

**‘Thousands of throbbing hearts’**  
**Sentimentality and community in popular Victorian poetry: Longfellow’s**  
*Evangeline* and Tennyson’s *Enoch Arden*.

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With the recent resurgence of interest in sentimental texts, an interest strongly indebted to cross-disciplinary discussions of emotion and its production, a renewed focus on sentimentality as a means of constructing shared sympathy and communal feeling has emerged in literary criticism. Critics have agreed that sentimentality, understood in Robert Solomon’s terms as ‘an appeal to the tender feelings’ (defined as pity, sympathy, fondness and compassion, among others), served a vital function in relation to the rapid pace of change and subsequent emphasis on dislocation or alienation in nineteenth-century British and American culture and literature.<sup>1</sup> However questionable sentimentality might have become, this argument runs, it remained the best model for the sharing of emotion amongst a community of readers. As Fred Kaplan, in his classic study of Victorian sentimentality, observes:

The Victorian ‘sentimentalists’ believed that the alienating and dehumanizing pressure and structures of modern culture, all of them dry-eyed exponents of misery and suppression, are more and more separating human beings from their natural sentiments, and that the desire to repossess them is widespread even if dormant.<sup>2</sup>

Philip Davis supports this in an excellent recent dissection of sentimental fiction:

When people moved from the countryside to the towns and hardly knew where they were any more in that harsher and faster world, at least they still knew the communal heart was in its right place. Is that not what Victorian sentimentality is: a defensive part of urban social history, democratizing inarticulate good feeling, offering family feeling a place in the new world?<sup>3</sup>

As a model for this perceived need for connection between humans and their emotions, both critics turn to the peculiarly Victorian cliché of the heart. Kaplan writes that sentimentality operates as ‘an attempt...to generate, or at least to strengthen the possibility of the triumph of the feelings and the heart over self-serving calculation’.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Miriam Bailin has argued that it ‘served the interests of the rising middle classes by providing a flexible language of feeling associated with gentility but arising naturally from the heart rather than from custom or breeding.’<sup>5</sup> Kaplan, Bailin and Davis agree on the central importance of shared feeling, and the

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Wordsworthian language used by these critics picks up on the key nineteenth-century image for picturing this communal sentimentality, the heart. In this view, the recovery of good, natural sentiments has a redeeming purpose in the face of the harshness and alienation of modern society. But without disagreeing with these critics' crucial arguments for the importance of sentiment in the Victorian novel, such statements are difficult because the problem in nineteenth-century discourses of feeling was precisely how to define 'natural' feeling given that feeling was in its nature 'inarticulate', and how to be sure that 'family feeling' meant the same thing across societal divisions. Even assuming a middle-class readership, the 'communal heart' was still something that Victorian writers and readers felt increasingly hesitant about identifying.

These critical comments by Kaplan, Bailin and Davis are almost tongue-in-cheek in evoking such concepts, self-consciously reiterating Victorian ideology, but the fact that their studies do not always attempt to define the fractures in such concepts as the 'communal heart' makes these fractures seem relatively unproblematic. As I have shown elsewhere, however, the 'language of the heart' simultaneously provides a model for community and shared emotional values, and was fraught with the very notions of dissolution and alienation that it sought to eradicate.<sup>6</sup> Davis and others are right to assert that sentimentality sought to create feeling communities, but of course writers in this period were also deeply concerned that this was impossible, precisely due to the fact that individual feeling was inaccessible, indescribable, and thus profoundly incapable of forming part of a communal understanding. As Matthew Arnold states in 'The Buried Life':

I knew the mass of men conceal'd  
 Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd  
 They would by other men be met  
 With blank indifference, or with blame reprov'd;  
 I knew they lived and moved  
 Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest  
 Of men, and alien to themselves – and yet  
 The same heart beats in every human breast!<sup>7</sup>

After the initial couplet, the succeeding lines create uncertainty as the end-rhyme for 'met' is delayed and the pace becomes uneven: the drawn-out vowel sounds of 'With blank indifference, or with blame reprov'd', the extra foot on this line (pentameter rather than tetrameter), strong caesura, and difficulty of contracting the potential four

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syllables of ‘indifference’ into the metre all throw the reader off balance, particularly when this line is succeeded by the fast trimeter of ‘I knew they lived and moved’. It is this strong and unsettling evocation of alienation both in form and content, this emphasis on a lack of reassurance and understanding, rather than a smug reliance on shared feeling, which sentimental literature sought to confront.

In the light of Arnold’s exclamation, sentimental poetry asks the question: does the same heart beat in every human breast? And if everyone does experience the same emotions, is this enough to overcome the sense of being alien and unrecognized? Longfellow’s *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* (1847) and Tennyson’s *Enoch Arden* (1862) seem good starting-points for this exploration because they created fervent communities of readers on both sides of the Atlantic, communities apparently based on shared emotional responses to the poems. These two poems, arguably the best-known narrative poems of the period, straddle a line between clichéd sentimentality, a pure appeal to the reader’s ‘tender feelings’, and more difficult affects. They effectively raise the question, highly pertinent to recent criticism, of whether ‘affect’ and ‘sentimentality’ are linked, with the former potentially a rebranding of the latter, or whether they are entirely different concepts related to different kinds of emotion.<sup>8</sup> Through the deliberate use of the sentimental tradition, Longfellow and Tennyson produce poetry that is clearly designed for mass appeal but also manages to call into question some of the notions about what Victorian sentimentality might do and whether it offered a positive means of creating communal feeling, both in relation to characters within the poem and readers without.

The perceived easy sentimentality of *Evangeline* and *Enoch Arden* provides a reason why both poems received relatively little critical attention in the twentieth century, despite their enormous popularity in the nineteenth.<sup>9</sup> *Evangeline* was Longfellow’s best-loved poem, by a considerable distance, and established his fame in Britain. William Whewell, in an 1848 review, famously declared it ‘the first genuine Castalian fount which has burst from the soil of America’, and in 1849 *Evangeline* apparently inspired the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite movement to rank Longfellow just below Shakespeare, along with Raphael and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.<sup>10</sup> There were at least ninety-four editions of Longfellow’s poems published in England in the 1850s, enough to justify Clarence Gohdes’ suggestion that in terms of mass appeal Longfellow became ‘the unofficial Laureate of Victorian

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England'.<sup>11</sup> Although critical opinion turned away from Longfellow in later years, *Evangeline* remained highly popular, creating its own legends and traditions and reappearing in various media, including both stage and screen. *Enoch Arden* was similarly the popular, if not the critical, highlight of Tennyson's career, and according to Howard Fulweiler and other modern critics, 'the epitome of Tennysonian and Victorian sentimentality'.<sup>12</sup> It sold 17,000 copies on the day of publication and 60,000 in the first year – at the time an astonishing figure for poetry – and like *Evangeline* it retained its popularity throughout the century and spawned assorted film adaptations and alternative versions.

Both poems are sentimental in that they set out to appeal to the reader's pity and play on a sense of empathy for loss and suffering through their passive, patient heroes, *Enoch Arden* and *Evangeline*. Although it may be difficult to define 'sentimentality' as a term, it seems easy to recognize particular kinds of language, particular scenes or plot structures as sentimental, and both these poems deploy a number of key sentimental stereotypes – lost lovers, an orphaned heroine, shipwrecks, lonely voyaging, illness and redemptive death. As Bailin notes of *Enoch Arden*, in a comment equally applicable to Longfellow's work, it 'offers almost an encyclopedia of the sentimental preoccupations and tropes that typify Victorian pathos'.<sup>13</sup> Most importantly, both poems present narratives of separation, of the loss of community. As such, *Evangeline* and *Enoch Arden* are part of an attempt to make the 'language of the feelings and the heart' into a coherent ideology, in that despite the geographical dislocation of heroine and hero in these poems, their sense of shared feeling could redeem them and, in the wider context of their journeys, might become part of how their communities define themselves. William Reddy argues in his work on emotions, *The Navigation of Feeling*, that the 'emotional regime' of a society is shaped by two constraints:

1. Because emotions are closely associated with the dense networks of goals that give coherence to the self, the unity of a community – such as it may be – depends in part on its ability to provide a coherent set of prescriptions about emotions.
2. Because intentional shaping of emotions insofar as they are cognitive habits is possible... a community's emotional order must take the form of ideals to strive toward and strategies to guide individual effort.<sup>14</sup>

Sentimental discourse provides a vital way of defining these emotional prescriptions and offering suggestions about the appropriateness of particular feelings within a

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specific community. *Evangeline* and *Enoch Arden* are in part attempts to define sets of ‘feeling rules’, in order to guide readers towards a shared emotional order. They offer idealized pictures of feeling heroes, Enoch and Evangeline, and then suggest that their quests might model ways for readers to feel in turn, thus providing, as Christoph Irmscher puts it in his excellent recent study of Longfellow, ‘*shared, public* images to contain [the readers’] *private* grief’.<sup>15</sup> These poems attempt to create a unified community through such prescriptions, but given that the language and narratives of both poems also deploy an Arnoldian sense of loss and alienation, the vision of a feeling community is always in question. Longfellow and Tennyson simultaneously construct a shared sense of sympathy and make this mutual feeling seem virtually impossible to achieve, exposing the fractures inevitable in any attempt to form a sentimental community.

*Evangeline*, written throughout in trademark hexameters, was based on a historical event, the 1755 expulsion of the Acadians (emigrant French Canadians) from Nova Scotia. It tells the story of an idyllic farming society attacked by the British and forced into exile in the United States. The poem opens with a lengthy and nostalgic description of the Acadian community in terms of their unity of feeling and action:

Thus dwelt together in love these simple Acadian farmers, –  
Dwelt in the love of God and of man. Alike were they free from  
Fear, that reigns with the tyrant, and envy, the vice of republics.  
Neither locks had they to their doors, nor bars to their windows;  
But their dwellings were open as day and the hearts of their owners;<sup>16</sup>

These lines emphasize that the Acadians are liberated from materialist and capitalist instincts: they do not protect their property, and similarly, they do not protect and individualize their emotions. In sharp contrast to the society imagined by Arnold in ‘The Buried Life’, here all hearts share the same affections for the same objects and contain nothing potentially injurious to harmony. Evangeline, young, beautiful, pure and virtuous, and recently betrothed to the equally upstanding Gabriel as the story opens, is the representative of this community, the repository of its peaceful present and hopeful future. In an early scene prefiguring the imminent destruction of the Acadian way of life, for instance, Longfellow depicts Evangeline’s father sitting by the fireside, watching:

how the flames and the smoke-wreaths  
Struggled together like foes in a burning city. Behind him,

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Nodding and mocking along the wall, with gestures fantastic,  
 Darted his own huge shadow, and vanished away into darkness. (146)

Remembering the comparison between home or hearth and the heart made above, such shadows suggest unsettled emotions in the observer as well as disturbances in the orderliness of the house. Extra significance also accrues to this moment because the fireside, as Kristen Gruesz has observed, had particular resonance in Longfellow's sentimental poetics, as the site of reading and of shared domestic affections.<sup>17</sup> The vision of conflict at the hearth here hints at the succeeding day's attack by the British, which ends with the farm being burnt and the father's death from grief: it thus mockingly highlights the precariousness of domestic tranquillity. Yet these dark visions and the 'fragments of song' Evangeline's father recalls are dispelled and made harmonious by the sound of Evangeline's spinning wheel:

While the monotonous drone of the wheel, like the drone of a bagpipe,  
 Followed the old man's song, and united the fragments together.  
 As in a church, when the chant of the choir at intervals ceases,  
 Footfalls are heard in the aisles, or words of the priest at the altar,  
 So, in each pause of the song, with measured motion the clock clicked. (147)

Although the countdown has begun to the destruction of this domestic bliss and the clock's onomatopoeic 'click' might hence be ominous, it is Evangeline's quiet labour that creates a memorable moment of harmony ('united the fragments together') in which the household space becomes sanctified.

This early suggestion that Evangeline might be a means of creating peace and unity underlies the rest of the narrative. As she is orphaned, separated from Gabriel and exiled to travel through America, continually searching for and missing him, her patience and fidelity mark her as the inheritor of her community's feeling and as the figure symbolically capable of uniting not only her own community but perhaps the newly emerging United States also. When Evangeline's companion, the priest Father Felician, tells her to 'accomplish thy labour; accomplish thy work of affection!' (158) he suggests that her loyal quest to find Gabriel is crucial emotional labour, and that her work of feeling (and the need to work at feeling, to maintain love in spite of distance and separation) is essential. Like much of Longfellow's poetry, *Evangeline* considers how individual felt experience might relate to a national ideal. Evangeline's epic journey through America, as a displaced and unknown refugee, reflects upon the capacity of the state to provide new homes for those exiled. Although she finds remnants of the Acadian dream in Louisiana, where some of her community have

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settled, she herself, lacking the focus for her emotions in Gabriel, never achieves this security and instead haunts the developing U.S.A. with a memory of home:

Now in the Tents of Grace of the meek Moravian Missions,  
Now in the noisy camps and the battlefields of the army,  
Now in secluded hamlets, in towns and populous cities.  
Like a phantom she came, and passed away unremembered. (170)

The poem, however, strongly suggests that she should be remembered, and achieves this through its narrative. In fact, the recreation of the imaginary Evangeline's sufferings seemed so accurate that nineteenth and early twentieth-century readers fostered an enduring myth, instrumental in the rebirth of Acadian culture, about the 'real' Evangeline and her lover.<sup>18</sup>

Evangeline's 'work of affection' provides a model for how personal actions and feelings might help to create a nation linked by loyalty to and love for home and family. While she is largely represented as a helpless victim of political actions, not an agent, as Shirley Samuels observes:

In the case of sentimentality, separation from political action nonetheless meant presenting an affective alternative that not only gave political actions their emotional significance, but beyond that, intimately linked individual bodies to the national body.<sup>19</sup>

Since Evangeline's personal, affective, quest to find Gabriel has meaning for displaced peoples in general, it thus endues a central issue in nineteenth-century American politics and culture with 'emotional significance'. As Lucy Maddox convincingly demonstrates, the question of the removal of American Indians and their displacement from their native lands – including the famous incident of the expulsion of the Cherokee nation from Georgia and their forced march on the 'Trail of Tears' in 1838 – was hugely controversial from the 1830s to the 1850s, and is reflected upon in oblique forms in a number of novels from this period.<sup>20</sup> Longfellow is not included in Maddox's study, but in the light of her argument it is difficult not to sense a parallel between the displaced Acadians, with their peaceful, nature-loving, non-capitalistic society, and the displaced Indian tribes.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the political implications of the way in which emotion might link bodies together are shown most clearly in a scene between Evangeline and a Shawnee woman, the widow of a Canadian who relates to Evangeline 'the tale of her love, with its pleasures, pains and reverses':

Much Evangeline wept at the tale, and to know that another  
Hapless heart like her own had loved and had been disappointed. (167)

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The transmission of affect between Evangeline and this unnamed woman as they weep together models how sentimental narratives might inspire compassion and identification between different races or nationalities. By introducing the minor character of the Shawnee woman, Longfellow, whether intentionally or otherwise, hints at disturbing connections between the British treatment of the Acadians and American treatment of the Indians. Just as one of the most well-known sentimental works of art of the period, Hiram Powers' 'The Greek Slave', seemed to displace the suffering of black slaves onto a historicized, pure, white woman; so the suffering of Native American people is displaced in Longfellow's poem onto the virtuous Evangeline and her pastoral Christian community – an easier subject for readerly sympathy – and thus both highlighted and occluded.<sup>22</sup> While the politics of the poem are profoundly conservative in their advocacy of patient Christian suffering, this contemporary context also gives the poem a political message which is not at odds with its sentimentality but instead fundamentally attuned to it: only through shared feeling can a community of disparate American peoples come to exist.

This sentimental notion is called into question, however, by the close of the narrative. Now a Sister of Mercy in Philadelphia, Evangeline finally finds Gabriel, an old man on the verge of death in a fever ward. This allows for a dramatic moment of recognition on her part, and his dreamlike identification of her as his lost bride. The implication is that as Gabriel dies immediately after this moment, so does Evangeline, finally uniting the lovers. The closing lines of the poem, moving forward to the present, depict Evangeline and Gabriel's graves as a sacred place of sentiment within a city characterized by alienation and physical and mental suffering:

Side by side, in their nameless graves, the lovers are sleeping.  
Under the humble walls of the little Catholic churchyard,  
In the heart of the city, they lie, unknown and unnoticed.  
Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing beside them,  
Thousands of throbbing hearts, where theirs are at rest and for ever,  
Thousands of aching brains, where theirs no longer are busy,  
Thousands of toiling hands, where theirs have ceased from their labours,  
Thousands of weary feet, where theirs have completed their journey! (173)

Evangeline and Gabriel are 'in the heart of the city', this implies, because they *are* the heart of the city, the fund of sentiment that underlies busy commercial life and retains its power even when 'unknown and unnoticed'. The peacefulness of death and secure space of a 'little' and 'humble' churchyard render Evangeline's emotion incorruptible;

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whatever may happen outside, she remains eternally pure and untouched, finally at rest after her travels. It is important, as Armin Paul Frank and Christel-Maria Maas have recently noted, that Evangeline ends her journey in Philadelphia, birthplace of the republic and a city ‘characterized as a place where the lost Acadian virtues of equality, charity and brotherly love recur as American virtues’.<sup>23</sup> Given the emphasis on exhausting, repetitive work in the above lines, however, it might be more accurate to state that Longfellow’s poem rather hopes that these virtues might recur in a future Philadelphia than asserts their present existence. The sentimentality of this passage is severely troubled. If Evangeline’s story is to serve as a model of feeling, showing how communal sentiment and the memory of a society can be preserved in an individual despite loss and separation, then the location of her grave might reassure these ‘thousands of throbbing hearts’ of the importance of their personal emotions. Although Evangeline lies unknown in the city, her story is maintained ‘by the evening fire’ by the remnants of the Acadian community in Canada, and, of course, Longfellow’s poem itself recuperates her journey. Through this sympathetic identification with her suffering, readers could learn the importance of a ‘work of affection’, of the survival of love in a hostile world. On the other hand, it is hard to identify the tone and mood of these lines. Like the repetition of ‘Now...Now...Now’ earlier, Longfellow’s exact reproduction of phrases (‘Thousands of ... where theirs’) creates an impression of weariness, a recurring and inescapable pattern. Erik Gray, in his recent study of Clough and the Victorian hexameter, assesses how ‘the hexameter both in Latin and English specifically depends upon the coexistence of conflicting impulses’, and notes that ‘the five most important hexameter poems in English of the mid-nineteenth century all concern displaced people’, perhaps because the shifting push-pull rhythm of the hexameter line is suited to accounts of wandering.<sup>24</sup> The hexameter’s ebb and flow, echoing the movement of crowds on the city streets here, does not lend itself to a sense of completion and rest. Moreover, if the repetition of ‘theirs’ attracts a stress, these lines take on an edge of resentment, a hint of ‘it’s all very well for *them*’. Evangeline and Gabriel have escaped the pain and loneliness of those trapped in the modern city, outside the walls of their enclave, but others have not. In this reading, their presence at the heart of the city is ironic, failing to affect the ‘thousands of throbbing hearts’ that surround them, the hearts of those who are Arnoldian exiles rather than openhearted farmers.

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Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* takes up the narrative pattern of exile (as Enoch journeys abroad to make money for his family, and is cast away on a desert island for years) and return. What Enoch shares with Evangeline is his patient Christian suffering and his long-held loyalty to his beloved; Tennyson's poem asks us to recognize his decision not to reveal himself to his wife, Annie, and hence destroy her new life with his rival, as heroic. It is this decision that marks a major difference between the poems – Tennyson's narrative eschews the sentimentalised moment of recognition. Not only this, but *Enoch Arden* denies Enoch virtually every connection, after his return, with his family, his home and his community. Like Evangeline, he loses the comforting space of the domestic hearth, but unlike her, this is not through violence and forcible expulsion but through a more disturbing, because more ordinary, displacement. From the moment he arrives in England his welcome is felt to be in jeopardy. Unlike the readers of *Evangeline*, we have been given both sides of the story, and so we know that Annie has remarried and had a child. Tennyson introduces a dissonant note shortly after Enoch's landing in England, as the word 'home' itself comes to seem alien to him:

There Enoch spoke no word to any one,  
But homeward – home – what home? had he a home?  
His home, he walked.<sup>25</sup>

This interrupted and questioning line is an anomaly in the poem, a moment when the boundaries between the narrative voice and the character's feelings are unclear. Assuming that this line represents Enoch's self-questioning, it is a rare insight into the character's mental anguish, as he asks himself not simply whether his particular home, a specific house or location, still exists, but whether 'home' as a concept is possible for him. In the iambic beat of the lines, the stress in 'had he a home?' falls on 'he', which again carries the same implication. Although 'His home' might seem like a continuation of these questions, the lack of a question mark might suggest it is rather a tentative answer, Enoch asserting that he does have a destination where he belongs. If so, it is negated when he reaches what was his home, and finds 'neither light nor murmur there/ (A bill of sale gleamed through the drizzle)' (683-4). Forced to carry on without much hope to a decaying tavern ('So propt, worm-eaten, ruinously old/ He thought it must have gone' (688-9)), he finds Miriam Lane, the elderly widow of the innkeeper, and hears the story of Annie's remarriage at second hand. In fact, on his

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deathbed Miriam Lane becomes his only confidante within his former community, and her response to his story is incredulity rather than recognition:

The woman gave  
A half-incredulous, half-hysterical cry.  
'You Arden, you! Nay, - sure he was a foot  
Higher than you be.' (848-51)

Even when she is persuaded, there is some doubtfulness about her emotional response to Enoch's tragic story:

As the woman heard,  
Fast flowed the current of her easy tears,  
While in her heart she yearned incessantly  
To rush abroad all round the little haven,  
Proclaiming Enoch Arden and his woes; (860-864)

By referring to Miriam Lane as 'the woman' (and always referring to her by both names rather than her Christian name), the narrator emphasizes the fact that Enoch barely knows her and has little connection to her. Although Miriam's desire to share Enoch's story with the community could be read as a wish to spread sympathy for him, it might also simply be a good occasion for gossip. 'Easy' is an adjective that invokes doubt: hard-won tears would surely be more valuable than gushing sentimentality. These tears, the first shed for Enoch since he sailed away, are suspect. It is easy for Miriam to cry, thus suggesting that Enoch's tragedy is only one of many events which could affect her, and also that her tears may give her an ease (in the sense of relief) which he cannot possess.

Tennyson's decision not to include a recognition scene between Enoch and his wife and children also marks a difference from other versions of the same narrative. In Adelaide Procter's 'Homeward Bound', for example, the sailor returns from exile to encounter his wife and her new husband, an old friend. His entrance into the family home is greeted 'with a shriek of fear and terror/ And a white face of despair'. Although the narrator stresses that no words are exchanged between the sailor, his wife and her new husband, they share an emotional moment of distress and grief:

Bitter tears that desolate moment,  
Bitter, bitter tears we wept,  
We three broken hearts together,  
While the baby smiled and slept.<sup>26</sup>

The sentimentality of this moment lies in the creation of a feeling community amongst people who have every reason to fear and mistrust each other, but who experience 'no thought but sorrow' instead. The baby's smile adds poignancy through

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the sense of innocence contrasted with the terrible knowledge of the adults in this scene, but it equally gives a reason for resolving the situation, a future made visible in the child's happiness. The fact that everyone's heart is broken, not simply the sailor's, means that he can find a measure of comfort and reconciliation with this family even while exiled from it again. Enoch Arden does not have this satisfaction. In the most famous scene of the poem, he goes to gaze upon Annie and his children and ensure their happiness, and standing outside the house is overcome with emotion:

Then he, though Miriam Lane had told him all,  
Because things seen are mightier than things heard,  
Staggered and shook, holding the branch, and feared  
To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,  
Which in one moment, like the blast of doom,  
Would shatter all the happiness of the hearth. (761-6)

Evangeline's cathartic 'cry of such terrible anguish' (172) on seeing Gabriel, or even the 'shriek of fear and terror' of the wife in 'Homeward Bound', are denied to Enoch and the reader. The possibility is introduced but never fulfilled, and Enoch remains unknown despite living on in the town for some time before his eventual death.

Enoch's witnessing of a vignette of happy family life from which he is excluded is a sentimental highlight, resonating with similar instances in Victorian fiction. But Tennyson does not sentimentalise Enoch's own emotional response, nor his terrible loneliness. As he comments to Miriam on what he can expect from the afterlife:

And now there is but one of all my blood  
Who will embrace me in the world-to-be:  
This hair is his: she cut it off and gave it,  
And I have borne it with me all these years. (888-891)

These lines can securely be described as intensely sentimental, lingering pleasurably on the irony that the only family Enoch has left is his dead son, a child whose death he only heard of on his return, and on the pathos of the lock of hair as memento of the dead. The implication is that his relationship with this dead child is now his only consolation, given that his other children appear to have accepted Philip as their father.<sup>27</sup> But these lines are also potentially much more despairing than the vision of Enoch and his 'babe in bliss' (894) reunited might suggest. The notion of Heaven as a site of restored relationships was a staple of Victorian religious discourse, but the reassuring ideological standpoint which held that families would be reunited in Paradise was perceived as problematic when it came to second marriages and later

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relationships, despite the suggestion in Luke 20: 35 that in heaven the dead ‘neither marry, nor are given in marriage’.<sup>28</sup> In other words, there may be some question as to whether Enoch’s family will ever be his again – or will they belong to Philip even in heaven? After all, Enoch’s refusal to break up Annie’s illegal second marriage does suggest (to the regret of some Victorian critics) that he does not see anything morally wrong or unsanctified in her marrying again. He treats her marriage as what she believes it to be, a genuine second marriage after the first husband’s death, and we assume that after the close of the narrative she will legally marry Philip. A lot depends on whether Enoch’s ‘now’ in line 888 means ‘now at this moment, as I die’ or ‘now that my wife has married again and my children have another father’, because the second alternative implies that *only* the dead child, who died before Philip became part of the family, will recognize Enoch as his father. Even in Paradise, Enoch may never be integrated into his lost family again.

Enoch’s emotional self-reliance is painted in much darker terms than that of Evangeline, because while she becomes ghost-like and unremembered in the scenes of her exile, he is in this position in what should be his home, but has become a place of more profound isolation than the desert island on which he was shipwrecked. The controversial costly funeral that Annie and Philip hold for Enoch might show the community that he was a man of worth, a hero, who should be remembered after death, but it does not provide a solution to his sufferings; and Anne Humpherys observes that the end of the poem also maximises Annie’s ‘horror, pain, guilt and remorse because there is nothing she can do’.<sup>29</sup> If *Enoch Arden* presents a bleak picture of its hero’s chances of being reintegrated into a community and provides no helpful models of shared feeling and sympathy, how can its sentimentality be constructive? The solution may be that, as with Evangeline in her solitary wanderings, the readerly community can make up for the hostility or ignorance of the communities represented within the poem. As Davis argues on the emotion created by sentimentality:

Emotion *is* that felt disproportion between the indifference outside and the sense of overwhelming meaning within. Hurt by the discrepancy, emotion constitutes of itself a compensation for it. That protective feeling offers via the readers an alternative society, an alternative secret family.<sup>30</sup>

Sentimentality thrives on indifference, and indifference within the poem teaches the reader, though the emotional response it creates, something about how not to

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constitute communities without it. But it might also, arguably, suggest to the reader that indifference to others' sufferings is an inevitable state of affairs, just as in death Enoch is indifferent to what Annie and his children will feel on learning of his unknown presence in their town, and Evangeline and Gabriel are indifferent to the 'throbbing hearts' of the inhabitants of Philadelphia.

Mary-Louise Kete, in a recent study of poetic sentimentality, argues that:

The poetics of sentimentality is best revealed by attention to quotidian verse that celebrates not the sublime, the individual, and the possibility of dissent, but the domestic, the familial, and the possibility of consent.<sup>31</sup>

*Evangeline* and *Enoch Arden* fit this model, but while their focus is firmly on the importance of 'the domestic, the familial and the possibility of consent', they are not celebratory or even necessarily positive about the prospects of these concepts. Rather than, as Fulweiler argues of sentimental literature, counteracting a pervasive cultural sense of homelessness and lack of belonging by insisting fervently that such belonging is possible, they suggest how important family feeling, romantic love, and empathy are for both the individual and society by presenting individuals who are disappointed and thwarted in the first two and seldom find the third even when they practise it themselves.<sup>32</sup> The kind of recuperative sentimental community discussed by Kete might exist as an ideal in these poems but the close of both narratives does not present a bright prospect for its future. For poems that have repeatedly been suspected of falsity by critics or dismissed for their substitution of easy, inauthentic emotions of pathos and pity for the harder affects of tragedy and pain, *Evangeline* and *Enoch Arden* seem a lot darker and more focused on loss and indifference than might be expected. Their emotional range, in many instances, is closer to the difficult responses of affect or passion – including unresolvable emotions of pain or loss – than the emotions traditionally associated with clichéd sentimentality, such as pity and tenderness, and they ask tricky questions, questions with political as well as personal implications, about the possibility of shared communal feeling. Some of the most sentimental moments in Victorian poetry, Longfellow and Tennyson's work suggests, can also be the most estranging and estranged.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Solomon, *In Defense of Sentimentality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.4 and passim.

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<sup>2</sup> Fred Kaplan, *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), p.41.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Davis, 'Victorian Realist Prose and Sentimentality', in *Rereading Victorian Fiction*, ed. Alice Jenkins and Juliet John (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp.13-28 (p.23).

<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, p.37.

<sup>5</sup> Miriam Bailin, "'Dismal Pleasure": Victorian Sentimentality and the Pathos of the Parvenu', *ELH* 66 (1999): 1015-1032 (1016).

<sup>6</sup> Kirstie Blair, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'The Buried Life', lines 16-23, in *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Miriam Allott and Robert H. Super (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Recent discussions of 'affect' by Isobel Armstrong and Teresa Brennan have little to no discussion of sentimentality as a concept: Brennan briefly mentions that 'sentiments' can be accepted as 'subsets referring to longer-lasting affective constellations'. See *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p.6 and Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.108 and passim. The incorporation of sentimentality under the rubric of affect seems valid given that the latter includes emotions not usually associated with the former (e.g. the passions of grief or terror), but it is important to consider whether eighteenth and nineteenth-century writers, lacking the concept of 'affect', would have viewed the sentiments in this way. I suggest here that for Longfellow and Tennyson sentimentality could include a wide range of affects as well as affect including a wide range of sentiments, and that



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there was a vexed question as to whether ‘sentiment’ *solely* referred to the ‘tender feelings’.

<sup>9</sup> Dana Gioia, in his important 1993 defence of Longfellow, for instance, noted that his work then existed in ‘a critical vacuum’. ‘Longfellow in the Aftermath of Modernism’, in *The Columbia History of American Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp.64-96 (p.70).

<sup>10</sup> William Whewell, *Fraser’s Magazine* 37 (1848): 295-298. Cited in Clarence Gohdes, *American Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p.109.

<sup>11</sup> Gohdes, p.126.

<sup>12</sup> Howard Fulweiler, ‘Here A Captive Heart Busted’: *Studies in the Sentimental Journey of Modern Literature* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), p.8.

<sup>13</sup> Bailin, p.1024.

<sup>14</sup> William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of the Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.61-2.

<sup>15</sup> Christoph Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), p.70.

<sup>16</sup> *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*, in *The Poetical Works of Longfellow* (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), p.143. All further references given in the text.

<sup>17</sup> Kristen Silvia Gruesz, ‘Feeling for the Fireside: Longfellow, Lynch, and the Topography of Poetic Power’, in *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture*, ed. Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp.43-63.

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<sup>18</sup> Irmischer describes how the translation of *Evangeline* helped to construct it as a ‘French-Canadian’ poem (pp.246-53, p.252). See also Naomi Griffiths, ‘Longfellow’s *Evangeline*: The Birth and Acceptance of a Legend’, *Acadiensis* 9 (1982): 28-41.

<sup>19</sup> Shirley Samuels, ‘Introduction’ to *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.4.

<sup>20</sup> Lucy Maddox, *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of American Affairs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>21</sup> This parallel was first suggested to me by Professor Jay Grossman in an undergraduate seminar. Charles Calhoun, in his recent biography of Longfellow, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), argues that any such parallels in *Evangeline* are unintentional and retrospectively ironic, because ‘only a radical’ in 1847 would have perceived them (182). This is a compelling point, but works against the possibilities of radical reading suggested by Maddox. Rosemary Lyons highlights connections between Longfellow’s poem and (contemporary) Native American and Acadian literature, but only in order to characterize *Evangeline* as naïve, reactionary and dated. See *A Comparison of the Works of Antonine Maillet of the Acadian Tradition of New Brunswick, Canada and Louise Erdrich of the Ojibwe of North America, with the Poems of Longfellow* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 2002), pp.4 ,6.

<sup>22</sup> On sentimentality and ‘The Greek Slave’ see Joy Kasson, ‘Narratives of the Female Body: *The Greek Slave*’ in Samuels, ed., pp.172-190.

<sup>23</sup> Armin Paul Frank and Christel-Maria Maas *Transnational Longfellow: A Project of American National Poetry* (Peter Lang: Frankfurt, 2005), p.95.

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<sup>24</sup> Erik Gray, 'Clough and his Discontents: *Amours de Voyage* and the English Hexameter', *Literary Imagination* 6 (2004): 195-210 (196).

<sup>25</sup> Alfred Tennyson, 'Enoch Arden', lines 663-5, in *The Poems of Tennyson*, 3 vols, ed. Christopher Ricks (Longman: Harlow, 1987), vol II. All further references given in the text.

<sup>26</sup> Adelaide Procter, 'Homeward Bound', from *Legends and Lyrics* (London: George Bell, 1892), p.51.

<sup>27</sup> On the consolation present in these lines, see Bailin, 'Seeing is Believing in "Enoch Arden"', in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp.313-326 (p.322).

<sup>28</sup> On the importance of the idea of family reunion in heaven, see Michael Wheeler, *Death and the Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.132-3.

<sup>29</sup> Anne Humpherys, 'Enoch Arden, the Fatal Return, and the Silence of Annie', *Victorian Poetry* 30 (1992): 331-42 (340).

<sup>30</sup> Davis, p.21

<sup>31</sup> Mary-Louise Kete, *Sentimental Collaborations: Mourning and Middle-Class Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p.3.

<sup>32</sup> Fulweiler, pp.20-21.