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History of Emotions



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*Royal Rage and the Construction of
Anglo-Norman Authority, c. 1000-1250*

KATE MCGRATH



Palgrave Studies in the History of Emotions

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Kate McGrath
Department of History
Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, CT, USA

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The love of God unutterable and perfect, flows into a pure soul the way that light rushes into a transparent object. The more love it finds, the more it gives itself; so that, as we grow clear and open, the more complete the joy of loving is. And the more souls who resonate together, the greater the intensity of their love, for, mirror-like, each soul reflects the other.—Dante

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ABBREVIATIONS

- EH* Chibnall, Marjorie, trans. and ed. *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*. 6 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- GG* William of Poitiers. *The “Gesta Guillelmi” of William of Poitiers*. Edited and translated by R.H.C. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- GND* Van Houts, Elizabeth, trans. and ed. *The “Gesta Normannorum Ducem” of William of Jumieges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- GRA* William of Malmesbury. *Gesta Regnum Anglorum*. Edited and translated by R.M. Thomson, R.A.B. Mynors, and M. Winterbottom. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- HA* Henry of Huntingdon. *Historia Anglorum*. Edited and translated by Diana Greenway. Oxford Medieval Texts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- HN* Dudo of St. Quentin. *History of the Normans*. Edited and translated by Eric Christiansen. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998.
- HN_{ov}* William of Malmesbury. *Historia Novella*. Edited by Edmund King. Translated by K.R. Potter. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- PL* *Patrologia cursus completes, series Latina*. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 221 vols. Paris: Petit-Montrouge, 1844–1864.



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

During the Norman rebellions led by Robert Curthose (c. 1051–1134) and Robert Bellême (c. 1056–c. 1130), Orderic Vitalis (1075–c. 1142), an Anglo-Norman chronicler of the monastery of Saint-Évroul, tells us that Bishop Serlo of Sèez (d. 1123) used Easter services to address King Henry I (r. 1100–1135) of England.¹ In front of the other worshipers, Orderic claims that Bishop Serlo began to complain quite publicly and dramatically about all the harm that the rebels were causing his parishioners. Orderic writes, “Sighing long and sadly, he said to the king, who had humbly taken his seat with some of his magnates at the end of the church among the boxes of the peasants, ‘All Christians should mourn in their hearts to see the Church trodden underfoot and the wretched people destroyed. ... [I]ndeed, all Normandy, dominated by godless bandits, is without a true ruler.’”² Orderic notes that Bishop Serlo proceeded to describe several specific acts that he thought were particularly egregious, such as the burning of churches and killing of unarmed peasants. In the speech Orderic has constructed for him, he attributes these outrages to Robert Curthose’s lack of effective rule. According to Orderic, he exclaims, “When the ruler is foolish the whole province is in danger and the wretched people suffer utter deprivation.”³ Orderic then ends this scene by having Serlo issue a final, desperate plea. “‘I address them too, my lord king, to your ears,’” Serlo said, “so that your spirit may be kindled by the zeal of God to imitate Phineas [Numbers 25:7–8] and Mattathias [Maccabees 2:24] and his sons.

Rise up boldly in the name of God ... Just king, in this dire distress of your native land, 'become angry' [*irascere*] to some purpose and as, David, prophet and king, teaches, 'sin not' by taking up arms not for lust of earthly power but for the defense of your country."⁴ By quoting Psalm 4, Orderic confirms the view that humans could get angry without sinning, provided they conformed to models of Biblical anger. He is suggesting that if Henry took action, in this case violent action, to suppress the rebellion that he would be following the model established by the great kings of the Bible, and thereby, demonstrating the righteousness of his rule.⁵ Orderic Vitalis has constructed an elaborate justification for Henry to not only experience anger but also to display his anger in violence. By doing so, Orderic implies that Henry would be restoring royal leadership to Normandy, as Serlo's speech suggests that Henry's failure to display his anger would confirm that Normandy currently lacked a true ruler.⁶

This story is just one of many in Anglo-Norman and Northern French historical writings by ecclesiastical authors who represented anger as an essential element in the politics of eleventh- and twelfth-century England and Normandy. Ecclesiastical historians, such as Orderic, Dudo of St. Quentin (c. 960–1026), William of Jumièges (d. c. 1070), William of Poitiers (c. 1020–1090), William of Malmesbury (c. 1095–1143), and Henry of Huntingdon (c. 1088–1157), repeatedly explained why conflicts broke out, how they were conducted, and by what means they were ended by reference to the anger of the participants.⁷ In fact, they consistently refer to these episodes in a manner that has the effect of constructing a cycle for the expression of anger in which kings get angry, act out in anger, and then release their anger to make peace. In the story related above, Orderic seems to be offering King Henry broad authority to take military action as part of his exercise of kingship. Such references to anger in medieval stories about conflict are ubiquitous. In surveying Latin and Old French texts, scholars have noted how frequently anger is treated as a motivating force in politics in histories, royal biographies, saints' lives, episcopal letters, and other kinds of Latin texts, as well as in French epics and romances.⁸ The common attribution of anger to kings in eleventh- and twelfth-century Anglo-Norman texts surely suggests that their authors valued it as an important component in characterizing royal decision-making and royal actions.⁹ Lindsay Diggelman suggests referring to this as "emotional kingship."¹⁰ Scholars, then, need to understand what role anger rhetoric plays in the construction of models of kingship in these narratives.

This work seeks to understand how eleventh- and twelfth-century Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical authors attributed emotions to kings in the exercise of their duties and how such attributions related to larger expansions of royal authority. It posits that ecclesiastical writers used their works to legitimize certain displays of royal anger, often resulting in violence, while at the same time deploying a shared emotional language that also allowed them to condemn other types of displays. The theological ambivalence toward anger made it a useful tool for ecclesiastics to use to evaluate royal actions. Its classification as one of the so-called Seven Deadly Sins meant that it could be used to condemn blameworthy or excessive behavior; at the same time, its attribution to the saints—and even God—made it possible to also characterize kings as wielders of divine vengeance in other contexts.¹¹ As a result, the examination of how these authors attribute the emotion of anger to royal actions allows us to better understand contemporary ecclesiastical responses to the growth of royal authority and centralization in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

I argue that attributions of anger were used as important markers in Anglo-Norman historical narratives in order to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate displays of violence and ultimately the exercise of royal power.¹² Anger was used by ecclesiastical historians to provide greater legitimacy for the exercise of royal prerogatives by labeling their actions as not only just but even often righteous.¹³ At the same time, however, ecclesiastical historians also used it to comment on what they saw as necessary restraints and limits on royal power. I argue that appropriate and inappropriate displays fit a pattern in that these historians consistently mark similar displays as either appropriate or inappropriate, and, therefore, they reveal underlying social norms for honorable royal behavior.¹⁴

Ecclesiastical writers do not discuss royal anger in a political vacuum, as many of the episodes for appropriate or inappropriate anger occur in situations dealing with the contemporary aristocracy. As we see in the example above, Orderic Vitalis has Bishop Serlo demand royal actions against what he sees as the out of control behavior of Robert Curthose and Robert of Bellême. These texts, then, also focus on the appropriate relationships between kings and their nobility. Such attention is, perhaps, not surprising, as royal expansion often came at the expense of aristocratic privileges. What is noteworthy, however, is that in constructing these episodes, ecclesiastical historians provide insight into the relationship between kings and nobles. Moreover, they comment on whether kings are models of the behaviors and sentiments expected of a ruler. Understanding how and

why ecclesiastical historians attributed anger to kings, then, allows important insight into the development and contestations of models of kingship in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as well as into larger discussions of the evolution of norms for aristocratic feuding and warfare.

I should be clear that this study only examines the attribution of anger to kings. Like most aspects of medieval history—and society more broadly—much of the experience and expression of emotions were certainly gendered.¹⁵ While this work will touch on these considerations in the context of specific episodes and examples, the focus, however, is directly on the masculine construction of anger and its call for the appropriate masculine displays of prowess and violence in response. While the construction of queens' anger is certainly important and needed, it is not in the purview of this analysis. As a result, we will only be looking at the history of the emotions of Anglo-Norman kings.

To that end, I argue that ecclesiastical writers of eleventh- and twelfth-century Anglo-Norman and Northern French historical narratives imputed anger of one kind or another to kings for the purposes of explicitly characterizing and evaluating their conduct and of implicitly commenting on the expansion of royal authority during the period. As Geoffrey White argues, "Emotions glossed as anger frequently encode judgments about violations of person and moral order. In light of these understandings, talk about anger becomes an idiom for moral argumentation: it signals the perception of transgression and the possibility of corrective action."¹⁶ Though there are many ways in which Orderic's depiction of the call for anger in the opening passage can be interpreted, I will argue that we should pay attention to both the language and imagery used to represent anger and to the way in which anger encoded customary conventions for social behavior. The ubiquity and consistency of the terminology and rhetoric used to signify anger across this whole body of ecclesiastical texts suggests that we should consider passages that represent anger as not merely descriptive of a given subject's emotional state or mood. Instead, eleventh- and twelfth-century ecclesiastical authors imputed anger to the subjects of their histories in such a way as to bring out their moral character and to evaluate their actions, and they did so by following conventional language for the discussion of anger. They portrayed individuals in their narratives who displayed anger in ways that they implicitly characterized as honorable and righteous in a favorable light, but they condemned individuals who displayed anger in ways that they

characterized as shameful or unrighteous or whose anger drove them to excessive violence.

I argue, moreover, that by distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate displays of anger, ecclesiastical authors implicitly constructed formulaic scenarios of exemplary social behavior, which show how these authors expected kings to express their emotions in disputes. Ecclesiastical authors, whether implicitly or explicitly, inscribed in their narratives what we may call the cycle of anger—stimulus, experience, expression, action, response, and reconciliation—in what are surely model episodes. Such stories about appropriate and inappropriate displays of anger served both to instruct people by stating what they should and should not do and to show people how they should or should not act by presenting them with examples of good and honorable displays of anger and bad and shameful displays of anger. Ecclesiastical authors, therefore, emphasized how people expressed their anger through action; by doing so, they provided evidence from which modern scholars can infer the existence of models of righteous kings acting in ways that ought to be emulated and models of bad kings acting in ways that should be shunned. Therefore, we should interpret representations of anger as more than transparent descriptions of mood; they were assessments of people and of behavior that were based on established or emerging social conventions.

In this work, I am particularly interested in how ecclesiastical historians imputed anger to kings to legitimize or condemn acts of violence for which they were responsible.¹⁷ As Catherine Peyroux notes, “Many researchers further include in anger’s essential definition a prerogative over the moral domain. This framework of understanding attributes to anger an inherent claim about some sense of ‘ought,’ so as to capture the aspect of anger that stems as a response to some sense of what is felt to be ‘unjustifiable’ harm.”¹⁸ Because ecclesiastical authors distinguished between acceptable and unacceptable expressions of anger, it is possible to surmise some of the implicit norms for how ecclesiastical authors expected kings to behave. In other words, when Orderic has Bishop Serlo exhort King Henry I to take actions against his brother and the other Norman rebels, we may reasonably conclude that Orderic believed that this was how Henry ought to have responded to the bishop’s pleas. This work, in short, will infer some of the social conventions surrounding how ecclesiastical authors imputed anger to contemporary kings through the representation of their, often violent, behavior.

FRAMEWORK FOR INTERPRETING EMOTIONS

Before turning to the texts themselves, it is important to first address the framework for interpreting the use of emotions in historical texts.¹⁹ Some of the earliest historians to discuss emotions in medieval Europe read these texts as windows into medieval interiority, as transparent descriptions of what medieval individuals actually felt. Scholars such as Johan Huizinga and Marc Bloch concluded that medieval people were highly emotional—indeed, too emotional—that they were like children who could not repress their own anger or the violent impulses with which it was associated. Their approach has been labeled by scholars as the hydraulic model of emotions, because it assumes that emotions are always trying to burst out of oneself, and they must be tightly reined in by self-control. In this model, pre-modern people were not as readily able to do so. In his famous study, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, Huizinga characterized the emotions of fifteenth-century nobles as “both starkly polarized and highly unstable.”²⁰ Moreover, he notes that “the contrast between suffering and joy, between adversity and happiness, appeared more striking. All experience had yet to the minds of men the directness and absoluteness of the pleasure and pain of child-life.”²¹ Bloch speculatively identified various reasons for what he saw as the overemotional sensitivity of medieval people, noting that “the irrational is an important element in all history.”²² For him, the main cause was the poor standard of living at this time, which made medieval people easily susceptible to passions and woes. Their poor diet, bad hygiene, and close and constant proximity to random acts of violence produced “perpetual insecurity.”²³ According to both scholars, medieval culture imposed few constraints on the expression of emotions, which served as the motivating force for politics and behavior.²⁴

Arguments such as these about the emotionalism of medieval society served as a basis for Norbert Elias’s later contention that early modern court culture civilized society and led to the repression of the emotionalism that characterized medieval societies.²⁵ In short, Elias posited that the rise of early modern court society and its elaborate social etiquette served to restrain the uncontrolled impulses of medieval people.²⁶ According to Elias, “Rapine, battle, hunting of men and animals—all these were vital necessities which, in accordance with the structure of society, were visible to all. And thus, for the mighty and strong, they formed part of the pleasures of life.”²⁷ This gratuitous anarchy and violence were possible, he claims, because there was no “punitive social power” to stop their force,

except perhaps through those who were stronger and still more barbaric.²⁸ Ultimately, the failure of Elias' argument is that it rested on a false dichotomy between mind/body or emotions/reason. Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy argue that the problem for historians of Elias' generation was that they had internalized the hydraulic model of emotions, and they had linked the development of states, liberal democracies in particular, to the application of reason and science. For them, states demonstrated their authority and legitimacy by removing emotions from governance. These historians, then, failed to understand how the state is also part of the production of emotions and regulation of what William Reddy has called "emotional regimes," or the sponsorship and policing of certain emotions and certain types of emotional displays.²⁹

J.E.A. Jolliffe was one of the first to argue that royal anger was more than excessive emotions and was an important component of Angevin kingship. Royal anger, he maintained, was an extension of the king's will, as the monarch simultaneously withdrew his *benevolentia*—that is, his favor and protection—from a subject or group of subjects and in its place, expressed *ira et malevolentia*—that is, his anger and enmity. According to Jolliffe, the phrase "anger and ill-will"—which is found in many different kinds of legal texts, political narratives, and literary works—did not simply designate an emotional state, though Angevin kings were certainly famous for their rages; the king's anger and ill-will constituted a political tool for effective rule that always involved a threat of violence and sometimes violence itself.³⁰ Anger and ill-will "would be less worth attention," he writes, "if they had not an active, punitive, counterpart, which had as really and still more deeply its share in the inner craft of Angevin kingship."³¹ The king's expression of anger and malevolence at his enemies was so effective because contemporaries regarded its expression, within certain limits, as a just manifestation of the king's will.³² In Angevin England, royal anger became more formalized with the regular payment of fines by individuals wishing to avoid or pacify the *malevolentia regis* and regain the king's protection from lawsuits or violence from their enemies.³³ Instead of expressing the king's true feelings of rage and hostility, then, Jolliffe argues that this kind of royal anger was a political instrument that the king used in forging political alliances, undermining the position of adversaries, dispensing and withholding patronage, and executing other political policies.

In recent years, there has been an explosion in the scholarship on the history of emotions in general. Several journals have even dedicated whole volumes to exploring its history, and publishers have commissioned series

for its study, such as this Palgrave series.³⁴ There has also been the establishment of major academic centers for the study of the history of emotions, such as the Australian Research Council's Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions or Ute Frevert's project on history of emotions at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development. Much of this recent work has sought to refute the view that people in the past were less equipped to process or repress their emotions. These scholars argue instead that we need to understand how people in the past understood emotional experiences and expressions in their own terms. In general, scholars tend to take one of three approaches to analyzing the history of emotions: universalist, constructionist, and a hybrid that combines biology and sociology.

Some favor the universalist approach that uses neuroscience to argue the biological basis for emotions and their expressions as part of a shared humanity.³⁵ Starting with Paul Ekman's work with facial expressions in New Guinea, this approach argues for the evolutionary development of emotions, and as such, the universality of emotions and emotional displays across human societies.³⁶ Since emotions evolved early in the development of *Homo sapiens*, according to advocates, they are, therefore, similar across time and space, and it is possible to use research from modern neuroscience and psychology to understand emotions in the past. And so, these scholars do not believe that emotions have changed significantly over time.

In the case of anger, scholars have highlighted its role in communicating threats and, therefore, survival. As Daniel Lord Smail suggests, "moral sentiments of hatred and anger evolved in the ancestral environment of *Homo sapiens* for specific reasons having to do with the formation of groups, the punishment of non-cooperative freeloaders, and the pursuit of status."³⁷ Some neuroscientists have labeled this the "Anger Superiority Effect."³⁸ It suggests that people have an inherent tendency to notice people who are exhibiting angry facial expressions in a crowd or other public setting to a greater extent than other facial expressions. Jennifer Lerner and Larissa Tiedens explain, "Angry faces are spotted quickly and mistakes are rarely made regarding them, as compared with other emotion expressions. ... Angry expressers are implicitly perceived as threatening, competent, powerful, and dominant, while sad expressers, by comparison, are perceived as likeable, submissive, and in need of help."³⁹ This model might suggest why medieval authors scripted anger in certain ways; it suggests they delineated emotions in ways that all

humans readily processed and understood.⁴⁰ By appearing angry, the king would have elevated himself into a position of power; by appearing sad and mournful, the petitioner would have emphasized his or her submission and need.⁴¹ As a result, the “motivational aspect of anger readies the individual to act in order to change the situation, remove the problematic components, and re-establish the situation that existed prior to the offense.”⁴² In other words, expressions of anger from a biological standpoint are an impetus for action to remedy the source of the displeasure. The somatic features of anger, including elevations of adrenaline level in the body, then, serve as convenient explanations for aggression and violence. In Daniel Smail’s view of emotions, anger was an essential element in early human survival, and as such, it was hardwired in the body, often unconsciously. He contends, “Recent work in neuropsychology and neurophysiology has shown that [emotions] are physiological entities, characteristically located in specific parts of the brain and put there by natural selection. Some of them, including emotions, are relatively automated, no different from the other areas of life governance—basic metabolism, reflexes, pain, pleasure, drives, motivations—that are routinely handled by the brain in all hominoids.”⁴³ He continues, “The existence of brain structures and body chemicals means that predispositions and behavioral patterns have a universal biological substrate that simply cannot be ignored.”⁴⁴

One problem with this approach, however, is that it fails to explain difference in emotional expressions. If humans across time and space all exhibit one set of universal emotions, then how do we explain differences in how these emotions are displayed or what precipitated the experience of certain emotions? The universalist approach, then, removes historical change from the study of emotions altogether.⁴⁵ The evidence from countless studies in the history of emotions demonstrates clearly the vast diversity in the expression of emotions across time and space. The way in which emotions are described and emotional displays are characterized varies widely between different cultures; even what is an emotion varies across different societies.

Moreover, Paul Ekman, one of the strongest advocates for the universality of human emotions, wavered on what should even be considered a basic, core emotion. He originally argued for six basic emotions—anger, disgust, fear, sadness, surprise, and happiness—and five additional possible emotions—contempt, guilt, embarrassment, awe, and shame. He then later advocated for five basic emotions—anger, disgust, fear, sadness, and

happiness—and three additional possible emotions—shame, contempt, and surprise.⁴⁶ Other scientists have also strongly questioned and rejected Ekman's conclusions. J. van Brakel proves a cross-cultural analysis of studies on emotions to show how highly contextual they are. In particular, he highlights the variability of the expression of anger across different cultures. He also discusses the criticism of others about the design and execution of Ekman's work. Specifically, they critique Ekman's work based on the variability of other studies, failure to prove a biological or evolutionary basis, the problems of using still photographs, the forced-choice nature of the experiments, failure to understand the Fore language, and the ethnocentric bias of the studies.⁴⁷

In addition, William Reddy in his recent work on the development of romantic love in different medieval contexts is able to demonstrate conclusively that the relationship between love, sex, desire, and marriage were not normalized across different cultures. In his comparison of the understanding and experience of love in medieval Europe, Japan, and Southeast Asia, it is clear that there was no one universal emotion shared by all people. Medieval European aristocrats developed a conception of romantic love to resist the Church's insistence on the sinful nature of sex as what Reddy calls "desire-as-appetite." Without this pressure, the concepts of love and desire developed very differently in Japan, where the emphasis was on stylized sex and courtly courtesy, and in Southeast Asia, where sex was linked to ecstatic experiences with the divine.⁴⁸ While the human capacity to experience certain emotions may be universal, it is one's culture that ultimately determines how and why they are expressed. We may all have the capacity to feel rage, but it one's own cultural context that will determine what might provoke that feeling and condition on how one displays the experience of anger as an emotion.

Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy also make an important final point about studies that focus too much on the universality of emotions, namely that not only do we experience emotions differently, but similar situations can evoke different emotional responses in different people for different reasons.⁴⁹ For example, someone who experiences uncomfortable fear from watching horror films, like me, is going to react differently to viewing *Nightmare on Elm Street* than someone who enjoys the adrenaline rush of being scared. How, then, can we explain this variation in emotional responses to the same movie? If emotions are both universal and a product of evolutionary survival, then should not the response to a scary film be the same regardless?

Because of the importance of cultural context, other scholars approach the history of emotions from a more social constructionist view.⁵⁰ These scholars point to the limitations of biology in deducing how people understood their own emotions and how emotions could be displayed. They instead use many of the methods developed by anthropologists and sociologists to understand emotional displays in particular settings. In the case of displays of anger, Stephen D. White has argued that these displays are frequently situated in formulaic sequences of actions that he calls “scripts.”⁵¹ He argues that medieval authors fitted descriptions of men getting angry into narrative scripts that typically began with a man hearing about something or seeing something that injured and shamed either him or someone associated with him; that it continued with the man expressing anger of one kind or another; and that it concluded with the man instigating violent retaliation for the injury against the person or persons responsible for it. He also demonstrates that both Latin and Old French narratives include similar formulaic sequences of this kind.⁵² By describing displays of anger in highly conventional terms, these authors, he concludes, took it for granted that anger was an element of politics and the exercise of lordship and other kinds of power in medieval society.

Likewise, Jehangir Malegam has demonstrated how useful categorizing and analyzing these scripts can be for understanding medieval social interactions.⁵³ He specifically calls for examination of the sequence of emotional processing. In accounts of the experience of medieval emotion, especially of anger, Malegam notes that people are usually described as experiencing more than one emotion in a particular sequence or pattern. He argues, “Anger and the feelings that appear alongside it offered medieval audiences templates of acceptable emotional transition: rage to grief instead of rage to envy; remorse to love instead of remorse to despair. Recognizable within particular ‘emotional communities,’ (see Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*) these templates also redrew the lines of community, assigning membership to those who had supposedly participated in these culturally meaningful choreographies of emotional change.”⁵⁴ It is important, then, to not only examine the expression of anger in these texts, but it is important to also understand the expression of anger in relation to other emotions.

In addition, Gerd Althoff has suggested ways that these scripts could have also reflected the actual practice of political rituals.⁵⁵ In his view, “All of these signs [i.e., ‘customs governing communication’], sometimes bundled together in rituals and stage performances, had the goal of

transmitting a clear and unmistakable message. These customs bestowed a certain security on public interactions.”⁵⁶ He highlights the use of the language of grief and anger in the petitioning of nobles for aid and assistance. As part of what he labels the “rules of the game,” dependents were expected to petition kings by appearing sad and humble, while kings were expected to respond by displaying public anger in support of their dependents’ causes.

Such studies, therefore, are very useful in understanding how medieval authors narrated episodes of displays of anger. They cannot, however, tell us much about what medieval people might have actually felt. Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy raise two important cautions in this regard. They are concerned that by limiting studies strictly to rituals or scripts that we fail to try to understand how medieval people actually experienced their emotions and the emotions of others. They are careful not to see medieval descriptions of emotional expressions as transparent, but they wish to explore a methodology that might clear some of the opacity of medieval emotional displays.⁵⁷ After all, for a text to make sense to its readers it must in some way translate into their reality. This is especially true in the case of our Anglo-Norman historical narratives. Many of these ecclesiastical writers were writing relatively recent contemporary history, and if they coded or represented emotions in inauthentic ways then surely their readers would be less able to believe or even to follow their accounts. The other caution they raise is to question the implicit assumption that because emotions are ritualized that they are not authentic and actually felt by the participants. The highly ritualized nature of displays of emotions may have been to stimulate the authentic experience of the desired emotions. In addition, they note that feigned emotions are still emotions and worth exploring.⁵⁸ It is one of the reasons that they call for more examinations of the role of emotions in public settings. By looking at the function of emotions in public contexts, it is possible to reevaluate the benefit of our sources and incorporate more narrative sources with their rich descriptions of emotions displays, especially in the actions of kings and nobles.⁵⁹

More recently, some scholars have developed a middle ground between viewing emotions in terms of either evolutionary biology, which sees emotions as universally experienced in similar ways as part of a shared humanity, and constructionism, which sees emotions as inherently structured by socialization and unique to each culture.⁶⁰ As Nicole Eustace argues, “A historical approach can eschew such extremes.”⁶¹ This approach recognizes the role of biology in the experience of emotions, while remaining

mindful of the profound role of culture in the expressions of emotions. As Barbara Rosenwein defines it, “there is a biological and universal human aptitude for feeling and expressing what we now call ‘emotions.’ But what those emotions are, what they are called, and how they are evaluated and felt, and how they are expressed (or not)—all these are shaped by ‘emotional communities.’”⁶²

One of the best strategies for bridging the divide is to consider emotion talk as what William Reddy calls “emotives.” For Reddy, emotives are statements of emotion, which reflect one’s feelings, but that also have an important ability to reshape one’s feelings through their expression. Reddy’s use of emotives retains both the power of the interior experience of emotions while at the same time recognizing the power associated with the process of expressing one’s emotional experience in cultural settings. He explains that emotions “are themselves instruments for directly changing, building, hiding, intensifying emotions, instruments that may be more or less successful.”⁶³ As such, they are also part of a process of evaluating and assessing our emotions. By looking at how these texts, then, make use of emotives it is possible to not only have a better understanding of medieval understandings of anger as an emotion, but also a better understanding of how they evaluated and assessed the experience of anger.

Barbara Rosenwein likewise argues for a connection between emotion talk and emotional feelings. She argues, “‘performed emotions’ are also felt: this was already the conclusion of Arlie Hochschild’s 1983 study of the emotional training of airline flight attendants: the successful trainees internalized the emotional norms they were told to perform. They learned to really mean the smiles they gave to rowdy passengers; they learned to suppress feelings of fatigue and irritation.”⁶⁴ While passages that represent anger, therefore, should not be read literally, they still provide clues into the emotional worlds of medieval people. As Barbara Rosenwein notes, even if they are only pretending to have these emotions, this, nonetheless, can tell us something about emotional norms.⁶⁵ This interpretation relies on previous studies that have highlighted the importance of analyzing emotions in their specific social, political, and cultural contexts, instead of situating them in the grand narrative of the history of emotions.⁶⁶ As Barbara Rosenwein argues, “The job of the historian is to discover the particular norms adhered to at a given time and to understand the complex of social, political, religious, and cultural forces responsible for or at least influencing those norms.”⁶⁷ Otherwise, she fears that historians will make the mistake of previous scholars, such as Elias, of assuming that