

Via Media: The Circulation of Narratives and their Influence on Tourists' and Residents' Actions and Memories

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Résumé de l'article

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Résumé

Cet article illustre l'interaction du local et du global dans la circulation de récits qui donnent forme à la mémoire d'un lieu et l'inspirent, tout en répondant à sa culture matérielle et en ayant en retour un impact sur celle-ci. En retraçant les récits interprétatifs des résidents et des touristes au sujet du village troglodyte italien des Sassi di Matera, dans les médias et par le biais des actions, cette étude montre comment différents groupes abordent la malléabilité de la mémoire et de la représentation du site pour renforcer des constructions identitaires et des buts politico-économiques.

Abstract

This article illustrates the interplay of the local and global in the circulation of narratives that shape and inform memories of a place while also responding to and impacting its material culture. Tracing narratives of residents' and tourists' interpretations of an ancient, Italian cave-city (the Sassi of Matera) through media and action, the study shows how different groups engage the malleability of memory and site representation to reinforce identity constructions and political-economic goals.

The Role of Media in Circulating Narratives

Through analysis of the preservation of material culture—here, a ruin that has become a world heritage site—this study brings to light the processual nature of narratives, the exchange of narratives among actors interacting with a physical place and the importance of present-day power relations in the construction of the past. Following several examples illustrating the role of global media in shaping outsiders' perceptions of a place, the article situates its case study—the Sassi of Matera in the Basilicata region of Italy—in relation to literature on memory and narrative. It then presents a genealogy of changing meanings, memories and values placed on the site during several centuries, as these were shaped by the intersection of narratives

circulating among locals, institutions and outsiders. The dominant role played by media in this story about narratives of the Sassi of Matera emerges clearly. Next, a series of findings illustrates effects of the circulation of narratives on several groups, both insiders and outsiders, and their resulting actions. This leads to a discussion of some of the Materans' interpretations of the Sassi informed by memories of personal experiences as well as rhetorical strategies, mass-mediated narratives and political agendas. The article concludes with a discussion of the relevance of material culture to power struggles taking place in the Sassi.

In December 2002, an American contacted me to learn more about the Southern Italian city of Matera. He had just returned from a trip to Matera, lured there by Frank Bruni's *New York Times* article of November 11, 2002, that featured the city. Entitled, "It's not Jesus' Jerusalem, but as a Stand-In

It's Safer," Bruni described Mel Gibson's choice of Matera as the location for his film, *The Passion of the Christ*, being shot there that fall. Visually resembling Jerusalem are Matera's extensive, urban cave complexes called the Sassi, a UNESCO World Heritage Monument. Beyond Gibson's and my correspondent's attraction to these ancient and intricate spaces, however, both men were impressed by the Sassi's previous role as Jerusalem in other Biblical films, most notably Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1964 *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, which inspired Gibson's work.

A few months earlier, in October 2002, Francesco Foschino launched an unofficial website for Gibson's film—a year before its Hollywood producer made an official site. The purpose of Foschino's website, however, was not to promote the film; he used the film and its appealing landscape to promote tourism to Matera, his hometown. He intended to initiate cinematic tourism to Matera (in particular, to the Sassi) by offering a Passion Tour package to devout Passion fans. Few tours were actually sold, despite the fact that the website received 170,000 hits during the first three months of 2004, when the film was released in the United States. Ironically, Matera did receive an influx of tourists, thanks in part to international news media (Foschino 2004). Both printed and electronic news, particularly from American and British news agencies, sensationalized the film, reporting miracles occurring in Matera and a fictitious tourism boom based on the existence of Foschino's popular website and several interviews with him. Copied and recopied by other agencies and translated into Italian, newsrooms disseminated the misrepresentation of Matera's "sell-out" to cinematic tourism. At that time, apart from Foschino's website, the city was making little effort to exploit its relationship to the film. However, in an article that still appears on close to 100 websites, *The Guardian* reported "Italy's Cavemen Cashing in on Passion of Mel" (Arie 2004). Medichini (2004) also garnered website publicity when *Associated Press* (reprinted in *USA Today*) reported on Gibson's film, "Residents hope to turn it into a tourist bonanza . . . Not to miss this occasion, the town is unabashedly plugging its link to the Gibson film." Ironically, Foschino (2005¹) reports that the false advertising of the news accounts actually did lead some tour operators to the doors of the city, creating, in effect, a real (though small and short-lived) tourism boom that hit at Easter 2004.

By the summer of 2004, Passion Tour packages were no longer being offered due to their general failure and the fact that cinematic tourism did not take off here after its initial glimmer. That June on a bus from Bari to Matera, I met two Danish backpackers who had not known that *The Passion* was filmed here. They selected Matera to begin their Italian itinerary (composed entirely of World Monuments) based on the recommendation of their guidebook (Simonis et al. 2004). Emphasizing the Sassi's UNESCO World Heritage status, the book—*Lonely Planet: Italy*—starred Matera as a must-see, along with six other Italian cities (including Rome, Florence and Venice). My companions were dismayed when I mentioned to them that en route to Matera we would pass two other members of the UNESCO World Heritage club (Castel del Monte and Alberobello) that *Lonely Planet* had not highlighted.

These three references to the Sassi of Matera bracket a phenomenon that I posit as my argument. Like the narratives produced by collective memory through repetition and transmission within a group, outsiders' representations of a site also develop into narratives. Often, they have been informed by local interpretations. This is particularly true of Matera's Sassi, whose intricate physical form, picturesque setting and emotive imagery lend themselves to the development of regional and national narratives.

As they circulate through individual and institutional agency and power, they inform interpretations other outsiders have of the site—that of tourists, for example—while at the same time they reciprocally influence insiders' interpretations, that is, the memories of the local population. Indeed, of perhaps greater significance is the power that narratives about a place have to circulate people, in the sense of drawing people to a location, influencing local actions and imprinting local memories. Additionally, they shape tourists' actions, experiences and interpretations, which in turn perpetuate their transmission.

I aim to demonstrate how memories of Matera are transformed by the globalization of culture. The work engages a series of interviews I conducted between 2000 and 2006 with twenty-seven tourists and fifty-nine Materans representing a broad range of social backgrounds about the role of the Sassi in local narratives and in mnemonic constructions. I also draw from a survey of travellers' accounts and guidebook descriptions of Matera published from 1702 through 2006, a sampling of Materan city council records from 1986-2006, a survey

of Matera-related websites viewed between 2004 and 2006, a sampling of Italian and American newspaper articles published from 1950 through the present, documentary films on Matera made between the 1960s and 2000s and feature films shot in Matera. Transposing memories from the realm of the local to the global challenges the tenets of official national history of a place or a nation. My concern is that within this process, memories of Matera are easily subsumed into the powerful overflow of global narratives of the site, and this makes it easier for political elites at local and national levels to advertise Matera as a tourist site by manipulating past and present interpretations of the site for specific political purposes.

The argument is based on the concept of narrative as a means of shaping ideas, inducing action and bringing change to the physical environment and its material culture. Narration is a creative and intellectual process that recounts a selected and ordered series of events. Narratives circulate person-to-person and via media, including films, novels, newspapers, television, websites and guidebooks. As will be shown in recounting my research in Matera, the lineage of contemporary descriptions and histories (even erroneous ones) of the city printed in guidebooks as well as communicated in interviews, by tour guides and on tourist menus, dates back decades and sometimes centuries to well-known publications. While some of the narratives are officially produced or voiced by leaders of different social groups and thereby legitimized by their prominence as culture producers, others move through less formal, uncontrived pathways, such as word of mouth. Narrative also structures identity, which is shaped through the retelling and alteration of memory. Memory and identity are therefore linked and change over time. Together they maintain social boundaries and positions of power (Gillis 1994: 4). Collective memory results from, and is kept alive through, the repetition of narratives. Memory reflects a group's beliefs and values through the group's rereading of the past. Similarly, shared recollections come to resemble each other through recitation while differences of personal experience fade. Like other narrative structures, memory is highly selective and informed by one's knowledge, beliefs and perceptions (Halbwachs 1992, Connerton 1996, Fentress and Wickham 1992).²

Narrative and collective memory intersect in studies of nationalism and the development of national heritage. My research shows that they bring

unity to a disunited group chiefly by creating large-scale political identities that solidify the nation state. Of particular note in nation studies related to these themes are Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1992) and Hobsbawm and Ranger's edited volume, *The Invention of Tradition* (1983). Though not a nationalist study, my analysis acknowledges the power struggles that accompany the development of narratives as they shape identity and memory within a global context. I differ from Nora by rejecting the premise that places can contain memories. This would mean that memories are static and that places have fixed meanings. In contrast, I assert that memories are fluid, narrative processes and that places, especially ruins, have no meanings independent of culture. Memories are constructed largely through rhetorical processes, though these are influenced by material and visual culture that spark the renewal of memories and the recitation of narratives. As they are not static objects, memories change with their retelling. Collective memory is therefore diachronic in nature.

Like Hobsbawm and Ranger, my work addresses the concept of invented traditions. Though created within the context of global tourism development, the invented traditions I study are motivated less for reasons of nationalism than for social and economic power on the local level. Hobsbawm refers to invented traditions as modern phenomena that make reference to the past and have political intent (4), showing that evolved or "old" traditions are, by implication, defined as real, pre-modern and free of political content. I argue that the old and new layers of meaning and the old and new uses of a site (in particular, the Sassi) do not demonstrate their notion of authentic versus inauthentic practices. Instead, they illustrate the mutability of identity, the arbitrariness of meaning and the essentially political dimension of these practices. I view these layered traditions as cultural constructions, superimpositions of systems of values and struggles for power and representation.

The nationalist narratives I analyze intersect with another body of research relating to this study, that of heritage production. Two scholars who investigate the integral relationship between the heritage and tourism industries are David Lowenthal (1993, 1998) and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998). These authors agree on the basic definition of heritage as not being history per se, but instead being a contemporary practice that loosely draws upon and elaborates history for current political and economic goals. They differ, however, in their

attitudes toward heritage. Without denigrating it, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett seeks to expose heritage as an objectification of the past and a “value-added” industry” (150). Describing heritage as a cultural production that breathes new life into “dead sites” (7), she demonstrates how heritage is marketed by the tourism industry to revive local economies. Lowenthal’s portrayal of heritage is more sinister, as reflected in his titles. He reproaches heritage for its exclusivity and for its fictive representations of the past that are mistakenly accepted as historical truth.

Both these approaches to heritage resonate in my study. The circulation of narratives, whether intentional (as in guidebooks) or unintentional (as with word-of-mouth), can be viewed as heritage production. Like heritage, they are not necessarily grounded in historical fact, they scramble chronologies and they elide distasteful events to produce a palatable (and sellable) product that pleases current audiences. As Lowenthal states, and my Mussolini example, below, demonstrates, “heritage thrives on persisting error” (1998: 128). These errors and omissions and synthesis of fact and fiction also resemble communal memory and its repetition of narratives transmitted verbally.

History of the Site: Making the Ruin

Contemporary interest in Matera revolves around the city’s ancient caves. This area is composed of densely grouped, part-cave, part-constructed houses woven into a deep canyon like a limestone honeycomb. Continuously occupied as an urban cave complex for at least the past 1,300 years, the site actually shows evidence (artifactual and carbon-dating) of continuous or sporadic occupation for 100-700 millennia before that.³

The city’s naturally defensive position and available fresh water have spurred urban development and attracted invaders and colonizers, such as Greeks, Romans, Goths, Longobards, Saracens, Normans, Swabians, Angevins, Aragonese, Napoleonic forces, Austrians, Bourbons and Lombards (ca. 600 BCE-1860 CE). In the soft limestone walls of the canyon into which the city is sculpted, traces of occupiers and invaders remain. Marks of domination, suppression and resistance compose and encrust its layers of development and shape the fabric of the ancient cave city. Its walls cryptically record millennia of tumultuous history, identifying this as a site of contestation to this day.

About 150 cave chapels located both inside and outside the city complement the domestic,



cavernous network. Their Byzantine wall frescoes, dating to the 9th century, identify Matera’s early religious importance. Ornamentation in the cave churches has been modified over time; Romanesque, Renaissance, Baroque and later-modern frescoes cover earlier subjects and modify the space. Like the city’s residential caves, the ecclesiastical structures were probably used by humans for tens or hundreds of millennia before their conversion to Christian chapels and monasteries.

Although many of the Sassi’s part-cave houses display lavishly sculpted Renaissance and Baroque ornamentation attesting to social integration during centuries past, an exodus of elite Materans began in the late 17th century and continued through the 19th century. They built new houses on the ridge above the Sassi, leaving a concentration of poor peasants in what became ghettoized Sassi. The process intensified over the centuries and by the mid 20th century, the Sassi were stigmatized as

Fig. 1
Overseen by a medieval cathedral, the Sassi ripple down the side of a cliff. (A. Toxey, 2003).

Fig. 2
Renaissance
ornamentation on
a Sassi palazzo (A.
Toxey, 2006).



the “Capital of Peasant Civilization” and a locus of premodernity.⁴

After the Second World War the city’s poverty and resultant insalubrious living conditions were widely publicized. Framed within the picturesque and primordial setting of the caves, they brought negative attention to Matera, which consequently was labelled the “shame of Italy.” In a highly publicized and nationally discussed event, the government built new housing for Sassi residents. Employing the talent of many of Rome’s most famous architects at the time, the twenty-five-year project replaced Matera’s infamy with the glamour of postwar modernism. The evacuated caves were forgotten and left to deteriorate.

Fig. 3
Frescoed rock church
outside Matera (A.
Toxey, 2003).



Despite their abandonment and burial under heaps of scorn and debris, a movement to preserve the Sassi developed in the 1960s and has maintained momentum. It started as a grassroots effort by local elite (not the shamed, displaced Sassi residents) and achieved national support with the passage of a law in 1967 naming the Sassi a national monument, followed by another law in 1986 that provided national funds for preservation. At this point, the city commissioned architect Pietro Laureano to develop a study of the Sassi and submit it to UNESCO for world heritage candidature. A native Materan, Laureano had spent his career as a UNESCO consultant working with cultural heritage in Africa. His proposal was accepted and the Sassi entered the revered list in December 1993.

Following this auspicious event, frenzied preservation efforts have been salvaging the ruin with national, European Union and private funding. The caves have now been largely renovated as living and commercial spaces. The first wave of residents was young professionals, either members of the old elite or newcomers to Matera who were interested in its history. In the last five years, however, as the site’s popularity has grown in the tourist circuit, many of the avant-garde have left, and the Sassi are becoming almost exclusively a tourist site—a trend that has occurred at other inhabited world heritage sites, such as Carcassonne in France.

Mapping the Flow of Narratives Against their Effects

To understand the development, diffusion and influence of narratives about the Sassi of Matera, my study compares on-site ethnographic research with a survey of visual culture (in particular, several forms of media), and a study of the material culture of the caves. One finding is that the circulation of narratives and the effects of them on different groups or social strata are tied in a reciprocal process.

Reciprocal Readings

The interpretations of locals are co-dependent with those of outsiders. Once visitors’ perspectives enter the stream of mass media through newspapers, books, websites, television and film, they influence both local and non-local readings of the site.

One example is the transference of descriptions of the Sassi from traveller to guidebook to tourist and local resident. The portrayal of the Sassi lit at night as resembling a “starry sky” (Pacichelli



1702/1975, 2: 267) was made at least as far back as the early 18th century and was repeated for centuries by later observers in their published travel accounts and early guidebooks. Likewise, the comparison of the Sassi to Dante's *Inferno* has a lengthy provenance that includes Carlo Levi's (1987) famous book, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, news articles, travellers' accounts, guidebooks including Lombardi's (2006: 746) *Fodor's Italy* and even contemporary street talk with this author (A. Mastrogiulio, pers. comm.). Also, the oft-noted description of the Sassi as a crèche is reinforced by a permanent nativity scene sculpted into a transept of the cathedral in the 16th century, in which Bethlehem takes the form of the Sassi.

Misperceptions also circulate. Throughout the 1990s, for example, I was told by several local residents, and even read on a menu in a tourist restaurant,⁵ that the Sassi had been evacuated and closed by Mussolini. Although such plans had been discussed during Mussolini's administration⁶, it did not happen until the 1950s under Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi. The story now circulating on the streets omits political information altogether, not mentioning either Mussolini or De Gasperi. (UNESCO's aura may have influenced this apolitical telling of the story.) The old story, however, continues to be repeated among tourists, as witnessed by a recent novel set in the Sassi in which this misattribution to Mussolini recurs.⁷ The American tourist who wrote the novel was misinformed, as was I, by the popular representation of the site. Although the popular representation has now changed, readers of the novel will continue to learn and repeat the incorrect information.

Since the Sassi were listed as a UNESCO world heritage site, national television stations have commissioned and aired countless documentary films about the city, and Matera's frequent appearance in newspapers and magazines has helped to generate national tourism. The image of the city's destitution that media generated during the 1940s still permeates national memory. More familiar with its demonized than its lionized reputation—despite the barrage of positive press—many Italian tourists who arrive here are amazed by the lack of poverty.⁸

Let's Go Italy generates another false representation. Describing a guest room in a hotel located in the Sassi, it recounts "the inimitable experience of sleeping inside what was once a Neolithic temple" (2005: 620). One room in the hotel did function in the past as a Catholic church or chapel, but no Neolithic temples have been positively identified here or anywhere in the region. The author conflated the chapel with the Sassi's prehistoric roots, and the misreading will inform the understanding of tourists who visit Matera. This is an example of heritage production described by Lowenthal wherein facts are embroidered and mixed with myths to produce a historical pastiche and an attractive new narrative that serves current interests (1998: 128-29, 142-43).

Word Causes Action

A second phenomenon found is that narratives circulating among media stimulate actions. The two major events of the past 50 years—abandoning the caves and then reclaiming them—have been strongly motivated by mass media and global culture. These events speak to how visual culture can have a physical impact on material culture.

Fig. 4
The Sassi at night resembling a "starry sky" (A. Toxey, 2010).

Evacuation and Dilapidation of the Sassi: In post-war Italy, it was not unusual for towns to house large peasant populations with pre-industrial lifestyles. What made Matera stand out, however, was the attention national and international press paid to it, resulting from the town's uniquely picturesque cave setting. Although criticisms of Matera had figured in political and social scientific literature since the early 1900s, the publication of *Christ Stopped at Eboli* catalyzed and expanded press coverage of the Sassi to international audiences. The broadly distributed book by the famous author and artist who was politically exiled to Southern Italy under Fascist rule, shocked readers with descriptions of the deplorable living conditions of Materans living in cave houses. Even though the conditions and the associated lifestyle were relatively unchanged from centuries past and differed little from much of rural Italy, changing standards of living in the north and outside of Italy rendered them unacceptable to the modern age.

Embarrassment resulting from the publication of Levi's book extended from the national government to the local population. Under the burden of national shame for this habitat's deemed "backwardness" that included lack of modern sanitation systems, the state government passed a law and established funds to evacuate the Sassi population to new housing built on the ridge above the Sassi and next to the old elite town. The relocation took place during the 1950s through 1970s. As they emptied, the Sassi were branded as a place of crime and avoided by upstanding Materans. Concomitantly, modern services and lifestyles in the new homes replaced peasant customs and practices. Literally

and figuratively turning its back to the Sassi, the new city shunned the sight and memory of its past. Buildings blocked views into the Sassi and passages leading into the cave zones were barred by the government in an effort described as protecting Materans from collapsing Sassi buildings (while removing people's access and interaction with this tangible reminder of their recent history). During the following decades, the site experienced significant deterioration, accelerated by the use of it as a municipal dumpsite by former residents in a symbolic burial of their scorn.

This series of events exemplifies the interplay of the physical, the visual, the rhetorical, the local and the national in constructing a community's collective memory. By removing physical access to the material culture of the Sassi, and inundating the local society with national narratives of shame through visual and textual media, most Materans learned to disdain and then forget their previous peasant identity and lifestyle. This effort succeeded largely due to a discourse of shame that was inflicted on the Sassi and their residents. Described in Italian newspapers as the "national shame,"⁹ the Sassi, their occupants and the peasant lifestyles they had led for centuries were denigrated and spurned by the postwar, modern world. The narrative of shame was a powerful tool for convincing Materans to leave their ancestral homes. In fact, it was so powerful that many former Sassi residents today refuse to acknowledge their families' histories among the caves—despite the fact that for the past twenty-five years, the government's position has reversed from one of abandoning to embracing the caves.

Naming and Reclaiming the Ruin: By 1990 when I first visited Matera, the Sassi were in ruins. Despite the fact that three decades of lobbying by Matera's intellectual elite (assisted, ironically, by Carlo Levi) had brought about the passage of two state laws that named the Sassi a national monument and provided funds for preservation, little conservation took place before 1993, when the Sassi entered the World Heritage List. This act returned Matera to world interest and initiated a new narrative. From being the focus of negative press and a national discourse of shame in the 1940s and 1950s and dropping into anonymity in the following decades, Matera then became the focus of positive press in the 1990s and a subject shaped in discourses of national and global heritage. A flood of news articles and television documentaries followed. Municipal tourism offices and initiatives were established,

Fig. 5
Detail of the Sassi as they looked ca. 1950 before the population was evacuated (courtesy of Enzo Viti Collection).



and the UNESCO logo joined the city seal on every brochure, letterhead and website officially—as well as non-officially—produced.

The past eighteen years—one could say, the UNESCO years—have witnessed an influx of new residents to the Sassi since they are no longer barred from occupation. Adding their marks to the accumulation of traces left by predecessors, the newcomers are not generally descendants of former Sassi residents. In addition to the preservation-minded residents moving in, the Sassi now attract commercially-minded tourism professionals, such as restaurateurs, hoteliers, operators of bed-and-breakfast establishments, guide services, souvenir shops, and the like, as well as city leaders, regional tourism authorities and tourists.

UNESCO does not work directly as an agent in the creation of tourism and memory. It does not even broadly publish the list (which includes minimum interpretation), and it only indirectly influences preservation policies of a named site. Nevertheless, in the hands of city boosters and tourism professionals, the organization's name and its list can bring dramatic economic, physical and social change to a site and region. As with other world heritage sites, however, UNESCO and the preservation activity that follows in its wake are generators of change that may, or may not, be positive and welcoming. From a socio-economic and physical perspective, for example, the Sassi are being gentrified. Groupings of small houses are being combined into large, single family dwellings or hotels, and restaurants line the main street. Semi-public courtyards are being privatized, diminishing public space and dismantling the courtyard network—one of the Sassi's most interesting urban features. The surrounding city, too, is changing physically. With both preservation and tourist money flowing in, the modern city is expanding with countless new apartment buildings. Attracted to the Sassi's world heritage status, a new class of yuppies and aesthetes has moved to Matera, bringing further change to the site and the city. The presence of wealthy, worldly tourists, drawn by their guidebooks, further alters the social makeup of Sassi occupants from the former subaltern residents.¹⁰

The Role of Tourists in the Circulation of Narratives

A third finding is that media establish tourist circuits and define tourists' knowledge and perceptions of places. Tourists, in turn, perpetuate the circulation



Fig. 6
Detail of abandoned Sassi as they look today (A. Toxey, 2006).

of narratives about particular places through their own stories and reports.

The Tourist Circuit: Tourism depends upon guidebooks and other travel literature, news media, films, documentaries and such promoters as city leaders to put destinations “on the map” (literally and figuratively) by generating public awareness of them. These agents create the space of tourism¹¹ by producing the sites and circuits of tourism.

Fig. 7
Peasant-themed restaurant interior in the Sassi (A. Toxey, 2003).



In their various media, the agents present stories associated with the sites (that is, the reasons for which the sites are notable), in the process influencing the tourist experience. They inform tourists of a site's meaning and therefore condition, or bias, tourists' encounters with the site. Tourists then share their experiences and photographic reproductions of the site, ensuring that the prescribed perceptions and repeated stories remain in circulation.

Tourism's Discovery of Matera: Association with UNESCO has been crucial to transforming the Sassi into a heritage site, and international tourism results directly from the UNESCO label marketed heavily by all agents. Located on the world heritage tour, especially thanks to *Lonely Planet*, Matera has become a place of secular pilgrimage on a modern-day Grand Tour. *Let's Go Italy* (2005: 620) and *Fodor's Italy* (2006: 746-49) also give it significant exposure. The latter covers the Carlo Levi story and implies Matera's role in films with the words: "Stepping out onto your terrace and overlooking the old town is like being on a film set."

Matera's new fame coupled with its long history as a center of Christian worship drew the attention of the Catholic Church during its Great Jubilee 2000 celebration, when the Church introduced Catholic heritage tourism in Matera. The Church funded a restoration of the city's more glamorous churches and numerous cave churches

that were placed on a paid-admission tourist circuit. It also provided institutional support for travellers by transforming an old convent next to the cathedral into an elegant hostel.

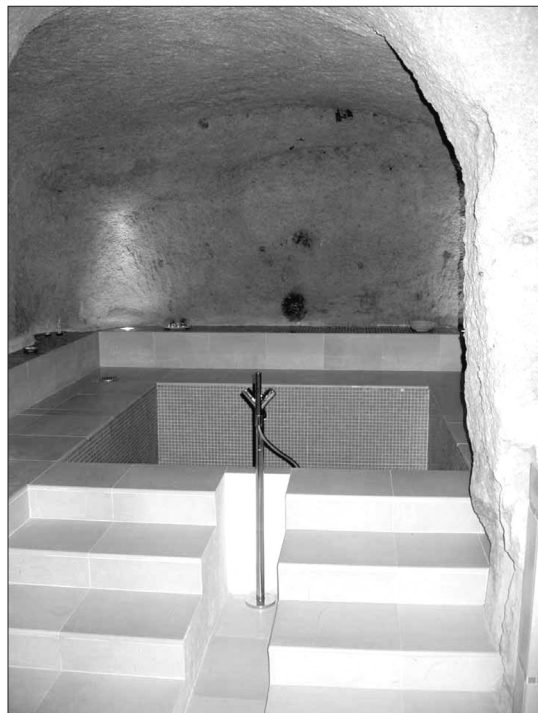
The Ruin: A Kaleidoscope of Different Interpretations, Agendas and Memories

Despite the caves' central location in Matera and their prominence in the region's history, many Materans perceive the Sassi as being outside the city. Framing the ancient city as an ex-urban ruin, they marginalize the cave zones by spatially and temporally distancing them from the local, contemporary culture. In this way, Materans also relinquish their claim to the site, leaving it vulnerable to both variable interpretations and decay.

Heritage production requires a temporal separation to allow the site's rebirth (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 8). In Matera, a spatial separation from the community has been created by forced expulsion, the passage of time and rejection of ownership. The combination of physical and temporal distance was necessary for the site to be identified as a ruin and reclaimed as a monument. Claire Lyons (1997: 79) writes, "[c]onstituted by memory and distance, ruins are proxies for a past that is continually reinvented by the present." Lyons reminds us that the meaning assigned to a site—and especially to a ruin that belongs to the past and has no contemporary owners—is flexible. Exposed to the wider world through their elevation to the status of world heritage, the Sassi are consequently subject to multiple meanings and identities. Agents engage the caves in differing social, political or aesthetic roles through their various interpretations of the site. In order for them to maintain their status, power and utility as ruins, however, the Sassi cannot be fully integrated into, or claimed by the present (Roth 1997: xi). They would otherwise become quotidian and lose their value of easily malleable identity. Currently, for example, local portrayals of the Sassi range from a symbol of feudal subalternity that should be buried and forgotten to a many-thousand-year-old symbol of humanity, urbanity and ingenuity that should be assiduously conserved.

Let us consider how the events of evacuation and preservation started processes among different groups of stakeholders of negotiating, contesting and forgetting memories of the Sassi. Who remembers what, and how do the memories change over time due to the influence of new discourses?

Fig. 8
Marble and tile sunken tub in a renovated Sassi home (A. Toxey, 2003).



Former Sassi Residents

Former residents who left during the period of the 1950s to the 1970s today recite their painful recollections of life in the Sassi. Consistently, they recount stories of hardship and poor hygiene, narratives that were learned during the early-to-mid 20th century. While the lives of Materans lacked many comforts that they enjoy today, their previous lifestyle was comparable to that of many Italians at that time (Tafuri 1989: 25; Barker 1995: 298; Ginsborg 1990: 122). It is interesting to note that residents of nearby villages, whose living conditions were similar to, or worse than, those of Materans, and whose lives were not ameliorated until much later than those of Materans, do not share these memory narratives of misfortune and pain.

The Materan discourse of shame and adversity grew from Levi's lurid descriptions of the misery of Sassi residents, a perspective that was influenced by his book's anti-Fascist political agenda. For example, he wrote (quoting his sister's observations):

[Children] appeared from everywhere, in the dust and heat, amid the flies, stark naked or clothed in rags; I have never in all my life seen such a picture of poverty. Flies crawled across their eyelids, and they seemed not even to feel them. They had trachoma. I saw other children with the wizened faces of old men, their bodies reduced by starvation almost to skeletons, their heads crawling with lice and covered with scabs. Most of them had enormous, dilated stomachs, and faces yellow and worn with malaria. (Levi: 87)

Using this book, the massive fallout from it in the national and international press and the contrast of the picturesque caves to the anguish felt by residents, the post-war government quelled the problems of the South in the mind of the nation by solving the problem of Matera. Its solution was to bring in experts to study the culture and society and then design a new city and lifestyle for the former Sassi residents. The narrative of condemnation of their former lifestyles that circulated especially during the post-war years shaped the collective memories that former residents recite today.

Too temporally close to their lives in the Sassi, many former residents do not respect them as historic or view them romantically. To their minds, the caves do not fit the definition of ruins. By shunning the cave zones, they likewise reject and disdain their personal histories. This act deters their return to the Sassi despite public subsidies available for preservation of this monument. The Sassi symbolize their subjugated, pauperized past, which has been tainted in their perceptions by

repeated memories of indignity and by decades of disrespectful dumping.

New Sassi Residents

Stories of poverty and poor hygiene recurring in the collective memories of many Sassi survivors represent only the past hundred years of the ancient city's life. Countering these are stories being woven by the Sassi's new residents who exhibit their affluence as they renovate and reoccupy the monument. Responding to narratives developing around the UNESCO title of World Heritage, they emphasize the site's monumental status and distant past—even titling the city “the Heritage of Humanity.” Repeating a speculation made by a local architectural historian, they expand the city's timeline millennia into the past, asserting that Matera is one of the oldest cities in the world, based on archeological remains from the Paleolithic era.

While they acknowledge the peasant storyline—and play this up in some of the new restaurants located in the Sassi whose decor includes red-and-white checked tablecloths, wooden barrels and farm tools attached to the stone walls—the owners of cave structures renovated for personal or hotel usage are taking a different tack. Except for the exteriors that by law remain unchanged, they distance the interiors from the wholesome yet socially inferior peasant theme. With such additions as marble floors, high-design furniture and fixtures, artful lighting of stone vaults and sumptuous bathing facilities, they create elegant spaces that allude to their affluent lifestyles and those of their wealthy clients. The meanings they assign to the place faintly evoke the Sassi's elite past of Renaissance and Baroque *palazzi* (mansions). More importantly, they aestheticize the site by emphasizing its sculptural beauty and ingenious craftsmanship, and by eliding its recent, uncomfortable social history. They emphasize the Sassi's venerable yet indefinable age. Their interpretations reflect their experiences and projected images of comfort and prosperity that contrast strikingly with former residents' memories of hardship.

Bureaucrats and Politicians

Another local contingent layers a different set of interpretations onto the Sassi—city, regional and state government institutions whose combined efforts define its official reading. They include the mayor, offices of tourism, offices of commerce, offices of preservation and office of training (licensing official tour guides). Not founded directly on

personal experiences, their representations of the Sassi cater to tourist expectations. Interestingly, like aesthetes who have taken up residence in the Sassi, they emphasize the misty prehistoric origins of the city, the human ingenuity that constructed the site and the picturesque setting (going so far as to remove historic structures in order to open postcard panoramas of the cave city).

An additional and significant feature of their official public memory is the heroic status and role they ascribe to Carlo Levi. Even though during the mid 20th century, many Materans were affronted by Levi's exposé and exaggerations of their misery, today's public figures tend to embrace Levi as the city's saviour. His name appears as a street name, in most guidebooks and regularly in newspapers. Art galleries frequently display his tableaux and the city's new art museum has dedicated one entire wing to his work.

Most important to the officially defined identity of the city is its inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Not only does every paper or digital document that the city generates proudly announce this honour with the UNESCO logo, but since 2001, police cars also wear this symbol—alongside the slogan, *Città dei Sassi* (City of the Sassi).¹² Brandishing this label, the city's prevailing image-makers subsume the identity of the entire modern city—whose post-1950 form, population and industrial strength are many times larger than those of its pre-modern progenitor—to that of the cave city, which had previously and ignominiously been buried by the modernized city.¹³ In this clear demonstration of power, city officials negate the former residents' anti-historicism and marginalization of the Sassi. This is significant, since the former residents and their progeny outnumber current Sassi residents some twenty-six to one.

Despite the current level of enthusiasm, the city administration's promotion of the Sassi only dates back to the December 1993 listing by UNESCO, which reclaimed and validated the discarded site to a global audience. While a preservation program had been planned and generous preservation funds made available through the state law passed in 1986, little action had taken place before the UNESCO wake-up call. It was at this time that Materans and city officials awoke to the bonanza in their midst and its tourism potential.

Trading New Memories for Old Ones

Complicating the Sassi's battlefield of memory and meaning is the fact that some of the opponents

are switching sides. In particular, several former Sassi residents that I interviewed are softening their derision of the caves, impressed by the international attention and validation of them and by their income-producing potential. They admit to having not set foot in the Sassi since their relocation and to having despised and felt shame for their former homes—until they were sanctioned by UNESCO and by tourism income. Now, the same residents take pride in their abandoned homes and are transforming them into bed-and-breakfast accommodations or are selling them to tourism developers. To explain their change of attitude, they marvel at the often-quoted claim that this is the oldest city in the world. In these cases, it appears that the narrative of shame that had been dictated by the national government and had informed their previous memories, has been replaced by a narrative of pride exerted by those same official sources.

This phenomenon illustrates several important points. In addition to memory being learned through repeated, rhetorical processes, memory is malleable and useful. It serves the present and not the past. Memory is social in nature. Forgetting is equally as significant as remembering. And, on a more ominous note, an element of power infuses all memory processes. This observation derives from the fact that the converts espouse the (changing) official line (that of the dominant political culture). As stated by Paul Connerton (1996: 1) "control of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power." This raises the question of how much the lived experience of place informs the memories of former residents as compared with the experiences of tourists and other agents. The process-oriented nature of the construction of memories is visible

Fig. 9
Mel's favourite Materan restaurant advertises his signature dishes (Courtesy of Trattoria Lucana and Chef Gigi).



here, with these former Sassi residents acknowledging their previous rejection of the Sassi while accepting the present interest in them.

Power Struggles: Creating, Marking and Marketing Sites of Tourism

The agents whose representations of Matera most powerfully shape tourist memories comprise numerous outsiders to the city: journalists, filmmakers and guidebook writers. For the past fifty years, film directors have been interpreting the Sassi and surroundings, as well as increasing their international exposure, through use as film sets. Often likened to the landscape of Jerusalem—recalling the comparison to a living crèche—the Sassi are particularly attractive to Biblical film directors as a safe substitute for the Holy Land.

Despite the region's popularity among directors, only Pasolini's film brought broad cinematic fame to Matera prior to Gibson's film. Without the benefit of international media that fuelled hype over *The Passion* (for example, websites, newspapers, journals, television talk shows and documentaries), this Italian film with its elegiac representations of Materan landscapes inspired groups of hippie college students from around the nation to squat in abandoned Sassi houses during the summers of the 1960s. Gibson's film generated a very different public response. The religious polemics that the film inspired—debates over Christian doctrine, accusations of anti-Semitism and accounts of on-set miracles and conversions—heightened attention to Matera by association.

In anticipation of the well-funded advertising and commotion surrounding Gibson's film, Pasolini's work was restored and re-released in Italy at Easter 2004 to coincide with the American remake. (The remake also celebrated the film's 40th anniversary and marked the 30th anniversary of Pasolini's assassination in 1975.) While *The Passion* induced international cinematic tourism to Matera (especially from the United States, Norway, Germany, Denmark, France, Holland, Japan and Korea), the combined power of the two films in Italy (and the subsequent reporting onslaught) elicited a stronger wave of national tourism to Matera. In fact, in contrast to Gibson's film, Pasolini's opus educated a powerful sense of nationalism among Italians, as witnessed in news articles and interviews of Italians who preferred the "more poetic" work of the Italian cinematographer to the visceral American treatment.

Cinema, Memory and Tourism

Cinema is a powerful force in the creation and influence of memory in popular culture (Zelizer 1995: 229). By identifying and locating the Sassi as a destination, illustrating them with postcard images and supplying stories and meanings, the films have created a space of tourism. Through the visual dimension of memory, filmmakers precondition what the tourist sees, experiences and knows about the site. By following the paths laid out for them, repeating the stories and re-photographing previously framed images, tourists participate in the scenario and relay process.

Cinematic Makeover: Marketing Matera as the filming location of these blockbusters has resulted in hotly contested attempts by municipal leaders to recast the city's identity as Christian Jerusalem, the intent being to augment local pilgrimage practices with national and international cinema-driven pilgrimage to this Holy Land simulacrum.¹⁴ The association of Matera with the hearth of Judeo-Christianity is particularly poignant because Levi's book title asserted that south of Rome there was no law, and south of Eboli (located near Naples) there was no God. Its meaning was political and not literal, yet the claim influenced strongly pagan readings of Materan and southern society (despite Matera's long-standing prominence within the Latin and Byzantine churches). Similar irony resides in the correlation of Pasolini's film with Gibson's film and with Easter. Pasolini was an ardent Communist, and his film was a critique of Christian Gospel. This criticism, however, has been overlooked by 21st-century viewers. Newspaper reporters, Materan tourism entrepreneurs and city officials actively deploy both films (while ignoring the pagan reading of Levi's book) in the interpretation of Matera as the land of Christ. This demonstrates the power of dominant image-makers to supplant past meanings with new ones to serve contemporary purposes in a process similar to heritage production.

Film-related media exposure has led to recognition of Matera and its evocative landscape by prestigious institutions, for example, the *Borsa del Turismo Mediterraneo* honoured Matera at its annual international convention in April 2004, and crowned it with another title: City of Cinema. The city government quickly reacted to these promotional opportunities by casting about for other film connections and approaching other film directors. Discussions took place, for example, with Abel Ferrara, who along with at least ten other film

directors has since shot films in Matera. Many of these have been religious or quasi-religious stories, for example, *Mary*, *The Nativity Story*, *Revelations*, *The Obscure Brother* and *The Omen*. In the spring of 2004 newspapers reported that the municipality exploited Francis Ford Coppola's family connection to a nearby village by inviting him to locate a film school in the Sassi and to chair a new regional Film Commission. The administration also announced plans for a cinema museum featuring Matera and its region in film.¹⁵ Although these proposals have yet to be realized, books are starting to appear on the topic of Matera in film, which further solidify this identity, for example, Luciano Veglia's (2007) *Matera: Una Città per il Cinéma*.

Asserting New Meanings: On the streets, site sacralization has occurred. Mel's favorite restaurant advertises his signature dish. Shop windows display photos of the proprietors with Mel. You can sleep in Mel's hotel room or even in the bed of Christ (that is, actor Jim Caviezel). The cost is nine times what the same establishment charged me in 2002.

Conflict broke out over physical attempts to mark the city as a western Jerusalem. Shouts of indignation met an official proposal to place crosses on the site that Gibson and Pasolini portrayed as Golgotha (Calvary). Mayor Porcari publicly stated:

Finally, we're receiving the attention that we deserve. And now, through many other initiatives, we'll look to sustain the attention we're getting after the release of these two films, in order to put the city on the international circuit of cultural tourism. (Ferrari 2004)

City council member for tourism, Giovanni Magariello, added: "We are planning to identify

the [film's] route [through the city] and on it, we'll indicate all the places used for [sets] in the film" (ibid.). This clearly exemplifies the official ways and intentions of city leaders to put Matera on the tourist map and to map Matera for the global cinematic tourist experience.

A polemic involving the Lions Club illustrates that social and political control is accomplished through interpretation of history and therefore control of memory. In April, 2004, the club installed fourteen large bronze plaques portraying the Passion of Christ near the Gibson set. The connection between the subject of the film and that of the plaques as well as their coincidental location and timing is obvious to many Materans, but the Lions Club denies the cinematic reference in its actions. A whole series of metonymies appear clear, however. The tourists' path follows the actors' path, which in the film represents the path of the cross, a metonym for Christ. Recasting once again the image of this ambiguous site, the plaques realize cinematic tourists' association of the site with Christ's afflicted journey bearing the cross. The plaques represent the Stations of the Cross, which, in Latin, are called *Via Crucis* (way of the Cross). In following this path, tourists become pilgrims, acting out their memories of the Gibson film while performing a sacred rite in this simulated Jerusalem. By overlaying this path along existing streets, the club effectively renamed the streets *Via Crucis*, or quite literally, Cross Street.

Current Sassi residents launched a campaign to remove the plaques, claiming they cut into and violate publicly owned and protected World Monument property; two historic Christian shrines were destroyed to install two of the plaques; municipal permission to install them was granted unlawfully; they are twice the size, of a different material and not placed in locations authorized by the (unlawful) permit; and they disrespect the site and its history.¹⁶ Although the campaign succeeded, the Lions Club appealed and prevailed by political means. Despite their legal nonconformity, the plaques remain. It happens that many Lions Club members also belonged to the conservative city administration; others were and continue to be prominent local lawyers; still others (architects and engineers) belong to the institutions responsible for Sassi preservation.

This example exposes the power involved in interpreting and marking the history of a place when competing agendas produce contested memories. As well as previously discussed examples, it also illustrates the inertia of perceptions, memories and

Fig. 10
Lions Club bronze plaques (detail on left; distant view on right) establish a *Via Crucis* in the Sassi. (A. Toxey, 2004).



narratives. Once in motion, they can resist change. Mechanisms that influence changes are strong forces representing political or economic authority. This includes leaders within the community as well as outsiders such as tourists, governments and such institutions as UNESCO. Not directly commercial, installation of the plaques is an act of identity construction being played out physically through political representation. If the plaques have the effect that the Stations of the Cross at Sacro Monte have had on generating tourism and pilgrimage to New Jerusalem (in the Piedmont region of Northern Italy),¹⁷ then the economic benefits to Matera's newer (yet visually more analogous) Jerusalem will be significant.

As the argument of the residents implies, the association with Jerusalem is an outsider's interpretation of the Sassi being recreated on site by insiders to reinterpret official history and to meet the expectations of other outsiders (based on filmic representation). Their objection is to the imposition of a new meaning and identity over old ones. They resist having their own meanings and narratives of the site trumped by those of a more powerful group. While the residents are waving banners of tradition and world heritage, the Lions Club members are using political pull (perhaps bolstered by hopes of economic benefits) to re-identify the site. As stated by Jacques Le Goff (1992: 54), "to make themselves the master of memory and forgetfulness is one of the great preoccupations of the classes, groups and individuals who have dominated and continue to dominate historical societies."

The act and ease of re-sacralizing sites demonstrate the pliability of identity and the arbitrariness of meanings and of the sacred. They also recall that meanings are socially determined and are a battleground for the exercise of social power. The construction of new shrines by the Lions Club undermines the patina of centuries of veneration of old shrines, exposing the discretionary nature of sacred site selection and squarely placing interpretation of the sacred within the realm of the social and political (though influenced by material culture). The residents objecting to this act were resisting this arbitrariness and defending what they held to be sacrosanct.

Littering: An Act of Dis-ownership or Ownership

A quieter yet more visible controversy over Sassi ownership and identity and the physical display of



Fig. 11
Continued use of the Sassi as a public dump (A. Toxey, 2002).

power and resistance finds the new Sassi residents opposing a contingent of adolescents. Although unrenovated Sassi structures appear to be abandoned in their ruinous state, in reality many provide shelter as lovers' pads, hideouts and drinking haunts.

Belonging largely to the public domain, these spaces are being taken away from this covert, adolescent community of squatters with the arrival of the elite who are slowly renovating and claiming the entire district. The youths' resistance to this gentrification takes the form of graffiti, somewhat aggressive behaviour at night and continued defacing of the property with litter, in particular, broken glass strewn along less-frequented paths. In addition to claiming the space, such tactics employ fear to ward others away.

The practice of using the Sassi as a dumpsite also continues among Materans in general, who discard everything from food scraps to large appliances there. As spaces are renovated and reoccupied, the clutter becomes concentrated in unoccupied spaces. Exacerbating the problem, work crews employed in the renovation projects often discard construction debris in neighbouring, unoccupied spaces. Whether casual or intentional, this practice speaks to the efforts among many locals to mark the site and maintain its identity as refuse, and it emphasizes their persistent lack of respect for this world heritage site.

The issue of power poses questions about money and the state. Why does the state appear to be absent here, and where is the money that is generating the quest for tourists and the controversies over

representation? The answers to these questions are not readily apparent but are intricately located in the history of this site.

Concluding Remarks on the Power of Narratives to Influence Thought and Deed

Like the Sassi, the terrain of memory is scarred by dispute, struggle, domination and resistance. Also like the Sassi, whose layers of construction and modification witness continual social change, memories and meanings are constantly negotiated, revised and renewed through social discourse and for social purposes. Even in the construction of identity, remembering serves a political purpose in the establishment of social order in the present.

Narrative is a powerful tool that can be used effectively by institutions. Through media reports Matera was reduced in the Italian collective memory from an unremarkable, though dramatically situated, city to a place of shame and from there elevated to a world monument. As in a self-fulfilling prophecy, media likewise produced a cinematic tourism boom in Matera by falsely advertising one. Through their positions of power, institutions reinterpret the past to accomplish their agendas in the present. City leaders also have the power to remove signs of resistance and to enforce their readings of the site with sanctioned physical markers.

Without the products of media, cinema and guidebooks (i.e., visual culture), Matera and its rich material culture would not have become a stop on the tourist circuit. City leaders first worked to add

Matera as a day-trip excursion off established tourism routes to Bari and to the beaches of Metaponto. The result was that tourists dropped in for a few hours, visually consumed the city and left without spending money. With the new visibility from film and media coverage, along with public and private investment in tourist reception facilities (hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops), the municipality now frames the Sassi and their surrounding points of interest as a destination.¹⁸ Cultural and economic leaders are negotiating with tour operators for tourists to spend at least one night in Matera.¹⁹ Increased exposure in guidebooks is also bringing tourists to Matera who are not part of a packaged tour, like the Danish youths I met on the bus. Following paths established by these agents, tourists to Matera repeat learned interpretations and join in the continual rhythm of recreating narratives.

Collective memories identify groups and reassure them of their unity and their singularity (Holtorf 1997: 50). Through the recitation of narratives, they retell and recreate the past in the present, modifying memories as necessary to reflect the groups' changing political, social and economic conditions. This repetition is similar to the circulation of narratives that occurs among media and that informs groups and individuals. These are both, in fact, dynamic, rhetorical processes of repetition and change. If we broaden the definition of memory beyond the collective group, we can say that the circulation of narratives through media is also a process of remembering. Perhaps this is a case of expanding the local to the global. If we can have global culture and world heritage, then surely we can have global memory.

Notes

1. In a 2005 unpublished paper "Un Viaggio Lungo un Film" Foschino discusses this matter. The same information was also imparted to me in personal communication with Foschino in 2004.
2. Other social memory scholars, however, assert that memory exists independently of group values and of belief in the past as it did happen. See for example Olick and Robbins (1998) and Misztal (2003).
3. In his nomination of the Sassi of Matera to the UNESCO World Heritage list, Materan architect Pietro Laureano averaged these dates to arrive at the age of 350,000 years. Excavations surrounding Matera provide evidence of human occupation from the early, middle and late Paleolithic, Neolithic, Eneolithic, early, middle and late Bronze Ages, and Iron Age. For example, a well preserved skeleton believed to fall between Neanderthal and the precedent Homo erectus (ca. 150,000 BP) was found in a cave north of Matera at Altamura. The Grotta dei Pipistrelli (Bat Cave), located just south of Matera, is another particularly celebrated prehistoric site rich with finds covering many years of human occupation beginning in the late Paleolithic (ca. 15,000 BP). Within the confines of the city of Matera, remote cavities have brought some Eneolithic and many Bronze Age artifacts to light (Laureano 1993: 30, 75). For a comprehensive urban history of Matera, see Toxey (forthcoming).
4. This was brought to the attention of the general public with the publication of Levi's book, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Christ Stopped at Eboli) in 1946, which provided descriptions of the Sassi residents' preindustrial lifestyle. Matera's title, "*la Capitale della Civiltà Contadina*," (The Capital of Peasant Civilization), which is associated with Levi, was also popularized at this time by the press.

5. Paper placemats at the Ristorante/Pizzeria Il Terrazzino, July 7, 2000.
6. The Fascist plan for evacuating the Sassi was defined in 1927 by Doctor Alfredo Angeloni in his extensive program for expanding Matera, entitled *Per la Più Grande Matera* (For a Larger Matera). This was further elaborated in 1935 with the city plan designed by Vincenzo Corazza and in 1946 with a more comprehensive regional plan designed by Emanuele Plasmati. Portions of these plans were carried out before the Second World War halted building activities.
7. Rather than portraying the evacuation as a positive event and a gift of Mussolini as the popular version of the story describes, Sturz (2002: 12-14) portrays it as a bloody, negative event accomplished at gunpoint.
8. This observation has been expressed by many of my interviewees, for example, Anna Maria Pavone (August 22, 2010), Pietro Russo (July 15, 2006), Alberto Conti (June 18, 2003).
9. See for example, *La Gazzetta del mezzogiorno*, September 4, 1941.
10. For an exhaustive analysis of the social, economic and physical impact of the Sassi's preservation on the city and region, see Toxey (forthcoming).
11. By the space of tourism, I mean the physical environment in which tourism takes place.
12. This appellation derives from the title of a 1946 article in which it was used derisively to castigate Matera's living conditions. G. Puccini, "Matera Città dei Sassi," *Vie Nuove* 1:3 (October 6, 1946). The slogan was recently reborn in a positive light.
13. The Sassi cover approximately 29 out of the city's 780 hectares, and as of 2010 house 2,298 of the city's population of 60,695.
14. The parallel drawn between Matera and the Holy Land is particularly relevant to Memory Studies. Maurice Halbwachs, father of the field of collective memory, studied the historical use of the concept of the Holy Land to shape and reshape memories over time. He showed how this legendary place was a product of the medieval imagination that was overlain on the terrain of Palestine. See Zelizer (1995: 223) and Halbwachs (1992: 193-235).
15. These big plans have not materialized and some of the news reports of the city's contact with Coppola have been contested as being erroneous (Foschino 2005). Writing for *The New York Times* on November 21, 2010, Gisela Williams, however, reports that Coppola will soon open a hotel in his ancestral village (See "Luxury Transforms Caves and Farms in Italy," page TR9).
16. The controversy was followed in the two local newspapers, *La Nuova Basilicata* and *Il Quotidiano* between April 2 and August 2, 2004.
17. As noted in Maria Pia Di Bella's unpublished response to papers presented at a session of the 2004 American Anthropological Association annual meeting.
18. **Describing the collaborative relationship between the tourism and heritage industries**, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes that: "To compete for tourists, a location must become a destination" (1998:152) and that heritage converts "locations into destinations and tourism [makes] them economically viable as exhibits of themselves" (1998:151).
19. Outward contempt toward busloads of non-spending Japanese tourists brought regularly by a tour operator to Matera on a side trip from the neighboring region of Apulia resulted in negotiations, which included: an agreement with the tour operator to stay in Matera, the foundation of an Italo-Japanese cultural association in Matera, two visits by the Japanese ambassadress to Italy and a much touted Italo-Japanese cultural festival held in Matera in September 2005. With the success of these efforts and the general rise in tourism—including tourism from other Asian countries—the focus on Italo-Japanese relations has declined, and the Italo-Japanese cultural association has folded.

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