



# Enlightening Tourism.

## A Pathmaking Journal



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## **BOOK REVIEW:**

*Heritage, Affect and Emotion: Politics, Practices and Infrastructures,*

edited by Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, (2017), Routledge, New York. ISBN-10: 1472454871, £90 (Hardback), 302 pp. 29 black and white illustrations.

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*Heritage, Affect and Emotion: Politics, Practices and Infrastructures*, edited by Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, is the first volume in the series for Critical Studies in Heritage, Emotion and Affect edited by Divya P. Tolia-Kelly and Emma Waterton. This is a timely and significant book that contains much value in this landmark series that recognises and encourages cross-disciplinary contributions in heritage studies in order to stimulate and advance heritage debates. Subsequently, contributions to the series are sought from a variety of disciplines including geographers, historians, archaeologists, sociologists, anthropologists and tourism scholars that engage with the concept and practice of heritage as co-constituted through emotion and affect. This first book provides a much needed focus on relating heritage with the politics of affect, with a critical appreciation that draws attention to how politics of affective registers, such as pain, joy, nostalgia and belonging, influences our engagement with heritage.

As recognised in the opening introduction to the book, the paradigms through which heritage engagement is expressed have witnessed a substantial change with regards to scholarly activity and focus, drawing attention to 'value, power and politics of affect and emotion' as a means by which to understand embodied aspects of heritage experiences and affective relationships with the past (p.1). In my view this book, therefore, successfully critiques affective experiences and explores current advances in theory and thought to better comprehend how heritage is affected. As the editors highlight, the book seeks to 'propel heritage studies away from simpler 'two-dimensional' textual readings' and instead stimulate and engage 'with experience, the sensory realm and the affective materialities and atmospheres of heritage landscapes' (p.1). In other words, the volume seeks to examine 'the process of recognition, understanding and experiencing self at heritage sites' (p.3). With that in mind, contributions are sought from a variety of disciplines and, as such, the book provides novel illustrations and a critical appreciation of affected heritage experiences.

The book is presented in three parts. Part 1 is concerned with memory. The relationship between heritage and the past is intimately related to debates concerning memory (Huysen, 2003) and this section acknowledges the significance of memory in eliciting affects at heritage sites. In Chapter 1 Sather-Wagstaff provides the theoretical basis for both the book and more specifically part 1 of the volume and engages with the new theorization of heritage encounter that focuses on 'human sensorium as polysensory' in understanding heritage construction through 'embodied experiences' (p.14). Sather-Wagstaff goes on to explain that a polysensory approach 'encompasses imagined' 'sensory stimuli' and 'acknowledges the power that acts of oral or written narration have for invoking sensory responses' (p.17). A polysensory approach 'centres on the dynamic relationship between the senses, feeling, emotion, cognition, and memory' (p.18). The significance of this opening chapter, in my view, is that Sather-Wagstaff recognises memory and memories as important stimuli when engaging with and encountering heritage. In the subsequent section memory as affective stimuli is explored as a means by which to recognise the plurality of heritage narrative.

In situating this analysis, Chapters 2-6 focus on specific cases in the museum sector. Whilst a wider array of cases might be more enlightening here, the focus on the museum sector does elicit a number of interesting themes and concluding

thoughts which are applicable to other heritage sites. For example, in Chapter 3 Dittmer and Waterton consider affective experiences found at the Australian War Memorial and, in particular, the relationship between heritage and affective technologies. In their account, memory is four-dimensional where past encounters are enlivened through imagined experiences stimulated by contemporary museum practices and sensory forms of experience. This theme is continued by Cooke and Frieze (Chapter 4) who discuss how the redevelopment of the Jewish Holocaust Centre in Melbourne, to include personal testimonies from Melbourne's Holocaust survivors, resulted in a pedagogy of feeling; a methodology for keeping the affective alive and in contemporary debate. In Chapter 5, Schorch, Waterton and Watson explore the extent to which museum experiences are embodied and interpretive engagements resulting in what they describe as the 'cosmopolitan affect' (p.108), 'an embodied, social practice' (p.109). They suggest that an appreciation of multicultural feeling, expression and tolerance highlights the transformative potential of heritage space as a canopy where cosmopolitan sensibilities emerge, are articulated and understood. In the concluding chapter of this part of the book, Munroe engages in a critical exploration of affective memory, suggesting that affect and emotion facilitate the process of narrative construction through 'lived, felt, thought and experienced' (p.128) co-constituted encounter charged with emotion and dialogue.

Part 2 is entitled 'places' and is comprised of six chapters that considers post-human encounters with heritage places as sites of affective engagements (Chapters 7–12, by Hoskins, Light and Watson, Mains, Munteán, Knudsen and Ifversen, and Yarker respectively). As described by the editors, these chapters focus on 'engagements with heritage places where they become ecologies with agencies, intensities and capacities, and through their agency actively co-create the landscape' (p.7). Similarly to part 1, the authors successfully employ a range of cases to illustrate the theoretical implications of embodied engagements with heritage spaces and places. To single out particular chapters in such a collection of high quality contributions might seem unfair but of particular interest in this section of the book, Light and Watson's chapter (8) explores heritage engagement at a ruined medieval castle. Reflecting on their own experiences of visiting such as heritage site, the authors argue that the castle experience is expressed through a combination of atmospheric affective registers. For Light and Watson, engaging with what they describe as a 'cultural artefact', the castle experience is a representational

'assemblage' encompassing 'discursive and narrative elements' and 'echoes of embodied engagement, affective registers and emotional expression' (p.175). In complete contrast, in Chapter 10 Munteán engages with an account of digital heritage and examines how digital documentary heritage 'engenders affective engagements' (p.215). What is offered here is an evaluation of the potential for technology in facilitating affective engagements with heritage.

The final part of the book, 'practices', includes two chapters which are contributed by heritage practitioners. For Emerick (Chapter 13), conflict and tension between the public and the heritage professional occur as, according to the author, multiple narratives and encounters with heritage sites exist that make these places meaningful and valued. Consequently, the contested nature of these encounters requires a values-based approach to community engagement which is dialogic and embraces expressions of enthusiasm. Heritage professionals should 'write and speak clearly, and distinctly, with the minimum of jargon' (p.273) in order to engage with and understand the multiple narratives and encounters ascribed to heritage sites. In the concluding chapter (14), written in a format which I consider unique and creative, a conversation with the artist Rosanna Raymond regarding affect and heritage and the creation of a practitioner-led heritage space in articulating cultural heritage and values is presented. Whilst thought provoking, this chapter would benefit from some concluding thoughts that draws together the key themes which emerged from the conversation.

To understand the complex relationship between heritage, memory and affect it is apparent that different methods and approaches are required and it is clear from reading this volume that an attempt has been made to address these considerations through contributions of both a theoretical and practical nature. I can only hope to give a flavour of the book in this short review. The originality of the book lies in its contribution to current debate, drawing attention to the politics of affect and its relationship with heritage. This is a well-constructed, theoretically based volume, with illustrative examples and contributions of an interdisciplinary nature. It has an international approach and, with contributions sought from academics and practitioners, results in an accessible and insightful volume. This is, and in my view will remain so for a considerable length of time, a valuable book for academics, practitioners and students, with the necessary breadth and depth of coverage and

contemporary focus, with insightful discussions and conclusions, ensuring it will meet the needs of these various audiences in a stimulating and energetic manner.

The significance of this book is greater still. The unexpected passing of Steve Watson in January 2016 is a profound loss to the field of heritage studies and indeed academia. Steve had a considerable impact on his field, and with frequent collaborator Emma Waterton (2010a; 2010b; 2014; 2015), continues to shape and influence theoretical thought and debate in this area. It seems only just that this series, one considered a landmark in re-shaping and advancing the discipline, is dedicated to Steve, a pioneer of the study of heritage.

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