

Emotional Heritage: a theoretical investigation and it's vulnerable nature

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Abstract—Heritage serves as the foundation of human identity, encapsulating the values, traditions, and artifacts that define civilizations across generations. It not only shapes our understanding of history but also influences contemporary power structures and social interventions. Graeber and Wengrow critically examine the historical evolution of societal organization, arguing that hierarchy, domination, and self-interest have historically structured human societies. However, they contend that collective learning has led societies to regulate these tendencies, channeling them into legally defined domains such as the economy while restricting them elsewhere.

This exclusionary framework fosters the construction of identity through self-imposed limitations, shaping individual and collective narratives within the historical continuum. The relationship between identity and heritage is fluid, as emotions mediate the association and disassociation of individuals from historical hierarchies. Kingston underscores this fluidity by challenging rigid distinctions between "historic" and "unhistoric" groups, instead proposing a continuous spectrum of historical interaction.

Despite this dynamic interplay, heritage studies have often overlooked the role of individual interactions in shaping historical consciousness. Lipp and Krempel illustrate this in the context of petitions during the Revolution, emphasizing their reliance on social networks, cultural organizations, and long-term ideological formations. These pre-revolutionary discussions fostered a collective understanding that ultimately influenced political action.

This article critically examines heritage through the lens of emotional engagement, cultural dilemmas.

Keywords: Heritage, Emotion, History, Culture, Historiography

I. INTRODUCTION

Heritage constitutes the essence of our identity, reflecting the narrative of human civilization through the lens of values, traditions, and artifacts passed down through generations but it also defines where we are in terms of evolution of power structure. It informs not only our understanding of history but also shapes our present and future societal structures to the extent that we engage in social interventions accordingly. Graeber and Wengrow has intrinsically sketched the understanding of underlying sense of past from starting to the primordial symbol of God to the inheritance of traditional understanding that teaches us that "Hierarchy and domination, and cynical self-interest, have always been the basis of human society. It's just that, collectively, we have learned it's to our advantage to prioritize our long-term interests over our short-term instincts; or, better, to create laws that force us to confine our worst impulses to socially useful areas like the economy, while forbidding them everywhere else."¹

This everywhere else is where the others identity shapes and transforms to radical discourse of self limitations. While we question the perpetual formation of the past, we need to investigate the equivalence between person and its connection to the evolutionary hierarchy of time where identity associates and disassociates itself on the condition of emotions. These emotional interjections create and recreate narrative to the existing facts to find the individual in that social spectrum of the past. Kingston has marked this tendency as the "spectrum of historic characters no longer seemed tenable . There was no longer any clear - cut line to be drawn between " historic " and " unhistoric " groups of people , but instead a continuous"². This continuous is a characteristic of interaction between individuals and the process which has not been taken in account in context of Heritage studies. There is a predominant exchange of information that allows us to recognise the past. Lipp and krempel has narrated this design of interaction in the context of petition where "Petitions during the Revolu- tion were usually based on individual interaction and social contact, and they relied on indigenous networks and cultural organizations which contributed to the mobilization. They were also based

on a long-term process of consensus formation during the Vormärz, when most of the liberal ideologies and goals were formulated, the legitimation of the bureaucratic monarchical state was questioned, and nationalist ideas were developed. The discussions which took place in the pre-Revolutionary period produced a collective definition of the situation which led to activities.”³

This article explores the rich tapestry of heritage by examining these tangible and intangible facets of emotional underpinnings, cultural dilemmas, and the relentless evolution of human expression in relation to the past.

In search of common and the unfortunate distinction

While first two decades of twentieth century is marked by the intercept between the social and individual from where the modernization took its new discourse in terms of appropriating power, many traditional scholarship has argued that it was due to the disengagement of settlement and revolutionary powers unleashing ethos that serves certain groups with their common interest. These were followed by individual will of the leader of the oppressed and further strengthened by the support of people with distinguished observations about freedom and rights. Mozaffari and Westbrook stated this trajectory in their book by quoting “Many of these countries have emerged from a colonial era and are searching for an identity of their own. This identity is at the same time specific and regional, yet it must continue to share a common civilization and history...”⁴ In particular the colonial counterpart has tried to indicate certain characteristics beside traditional legacy to subsidize the cultural navigation towards the ruler's inheritance rather than what the land originally evolved from. In the course of history it has been overlooked but accepted as an effective amalgamation of two cultures whereas there was always a prevalence between each other which concluded in defining the blurb of the identity. An inner resistance was always there while delivering the equivalence as Hall has stated that “They bear upon them the traces of the particular cultures, traditions, languages and histories by which they were shaped. The difference is that they are not and will never be unified in the old sense, because they are irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, belong at one and the same time to several 'homes’”⁵.

II. HERITAGE AND EMOTION

Heritage can generally be divided into two main types: tangible heritage and intangible heritage. Each type contributes distinctly to the formation of cultural identity and the conservation of history.

Tangible heritage includes physical objects and historic locations that reflect the achievements and ways of life of earlier generations. Notable examples are structures such as the Pyramids of Giza, the Colosseum in Rome, and a myriad of temples, churches, and mosques around the globe, all of which narrate stories of architectural brilliance and cultural importance. Artwork like paintings, sculptures, and crafts that showcase the artistic traditions of various cultures act as repositories of history. Landscapes that illustrate the connection between communities and their environment provides a direct link to history, enabling settlements to recognize their cultural foundations. As we have started earlier that these are interconnected with individual values and acceptance which is continuous activity to be recognized as “material heritage is thus expressed in a coalescence of haptic moments, smells, shadow, light and atmosphere together with feelings of achievement, risk and foreboding. From castles to coasts, we encounter benign representations...”⁶.

On the other hand, intangible heritage consists of the customs, symbols, expressions, and knowledge that various communities value and hold dear. This includes traditional folklore, storytelling, rituals, and festivals that uphold cultural practices, as well as dialects and languages that convey distinct perspectives and encapsulate the core of cultures. Forms of art such as music, dance, and theater represent the lived experiences and histories of a community. Intangible heritage is especially critical in today's interconnected world, where many traditional customs face the threat of vanishing. Its preservation promotes cultural continuity and reinforces community ties, emphasizing the importance of expressions that resonate deeply on emotional and spiritual levels. In another context a person with his “feeling of identity or common behavior, as well as in activities and territory, Individuals can belong to more than one community”⁷ makes him unsettled in the formation of identifying the past and relation to its inception of historical identity. So, in a way his current coherent social space is not associated with the prevalent norms of social heritage.

Here Smith argued that heritage is a performative space and continuous because in the context of material heritage, people who found themselves not associated with that space or not equivalent with their past value system make that heritage lose its subjectivity. Thus scholarship has argued to call it a critical heritage on various other relevant conditions.

In a world where the past seems to dictate our futures, few concepts are as multifaceted yet underexplored as emotional heritage. This heritage, a tapestry woven from the threads of our individual feelings and experiences, stands in stark contrast to the broader strokes of collective memory. While society prides itself on its evolution, we often overlook the intricate emotional legacies that shape our identities. However, in our eager quest for societal progress, we hypocritically dismiss these nuanced emotional ties, opting instead for a shallow understanding of history devoid of emotion and meaning. Smith has coined these trajectory as “performance of heritage-making”⁸ where an individual experiencing the past through tangible and intangible heritage creates an emotional narrative that brings his own memories and experience to the process and thus transfers it to others which can be defined as emotional heritage.

III. THE INDIVIDUAL'S EMOTIONAL HERITAGE

Emotional heritage can be understood as the emotional experiences, familial connections, and personal traumas that define an individual's makeup. This heritage is not merely a collection of memories but a fundamental part of our identity, influencing our decisions, relationships, and reactions to societal changes. Each person's emotional landscape is a rich archive, filled with joys, sorrows, triumphs, and failures. Cameron and Bondi have detailedly investigated these processes where they state that “these emotionally mediated senses and relations that compose the fabric of our existence, that make our lives meaningful, or, in their absence, hopeless. Emotions are vital (living) aspects of who we are and of our situational engagement within the world, they compose, decompose, and recompose the geographies of our lives. And even Descartes recognized this to some extent. After all, in his last book, fittingly entitled *The Passions of the Soul*, he reflected upon what was lacking at the centre of his divisive philosophy, the emotional no-man's land in and between the subjective and objective worlds he had broken apart. Here he recognizes that even his rationalistic philosophy is, after all, motivated by desire, a desire for knowledge and that this passion is, in its turn, sparked into being by another, by wonder. "Wonder", says Descartes (1952, 308), 'is a sudden surprise of the soul causing it to consider with attention those objects which seem to it novel and unexpected". And while Descartes (1952) argues an excess of wonder is harmful and must be suppressed having no remedy 'other than acquiring the requisite amount of knowledge' this is, nonetheless, an explicit admission that the 'sweetest pleasures of this life we feel only because we are not pure mind but hybrid beings, profoundly passionate creatures also composed of flesh and blood. Contra Cartesian dualism we are always already emotionally engaged beings-in-the-world”⁹.

In contrast to emotional heritage, collective memory refers to the shared memories of a group that shape societal norms and values. While collective memory is often celebrated for its role in fostering unity and cultural identity, it can easily overshadow the emotional experiences of the individual. The hypocrisy lies in the fact that society often points to collective memories—great battles won, significant social movements—or narratives of “us” and “them,” ignoring that these supposedly unifying stories are often branded with the scars of personal legacies. And thus Schonfeldt in his book have argued about the individual dissociates himself with the narrative of heritage by making his own in their way - “theory displays an equally strong concern for the interrelations between wounds and words, between wounds and signification. These interrelations, however, have been theorized in significantly different ways. Caruth's highly influential publications. *Trauma and Unclaimed Experience* initiated a paradigm of theorizing trauma marked by scepticism towards narration. Caruth allows for the possibility of trauma being transformed into a narrative that tries to make sense of the incomprehensible but claims that such a narrative is likely to distort the "truth" of trauma and weaken its impact: [T]he transformation of the trauma into a narrative memory that allows the story to be verbalized and communicated, to be integrated into one's own, and other's knowledge of the past, may lose both the precision and the force that characterizes traumatic recall”¹⁰.

To go further, Individuals who feel disconnected from their emotional roots may experience feelings of alienation and disempowerment. Yet, in our relentless pursuit of societal advancement, we often chastise those who are unable to move forward without addressing the scars of their past. The hypocrisy is stark; we celebrate collective achievements while routinely undermining the very emotions that fuel personal resilience.

IV. INCLUSIVE NATURE OF MEMORIES, ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND CHANGE

The historicization of emotional experiences is selective. While marginalized narratives may slip through or institutionally overlooked, popular history tells us stories that reinforce a grand narrative of progress. The hypocrisy lies in our so-called inclusivity; we proclaim allegiance to diverse perspectives, yet we often fail to integrate the emotional legacies of those on society's fringes into the mainstream dialogue. The basic argument is how a heritage which is continuous in making can find its relevance and put an equivalence with narrative to existing social life and culture of the individual so that it can engage with collective memory. The process is vertical in institutions like museums where it's upside down to individual from collective history and compels them to find their identity in the broad spectrum. Whereas there is an ignored horizontal discourse of individual narrative transferred from each point to another by masking heritage to its personal anecdotes and giving it a collective interpretation to the existing artifacts and objects from the past.

For true evolution to occur, there must be an acknowledgment of emotional heritage alongside collective memory. Recognizing the stories of individuals—whether they be tales of loss, love, struggle, or triumph—enriches our understanding of societal evolution. But here we stand, at the crossroads of progress, wanting to hear the voices but hesitant to include the weight of their emotional histories. Reddy in his book stated this problem as “Neither emotional constructionists nor psychocultural anthropologists attempt to deal with historical change. Even when looking at the aftereffects of revolution or dictatorship, the latter group makes no effort to see how culturally specific emotional factors may have lain at the origin of historical change or may have served to heighten the likelihood of crisis or repression. Emotions are affected by history, but are not part of history”¹¹.

V. SOCIETAL EVOLUTION: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Societal evolution, characterized by shifts in values, norms, and structures, often appears as a linear progression toward a better future by often excluding the individual space. However, this evolution can be selective, favoring memories and narratives that are palatable to the collective, often at the expense of enriching individual emotional narrative.

In this context the idea of emotional heritage encompasses the deep feelings, memories, and values associated with shared experiences. Not only his emotional aspect is crucial in shaping societies through time but how the present spectrum looks at its past and recognise it is equally important the interpret historical narrative further

Emotional heritage illustrates how communities relate to their history, affecting current identities and the resilience of the community. It includes collective memories of both joyful and sorrowful events that shape social narratives. For example, the commemorative activities related to the World Wars or civil rights movements evoke a sense of shared identity and responsibility. Storytelling has long been a vital means of passing down ancestral wisdom and moral teachings, fostering a deep sense of belonging and continuity within communities. Through the rich tapestry of narratives, cultures convey their histories, values, and ethical lessons, allowing individuals to connect with their heritage and understand their place within the larger narrative of their society. These stories, often shared in communal settings, strengthen interpersonal bonds and reinforce a shared identity, creating a collective memory that transcends generations. In this way, storytelling not only preserves cultural traditions but also nurtures a sense of responsibility toward future generations, ensuring that the lessons of the past remain alive and relevant.

VI. SOCIO-CULTURAL DILEMMAS SURROUNDING HERITAGE

The preservation and interpretation of heritage often give rise to socio-cultural dilemmas, particularly as societies evolve.

Preserving heritage starts with the recognition that cultures are not static but rather dynamic and evolving. This raises questions such as balancing contemporary values with the desire to maintain historical integrity poses a significant challenge. For example, urban settlements with its value system often tries to ignore or foster oppressive nature to the interpretation of rural history and thus a new kind of ethnocentrism offers the past and identity of native people. This might not be the case for the rural heritage sites where it is maintained from the post of conservation and evidence. Interpretation often occurs from a sense of crisis when one is failed to relate and thus makes space by purging alterations to the existing narrative.

The recreation and commercialization of cultural practices can lead to ethical issues, especially when dominant cultures exploit marginalized ones for profit or aesthetic purposes.

VII. INDIVIDUAL CREATIVE LIBERTY, EMOTION, AND THE RECREATION OF COLLECTIVE HISTORY

In a world increasingly driven by individualism, the concept of creative liberty takes on a profound significance, especially when intertwined with emotions and the retelling of collective histories. On the surface, it appears that individuals are empowered to express themselves freely, allowing for unique interpretations of historical narratives. Yet, this very freedom often drips with hypocrisy. While we champion individual creative liberty, we simultaneously impose collective values and expectations that, ironically, shape those very expressions.

Creative liberty is often celebrated as the embodiment of personal expression. These personal expressions are navigated by social experience confined and defined by power structure of low and high culture group where the interaction happens on the basis of hierarchy. These cultural group dominantly recreates the narrative and thus alternates the space with its understanding with past.

The question arises: if our creative liberties are bound by what we fear, what we appropriate, and how we individually experience emotions, can we truly consider our creations as solely our own?

Different emotions can lead to selective recounting of history. For instance, the mourning for a lost culture can overshadow the narratives of resilience and adaptation. But in the realm of making history accessible, emotions may be exaggerated to elicit stronger reactions in the context of what is truth and whether the past is being distorted in the liberated space of individual or collective emotional oppression. Silko in his narrative portrayed this oppression- "The old man shook his head. "That is the trickery of the witchcraft," he said. "They want us to believe all evil resides with white people. Then we will look no further to see what is really happening. They want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction. But white people are only tools that the witchery manipulates; and I tell you, we can deal with white people, with their machines and their beliefs. We can because we invented white people; it was Indian witchery that made white people in the first place."¹²

VIII. THE CONFLICT OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND PERSONAL EXPRESSION

While history has its collective heritage anecdoted by individual narrative can often render to manipulation by distorting identity which leads to misinterpretation of heritage. At its core, the recreation of collective history is a communal act; however, individual expression often battles the collective memory. This conflict manifests in various ways like Individuals may modify historical facts to suit their narratives, creating an alternative "truth." This is what the high culture group denote as others in the periphery of social interventions.

This narrative freedom questions the reliability of collective memory—how can there be a shared history if everyone acknowledges a different interpretation? Likewise, individuals from marginalized communities often seek to reclaim their histories, challenging dominant narratives. While this can empower the individual, it also introduces a struggle where conflicting truths collide, complicating the collective memory. The ensuing discourse surrounding these recreated histories often spirals into heated debates. The hypocrisy lies in the fact that while society claims to embrace diverse histories, discomfort with certain narratives can stifle the very discussions we advocate for- "people-centred conservation is providing new ways of thinking about historic places, the reasons why they matter to individuals and collectives and how this knowledge can influence the protection of the past. As Wells writes, 'People-centred and human-centred heritage conservation seeks to balance practice between people and building and landscape fabric'¹³.

IX. CONCLUSION

Madgin and Lesh has beautifully narrated the relevance of what we are denoting as emotion heritage as - "Neil A. Silberman (2015) writes that the 'spirit of place genius loci has its origins in Roman beliefs and rituals, but that in the twenty-first century, historic places are now conceived of more broadly. Even while re-constituting the tangible/intangible binary, this broader definition is nevertheless supported in the Declaration, where 'spirit of place' is defined as - the tangible (buildings, sites, landscapes, routes, objects) and the intangible elements (memories, narratives, written documents, rituals, festivals, traditional

knowledge, values, textures, colors, odors, etc.), that is to say the physical and the spiritual elements that give meaning, value, emotion and mystery to place.”¹⁴

Heritage, with its long back binary of tangible and intangible dimensions, plays a critical role in shaping societal values and identities. Its emotional resonance underpins the evolution of human culture, while the socio-cultural dilemmas surrounding it call for a delicate equivalence between preservation and adaptation. By embracing creative liberty and reimagining history, we enrich our understanding of the past while ensuring heritage remains a vital part of our collective human experience.

Experience that are not static and flows from individual to collective and vis-a-vis to put and understanding about past and it's vulnerable legacy that are still present to provide necessary evidence for he narrative. But what is more complicated is the contradictions between fact and what a population want to believe about their past. To what extent we can indulge interpretation of heritage and how it can protest the essence of preserving not only the tangible and intangible but the emotional Heritage which is in continuous making.

Emotional heritage is a profound aspect of individual identity that challenges the superficial narratives we often tell ourselves about progress. While societal evolution advocates collective memory, it hypocritically negates the vulnerable ethnocentric emotional stories of individual that contribute to a deeper understanding of our shared history .

Inclusion of diverse memories by recognising the existing facts of history which is believed to be true based on evidence can have different interpretations which enables heritage to free itself from confined past and walk along the spectrum of civilizational progress of understanding memories. The question is, are we ready to confront this uncomfortable truth and embrace the transformation it demands?

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