

Book Review

Laurajane Smith, Margaret Wetherell and Gary Campbell (eds.), *Emotion, Affective Practices, and the Past in the Present*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, paperback £.29.99, hardback £.110.00, ebook £.15.00, pp. xix+312

Emotion, Affective Practices, and the Past in the Present explores the connections between heritage and emotion and provides the theoretical ground for discussing affective practices while offering a variety of case studies which pragmatically engage with these concepts. The volume begins by acknowledging that emotions have rarely been the centre of attention in researching heritage, even though heritage itself is a multi-faceted concept which is often directly linked to emotion. The authors highlight the crucial role of affect in practices of heritage making and research, arguing that shifting our 'attention to emotion and affect allows us to deepen our understanding of how people develop attachments and commitments to the past, things, beliefs, places, traditions and institutions' (2).

The first section of the book focuses on practices of commemoration as a nexus between heritage and emotion. The section presents a wide range of heritage practices from the museum sector and beyond. In Chapter 2, Johanna Dahlin offers a vivid account of her experience in a search unit looking for human remains of soldiers fallen in the battle for Leningrad (1941-44) with an interesting focus on the embodied nature of this practice and its effect on contemporary understandings of Russian national identity. Museum-based projects are also included, such as Chapter 4, in which Amy McKernan and Julie McLeod consider commemoration practices of World War I in two different Australian museums and the power of affective strategies to destabilize (or reinforce) existing narratives. The chapter urges practitioners to acknowledge the power of emotion in museums as well as the potential of fostering a 'critical pedagogy' (Witcomb 2013) when engaging with historical accounts.

The second section is dedicated to the concept of inclusion/exclusion, for instance in the case of national narratives and identities. Rhiannon Mason, Areti Galani, Katherine Lloyd and Joanne Sayner's case study (Chapter 8), based at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle, UK, engages with the concept of migration (both in historical accounts and in the present), including results from visitor studies and their connections to the scholarship of affect and emotion. The authors effectively contextualize migration in this chapter by reflecting on current events, including, for instance, the humanitarian crisis in Calais and President Trump's newly-introduced immigration policies. Jennifer Robinson (Chapter 9) examines the emotional dimension of a number of problematic history exhibitions in Canadian museums, such as *The Spirit Sings* at the Glenbow Museum. Both Chapter 8 and 9 explore the potential impact of museum exhibitions on individuals and communities, emphasising the complexity of studying and predicting emotional responses. In addition to museum-based case studies, several chapters that are not directly related to museums or art galleries stand out by offering insight into alternative forms of heritage making. In Chapter 7, Martha Augoustinos, Brianne Hastie and Peta Callaghan present an analysis of two political speeches by Australian politicians – then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology speech to Australian Indigenous communities and Brendan Nelson's reply – to explore the use of national imaginary when engaging with a country's own history. Overall, the chapters in Part II present creative and captivating perspectives on the topic of heritage and emotion. However, compared to Part I and III, the overarching concept – 'Belonging and Exclusion' – only loosely connects chapters to each

other, which differ significantly both in themes (tourism, national identity, migration) and subject matter (political speeches, private city tours, museum exhibitions).

The volume's final section centres around the pedagogical aims of heritage institutions and the role of affect and emotion within them. The section opens with Michalinos Zembylas' (Chapter 8) thorough theoretical analysis of 'difficult heritage' and the consequences of emotionally engaging with 'difficult' issues and stories. Zembylas uses concepts from the history of emotion and critical pedagogy to discuss what the roles of curators and museum educators are when engaging with 'difficult heritage'. Daniela Gachago, Vivienne Bozalek and Dick Ng'ambi, in one of the few case studies from outside the Euro-Australian sphere (Chapter 14), provide reflections on a digital storytelling project carried out at a major University of Technology in South Africa. By examining student responses to the project, the chapter explores issues such as white guilt and shame and especially their relation to race, gender and class.

Contributors to this volume engage with heritage debates pragmatically and with an in-depth understanding of key concepts such as critical pedagogy and affective practice (Wetherell 2012). The multifaceted quality of heritage practices is particularly evident in the wide range of subject matters and case studies presented, which include both examples of artefact- or museum-based practices, as well as analyses of more abstract concepts such as national identity and historical imaginaries. Several chapters centre around Australian and New Zealand Indigenous communities, especially in the context of colonial legacy, school history textbooks and national identity. While these authors offer precious insight into Settler-Indigenous relationships, the focus is geographically specific and issues around Indigenous artefacts, repatriation and representation in museums are not discussed.

The volume introduces a significant quantity of concepts from the field of emotion and affect, however the systematic breakdown of terms provides the reader with a solid theoretical base upon which case studies from contributors can be then explored. Scholars and students of heritage and museum studies will find this book useful to understand major discourses around emotional and affective practices, and their links to heritage and museums. Chapters exploring the embodied nature of emotions and the role of artefacts in generating emotional responses will be of interest to researchers of material culture across several disciplines. Museum professionals might be particularly interested in the volume for its detailed case studies and methodologies as well as a clear argumentation of why emotion and affect are so crucial to museum practice. Part III, 'Learning, teaching and engaging', will be particularly useful to museum educators looking for examples of how to integrate emotion and affect practices into their pedagogical approaches.

References

Witcomb, A. (2013) 'Understanding the role of affect in producing a critical pedagogy for history museums' *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 28 (3) 255–271.

Wetherell, M. (2008) *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding*, London: Sage.

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