Emotions

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WE owe much of our present-day understanding of the emotions to the Victorians and the remarkable self-scrutiny that they exercised in seeking to understand the nature and source of emotions. The Scottish philosopher, Alexander Bain, captures the dynamism of this field of study when, in a preface to the second edition of his *The Emotions and the Will* (1865), he notes that he has "recast" his chapter on emotion, further commenting that "the deriving of emotion from sensation, according to general laws of the mind, has rendered it possible to define and classify the emotions more precisely."[1]

Victorian emotions were as diverse and complicated as our own, and as Rachel Ablow has helpfully remarked, "the emotions continued to function as a central epistemological tool throughout the era," defining boundaries, justifying exclusions, accounting for taste, and driving change.[2] At times Victorian emotions can seem remote, a difference that Jenny Hartley captures superbly when she discusses her students' negative reactions to sentimental Dickensian prose and the transformative experience of reading the words aloud, as a Victorian reader would have done.[3] Words that seemed mawkish on the page became vivid with feeling and offer important insights into how we might understand what the emotions theorist Monique Scheer has termed "emotions as practice."[4] Hartley's example demonstrates that Victorian emotions can be retrieved and understood, and that doing so can offer valuable insights into the period's literature, culture, and society. Furthermore, we can deepen our understanding of the nineteenth-century emotional landscape by seeking to understand emotional impulses that spurred the Victorians to action.

One understudied aspect of Victorian emotional life is the society's affective attitudes towards a swiftly changing and expanding environment. Writing about environmental change is, whether we like it or not, an emotional process, just as it was for the Victorians. Today, the use of the word "environment" often signals concerns surrounding the destruction of the natural world, extinction, and climate change, although for the Victorians the term was more capacious, with its usage extending to "surroundings" of any kind, rather than specifically rural spaces. The Victorians were deeply aware of accelerating ecological change, in terms of the impact of industrialism on the world around

them, as well as through travel, which—as it became easier—opened up new and fascinating places to explore and inhabit.

Writing in 2011, John Parham, who has been a leading figure in Victorian ecocriticism, laid out four important reasons for studying Victorian ecology. Parham notes that while Romanticists have been quick to engage with the possibilities that ecocriticism revealed, Victorian scholars have been more hesitant.[5] His four categories encompass scientific developments of the period, relations between humans and non-human others, Victorian political economy's impact on the environment (including the rise of activism and "green politics" at the end of the nineteenth century), along with a need to examine the alarm and bewilderment accompanying the extraordinary number of ecological changes. As Parham expresses it, "the utility of 'Victorian ecology' resides in considering the multiplicity of ways—effective or otherwise—in which Victorian literary figures negotiated these dichotomies and, in turn, the complexity intrinsic to ecological thought."[6]

Implicitly intertwined with each of Parham's categories is the issue of emotion. The Victorians experienced strongly affective responses to environments, whether through their wonder as they learned of the difference of Britain's expanding colonial holdings, or through the misery caused by the pollution and urban overcrowding that were byproducts of industrialism. Philip Steer has convincingly argued for reading industrial novels as climate change works, and his assertion of the "strange and troubled kind of intimacy between our own moment of climate change and nineteenth-century Britain" reveals some of the affective connections experienced by critical readers who see parallels between our present moment of ecological catastrophe, and the varied forms of climatic alteration experienced by the Victorians.[7]

Alexa Weik von Mossner has helpfully characterized affective reactions to the environment as a type of twofold embodiment. She asserts provocatively that, "our minds are both embodied (in a physical body) and embedded (in a physical environment), not only when we interact with the real world but also in our engagement with imaginary worlds."[8] We might extend her parameters a little further to think about transhistorical comparisons, connecting our present ecological dilemma to that of the past, while attempting to remain conscious of our cultural, temporal, and physical embeddedness.

To engage with Victorian emotions surrounding the environment is for some a quest to locate and understand a potential beginning point for the Anthropocene.[9] Through examining a text like Anthony Trollope's

two-volume travelogue, *Australia and New Zealand* (1873), we not only begin to see Trollope's own conflicting emotions when faced with the vastness and difference of Australia (and his reactions range from awe at its natural resources to contempt for what he perceives as the docility of its native wildlife), the author also provides us with an often unwitting first-hand account of the deleterious effects of northern hemisphere ventures like pastoralization. He charts the damage caused by deforestation (a subject he revisits with some passion in his 1874 novella, *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil*), while also demonstrating the destructive impact of importing European livestock to the colony. There are many places within the travelogue where Trollope carefully analyzes his own emotional state.[10] But it is also interesting to consider the role of hindsight in informing readerly affects provoked by the work.

One of the heartbreaking aspects of working on the Victorian environment is to see how little has changed since the nineteenth century, as the need for sustainability competes with the idea of the world as a "resource" ripe for plunder. We might look to the fog pervading Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852–53) or the "unparliamentary" smoke of Gaskell's *North and South* (1853) for early representations of pollution, while the ivory trade depicted by Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* reminds us of an ongoing conservation battle that has yet to be won.[11] A further striking example of the type of cross-temporal affect that I seek to outline may be found in Trollope's novel, *John Caldigate* (1879), when the narrator describes the vandalism of the gold-mining industry, highlighting the carelessness with which those in pursuit of wealth take what they need from the ground and move on:

> They had walked about half a mile from the town, turning down a lane at the back of the house, and had made their way through yawning pit-holes and heaps of dirt and pools of yellow water,—where everything was disorderly and apparently deserted,—till they came to a cluster of heaps so large as to look like little hills; and here there were signs of mining vitality. On their way they had not come across a single shred of vegetation, though here and there stood the bare trunks of a few dead and headless trees, the ghosts of the forest which had occupied the place six or seven years previously.[12]

The narrator's tone makes apparent Trollope's dismay at the damage caused by the miners. With its craters, dirt, and stagnant water, the scene is a desolate waste land that is almost post-apocalyptic. While Trollope may not couch his critique in ecological terms, it is clear that his narrator is aghast and ashamed at the damage, and how quickly European settlers have wreaked devastation upon their adopted home.

I am struck by how similar Trollope's description is to contemporary accounts of the laying to waste of landscapes by today's mining corporations.[13] My Anthropocenic embeddedness makes reading this and many other Victorian environmental accounts a deeply visceral experience, and demonstrates how an emotion- or affect-driven methodology can illuminate apparently familiar literary and historical texts.[14] It therefore seems an obvious next step for Victorian scholars to inflect our ecocritical work with affect and emotions theory, which will enable important insights into the fear, uncertainty, and trauma characterizing environmental change then and now. Yet there are many other threads of Victorian studies that stand to benefit from an emotion- or affect-based methodology, which sheds light on the intensity of Victorian feelings and how they became the spurs to so many different forms of action.

Notes

1. Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (1859; London: Longmans, Green & Co. 1865), vi.
2. Rachel Ablow, "Introduction: Victorian Emotions," *Victorian Studies* 50, no. 3 (2008): 375–77, 375.
3. Jenny Hartley, "Nineteenth-Century Reading Groups in Britain and the Community of the Text: An Experiment with *Little Dorrit*," in *Reading Communities from Salons to Cyberspace*, ed. De Nel Rehberg Sedo (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011): 44–59, 52.
4. Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and is this what makes them have a history)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion," in *History and Theory* 51 (2012): 193–220.
5. Publications in the field that postdate Parham's important reflections include: Dewey W. Hall, ed., *Victorian Ecocriticism: The Politics of Place and Early Environmental Justice* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); Laurence W. Mazzeno and Ronald Morrison, *Victorian Writers and the Environment: Ecocritical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Wendy Parkins, ed., *Victorian Sustainability in Literature and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2017); along with many excellent articles on a variety of aspects of Victorian environmentalism, as exemplified by Benjamin Morgan's incisive work on the intersections between science and climate change (see, for instance, Benjamin Morgan, "*Fin du Globe*: On Decadent Planets," *Victorian Studies* 58, no. 4 [2016]: 609–35).

6. John Parham, "Editorial," in *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, special issue, "Victorian Ecology," 14, no. 1 (2011): 5–9, 5–6.
7. Philip Steer, "Reading Classic Novels in an Era of Climate Change," in *The Conversation*, May 23, 2017, https://theconversation.com/reading-classic-novels-in-an-era-of-climate-change-75843.
8. See Alexa Weik von Mossner, *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative* (Athens: Ohio State University Press, 2017).
9. The onset of the Anthropocene, the epoch of human-engineered environmental change, is contested, with some dating it to the invention of the steam engine, others situating it in the early 1800s, and still others identifying its origins with the Victorians.
10. See Grace Moore, "So Wild and Beautiful a World Around Him: Anthony Trollope and Antipodean Ecology," in *The Routledge Research Companion to Anthony Trollope*, ed. Margaret Markwick, Deborah Denenholz Morse, and Mark Turner. (New York: Routledge, 2016) and Grace Moore, "'Beasts, Birds, Fishes, and Reptiles': Anthony Trollope and the Australian Acclimatization Debate," in *Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture*, ed. L. W. Mazzeno and R. Morrison (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2017) for two more detailed accounts of Trollope's emotional engagement with the Antipodes.
11. As I write, U. S. president Donald Trump seeks to reverse his country's ban on importing ivory products, a move which will endanger the world's already vulnerable elephant population.
12. Anthony Trollope, *John Caldigate* (1879; London: Dodo Press, n. d.), 74.
13. Raymond Williams writes of both mining communities and the environmental impact of coal mining in *The Country and the City* (1973), a work which is now considered to be a foundational text for ecocriticism, while ecological scholars including Joni Adamson and Pamela Banting have explored mining in their work. Philip Steer has written on Trollope and the gold rush, albeit from an economic perspective, in "Gold and Greater Britain: Jevons, Trollope, and Settler Colonialism," *Victorian Studies* 58, no. 3 (2016): 436–63.
14. Elspeth Probyn in "Shame in the Habitus" discusses uneasy landscapes, elegantly demonstrating how layers of historical guilt and shame can combine with a visceral response to colonized and decolonized spaces to create an affective state of complete overwhelmedness. See Probyn, "Shame in the Habitus," *Sociological Review* 52, no. 2 (2004): 224–48.

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Empire

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SINCE the rise of postcolonial theory and criticism in the 1980s, it has become commonplace within Victorian studies to understand empire as a necessary category of analysis. In drawing on the pathbreaking analyses of critics like Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, our field has long recognized how imperialism and colonialism functioned as crucial backdrops to the literary and cultural output of nineteenth-century Britain. At the same time, much of the current scholarship on empire and Victorian literature has still, in practice, tended to replicate imperial priorities and the spatial logic of settler colonialism. Frequently in this work, Britain remains the assumed center, as texts published within or about the metropole occupy an assumed-privileged status. Often building upon Said's influential method of "contrapuntal reading," these analyses construct important arguments about empire that nonetheless remain grounded in a relatively limited range of sources. Thus, in Elaine Freedgood's *The Ideas in Things*, for instance, empire reveals itself in the imperial things that appear in Brontë and Dickens.[1] Or in Nathan Hensley's *Forms of Empire*, he shows us how several British texts encode the foundational terms of sovereignty and violence within their aesthetic structures.[2] Moreover, even when scholars have looked further afield and beyond the British Isles themselves, such as in Hensley's chapter on Haggard or in Jason Rudy's wide-ranging *Imagined Homelands*, white emigrant or colonial writers frequently remain at the forefront, which leaves many issues and subjects in the margins even as they undertake the important work of recuperating authors and texts from understudied archives.[3]

Each of these books makes necessary interventions in our field, and their incisive and imaginative analyses have enriched our discussions of empire enormously. Nevertheless, their contributions mainly lie in how