The Arts and Feeling in Nineteenth-Century (London, 16–18 Jul 15)

Birkbeck College, University of London, Jul 16–18, 2015
Deadline: Jan 9, 2015

Emma Curry, Birkbeck, University of London

The Arts and Feeling in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture
Birkbeck College, University of London, 16-18 July 2015

Keynote Speakers: Professor Caroline Arscott (Courtauld Institute of Art, London); Professor Tim Barringer (Yale University); Meaghan Clarke (University of Sussex); Professor Kate Flint (University of Southern California); Professor Michael Hatt (University of Warwick); Professor Jonah Siegel (Rutgers); Alison Smith (Tate Britain)

"She saw no, not saw, but felt through and through a picture; she bestowed upon it all the warmth and richness of a woman's sympathy; not by any intellectual effort, but by this strength of heart, and this guiding light of sympathy..." (Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Marble Faun, 1860)

This conference will explore the ways in which nineteenth-century authors, artists, sculptors, musicians and composers imagined and represented emotion and how writers and critics conceptualised the emotional aspects of aesthetic response. How did Victorian artists represent feeling and how were these feelings aestheticised? What rhetorical strategies did Victorian writers use to figure aesthetic response? What expressive codes and conventions were familiar to the Victorians? Which nineteenth-century scientific developments affected artistic production and what impact did these have on affective reactions?

The conference will consider the historically specific ways in which feeling is discussed in aesthetic discourse. It will also, however, encourage reflection about the limits of an historicist approach for understanding the emotions at play in nineteenth-century aesthetic response and the possibility of alternative methodologies for understanding the relation between feeling and the arts.

Proposals of up to 400 words should be sent to Dr. Vicky Mills at artsandfeeling@gmail.com by 9 January 2015. Please also attach a brief biographical note. Proposals for panels of three papers are also welcome, and should be accompanied by a brief (one-page) panel justification.

Possible topics might include:
- Languages of emotion (affect; feeling; sympathy; empathy; sentimentality)
- Theories of feeling (psychologists; art critics; philosophers; authors)
- The arousal of specific emotions (pain; joy; anger; grief; tenderness; anxiety; disgust) and the aestheticisation of the emotions
- The physiology and psychology of aesthetic perception (Physiological aesthetics; empathy; the

nervous system; head v. heart)
- The arts and religious feeling (biblical painting; sacred music)
- Artists, museum visitors and concert-goers in fiction
- The gendering of aesthetic response
- The codification of artistic expression
- Museum Feelings (boredom; fatigue; the museum as a site of affect; the regulation of feeling)
- Curating feeling
- The "art of feeling" (how to feel the right thing in response to music, art, sculpture)
- Feeling and touch
- The role of emotion in ekphrasis; translating feeling

The conference is organised by the Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies at Birkbeck, University of London.

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Reference:
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