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Intimacy and Emotion

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If as the anthropologist Donna Birdwell-Pheasant contends, 'place' is a location that is named and holds the 'symbolic and imaginary investments of the population', then all towns and cities are born of emotion.¹ The process of identifying a location by a particular appellation, of determining its borders and boundaries, and then, and perhaps most importantly, in making decisions about who can live, work, hold civic rights and exercise duties, and call themselves 'of the town', requires human beings to make particular emotional investments in physical and imaginary space. And importantly, once such decisions are made, the towns and cities people make are deeply implicated in shaping the emotional lives of their inhabitants and those that move through them. Such shaping is, of course, like so much of life, informed not just by physical environment, but by the characteristics held and attributed to the individual being produced through space – whether they are male or female, rich or poor, indweller or migrant, black or white, gay or straight, adult or child. This Section of the Handbook seeks to interrogate what difference emotion makes to a gendered history of urban experience. Across six chapters, authors explore the different ways that emotions can be theorised and applied to urban histories and, through that theorisation, enable us to understand the important role that emotions have played and continue to play in human experience.

That emotion is not only something can be studied, but which should be understood to play a critical role in historical change is increasingly recognised by scholars. Whilst early work emphasised emotion as a biological experience that was labelled, contextualised and judged differently depending on culture and historical moment, scholars now recognise that the biological, 'felt', experience of emotion can differ across cultures. The body, as well as ideas about it, is subject to culture. Emotion is now understood as something that is produced through social relationships within particular spaces, and indeed can be articulated as form of practice or performance – a model of emotion that emphasises human agency,

society and dialectic exchange in the production of feeling.² Performed emotions are, like Judith Butler's construction of gender, something that is taught from birth, can feel 'natural' or innate to the performer, and are often performed unthinkingly in response to stimuli, but are nonetheless products of culture.³ As a result, the location of emotion – where people feel things, both bodily and geographically – can be understood to play a significant role in its making and in the significance people place upon it; alternatively, how people feel within particular places informs the meaning given to them – are they safe or scary, comfortable or distressing, stressful or peaceful. Emotions are increasingly understood as playing a significant role in human society, a necessary variable to be taken into account when making sense of the past.

Given this, historians have begun to reflect and theorise the ways that emotion shapes experience. Within the context of urban history, two approaches have been particularly significant. The first is the work being produced under the umbrella of 'emotional geographies'. Such work seeks to particularly interrogate the relationship between landscape, space, place and human emotions. Scholars have explored the way that urban-planning can shape emotion and behaviour, encouraging people to feel harried, stressed, or crowded, or alternatively, calm, peaceful and reflective. It has considered how these emotion-scapes inform the behaviours that go on there, whether that is violence, road-rage, or even compassion.⁴ Similarly, in this volume, Jeff Meek demonstrates the ways that for mid-twentieth-century gay and queer men, some of Scotland's urban spaces enabled sexual thrills, tinged with fear, anxiety and occasionally dislocation, as they sought sex in public places; conversely, some urban private spaces could provide 'emotional refuges', where such men found safety, comfort and love. The emotional experiences of these men were profoundly connected to the contours of urban-space and the meanings attached to them, and shaped by their gender, which provided them with spaces – such as the public toilet – that were not available to lesbian and queer women. Moreover, the urban – with large populations and the possibilities of anonymity – enabled some of these men to find a sexual liberty that was not possible in their small home towns or countryside, where they were

'known' and where the opportunities to form socially and legally-illicit attachments were more difficult.

The impact of the urban on incomers has been particularly interrogated. Why is that some cities, such as eighteenth-century London, cause such profound dislocation for newcomers, who felt out of place on entering? Why do cities produce important attachments and a sense of belonging for some inhabitants and not others; and how do new migrants come to feel at home in such locations?⁵ As Mark Steinberg demonstrates in chapter 29, the Russian capital cities of the early twentieth century were not only places of modernity, pleasure and hedonism, but profound dislocation and despair, particularly for young women from the countryside who ultimately took their own lives. Moving into new urban anonymity did not always liberate. As this suggests, the role of emotion in histories of mobility, migration and settlement is increasingly recognised as significant, whilst the importance of trust to accessing resources is highlighted, particularly in the lives of very mobile migrants, like soldiers, sailors and vagrants.⁶ Such research highlights the significance of the formation of emotional bonds – connections between people – to social integration, perhaps especially in eras where people relied heavily on credit to survive.⁷ Given this, the role of emotion, notably feelings of belonging, safety and security, to the physical and mental health of urban inhabitants has been highlighted, with social and economic marginality playing a significant role in a range of health, educational and economic outcomes.⁸

Such emotional geographies are deeply inflected by gender, race and other facets of identity. The ways that different bodies are interpreted in the same physical spaces has been shown to have different emotional impacts on those bodies, and vice versa. For example, as Barclay demonstrates in Section 2, women's movements through cities were not only more restricted than for men (reflecting on their moral character), but held different meanings depending on the time of day. In such a context, we might expect that women would not only feel less secure in urban spaces, particularly when 'out of place', but also perhaps experience heightened levels of fear and anxiety. Sonya Lipsett-Rivera conversely demonstrates the emotional possibilities of the urban setting for boys, trained in the rigours

of emotional discipline and control by their families. Outside of the home and workplace however, the streets, where boys of all ages came to play, socialise, watch parades and participate in urban life, could provide opportunities for emotional excess, rebellion and carnival. The streets provided an opportunity to resist and contest the 'spatial control' of the home, as Doreen Massey described it, suggestive of possibility and opportunities for the formation of independent identities.⁹ Their emotional freedoms, of course, were a privilege of their gender (girls' movements were typically more restricted) and perhaps also their youth, with the practice of emotional control a more significant concern for the parents and employers such boys would eventually become.

Scholarship has also demonstrated the ways that emotion is an important constituent of space, in a Lefebvrian sense (explored in more detail in Section 2), where space is both constituted by and produces social relationships.¹⁰ Heikki Lempa's chapter on nineteenth-century German spas are perhaps a classic example, as sites that were intentionally designed to produce particular emotions, but equally required such performances from those who visited. Such spas disciplined spa-goers through ritualised routines, designed to instil calm, peace, and pleasure, in contradistinction to the harried and stressful urban world beyond the spa boundaries. Spas were also sites that enabled sociability and interaction between spa-goers of different genders and backgrounds, the formation of a democratic ethos at least amongst the privileged. Peasants, of course, were expected not to disturb this world with their visible presence. The Spa produced and was itself produced through these emotional expectations and their active performances, setting itself as distinct from other urban spaces. It can perhaps be contrasted with Steinberg's Russian capitals, where crisis, despair and hedonism disrupted and disturbed, producing a sense of contested social relations and anxious lives.

As well as 'emotional geographies', the concept of the 'emotional community' has held particular resonance for urban historians. First, articulated by Barbara Rosenwein, the emotional community is a group with its own particular 'norms of emotional valuation and expression', that is which shares a consensus of what emotions exist, how they are

performed and their social significance (are they 'negative' or 'positive', productive or destructive).¹¹ Importantly, for Rosenwein, emotions are key to group formation, determining who is part of the group, who is not, and who sits beyond it. This model has been particularly fruitful for urban historians who seek to understand how cities determine who belongs, who does not, how such decisions are made, and what relationships people should have within it. As Susan Broomhall demonstrates in chapter 26, rich and poor were brought together as a single community within French cities, by shared expectations around charitable giving to neighbours and understandings of belonging. The poor were integrated into cities through being recognised by systems of poor relief, and by neighbours who vouched for their poor neighbours' entitlements. Yet, that is not to say there was no conflict.

Authorities' desires to regularise alms-giving and move it into institutions was challenged by longer-standing beliefs around the importance of personal giving and the emotional pull that the poor placed on the heart-strings of the city's wealthier inhabitants. Yet, city authorities were not above using emotional rhetoric themselves, placing 'worthy' middle-class women to stand in place of the poor outside churches or when collecting donations. Such choices enabled charity that was produced through emotional bonds of obligation between people (but interestingly not between people and institutions), without the disorderly giving they associated with the poor doing this themselves. Moreover, this was an emotional community where emotional expectations and feelings were shaped by gender. On one hand, poor women were more likely to receive poor relief and to be seen as 'deserving' of such charity; on the other, middle-class women were placed in charge of collecting donations for the poor, perhaps at least in part because women were associated with virtuous giving. Here what emotions – charity and obligation – city inhabitants should have towards their poor were informed by the gender of the recipient, whilst the locations of poor across cities demarcated the meanings attached to particular spaces, creating a gendered emotional landscape.

Conversely, emotions could become implicated in social discipline within emotional communities, as groups which regulated appropriate emotions and determined where and

how they should be expressed. Merridee Bailey's chapter looks at apprentice-merchant disputes in late medieval London and the ways that both parties drew on emotion in their making of urban behavioural standards. Both sets of men used emotional rhetoric in their petitions to the court, hoping at least to engage the sympathies of decision-makers and their performance is suggestive of a shared expectation around how such rhetoric should work to persuade. Yet, the stories such men told were also stories of emotional practices; employers who showed anger and such excessive discipline towards their wards and unruly apprentices who did not appropriately restrain their desires. In coming to court, these men drew on a wider set of expectations around appropriate emotions amongst the merchant classes in late medieval London and sought to demonstrate how their use of such emotions placed them within the orderly community, and others beyond its boundaries. Emotion became implicated in creating spaces of containment and bodily control over others and in determining the boundaries of community. As such, emotion informed moral codes and social order. Such disciplining is perhaps usefully contrasted with Meek's cities as a sites of emotional liberty. The city may provide emotional opportunities for some incomers, but they also required inhabitants to learn new codes that shaped and constrained emotional opportunities in particular ways. As Steinberg suggests in his chapter on early twentieth-century Russia, some people found this easier than others and some socio-temporal contexts provided more space for such opportunities.

Across this Section, there is a strong sense of the importance of the ways that people performed, interpreted and imagined their emotional worlds to the making of urban place. Steinberg's emotional dramas were played out in the writings of journalist, Olga Gridina, whose imagining of urban Russia as site of moral breakdown and despair was inflected in how she interpreted the behaviours of those she wrote about. Meek highlights how the emotional refuges queer men made in Scottish cities were always fragile in a context where homosexuality was a criminal offence; the boundaries of such community always at risk of containment from police or a hostile public. Bailey and Broomhall demonstrate the desire of populations to make meaning out of emotion and inscribe it on their urban landscapes, to

use their interpretation of emotion to determine the moral boundaries and acceptable behaviours within their urban communities. Within these histories, emotion becomes a site of social practice, with a felt or bodily dimension. Emotions become active within these urban histories, playing a significant role in the making of urban space and a necessary part of the telling of urban history.

¹ Donna Birdwell-Pheasant, 'The Home 'Place': Center and Periphery in Irish House and Family Systems,' in *House Life: Space, Place and Family in Europe*, ed. Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 105–32.

² Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is that What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory* 51 (2012): 190-220; Katie Barclay, 'Space,' in *Early Modern Emotions: an Introduction*, ed. Susan Broomhall (London: Routledge, 2016).

³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 181-90; Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose, 'Taking Butler Elsewhere: Performativities, Spatialities, and Subjectivities,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18 (2000): 433-52.

⁴ *Emotional Geographies*, ed. Joyce Davidson and Mick Smith (Farham: Ashgate, 2007); Nicholas Kenny, 'Emotions and City Life,' *Urban History Review* 42 (2014): 5-7; Peter Kraftl, 'Beyond "Voice", Beyond "Agency", Beyond "Politics"? Hybrid Childhoods and Some Critical Reflections on Children's Emotional Geographies', *Emotion, Space and Society* 9 (2013): 13-23; Jelle Haemers, 'A Moody Community? Emotion and Ritual in Late Medieval Urban Revolts', in *Emotion in the Heart of the City (14th-16th Century)*, ed. Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardins and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 63-81.

⁵ Maurizio Marinelli and Francesco Ricatti, 'Emotional Geographies of the Uncanny: Reinterpreting Italian Transnational Spaces,' *Cultural Studies Review* 19 (2013): 5-18; Ilaria Vanni, 'Oggetti Spaesati, Unhomely Belongings: Objects, Migrations and Cultural

Apocalypses,' *Cultural Studies Review* 19 (2013): 150-74; Laura Gowing, "The Freedom of the Streets": Women and Social Place, 1560-1640,' in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*, ed. Paul Griffiths and Mark Jenner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000): 130-53.

⁶ Katie Barclay, 'Marginal Households and their Emotions: the 'Kept Mistress' in Enlightenment Edinburgh,' in *Spaces for Feeling: Emotions and Sociabilities in Britain, 1650-1850*, ed. Susan Broomhall (London: Routledge, 2015), 95-11; K.D.M. Snell, 'Belonging and Community: Understandings of "Home" and "Friends" among the English Poor, 1750-1850,' *Economic History Review* 65 (2012): 1-25.

⁷ Craig Muldrew, 'Interpreting the Market: The Ethics of Credit and Community Relations in Early Modern England,' *Social History* 18 (1993): 163-83.

⁸ Barclay, 'Marginal Households'.

⁹ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994); Daphne Spain, 'Gendered Spaces and Women's Status,' *Sociological Theory* 11 (1993): 137-51.

¹⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Wiley, 1991).

¹¹ Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Barbara Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions,' *Passions in Context* 1 (2010): 1-32.