
Worrying about Emotions in History

Author(s): Barbara H. Rosenwein

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Review Essay
Worrying about Emotions in History

BARBARA H. ROSENWEIN

AS A MEDIEVALIST, I have cause to be worried about emotions in history. I do not worry about the emotions themselves: people in the past, as now, expressed joy, sorrow, anger, fear, and many other feelings; these emotions had multiple meanings then (as they do today); they had their effects on others and were manipulated in turn (as ours do and are). What medievalists—indeed, all historians who want to get their history right—must worry about is how *historians* have treated emotions in history. The purpose of this article is to survey the historiography of emotions in Western history and to suggest some fresh ways to think about the topic.

IT MAY BE OBJECTED THAT, for the most part, historians have not treated the subject of emotions at all. Despite numerous calls for their study, starting at least as far back as 1941 with a famous article by Lucien Febvre, most historians have shied away from the topic. Why indeed should they have essayed it? As an academic discipline, history began as the servant of political developments.¹ Despite a generation's worth of social and cultural history, the discipline has never quite lost its attraction to hard, rational things.² Emotions have seemed tangential (if not fundamentally opposed) to the historical enterprise.

When Febvre called for histories of emotions in 1941, he was not so much repudiating the political focus of history as recognizing something that, perhaps,

I dedicate this article to the memory of my father, Norman Herstein (1921–2002). This article was written during a year of research (1999–2000) supported by a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship and subvented by Loyola University Chicago. I am grateful to both. I wish to extend warm thanks to Esther Cohen, Mayke de Jong, Lynn Hunt, Piroska Nagy, Daniela Romagnoli, Tom Rosenwein, Daniel Smail, Stephen D. White, and members of the *AHR* Board of Editors for reading and commenting on this article in draft. At the behest of Allen Frantzen, I presented one version of it as a lecture for the Loyola Medieval Studies program; I would like to thank him, Theresa Gross-Diaz, and other members of the audience. Finally, I thank my graduate students—Kirstin DeVries, Frances Mitilineos, Jilana Ordman, David Roufs, and Sonya Seifert—for cheerfully worrying the topic with me throughout a year-long course.

¹ For a brief summation, see Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, N.H., 1997), 5.

² Less than forty years ago, when the *Journal of Social History* was founded, its founder, Peter Stearns, bewailed the fact that social historians were acting as handmaidens to political history; see *Journal of Social History* 1 (Fall 1967): 4. (Stearns figures prominently in emotions historiography, as will be noted below.) But even as late as 1994, Lyndal Roper's study of subjectivity in the early modern era, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London), 5, had to fight "our own attachment to the story of the rise of individualism and rationality." This bias is an aspect of history's gender: see Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical*

only the Nazis could have brought home to a Frenchman: politics itself is not rational, not unemotional. (Let us leave to the side for a moment consideration of the rational nature of emotions. In the 1940s—and indeed until the 1960s—everyone assumed without question that emotions were irrational.) Febvre believed it was important to study emotions because “the emotional life [is] always ready to overflow the intellectual life . . . [You might say:] The history of hate, the history of fear, the history of cruelty, the history of love; stop bothering us with this idle chatter. But that idle chatter . . . will tomorrow have turned the universe into a fetid pit of corpses.”³ Note which emotions Febvre evoked in this passage: hate, fear, and love. He threw in cruelty for good measure because he thought that all “irrational” matters went together. He was calling for histories of what we would call the “Dark Side”—hate, fear, cruelty. It is love, in fact, that is out of place here.⁴ But Febvre included love because it could easily fall out of bounds, to become passion and lust.

Why did Febvre imagine that histories of these gruesome feelings could stave off fascist nightmares?⁵ His answer was that “the history of ideas and the history of institutions . . . are subjects that the historian can neither understand nor make understood without this primordial interest that I call the psychological.”⁶ Inspired by the psychological theories of his friend Henri Wallon, who had just published an article on the topic in the *Encyclopédie française*, Febvre argued that emotions were basic in that they brought people together in the first place.⁷ But they were also

Practice (Cambridge, Mass., 1998). Emotions were similarly avoided until recently in anthropology: see Catherine Lutz and Geoffrey M. White, “The Anthropology of Emotions,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15 (1986): 405–36. Small wonder that William M. Reddy, who is interested in the history of emotions, has made politics an instrument of emotional control: Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), 124: “Emotions are of the highest political significance. Any enduring political regime must establish as an essential element a normative order for emotions, an ‘emotional regime.’” See also Reddy, “Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions,” *Current Anthropology* 38 (June 1997): 335: “Emotional control is the real site of the exercise of power: politics is just a process of determining who must repress as illegitimate, who must foreground as valuable, the feelings and desires that come up for them in given contexts and relationships.”

³ Lucien Febvre, “La sensibilité et l’histoire: Comment reconstituer la vie affective d’autrefois?” *Annales d’histoire sociale* 3 (January–June 1941): 5–20 [hereafter, “La vie affective”], quote on 19; in English as “Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past,” in *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre*, Peter Burke, ed., K. Folca, trans. (London, 1973), 12–26. All translations in this article are my own unless otherwise indicated.

⁴ Febvre, “La vie affective,” 18; also included “death” among the emotions. The net effect was to tie *sensibilité* to the more familiar *Annales* subject of *mentalités*. Though theoretically part of *mentalités* history, emotions have figured little in the overall thrust of such studies. See *Europäische Mentalitätsgeschichte: Hauptthemen in Einzeldarstellungen*, Peter Dinzelbacher, ed. (Stuttgart, 1993), where emotions figure quite secondarily to topics such as death, work, and nature. The case is the same in the overview in Hans-Henning Kortüm, *Menschen und Mentalitäten: Einführung in Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1996).

⁵ In the first version of “La vie affective” (Lucien Febvre, “La sensibilité dans l’histoire: Les ‘courants’ collectifs de pensée et d’action,” in *La sensibilité dans l’homme et dans la nature*, 10^e Semaine Internationale de Synthèse, 7–11 juin 1938 [Paris, 1943], 77–100), Febvre spoke (p. 98) of “les foules hallucinées de Nuremberg et d’ailleurs.”

⁶ Febvre, “La vie affective,” 19.

⁷ *Encyclopédie française*, Vol. 8: *La vie mentale*, Henri Wallon, ed. (Paris, 1938), pt. 24, pp. 1–7; the first section of the article, “Rapports affectifs: Les émotions,” was written by Wallon himself. Present at the 1938 conference at which Febvre first gave his paper, Wallon thanked Febvre for having “élargi mon exposé sur l’émotion, l’a enrichi et complété.” See *La sensibilité dans l’homme*, 104. It is perhaps useful to know that Febvre was the general editor of the *Encyclopédie française*. Wallon was his close friend from their days as fellow students at the Ecole Normale. See Carole Fink, *Marc Bloch: A Life*

primitive. Upon the foundational associations that emotions created were built the languages, ideas, and institutions of human civilization, but emotions remained separate from the culture that they generated. For Febvre, emotions were not *part* of civilized life, however essential they were to its existence.

Febvre's ideas are important because the small number of historians who have been interested in emotions habitually invoke him as the prophet crying in the wilderness, the man who saw the light but had few followers. It is my contention, to the contrary, that Febvre was simply following some others and was leading historians on the wrong path as he did so. In particular, he was following Johan Huizinga. This may seem surprising, because Febvre's article was ostensibly an attack on Huizinga. In *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, published in 1919 in Dutch (Febvre read it in the French translation of 1932), Huizinga spoke of the childlike nature of medieval emotional life. The opening of his first chapter announced the theme:

To the world when it was half a thousand years younger, the outlines of all things seemed more clearly marked than to us . . . All experience had yet to the minds of men the directness and absoluteness of the pleasure and pain of child-life . . . All things in life were of a proud or cruel publicity . . . All things presenting themselves to the mind in violent contrasts and impressive forms, lent a tone of excitement and of passion to everyday life and tended to produce that perpetual oscillation between despair and distracted joy, between cruelty and pious tenderness which characterize life in the Middle Ages.⁸

When Febvre read those words in the context of Nazi horrors, he objected to them not because he thought there was anything wrong in calling the Middle Ages childlike but because, in his view, Huizinga ought to have pointed out that emotions are *always* violent, shifting, and extravagant. However, some eras (in Febvre's view) could keep passions tamped down better than others. The historian's task was to identify such periods and explain how and why they worked. Febvre was calling for moral history, history that would explain fascism and reveal the principles on which a more rational order could be constructed. His call was public policy masquerading as history.

In the event, this was not the legacy of Febvre's article; its most important impact was to legitimize the emotionally childlike Middle Ages. How convenient this has turned out to be for modernists shall soon be made clear. Certainly, it was two modernists—Peter Stearns and his psychiatrist/historian wife Carol Stearns—who next called for a history of emotions. Their manifesto, published in the *AHR*

in *History* (Cambridge, 1989), 137, 149. Nevertheless, Febvre's emphasis on violent emotions was not Wallon's. Wallon was interested in all sorts of emotions: fear, joy, pleasure, anger, anxiety, and even shyness.

⁸ Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, Frederik J. Hopman, trans. (New York, 1924), 9, from the original Dutch: *Herfstij der Middeleeuwen: Studie over levens- en gedachtvormen der veertiende en vijftiende eeuw in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden* (Haarlem, 1919). See also now *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch, trans. (Chicago, 1996), 1: "every experience had that degree of directness and absoluteness that joy and sadness still have in the mind of a child." What Huizinga really said is perhaps of less importance than what historians think he said. The French version, where Febvre read his Huizinga, is *Déclin du Moyen âge*, Julia Bastin, trans. (Paris, 1932). Here (p. 10) the translation is rendered "toute expérience avait encore ce degré d'immédiat et d'absolu qu'ont le plaisir et la peine dans l'esprit d'un enfant."

in 1985, proclaimed a new field for historians of emotions: “emotionology.”⁹ It was an unlovely word but extremely useful, with its scientific panache recalling “sociology” or “psychology.” Within a year, the two had published *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America’s History*.¹⁰ These opening salvos marked the creation of a virtual mini-industry: an impressive series of books and articles by Stearns himself and others inspired by him on the emotional history of the United States.¹¹ Taken together, this body of work comprises the most significant research in the history of emotions to date. What are its premises?

“Emotionology,” a term created by the Stearnses, refers to “the attitude or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression [and] ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct.”¹² Its emphasis, then, is not on how people felt or represented their feelings but on what people thought about such matters as crying in public, getting angry, or showing anger physically. It assumes that what people *think* about feelings they will eventually actually feel. The Stearnses were here astutely picking up on some sociological theories of the 1970s and 1980s. The sociologist Arlie Hochschild, for example, was arguing that society could and did control emotions and their expression, that there were “feeling rules,” or “emotion rules” that told people, in essence, how to feel and how to express those utterly socially mandated feelings.¹³ Hochschild argued that airline stewardesses learned at training schools not only to smile but to *feel* pleasant when travelers yelled at them. She called this the “managed heart.” The Stearnses wanted to look at the managed hearts of the past.

But it turned out to be a very shallow past. For how do you get at the “emotional standards” of a society? The Stearnses’ answer: by looking at popular advice manuals. But these must be non-elite to qualify as emotionology. Thus, in *Anger*, for example, the Stearnses explicitly avoid using “high-culture sources”; their focus is on the “common folk,” which, in point of fact, turns out to mean the middle classes.¹⁴ Was there emotionology before the advent of modern advice

⁹ Peter N. Stearns with Carol Z. Stearns, “Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards,” *AHR* 90 (October 1985): 813–36.

¹⁰ Carol Zisowitz Stearns and Peter N. Stearns, *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America’s History* (Chicago, 1986).

¹¹ For example, Peter N. Stearns, *Jealousy: The Evolution of an Emotion in American History* (New York, 1989); Peter N. Stearns and Timothy Haggerty, “The Role of Fear: Transitions in American Emotional Standards for Children, 1850–1950,” *AHR* 96 (February 1991): 63–94; *An Emotional History of the United States*, Peter N. Stearns and Jan Lewis, eds. (New York, 1998); Peter N. Stearns, *Battleground of Desire: The Struggle for Self-Control in Modern America* (New York, 1999).

¹² Stearns and Stearns, “Emotionology,” 813. The definition, which is presented as a sort of epigram to the article, is followed by one for “emotion,” but only the latter was derived from the social-scientific literature, namely from Paul R. Kleinginna, Jr., and Anne M. Kleinginna, “A Categorized List of Emotion Definitions, with Suggestions for a Consensual Definition,” *Motivation and Emotion* 5 (1981): 355. The necessity for the term “emotionology” is not self-evident; at the time that the Stearnses were writing, social scientists were using the term “sentiment” to mean “socially articulated symbols and behavioral expectations,” as opposed to private feelings. See Lutz and White, “Anthropology of Emotions,” 409.

¹³ For example, Arlie Russell Hochschild, “Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure,” *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (November 1979): 551–75; Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley, Calif., 1983).

¹⁴ Stearns and Stearns, *Anger*, 249, n. 31; 12 (“common folk”); 16 (“middle class Protestants”).

manuals?¹⁵ The answer is no. The Stearnses explicitly rule out courtly love literature as an emotionology, for example, because it “simply did not penetrate far enough into popular culture or into institutional arrangements to count as a genuine emotionology.”¹⁶ But if courtly love literature, written in the vernacular and sung orally by troubadours in the south of France and by other poets elsewhere, must be considered simply part of “intellectual history,” then virtually nothing from the pre-modern period can be considered true emotionology.

This is why in a review of Jean Delumeau’s *Sin and Fear* Peter Stearns took the book to task: “The fact that Christian preachers reached out to urge and play upon the terror of death receives important new documentation in this study, but their degree of success remains oddly elusive. This is top down history at its worst.” And “laypeople figure relatively rarely.” Finally, the cutting blow: “The results do not fully escape the more limited confines of intellectual history.”¹⁷ There is plenty to criticize about Delumeau’s approach (as we shall see below), but the fact is that no medievalist or pre-modernist is going to find the sorts of materials that will allow for what the Stearnses call “genuine emotionology,” because emotionology by definition belongs to the modern period, when advice manuals for the middle classes began.

A short section in *Anger*, “Premodern Emotionology toward Anger,” is not about “emotionology”; it is about its lack. Tapping Huizinga (with grateful acknowledgment), the Stearnses claim that the pre-modern period had “less precise” standards than the modern, that its society tolerated “significant anger,” which was expressed more “frankly and overtly” than in the modern period. Indeed, there was no “general emotional control.”¹⁸ They continue: “Public temper tantrums, along with frequent weeping and boisterous joy, were far more common in premodern society than they were to become in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Adults were in many ways, by modern standards, childlike in their indulgence in temper, which is one reason that they so readily played games with children.”¹⁹

This broad dismissal of the period before the middle of the eighteenth century nicely narrows the field for the emotionologist. In *Anger*, the Stearnses distinguish three periods in the history of emotionology: the hundred years from about 1750 to 1850 introduced the ideal of the anger-free family; the period from 1850 to 1920 “produced the most distinctive American ambivalence about anger,” as the values of the earlier century began to “take hold”; the era from circa 1920 to the present showed (and shows) a general condemnation of anger, whose *only* outlet has

¹⁵ Stearns and Stearns, *Anger*, 2, suggest that “intimate community supervision” in the pre-modern period took the place of emotionology.

¹⁶ Stearns and Stearns, “Emotionology,” 830.

¹⁷ Peter N. Stearns, review of Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture, 13th–18th Centuries*, Eric Nicholson, trans. (New York, 1990), in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (Summer 1992): 156–58. Delumeau’s original book, *Le péché et la peur: La culpabilisation en Occident (XIII^e–XVIII^e siècles)* was published at Paris in 1983.

¹⁸ Stearns and Stearns, *Anger*, 21–23, 25.

¹⁹ Stearns and Stearns, *Anger*, 25; Huizinga is quoted approvingly by the Stearnses on 28. The use of the loaded term “tantrum” in this context is odd, since the Stearnses themselves had already pointed out in “Emotionology,” 826–27, that “tantrum” was a modern invention. It is not clear whence the idea that medieval people “readily played games with children,” but the source is probably Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, Robert Baldick, trans. (New York, 1962), 50, 71, 90.

become (ironically) the family itself.²⁰ In *An Emotional History*, the periodization is again threefold: there are “changes in the decades around 1800 and again around 1920.”²¹ This is a very narrow time frame. Emotionology, touted as a “boost” to the larger effort of getting at emotions in history, in fact boosts essentially the period that created emotionology.²² For that was the moment when (in the Stearnses’ view) people’s emotional lives stopped being childish and violent and, instead, started undergoing restraints.

The Stearnsian/Huizingian picture of the pre-modern period is powerfully undergirded by the work of Norbert Elias and his students.²³ *The Civilizing Process*, written in German while Elias was in England as a refugee from the Nazis, made little impact when it was first published in 1939. But upon its republication in 1968 and its translation into English and French in the 1970s, it became an extremely influential text.²⁴ Elias viewed Huizinga’s naïve Middle Ages through Freudian glasses:

People [in the Middle Ages] are wild, cruel, prone to violent outbreaks and abandoned to the joy of the moment. They can afford to be. There is little in their situation to compel them to impose restraint upon themselves. Little in their conditioning forces them to develop what might be called a strict and stable super-ego, as a function of dependence and compulsions stemming from others transformed into self-restraints.²⁵

The “people” Elias spoke of were the elite, the warriors, men used to bloodshed and plundering. Without a state to restrain them, they could do whatever their impulses led them to do. The one exception was at the courts of the very greatest lords (here Elias was thinking of the twelfth century on), where “within the restricted court circle, and encouraged above all by the presence of the lady, more peaceful forms of conduct become obligatory.”²⁶ It was in the psychology of the courtiers—the men who entertained, administered, and taught at the courts of the great—that the “civilizing process” first began. “Restraint” and “renunciation” led to the “transformation of drives,” tempered by love of a lady of high station.²⁷

²⁰ Stearns and Stearns, *Anger*, 11, where their conclusions are summarized.

²¹ Stearns and Lewis, *Emotional History*, 6. The editors in fact call theirs a “dual periodization,” but it depends on a prior, though largely undefined, pre-modern period.

²² Stearns and Lewis, *Emotional History*, 7: “By narrowing the historian’s task and defining it with precision, Stearns and Stearns gave the new field [namely, the study of emotions] an important boost.” Not all historians took seriously the Stearnses’ limitation of emotionology to middle-class controls. Thus Kari Konkola, for example, considered her study of the relationship between emotion and sin in the writings of seventeenth-century English divines to be part of the history of emotionology. True, she considered only “popular” authors. But what can “popular” mean in the seventeenth-century context? What classes were literate? See Konkola, “Psychology of Emotions as Theology: The Meaning and Control of Sin in Early Modern English Religion” (PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1994), esp. 13–16.

²³ For a comparison of the views of Febvre and Elias, see André Burguière, “La notion de ‘mentalités’ chez Marc Bloch et Lucien Febvre: Deux conceptions, deux filiations,” *Revue de synthèse*, 3d ser., 111–12 (July–December 1983): 333–48.

²⁴ A large bibliography on the reception of Elias is surveyed in Gerd Schwerhoff, “Zivilisationssproß und Geschichtswissenschaft: Norbert Elias’ Forschungsparadigma in historischer Sicht,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 266 (June 1998): 561–606.

²⁵ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 2 vols. in 1: *The History of Manners and State Formation*, Edmund Jephcott, trans. (Oxford, 1994), 319.

²⁶ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 324.

²⁷ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 327.

Only at the absolutist court of the modern state, however, did this new behavior and emotional style become obligatory and generalized. The state, far more surely than the “lady,” ended the reign of the warrior-knight. It monopolized taxes and the army, the twin pillars of power. It dominated the many complex institutions of society. To participate in this all-inclusive structure, people were forced to “attune their conduct [including emotional expression] to that of others.”²⁸ (Indeed, even without the state, increased social coordination, interdependence, and regulation demanded individual self-restraint.²⁹)

Elias’s scheme is seductive. It makes room for change, and it explains it. Moreover, it welcomes emotionology and other explorations of constraints, as all of these are part of the civilizing process.³⁰ With Elias at their elbows, historians have constructed the “grand narrative” of emotions that this article seeks to problematize.

In brief, the narrative is this: the history of the West is the history of increasing emotional restraint. Greece and Rome may be quickly dismissed: did not Homer sing of the sweet delights of anger?³¹ The Middle Ages had the emotional life of a child: unadulterated, violent, public, unashamed. The modern period (variously defined) brought with it self-discipline, control, and suppression.³²

²⁸ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 445.

²⁹ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 93–95. To the objection that the postwar period has seen a decline in “more or less automatic self-supervision,” Elias and his students have elaborated the notion of “informalization,” which postulates that “the loosening of restraints and codes of behaviour . . . is closely connected with, and contains at the same time[,] a ‘tighter binding of drives.’” See Cas Wouters, “Informalisation and the Civilising Process,” in *Human Figurations: Essays for Norbert Elias*, Peter R. Gleichmann, Johan Goudsblom, and Hermann Korte, eds. (Amsterdam, 1977), quote at 442.

³⁰ For new constraints not part of emotionology, see, for example, Abram de Swaan, “The Politics of Agoraphobia: On Changes in Emotional and Relational Management,” *Theory and Society* 10 (May 1981): 359–85, on the development of “agoraphobia” in the nineteenth century as the internalization of once formal city laws that provided for public order. Masculinity studies are also generally in easy accord with Elias, especially if they trace a trajectory from the privileging of brute strength to “a gentler and more domesticated type of man” who emerges at the end of the nineteenth century. See Pieter Spierenburg, “Masculinity, Violence, and Honor: An Introduction,” in *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor, and Rituals in Modern Europe and America*, Spierenburg, ed. ([Columbus, Ohio], 1998), 6. Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1989), 21, argues that, in nineteenth-century love letters, men, like women, valued “sincere, open, heart-felt [emotional] expression,” which, in her view (p. 8), “contributed to American individualism.” See other studies bearing on masculinity in n. 40 below.

³¹ For example, Stearns and Stearns, *Anger*, 7 and 21. Scholars of the ancient period have a rather more nuanced approach. A small sample of some recent bibliography on ancient emotions includes Carlin A. Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster* (Princeton, N.J., 1993); Edward Champlin, *Final Judgments: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills, 200 B.C.–A.D. 250* (Berkeley, Calif., 1991); *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*, Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, eds. (Dordrecht, 1998); Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, 1994); *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill, eds. (Cambridge, 1997). But William V. Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), contributes to the bracketing off of the Middle Ages, arguing that emotional control existed in the ancient world and then again in the sixteenth century. “In my view” (he writes, p. 150), “[Elias] described a real historical process but did so partially and inaccurately . . . What is suggested here is that the process had an important precursor in the classical world.”

³² The philosophers’ counterpart to the grand narrative of historians is the erroneous view that early modern philosophers separated the mind from the body and reason from emotion, so that modern philosophy represents the triumphant healing of these dichotomies. Countering this view is Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford, 1997), with her programmatic statement on 17–18.

It is not only historians who subscribe to this paradigm: it is, indeed, the narrative suggested by all the great theorizers of the twentieth century. For Max Weber, modernism and the state brought bureaucracy, which in turn promoted “the development of ‘rational matter-of-factness’ and the personality type of the professional expert.”³³ The Calvinist emphasis on proof of election led to “a systematic self-control,” the religious foundation of the modern capitalist mentality.³⁴ For Sigmund Freud, “civilization”—he was certainly speaking of modern European civilization, with its telephones, airplanes, parks, and obsessive cleanliness—“is built up on renunciation of instinctual gratifications,” which in a mythical past—not necessarily the Middle Ages but certainly not modern times—were allowed freer reign.³⁵ Even for Michel Foucault, whose work on ancient sexuality destroyed the myth of Greek hedonism, the disciplines destined to prod, study, parse, and control the body and sexuality proliferated on the whole after the medieval period.³⁶

MOST HISTORIANS OF THE MODERN PERIOD are used to having the Middle Ages serve as a convenient foil for modernity, so the grand narrative is extremely easy for them to swallow.³⁷ Let us briefly consider the terrain. In the United States, modern emotions history tends to fall into two groups: studies concerned with the formation of the “affective family” and those interested in “honor-based” societies—the Deep South in the United States and Mediterranean cultures in Europe.³⁸

Historians of the affective family tend to claim that in the Middle Ages and early modern period the family was cold and loveless; only in the eighteenth century did

³³ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds. and trans. (New York, 1958), 240.

³⁴ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Talcott Parsons, trans. (New York, 1958), 115; for a discussion of the “emotionalism” of the Pietists (as opposed to the Calvinists), see 138.

³⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Joan Riviere, trans. (London, 1955), 63.

³⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1: *An Introduction*, Robert Hurley, trans. (New York, 1978); Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan, trans. (New York, 1979). On the other hand, Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure*, Robert Hurley, trans. (New York, 1985), and Vol. 3: *The Care of the Self*, Robert Hurley, trans. (New York, 1986), show restraints, controls, and norms at work in the regulation of sexuality in the ancient world.

³⁷ Anthropologists constructed an analogous foil in their conception of “primitive society.” See Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion* (London, 1988), who shows, indeed, that at its inception, legal historians such as Henry Maine and N.-D. Fustel de Coulanges were as instrumental in creating the myth of the “primitive” as were the ethnologists E. B. Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan. Kuper concentrates on notions of primitive kinship, but the idea of the “primitive mind” was not far behind: see Charles R. Aldrich, *The Primitive Mind and Modern Civilization* (London, 1931), who places particular emphasis on fear as the chief emotion of primitive society (similar to some ideas of the Annales school—see below, n. 46); and Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, rev. edn. (New York, 1938), chap. 2.

³⁸ The major exceptions are Peter Stearns (discussed above) and William Reddy (discussed below). I leave aside studies focusing on romanticism (which by definition called attention to the emotions), such as Richard Brantley, *Coordinates of Anglo-American Romanticism: Wesley, Edwards, Carlyle, and Emerson* (Gainesville, Fla., 1993). The study of emotions in non-Western civilizations is just beginning: see *Emotions in Asian Thought: A Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy*, Joel Marks and Roger T. Ames, eds. (New York, 1995); David R. Matsumoto, *Unmasking Japan: Myths and Realities about the Emotions of the Japanese* (Stanford, Calif., 1996); Norman Kutcher, *Mourning in Late Imperial China: Filial Piety and the State* (New York, 1999).



FIGURE 1: Detail from Giotto's Birth of Jesus, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua (1304–1313). In the later Middle Ages, artists such as Giotto humanized the story of Christ's life and death with the addition of homey details, as in this depiction of an exchange of tender glances between mother and child. Courtesy of Fratelli Alinari/Art Resource, New York.

the loving family unit emerge. The notion of the affectless family does not contradict the vision of overwrought emotionalism in the Middle Ages, because the love involved in the affective family unit is understood to be tamped down, restrained, and unwavering. In this view, the pre-modern family was at best a

calculated social institution for reproduction and at worst a theater of violent outbursts. By contrast, the modern family is sentimental.³⁹

The South, whether of Europe or of the United States, has also inspired emotions history. Edward Muir's *Mad Blood Stirring* is a remarkably sophisticated example of the Elias paradigm at work. Exploring a particularly fractious group of Italian nobles involved in seemingly endless vendettas to maintain their honor, Muir sees "one of the great transformations in the history of emotions" take place as the nobles learned to hide their anger and become mannerly courtiers.⁴⁰ Similarly, Maureen Flynn's thoughtful work on anger in early modern Spanish culture invokes Anna Freud's studies of children at play to explain the purposes of sixteenth-century blasphemy, while she sees clerical "examination, confession, absolution," and so on as "part of the 'civilizing process.'" ⁴¹

In connection with the American South, emotions history tends to postulate the Civil War as the "civilizing moment." Here, the Old South represents "traditional society." In *Southern Honor*, Bertram Wyatt-Brown is perhaps most open about these assumptions, seeing ancient—indeed, "Indo-European"—origins in the code of ethics ruling the Old South.⁴² Without quite arguing that southern American

³⁹ For the loveless family, see Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York, 1975); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (London, 1977). The grandfather of these studies is Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*. For a survey of the literature, see Tamara K. Hareven, "The History of the Family and the Complexity of Social Change," *AHR* 96 (February 1991): 95–124. An early exception is *Interest and Emotion: Essays on the Study of Family and Kinship*, Hans Medick and David Warren Sabean, eds. (Cambridge, 1984), where the editors suggest that "not talking about affect" need not mean that no affect exists. The collective import of the articles in this latter book is that material calculation and emotion are always intertwined. More recently, Louis Haas, *The Renaissance Man and His Children: Childbirth and Early Childhood in Florence 1300–1600* (New York, 1998), 2, argues for "close affective bonds" between Renaissance fathers and children, but this simply pushes back the date of the birth of the affective family without challenging the notion theoretically. Similarly, Steven Ozment, *Ancestors: The Loving Family in Old Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), counters the Shorter/Stone point of view by arguing for a "turning point . . . in the treatment of children" (p. 58) during the twelfth century, with the affective family in full bloom circa 1500. In just the last decade, *medievalists*, however, have effectively countered the progressivist vision that these accounts, for all their revisionism, leave intact. Two recent review articles cover the evidence and cite the relevant bibliography: Pauline Stafford, "Parents and Children in the Early Middle Ages," *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001): 257–71; and Barbara A. Hanawalt, "Medievalists and the Study of Childhood," *Speculum* 77 (April 2002): 440–60.

⁴⁰ Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1993), xxvi. See also Muir, "The Double Binds of Manly Revenge in Renaissance Italy," in *Gender Rhetorics: Postures of Dominance and Submission in History*, Richard C. Trexler, ed. (Binghamton, N.Y., 1994), 65–82. Muir considers the turn from vendetta to the duel evidence of the civilizing process, since duels were rule-based. But Thomas W. Gallant, "Honor, Masculinity, and Ritual Knife Fighting in Nineteenth-Century Greece," *AHR* 105 (April 2000): 358–82, finds that, although Greek lower-class duels were equally scripted, "civilizing" took place when the duels were abandoned in favor of litigation in the courts. Both of these views adhere to Elias, although they place "civilizing" at different points on the continuum of progressive self-restraint that defines that process. For other studies of the affective life of the Mediterranean world, see Gallant's excellent and up-to-date bibliography.

⁴¹ Maureen Flynn, "Blasphemy and the Play of Anger in Sixteenth-Century Spain," *Past and Present*, no. 149 (November 1995): 29–56; Flynn, "Taming Anger's Daughters: New Treatment for Emotional Problems in Renaissance Spain," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (Autumn 1998): 864–86, quote on 868.

⁴² Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982), 33. Honor is not ordinarily included in psychologists' lists of emotions, but Wyatt-Brown quite rightly links it to "feeling" (*Southern Honor*, xi). For some indications of the role of emotions in bolstering honor, see Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley, Calif., 1986); and William Ian Miller, *Humiliation: And Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1993), esp. chap. 3.

mores were discovered in the forests of Germany, Wyatt-Brown claims that a set of traditions about honor, transmitted “from the wilderness of central Europe and Asia” to the world of southern whites, necessitated a certain type of culture that privileged valor, family, and patriarchy.⁴³ It was only with the Civil War—and the secularization and industrialization that followed—that honor’s hold was swept away.⁴⁴

Turning from U.S. historiography to that of Europe, we find emotions history rooted in the Annales school approach, represented by Febvre himself, although it has changed and become more international over time. In general, the Annales school, reacting against positivist historians who discussed *only* elites, put the focus on the masses. But, separating ideas from emotions and folding emotions into the larger issue of *mentalités*, *Annalistes* historians depicted the masses as passive slaves to their own mental structures.⁴⁵ These the *Annalistes* assumed to be so limited and inadequate as to prevent people from making sense of the world around them. As Stuart Clark has summed up the thinking of this school, “Physical and mental insecurity gave rise to emotional trauma. Preoccupied with surviving in hostile,

⁴³ Medievalists concerned precisely with such “traditions” see them as far more labile and historically contingent than Wyatt-Brown suggests. The “traditions” were continually reconstructed under new circumstances. See the essays in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800*, Walter Pohl, ed., with Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 1998); and Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, N.J., 2002). On the South as a traditional or “pre-modern” society, see Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, xii–xvii, where he explicitly links his work to that of anthropologists of Mediterranean cultures. On the other hand, Wyatt-Brown writes of southern settlers as having “Celtic” roots (*Southern Honor*, 36). For a critique of the practice of conceptualizing as “pre-modern” groups who live alongside societies that we call “modern,” see Daniel A. Segal, “‘Western Civ’ and the Staging of History in American Higher Education,” *AHR* 105 (June 2000): 770–805. Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South* (New York, 1984), problematizes the relationship between violence and “lack of restraint” on p. 11, yet on p. 20 he quotes Lawrence Stone approvingly on the “ferocity, childishness, and lack of self-control of the Homeric age” as seen in the English propertied classes—and in southerners by extension.

⁴⁴ See, however, Bertram Wyatt-Brown’s recent “sequel” to *Southern Honor*, titled *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s–1890s* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2001), where the Civil War and its aftermath do not bring sudden change. Clearly repudiating the Elias paradigm in Southern studies is Altina L. Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860–1900* (Chapel Hill, 1988). She suggests (p. 233) that the feud was used to foster “the conviction that Appalachian culture was inferior to bourgeois culture and consigned the mountaineers to the unreal world of savagery, whether degraded or noble . . . The irony here is that the feud [was at least partly] created by the modernizers and then used as an argument for drastic alternations in Appalachian culture.” Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, *Methodism and the Southern Mind, 1770–1810* (New York, 1998), makes much of the values of the southern subculture represented by Methodism. Here, emotions (see esp. 34–39) are rightly considered part of a larger belief system.

⁴⁵ On the original conceptions of *mentalités* and their transformations, see Burguière, “Notion de ‘mentalités,’” 333–48, who argues that Febvre’s views, which focused on “[le] jeu alterné de l’affectif et de l’intellectuel” (p. 344), were far less influential historiographically than Bloch’s avoidance of the intellectual. The last few years have seen critiques of this separation of ideas from mass culture. See Alain Boureau, “Propositions pour une histoire restreinte des mentalités,” *Annales: Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 44 (November–December 1989): 1491–1509. Piroška Zombory-Nagy and Véronique Frandon, with David El Kenz and Matthias Grässlin, “Pour une histoire de la souffrance: Expressions, représentations, usages,” *Médiévales* 27 (Autumn 1994): 5–14, criticize Febvre’s notion of “progress” from emotions to intellectual activities; Marcel Gauchet, “L’élargissement de l’objet historique,” *Le débat*, no. 103 (January–February 1999): 131–47, calls (p. 138) for a reinsertion of “la haute culture dans la totalité social-historique.”

mysterious surroundings, lost in a world of which they had only imprecise knowledge, simple men became victims of severe, even psychotic anxiety.”⁴⁶

If medievalists subscribe to the grand narrative—and many do—it is generally via the Annales school.⁴⁷ Already, Marc Bloch’s *Feudal Society* included the sober picture of “a civilization in which moral or social convention did not yet require well-bred people to repress their tears and their raptures.”⁴⁸ Jean Delumeau adds fear to the heady brew: he sees the sea, the night, strangers, women, witches, God, plague, famine, Turks, papal schism, and war as sources of intense fear in the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries. In addition, for Delumeau, there are other fears, which grow directly out of church teaching. They represent not the passions of primitive minds but rather the transferral and broadening out of the emotional climate of the monastery.⁴⁹ It is as if constraints had existed there and

⁴⁶ Stuart Clark, “French Historians and Early Modern Popular Culture,” *Past and Present*, no. 100 (August 1983): 62–99, quote at 69. Today, many French historians repudiate *mentalités* history, criticizing it, much like Clark, for its emphasis on stable structures and human passivity. For a statement of the new history, which emphasizes *représentations* over institutions, see the articles in *Les formes de l'expérience: Une autre histoire sociale*, Bernard Lepetit, ed. (Paris, 1995), especially the introductory critique of the old history: Lepetit, “Histoire des pratiques, pratique de l’histoire,” 9–22.

⁴⁷ Even without subscribing to the *Annaliste* view, most medieval literary scholars work without difficulty within Elias’s paradigm because it recognizes refined emotions within the court, the cradle of the civilizing process, and thus with the “product,” of that court, vernacular literature. See, for example, Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache, *L’humour en chaire: Le rire dans l’Eglise médiévale* (Geneva, 1994), which speaks of the “birth” of parody and humor in the twelfth century; while Charles Baladier, *Erôs au moyen âge: Amour, désir et délectation morose* (Paris, 1999), argues that the idea of “delayed love”—an ideal of emotional restraint—was elaborated at about the same time in troubadour poetry and scholasticism. However, there are challenges to this view. See Bernhard Jussen, “Dolor und Memoria: Trauerriten, gemalte Trauer und soziale Ordnungen im späten Mittelalter,” in *Memoria als Kultur*, Otto Gerhard Oexle, ed. (Göttingen, 1995), 207–52. The study of emotion in medieval vernacular literature has a long tradition, perhaps particularly in Germany. Consider, for instance, Karl Korn, *Studien über “Freude und Tränen” bei mittelhochdeutschen Dichtern: Beiträge zu einer Problemgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1932). More recently, early medieval Latin literature has received some attention. There are two schools, one arguing for mature emotion even in pre-twelfth-century literature (see, for example, Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*, 2 vols. [1965–66; 2d edn., Oxford, 1968]) and the other denying the possibility (see Peter Dinzelbacher, “Liebe im Frühmittelalter: Zur Kritik der Kontinuitätstheorie,” in *Konzepte der Liebe im Mittelalter*, Wolfgang Haubrichs, ed. [Göttingen, 1990], 12–38).

⁴⁸ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, L. A. Manyon, trans. (Chicago, 1961), 73. Closely following Bloch is Paul Rousset, “Recherches sur l’émotivité à l’époque romane,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 2 (January–March 1959): 53–67. For further discussion of Bloch’s notion of the emotions, see Stephen D. White, “The Politics of Anger,” in *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, Barbara H. Rosenwein, ed. (Ithaca, N.Y., 1998), 127–31; and Jean-Claude Schmitt, “‘Façons de sentir et de penser’: Un tableau de la civilisation ou une histoire-problème?” in *Marc Bloch aujourd’hui: Histoire comparée et sciences sociales*, Hartmut Atsma and André Burguière, eds. (Paris, 1990), 407–18.

⁴⁹ Delumeau, *Sin and Fear*, 21. Delumeau shows how restraints *within* the monastery can fit easily within the grand narrative, since the monastery is considered an elite institution that, by its very nature, is isolated from the world. In this sense, the numerous studies of medieval monastic emotions do not break with the grand narrative. One example among many is Gerhard Schmitz, “. . . quod rident homines, plorandum est: Der ‘Unwert’ des Lachens in monastisch geprägten Vorstellungen der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters,” in *Stadtverfassung, Verfassungsstaat, Pressepolitik: Festschrift für Eberhard Naujoks*, Franz Quarthal and Wilfried Setzler, eds. (Sigmaringen, 1980), 3–15. But recent studies show that monks, even early medieval monks, were *not* isolated from the laity and that, indeed, relations were close. For a survey of the bibliography, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Property Transfers and the Church, Eighth to Eleventh Centuries: An Overview,” in *Les transferts patrimoniaux en Europe occidentale, VIII^e–X^e siècle (I)*, Actes de la table ronde de Rome, 6–8 mai 1999 = *Mélanges de l’Ecole française de Rome, Moyen Age* 111, pt. 2 (1999): 563–75. It seems likely that monastic emotional styles had *some* relationship to concurrent lay emotional styles, although it remains to be seen precisely what that might have been.

there alone, until the monastic *contemptus mundi* (contempt for the world) was picked up by the friars and transmitted to the masses. Only then did a “European guilt mentality” develop.⁵⁰ This is not precisely *Annaliste*. It is more an attempt to find an emotionology for the early modern period. Nor does it exactly follow Elias, because the church, rather than the state, is Delumeau’s relentless “civilizer.” But it, too, works comfortably within the grand narrative.

The Austrian Peter Dinzelbacher makes a similar argument.⁵¹ He proposes that the late medieval church knew how to awaken “the imaginative fears and hopes of medieval men” for its own purposes, though no doubt in all sincerity. Dinzelbacher also touches on the earlier period, the society of the early Middle Ages, which he describes as organized for war, its fears quickly reassured by the presence of the saints. On the whole, it is a tough and unemotional time. No heart is sounded save in the monasteries. The historian of emotion need hardly consider it. With the twelfth century, the mood changes. The end of external threats and the new complexities of social life lead to the “civilizing process” and the formation of the superego.⁵² There are tender feelings and new explorations of the interior self; at the same time, “how surprising is it that the dark side of emotional life entered consciousness just as clearly, that hate and angst were increasingly projected at devils both earthly (heathens and Jews) and unearthly (demons)?”⁵³

The strength of both Delumeau and Dinzelbacher lies in their marvelous breadth of sources, the wonder of their monstrous and striking images, and their exuberant juxtaposition of violent and gruesome topics. But are they right to jump from scary sources to real fear?⁵⁴ In the twelfth century, St. Bernard talked about the diversions and pleasures afforded by sculpted monsters; in the twentieth century, Carol Clover points to the multiple affects in viewers of slasher films.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Delumeau, *Sin and Fear*, 240.

⁵¹ Peter Dinzelbacher, *Angst im Mittelalter: Teufels-, Todes- und Gotteserfahrung: Mentalitätsgeschichte und Ikonographie* (Paderborn, 1996). Dinzelbacher maintains he differs from Delumeau because he concentrates on religious fears. But the differences are subtler. It is more Dinzelbacher’s use of pictorial sources than his subject matter that separates him from Delumeau. Another study in the same mold is Piero Camporesi, *La casa dell’eternità* (Milan, 1987), in English as *The Fear of Hell: Images of Damnation and Salvation in Early Modern Europe*, Lucinda Byatt, trans. (University Park, Pa., 1991).

⁵² Dinzelbacher, *Angst*, 94, citing Elias with approval.

⁵³ Dinzelbacher, *Angst*, 93. For more along these lines, with particular emphasis on the blossoming of love in the High Middle Ages, see Peter Dinzelbacher, “Gefühl und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter: Vorschläge zu einer emotionengeschichtlichen Darstellung des hochmittelalterlichen Umbruchs,” in *Höfische Literatur, Hofgesellschaft, höfische Lebensformen um 1200*, Gert Kaiser and Jan-Dirk Müller, eds. (Düsseldorf, 1986), 213–41. For the counterpart, the lack of “real” love in the early Middle Ages, see Dinzelbacher, “Liebe im Frühmittelalter.”

⁵⁴ The same question must be asked even more pointedly of *Fear in Early Modern Society*, William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts, eds. (Manchester, 1997), which treats threats—such as floods in the Low Countries and fires in France—as direct sources of fear without querying the existence of the emotion these threats (some handled matter-of-factly as obstacles to be overcome) supposedly awakened. *Fear and Its Representations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso, eds. (Turnhout, 2002), appeared as this article went to press.

⁵⁵ Bernard, *Apologia* 12.29, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, Vol. 3: *Tractatus et opuscula*, Jean Leclercq and H. M. Rochais, eds. (Rome, 1963), 106; Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, N.J., 1992).

Delumeau and Dinzelbacher teach us pointedly that historians of emotion need to attend to reception theory and its variants, one lesson of which is to consider local contexts of meaning.⁵⁶

C. Stephen Jaeger, an American medievalist and not at all part of the *Annales* school, represents a different sort of partisan of the grand narrative. Without querying the notion of the civilizing process, Jaeger wants to push Elias's chronology back. In *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210*, he sees the process beginning at the court of the Ottonian tenth-century kings rather than among twelfth-century lords. Civilization grows out of the “system of education and its curriculum” set up by men who had the “urge to civiliz[e]” before social conditions made it necessary.⁵⁷ In Jaeger's *Ennobling Love*, the restraints are on even earlier: at the Carolingian court, where seemingly homoerotic poetry in fact expresses a well-worn type of spiritual friendship.⁵⁸ *Ennobling Love*, ostensibly still within the framework of Elias's scheme, stretches it to the breaking point. If the civilizing process cannot be tied to modernity and state formation, if emotional expression is restrained even in the ninth century, then the grand narrative has essentially become untenable even to one of its own adherents.

THERE IS A CLEAR THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING for the grand narrative. It is a particular model of the emotions, one that prevailed when Huizinga, Febvre, Bloch, and Elias were writing and that prevails today in our very language and in popular conceptions of the emotions. This is the “hydraulic” model: the emotions are like great liquids within each person, heaving and frothing, eager to be let out. The model in fact largely derives from medieval medical notions of the humors.⁵⁹ But it

⁵⁶ For an overview of reception theory, which includes as well an assessment of some of the most important work in “reader-response” criticism, see Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London, 1984). The classic is Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, Michael Shaw, trans. (Minneapolis, 1982), where, on 153–60, Jauss discusses the range of emotional reactions involved in aesthetic experience. Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York, 1998), show that sometimes horrors lead to both wonder and desire rather than fear.

⁵⁷ C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210* (Philadelphia, 1985), 8–9. Jaeger is not alone in pushing back (and sometimes changing the venue of) the process. See Paul Hyams, “What Did Henry III of England Think in Bed and in French about Kingship and Anger?” in Rosenwein, *Anger's Past*, chap. 5; Lester K. Little, “Anger in Monastic Curses,” in *Anger's Past*, chap. 1; and Dilwyn Knox, “Disciplina: The Monastic and Clerical Origins of European Civility,” in *Renaissance Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Eugene F. Rice Jr.*, John Monfasani and Ronald G. Musto, eds. (New York, 1991), 107–35.

⁵⁸ C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia, 1999). Here, Jaeger explicitly invokes the twelfth-century court as the cradle of civility: see p. 151, where he writes of “the sentiments of the literature of courtly love” as “testimony to social forces at work shaping or trying to shape a rough cut warrior society into a civil society.” Nevertheless, his discussion of the Carolingian court, where erotic emotional expression had a highly controlled, stylized, and non-erotic meaning, in effect pushes back the starting date of the grand narrative. For there, already, the aristocrats of the court, trained to be warriors, were at the same time poets of virtuous love.

⁵⁹ For a summary, see Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago, 1990), 104–06; for a survey of medieval views, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London, 1964), pt. 1.



FIGURE 2: Anger Commits Suicide (twelfth century). One tradition, largely associated with medieval monasteries, equated emotions with vices and depicted them as utterly out of control. Such ideas fed into the hydraulic model of emotions. In this Romanesque sculpture from Sainte-Madeleine at Vézelay, anger is personified as a flaming-haired demon, mouth open wide, tongue hanging out, and so frenzied that she (anger, *ira* in Latin, is gendered female) commits suicide. Courtesy of Foto Marburg/Art Resource, New York.

also accords with theories of energy that were up-to-date when Darwin and Freud were writing. Charles Darwin, like other scientists of his day, postulated a “nerve-force” that was liberated “in intense sensations,” among them emotions. Freud talked of impulses that could be deflected, repressed, or sublimated but,

unless given outlet, would never cease to press forward.⁶⁰ The hydraulic view meshes with how emotions feel to us and how those feelings are embedded in our language: "He flipped his lid"; "I couldn't overcome my sadness"; "He channeled his anger into something constructive."⁶¹ Here, pressures build up and must somehow be accommodated. Such a theory—whether learned or folk—assumes that emotions are universal. Insofar as it recognizes a history, it encourages a "binary" one in which emotions are either "on" or "off" depending on social, superego, or individually willed restraints. The hydraulic view lies behind the grand narrative, validating its search for a turning point based on restraint.

However, this model is no longer tenable. In the 1960s, it was dethroned in most scientific circles, its place taken by two new theories, both resolutely non-hydraulic.⁶² In the cognitive view, emotions are part of a process of perception and appraisal, not forces striving for release. Denying that emotions are irrational, cognitive psychologists see them as resulting from judgments about "weal or woe"—that is, about whether something is likely to be good or harmful, pleasurable or painful, as perceived by each individual.⁶³ In brief—eliding all the variant emphases of different theorists—the process begins with the judgment or "appraisal." Then come the emotional signals (palpitating heart, increased perspiration), some of which are conscious and nameable and others of which are not. Finally comes "action readiness": the person is poised to flee, strike, freeze, try harder, or do something new. Although most cognitive psychologists believe that there are certain "basic" emotions true of all human beings—fear and anger are on nearly everyone's list—it is clear that different perceptions by different individuals of what is relevant to their "weal or woe" will produce very different sorts of emotions even in similar situations.⁶⁴ The physical and mental capacity to have emotions is

⁶⁰ Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Paul Ekman, ed. (1872; 3d edn., New York, 1998), 74; Sigmund Freud, "Resistance and Repression," in *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, James Strachey, ed. and trans. (New York, 1966), esp. 294–302.

⁶¹ Decisive here are the studies of linguists: see George Lakoff and Zoltan Kövecses, "The Cognitive Model of Anger Inherent in American English," in *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*, Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn, eds. (Cambridge, 1987); George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago, 1987), Case Study 1.

⁶² For a convenient survey of theories of the emotions, both old and new, see Randolph R. Cornelius, *The Science of Emotion: Research and Tradition in the Psychology of Emotions* (Upper Saddle River, N.J., 1996).

⁶³ The pioneering work was done by Magda B. Arnold, *Emotion and Personality*, 2 vols. (New York, 1960); for a brief statement of the current theory, see *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions*, Paul Ekman and Richard J. Davidson, eds. (New York, 1994), Question 5: "What Are the Minimal Cognitive Prerequisites for Emotion?" There is, in fact, a long tradition of cognitive emotions theory in Western philosophy, beginning with Aristotle (see Stephen R. Leighton, "Aristotle and the Emotions," in *Essays on Aristotle's "Rhetoric,"* Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, ed. [Berkeley, Calif., 1996], 206–37) and cultivated (alongside the hydraulic theory) in the seventeenth century (see James, *Passion and Action*, esp. 196–207). See also Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford, 2000), for the Stoics; and Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), for a "neo-Stoic" view that asserts the cognitive nature of emotions.

⁶⁴ On basic emotions, see Ekman and Davidson, *Nature of Emotion*, Question 1: "Are There Basic Emotions?" I leave aside in this account research on the amygdala and other "emotional" sites of the brain. See Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (New York, 1966); Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York, 1994); and Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York, 1999). Although such studies suggest that the brain reacts unconsciously to stimuli, this does not challenge the foundations of cognitive theory, for the brain's response implies a kind of

universal, but the ways those emotions are themselves elicited, felt, and expressed depend on cultural norms as well as individual proclivities.

In the 1970s, this new model of the emotions was joined by a second one even more decidedly non-hydraulic: social constructionism.⁶⁵ According to this view, emotions and their display are constructed, that is, formed and shaped, by the society in which they operate. For “strong” social constructionists, there are no “basic” emotions at all; for “weak” social constructionists (the majority), societies bend, shape, encourage, and discourage the expression of various emotions. Emotions depend on language, cultural practices, expectations, and moral beliefs. This means that *every* culture has its rules for feelings and behavior; *every* culture thus exerts certain restraints while favoring certain forms of expressivity. There can be no “untrammeled” emotional expression in this non-hydraulic view of the emotions because emotions are not pressing to be set free; they are created by each society, each culture, each community. Unlike cognitivists, social constructionists do not care much about—some even deny—the internal mechanisms of emotions’ production. But although on this point the cognitivists and constructionists clash, both together point a way to a history of the emotions that does not postulate “restraint” as its one variable but looks rather at two complementary issues: what people consider (both consciously and unconsciously) conducive to their weal or woe and what possibilities cultures provide for the expression and representation of their feelings.

A FEW HISTORIANS HAVE ALREADY taken these theoretical shifts to heart. While quibbling with social constructionism, William Reddy more importantly introduces the term “emotives” to describe the process by which emotions are managed and shaped, not only by society and its expectations but also by individuals themselves as they seek to express the inexpressible, namely how they “feel.”⁶⁶ Although he does not say so, Reddy’s emotives subsume emotionology: whereas emotionology sets standards only for others, the “you” of the advice manuals, emotives set standards for you, me, and them—the people involved in all emotive interactions.⁶⁷ Thus Reddy emphasizes the vocabulary of emotion, for only as people articulate their feelings can they “know” what they feel and, reflecting on their newfound

knowing and evaluation. Consider Damasio, *Feeling of What Happens*, 49: “Emotions are a fairly good index of how conducive the environment is to our well-being, or at least, how conducive it seems to our minds.”

⁶⁵ For an overview, see Rom Harré, ed., *The Social Construction of Emotions* (Oxford, 1986). Despite some recent attacks on it (see, for example Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* [Cambridge, Mass., 1999]), the social constructionist view remains a key theoretical approach in the social sciences. See one recent attempt to reconcile it with (seemingly antithetical) evolutionary psychology: Ron Mallon and Stephen P. Stich, “The Odd Couple: The Compatibility of Social Construction and Evolutionary Psychology,” *Philosophy of Science* 67 (March 2000): 133–54.

⁶⁶ Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*; Reddy, “Against Constructionism”; William M. Reddy, “Emotional Liberty: Politics and History in the Anthropology of Emotions,” *Cultural Anthropology* 14 (May 1999): 256–88; Reddy, “Sentimentalism and Its Erasure: The Role of Emotions in the Era of the French Revolution,” *Journal of Modern History* 72 (March 2000): 109–52.

⁶⁷ Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, 103, writes of the “powerful effects which emotional utterances can have on emotions.”



FIGURE 3: St. Matthew, Ebbo Gospels (816–835). Despite their dependence on Late Antique and Byzantine models, even early medieval artists elaborated new modes of emotional expression. The St. Matthew in this Carolingian manuscript hunches over his work in furious concentration, his eyes bulging, his brows drawn up, his robe a flurry of zigzag lines. The wintry scene echoes the evangelist's frenzy, heaving and billowing, slashed by lines of gold. It would be hard to find a better depiction of "action readiness." Bibliothèque Municipale, Epernay, MS 1, fol. 18v. Courtesy of Foto Marburg/Art Resource, New York.

knowledge, feel yet more.⁶⁸ In Reddy's hands, intellectual history becomes critical to emotions history rather than antithetical to it.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Reddy revels in sources that are stereotypical, the kinds of materials that other historians might reject or query as "insincere." Arguing that sincerity itself is culturally managed, Reddy sees "official" representations of emotions as effective, if imprecise, shapers of individual representations.⁷⁰

Medievalists taking the new paradigm seriously are, like Reddy, interested in utterances, but they think about gestures even more. The repertory of medieval emotion words is not negligible, but it is not the thesaurus available to, for example, eighteenth-century French people.⁷¹ Emotional gestures, however, crop up in numerous medieval sources, such as chronicles, poems, charters, and legal documents. One important strand of medieval emotions studies has been created by Anglo-American legal historians who take seriously the representations of "royal wrath" and "love days" (during which people were supposed to settle out of court) that appear in their sources.⁷² The collective impact of this historiography is to show

⁶⁸ William M. Reddy, *The Invisible Code: Honor and Sentiment in Postrevolutionary France, 1814–1848* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997), explores an elite culture that gendered "honor" as male and dubbed it rational, while contrasting it with "sentimentality," which was associated with women and unreason. For men, the consequence of this "structure of feeling" was quite literally to suppress emotions as much as possible, "render[ing] daily life flat, prosaic, and lonely" (p. 112). In "Against Constructionism," he reviews a case of nineteenth-century French *délicatesse* in which emotions were expressed (by both a man and a woman) with such delicacy that even people at the time had difficulty construing their meaning. In "Sentimentalism and Its Erasure," he argues that when Enlightenment-period emotional effusions were understood as demonstrating natural virtue, they were cultivated; when, following the French Revolution, "interest came to be seen as the guiding principle of public action" (p. 145), sentiment was newly gendered as female. Continuing this latter theme in *Navigation of Feeling*, Reddy discusses the deleterious consequences of eighteenth-century optimistic sentimentalism, which, he argues, led to the Terror of 1794, and, in a reactive about-face, was succeeded by a new, more pessimistic, emotional regime in the nineteenth century. It would seem that Reddy's approach should help to dismantle the grand narrative. But in fact, it does not do so as effectively as it might for two reasons. First, Reddy's treatment of emotives privileges the period when a rich vocabulary of sentiment emerged, namely the eighteenth century. Second, Reddy's emphasis on emotional regimes leads him to develop a theory of "emotional liberty" that values certain forms of emotional management—those that are most open "to the full character of selfhood" (p. 331)—over others. In this scheme, the Middle Ages gets low marks. (Compare Reddy's discussion of the "violent" culture of pre-conversion Santa Isabel on 117–18.) Indeed, Reddy explicitly adopts Elias's chronology of Western "civility" (p. 324).

⁶⁹ In Reddy, "Sentimentalism and Its Erasure," it is, in fact, high theory that guides emotional expression at every level. See Michael Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1995), which suggests that critiques of "enthusiasm" helped transform its very meaning, from a religious phenomenon to a personal sentiment. For a somewhat different approach to the "uses" of emotion, see Julie K. Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago, 1999), which shows how sentiment became a political institution in the United States, used to renegotiate relationships of equality and inequality.

⁷⁰ For Reddy, all emotions are "instrumental." But even if one cannot follow him quite this far, it is helpful to realize that even the most seemingly intimate diary can give us only an approximation of the emotional life of its subject. We cannot know for sure (and often neither can the diarist) if the feelings expressed are purely conventional, idealized, manipulative, or deeply felt. This is precisely the issue that confronts psychiatrists and anthropologists when they talk to living people. Doing emotional history beyond the "grand narrative" demands careful attention to linguistic, social, and political contexts; but that is presumably part of the historian's methodology in any case.

⁷¹ On the range of emotion words of the central Middle Ages, see White, "Politics of Anger," 132–35.

⁷² The grandfather of these studies was J. E. A. Jolliffe, *Angevin Kingship* (London, 1955), who clearly did not need cognitive theorists to reveal to him that emotions could be part of hardheaded political strategy. More recent contributions to this tradition include Fredric L. Cheyette, "Suum cuique tribuere," *French Historical Studies* 6 (Spring 1970): 287–99; Michael Clanchy, "Law and Love



FIGURE 4: Scenes from David's Life, leaf of a Winchester Bible (circa 1180). At the top left, King Saul and his army are "in array" to fight the Philistines, while the young David casts a stone with his slingshot at the enemy's champion, Goliath, too large to be confined by the frame of the picture (1 Kings [1 Sam.] 17:21, 17:49). In the next scene, top right, David takes Goliath's sword and cuts off his head as the Philistines flee

how feelings played a role not only in the creation of legal and political systems but also in the ways in which those systems were manipulated and (sometimes) bypassed.

Coming to such sources from another direction, that of rituals and institutions of confraternity, the German medievalist Gerd Althoff turns Huizinga's Middle Ages—with its childish, direct, and unembarrassed emotionality—directly on its head. For Althoff, the violence and directness of the Middle Ages was pure politics, or, more precisely, the medium through which power was expressed, understood, and manipulated. Emotions telegraphed information. Certain emotions were appropriate at certain times, in certain people who held certain statuses. The use of emotions—their “performance”—told enemies about the possibilities of peace and alerted friends to the likelihood of continued friendship.⁷³ Vehement emotion signaled resolute determination; the more one wanted to insist on something, then (in Althoff's words) “the more extreme reaction and emotion he show[ed] publicly.”⁷⁴ For Althoff, emotions have social functions and follow social rules.

These initiatives in medievalist historiography are welcome and important correctives to a uniformly childish Middle Ages. They consider medieval emotions

in the Middle Ages,” *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West*, John Bossy, ed. (Cambridge 1983); White, “Politics of Anger”; Richard E. Barton, “‘Zealous Anger’ and the Renegotiation of Aristocratic Relationships in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century France,” in Rosenwein, *Anger's Past*, chap. 7; Robert Bartlett, “Mortal Enmities”: *The Legal Aspect of Hostility in the Middle Ages* (Aberystwyth, 1998); Daniel Lord Smail, “Hatred as a Social Institution in Late-Medieval Society,” *Speculum* 76 (January 2001): 90–126; Paul Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England* (Ithaca, N.Y., forthcoming). Well aware of, drawing on, and amplifying this Anglo-American historiography is Claude Gauvard, “*De grace especial*”: *Crime, état et société en France à la fin du Moyen Age*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1991).

⁷³ On this point, Althoff is less social constructionist than Darwinian, in whose view certain facial expressions are universal communicators of emotion. For the recent version of this “universalizing” theory, see the summary in Paul Ekman, “Expression and the Nature of Emotion,” in *Approaches to Emotion*, Klaus R. Scherer and Paul Ekman, eds. (Hillsdale, N.J., 1984), chap. 15.

⁷⁴ Gerd Althoff, “Empörung, Tränen, Zerknirschung: ‘Emotionen’ in der öffentlichen Kommunikation des Mittelalters,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 30 (1996): 60–79, quote at 67. See also Althoff, “*Ira Regis*: Prolegomena to a History of Royal Anger,” in Rosenwein, *Anger's Past*, chap. 5; Althoff, “Demonstration und Inszenierung: Spielregeln der Kommunikation in mittelalterlicher Öffentlichkeit,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 27 (1993): 27–50. Unlike Althoff, Ruth Schmidt-Wiegand, “Gebärdensprache im mittelalterlichen Recht,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 16 (1982): 363–79, insists (p. 365) on a distinction between spontaneous gestures, such as laughing and crying, and conventional ones. On gestures and emotion, see also Moshe Barasch, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York, 1976); Barasch, *Giotto and the Language of Gesture* (Cambridge, 1987); Jean-Claude Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1990); Martin J. Schubert, *Zur Theorie des Gebarens im Mittelalter: Analyse von nichtsprachlicher Äußerung in mittelhochdeutscher Epik; Rolandslied, Eneasroman, Tristan* (Cologne, 1991).

(17:51). In the middle tier at the left, David plays the harp while Saul, angry at David's renown, holds the spear that he will soon throw at the boy without success (18:9–10, 19:9–10). To the right, Samuel anoints David “in the midst of his brethren” (16:30). The bottom tier tells the story of David mourning his estranged son Absalom. To the left, Joab thrusts a lance into Absalom, who is caught fast in a tree (2 Kings [2 Sam.] 18:9, 18:14). At the far right, David weeps (2 Kings [2 Sam.] 18:33, 19:1). Unlike the medieval chronicles that Johan Huizinga was presumably thinking of when he described the emotional life of the Middle Ages as “excited,” most medieval art, as this example shows, was very restrained in its emotional representations. Saul's anger is shown by the unnatural tilt of his head, while David, in a gesture of mourning already used in classical antiquity, indicates his grief by raising the edge of his mantle to his eyes. Courtesy of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. MS M.619, verso.

worthy of study, do not trivialize them, and recognize the constraints that shaped them.⁷⁵ But both are quite tied to questions of power, whether royal or legal. Yet if emotions are part of daily (indeed, continuous) evaluations of weal and woe, then they must have been as much a part of intimate family constellations as of high politics. For emotions are among the tools with which we manage social life as a whole.

Given this fact, let me suggest a historical approach to the emotions that takes into account the new non-hydraulic theories of emotions, focuses on more than power and politics, and recognizes the complexity of emotional life. People lived—and live—in what I propose to call “emotional communities.” These are precisely the same as social communities—families, neighborhoods, parliaments, guilds, monasteries, parish church memberships—but the researcher looking at them seeks above all to uncover systems of feeling: what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them; the evaluations that they make about others’ emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.⁷⁶

I further propose that people move (and moved) continually from one such community to another—from taverns to law courts, say—adjusting their emotional displays and their judgments of weal and woe (with greater and lesser degrees of success) to these different environments. As Lyndal Roper has put it, “competing cultures [may be seen in the] same individual man [or woman].”⁷⁷ There are two points here: not only does every society call forth, shape, constrain, and express emotions differently, but even *within the same society* contradictory values and

⁷⁵ William Ian Miller is another medievalist of whom this can be said. Using poetry to get at Icelandic emotions, Miller shows that the violent and seemingly impulsive Icelanders of the sagas are just as involved in emotion management as the courtiers of absolutist courts. See his *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago, 1990); Miller, *Humiliation*; Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998). Following a similar line of argument vis-à-vis the violent knight of chivalric literature is Richard W. Kaeuper, “Chivalry and the ‘Civilizing Process,’” in *Violence in Medieval Society*, Kaeuper, ed. (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2000), 21–35. Challenging the Elias paradigm on two fronts—the date for the rise of “good manners” and its origins in the princely courts—Daniela Romagnoli discusses a long tradition of comportment literature, which dated back to the sixth century and blossomed in astonishing abundance and variety of forms in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, not only at the courts but in the monasteries and, above all, the cities. Romagnoli argues that all groups must have rules “indispensable to their survival,” and that the history of “good manners” is both discontinuous and non-evolutionary. See Romagnoli, “La courtoisie dans la ville: Un modèle complexe,” in *La ville et la cour: Des bonnes et des mauvaises manières*, Romagnoli, ed. (Paris, 1995), chap. 1, quote at 73.

⁷⁶ Although it may sound similar to Brian Stock’s “textual communities” (*The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* [Princeton, N.J., 1983]), the term “emotional communities” is meant to be considerably broader. These must be, almost by definition (since emotions normally have a social, communicative role), an aspect of every social grouping in which people have a stake and interest. Helpful here is the sort of enterprise represented by *Emotion in Organizations*, Stephen Fineman, ed. (London, 1993), where even a factory is seen to have various “emotional zones” and to elicit and manage various emotions. See also Keith Oatley, *Best Laid Schemes: The Psychology of Emotions* (Cambridge, 1992), where emotions are seen as key to people’s roles in life and (especially) in making transitions from one role to another. Oatley writes as well (p. 356) of “semipermeable membranes” that divide the “distinctive worlds” in which people are engaged. Unlike Reddy’s notion of “emotional refuge” (see *Navigation of Feeling*, 128–29, for the definition), the idea of emotional communities does not require a set of overarching emotional norms from which people seek relief.

⁷⁷ Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 119.

models, not to mention deviant individuals, find their place. John Baldwin has pointed to the multiple voices in medieval discourses on sex.⁷⁸ I suggest that we recognize the possibility of finding similar varieties, as well as convergences, in emotional feeling and expression.

There is space here for only the briefest of illustrations of emotional communities in the Middle Ages. Our chief source for sixth-century Francia, Gregory, bishop of Tours, had a consistent set of emotional expectations. He justified writing his famous *Histories* because (he thought) the “fury of kings” had to be made known to posterity.⁷⁹ But in fact, his most emotional passages were about men, women, and children talking with one another at moments of crisis. He tells us, for example, that when a young aristocrat named Injuriosus first wed, his bride kept him up the whole night, weeping. Gregory imagined their pillow talk: “I beg you to explain what makes you so sad,” the young groom exclaims. The bride turns to him, replying, “If I cry every day of my life, will that be enough tears to wash away the immense sorrow of my heart? For I had determined to keep my body pure for Christ, untouched by a man.” The two continue to talk into the wee hours, the wife’s tears and clamors eventually “moving” her husband, leading the two to vow—and accomplish—a married life of chastity.⁸⁰ The point is not that such a moment did or did not “actually happen” but that Gregory imagined an emotional scene between husband and wife, complete with tears and emotional transformations. (If the passions are not the ones that we expect in our own century, that does not obviate their importance.)

Similarly, Gregory recounted his own childhood illness in emotion-laden terms. His uncle (Gregory wrote) lovingly came to visit the sick boy. His mother declared, “This will be a mournful day for me, my sweet son, for you have such a fever.” Gregory’s triumphant response to his mother, while predictably pious, was also solicitous of her feelings: “I beg you not to be sad at all, but send me to the tomb of the blessed bishop Illidius. For I believe and have faith that his virtue will bring happiness to you and health to me.”⁸¹

When this normal, “sympathetic” family broke down, in Gregory’s view, anger and fury rather than love and happiness were the results. Gregory recounts the story of the stepmother of Prince Sigeric. She took to wearing Sigeric’s real mother’s clothing. The boy, “moved to gall,” upbraided her. She, in turn, was “inflamed by fury.”⁸²

The family was thus clearly a site of many sorts of emotions, and when Gregory

⁷⁸ John W. Baldwin, *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200* (Chicago, 1994). On the likelihood that even within one culture there are different takes on the same experience, see Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, 2d edn. (Boston, 1993), where, on 20–21, culture is described not as a “self-contained whole” but rather as the site of “heterogeneous processes.”

⁷⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, præf., Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, eds., *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* (hereafter, *MGH SRM*) 1, pt. 1 (Hanover, 1951) (hereafter, Gregory, *Histories*), 1: “regum furor.”

⁸⁰ Gregory, *Histories*, 1.47, pp. 30–31. On chaste marriages, see Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, N.J., 1993). The scene depicted by Gregory would seem to be a good example of “emotives” at work.

⁸¹ Gregory, *Liber Vitae Patrum*, 2.2, Bruno Krusch, ed., *MGH SRM* 1, pt. 2 (1885; rpt. edn., Hanover, 1969), 220.

⁸² Gregory, *Histories*, 3.5, pp. 100–01.

turned (in his imagination and representation) from the domestic nexus to the world of politics, his emotional expectations remained the same. The civil wars of the Franks were, for Gregory, family matters. This helps explain why he thought that he was writing about the “fury” of kings, even though it was (and remains) perfectly possible to depict Frankish royal warfare in the language of power politics.⁸³ For Gregory, two potentially separate emotional communities—home life and the battlefield—converged.

But in twelfth-century France, the “gift of tears” was cultivated in certain circles—among the Italian hermits, at Fécamp, and in Cistercian monasteries—while, at the very same moment, it was utterly rejected in other milieux, especially at the monastery of Cluny and the cathedral school of Saint-Victor.⁸⁴ These were separate emotional communities. Similarly, in the later Middle Ages, childbearing women had license to scream in pain. But idealized women of the same period—women depicted as saints—suffered painful diseases or torments not only without complaint but gratefully, as a token of their identification with the suffering of Christ.⁸⁵

In the fourteenth century, preachers’ handbooks claimed that hatred was a sickness of the soul.⁸⁶ But in the neighborhoods of fourteenth-century Marseilles, everyone knew that hatred was a right (*ius*) that could be maintained and nourished by families and friends or (on the other hand) ceded and given up. Within the emotional community represented by the neighborhoods of Marseilles, hatred was a good, a necessary part of honor, an advertisement of alliances, and even a “defense” of sorts when a murderer was hauled into court. But officials of the Angevin crown, which ruled Marseilles during this period, did not recognize these hatreds; they decontextualized violent acts, condemning them as irrational, in effect adopting the viewpoint of the preachers’ handbooks. The crown’s men represented an emotional community very different from Marseilles’ neighborhoods. Yet those very officials shuttled from one community to the other, participating in the culture of hatreds at home, belittling the same culture when compiling records for their Angevin masters.

To sum up: there were many medieval emotional communities. Certain of these applauded histrionic expression;⁸⁷ some privileged gestures or bodily symptoms.⁸⁸ Certain communities gendered emotions. Some emotional communities overlapped

⁸³ See Guy Halsall, “Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West: An Introductory Survey,” in *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West*, Halsall, ed. (London, 1998), 1–45.

⁸⁴ Piroska Nagy, *Le don des larmes au Moyen Age* (Paris, 2000), pts. 3 and 4. Is a study of a religious doctrine such as “the gift of tears” really emotions history, or must it be relegated to the “intellectual history” bin? As Reddy shows, it is quite wrong to separate the two. Indeed, one school of anthropological thought considers “narratives, conversation, performances, poetry, and song not as texts for cultural analysis but as social practices with serious effects.” See *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, Catherine A. Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds. (Cambridge, 1990), vii. If songs, why not treatises on tears? The representation and discussion of emotion in *any* source ought to be grist for the historian’s mill, since all texts are social productions, reflect certain norms, and presumably have impact on at least some groups.

⁸⁵ Esther Cohen, “The Animated Pain of the Body,” *AHR* 105 (February 2000): 61–62. The Latin *dolor*, much like English “pain,” can refer to both physical and mental anguish.

⁸⁶ For what follows, see Smail, “Hatred as a Social Institution.”

⁸⁷ This is surely the more fruitful interpretation of Huizinga’s overwrought chronicle sources. See White, “Politics of Anger,” for a useful approach.

⁸⁸ For gesture, see n. 74 above. For somatic symptoms of emotions, see the discussion of Icelandic

(or were perceived by those living in them to overlap) with others nearby; others called forth very different, sometimes even antithetical, emotional configurations. In the end, it will of course be necessary to organize these observations into a coherent narrative. It will not be a narrative based on the progress of (self-)control but rather on the interactions and transformations of communities holding various values and ideas, practicing various forms of sociability, and privileging various emotions and styles of expression.

THE GRAND NARRATIVE that has dominated emotions scholarship cannot stand. It is based on a debunked theory of the emotions and its concomitant, but flawed, notion of progressive self-restraint. Jettisoning the hydraulic view does not mean that one new approach must take over: there are plenty of issues to consider and a variety of useful modes of attack, no one of which is going to compass the whole field for all periods and every sort of evidence. The new narrative will recognize various emotional styles, emotional communities, emotional outlets, and emotional restraints in *every* period, and it will consider how and why these have changed over time.

Once we have embarked upon that narrative (and some already have), we may stop worrying about emotions in history and begin to enjoy them.

emotions in Miller, *Humiliation*, chap. 3; and Carolyn Larrington, "The Psychology of Emotion and Study of the Medieval Period," *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001): 251–56.

Barbara H. Rosenwein is a professor of history at Loyola University Chicago. She is the author of *A Short History of the Middle Ages* (2001) and *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (1999), editor of *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (1998), and co-editor (with Sharon Farmer) of *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society* (2000) and (with Lester K. Little) *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings* (1998). The recipient of National Endowment for the Humanities and John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowships, Rosenwein is currently studying the various emotional communities of the early Middle Ages.