“Attending Women: It’s About Time”
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Workshop Title
Emotional Communities: Early Modern Women Writers

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Abstract
The emotions – passions, affections, feelings, and sentiments – color each individual’s experience of time. This workshop will explore emotions in early modern poetry and how emotions create “emotional communities.” The readings will compare and contrast women’s and men’s depiction of emotion and time in some examples of Spanish, French, and Italian poetry from 1400-1690.

Description
Barbara Rosenwein posits that “an emotional community is a group where people have a common stake, interests, values, and goals. Thus it is often a social community. But it is also possibly a ‘textual community’ created and reinforced by ideologies, teachings, and common presuppositions. With their very vocabulary, texts offer exemplars of emotions belittled and valorized.” (Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages, Cornell University Press, 2006, pp. 24-25) We will take Rosenwein’s
approach, outlined in her introduction, as the common horizon of interpretation, or critical approach, for the workshop. Thus, the introduction is the required reading, and we invite each participant to consider writers they are familiar with as examples to bring to the discussion.

As we examine emotions in the early modern poetry of women writers, we will investigate the emotional communities within which they operated during their own time, and perhaps operate still today. We want to consider these emotional communities in their own right, as an alternative to, or even intersecting with, communities comprised of all men, rather than a critique of those heterogeneous groups. What are the issues that provide the most fodder for affective language for a given emotional community? Does this emotional community transcend time and space, or is it demonstrably tied to a period and a location? Does the community act as a catalyst for change? To what end? Some emotional language is rooted in religious conviction, so how does an emotional community cultivate devotion to a person or an ideal? A single individual can take part in several emotional communities simultaneously, so how does such a community contribute to the construction of the self?

The organizers have provided particular examples on a separate Google Drive for participants to review as part of the recommended reading. Please contact us directly for more information. Included on the Google Drive are poems by Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara in Italian and Luisa Sigea and Teresa de Avila in Spanish, as well as poems by Madame de Guyon and Antoinette Deshoulières in French: they all illustrate how poetry can be studied from the perspective of emotional communities. For the sake of comparison on the Italian front, passages from Petrarch’s narrative poem *Triumphs* that ventriloquize his beloved Laura to depict her emotions in the ‘first person’ are also included, and for Spanish, we refer to passages from Cervantes’ *Don Quijote*: the ‘Foolish Curiosity Tale’ and the episode of Montesino’s cave. When discussing the poetry we want to reflect on how women writers redirect or change the vocabulary of emotion used by male writers. In the analysis of the prose samples the question is inverted and opens two paths of research 1) how do male writers shape female characters’ discourses on emotions and 2) what kind of interplay in the narrative creates the female representation inside the male discourses composed by the writer?

Although the organizers are engaged in research about these writers and the question of emotions, many participants will be new to the topic. In order to facilitate discussion, we would like to invite interested participants to contact us with any issues or questions in advance, allowing more preparation to animate a lively discussion. This presymposium communication should also help to build a sense of community and familiarity before we come together in Milwaukee.

The majority of the discussion will focus on refining potential research problems and articulating questions to solve those problems, as outlined in *The Craft of Research* (2003, see recommended reading). As researchers, we move from topics – the focus of the conference and individual workshop - to research problems to questions, and finally to arguments. This should help all the participants to ultimately engage their own sources and make arguments that can be tested in their own research. The problems and questions should also provide substantial material for classroom discussion when we return to our home institutions. We look forward to seeing you soon.
Preliminary Reading List

Recommended Reading List
Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, “Chapter 3” and “Conclusion,” 191-203.


Primary Texts
(Please request access to the Workshop Google Drive to access the texts)

Vittoria Colonna:
“Pensiero privo d’affetto”
“Scrivo sol per sfogar l’interna doglia”
“Lasciar non posso i miei saldi pensieri”
“Di novo il Cielo de l’antica gloria”

Veronica Gambara:
“Mentra da vaghi e giovenil pensieri”
“O del la nostra etade unica gloria”

Francesco Petrarca:
“Triumph of Death II”

Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte-Guyon:
“Je suis un petit oiseau” / “A little bird I am”
“Si aimer est un crime” / “Love constitutes my crime”
“Love increased by suffering”

Antoinette Deshoulières:
“Ode à M. le Duc de La Rochefoucauld”

Miguel de Cervantes:
*Don Quijote*

Luisa Sigea:
Short Selection of Poems

Teresa de Avila:
Short Selection
This is a book about the history of emotions. The topic is paradoxically very old—historians have always talked about emotions—and almost entirely unexplored, since for the most part such talk has been either unfocused or misguided. For the unfocused variety, consider Tacitus, who, when describing the condition of Rome at Nero’s death, said that the senators were “joyous” (laeti); the commoners “roused to hope” (in spem erecti); and the lowest classes “mournful” (maestis).¹ He did not intend thereby a serious discussion of emotions but rather a lively evocation of the different classes at Rome and their disparate interests.² Historians continue to write in this way when they wish to be colorful. Thus David Fromkin tells us that on the eve of the First World War the German chancellor and senior officers “awaited events with different hopes, fears, and expectations.”³ These are perfectly ordinary and innocent examples of “unfocused” historical emotion talk. I shall leave until later in this chapter the discussion of focused studies, for they are a relatively recent development to which this book must pay considerable attention. Suffice to say that for the most part they have been inspired by a particularly simplistic notion of the emotions that makes passions not so much different from age to age as either “on” (impulsive and violent) or “off” (restrained).

The fact that there is a history of emotions but that it has been studied (for the most part) wrongly or badly is one reason that I have written this book. There is another reason as well: I am convinced that, as sociologists already know very well, “the source of emotion, its governing laws, and its consequences are an inseparable part of the social process.”⁴ Historians need to take emotions as seriously as they have lately taken other “invisible” top-

2. Ramsay MacMullen, however, argues in Feelings in History, Ancient and Modern (Claremont, Calif., 2003) that writers like Tacitus did their history exactly right and that modern historians too should learn to tack passions into their bloodless prose. But this they do, as David Fromkin in note 3 below exemplifies.
4. David D. Franks, “The Bias against Emotions in Western Civilization,” in Sociology of
ics, such as ecology and gender. I use as my starting point the Early Middle Ages because the Middle Ages remains, despite caveats, a direct ancestor of modern Western civilization, and the Early Middle Ages is its link to the ancient world and thus to the Greek and Roman legacy of ideas and words having to do with emotions. The Early Middle Ages is thus a natural starting point. Focused studies of emotions have treated the Middle Ages as one emotional period. I challenge this view. Even very short time spans, such as the sixth to late seventh centuries, which are the ones covered in this book, saw vast changes in the uses of emotional vocabulary and expressive repertoires. But arriving at this conclusion requires considering contexts far more precise than "medieval" or "modern."

I postulate the existence of "emotional communities": groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value—or devalue—the same or related emotions. More than one emotional community may exist—indeed normally does exist—contemporaneously, and these communities may change over time. Some come to the fore to dominate our sources, then recede in importance. Others are almost entirely hidden from us, though we may imagine they exist and may even see some of their effects on more visible groups. In this book I trace a number of emotional communities, and in several instances I show how one displaced another, at least from the point of view of the production of texts. I do not claim to have found all the emotional communities of the sixth and seventh centuries; if this book's title were to be glossed, it would be as Some Emotional Communities, not The Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages.

Thus far I have spoken of emotions in history and emotional communities as if the meaning of the word "emotions" were self-evident. It is not even though as recently as 2001 Martha Nussbaum declared that "emotions" was a universal "sub-category of thought." In fact, the use of the catch-all term "emotions" to refer to "joy, love, anger, fear, happiness, guilt sadness, embarrassment [and] hope" is quite recent even in the Anglophone world. The Oxford English Dictionary records that the earliest meaning of the term (dating from 1579) was "a social agitation"; "emotion" gained its significance of mental agitation only about a century later. Nevertheless, a Thomas Dixon has shown, it was not the favored word for psychologist turmoil until about 1800. Before then, people spoke more often—and more precisely—of passions, affections, and sentiments. All of these refer to fairly clear subsets of the words and ideas that today come under the umbrella of emotions. It was the scientific community that privileged the term "emotions" and gave it the portmanteau meaning that it now has. Otnie Dror has demonstrated the advantages that this offered to white-coat professionals in their laboratories.

Many European languages have more than one word for the phenomenon that Anglophones call "emotions," and often these terms are not inter changeable. In France, love is not an émotion; it is a sentiment. Anger, however, is an émotion, for an émotion is short term and violent, while a sentiment is more subtle and of longer duration. German has Gefühl, a broad term that is used when feelings are strong and irrational, rather like les émotions in

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5. The term that might emerge from the latter project is my study of epitaphs in three cities; see chapter 2.


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French, while Emffindungen are more contemplative and inward, rather closer to les sentiments. Italians speak of emozioni and sentimenti; the two words sometimes have the same implications as their counterparts in French, while at other times they are virtually equivalent, much as the English word "feelings" tracks approximately the same lexical field as "emotions."10

How important should these distinctions be for our inquiry into the "emotional communities" of the early Middle Ages? If they constituted watertight definitions, it would be necessary to rethik the title as well as the very terms of this book. But they are nothing of the sort. Consider the category "passions," which in the mid-eighth century was a term in active use. In Samuel Johnson's dictionary (1755) it was defined by one authority as "the receiving of any action in a large philosophical sense; in a more limited philosophical sense, it signifies any of the affections of human nature; as love, fear, joy, sorrow: but the common people confine it only to anger."11 Thus, although "passions" had a distinct connotation (powerful feelings such as anger), it also might compass the same terms that were signified by "affections." Similarly, my Petit Robert, published in 1985, defines both sentiment and émotion as a réaction affective, an "affective reaction," though (generally) of different intensities and durations. Clearly there is a continuum, not a decisive break, between émotion and sentiment, passion and affection.12

The ancient world had many emotion words, as we shall see in chapter 1, and it also had generic terms that were about equivalent to the term "emotions," though never precisely so. I use the term emotions in this book with full knowledge that it is a convenience: a constructed term that refers to affective reactions of all sorts, intensities, and durations. We shall see that, despite its drawbacks, it is serviceable, even for the medieval world where, in

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10. I am grateful to Riccardo Cristiani, Dominique Iogna-Prat, Régine Le Jan, Walter Pohl, and the audiences of my 2004 lectures in Paris for enlightening discussions on these points. Note that a recent survey of the emotions (in mainly modern history) in Italian is titled Storia delle passioni (History of the Passions). The editor says, presumably with a wink, that she chose the term to contrast it with the "dispassionate" (passionata) present. More seriously, she sees a difference between "passions" and "emotions": passions are inseparable from their forms of expression (rappresentazione). See Storia delle Passioni, ed. Silvia Vegetti Finzi (Rome, 1995), pp. v–vi.
12. I am grateful to Damien Boquet for discussions on this point.

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deed, it had some distant ancestors—in the Latin phrase mutus animi (motions of the soul) and in the Latin adjective commutatus (moved). To vary my prose, I also make use of "passions," "feelings," and, to a lesser extent, "affects" as equivalents of "emotions."

**THE "CHILDHOOD OF MAN"**

This is not the first book to trace the history of emotions. But the topic—as a focus rather than as a colorful aside—is relatively recent, having effectively begun less than a century ago with the work of Johan Huizinga. In his perennially popular book on the Late Middle Ages, Huizinga likened the emotional tenor of the period to that of modern childhood: "Every experience," he wrote, "had that degree of directness and absoluteness that joy and sadness still have in the mind of a child."13 It was a "fairy tale" world where feelings were "sharper" and "unmediated." "We have to transpose ourselves into this impressionability of mind, into this sensitivity to tears and spiritual repentance, into this susceptibility, before we can judge how colorful and intensive life was then."14 Passions of every sort held sway; the medieval city was filled with "vacillating moods of unreined exuberance, sudden cruelty, and tender emotions," while "daily life offered unlimited range for acts of flaming passion and childish imagination."15 Huizinga's Middle Ages was the childhood of man.

Childhood, however, never lasts. The Late Middle Ages was, for Huizinga, its last gasp. The modern world—the busy, dull, dispassionate world of adults—was on its way. This was clear from Huizinga's repeated use of the word "still" (nog in Dutch). Thus he noted that "a conflict between royal princes over a chessboard was still as plausible as a motive in the fifteenth century as in Carolingian romance"; and "during the fifteenth century the immediate emotional affect is still directly expressed in ways that frequently break through the veneer of utility and calculation."16 Again, putting the same point another way, medieval "politics are not yet completely in the grip of bureaucracy and protocol."17 Adulthood was the world of "util-

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14. Huizinga, Autumn of the Middle Ages, pp. 7–8.
15. Ibid., pp. 2, 8.
16. Ibid., pp. 8, 13 (emphasis mine). I thank Mayke de Jong for helping me with the Dutch.
17. Ibid., p. 12 (emphasis mine).

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ity and calculation,” of “bureaucracy and protocol”; it was Huizinga’s own era.

Huizinga’s words, by now nearly a century old, ought to be the instructive relic of an earlier historical sensibility. In fact his view of the Middle Ages remains foundational today, especially for the history of emotions, violence, impulsivity, behavior, and crime (all of which tend to be seen as related or even identical). While the ontogeny of history—the theory that traces a trajectory from infancy to adulthood—is today out of fashion, it persists “undercover” in the history of human behavior and feeling. In the 1930s the Annales school adopted it in the guise of the “structure” of “mentality.” A certain historiographical strand continues this tradition today. Jean Delumeau in France and Peter Dinzelbacher in Austria, for example, treat fear as a built-in structure of the medieval mind. In Rassurer et protéger Delumeau speaks of a sentiment de sécurité, deriving the idea from John Bowlby’s studies of infantile needs. By terming benedictions, processions, indulgences, and so on “mechanisms of reassurance,” Delumeau reinforces Huizinga’s vision of medieval people as childlike in their goals and behaviors.

Elsewhere the paradigm of Huizinga persists under the cloak of “emo-

tionology” or its close relation, “the civilizing process.” In 1983 Peter and Carol Stearns created the term “emotionology” to describe “the standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression.” Before the days of emotionology—that is, before the mid-eighteenth century—there was no internalized self-restraint. The Stearnses claimed that “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.”

Powerfully bolstering this “up from childhood” history was the theory of the “civilizing process” elaborated by Norbert Elias in the 1930s, but which began to make inroads in historical circles only in the 1970s, when it was translated into English, French, and Italian. Elias’s book was a grand synthesis, perhaps the last such of the twentieth century. It embraced history, sociology, and psychology in two dazzling—and extremely entertaining—volumes. Like Max Weber, Elias was interested in rationalization, bureaucratization, and the juggernaut of the modern state, with its “monopoly of force.” Like Freud, however, he was keen to understand the individual psyche. He faulted the sociologists for separating ideas and ideology from what he, adopting Freud, called “the structure of drives, the direction and form of human affects and passions.” At the same time, he thought that the Freudians separated the psyche from society. Lamenting the narrow vision of psychologists, Elias pointed out that they made “no distinction . . . between the natural raw material of drives, which indeed perhaps change little throughout the whole history of mankind, and the increasingly more firmly wrought structures of control.” Elias’s focus was thus on the historicity of the superego; in his view, the process of civilizing set up more and more controls over the drives (or affects, impulses, emotions—Elias:

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19. See Marc Boch, Feudal Society, trans. L. A. Manyon (Chicago, 1961), p. 73: the Middle Ages was “a civilization in which moral or social convention did not yet require well-bred people to repress their tears and their raptures” (emphasis mine). For further discussion of this aspect of the Annales school, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” AHR 107 (2002): 921–45, esp. 932–34.
22. Delumeau, La Peur, p. 17, speaks of the importance of “attachement” between the directing classes and the commonality. When the directing classes refuse the love from below, pour et laïque (fear and hate) are the results.
26. Ibid., p. 409.
used such words interchangeably). The energies of the Western psyche became progressively compartmentalized, so that eventually cognition and reason became fairly impermeable to emotions.

Thus the importance of history to Elias. He insisted that what he was tracing in the "civilizing process" was empirical, not theoretical. He had made "a scrutiny of documents of historical experience." Above all he looked at books of etiquette, because he saw a direct link between behavior, emotion, and impulse control. He quoted the *Disputa Catonis* (written in the third or fourth century and popular thereafter), which he called the "code of behavior encountered throughout the Middle Ages." Its maxims, such as "You should follow honorable men and vent your wrath on the wicked," were for Elias evidence of medieval "simplicity, its naïveté." Painting by then familiar Huizingan picture, Elias continued: "There are [in the Middle Ages], as in all societies where the emotions are expressed more violently and directly, fewer psychological nuances and complexities in the general stock of ideas. There are friend and foe, desire and aversion, good and bad people."28

The lack of a strong overriding power meant that medieval knights—for Elias, they were the key to the whole discussion—could give in to their violent impulses: "The release of the affects in battle in the Middle Ages was no longer, perhaps, quite so uninhibited as in the early period of the Great Migrations. But it was open and uninhibited enough."29

This situation changed gradually. At the courts of the most powerful medieval princes the gentle influence of the "lady" and the tyranny of the lord combined to make "more peaceful conduct obligatory."30 Later, in the sixteenth century, the process took hold permanently. At the courts of absolute rulers who monopolized all power, men were forced by circumstance to control themselves. Eventually external requirements effected intrapsychic transformations: "As the individual was now embedded in the human network quite differently from before and moulded by the web of his dependencies, so too did the structure of individual consciousness and affects change."31 And, looking at the matter psychodynamically, Elias argued that "wars and feuds diminish. . . . But at the same time the battlefield is, in a sense, moved within. . . . An individualized pattern of near-automatic habits is established and consolidated within [the human being], a specific 'super-ego,' which endeavours to control, transform, or suppress his affects in keeping with the social structure."32 As society became more complex, the state more powerful, and individuals more interdependent, the controls only increased, so that modern man's psyche today is hedged about in every way.33

Despite the fact that almost every element of this argument has problems, Elias's theory remains triumphant today.34 When I first began to write this very paragraph, the New York Times was telling us that "Elias has posthumously become [a] theoretical guru." Barbara Hanawalt, a prominent contemporary medievalist, was quoted in the same article as saying, "Elias is onto something: people begin to change their notions of how people should behave. In the 14th century people are concerned with whether someone is of good or ill repute; it's a collective, community judgment. When you get into the 15th century, the question is about someone's 'governance.' There is a shift from community reputation to an emphasis on internal control.35

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27. Ibid., p. x.
28. Ibid., p. 35.
29. Ibid., p. 162.
30. Ibid., pp. 445–46.
31. Ibid., p. 397.
32. Ibid., p. 373.
34. The reception of Elias's work is assessed in Gerd Scherhoff, "Zivilisationsprozeß und Geschichtswissenschaft. Norbert Elias' Forschungsparadigma in historischer Sicht," *Historische Zeitschrift* 266 (1998): 561–606. Elias's historical accuracy regarding the early modern court and its culture is critiqued in Jeroen Duindam, *Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court* (Amsterdam, 1994). The Freudian theory of drives, on which Elias's theory fundamentally depends, has been repudiated by most psychologists (see below) and even many psychoanalysts, e.g., John Bowlby (Attachment and Loss, vol. 1, chap. 7). Daníel Romagnoli has shown that comportment books were already produced in the sixth century and became abundant by the twelfth, not only at the courts and the monasteries of Europe but above all in the cities; see her "La courtoisie dans la ville: un modèle complexe," in *La ville et la cour. Des bonnes et des nuisibles manières*, ed. Daniela Romagnoli (Paris, 1999), chap. 1. See also Medieval Conduct, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Robert L. A. Clark (Minneapolis, 2001). Finally, a recent collection of articles thoroughly critiques Elias's use, abuse, and ignorance of sources: *Zivilisations-Prozesse. Zu Erzählungsdrifts in der Vormodern*, ed. Rüdiger Schnell (Cologne, 2004).
Emotionality and the civilizing process are convenient theories for historians. For those studying the postmedieval period they provide a virtual tabula rasa—a Middle Ages of childish (read: unmediated) emotionality and impulsivity—on which the early modern period can build its edifices of autonomy and reason. But “early modern” itself is a historical construct whose validity must come from a sound understanding of the Middle Ages. Was the Middle Ages emotionally childish, impulsive, and unrestrained? Some medievalists have already found the contrary to be the case. Moreover, current theories of the emotions challenge the very possibility.

**UPENDING OLD MODELS**

Even Elias admitted restraints at the medieval princely courts, so the fact that literary scholars discovered that troubadour poetry celebrated love—delicate, temperate, and deeply felt—hardly rattled the paradigm. But in the 1950s such love was discovered in the monasteries as well. Jean Leclercq, for example, praised monastic love—the love that Cistercian brethren delighted to explore both in relation to themselves and to God—as sublime self-expression. Soon John C. Moore’s *Love in Twelfth-Century France* found love not only in the monasteries and the courts but also in the cities, among the “schoolmen.”

Further eroding the model was C. Stephen Jaeger, who, in a series of writings that began in the 1980s, found the “civilizing process” taking place at the courts of tenth- and eleventh-century German imperial rulers. In the late 90s, he went further, putting aristocratic love at center stage. This was a highly restrained love that was understood at the time as “the source of a morality and a heroism of self-control and self-mastery.” Yet this love flourished as early as the sixth century, and it experienced a real blossoming among the members of the Carolingian court in the ninth century.

The largely literary approaches of Leclercq, Moore, and Jaeger were complemented by the work of some legal historians. J.E.A. Jolliffe, pioneer of a legal school that saw functionality (rather than pure impulsivity) in medieval emotional expression, argued that the medieval English king’s anger was an effective political tool. Because the royal public and private personae could not be separated, Jolliffe argued, “the ruler’s personal hates and fears were released as efficient forces to play about the political world.”

Royal anger—*ira* or *malaventia*—placed disfavored persons in a sort of “limbo”; they were not quite outlaws, but neither were they under the law’s protection. Royal wrath brought men and institutions to heel. The study of the king’s emotions was, for Jolliffe, essential for understanding the twelfth-century polity.

W. H. Auden had written “Law Like Love” a decade before Jolliffe wrote about his twelfth-century kings. In the late 1960s, Fredric Boyce wrote Auden’s poem to drive home the points of his pioneering essay on pre-thirteenth-century French law. Arbiters out of court—normally *amicis* (friends, cronies) of both sides—not remote judges *en banc*, made informal legal systems work precisely by recognizing the emotional components of disputes. As Boyce put it, the arbiters “must assuage anger, soothe wounded pride, find the solution that will bring peace.” Just as Boyce was writing, a few English and American anthropologists were adopting a processual model of dispute resolution. Their colleagues in medieval his-

42. Ibid., 91.
43. Ibid., p. 97.
46. Key readings for this group: *The Ethnography of Law*, ed. Laura Nader (Menasha,
tory soon joined them. This confluence of interests need not necessarily have led to emotions history, but in fact it did so, as historians recognized the key role of emotions in moments of crisis and dispute. In the early 1980s, Michael Clanchy was quoting the Leges Henrici Primi—where amor (love) triumphs over iustitium (justice)—and citing anthropological literature on law in acephalous societies in a paper that broadened out from the English village “loveday” to the whole question of law as “the extension and reinforcement of bonds of affection beyond the immediate family.”48

By the nineties, a number of Anglo-American scholars of medieval law considered emotions to be as normal and central a topic in their field as “felony” and “trespass” had been for Pollock and Maitland.19 These emotions were understood not as the products of “vacillating moods” but rather as tied to dearly held goals and values. Thus William Ian Miller wrote on affect and honor, Stephen D. White looked at anger and the exercise of lordship, and Paul Hyams and Daniel Smail explored the role of rancor and hatred in the development of law.50 In Germany Gerd Althoff, approaching similar legal and political materials from an interest in nonverbal gesture


47. See for example, the essays in Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West, ed. John Bossy (Cambridge, 1983).


49. Nevertheless, their contribution was (and is) not widely noted. It is telling that Michael Toch claims to be drawing upon mentalité methodology in discussing the emotions evident in the records of a Bavarian manorial court, whereas in fact the author is more clearly following the path of the Anglo-American legal historians delineated here; Toch, “Ethics, Emotion and Self-interest: Rural Bavaria in the Later Middle Ages,” Journal of Medieval History 17 (1991): 135–47.


rather than law, argued that emotions were “staged”—as all emotions are packaged—to relay important information about power and authority. Both rulers and their subjects followed “rules of the game”: ritual acts, including emotional displays, that followed clear models and signaled clear messages to all concerned.51

It is thus evident that many medievalists have moved beyond the paradigm of an emotionally childlike and impulsive Middle Ages. They have carved out arenas—love in the monastery, love in the courts, staged anger in ceremonies of lordship and kingship, love in the twelfth century—where the model does not apply. Since the 1970s they have found strong theoretical ground for their assertions, as a number of them explicitly recognize, because of the revolution in the way in which emotions came to be conceptualized by psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists.

The “old” theory of the emotions was hydraulic. Whether Darwinian or Freudian, psychologists assumed that passions were “drives” or forms of energy that would surge forth toward “discharge” unless they were controlled, channelled, or channeled.52 The theories of the 1960s and 1970s, however, were free of instincts, drives, and energies. Thus for Magda Arnold, an early leader in the field of cognitive psychology, emotions were the result of a certain type of perception, a relational perception that appraised an object


agreeing that at least some emotions are “hardwired” in the human (and animal) psyche, social constructionists point out that emotional expression takes as many forms as there are cultures. Thus romantic love is privileged in one place, reviled in another, and unknown in still a third. Anger is expressed by bodily swelling, reddening, or whitening in one culture, while in another it leaks to wordy insults. In Japan there is a feeling, **anmae**, of contented dependence on another; but in English there is nothing comparable and presumably no feeling that corresponds to it. No one is born knowing appropriate modes of expression, or whether to imagine emotions as internal or external, or whether to privilege or disregard an emotion. These things make up the “feeling rules” that societies impart. Putting social constructionism and the cognitive view together, we may say that if emotions are assessments based on experience and goals, the norms of the individual’s social context provide the framework in which such evaluations take place and derive their meaning. There is nothing whatever “hydraulic”—nothing demanding release—in this cognitivist/social constructionist view.

The psychologist Randolph Cornelius says that Americans would consider **anmae** “embarrassingly childish.” But the cognitive and social constructionist theories of emotion suggest that no emotion is childish. Even for children, emotions are not “pure” or unmediated; all are the products of experience, and experience itself is shaped by the practices and norms of a person’s household, neighborhood, and larger society. Even the most “impulsive” of behaviors is judged so within a particular context. If an emotional display seems “extreme,” that is itself a perception from within a set of emotional norms that is socially determined.


56. Cornelius, *Science of Emotion*, p. 155, points out that social constructionism is “an outgrowth of the cognitive revolution.” But for cognitivists, “appraisals represent innate re-

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sponses to evolutionarily significant events,” while for social constructionists they are socially shaped responses to events that are socially defined as significant.


RELATIVISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

The historian William Reddy and the philosopher Martha Nussbaum, the two most important recent commentators on the emotions, dislike the relativism that social constructionism implies. If one cannot make judgments about emotions, if all emotions are created equal, then there is no room for advocacy. Without right or wrong, there can be no ethics, no basis for change, and no critique. Reddy’s and Nussbaum’s objections are significant for the history of medieval emotions, but for two opposing reasons. Nussbaum, a moral philosopher, largely skips the Middle Ages in her quest for a socially ameliorative form of love: she seeks an emotional life that goes beyond the self and leads to altruism, and here she finds the Middle Ages wanting. Reddy is not interested in the Middle Ages per se. But because he proposes a theory of social transformation based on the nature of emotions, he points the way toward a new emotions history in which the Middle Ages may potentially be integrated. Let us explore their briefs in turn.

Nussbaum, who does not hesitate to call emotions “thoughts”—“upheavals of thoughts”—not only accepts but adds muscle to the cognitive view by finding it both cogent and potentially therapeutic. If assessments are based on past experiences, then a childhood full of imaginative play and an adulthood full of art provide an incomparable repertoire of objects, images, and responses for individuals to work with. Nevertheless, Nussbaum wishes to move beyond the cognitive stance. Recognizing that the new psychology does not lead to “normative questions,” she insists that “it is right to ask” these anyway, and she spends fully two-thirds of her book exploring whether “there is anything about emotions that makes them subversive of morality (or, in other ways, of human flourishing).” In fact, she finds the contrary: the right emotions are good. And because emotions are based on assessments, they can be altered (and made better) by “altering our perceptions of objects.”

There are many “right” emotions, but love is the one for which Nussbaum cares to find a history. Here the Middle Ages falls short, for it contributes little to the “ladder of love tradition” that interests Nussbaum—a tradition that attempts “to reform or educate erotic love so as to keep its creative force while purifying it of ambivalence and excess, and making it more friendly to general social aims.” (Here Nussbaum has unfortunately not read the work of C. Stephen Jaeger.) Thus, while claiming that “one could write an illuminating history of moral thought from Plato to Nietzsche using that motif [of love’s ladder] alone,” in fact Nussbaum brackets off and omits the Middle Ages. She sees the origins of “love’s education” in the ancient world and finds it again in the early modern period.

With the exception of courtly love and the neo-Aristotelian philosophy of St. Thomas, the Middle Ages fail, for Nussbaum, to provide a notion of love that appreciates individuality, is respectful of human agency, and leads to compassion for the hungry, the grieving, and the persecuted. In Nussbaum’s hands, St. Augustine becomes responsible for this blinkered view; although (unlike the Stoics) he accepted—even celebrated—emotions, he also mistrusted them except insofar as their object was God. Dante, by contrast, liberated love. Nussbaum’s cutting-edge views of emotions are in this way incorporated into a traditional view of history in which the Italian Renaissance is the dividing line between inadequate and full human awareness.

William Reddy echoes Nussbaum in judging certain emotional stances as better than others. But he has a different agenda: he seeks not emotional desiderata but emotional liberation. Unhappy with both the moral relativism of social constructionism, which argues that all societies are “created equal” because there is no universal or essential truth, Reddy postulates that emotions “are the real world-anchor of signs.” By that he means, first, that they exist; and second, that they take the form that we know them in the context of the signs—which depend on the cultures—that elicit them. For Reddy, emotions have protean potential. But they are not expressed in protean ways because, already in their expression, they have been shaped, molded, and channeled rather thoroughly. Nevertheless—and this is the key point—that molding is never entirely successful. Reddy makes this argument...
their weaknesses. People felt guilty about disagreeing with the Terror, and they felt guilty about their guilt. They felt fear for themselves and grief at the execution of friends. In short, they experienced acute emotional suffering.

Under the pressures of this extreme discomfort, “Jacobin-style emotives” were duly rejected, a reaction set in with the Directory, and sentimentalism ceased to define the emotional regime. The new political regime rejected emotionality, elevating “masculine reason” in its place, while a variant of sentimentalism found a role in art, literature, and intimate family life. But, unlike the emotional refuges of the past, the new ones allowed emotions to be associated with weakness as well as strength. Released from the constraints of high-mindedness and moral goodness, emotives now had freer play in people’s lives. The liberty wrought by the French Revolution was emotional.

EMOTIONAL REGIMES / EMOTIONAL COMMUNITIES

Thus Reddy gives a scheme for historical change that does not rely on an ontogenic argument. It is not progressive restraint that leads to the modern world for Reddy but rather emotives and the emotional suffering that they entailed in the eighteenth century. Admittedly the emotional regime at the royal court was highly restrained and controlling. But this did not create—as Elias would have it—internalized superegos. Rather it led men and women to seek emotional relief in refuges which, while imposing their own norms and restraints, allowed for alternative forms of emotional expression. Reddy suggests that this double-sided emotional life could not last because the refuges pressed to remake the world in their image. “The Revolution . . . began as an effort to transform all of France, by means of benevolent gestures of reform, into a kind of emotional refuge.” Hence one emotional regime was replaced by another. But the new one turned out to be even more painful than the first. Rejecting its constraints, the Directory and the Napoleonic era created a new, more open emotional regime even as it demoted emotions by opposing them to Reason. For Reddy, all emotional regimes are constraining, and people must search for the regime most open to alternatives, experiment, failure, and deviance.

Reddy is entirely straightforward in preferring some emotional regimes to others. What he does not say—but is nevertheless implicit in his work—is that the trajectory of Western history (at least the recent trajectory) is in the right direction. We begin with the court of Louis XIV, where emotional life was entirely stifled. We continue with the emotional refuges of the salons and Masonic lodges, where emotives were appreciated and cultivated. Nevertheless, these refuges harbored a fatal flaw, which became evident once they themselves attained the status of an “emotional regime”: the erroneous assumption that policies and morality could be based on “true” emotions. The emotional suffering produced by this new regime gave way in turn to the romantic passions of the nineteenth century, which was also “wrong” in its separation of emotion from reason, but was, in any event, less painful and more open. This regime has more or less persisted until the present.

Making emotional suffering the agent for historical change is a hypothesis full of hope, but it is problematic as a general theory. It discounts the fundamental comfort of “deeply ingrained, overlearned habits.” One of the reasons that anthropologists have been reluctant to judge the emotional tenor of the cultures that they study is because, on the whole, people adjust to the cultural constraints that surround them and feel, if not happy, then at least “at ease.” Some suffer, to be sure. In the world of the Bedouins studied by Lila Abu-Lughod, for example, a man named Rashid made a fool of himself by falling in love with his wife. But his very foolhardiness became a way to reinforce the general norms among the members of his family: “His mother, brothers, and cousins criticized him as lacking in ‘agl [social good sense], and even the children, his nephews and nieces, all told me that they no longer feared him.” The children were not suffering; they were relieved. One man’s suffering can be (and often is) another’s delight.

Thus at the court of Louis XIV in 1692 the king wanted to arrange an ignominious marriage for his nephew the duc de Chartres with one of his illegitimate daughters. The young duc, weak and speechless in front of the king, consented. His parents were humiliated; his mother burst into tears.

78. Ibid., p. 146: “If the theory of emotives is right, then sentimentalism’s view of human nature was wrong in interesting ways. (And in saying it was ‘wrong’ I am purposefully breaking with a relativist stance vis-à-vis the subject matter of my research.)”

disgust, instead behaving—and feeling—benevolently toward recalcitrant
and drunken passengers. Alienated from their “true” emotions, these
women could hardly “recenter” the world of their friends and family without
a sense of phoniness or disgust at their “commercial” selves. Yet the world of
friends and family also managed emotions, which were shaped for purposes
of “social exchange” if not for financial profit. Thus one sees in airline stew-
ardesses an artificial but nevertheless perfectly coherent emotional community
that coexisted side by side with others.

For Hochschild, it is wrenching to go from one emotional community to
another. But this cannot be true for everyone. Anthropologists do it all the
time, presumably enjoying the experience, which is indeed part of the very
call of their profession. Renato Rosaldo described his initial perplexity at
headhunters who claimed that culling heads assuaged their sadness. Later
he understood and felt their complex intermingling of “bereavement, rage,
and headhunting”; he entered their emotional community. Abu-Lughod
wrote that she would “miss” the emotional community afforded by her
bedouin hosts, “the joys of a sociable world in which people hug and talk
and shout and laugh without fear of losing one another.” Clearly Abu-
Lughod’s normal emotional surroundings were rather different.

Imagine, then, a large circle within which are smaller circles, none en-
tirely concentric but rather distributed unevenly within the given space. The
large circle is the overarching emotional community, tied together by funda-
nmental assumptions, values, goals, feeling rules, and accepted modes of
expression. The smaller circles represent subordinate emotional communi-
ties, partaking in the larger one and revealing its possibilities and its limi-
tations. They too may be subdivided. At the same time, other large circles
may exist, either entirely isolated from or intersecting with the first at one
or more points.

Whether overarching or subordinate, emotional communities are not
coterminous with just any group. A crowded street does not constitute an
emotional community. An emotional community is a group in which
people have a common stake, interests, values, and goals. Thus it is often a

social community. But it is also possibly a “textual community,” created
and reinforced by ideologies, teachings, and common presuppositions. With
their very vocabulary, texts offer exemplars of emotions belittled and val-
orized. In the Middle Ages, texts were memorized, made part of the self,
and “lived with” in a way analogous to communing with a friend. Hagi-
ography (the lives of saints) was written so that men and women would
have models of behavior and attitude. The readers of these lives took that
purpose seriously.

Thus emotional communities are in some ways what Foucault called a
common “discourse”: shared vocabularies and ways of thinking that have a
controlling function, a disciplining function. Emotional communities are
similar as well to Bourdieu’s notion of “habitus”: internalized norms that
determine how we think and act and that may be different in different
groups. Some sociologists speak of “group styles,” in which “implicit, cul-
turally patterned styles of membership filter collective representations” that
may include “vocabularies, symbols, or codes.” I use the term “communities”
in order to stress the social and relational nature of emotions; to allow
room for Reddy’s very useful notion of “emotives,” which change the dis-
course and the habitus by their very existence; and to emphasize some
people’s adaptability to different sorts of emotional conventions as they
move from one group to another.

92. For textual communities, see Brian Stock, The Implications of Literacy: Written Lan-
93. In the modern world, films and mass media do this as well. Thus Nussbaum finds it
useful to analyze a popular American film, Terms of Endearment, because it “appealed to a
mass audience in its own culture and elicited strong emotions from it” (Upleavals of Thought,
p. 165).

94. Reading partook of the process of “meditative imaging” discussed in Giselle de Nic,
“Images of Invisible Dynamics: Self and Non-Self in Sixth-Century Saints’ Lives,” Studia Pat-
95. There was little “emotionology” as such in the Middle Ages—there were few advice
books (though exceptions, such as “mirrors of princes,” existed) and nothing written for a
broad “middle class” until the very end of the period. But the normative value of texts such as
saints’ lives, penitentials, and liturgical readings must not be overlooked as sources that
shaped emotional conventions and norms as surely as family and neighborhood.
96. Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman, “Culture in Interaction,” American Journal of Soci-
97. On the importance of early medieval communities—monks, laity and clergy, the imag-
inated community of the living and dead, and so on—the bibliography is enormous. I cite here

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METHODS AND SOLUTIONS

Emotional communities are not constituted by one or two emotions but rather by constellations—or sets—of emotions. Their characteristic styles depend not only on the emotions that they emphasize—and how and in what contexts they do so—but also by the ones that they demote to the tangential or do not recognize at all. To discover and analyze these communities I read related texts, noting all the words, gestures, and cries that signify feelings—or the absence of feelings. I am interested in who is feeling what (or is imagined to feel what), when, and why. Are there differences between men and women? I look for narratives within which feelings have a place, and I try to find common patterns within and across texts. I also seek implicit theories—insofar as possible—of emotions, virtues, and vices (all of which are related in the Western tradition, as will become clear in the next chapter).

Thus an important part of my method is to gather a dossier of materials (almost always written sources) that belong together because they point to an identifiable group, whether tied together by personal friendships, shared texts, or institutional affiliations. When I can find them—and when they are relevant to my group—I welcome on equal footing conciliar legislation, charters, hagiography, letters, histories, and chronicles. I set aside any isolated work, however interesting it may otherwise be. Always I miss what historians would look at first in the modern period—diaries, memoirs, interviews—though it may well be that we wrongly think of these as accessing emotion better than other sources: it is our own emotional community that values them for conveying intimate and sincere emotional expression. More serious is the lack of materials reflecting the lower classes. The extant writings of the Early Middle Ages echo only the voices of the elites—and the clerical elites at that.

Written texts present numerous problems. To be sure, many may be solved by the new and old auxiliary sciences of the historian—paleography, codicology, textual criticism, philology. But the historian of emotion is immediately confronted with somewhat different and as yet largely unmet challenges. Already long ago we realized that our sources are “interested,” often “insincere.” What should we make of them when they purport to tell us about emotions? Further, as composed texts, are they not very far from

“real” emotions, communicating them (at best) via a distorting “second hand”? Then, too, do not genres dictate the “emotional tenor” that a text will have, quite independently from any supposed community? Finally, are texts not full of topoi, repeated commonplace derived from other places, sources, and eras? What can topoi tell us about real feeling?

These are serious matters, but they are not insurmountable. Emotions are always delivered “secondhand,” whether one adopts Reddy’s notion of emotives or thinks simply of the ways in which one knows about feelings in ordinary life: via gestures, bodily changes, words, exclamations, tears. None of these things are the emotion; they are symptoms that must be interpreted—both by the person feeling them and by observers.8 Texts provide one set of interpretations; the reader (or historian) studying them supplies others. The psychoanalyst with a patient on the couch is not in a much different position, though of course she can interrogate the patient in ways that historians can do only less directly with texts. Nevertheless, both historian and analyst depend on self-reportage, words, and silences.

The constraints of genre admittedly pose a problem. Might not the well-meaning historian mistake a particular genre, with its rules of expression, for an “emotional community”? I have tried to overcome this potential pitfall by drawing together different kinds of sources. Nevertheless, it is true that some of the dossiers that I have been able to gather are rather heavily weighted toward a particular genre. This is no doubt largely the result of chance survival rather than the favoring by a community of one genre over the other. (But if one genre were in fact privileged over others by a community, this would strengthen my case, since it would suggest that emotional communities choose the genres most compatible with their styles.) The rules of genre were not, however, ironclad. They themselves were “social products”—elaborated by people under certain conditions and with certain goals in mind—and they could be drawn upon and manipulated with some freedom. Like Isen and Diamond’s “automatic habits,” they shaped emotional expression even as they themselves were used and bent so as to be emotionally expressive. Thus, for example, we will see that what was a banal epitaph in one region was quite exceptional in another, that saints’ lives

8. It is true that the James-Lange theory and its variants argue that the bodily change is the emotion. But bodily changes still need to be interpreted, a process that relies on cognition and thus is subject to social shaping, misapprehension, denial, and all the other mechanisms that mediate between an “emotion” and its naming. On the James-Lange theory see most conveniently Cornelius, Science of Emotion, chap. 3.


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written in the first half of the seventh century were markedly less emotional than those written later in the century, and that charters—the early medieval equivalent of legal documents—were not entirely determined by boilerplate.99

It is true that genres tend to have different uses for emotions. Presumably letters best reveal how a person “really” feels. Saints’ lives tell us how people were supposed to behave, emphasizing emotional ideals. Sermons, too, emphasize “oughts.” Histories and chronicles, it would seem at first glance, must be driven by their subject matter and thus pose special problems: if someone or some event is emotional, the historian has no choice but to portray it thus. This, however, cannot be right, for the choice of subject and the way in which it is portrayed has everything to do with a historian’s emotional community and the ways in which he or she imagines her audience. But surely biblical exegesis is utterly subject driven; an exegete must deal with emotional passages because they come up, willy-nilly, in books of the bible. To be sure, we cannot then say that those passages express the exegete’s emotional community. But if a hagiographer, homilist, or letter writer quotes an emotional passage from the bible, then that is grist for our mill, though it is important not just to “count” it as “emotional” but to know whether the passage is quoted with approval or censure and in what context.

That texts may be insincere, make things up, mislead, and even lie is precisely what the historian’s craft is meant to confront. We no longer think that texts are transparent windows onto “reality.” We would be wrong to drop this stance when it comes to emotions. In one of his saints’ lives, the sixth-century bishop Gregory of Tours described a joyful baby.100 But no one knows how a baby “really” feels; and besides, this baby’s joy was part of a miracle that Gregory was promoting. There is much to doubt in the account. But that Gregory imagined a child laughing with joy, that he found this a convincing image, that he expected his audience to find it as well: *this* we may say is probably true. Even if Gregory were deliberately lying, his lie would betray a truth, namely that in his day it was possible to imagine happy babies.

But perhaps happy babies were not part of Gregory’s world but constituted merely a *topos* that he knew about from his writing and education.

Like the “Dear” that we use today in formal letter salutations, even people we do not know—“Dear Sir or Madam”—*topoi* are conventions that have largely lost their meaning. Or so they appear. Medieval writings are of these expressions, which in part were meant to show off the writer’s literary background and mastery of certain conventions. The sixth-century pope Egbert used the metaphor of sweetness (*hulceto*) continually in his writings. To Ernst Curtius, writing half a century ago, was seen as proof of his artificiality.101 But what would be the use of metaphor if it had no meaning?102 Fortunatus employed the phrase because it helped him win favor; when he wrote of the “sweetness” of one of his trons, he was drawing “attention to a characteristic which he had used as motives to applaud.”103 Artificial sentiments—even the mollifying “Loyal Sir”—tell us about conventions and habits; these have everything to do with emotion, as Isen and Diamond have been at pains to point out. And even Isen and Diamond are wrong, insincerity tells us about how people are posed to feel. Fortunatus’s patron was presumably made happy by the thing “sweet.” (That few men would be happy with it today tells us that our own emotional community is quite different from Fortunatus’s.) Today send Hallmark cards. Is this an act of sincere emotion? It is hard to know but one thing is certain: it tells us about prevailing emotional norms.

**THE SHAPE OF THIS BOOK**

This deliberately short book is in effect an extended essay and an invitation to others to add to the picture that it sketches. Each chapter raises a distinct methodological problem in connection with studying emotional communities. It should be said at the outset that statistics is not among methods used. Though there are plenty of numbers and much countin,

99. See chapter 2 for epitaphs, compare the emotional tenor of hagiography in chapters 5 and 6, and consider the discussion of charters in chapter 6 below.


102. Indeed, Massimo Montanari denies that topoi exist, for once they are properly contextualized, they take on various meanings; Montanari, “Uomini e oris nelle fonti agiogra dell’alto Medioeva,” in *Il Bestia nel medioevo*, ed. Bruno Andreoli and Massimo Mont (Bologna, 1988), p. 57. I thank Professor Montanari for sending me a copy of his article.

emotion words in this book, they are meant to serve as rough-and-ready snapshots, not as proofs. Chapter 1 begins with the Western tradition of emotion thought and emotion words, sketching the Latin legacy that would be transmitted directly to the Early Middle Ages. This chapter does not take up any emotional communities as such; indeed, it flattens out the ancient world as if it were merely a repository of *topoi*, words, and ideas about emotions ready to be drawn upon by future generations. No one in the Early Middle Ages would embrace the entire legacy, which itself was the product of many different emotional communities. Rather, succeeding generations carefully, though no doubt unconsciously, drew upon various parts of the ancient legacy—those most readily available and most consonant with their values and goals.

Chapter 2 takes up the possibility of studying coexisting emotional communities in different regions, suggesting that they might be connected to local traditions. Thus it looks at the funerary inscriptions of three different Gallic cities and suggests that quite different emotional communities were involved in each. Chapter 3 explores an emotional community through the writings of one person, Pope Gregory the Great (590–604). The methodological problem here is to take one man’s writings as reflection of a larger community: I consider Gregory’s work to represent the assumptions and norms of the clerical/monastic community for which he wrote and in which he spent his days.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 turn to Francia; the triptych is meant to illustrate how and why different emotional communities may come to the fore and then fade away. Again, each chapter poses a different methodological problem. Chapter 4 seeks to discover an emotional community from the writings of two friends, Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus (whom we have just met). They were contemporaries of Gregory the Great, and their community of feeling had much in common with the pope’s. But, working with the scheme of circles suggested above, we may say that their emotional community intersected with but did not entirely track the boundaries of the affective group in which Gregory lived. I argue that the emotional community of the two friends was characteristic of the court at Metz, about which, however, we know very little else. Chapter 5 finds a later, and very different, emotional community at the Neustrian court of Clothar II and his heirs, for which we have considerable evidence from a relatively wide variety of sources. Here the methodological issue is to see commonalities across many different genres by many different people, as well as to be sensitive to some telling differences. Chapter 6 raises perhaps the most harrowing methodological questions, for it draws mainly on anonymous writings. How can such writers constitute a social group, let alone an emotional community? I argue that in this case they can and do, and that their emotional community, that of the late seventh century, was quite different from any we had seen before.

I end my study here, in the late seventh century. The eighth century was a “new world,” increasingly marked by Carolingian hegemony. The “epigraphic habit,” which commemorated the dead and with which we begin the study of emotional communities in chapter 2, originated in its Christian form at the end of the fourth century and petered out at the close of the seventh century.¹⁰⁴ I take my cue from this rough-and-ready barometer. The next period—surely the eighth through early tenth centuries—deserves its own book. The book’s conclusion, then, reviews the arguments of the previous chapters, confronts some caveats, and proposes a theory of emotional communities as agents of change. It is commonplace to see the modern period as one of dramatic transformations, while the Middle Ages—especially the Early Middle Ages—is thought to have changed with glacial slowness. But we shall see that, at least in the history of emotions, startling shifts took place within one or two generations. The history of emotions helps us to see new dynamism in a historical period that seems otherwise largely stagnant.

EMOTIONAL COMMUNITIES IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES