Revisiting space and emotion: new ways to study buildings and feelings


Published in:
History Compass

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal

Publisher rights
Copyright 2023 the authors.
This is an open access article published under a Creative Commons Attribution License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the author and source are cited.

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person’s rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact openaccess@qub.ac.uk.
Revisiting space and emotion: New ways to study buildings and feelings

Maja Hultman1 | Sophie Cooper2

1Centre for European Research/Faculty of Humanities, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden
2Liberal Arts, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, UK

Correspondence
Maja Hultman.
Email: maja.hultman@gu.se

Funding information
Royal Irish Academy, Grant/Award Number: Charlemont Grant

Abstract
In her 2014 History Compass article, Margrit Pernau issued a call for scholars to consider entanglements between history of emotion methodologies and space. She argued that 'bodies are necessarily situated in space, and they bear the imprint of the spaces they are moving through and have moved through.' Nine years after the publication of Pernau's article, this study engages with developments in the field of history of emotions to posit that emotional methodologies provide important opportunities for scholars of the urban built environment, adding additional lenses that can help to push the boundaries of urban history. Extending Pernau's thesis by borrowing theoretical and methodological muscle from affect theory and the combined field of slavery and gender studies, via the concepts of atmospheres, reconstruction, and critical fabulation, this article explores new avenues for research that aims to understand and analyse marginalised groups in urban history. The explorative analysis is tested on a macroanalysis of social processes among the Irish diaspora in nineteenth century Melbourne and Chicago and a microhistorical study of a Pietist orphanage in nineteenth century Stockholm and thus showcases the possibility of the approach to go beyond spatial-emotional management and reach contradictory and alternative strategies and experiences.
1 | INTRODUCTION

As modern urban historians, we concur with spatial theorists that the built environment, infused as it is with emotional meaning, holds valuable and necessary keys to understanding religious, ethnic, social, political, and gendered minorities' navigation of agency in urban landscapes (e.g., Gunn, 2017; Lefebvre, 2009; Nic Ghabhann, 2018; Tuan, 1990). For this, the established field of history of emotions provides a broad framework and multiple concepts for analysing continuity and change, power relations, socio-control, and societal norms, which are not only spatially specific but also shaped by spatial discourses (e.g., Barclay, 2021; Reddy, 2001; Scheer, 2012; Seymour, 2020). However, the interplay between the history of emotions and the built environment has traditionally been overlooked in favour of a focus on what happens within the confines of a particular space. From this point of view, a built space is only the setting for emotional entanglements to take place within (e.g., Häberlen & Spinney, 2014).

The conceptual and methodological marriage of urban history approaches and history of emotion frameworks, which was suggested by Pernau (2014; Pernau, 2015b) in this journal nine years ago, allows for a more holistic study of the relationship between bodies, urban spaces, and emotions. It provides insight into how emotions affect the built environment and how the built environment in turn enforces or changes emotions. Since 2014, modern urban history increasingly responds to her call (e.g., Barclay & Riddle, 2021; Chatterjee et al., 2017; Kenny, 2014a,b; Prestel, 2017). Some, like Rose and Fitzgerald (2022, p. 17), go further, presenting the city as an 'ecological' place where people and the environment shape each other. In terms of the modern city, they argue that for contemporary scholars, although preoccupied with spatial formations such as arcades and factories, the city prompted bodies to experience new types of sensations, often related to outlandishness and unheimlich-ness, as well as sicknesses, be they health-related, socio-economic, or moral (Rose & Fitzgerald, 2022, pp. 27–58). Excavating the century-old scholarly interest in the body as locus for 'biosocial challenges of inhabitation,' Rose and Fitzgerald (2022, pp. 57–8) call for studies that investigate how the urban experience of exclusion and marginalisation promotes and shapes anxiety and mental disorders. Inspired by their focus on the body, we argue that Pernau's innovative spatial-emotional approach needs to be expanded in order to more coherently encompass studies of marginalised groups that scholars of urban space and history of emotions so often want to reach.

In this exploratory article, we theorise that a focus on the culturally informed and biologically driven body aids urban historians' study of spaces. We present the methods of reconstruction and critical fabulation as ways to access and analyse atmospheres experienced by historical bodies and discuss this approach in relation to urban groups of women and orphans among Irish Catholic migrants and Swedish Pietists. While results from our approach remain suggestive, we argue that this is indeed the point. By allowing space for uncertainty and multiple readings, we believe that historians can start puzzling together the everyday lives of marginalised historical agents, even when sources are scarce.

2 | STATE OF THE FIELD: FINDING AND ANALYSING EMOTIONS IN SPACE

While architectural historians have often led the way in considering how a designer or architect envisioned emotional responses within a space (e.g., Godson & James-Chakraborty, 2019; Hammond, 2022), these expectations can, and often are, transgressed, conflicted, and actively reacted to (e.g., Boddice, 2018; Ebrahimi & Maitland, 2022; Fama, 2022; Whyte, 2018). Pushing the field of architectural history forward, Sara Honarmand Ebrahimi's special forum on 'Exploring Architecture and Emotions through Space and Place' employs a diversity of emotional concepts to investigate the interplay between management of space and management of emotions (Ebrahimi, 2022). While promoting the theoretical and methodological heterogeneity and possibilities within the field (Boddice, 2022, pp. 176–7; Bremner, 2022, p. 173), the forum also aligns itself with the current academic trend that focuses on emotional regimes and the influence of social expectation and pressure on activities within certain spaces (Reddy, 2001, pp. 124–5). For example, Holloway and Worsley (2017) highlight the perceived suitability of emotional
responses—with particular emphasis on where and how emotions can be expressed—in their work. Together with Padme Dorje Maitland, Ebrahimi, however, points out that these, in Scheer’s (2012, p. 209) words, material manifestations of emotional setups sometimes fail to be used according to plan. Taking the British Empire as an example, they stress that ideological ideals might not always be implemented through a building ‘in the domain of lived realities’ (Ebrahimi & Maitland, 2022). Therefore, experiences linked to marginalised groups should theoretically be within our reach.

Still, our concern is one of method: how can we as urban historians access the affective dimension of the lived reality of marginalised groups? Reddy’s (2001, pp. 125–8) notion of emotional refuges has guided several scholars towards investigations of spaces where deviant norms or subversive emotions were possible practices (e.g., Buchanan, 2014; Hamlett, 2015; Seltenreich, 2015; Tebbutt, 2022), but his emphasis on textual sources limits our access to illiterate groups, individuals who did not have time to write, or people whose writings were not deemed important enough to archive. This is especially true when gendered, age, religious, or ethnic minorities are considered. Arguing that spaces allow for a palimpsest of practices beyond the duality of regimes and refuges, Seymour (2020, pp. 12–3) uses emotional arenas to investigate patterns of emotional styles that are ‘distinctive to’ certain spaces, such as the courtroom (Gammerl, 2012). Still, he mainly views the concept as a methodological tool to ‘contain and envisage an intrinsically evanescent historiographical quarry’ (Seymour, 2020, p. 205), and as a result, the material dimension falls out of analytical focus. Conversely, Olsen and Vallgårda’s (2022, pp. 437–9) concept of emotional frontiers provides insight into the discomfort and vulnerability experienced by unprivileged groups as unfamiliar sets of emotion rules or codes of emotional behaviour are encountered in a new space. Through their approach, the lived realities of, for example, a Jewish refugee girl and indigenous children in Canada are captured through autobiographies and oral history. While the emerging field on the history of emotions in the built environment strives, and sometimes achieves, to encompass marginalised groups, it is bound to historical agents that can be found in archival material where emotional practices are noted if not reflected upon explicitly. We are clearly not the only ones interested in the spatialised emotions of marginalised groups within other classes, ethnicities, religions, ages, or gender, but we take a more practical approach. Namely, how can we find and analyse emotions of historical individuals whose everyday urban life has eluded or been excluded from archives?

To find new avenues for explorations of the emotions of marginalised groups in built environments, we turn to Pernau’s (2014) History Compass article as a prompt for our own work. To advance studies in urban history and the history of spaces, Pernau suggests that historians cannot regard emotions as inherent to any space, but rather as a result of, and mediation between, the material reality and the cultural constructions and interpretations of spaces. In an expansion of her thesis, she adds that neither holds ‘ontological priority’ (Pernau, 2015b, p. 662). Forming and formed by societal norms and cultural discourses, emotions are contextual. In understanding their spatial foundation in physical and imagined forms, as suggested by Pernau (2015b, p. 662), we gain insight to the ‘specific ways of expressions’ that were available at a specific time and place. As urban historians, this framework reminds us of Henri Lefebvre’s (1974/1991, pp. 15–68) methodological triad of spatial practices (the perceived physicality of a city), spaces of representation (lived experiences conveyed through, e.g., emotions and memories), and representations of space (urban space as it is conceived, planned, and organised). But whereas Lefebvre understands spatially-related emotions as one of three equal nodes that together produce the social space of a city, thus prompting research to focus on their role in human interactions and relations, Pernau unbraids the concept into several components. Dividing the emotional relationship with material reality into three translations, Pernau and Imke Rajamani (2016, p. 61) present a model for the ongoing, circular spatial-emotional process that involves sensory experiences, cultural constructions (defined as ‘multimedia sign systems’), and bodily practices. Thus, influenced by Scheer’s (2012) notion of emotional practices, Pernau advises urban historians to attend to matters of space and emotions through the historical body in relation to its experience of the multisensory urban environment, imaginations of it, and physical movements through it. We find this flipping of dynamics methodologically helpful in researching how the materiality of spaces become endowed with, and form, emotional meanings.

Alerting us to the sensing, thinking, and moving body in the practice of emotions, Pernau directs us methodologically towards new types of sources. She argues that in order to investigate the materiality of space and the
historicity of emotions, scholars must move beyond textual sources. By using visual, non-verbal, and material sources, the everyday experiences of those who inhabited the urban landscape but did not keep an archive, do not feature in the state’s archive beyond a census record, or are indeed hidden in biased archives can be uncovered. These kinds of sources are also applicable to Pernau’s (2014, pp. 542–6) two-sided analysis: she, for example, reads maps as both positivist, physical realities and constructed visions of the world, and an analytical combination of both aspects allows for studies of ‘space as a material reality and as the result of an antecedent and ongoing cultural interpretation.’ While we agree with her innovative analysis of visual sources and general call for broader archival reference points, her examples tend to privilege archival material created by, often colonial, elites (Pernau, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2017). In this way, the desire to interrogate the co-dependency between space and emotion is limited because it still prioritises the emotional regimes projected by the elite instead of questioning the experiences of the everyday and the ordinary. This is where we propose to build upon and stretch Pernau’s boundaries of spatial-emotional analysis. Without the archival existence of explicit voices from marginalised groups, how can we reposition research to focus on their affective experiences and emotional practices? We suggest that a focus on bodies through considerations of affect theory, specifically the concept of atmosphere, and the combined field of slavery and gender studies proves helpful.

Pernau’s (2014, pp. 541–2) rejection of frameworks such as atmospheres, due to their perceived downplaying of historical and social variables which are crucial to how emotions are presented and understood, has been widely echoed in the history of emotions. Indeed, Rob Boddice’s and Mark Smith’s introduction of the biocultural body as a way to connect brain (culture), body (biology), and (the social) world is developed in direct comparison to the universal body considered by affect theorists (Boddice & Smith, 2020, pp. 20–1). Böhme (1995, p. 22) proposes that an atmosphere is a collection of intense sensations in subjective bodies that arise from, are transmitted through, or related to material, objective environments, thus categorising them as essential and universal. On the other hand, Reckwitz (2012, p. 251) views affect as cultural and relational and not ‘inner possession of individuals’ and defines them as ‘bodily reactions enabled [or] restricted by interpretative schemes,’ which are socially defined. From this point of view, human subjects and material objects together participate in affective, bodily ‘practices [that] are embedded in cultural schemes that inform the agents’ way of thinking about and handling the things concerned’ (Reckwitz, 2012, p. 253). In other words, people’s bodily reactions—sensations and affects—to material realities are informed by the culture they inhabit and the social networks they belong to. Thus, contrary to Pernau’s misgivings, an analysis of the atmosphere related to a building does not have to ignore the historical context and the social and cultural background of an individual. In his praxeological approach, Reckwitz conceptualises affect as a bodily sensation arising as a space is appropriated and in dialogue with the unique experiences of an individual. As a result of this dialogue, one building can produce several different atmospheres depending on who is visiting (e.g., Anderson, 2009; Finlayson, 2012; Michels, 2015).

While the approaches of history of emotion and affect theory vary in theoretical mooring and conceptual width of what emotions or affects are, where they come from, and how they are expressed, we are struck by their likeness in putting the human body at the centre of research. Pernau’s spatial-emotional model, affect theory, as well as the recent development of a history of experience, which incorporates all things senses, feelings, and emotions (Boddice & Smith, 2020, p. 17), are all interested in how a body feels, imagines, reacts to and informs a building, and how this affective and/or emotional practice is linked to the wider society. For example, in relation to urban history, Gandy (2017, p. 355) uses the concept of atmosphere to highlight that there is a ‘persistent material or meteorological presence, either real or imagined, which envelops or unsettles the human subject’ visiting a built environment, which simultaneously hints at Pernau’s model of the intrinsic relationship between bodily senses, cultural constructions, and bodily movements when in contact with an absolute space. Talu (2022, pp. 98–103) underlines further that the concept of atmosphere denotes liminal ‘spatialised emotions’ originating from subjective emotions and material realities, capturing the ‘immersive and multi-sensorial’ experience of inhabiting urban space. Adding a focus on the affective body to the study of the built environment therefore prompts new questions about the interplay of light, sensory responses, and emotion in people’s bodily relations to the city, opens up for a more flexible and adaptable understanding of the relationship between space, people and emotions, and allows urban historians to approach a wide range of material where traces of bodies can be found.
To be able to read and analyse how a historical body felt in and related to the built environment, we are inspired by recent work within slavery and gender studies that reconstructs everyday lives from a variety of fragmented material. Positioning historical individuals within reconstructed urban settings, researchers, such as Fuentes (2016) and McKittrick (2006), investigate the agencies and affective experiences of historically and archivally silenced and structurally ignored groups of people; working not only with a lack of sources connected to enslaved African women but also on corrupt archives that mediate historical remains through the structure of white supremacy (Fuentes, 2016, pp. 1–6). This method encourages a certain amount of informed speculation on how a person might have navigated the built environment and thus allows for the integration of potential histories or critical fabulation, a term coined by Hartman (2008, p. 11), into the study of the built environment. As an author, Hartman works closely with existent archives and emphases that we cannot take their curated knowledge for granted. By ‘re-presenting the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of views’ and ‘imagin[ing] what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done,’ the authoritative narrative of the archive is subverted. While Hartman’s technique has been engaged with in varying levels of persuasion (Connolly & Fuentes, 2016), Boddice and Smith have, within the boundaries of the history of experience, argued that it is particularly fruitful when few sources exist or archival silence persists (2020, p. 38). We similarly believe that this explorative scholarly tool of critical fabulation—infused speculation, imaginative reconstructions of urban landscapes, potential histories, and perhaps even fictionalised historical narratives—allows for extended analysis of visual and non-textual sources and material objects. What happens when we, as historians, imaginatively walk with a marginalised individual through a historical space they encountered on a daily basis? What do we learn through a reconstruction of an urban space from sources not immediately related to the marginalised groups in question? To what extent can we use our scholarly expertise in tandem with imaginative reconstruction to push analytical boundaries of the history of emotions in the built environment?

Pernau (2014, p. 542) warns that the emotional turn’s focus on reaction, not a shared linguistic or visual understanding, holds ‘the danger of replacing the dichotomy between nature and nurture by a no less unproductive one between the body and language or even between materiality and representation.’ While agreeing that emotions result from material realities and cultural constructions in dialogue with each other through the body, thus collapsing the dangerous polarity, we also argue that methods pertaining to the historical body, such as atmospheres, reconstruction, and critical fabulation, need to be taken into account to uncover affective experiences of marginalised groups. Building on examples from work on ‘belonging’ and applying the methodology to two case studies, we seek to demonstrate the ways that history of emotions, through its various frameworks, can be used by urban historians to ask new questions of the role and practice of emotions within the built environment. In doing so, we approach our sources and subject matter from a spatial perspective, bringing in methods from history of emotions to push the boundaries of traditional urban approaches.

3 | SPATIAL-EMOTIONAL APPROACH TO MARGINALISED URBAN GROUPS

The question of what we understand as an emotion is one that has preoccupied historians of emotion (Dixon, 2012). Refocusing the debate away from definitions allows social and cultural historians to expand the urban space from a setting in which community building occurred to an active conversation around resources, ambition, and imagination. As Maddrell et al. (2022, p. 2) note, ‘a person’s sense of belonging and rights are grounded in the local spaces of everyday practices.’ It is here that the history of emotion frameworks can become particularly important in considering how immigrant or religious groups felt that they belonged to a space and how they projected that feeling outwards. As an example, Irish Catholics in Melbourne and Chicago poured their money into the building of grand halls and churches both as a demonstration of their new-found wealth and influence and as a sign that they would have an ongoing and long-lasting presence in those urban spaces. These buildings were not just spaces where community connections were made. They were part of that becoming and belonging: both the setting and the
physical manifestation of it. Building projects, such as churches and schools, melded the emotional desire of migrant groups to practice their faith with the wish to ‘belong.’ This is where the blending of architectural, urban, emotional, and social history approaches converges. What this ‘belonging’ looked like differed depending on the local context, but the process of atmosphere building frequently spread across the world, through tools communicated within familial, community, and institutional networks.

As Pernau makes clear, the emotions tangled up in these building projects are intrinsically connected to the moment of creation. However, many of these building projects took years, even decades, to come to fruition. Across this time of planning and building, we can examine how migrant communities’ emotional connection to ‘home’ evolved, especially as second and third generations with little connection to the ‘homeland’ reached adulthood. Examining large-scale building projects allows for the evolution of emotional connections over time without becoming ahistorical. However, we should not purely confine our research to marks on and in the building itself. Chicago’s first bishop, William Quarter, for example, instituted the city’s ethnic parish system in 1844, meaning that ethnic groups attended church and school in their native language. Quarter argued that this allowed priests to exert a ‘more wholesome influence’ on their congregants and let people speak to their God in comfort (Shanabruch, 1981, p. 8). While women and less wealthy people contributed heavily to fundraising for buildings, making a claim to brick and mortar Catholicism (Skerrett, 1996, 1997), these architectural efforts were heavily dominated by men. What remains architecturally, and what is therefore more accessible to researchers, reflects the emotional regimes encouraged at the time of building. As the Irish Catholic Church, including in the diaspora, became more conformist and ritualised during the second half of the nineteenth century, traditional feminised performances of devotion and emotion, for example, keening, were rejected by the male hierarchy (Delay, 2019). In a culture increasingly preoccupied with shame and silence in relation to female voices and bodies, women were forced to find alternative ways of performing emotion within their religious practice. By partaking in the work of the church—and in shaping the built environment—these women were able to perform their religious devotion in ways that were deemed appropriate and respectable. Inspired by Pernau and other historians of emotion, we can ask how women were able to be in religious space. Feeling comfortable or uncomfortable, welcomed or not, inevitably alters religious experience and the emotional scripts dictating religious practice. Women strategised to make religious buildings more welcoming, and potentially more feminine, spaces through temporary decorations and investing in sacred objects. In this way, women laid an emotional and physical claim to spaces which threatened to exclude them and their bodies.

The built environment is not just a setting for the body, emotion, and language to interact, but for emotional outbursts and responses to become part of the built environment and, in turn, for that built environment to shape the emotional communion of its inhabitants. Catherine-Rose Hailstone (2022) has explored how fear was embedded into the walls of mediaeval churches in order to enable bishops to fulfil their pastoral obligations by surrounding congregants in an atmosphere of fear of God. ‘Irishness,’ conversely, did not need to be embedded into the walls of its main Church. Religious spaces are temporarily transformed on an everyday basis. Instead of more permanent fixtures, a distinctive celebration of Irishness was brought into the Church through temporary material culture, like lace veils or shamrocks in flower arrangements. These were small gestures to the everyday emotional connections of congregants to their faith and their communities. The temporary nature of this material culture also provided opportunities: to perform belonging even with limited resources and to change, shift, and evolve their understandings of what it was to be ‘Irish’ and Catholic in the diaspora. It was this blending of the temporary and the more permanent which let the boundaries of belonging expand, evolve, and retrace to suit the needs of a society in flux. This expansion of approach places the creation and sustenance of emotional atmospheres back into the hands of those who actually inhabited the space on a regular basis, focussing on more organic evolutions of emotions instead of its management.

The reconstruction of the everyday life of Irish and Catholic women and migrants in relation to churches confirms the analytical possibilities of tracing marginalised bodies and the atmospheres they endeavoured to construct in spaces planned and built by more privileged groups. To further stress this approach, we now turn to a specific case study from modern Stockholm. On September 11, 1847, orphaned girls, their teachers and caretakers, and philanthropists gathered in the school venue of the Pietist orphanage Murbeck Institution for the Education of Poor Girls to
celebrate its centennial. At the time, Pietist religious life revolved around personal salvation and the lifelong process of spiritual renewal. Genuine faith was accomplished through bodily sensations of fear and anxiety over sin and hell, believed to be revealed by God, which in turn signalled to Pietists that they had started the process of conversion and could overcome said feelings (Bähr, 2014; Engelhardt, 2019). As emotional communities formed around these expected emotions (Engelhardt, 2019, p. 254; Rosenwein, 2007), Pietists extended their experience of God’s love into social practice through charity, philanthropy, and missionary work, such as Murbeck Institution. Sermons and poems in a dedicated pamphlet from the centennial celebration defined the Swedish orphanage as a ‘building of love,’ a conduit for the social and metaphysical metamorphosis in turning girls into economically contributing citizens, their eternal souls saved by God (Nordenson, 1847). According to the anonymous poet, the building was an epitome of the love of Christ, metaphorically compared to a fertile landscape for religious and societal upbringing, and a material manifestation of the Pietist practice of love for girls abandoned by their parents. Murbeck Institution was imagined as a material space that aided the institutionalised girls’ journey from darkness to light, from societal marginalisation to working citizens, and from strangers of Christ to believers by providing accommodation, religious education, and training towards a future as domestic servants (Nordenson, 1847, p. 34). The spatial representation of the orphanage in an accompanying lithograph similarly used the metaphor of light to instil a sense of societal demarcation (Figure 1). The building is pictured as a sole presence in a clean urban world, its white facade, and many windows highlighting its connection to light, and by Pietist extension, God’s presence. The pamphlet reveals the emotional regime that employers and benefactors strove to implement upon the girls living in the orphanage at the time of its centennial.
But how was the orphanage—as a religious institution and a material reality—experienced by multisensory orphaned bodies that spent years within its walls? The atmospheric approach and the methods of urban reconstruction and critical fabulation promote alternative readings of the experience of the orphanage, thus taking us one step closer to grasping the everyday life of the girls. Archival material does not reveal names or other personal information pertaining to the children who lived in Murbeck Institution. They were an, to us, unknown group that inhabited the city, which for a large part of their lives was dictated by their Pietist benefactors. But instead of towering above the rest of the city and from a clean and spacious street reaching a sky unpolluted by industrial fumes, as the lithograph suggests, a photograph of the street, albeit from decades later, portrays another reality of the orphanage (Figure 2). Cobbled pavements had emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, and the many individuals captured by the camera of early technology suggest a street bustling with life. From the angle of the camera, both sides of the street are visible, highlighting the narrowness of the street and the similar design of the buildings in the larger urban landscape. The winter day, and the consequent icy slush, underlines the contrast between this streetscape and the spacious and clean one suggested in the lithograph. The orphanage did not tower above the rest of the world but was merely one of many similar buildings in a row on a street in Stockholm’s industrial suburb.

Prompted by Pernau to consider sensory and moving dimensions of the body, we muse over whether the girls, as they walked towards the orphanage on this street and thus entered a culturally defined dialogue with the building, would have experienced the solemnity and godly love that leaders envisioned. As discussed earlier, we cannot presume that the spatial representation and organisation advocated by Pietist leaders were successfully implemented. It is likely that the rush of people, and the fact that women were not supposed to journey through public spaces in their spare time, distracted the girls’ approach to and entrance into the building. Instead of spending time on
considerations of it as a material manifestation of God’s care for them, the movement might just have been a matter of zigzagging through the urban crowd. Thus, when we imaginatively insert the orphans into the material reality of the photograph, the leaders’ spatial imagination of the building’s religious purpose of practicing God’s love does not appear as a probable atmosphere for the girls. The orphanage’s location in an industrial suburb and in a house not purpose-built for it would not have inspired sensory and affective experiences of material insularity and moral imposition. While lacking ego-documents from the girls themselves, the reconstruction of urban atmospheres and the critical fabulation of how the landscape might have been sensed and moved through contradict the more accessible, to scholars, emotional regime of the male leaders of the orphanage. The result from this hands-on example of our proposed methodology is suggestive, but it also underlines why emotions within the built environment must be considered by urban historians. Scholarly considerations of temporary bodily senses and movements in or around more permanent structures revert our gaze from producers of spaces and archives towards marginalised historical agents and their consciously or unconsciously conflicting practices.

4 | CONCLUSION

Building on Pernau’s pivotal article from 2014, we have suggested how spatial-emotional entanglements can aid urban historians in excavating and exploring experiences of marginalised groups. Our aim was to find an approach that could better highlight the experiences of Irish Catholic female migrants and Pietist orphaned girls, two groups of individuals that are subdued, if not silent, in historical archives. To achieve this, we combined Pernau’s double-sided analysis with the theoretical and methodological possibilities of atmospheres, reconstruction, and critical fabulation. Together, they allow for an explorative analysis that extrapolates a multitude of sensory and affective experiences through the atmospheric dialogue between bodies and the built environment. Using visual sources and material objects, we thus go beyond the much more accessible emotional management, historically installed by men, to suggest how women and girls might have experienced and used urban structures, such as churches and orphanages. While the Pietist orphanage example considers the interaction of intention and representation with critical questions of the orphans’ possible response, the Irish example emphasises the agency of women in creating an atmosphere of belonging which works in tandem with the more permanent built environment. In both cases, the sensory and bodily dimensions of lived everyday experiences are a negotiation of the built environment and intended emotional regimes, which others aspired to. The atmospheres that are thus created are ever shifting and individual, while reflecting the more general intentions of those who inhabited and those who designed. The differences between our two case studies, with regard to geography, temporality, and societal processes, demonstrate the potential of this approach: it applies to both macro and micro histories in various global settings and pushes beyond the co-management of space and emotion to find ordinary, quotidian, and temporary uses of the urban built environment.

Many urban historians have approached the history of emotions to consider biocultural responses to marginalisations within modern urban landscape (e.g., Fitzgerald & Rose, 2022; Kenny, 2014b; Prestel, 2017). While their work inspires us to turn to the biocultural body as a locus for research, we use it to uncover marginalised everyday life histories situated in the city. No clear-cut conclusions emerge. Instead, we find contradictory and alternative strategies and experiences. But we do not see the suggestive nature of our results as problematic. Leaning onto the individuality, diversity, and multitude that a history of emotions promotes, we argue that contingency needs to be a considered part and a parcel of urban histories. Ebrahimi’s and Maitland’s (2022) call for historians of emotion in the built environment to research ‘how it felt for every person to be [in a building] at a specific time’ might prove too difficult, as they themselves point out, but we believe that our approach allows the field to begin to consider a variety of historical agents. Relating to research on colonised areas in the global world, Katie Barclay (2021, p. 466) understands the history of emotions as a tool to help ‘destabilise and de-centre western assumptions about human behaviour.’ With this exploratory article, we urge colleagues in urban history to similarly use the tool to find and analyse bodies that destabilise historical narratives. Reaching beyond socially coherent and structured emotions,
this approach prioritises fragments, the temporary, and the multitude, thus capturing marginalised emotional practices and opening new doors for researching experiential and social histories of the built environment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Research reported in this publication was funded by the Royal Irish Academy. The content of this publication is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the Royal Irish Academy.

ORCID

Maja Hultman https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6634-7777

REFERENCES


AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Maja Hultman** is a postdoctoral researcher at Centre for European Research and the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Gothenburg and has held research fellowships at Centre for Business History in Stockholm and Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz. She is currently working on her first monograph, *Jewish Feelings in the City: Emotional Topographies and Power Relations in Modern Stockholm*, which will examine the intersection between urban history, Digital Humanities, and the history of emotions through the case study of Stockholm's Jewry.

**Sophie Cooper** is a Lecturer in Liberal Arts at Queen's University of Belfast. She is a social and cultural historian of Ireland and the Irish diaspora with a particular emphasis on gender, religion, and urban space. Sophie’s first book, *Forging Identities in the Irish World: Melbourne and Chicago, c. 1830–1922*, was published by Edinburgh University Press in early 2022. Sophie’s work has also been published in *Women’s History Review* and *Social History* journals in addition to edited collections.

Both are members of the HEBE (Histories of Emotion in the Built Environment) research network. HEBE is committed to considering the ways that the history of emotions can help us to better understand the built environment. It aims to facilitate inclusive cross-sectoral discussions between and across disciplines and practices. In doing so, researchers will reflect on the methodological opportunities and challenges of using emotional frameworks in the study of the built environment over the next 5 years. The HEBE network will run a series of seminars and events exploring these topics.

**How to cite this article:** Hultman, M., & Cooper, S. (2023). Revisiting space and emotion: New ways to study buildings and feelings. *History Compass*, e12764. https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12764