

# ACCEPTED

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# Emotions and Change

Katie Barclay

This introduction to the special issue on 'Emotion and Change' introduces the main theories of the role of emotion in processes of social and political change, as well as how emotion is theorised to change over time. It introduces the articles within this issue as part of this literature, highlighting how they contribute and extend the field, notably in their discussion of ambivalence and stasis as part of movement.

**Keywords:** emotion, change, movement, society, politics, ambivalence

Why and how things change has been at the heart of scholarly endeavour, even if only implicitly in the promise of new knowledges to alter current society and to improve the human condition. For many scholars, not least historians and sociologists, explaining social, economic, political, cultural and now emotional change has been a core question for the discipline.<sup>1</sup> The role of emotion in processes of change, and conversely, how emotions have themselves changed over time and place, was a key foundation topic for the ARC Centre of Excellence in the History of Emotions, from which this journal emerged. Thus, it seemed apt as a topic for our inaugural special issue. That many events have been, or appeared to be, emotionally charged has long been recognised, with emotion central to both popular and scholarly representations of revolutions, riots, political commitments, and resistance to social norms.<sup>2</sup> At an individual level too, emotions have been implicated in change, with personal

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<sup>1</sup> David Lemmings and Ann Brooks, 'The Emotional Turn in the Humanities and Social Sciences', in *Emotions and Social Change: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, ed. David Lemmings and Ann Brooks (London: Routledge, 2014), 3-18.

<sup>2</sup> For example, P. T. Clough and J. Halley (eds), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Christian von Scheve and Mikko Salmela (eds), *Collective Emotions. Perspective from Psychology, Philosophy, and Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Erika Summer-Effler, 'The Micro-Potential for Social Change: Emotion, Consciousness and Social Formation', *Sociological Theory* 20, no. 1 (2002): 41-60; Jeff Goodwin, James Jasper, and Francesca Polletta (eds), *Passionate Politics: Emotions and*

development and growth often articulated as emotional turmoil and struggle, and where therapeutic attempts to ‘deal with’ emotions are located as key to the making of a new self.<sup>3</sup> Emotions also change and have changed, as socially-produced phenomena in relationship with wider environment and culture.<sup>4</sup> Work that explores and theorises emotions in processes of change, as well as the process of emotional change, is still relatively new. Yet, as this special issue suggests, emotions scholarship has the potential to make increasingly significant interventions into debates about the relationship between structure and agency, reproduction and evolution, movement and stasis.

The role of emotion in social, cultural and political change has long been recognised, if often given a backseat to wider social processes. Emotions were often the evidence of movement – of the crowd, of public opinion, of changing ideas and values, of resistance – from one state to another.<sup>5</sup> They were the bi-product of injustice, education, physical discomfort, or embodied pleasure, affirming experience and motivating action. Tying emotion to its etymological root ‘to move’, emotion was the physical embodiment of the ideas and experiences that produced social, political, cultural and other types of change.<sup>6</sup> For

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*Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act up's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Joanne Sharp, ‘Geography and Gender: What Belongs to Feminist Geography? Emotions, Power and Change’, *Progress in Human Geography* 33, no. 1 (2009): 74-80; Nicole Eustace, *Passion is the Gale: Emotion, Power and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Jason Frank, ‘Sympathy and Separation: Benjamin Rush and the Contagious Public’, *Modern Intellectual History* 6, no. 1 (2009): 27-57; Mary Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Jessica Rosenburg and Gitana Garofalo, ‘Riot Grrrl: Revolutions from Within’, *Signs* 23, no. 3 (1998): 809-41; Orly Benjamin, ‘Therapeutic Discourse, Power and Change: Emotion and Negotiation in Marital Conversations’, *Sociology* 32, no. 4 (1998): 771-93; Bethany A. Burum and Marvin R. Godfried, ‘The Centrality of Emotion to Psychological Change’, *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 14 (2007): 407-13; Antonio Pascual-Leone, ‘How Clients “Change Emotion with Emotion”: a Programme of Research on Emotional Processing’, *Psychotherapy Research* (2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2017.1349350>; Barbara Van Wijnendaele, ‘The Politics of Emotion in Participatory Process of Empowerment and Change’, *Antipode* 46, no. 1 (2014): 266-82.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: the Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History: Lost and Found* (New York: Central European Press, 2011); Peter Stearns and Carol Stearns, ‘Emotionology: Clarifying the History of the Emotions and Emotional Standards’, *American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985): 813-36.

<sup>5</sup> See note 2.

<sup>6</sup> Patricia Simons, ‘Emotion’, in *Early Modern Emotions: an Introduction*, ed. Susan Broomhall (London: Routledge, 2016), 36-39.

some, emotion was then less interesting, a biological response to the larger events that scholars could identify, study, explore and ultimately modify. For others, emotions became a key mediator of change, implicated in decision-making and morality; they were ‘felt judgements’.<sup>7</sup> Drawing from scholarship, particularly in philosophy, that sought to collapse the distinction between emotion and cognition, emotions were not just responses to the world but a mechanism through which humans interpreted their experience.<sup>8</sup>

Felt judgements place emotion in an active position of mediator between self and society, where emotion is not only a response to events that motivates action, but shapes the meaning that inheres on events. Sara Ahmed similarly located emotion as the interface between the individual and the social; they are ‘neither “in” the individual or the social’ but produce the relationship between both. Thus, for Ahmed, emotions circulate, ‘stick’ to objects and people, and shape power relationships – an ‘affective economy’.<sup>9</sup> An economy of emotion shapes social relationships through its role in producing injustice and responses to it, enabling resistance to norms and ultimately change. These are models for social change that locate emotion as central to interpretation and meaning, situating the origins of change in an emotional-discursive framework.

That emotions might provide a structure for human behaviour and action has also been posited by historians of emotion.<sup>10</sup> Barbara Rosenwein argues for ‘emotional communities’ composed of individuals who share the same system for valuating emotion.<sup>11</sup> I suggest emotions, particularly love, as emotional frameworks that reproduce particular forms

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<sup>7</sup> Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*; John Jervis, *Sympathetic Sentiments: Affect, Emotion and Spectacle in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Peter Goldie, *The Mess Inside: Narrative, Emotion and the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Giovanna Colombetti, *The Feeling Body: Affective Science Meets the Enactive Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Arlie Hochschild, ‘Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure’, *American Journal of Sociology* 85, no. 3 (1979): 551-75.

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

of social order.<sup>12</sup> William Reddy offers emotional regimes that set normative standards for emotional behaviour that in turn shape the nature and site of political power.<sup>13</sup> These are theories that embed emotions not in, but *as* social structure, as systems designed to produce continuity of behaviours and social power relationships, and thus become open to resistance and transformation. Change for these scholars draws on models found elsewhere in the humanities and social sciences. Rosenwein implicitly ties such change to language and society; new communities and new expressions of emotion produce new norms. Barclay, following Foucault, argues for a reiterative process of negotiation, where change evolves slowly and incrementally. Reddy locates change in ‘emotional refuges’ that form as communities of resistance to wider regimes, growing and ultimately coming to power. Emotions are central to these models of change in as much as it is because of commitments to new expressions or experiences of emotion that people come to resist contemporary structures, and it is through the reforming of emotion that change is enabled.

Emotion can also be a technology of change, a tool used to enable processes of transformation. This is not just a case of emotion motivating action, but of the uses of emotion by actors in shaping the world. A scholarship of sympathy and empathy, as well as on marketing techniques and political protest, highlights the uses of emotional rhetoric, imagery and most recently digital forms to shape the opinions and feelings of actors, transforming the individual and through that society, culture and nation.<sup>14</sup> Embodied

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<sup>12</sup> Katie Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power: Marriage and Patriarchy in Scotland, 1650-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: a Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> C. A. Lutz and L. Abu-Lughod (eds), *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Randell McGowen, ‘A Powerful Sympathy: Terror, the Prison and Humanitarian Reform in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 3 (1986): 312-34; Helena Wulff, ‘Longing for the Land: Emotions, Memory and Nature in Irish Travel Advertisements’, *Identities* 14, no. 4 (2007): 527-44; Adi Kuntsman, ‘Introduction: Affective Fabrics of Digital Cultures’, in *Digital Cultures and the Politics of Emotion*, ed. Athina Karatzogianni and Adi Kuntsman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1-17; C. Critcher, *Moral Panics and the Media* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2004); David Lemmings and Claire Walker (eds), *Moral Panics, the Media and the Law in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Peta Tait, ‘Love, Fear and Climate Change: Emotions in Drama and Performance’, *PMLA* 130, no. 5 (2015): 1501-

performances of emotion can similarly be active, shaping personal interaction and the meaning of human engagements. Whether such performances are intentional and political, or personal and individual, they nonetheless have can real effects in shaping responses and environment.<sup>15</sup> This can extend to the production of ‘affective atmospheres’, the emotional-laden meanings that produce space, and its ability to determine how particular places are interpreted, used and shape power.<sup>16</sup> A technology of emotion that is operationalised through performance, or practice in the Bordieuan tradition, is implicated in the production of identity, where the experience and expression of emotion become part of the making of self.<sup>17</sup> As emotions become key to identity, personal emotional can have social and political effects. Moreover as ideas about self and emotion vary over time and culture, transformation in how people perform emotion alter the communities, regimes, and frameworks that operate as a structure for human experience.

If emotions ‘do things’, how emotions themselves change is not yet well articulated by change theorists. Scholars of the evolution of emotions, as concepts and experiences, locate change in larger developments in ideas, practices and technologies. New experiences and events, new interpretations of the body, of personal relationships, of society, require new languages and explanations of emotion. These in turn come to produce emotional experience for individuals.<sup>18</sup> Emotions, or at least pre-discursive affect, are not passive in this process of

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1505; Robert Cockcroft, *Rhetorical Affect in Early Modern Writing: Renaissance Passions Reconsidered* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Katie Barclay, ‘Performing Emotion and Reading the Male Body in the Irish Court, c.1800-1845’, *Journal of Social History* (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shx017>; Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> Ben Anderson, ‘Affective Atmospheres’, *Emotion, Space and Society* 2 (2009): 77-81; Joyce Davidson and Christine Milligan, ‘Embodying Emotions Sensing Space: Introducing Emotional Geographies’, *Social & Cultural Geography* 5, no. 4 (2004): 523-32.

<sup>17</sup> 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, no. 2 (2012): 190-220.

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Mark Seymour, ‘Emotional Arenas: from Provincial Circus to National Courtroom in late Nineteenth-Century Italy’, *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 177-97; Ute Frevert et al., *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity & Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Anna Wierzbicka, ‘“Happiness” in Cross-Linguistic and Cross-Cultural Perspective’,

change, situated as experience that fails to be accounted for under present terminologies and demanding of a reimagining. Yet, this is not a story where emotions are the sole actor in processes of change; rather as a ‘mediator’, emotion adapts with society and culture in a collaborative process of reinvention. The scholarship of changing emotion then becomes a history of larger process of social, economic, political and cultural transformation, with emotion acting as a cogent reminder of the reciprocal operation of different domains of production.

The authors in this special issue contribute and extend these debates. Erika Bondi and Alice Poma and Tommaso Gravante in their respective articles explore political radicalisation as a process of emotional transformation. Poma and Gravante’s study of the Mexican feminist organisation, *Mujer Nueva*, argues for engagement by subalterns in political resistance as a moment of transformation that enabled the long-running empowerment of this group of women. They highlight empowerment as an ongoing emotional process, where personal emotional experiences – both negative and positive – are reinterpreted and refelt through a political lens that leads to the production of the political, empowered self. This is a story of social and political change that originates in a shift in how individual’s experience emotion; importantly for the broader scholarship, it was this emotional transformation – not the success of the (failed) political action – that had long-term biographical and so social effects.

Drawing from literature rather than life, Erika Bondi highlights a similar exploration of female empowerment in Reina Roffé’s *Monte de Venus* (1976). Located against the backdrop of the Argentinian resistance movements of the 1960s and 70s, the novel’s protagonists explore left-wing political resistance as a site of female radicalisation. Roffé’s female characters engage in a process of personal emotional transformation – moving from

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*Daedalus* 133 (2004): 34-43; Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

shame and anger to pride through political activism – but are unable to realise their desires due to the continuing patriarchal structures of Argentinian society. Thus, whilst capturing the same emotional dynamic as described for women of the *Mujer Nueva*, the novel is ambivalent about its political efficacy. It is an ambivalency produced in the novel as an ‘emotional tone’ that itself inheres meaning to the events described. This is ‘affective atmosphere’ structuring meaning for the reader, and an ambivalency that destabilises the political potential of personal emotional change.

A similar ambivalence is evident in Ben Gook’s exploration of the social, political and personal functions of ecstasy for German youth in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The fall of the Wall and the moment of disequilibrium that followed produced both widespread confusion and possibility. Through techno music and its ecstatic potentiality, German youth sought forms of unification that exceeded long-held divisions and social and political complexities. It was an attempt to produce the self collectively through an ecstasy that was simultaneously underpinned by the melancholy of ending and loss. Gook explores a sought after emotional transformation in response to political change, an emotional experience that symbolised the possibilities of social and economic transformation, but which could never realise them (at least in musical form). This was emotion as a ‘figuring out’ of the social and political, an example of Ahmed’s emotion as interface in the production of meaning – but which remains in the space of potential, rather than the real. Like Bondi then, emotional transformation is a site of ambivalence, of possibilities, negotiations, and closures – a moment of stasis as well as movement.

The importance of emotion in enabling people to operationalise change also emerges in Amy Milka’s discussion of gentility in the eighteenth-century courtroom. Thinking about emotions that ‘do’ things, Milka highlights how the performance of ‘genteel’ emotions by men in the courtroom enables the eighteenth-century public to ‘manage’ developments in

class relations of the period. If a rising middle-class disrupts traditional models of social order, where the elite have more character as a right of their class, then the display of genteel emotion – tied closely to the achievement of civility and virtue – provides an alternative register to decode character and identity. Emotion here provides a language to enable the communication of legal ‘truth’ in a moment of change. Yet, as her case studies evidence, this emotional logic is fragile, as forgers and imposters – genteel men – fail to evidence the virtue their emotions convey.

Some of that fragility might be suggested by Jane Lydon in her exploration of empathy/sympathy in early nineteenth-century Australian humanitarianism. Looking at images designed to produce compassion in the public towards the aboriginal community, Lydon carefully decodes the political dynamics of compassionate representation. The black man is rendered a subject of pity; the white of savagery. Yet this is a politics that still locates power in the white community, as those whose emotional transformation – whose ability to exercise compassion – matters, and conversely also insists on the humanity of a group to whom it was often denied. Compassionate emotion thus become implicated in the formation of the polity and nation’s boundaries. In such imagery, emotion is both a tool of transformation and what is desired from the observer; together such emotion should (in theory at least) lead to social and political action by those who have been moved.

If humanitarian representations of the black body were designed to bring the aboriginal community back into the nation (if in a restricted form), the shaming of girls and women in Australian institutions, described by Mason and Fattore, dislocated them from society. Tracking institutional shaming practices across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they not only identify the uses of shame in the production of social relations but how shame and shaming practices evolved over time. Nineteenth-century institutions operationalised shame through the disciplining of the female body, locating such women as

external to virtue and nation; twentieth-century institutions controlled not only behaviour but the self, asking women to internalise shame as part of their identity. In internalising shame, women removed themselves – or at least the part of self experienced in the institution – from public discourse, a silencing that allowed institutional abuses to go unspoken. In giving such women voice, the Royal Commissions of recent years refract that shame back onto the nation, producing a ‘felt community’ but not one that has internalised the shame placed upon it. Mason and Fattore’s careful unpicking of the different manifestations of shame, both across different power relations, and time and place, highlights emotion as contingent, evolving and dynamic – emotion that is changed as it changes the world around it.

Across the special issue, if emotions are operationalised in the production of social, economic and political change, their effects are not always predictable or laudatory. If change begins (if we can call it a beginning) with emotional exploration by and transformation of the individual, it is the capacity of emotion to produce society and the collective that enables change on a broader scale. Where that evolution from the individual to the group is not possible – a possibility that across this special issue is notably impacted by the well-worn trifecta of class, gender and race – the transformational effects of emotion are harder to realise or manifest in unexpected forms. At the same time, emotion appears as an important resource for not only managing and processing the change around us, but giving it definition. This recursive relation between the individual and the group that emotion mediates produces change as a performative dynamic – a constant becoming, a state of continuous movement.

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