

## **“Preserv[ing] the freshness of the system”: Itineraries of the Body in Alexander Bain’s Rhetoric of Travel**

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“While the face of the civilized world is receiving its network of railroads, and the broad sea is becoming narrower by steam power, it may not be unprofitable to take up as a theme of study and discourse, ‘How to travel.’ Henceforth, we are to be let loose in multitudes from our anchorage to our homes and our narrow circles, and to flow in unceasing tide over foreign nations and through distant cities.” Thus begins a little-known 1847 essay by Alexander Bain, published in Lowe’s *Edinburgh Magazine*, entitled “On Travelling and Books of Travel.” In the first half of the essay, Bain advises his readers on the least stressful, most beneficial way to travel, and in the second half, he gives tips on the most effective way to write about one’s travels. His advice for both activities rests on the revolutionary (for the time) assumption that the mind/body is a unified system, and that physiological considerations are just as important for traveling and writing as intellectual and aesthetic considerations.

Famous in his day for his contributions in the newly emerging field of psychology, Scottish-born Alexander Bain (1818-1903) was also known for his work in rhetoric and educational theory. His two-volume treatise *The Senses and the Intellect* (1855) and *The Emotions and the Will* (1859) became standard texts on the study of the mind and went through several editions. Another of Bain’s works, *English Composition and Rhetoric, A Manual* (1866) has had a continuing influence on composition theory and pedagogy even to the present day. His life-long explorations the physiological basis of intellect, emotion, and will earned him acclaim and infamy; in the words of one contemporary wit, Bain’s philosophy amounted to saying a man’s “soul’s his brain.”

In this paper, I will first situate Bain’s essay within the context of contemporaneous texts that give advice about travel for tourists and emigrants. Second, I will examine at some length the homology between Bain’s suggestions for the *practice* of travel and the *rhetoric* of travel. I aim to demonstrate that, for Bain, taking account of embodiment is crucial for effective performance in both of these arenas. What Bain does in this obscure essay is make clear the connection between traveling in the body and embodying the travel in the text—a connection that was to make itself felt around the world in his subsequent works on psychology, rhetoric, and education.