”, by Marymor (2018, 2019), reveals that the first mentions of publications of engravings on Dampier and Pilbara actually date from the 1970s, with authors such as Wright, Virili, Lorbanchet, Clarke, etc. (the first of these even raising the question of their preservation as early as 1970). Bednarik (2008), for his part, recalls, during a UNESCO symposium in 2008, that he himself began making an inventory of them in the 1960s. Several scientists have denounced the constant opposition of influential politicians, pressured by industrial lobbies and contempt for the Aborigines (facilitated by the elimination of the original group and the greed of certain other groups), to the inscription of these engravings at national and international level (UNESCO World Heritage), while what we have here is (or was) one of greatest concentrations of engravings (amongst the oldest, if not the oldest, in the world) in the country, even in the world, as Peter Eeckhout reminds us at the beginning of the documentary (see, for example, Gregory (2009) or Gonzáles Zarandona (2011, 2013)).

paintings on bark, sand or canvas, even in sacred caves. However, from an archaeological point of view, engravings identified as ancient retain their autographic mode of existence; it is moreover this mode of existence, from the point when it was established as inherent in their status as traces, that has made it possible to regard them as indices to the ancient social practices of the Aborigines. At the same time, without the interest that supported the decision to produce a scholarly representation, the engravings would not even be traces, because they would not have been the subject of scrutiny, either scientific or heritage. Without the production of knowledge, beyond their mode of existence in Aboriginal memory, no redefinition of their status would ever have been considered. They would have remained simple things, subject only to the vagaries of nature and human activity. However, they have an allographic social mode of existence, which is due to the fact that they are a form of Aboriginal writing that renders them “texts bearing knowledge” for those who have learned to interpret them, and also the fact that the scholarly representation that gives them existence as heritage in scientific texts recognizes this allographic social mode of existence. Therefore, they are autographic in their material reality, but (doubly) allographic in their scholarly representation.

Even though they are not officially the subject of an application for inscription on the World Heritage List by the Australian government, recognized as heritage by archaeologists, they are publicized as such. When the archaeologists consider, in the final sequence of the documentary, that the Australian government has an obligation “to present this site to UNESCO for it to be classified as heritage of humanity”, and that the reason for this is that “nowhere else in the world is there such a high concentration of petroglyphs as in this archipelago, and moreover associated with sacred monuments such as this one”³³, they are clearly responding to the question of whether the heritage nature of the engravings justifies the need to protect them by applying the generic heritage interpretive scheme.

Mediatization through the documentary then has a leading role, since it makes their value publicly known on an international scale, irrespective of the decision of the Australian government. Through being linked, knowledge, value and mediatization thus constitute a central issue.

1.2.2. Issues around the heritage value of the engravings

It is difficult to ask the question of the heritage value of an object without turning to the original text by Riegl (1984 [1903]): *The Modern Cult of Monuments*. This author draws the dividing line between “memory values”, conferred by the monument’s creator (when intentional) or by us for historical monuments (because it

³³ The Aboriginal memorial to the Flying Foam massacre, where the Aboriginal community of the archipelago was eradicated in 1868.

belongs to the past), and “contemporaneity value” when we consider the monument as if it had just been created. From the resulting value system, the heritage world has retained three values as fundamentally “heritage values”: the two “memory values”, the *historic value* and the *age value*, together with the *artistic value* (former or relative); the use value having been more or less put aside, except when there is repurposing of monuments. More recently, two authors, Xavier Greffe and Nathalie Heinich, proposed, according to two very different but complementary new points of view, a review of these heritage values. Discussing the *Modern Cult of Monuments*, Greffe (1990) proposed an approach to heritage as a cultural property; therefore, from an economic point of view, that essentially takes us far away from the construction of a scholarly representation through archaeological investigation. Greffe introduced, in addition to the three values taken from Riegl³⁴ and alongside cognitive value and economic value, another value that is less to be expected from an economist: *social value*. The reason for this is that “men need the testimony of other men and that each era draws from those that preceded it the emotions that will allow it to create and produce” (Dupuis and Greffe, cited by Greffe (1990, p. 11)). The characteristic of social value can be said to strengthen *social identity*, either in the form of a national consciousness, as was the case, for example, at the time of the French Revolution; or, as he writes with reference to Lemaire, as “a consciousness of the past makes it possible to create a common identity for the present as well as for the future”³⁵. This social value therefore stems from a societal point of view. Moving to Heinich (2009, Chapter 12), at the end of her analysis of the researchers’ inventory process, she puts forward a “heritage axiology” consisting of the values of antiquity, authenticity, rarity, significativity (significance attributed by the researcher to an element as representative of a category or testament to a practice) and beauty. It could be highlighted that this axiology partially redistributes Riegl’s values in line with the practice of expertise specific to the heritagization mode of the inventory³⁶. However, Heinich (2009) presents them as implicit principles common to members of the same culture (p. 236) that allow them to recognize that an object has characteristics that correspond to heritage

34 “For Riegl, a monument has three dimensions: it is a source of history, it is an artistic creation, it represents time gone by” (Greffe 1990, p. 14).

35 But, he continues, “on condition, however, that everyone is very sure about it”. However, as the rest of the text appears to express a few reservations toward Lemaire’s thesis, it is not really possible to determine whether the above condition is Lemaire’s or Greffe’s! Especially since it is difficult to go back to Lemaire’s text, the reference to this text having been abbreviated to (Lemaire, p. 31), while the bibliography lists two texts by Lemaire co-authored with Ost, but none by Lemaire alone. However, this imprecision does not change the fact that the role of the of strengthening social identity is well attested as being a characteristic of social value.

36 A mode which I will discuss in section 2.1. A wide-ranging discussion of the notion of “value” can be found in Heinich’s (2017) work *Des valeurs. Une approche sociologique*. It goes without saying that I am dealing here only with heritage value.

characteristics. The values retained in this axiology are consistent with many circulating values (in particular, the values related to time and the social relationship with which the object is invested) that contribute to constituting the heritage interpretive scheme, thus conferring upon it its generality.

In the case of the documentary on the engravings, these approaches to value led to identifying three ways of implementing their values.

– The first, operational, involves professionals, scientists or the administrative bodies. The *qualities* that the object possesses, based on its characteristics, meet the “criteria” applied by the actors who have these competencies. The axiology developed by Nathalie Heinrich, mentioned above, while it finds echoes with the interpretive scheme that allows everyone to recognize what heritage is, is above all a professional axiology. It focuses on a rationalization of evaluation that confirms (or, conversely, may give pause to) the expert’s intuition of the object’s heritage value. Here, it is scientific, due to the archaeologists who, after their investigation, provide evidence for heritage status for the engravings.

– The second modality touches on what I have elsewhere called the receiver’s point of view³⁷. In this particular case, this point of view is in the media coverage: it is not developed in a direct relationship with the engravings, but passes through the mediation of the documentary. The documentary, by making use of scholarly knowledge, experiences, representations, the relationship to time, the feeling of belonging and identity, gives an image of the engravings that accords with the axiology of heritage and thus confirms the intuition of the heritage character of the engravings that the viewer may feel thanks to the *heritage interpretive scheme*: the age of the engravings is not in doubt; there is agreement from all the archaeologists who have studied them, and the Aboriginal park warden on their authenticity. The investigation into their use by the Aborigines proves their significativity and they are recognized as belonging to what we call “rock art”. As a corollary, it is through its participation in the circulation of the various media texts that the documentary contributes to the development of the features that define what heritage is, in the form of this heritage interpretive scheme, which also includes scientific or professional texts (or texts) publicizing heritage objects and social subjects’ knowledge, experiences or representations of them. This second modality is therefore strictly ideological: in the sense that it forms a representational nebula, a background from which the feeling (or rather the intuition) that the engravings constitute heritage arises³⁸.

– The third modality can be said to be social in that it relates specifically to the relationship of the social subjects to the engravings. Paraphrasing Micoud (1995

37 Linked to the central role given to temporality and the effects of the material presence of the monument (Davallon 2006, pp. 84–88).

38 Here, we could say we have the beginning of a *media heritagization mode*.

[1994], p. 27), it could be summarized as follows: Whose heritage are the engravings? The documentary, like any document publicizing heritage, aims to create an interest in the spectator to make them recognize engravings as *heritage*; both as the heritage of a collective, but also, in a certain way, as heritage “for the spectator”; this is insofar as, being exceptional enough to be regarded as heritage of humanity, they make an impression on the spectator, causing – in representation (including through identification) – an attachment and an appropriation. Actually regarded as the Aborigines’ heritage, it is in this respect that their study and recognition by archaeologists (including Peter Eeckhout) assign a social value to them; they also become so through publicization, in a very different way, for the documentary’s audience. We thus have an example of the symbolic operativity of heritage, which, through the recognition of the value of objects by means of the heritage interpretive scheme, aims to create a broader collective bringing together various actants: the initial collective and an audience. As a result, this operativity of heritagization raises, in this case, the question of the relationship of the Aborigines to the engravings.

1.3. Aborigines and engravings: another heritagization mode?

The documentary, while explaining the production of the archaeological heritage mode, indirectly leverages two other heritagization modes. First, putting forward the idea of an application by Australia for the engravings to be inscribed on the World Heritage List makes reference to the administrative-legal mode: the government must express its desire to protect them and request their inscription on the UNESCO list as heritage of humanity. Then, focusing on the production of a scholarly representation and publicization draws attention to a major element that is missing: the group that regards itself as heir. Following the archaeologists’ investigation presented in the documentary, we would have expected the engravings to be seen as the manifestation of an intangible heritage, since they are a form of writing that is transmitted by memory. However, that is not what happened.

European viewers can only wonder why there has been no reference to intangible heritage. It should be noted that when Kenny Diamond said he became “a national park warden in order to protect this heritage and understand his people’s history”, he described the use that his ancestors made of engravings, but did not mention heritage in the sense of patrimony. Instinctively, listening to him, we infer that this heritage is part of his people’s heritage (in the sense of patrimony): applying our heritage interpretive scheme, we think that he is showing an interest (of the patrimonial type) in the engravings, and, possibly, in what they convey of his people’s history. However, in doing that, are we not forcing the interpretation? We should place ourselves in the Australian context and seek a different interpretation in considering that not all Aborigines belong to the same community, and that in any case, they do

not (necessarily) think in terms of heritage, *heritage thinking* being a specifically European way of conceiving the relationship to time – such as archaeology or history. Kenny Diamond’s absence of recognition of the engravings as heritage (in the sense of patrimony) would then be an indication that, contrary to what we might instinctively expect, there is a divergence between the archaeological heritage mode and the nature of the connection that the warden has with the engravings and those who produced them.

In order to examine these questions, let us return to the heritage interpretive scheme and the three modalities (operational, mediatic and social) mentioned above: recognition of qualities according to criteria established by professionals; recognition of a heritage value that makes the object a being of language; heritage recognition by the social group, which is, in this case, missing. Each of these modalities is produced by a particular instance that can be observed in the media texts: the scientists who produce knowledge about the engravings; the producers or readers of the texts who mobilize representations of heritage value; the heirs of the group that produced the engravings. In the scope of the first two instances, the documentary finds itself caught up in different texts for which it offers a more or less explicit interpretation; and the same media texts, in turn, are used in its interpretation. It is therefore necessary to examine whether there may be texts that, if being linked to the documentary, would provide information on the third instance. Some of these texts could even give it a different status, which would then make them *enunciative events*, which would open up a new heritagization mode.

Two media texts immediately stand out because of their proximity with the documentary. The first is a two-part documentary on the Aborigines at the same time as Arte’s documentary on the engravings, and which I mentioned earlier in connection with the two major periods (before and after the rise in water level). Entitled *Australie: L’aventure des premiers hommes* [Australia: The Adventure of Early Man], it provides information on the Aborigine’s relationship with landscape features and with memory. The second text is a scientific text with an administrative purpose; it is the first release of a report written by Jo McDonald and Peter Veth for the Australian Heritage Council, entitled *A Study of the Outstanding Universal Values of The Dampier Archipelago Site, Western Australia* (McDonald and Veth 2011³⁹). Its argument has a direct focus on the way in which the engravings and the site of the Dampier Archipelago meet UNESCO’s “criteria”, defined by Icomos

39 This report’s title page is dated September 23, 2011. It can be found on the website Academia.edu, but does not appear in Marymor’s bibliographic compilation (2019). So, it seems to be a working version (hence its date in square brackets). On the other hand, a 2009 article (entitled “Dampier Archipelago petroglyphs: archaeology, scientific values and National Heritage Listing”) had discussed the inscription of the site on the national list with a view to its protection (McDonald and Veth 2009).

(UNESCO 2021), and used to determine the “exceptional universal values” (EUV) of an object⁴⁰. It makes reference not only to numerous scientific texts (archaeological publications), but also to texts governing Australian heritage or the procedure for inscription on the UNESCO list.

1.3.1. Archaeological interpretation of the Aborigines’ relationship to engravings

The report by Jo McDonald and Peter Veth is a synopsis of the scholarly representation of the archipelago’s engravings, of which the documentary clearly publicizes only a small part. The report goes far beyond it on two important points: on the types of engravings, and on the relationship that Aborigines have with them. It thus constitutes the real *enunciative event* characterizing the archaeological heritagization mode, the documentary being only a shortcut.

Reading it shows that the documentary’s focus was in fact on the presentation of the engravings under themes that the authors described as “economic” or “functional”, as opposed to engravings with “ceremonial” or “abstract” themes:

During the multiple phases of art production, there are high degrees of stylistic heterogeneity, technological innovation, sophisticated use of perspective, and extensive exploration of themes from the economic and functional (hunting, fishing and prey) through to ceremonial and abstract (dancing figures with accoutrements and large complex revelatory panels such as “The Climbing Men Panel”). (McDonald and Veth 2011, p. 39)

Furthermore, within the first themes, we mainly have engravings depicting animals; they do not show, for example, hunting scenes, fishing scenes or scenes composed of several characters⁴¹.

On the subject of the Aborigines’ relationship to the engravings, the report emphasizes the strong spiritual meaning of this site for the heirs of those who created the engravings: sometimes still living in the region, they maintain strong

40 Available at: www.whc.unesco.org/fr/criteres/. As the Dampier site does not appear on the World Heritage List, it is possible that it has never been the subject of an application, the government thus having chosen the industrialists rather than the Aborigines.

41 The spiritual approach and the social approach are thus absent from the documentary. For examples of such scenes, see McDonald and Veth (2011, p. 43).

cultural links with the site⁴². This is indeed the basis of the argument on the site's "exceptional universal values" (EUVs). The authors explain, for example:

The Dampier Archipelago is part of a living cultural tradition and Aboriginal people hold that the engravings are the work of the Marga – ancestral creator beings – from the Dreaming. They are a permanent reminder of the Law⁴³ and retain their spiritual power. The petroglyphs are an inherited and ongoing responsibility and the Pilbara groups have songs and mythologies for many of the images depicted in petroglyphs on the Dampier Archipelago. Many of the images have cultural meaning over and above straightforward depictions and would likely have played a role in education and initiation. (McDonald and Veth 2011, p. 44)

Documenting the engravings, which was carried out using, as a basis, the memory of elders belonging to groups that regard the engravings of the archipelago as productions of ancestral creative beings, led the authors to claim that they all had a spiritual meaning:

We have documented accounts from neighbouring Western Desert senior custodians (Veth since 1986; and McDonald and Veth more recently during the Canning Stock Route Project, e.g. McDonald and Veth 2011) that engravings are from the Dreaming (Jukurrpa) and represent both the travels, markings and embodiments of these ancestral creator beings. (McDonald and Veth 2011, p. 45)⁴⁴

The Aborigines from this region (Western Desert) share with those from Pilbara the principle according to which "Ontologically, all engraved art (petroglyphs) can be seen as significant, tangible expressions of ancestral actions" (McDonald and Veth 2011, p. 45).

42 See McDonald and Veth (2011, p. 44). The authors cite, for example, a presentation by the Roeburne Art Group explaining how the Aboriginal cultural practice of petroglyphs serves as a basis for current artistic production: www.roebourneart.com.au/culture [Accessed February 15, 2019].

43 The Law is the knowledge that governs the Aborigines' lives, founded on the cosmology of the Dreaming, which teaches, among other things, everything that must be understood in order to survive in a very harsh environment.

44 This reference (McDonald and Veth 2011) refers to: McDonald, J.J. and Veth, P.M. (2011). The social dynamics of aggregation and dispersal in the Western Desert. In *A Companion to Rock Art*, McDonald, J.J. and Veth, P.M. (eds). Wiley-Blackwell, Malden.

From this, it can be seen that the authors have an approach to the Aboriginal memory of the petroglyphs that is in complete contrast to the approach we might infer from our heritage categories when watching the documentary, in particular those, mentioned above, that characterize intangible heritage. From this point of view, the report provides crucial information on the two universes: archaeology and memory. Its textual and editorial enunciation is unquestionably that of archaeologists and heritage experts, but it nevertheless gives a lot of room to the status that the Aborigines accord to the engravings and the approach they still have to them. Everything suggests that, while the documentary does not mobilize Aboriginal memory to any great extent, there was a deliberate choice; perhaps due to the complexity of the material, the textual volume needed to present the cosmological background, or the need to keep within the operational format of the series, whose topic is archaeological investigations and not heritage or the Aborigines either, unlike the other two-part documentary *Australie: L'aventure des premiers hommes*⁴⁵.

The difference in interpretation of the engravings by the archaeologists and by the Aborigines is clearly not concerned with what the engravings show: whether they are animals, humans (in profile, full-face, etc.) or objects such as a boat, the engravings are recognized according to the rules of depiction of world objects by the Aborigines, and with one or two difficulties by the archaeologists (and ultimately by the readers of the report). The Aborigines do in fact have definite advantages over Europeans: on the one hand, having the ability to interpret footprints, they have a skill in semiosis by recognition that goes beyond that of Europeans, as can be seen in other circumstances⁴⁶; on the other hand, with the Law, they have the cultural rule (the code) of interpretation of stylizations and locations. However, the difference lies on another level: to qualify it in semiotic terms, I will say that regarding the engravings as productions of ancestral creators (those who created everything that exists) amounts to positing a continuity that runs from their creation to what they are today. This is not something that is missing, represented by a sign, but a continued presence of the thing that has been created⁴⁷. We could put it this way: putting a durational symbolic continuity (or a numerical identity⁴⁸, as

45 So there should be a document that brings together the two documentaries and the report to put forward a complete media heritagization that remains at this stage the product of my interpretation as a viewer and reader.

46 Example of footprint analysis by Aborigines in *Australie: L'aventure des premiers hommes* dans le désert de Nullarbor.

47 This semiotic formulation seems to me to agree with what Descola (2005) writes about the Dreaming: "The Dreaming is thus neither a past remembered nor a retroactive present, but an expression of proven eternity in space, an invisible framework of the cosmos guaranteeing the continuation of its ontological subdivisions" (p. 207).

48 On this form of identity, see Genette (1994, pp. 27–31).

Genette would say) in place of the semiotic break which itself presupposes a difference between past and present, and between absence and presence, and between depicted reality and sign. Europeans are misled by the fact that they instinctively recognize archaeological or heritage traces in the engravings, indices to an event to be identified. If we infer that the same is true for Aborigines, we presuppose that they exercise a reflective activity on these engravings as part of an inherited culture. In other words, we project our *heritage thinking* – even if enriched by an intangible heritage, what is more, separate from us. However, assuming there has been no major misreading of what the authors of the report write, the cosmological meaning of the engravings lies not in the interpretation of indices that can be made by individuals in the present day, but rather in the fact that these individuals belong to the same cosmological group as the “trace” and its “meaning”, because they all have the same origin, since their links stem from Dreamtime. This would also mean that the engravings, even if they are the work of ancestral creative beings, could have been produced and used (for example, interpreted as indices to the presence of animals) by humans in the past, just as they still could be in the present (with the production of new engravings, by new members of the group, as is the case for certain “artistic” productions), without their cosmological meaning – or rather their mode of existence, in other words, what they are – being altered. It is in terms of this difference that it seems possible to understand the conclusion of this part of the report:

Some engraving sites, specifically, and all rock art sites, more generally, have varying degrees of significance in terms of their origin, mythological associations and their possible role as mnemonic devices. (McDonald and Veth 2011, p. 46)

We have seen that archaeologists, for their part, had to deploy a highly complex system of interpretation in order to be able to define the origin of engravings as “things” produced by humans of the past, and thus to be able to reconstruct the use that these humans may have made of them. The engravings are all traces that are meaningful because they are bearers of indices to this origin, which then need to be interpreted using lateral knowledge. This approach, based on a semiotics of the interpretation of objects as traces, will enable the production of knowledge external to the link that may exist between the creator of the object, the object and its interpreter. Contrary to what happens in Aboriginal cosmological continuity, it is a reconstructed (and not a given) continuity which will be found at the foundations of the heritage object, hence the crucial role of the knowledge produced.

We are thus faced with two symbolic regimes that are totally different because they belong to two “ontologies” (this word being understood here in the sense given

to it by Descola)⁴⁹: from the archaeologists' side, naturalism; from the Aborigines' side, totemism. It is this difference that confronts the archaeologists, and more generally the world governed by heritage thinking, against the Aboriginal symbolic order that conceives of objects in radically different ways.

1.3.2. The engravings, “Aboriginal heritage”?

As the report was written for UNESCO experts, everything suggests that the parallel presentation of the archaeological approach and the meaning that Aborigines attribute to them is in line with the normative rule established by Icomos-Australia (2013 [1979]) in the Burra Charter, which recognizes material heritage objects as having values that are qualified as *immaterial* (in other words, which can be said to be memorial and spiritual for the Aborigines): these values can then take their places alongside other heritage values. A traditional sacred gathering place (like the sites of raised stones) and, much more than that, a place as unique and eminently symbolic as the memorial to the Flying Foam massacre, can be seen as perfect examples. In any case, the affirmation of these “immaterial values” introduces another interpretation mode for these material traces, relics and the engravings. In this sense, it may announce the possible emergence of a heritagization mode different from those already met – or at least, of a consideration the *social values* of these archaeological heritage objects. However, this is a consideration based on what modalities?

A comparison of the report and the documentary *Australie : L'aventure des premiers hommes*, the latter being based not on scholarly documents but on publicization material, provides additional information on the “naturalistic” treatment of the Aborigines' comments. This documentary presents a broad synopsis of the state of archaeological research in order to retrace the adventure of the Aboriginal settlement of Australia, their environment and their way of life, from their arrival on the continent to the present day.

Hence, in a way it deals with the production context of the engravings and, in this regard, exemplifies the results produced by the archaeological investigation of the history of the Aborigines. However, alongside this contribution of knowledge on the Aborigines' way, which I have mentioned before, it is the way in which the Aborigines' comments are presented that I will pick up on here: for each of the sites presented, which are spread across the whole of the continent, the interpretation almost invariably involves anthropologists and Aborigines, with perhaps, in

49 “An ontology, for me”, explains Descola (2017 [2014]), “is simply the instituted result of an identification mode, the particular form, identifiable in discourses and images, taken at this or that time, and in this or that region of the world, by one of the four continuity and discontinuity regimes [between nature and culture]” (p. 237).

addition, sequences of archival documents on the life of Aboriginal groups (or tribes?), many of which were recorded in the 1960s. However, it can be noted that the composition of the two media texts, that is, the report and the documentary, is similar: the general framework follows the scientific thinking of a presentation of the results of archaeological investigations, with, in parallel, a presentation of Aboriginal memory, and with the words illustrated by reproductions.

Therefore, a parallel is drawn between the discourse of the archaeologists and that of the Aborigines. However, while the archaeologists' discourse belongs to the scientific register⁵⁰, that of the Aborigines belongs to tradition. When they arrive at a site, the Aborigines address the ancestors; they give the name, the meaning of the place and its origin according to ancestral knowledge, perhaps making reference to the Law; they explain the way of life, techniques used in hunting or preparing seeds, the use of engraved maps and water collection, eel farming techniques, and the remains of dwellings; from looking at paintings, they speak about events that marked the life of the tribe, etc. Two methods of approaching and interpreting the same object or the same situation thus emerge, in two registers that derive from universes that are fundamentally different. For example, at the petroglyphs of faces at the Dampier site presented by Ken Mulvaney, who explains the style and composition of a face engraving and begins the process of dating them (25,000 years, perhaps 35,000), the elder with whom he is working, after having addressed the ancestors, comments (in voiceover): "There are many spirit descendants here and they are alive, that is why we must speak to the earth. These stones are very precious to us. They tell the story of creation, like the Bible. Seeing them, one understands the past. Aboriginal Law teaches all this".

Like the report, this documentary seems to follow the recommendations of the Burra Charter of Icomos-Australia, according to which the intangible values of a community or group (in this case, the spiritual value of landscapes, relics, paintings and engravings for Aborigines) are intangible values that form an integral part of heritage⁵¹.

Therefore, this charter specifically aims to reduce the conflict between the archaeologists' approach to the engravings and the Aborigines' approach. According to the charter, all tangible heritage objects have a memorial dimension; therefore, it proposes considering the heterogeneity of what constitutes heritage (or memory) for the diverse social groups that exist in the country. The charter thus avoids any

50 Note that among the archaeologists interviewed, we follow Ken Mulvaney on the face petroglyphs of Dampier, Peter Veth on the search for water and Jo McDonald on the first contacts with the English.

51 This approach was clarified in the revision (1988) of the Burra Charter. The current version is the 2013 version, which includes the documents that were previously appended.

distinction between “heritage” and “places of memory”, as does the French model, and brings together their various values (aesthetic, historical, scientific, social or spiritual) under the generic name of “cultural significance”:

Cultural significance means aesthetic, historical, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. Cultural significance is embodied by the *place* itself, its *fabric*, *setting*, *use*, *associations*, *meanings*, records, *related places* and *related objects*. (ICOMOS Australia 2013)

Moreover, for the same object, this cultural value can be different for different groups, or even for different individuals. Among the values that make up this cultural value, a special place is given to “immaterial” values or dimensions, such as symbolic or commemorative qualities, which are presented in the charter as the “meanings” of the place or object.

Meanings denote what a *place* signifies, indicates, evokes or expresses to people. [Explanatory Note: Meanings generally relate to intangible dimensions such as symbolic qualities and memories.] (ICOMOS Australia 2013)

This charter therefore sets out to supplement archaeological thinking – and more generally, heritage thinking – with the Aboriginal symbolic order by taking *social values* into consideration. These values involve the relationship of social subjects to heritage objects, but more than that, they imply giving a particular importance to social subjects that belong to the group of origin of these objects. Hence, there is recognition of a new actant taking part in heritagization, an actor who is neither the producer of knowledge nor the instance declaring heritage status. Although the report gives a key place to Aboriginal knowledge, and with its arguments on exceptional universal values proposes a recognition of Aboriginal memory during the reporting process, its composition and content are within scope of the *authority* (in the double sense of author and institutional validation) of archaeologists. However, if a new heritagization mode is to be created – here, a *social heritagization mode* – the initiative should be passed down to the group; or at least, the group should have participation in the authority. Otherwise, there is indeed a new direction of thrust, but it remains in the shadows: relative and limited. The introduction of the social dimension is the beginning of a line that is in the process of being drawn between the material dimension (objects such as traces) and the anthropological dimension (the way of life of the group at the origin of these objects), but which is not able to detach itself to form a unique and autonomous heritage production mode.

The fact that, in the charter, the archaeological component remains structuring and the social value dimension is only an appendix, being without “authority”, brings consequences for the traces, their interpretation and their interpreters. The first (and most visible) consequence is a standardization of the social value of objects under the heading of “meaning”, assimilating, for example, Aboriginal cosmology (Law) to “symbolic or commemorative qualities” and positing it as identical to the collective memory of groups of colonists. To look at the scientific aspect alone: by removing the political dimension, such standardization merges a memory attached to places or events with the logic of a culture; it dismisses any difference between the two ontologies in favor of just one. However, even if using the categories of naturalistic ontology to understand a culture (all the more so if it is governed by another ontology, as is the case, here, with totemism, which is indeed the basis of the study of societies), that does not mean it always goes without a hitch, such as when it comes to giving a symbolic status, of a heritage nature (therefore of European origin), to objects belonging to this other culture – all the more so for another ontology. The second consequence is a perfect illustration of this type of problem: the archaeological investigation and the heritagization of artifacts risk de facto introducing a continuity solution between the Aborigines of old and the Aborigines of today; this is because the latter, as bearers of memory, become informers on issues predefined by the archaeologists. It is true that the report, like the documentary *Australie : L’aventure des premiers hommes*, avoids this risk in principle by affirming, on the contrary, the continuity of Aboriginal culture within the group by resituating places, objects and discourses in the thinking of the Aboriginal culture, in a manner distinct from heritage thinking. In a way, they “encapsulate” the Aboriginal universe (how could it be otherwise?). The fact that the choice of these places and objects is made by archaeologists inevitably transforms the memory summoned up and expressed into a contribution of lateral knowledge on the objects being studied; this integration of Aboriginal memory as heritage knowledge thus carries the risk of heritagizing the memory (i.e. the bearers of it), along with the places and objects.

These two consequences, given the contradictions contained within them, show the limits of the archaeological heritagization mode applied to objects belonging to a group, unless the group has the intention of adopting a heritage-related viewpoint, interest or purpose. For the documentaries’ viewers, who are familiar with the heritage interpretive scheme, the objects presented “are” heritage. However, this will not necessarily be the case for an Aborigine; or rather, even when this is the case, and they express their culture in heritage thinking, these objects will not so much retain another “meaning” for them (as the Burra Charter suggests) as keep the group’s own mode of social existence, the heritage interpretive scheme remaining an expression of this mode of existence for others.

1.3.3. Challenging the archaeological heritagization mode

The question of the relationship between culture (in the anthropological sense) and heritage is at the center of a series of articles, published by Laurajane Smith, Emma Waterton and Gary Campbell⁵². The major focus of this is specifically the critique of archaeological discourse as a heritage operator.

In a text written some time ago, dealing with the conflict between archaeologists and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Lands Council (TALC) that resulted from the film *The Last Tasmanian* – which suggested that all Tasmanians had been eradicated and therefore were no longer in existence – Smith attacks both the practices and the scientific imperatives of archaeologists.

These, she explains, are useful to the denial by the government authorities of Aborigines' claims to their cultural identity, insofar as archaeologists consider the elements of Aboriginal material culture as objects belonging to the past, and themselves define their value and meaning:

Thus, archaeological rationality, emphasized by the logical positivism of processualism⁵³, became useful in defining populations (be they indigenous peoples or other groups) through both their “archaeological” past and the material culture (or heritage objects) which were defined as representing their past. Further, the application of ‘rational’ knowledge explicitly renders the social problems it governs as non-“political” and thus more tractable. (Smith 1999, p. 27)

Hence, the question was raised about this power of archaeology by some Aboriginal communities, as was the case during the conflict referred to above, which ultimately led to the cessation of some archaeological research in Tasmania and the restitution of elements of their material culture to certain communities.

This criticism of the archaeological approach can also be found in the discursive analysis of the Burra Charter by Waterton et al. (2006). I would note in passing that this analysis reinforces the idea that this charter has a structuring role in the way of thinking about heritage in Australia. However, more importantly here, the authors

52 For example, to name but a few: Smith 1999; Waterton et al. 2006; Waterton and Smith 2009; Smith and Campbell 2017.

53 If I am not mistaken (not being an archaeology specialist), this is an approach (which has its origin in English-speaking countries) that emphasizes the anthropological, functional, ecological dimension and uses measuring instruments (e.g. for dating) that allow improved objectivity. The report seems to agree with many of the characteristics of this approach.

show that the revisions to this charter (especially the 1999 revision) reflect an attempt (unsuccessful, according to them) to integrate societal changes and in particular the growing strength of the demands of the Aboriginal groups to exercise authority over their lands, and also to assert their identity. This confirms that this charter effectively initiates a bifurcation point that does not, however, go so far as a shift toward to a new heritagization mode. A careful discursive analysis of the charter, such as an analysis that looks at the modalization, identifies the reason for this: maintaining the difference between, on the one hand, active subjects (experts) and, on the other hand, subjects who have been consulted or beneficiaries who limit themselves to either recognizing values, providing information, or taking ownership of the representations, but who do not really take any action. Even though a new actant (the aboriginal social group) is actually taken into consideration within the heritagization process, the charter ultimately upholds the privileged position of the experts. This leads the authors to conclude:

Although laudable and sincere attempts have been made to incorporate a greater sense of social inclusion and participation in the Charter's revision, the discursive construction of the Burra Charter effectively undermines these innovations. (Waterton et al. 2006, p. 351)

We might wonder if this state of affairs is not related to the division between two postures, which, as seen earlier, divides everything: from an ontological point of view, these are two comparable ways of thinking about the relationship between nature and culture, and from a societal point of view, they are two profoundly unequal positions. This is what the authors seem to be suggesting when they set the heritage rational of archaeology against the demands of the Aborigines.

In terms of the question of the bifurcation of the heritagization mode from an archaeological logic to a more social rationale, these criticisms should be placed in the context of a more general and more radical approach that aims to bring a new way of approaching heritage, which would be fully social. In the book edited by Emma Waterton and Laurajane Smith on *Taking Archaeology Out of Heritage*, their own chapter starts with an indictment of the pretention that exists within archaeology, within architecture and art history, to provide the tools for defining, thinking about, interpreting, managing and preserving heritage, as national heritage.

Instead of the knowledge derived from the above disciplines, which are the operators of what Smith (2006) calls the “*authorized heritage discourse*” (AHD), they put forward an approach in which “heritage is a subjective and political negotiation of identity, place and memory” (Waterton and Smith 2009, p. 15). They say that, in doing this, they are drawing upon the *re-theorization of heritage*, developed by Smith in *Use of Heritage*, in which she regards heritage as a cultural

process or a performance “that is concerned with the regulation, mediation and negotiation of cultural and historical values and narratives” (Smith 2006), so that:

Heritage becomes not so much the thing or place identified by the AHD [authorized heritage discourse] as “heritage”, but instead the values and meanings that are constructed at and around them – heritage is what is *done* and not what is conserved, preserved or managed. (Waterton and Smith 2009, pp. 15–16)

It is therefore an alternative to the usual definition of heritage (the famous “authorized heritage discourse”) which is thus asserted.

Heritage becomes an act of communication [...] and a process of emotional and cultural engagement [...] that is about the assertion and mediation of historical narratives and collective memories, and the cultural and social values that underpin these.

In this definition, all heritage is intangible, as it is redefined as a cultural process in which the values and cultural and social meanings that help us make sense of the present are identified and negotiated. (Waterton and Smith 2009, p. 16)

Moreover, in her 2006 publication, Laurajane Smith gives examples of the emergence of social processes of a heritage or memorial nature, led by groups that challenge the processes based on the authorized heritage discourse, or that, more radically, propose alternatives to these processes. Even if the re-theorization is about heritage and not about heritagization, it operates a series of shifts that de facto begin sketching out a new mode of heritagization: *social heritagization*. With a series of shifts: a shift in the main actor, the experts (archaeologists, in particular) being replaced by the members of the social group; a shift in the major operation, the subjective and political negotiation of identity, memory, values and meanings taking precedence over the conservation and preservation of material traces; a shift in temporality, the present being at the center, and no longer the past; a shift in terms of the object that constitutes heritage, the intangible dimension having more importance than the material object; finally, a shift in the science of reference, ethnography (and, in view of the methods used, probably more broadly the social sciences) replacing the historical sciences (archaeology, art history and history) or architecture.

1.4. To sum up: value of the method and exemplification of the approach

This chapter, whose purpose is chiefly to illustrate how the approach set out in the introduction could be applied to the examination of media texts in view of an understanding of heritagization modes, provides us with a series of lessons that will be examined in detail in future chapters.

A first set of lessons is about the functioning and function of documentaries. First of all, they show how the documentary *Australie : Le grand livre des Aborigènes*, as a media publicization text, reports on the archaeological interpretation process of the engravings: these, bearing in mind the Aborigines' comments, having been recognized as *traces of social practices of the past* by archaeologists who have produced scientific knowledge about the nature of these engravings and the context of their creation. The consequence of this production was a recognition and affirmation of their heritage character calling for one of the highest official pronouncements: their inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Then, we saw how this operation of the documentary effected a *mediation*, especially through the figure of Peter Eeckhout, of the program of production of knowledge, characteristic of archaeological heritagization. The resulting scholarly representation is thus made up of concentric circles that start from a central core, formed of knowledge directly related to the engravings and the Aboriginal way of life, to the most distant and peripheral knowledge, such as knowledge about the rise in sea level or airborne laser detection technology; this is *lateral knowledge* that is mobilized to contribute to the interpretation of this particular type of traces, the engravings.

Second, we observe a shift in the central operation of heritagization from statement to publicization, with an increase in the weight of the latter as mediatization of the production of knowledge. In this case, it is due to the position of the Australian state supporting industry against the results of scientific research. However, we will see that, no matter the reasons, the production of knowledge, which up to now was used for the official statements, is going to be publicized. Its mediatization expands the circle of interpreters of this knowledge and thus arouses an audience's social interest in heritage traces that belong either to their own culture or to other cultures.

Third, we explain the emergence of a challenge to the traditional and institutional heritagization mode that contradicts the "authorized heritage discourse", to use the words of Laurajane Smith; in this case, that of archaeology and the Burra Charter. A conflict is therefore emerging between two heritagization modes, which call upon two different sciences of reference (archaeology and ethno-anthropology). However, the differences between the positions and practices of archaeologists, those

mentioned in the Burra charter, those claimed by ethnologists and naturally those of the Aborigines suggest that these two modes are far from being monolithic. Each of these modes assembles several different registers of operations and actants (objects, social actors, sciences of reference, etc.), the combination of which produces *variants*, which define multiple ways of approaching the objects concerned and which should be examined carefully.

The conjunction of these three lessons leads to a dual hypothesis that serves as a common thread in this book. The development of mediatized publicization, especially through documentaries, can be accompanied by the emergence and circulation of new representations on what constitutes heritage, which would be related less to the traditional heritagization mode than to new ways of interpreting and building a relationship with traces of the past.

Second, these representations can be said to be *heritage interpretive schemes*. I argued, in the Introduction, that these schemes make reference to a *generic* form that played on the feeling of conformity to the constitutive rule of heritage, according to which, what “constitutes” heritage is a “thing” (material object or process) derived from a past, during which it was endowed with values, so that it must be kept in order to be passed on. I would like to show, in the following pages, how these schemes are based on a temporality that unites past and future in the presence of a sociality (within the relevant collective) or a complicity (with an audience) around an attachment to this “thing”, the result being the emergence of a heritagization mode that mediatizes this attachment.