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THE HISTORY OF EMOTIONS: AN INTERVIEW WITH  
WILLIAM REDDY, BARBARA ROSENWEIN, AND PETER STEARNS

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ABSTRACT

The history of emotions is a burgeoning field—so much so, that some are invoking an “emotional turn.” As a way of charting this development, I have interviewed three of the leading practitioners of the history of emotions: William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns. The interviews retrace each historian’s intellectual-biographical path to the history of emotions, recapitulate key concepts, and critically discuss the limitations of the available analytical tools. In doing so, they touch on Reddy’s concepts of “emotive,” “emotional regime,” and “emotional navigation,” as well as on Rosenwein’s “emotional community” and on Stearns’s “emotionology” and offer glimpses of each historian’s ongoing research. The interviews address the challenges presented to historians by research in the neurosciences and the like, highlighting the distinctive contributions offered by a historical approach. In closing, the interviewees appear to reach a consensus, envisioning the history of emotions not as a specialized field but as a means of integrating the category of emotion into social, cultural, and political history, emulating the rise of gender as an analytical category since its early beginnings as “women’s history” in the 1970s.

*Keywords:* history of emotions, emotion, feeling, life science, neuroscience, poststructuralism

I. WILLIAM M. REDDY

JP: Let us start with an exercise in intellectual autobiography. You studied history under Joan Scott and William Sewell at the University of Chicago during the late 1960s and early 1970s, held postdoctoral positions in anthropology with Clifford Geertz at Princeton and in psychology with Jerome Kagan at Harvard, and started out as a labor historian of France, eighteenth–nineteenth centuries. How did you get into the history of emotions?

WR: My research on the textile industry attempted to treat this earliest of mechanized manufacturing as a cultural field. In other words, I tried to understand, especially, how the idea of “labor as a commodity” was embodied in new rituals (of measurement, of payment, of discipline) and new social practices (for example, among members of laboring families, or in the political sphere). In a second study, I tried to extend my findings to the whole of early industrial Europe. My aim was

1. I conducted the interviews via e-mail. For their comments I am very grateful to Christian Bailey, Pascal Eitler, Ute Frevert, Benno Gammerl, Ingo Gildenhard, Margrit Pernau, Robert Reifeld, Monique Scheer, Anne Schmidt, and Eva Sperschneider.

to show that, if the very idea of “interest” or “gain” had to be culturally (ritually and practically) defined before it could serve as grounds for action, then certainly so did the concept of “class.”

From there, I decided to explore what it meant, in cultural terms, for a society to be based on “freedom of contract,” as that principle was embodied in Napoleon’s Civil Code of 1804. The study that resulted compared marriage with two forms of “bourgeois” employment: that is, salaried employment in the civil service, and work in the emerging field of journalism. The inclusion of marriage was an initial attempt to bring gender issues into focus on an equal footing with other ones. Marriage was obviously anomalous as a contract—unlike other contracts, its terms were laid out in detail in the Civil Code and, most remarkably, the parties remained equal before the law only until the marriage was consummated. In practice, however, every type of labor contract had its own rich variety of anomalies. I saw myself as still doing labor history, in effect.

In all this research, I was constantly slaying the dragon of “self-interest”—showing that it was an empty notion that could be filled in practice only by cultural structures, a notion that had its own history and could not be used without critical reflection. At the same time, I noticed that, in gender history, researchers were becoming interested in emotions, largely because women had always been considered more emotional than men in European history. This unchanging idea meant quite different things in different periods, as it turned out—a discovery suggesting that emotions have a history. I thought that emotions—whatever they turned out to be—might provide a better, a more positive ground for theorizing the individual than anything available so far. This new ground, I hoped, might allow historians to get beyond the fracturing of social identities—from (highly complex) classes, into genders, ethnic and cultural origins, races, sexualities, and the overlaps, or “intersections,” of these categories. The linguistic turn had helped forward a work of destruction, making it impossible to conceptualize social life in terms of liberal or Marxist theory. Emotion might provide a new underlying structure through which all these complex meanings we had discovered and researched became personal. I also thought that historians were, so far, using the concept of “emotions” in an entirely common-sense way, without any critical reflection on the cultural construction of this central “Western” ingredient of the self. About 1995, then, I began working on *The Navigation of Feeling*.<sup>2</sup>

JP: What are you currently working on in the field of emotions’ history?

WR: I am currently working on the history of romantic love. As a follow-up to the book on the history of emotions, I am taking on this crucial “Western” emotion, which has a rich history that might appear quite different when examined in the light of the theory of “emotives.” In doing this, I am also taking on the history of sexuality, which has been theorized for the most part in terms of “desire”—as understood, initially, in the works of Foucault and Lacan. I think the theorization of desire is often inadequate. Foucault and Lacan, in effect, took over from Freud (not uncritically, but without sufficient historical understanding) a notion of desire that can trace its history back to Augustine of Hippo. “Desire,” in other

2. William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

words, is very much a Western construct, and not something on which a universal theory can be built. It does not exist elsewhere. The latest neuroscience research, I will also try to show, is unable to provide us with a clear understanding of sexual “appetite” or desire, its neurophysiology, or its neurochemistry—in all likelihood because to have “sexual desire” is a cultural, not a hard-wired, experience.

I will show that the European idea of romantic love was formulated by an aristocratic fashion—literary and practical—of the twelfth century, a kind of underground movement of protest against the Gregorian Reform’s extreme theology of desire. Love, said the troubadours and their imitators, is sacred; it is self-sacrificing, and cannot be a mere appetite. I plan to make a point-by-point comparison of this twelfth-century transformation with twelfth-century treatments of sexuality in Hindu bhakti temple worship and among Heian Japan’s imperial elite: both were social contexts in which “love” was not contrasted with “desire,” because there was no concept of sexual desire as appetite.

JP: In your 1997 article “Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions” you described what one might call “the poststructuralist dilemma”—the loss of a vantage point from which one can make ethical-political judgments in a relativist universe.<sup>3</sup> You went on to show how such value judgments in fact crept into 1980s social-constructionist ethnographies of emotions that purported to have relegated them to the dustbin of “ethnocentrism.” What you did was to advocate the recovery of such a vantage point precisely to continue the liberal-progressive political project out of which many strands of poststructuralism grew. And, one might add, *contra* the insinuation of adhering to a natural-rights, anti-postmodernist brand of liberalism, you once said that your “utopia would, in any case, look more like Judith Butler’s than like Martha Nussbaum’s.”<sup>4</sup> In your article, you then translated the universalism vs. social constructionism binary into John Austin’s speech act theory, linking “constatives” (utterances that describe the world, such as “this table is white”) with universalism, “performatives” (utterances that can alter the world, such as the bride’s “yes, I do” at a wedding) with social constructionism. By coining the term “emotives” you suggested a way out of the poststructuralist dilemma. How? Can you explicate this for our readers?

WR: First, I should note that I regard the article you refer to as a preliminary formulation, and *The Navigation of Feeling* of 2001 as a much more satisfactory discussion of all these matters.

The concept of “emotives” provides a way out of the poststructuralist dilemma only if one accepts, in advance, that there is something beyond language. This does not have to be conceptualized in a Kantian way, as a *Ding an sich* beyond our understanding. If one likes, the “something” that is beyond language can be seen as the existence of multiple languages within the “self,” or within “experience,” or at least as a precondition to the existence of meaningful speech. It is quite well known that the poststructuralist conception of language had its origin in structural linguistics, specifically in the theories of Fernand de Saussure and Roman Jako-

3. William M. Reddy, “Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions,” *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 2 (1997), 327-351.

4. In Reddy’s response to Jeremy D. Popkin’s review of William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*. *H-France Review* 2, no. 119 (November 2002).

bson. In a recent article, I argue that structural linguistics is a social-science discipline—the empirical study of human language use—and the resulting theory of language is a hypothetical explanation.<sup>5</sup> If one accepts the epistemological terms in which it was formulated, then one ought also to agree that a lot of present-day neuroscientific research (but not all), because it is consistent with the same epistemology, is worthy of respect. This research has gone far beyond Saussure, showing that scores of different codes operate in parallel whenever a person “perceives” an object or understands a spoken or written word. No one knows how to read each of these codes separately. But it is possible—through the careful study of reaction times, event-related potentials, fMRI scans, and so on—to detect their separate functioning, and their mutual interaction. We know that various levels of decoding work simultaneously. For example, a person is already unconsciously guessing at the meaning of a word before having identified the phonemes that make it up. These unconscious guesses rely on input from other senses: vision, smell, touch—each of which involves codes of several types. Translations among all these codes are being accomplished at incredible speed.

It is therefore meaningful for anyone (anywhere in the world) to say, “When I heard myself say *x*, I thought, what am I saying?” Putting a thought into words involves translation. Listening to it (as opposed to just thinking it) involves still other procedures of translation. Translation, as many philosophers have rigorously shown, involves an element of indeterminacy. Therefore, any expression of the form “I feel *x*” involves a double element of indeterminacy, because it is about that “entity” that formulates the expression, and, in being uttered, influences (or changes) the entity in question. Emotional expressions, in this sense, are neither constative nor performative, in Austin’s sense. They are a third kind of utterance; this is why I coined the term “emotives” for them. I argue that “emotives” are at once managerial and exploratory. An emotional expression is an attempt to call up the emotion that is expressed; it is an attempt to feel what one says one feels. These attempts usually work, but they can and do fail. When they fail, the emotive expression is “exploratory” in the sense that one discovers something unexpected about one’s own feelings.

But to get from this point to the question of political significance involves crossing two more bridges: (1) recognizing that communities have a huge stake in how people habitually use “emotives”; and (2) finding some standard by which one can measure or identify emotional suffering. By “emotional suffering” I mean any kind of distress, including physical pain, that is attended by negative responses, that is, that is truly unwanted.

The first of these bridges is easily crossed. As I have noted elsewhere, there is ample evidence in ethnographic and historical research on emotions that every community deploys emotional ideals and norms, and inculcates norms through emotional rituals, formulas, prayers, oaths, and so on.<sup>6</sup>

5. William M. Reddy, “Saying Something New: Practice Theory and Cognitive Neuroscience,” *Arcadia: International Journal for Literary Studies* 44, no. 1 (2009), 8-23.

6. See Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*; *idem*, “Emotional Styles and Modern Forms of Life,” in *Sexualized Brains: Scientific Modeling of Emotional Intelligence from a Cultural Perspective*, ed. Nicole Karafyllis and Gotlind Ulshöfer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 81-100.

The second of these bridges presents more difficulties. The idea of “social suffering” has been widely addressed among anthropologists in recent years, and the definition of the term is recognized as a problem of considerable urgency.<sup>7</sup> To a significant degree, suffering is organized and varies in surprising ways from one time and place to another. Normative “emotives,” often prescribed, often repeated, can be used, up to a point, to change how we feel. Nonetheless there are (universal) limits to our plasticity in this regard, as well as a (universal) physiological substrate that is manipulated in such training. Learning the norms of a prevailing “emotional regime” generally involves suffering under a certain discipline. The kind of suffering usually associated with violation of rights—from torture to genocide—is often understood by perpetrators as an extension of the kind of suffering inflicted in the inculcation of norms, as when one “humiliates” a political prisoner or “punishes” an enemy nation.

It is therefore a valid question to ask, in any specific case, what kinds of suffering may be legitimately inflicted (by whom, on whom) and what kinds are illegitimate. There are no easy answers to such a question. But it is a proper question to ask, and approximate answers are extremely useful, both scientifically and politically.

JP: How has your thinking evolved on “emotives” and the poststructuralist dilemma since 1997?

WR: Since the publication of *The Navigation of Feeling* in 2001, I have published two pieces—already mentioned—that show the compatibility of the theory of “emotives” with (1) a Wittgensteinian approach to social life (in 2008), and (2) practice theory as developed by Bourdieu, Giddens, Ortner, Sewell, and others (in 2009).<sup>8</sup> I have, to some extent, tried to keep track of the rapid development of cognitive neuroscience and affective neuroscience; and, as discussed briefly in the 2009 essay, I find much that confirms the critical approach to these fields laid out in *The Navigation of Feeling*.

JP: “Emotives” have been criticized for what one might call linguistic imperialism, for forcing the specificity of verbal utterances on such non-verbal body practices as smiling or crying. Barbara Rosenwein, for instance, wrote in her—otherwise enthusiastic—review of *The Navigation of Feeling* in *The American Historical Review* that “emotives” “privilege words over other forms of emotional behavior, but in some cultures (for example, that of medieval Iceland) reddening, trembling, and swelling play a more important role than utterances.”<sup>9</sup> What do you say to the charge of logocentrism?

WR: It is both legitimate and important to distinguish those expressions—verbal, gestural, facial, and so on—that derive directly from conscious, intentional “decisions” made in the full light of attention, from other expressions that occur inadvertently or with only partial awareness. The former can be “emotives”; the

7. See, for example, the anthology *Social Suffering*, ed. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), as well as Ramu Nagappan, *Speaking Havoc: Social Suffering and South Asian Narratives* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005).

8. Reddy, “Emotional Styles and Modern Forms of Life;” *idem*, “Saying Something New: Practice Theory and Cognitive Neuroscience.”

9. Barbara H. Rosenwein, review of Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, *American Historical Review* 107, no. 4 (October 2002), 1181.

latter cannot be, for the simple reason that “emotives” are both managerial and exploratory. We utter (or execute) them in the hope that our actual full response will match the words we utter or gestures we make. Responses such as tears and blushing are widely reported to be beyond such conscious, direct decision-making. Of course, some persons are able to learn to produce them, if not at will, nonetheless with predictable success when they wish. But even they do not do so by direct voluntary control, unlike moving arm or leg muscles; instead they rely on indirection, such as recalling or imagining an appropriate context. This explains why tears and blushing have often been considered to be marks of sincerity, or clues to an interior state the individual may wish to mask.

JP: One could also argue that “emotives” fail to adequately reflect the social situation in which utterances are made. For example, the “life-altering” feedback cycle put into motion by my utterance “I am happy” in front of my psychotherapist, whom I pay to achieve happiness, differs from the life-altering effects of the same utterance in another social situation—for instance, when I defiantly reply “I am happy” to my mother, who has just proven to me that I am locked in an unhappy romantic relationship. Some of these contextual differences manifest themselves in intonation, modulation of voice—in short, prosody—but others remain invisible. Some kind of contextual vector needs to be built into the “emotive” concept, don’t you agree?

WR: I completely agree with this observation. It seems to me this is just the kind of issue I wish to bring in as a concern of research. It is perfectly possible that some of the prosody of an utterance is chosen, some inadvertent or unconscious—this is perhaps always the case. I would apply the same distinction as in the previous question. The “emotive” character of an utterance or gesture arises from the fact that the actor is trying to accomplish an act of self-management or self-exploration by making it. The effects of this emotive may show up in the utterance itself. One might, for example, start sobbing before one managed to complete the utterance, “I am happy.”

JP: Another key concept of yours is that of the “emotional regime,” which you define as “The set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and ‘emotives’ that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime.”<sup>10</sup> Now, it is hard to avoid the impression that your prototypical political regime is the nation-state. Yet this nation-state is of course a fairly recent, modern invention. In many periods of history and regions of the world there was no state whose tentacles deeply reached into the fabric of social life. Historical actors instead belonged to multiple, overlapping, largely local communities. To quote Barbara Rosenwein once more, even when applied to centralized states the concept “may overlook varieties and localisms. Is it not likely, for example, that eighteenth-century salons, marital beds, and law courts—let alone the homes of the laboring poor (the latter a point raised by Reddy himself) constituted their own emotional communities, whose relations to the emotives prescribed by ‘sentimentalism’ (or courtly civility, for that matter) varied?”<sup>11</sup> How about using

10. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 129.

11. Rosenwein, *American Historical Review*, 1181.



“emotional regime” in the plural? How, then, would “emotional regimes” differ from Rosenwein’s own “emotional communities”?

WR: I am completely at ease with the idea of using the term in the plural. When I first formulated it, in fact, I was thinking of the ethnographic context—face-to-face communities as in the classic studies of Catherine Lutz or Lila Abu-Lughod.<sup>12</sup> It is quite clear that emotional norms are imposed, and emotional ideals exalted, in small isolated communities such as that of the Ilongot of Michelle Z. Rosaldo’s classic 1980 ethnography.<sup>13</sup> I noted in *The Navigation of Feeling* that any community that extends beyond face-to-face contacts is likely to have many emotional styles. I would add here that some of them are imposed in their own context, that is, have the force of norms in that context. A flight attendant who cannot be cheerful will lose her or his job. But the same norm could not be applied to a basketball coach (a group, in the U.S.A., notorious for the frequency and brilliance of their angry outbursts). Some face-to-face communities within a larger polity may be able to sustain emotional styles that have little in common with the transregional norms of that polity. If they enforce these styles through penalties such as gossip, exclusion, or demotion, these styles count as “emotional regimes.” Those styles that are more or less coordinated with the emotional norms enforced at the center of power or authority of a polity could be considered components of its “emotional regime.”

JP: What do you make of the vulgarization of such concepts as “emotional regime,” which many historians strip of its dimension of “emotives” and employ to denote no more than the emotional style of a group?

WR: Our ability to grasp the political, in the way that Raymond Williams’s notion of “structure of feeling” grasps the political, relies on our appreciation that emotional styles are enforced, that penalties and exclusion fall on those who do not conform to them. “Style” becomes “regime” when the sum of the penalties and exclusions adds up to a coherent structure, and the issue of conformity becomes defining for the individual. For example, when two persons begin to shout at each other in anger in a restaurant, the staff of the restaurant is likely to ask them to leave. There is an emotional style appropriate to restaurant customers. This is one of a number of styles appropriate to consumers—although what is permissible at a soccer game is quite different from what is permissible at a restaurant. We can begin to talk of an “emotional regime” for consumers when we consider that, in many Western industrialized countries today, one might be deprived of the necessities of life, in effect, if one could not conform to at least one or two of the range of emotional styles cumulatively “enforced” on consumers. Even a wealthy schizophrenic may need help getting food.

JP: A critical component of your theory is to be able to make value judgments about various “emotional regimes.” You call the process of maneuvering between

12. See Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Catherine Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and Their Challenge to Western Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

13. See Michelle Z. Rosaldo, *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980).



different goal orientations of emotions “emotional navigation,” the availability of spaces (or practices) that reduce goal conflict “emotional refuge,” the result of emotional goal conflict “emotional suffering,” and the ideal “emotional regime” one that offers the greatest amount of “emotional liberty.” To illustrate, a kulak’s daughter during the Soviet collectivization of agriculture would have been thrown into intense emotional suffering because of the goal conflict between love for her biological father and love for the “father of peoples,” Stalin. If she obeyed the latter, she had to denounce the former and likely cause his physical annihilation. The “emotional regime” of Stalinism would have made it very difficult for her to practice successful emotional navigation, would have offered little emotional refuge, thus amounting to a small degree of emotional liberty. It was a *bad* “emotional regime.” Is this a fitting example? Apart from this kind of goal conflict between two objects of love, what else does “emotional suffering” in your understanding encompass?

WR: You have offered as a quick example a case that is simplified, perhaps too simplified. It raises many questions. For example, in a society where children are left under parental care through adolescence, it might be the case that children, given the power to denounce their parents, would often use this power to enhance their “emotional liberty” vis-à-vis their parents. They might also suffer some guilt in making such use of their new power. In any case, careful investigation would be necessary to determine the effects of such a policy. In *The Navigation of Feeling* I argued that rigid regimes—in which emotional norms are more sharply drawn and more rigorously enforced—will be less stable than loose regimes that tolerate substantial deviance. I had in mind the contrast between the Jacobin Republic and the constitutional monarchies of nineteenth-century France. It is also the case that the rigid regimes inflict a special kind of emotional suffering, often unjustifiable suffering, that is sharp, personal, and sudden—as when one is judged summarily by a revolutionary tribunal. Suffering under the Civil Code of 1804—for example, suffering caused by a long term of unemployment—was more diffuse, less easily defined. In addition, it was less intense because the individual retained an array of choices and shreds of hope.

But one must tread carefully. During the Soviet era, for example, at least in some instances, I suspect people found emotional refuge at their place of work, because they enjoyed a high degree of job security and because many enterprises “stockpiled” excess labor in order to be able to meet production quotas. Only experts in the field would be able to determine if this were the case. Nonetheless, it does not strike me as *prima facie* implausible that there was more emotional freedom for certain groups in the Soviet Union in the 1930s than for many groups in Depression-era Oklahoma or Mississippi.

A paradigm I often use for emotional effort and suffering is the case of a long-distance runner. The farther she runs, the greater the intensity of certain physiological responses: muscular pain, joint pain, the sensation of lacking oxygen. She, like most humans, associates these sensations with a failure of self-care. Routine self-care is a high-priority goal for any human who has survived early childhood. Feelings of urgency and anxiety arise as this goal is neglected. The more intense the pain, the more convincing the impression that one is neglecting something

essential. The “anxiety” that results is learned—but it is a feeling almost every healthy adult will have learned, one way or another. The competitive runner—for example, the Olympic contestant—has another high-priority goal, which is to win the race. When we admire the winner of this kind of competition, we admire, in part, the winner’s capacity to sustain the goal of winning through the frequent, intense inner goal conflicts that accompany training and performance. Suppose, however, that the runner were trying to win because she was the captive of a totalitarian regime, and her captors had told her that if she lost the race, one of her fellow prisoners would be executed. While we would still admire her if she won, we would regard her treatment as a form of torture, and her experience as a form of “emotional suffering” (rather than “effort”).

It is not easy to apply such labels, but we must apply them, or their equivalents, or give up on making any political sense of history. For example, one political stance toward modern, conscripted infantry soldiers is revealed when one decides to call them “brave” (like Olympic competitors), and quite a different political stance when one decides to call them “victims.”

I would call the winner of a Roman gladiatorial game, whose opponent died in a fair fight, a “victim”—even in the moment of his triumph. Roman slave revolts were suppressed with savagery, and slave blood was regarded as worthless blood; the documentation on this is quite good. A slave’s high-priority goal of self-care was simply categorized as something different from a citizen’s high-priority goal of self-care, as something so unimportant it could be manipulated to produce entertainment. Even if there were slaves who accepted this as just, I do not. I would insist that each human individual’s capacity for effort, capacity to suffer, be treated with equal dignity. Here I use examples involving physical damage or endangerment, because they are easier to characterize in a few words. But I would make the same point about interpersonal emotional bonds, and the suffering one can inflict by their manipulation. Needless to say, it is a challenge to describe them adequately. However, I would certainly consider the work experience in an early nineteenth-century cotton-spinning mill as, for at least some workers, a form of torture, inflicted through freedom of contract.

JP: Is the amount of suffering ultimately determined by the make-up of our brain? Put differently, is there such a thing as “hard-wired” boundaries to emotional navigation, an absolute limit beyond which suffering invariably begins? Or is there unlimited space for individual and cultural agency—after all, who is to decide what suffering means for a given person (for example, a masochist) or a given culture (for example, one that puts a premium on suffering, such as an order of self-flagellating monks)?

WR: The answer to this question is implied in my previous responses. Everything is, in a way, determined by the make-up of the brain. In another sense, the answer to this question remains unclear. It seems to me likely that communities have sometimes trained individuals, by well-organized repetition of situations involving intense pain or physical trauma, to tolerate such pain and trauma with only slight “emotional suffering,” in the sense of goal conflict. Julius Caesar obviously had many such veterans in his legions when he finally crossed the Rubicon.

But, as with Caesar's legions, the training of such persons generally involves a winnowing process. Those who cannot sustain the process fall by the wayside.<sup>14</sup>

JP: The greatest amount of emotional liberty, then, seems to obtain in liberal, democratic societies with strong minority rights. That is, in the ideal society of many politically progressive Westerners. Isn't this circular?

WR: I would say that it remains to be seen how best to ensure that each person's capacity for emotional suffering is treated with equal dignity. If some Western democratic regimes have come closer to this ideal than earlier European monarchies or concurrent centralized socialist regimes, it has been at least in part by accident. There is quite a bit of emotional suffering involved in conforming to the norms of the rational, self-interested individual that these regimes, in principle, have set out to "liberate" as if such "individuals" were given in nature. The amount of suffering varies enormously by socioeconomic status; by racial, ethnic, and gender identity; by the economic *conjuncture*; and in accord with a variety of other circumstances. There are over a hundred thousand schizophrenics who live as homeless persons on the streets of the U.S. today, without medication or care—just to take one example.

JP: One might wonder why you chose to first lay out a specific cognitive psychological theory of emotions and then to say that a certain type of polity best fits this theory because it allows for a maximum of emotional refuge, navigation, and liberty, creating a minimum of suffering. An alternative would have been to first spell out your political-ethical values and then to say that a certain brand of cognitive psychology best fits these political-ethical values. What do you think?

WR: My intention has been to find, rather than to lay out *a priori*, my political-ethical values through a process of critical reading of neuroscience research, motivated by a sense of frustration with the landscape left us by poststructuralism. I have tried to share this process with interested readers.

JP: In my view, the architecture of *The Navigation of Feeling* follows two complementary principles: (1) dialectical and (2) in the vein of deductive social science. (1) Dialectical: first there is the universalist thesis (chapter 1, "Answers from Cognitive Psychology"), then the constructionist antithesis (chapter 2, "Answers from Anthropology"), which is then *aufgehoben* in a historical synthesis of the emotions (chapters 2–3, "Emotional Expression as a Type of Speech Act" and "Emotional Liberty"). (2) Deductive social science: part I ("What Are Emotions?") lays out the theory, which is then applied to "historical data" in part II ("Emotions in History: France, 1700–1850"). Another indication of the book's social-science "feel" is its mode of exposition, which is lucid, jargon-free, and bereft of irony or postmodern language games. Do you agree with this description of your book's architecture?

WR: I agree with your characterization of the work as "dialectical," with the proviso that the synthesis of critical readings of both psychological and anthropological research lies not in historical understanding, but in the concept of "emotives," which makes a history of emotions thinkable. I do not consider the method

14. For a related example, cf. Harvey Whitehouse, "Rites of Terror: Emotion, Metaphor and Memory in Melanesian Initiation Cults," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2 (1996), 703–715.

of the work to be “deductive,” however; perhaps “critical-empirical,” in the sense that answers are sought in empirically acquired evidence, but only on the condition that the epistemology permitting the acquisition of such evidence is constantly subjected to critical evaluation. None of the disciplines of the social sciences are “jargon-free,” of course. I did strive to ensure the text could be read by a wide variety of educated readers.

JP: If I correctly detected the social-science logic of your book, then your theory would have to be judged by the quality of empirical application.<sup>15</sup> And yet many feel that the application of your theory to the French historical material is the less successful part of the book. The caesurae in French history are the well-known ones; your interpretation of sources lacks—deliberately, I am sure—some of the linguistic depth known from your earlier work, so that we end up imagining a history of emotions à la Reddy as a history that entails a loss of some of the philological sensitivity—the attention to figurative speech and much more—we acquired in the wake of the linguistic turn. What do you make of this point?

WR: The historical part of the work consists of two sections: (1) an overview of eighteenth-century history and a suggested “explanation” for the instability of the Jacobin Republic, and (2) a rigorous examination of the emotional language of pleadings and depositions in civil litigation cases under the Restoration and July Monarchy, based on two carefully constructed samples and relying on an exhaustive examination of emotional vocabulary in these samples. The first of these sections was simply an effort to show how the landscape of the past could look quite different, in the light of the concept of “emotives,” and how this concept might license certain kinds of historical explanation (of just the kind once sought after by “new” social historians and Marxist historians). The second section was an attempt to show what a case study of emotional history, based on primary research, might look like. In my conclusion to this latter study, I remark, “Greater ease of navigation [of feeling] was therefore purchased [in the early nineteenth century] at the price of a pervasive malaise, a sense of shame about the new ‘bourgeois’ society that found expression in myriad ways.”<sup>16</sup> I refer you to the remainder of that discussion. If this analysis has involved a loss of philological sensitivity, so be it. I note that Peter Stearns, who is reserved in his judgment of the theory offered in the book, remarked that “Simply in its nuanced statement of the nineteenth-century system . . . this book is immensely valuable.”<sup>17</sup>

JP: You are one of the few historians to deeply immerse yourself in the primary research of one life science, cognitive psychology. By that I mean to say that you don’t just read “popularizers” like Antonio Damasio or an occasional *Science* or *Nature* article, but actually delve into large numbers of articles and are able to judge the quality according to life-science criteria—the experimental design, the sample size, and so on. What path led you there? How, and why, did you achieve

15. In a similar vein, the anthropologist Signe Howell wrote in a reaction piece to your article “However, as it stands, the argument [of “emotives”—JP] is suggestive rather than convincing. . . . Ultimately, the anthropological contribution to the study of cognition and emotion must be founded in empirical fieldwork.” Signe Howell on William M. Reddy, “Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions,” *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 2 (1997), 342-343.

16. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 311-312.

17. Review by Peter N. Stearns, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33, no. 3 (2003), 474-475.

such a profound knowledge of life science? Do you recommend that we all go there, much like historians during the 1970s got into demography or statistics, and during the 1980s into literary scholarship?

WR: I do not recommend that all historians immerse themselves in cognitive psychology or neuroscience research. However, it is worth noting that sociologists, political scientists, and economists are actively developing subfields, such as the one called “behavioral economics,” that rely on cognitive neuroscience for their research paradigms. I do think that the discipline of history could benefit in similar fashion. At the same time, I also think that it is a serious mistake to simply “utilize” uncritically the results of research in this field. The reason is that these results are always expressed in terms of models that are constructed ad hoc. There is no general model of cognition or of brain functioning that historians can “borrow.” There are many, many models; they have their own labs, conferences, and journals, their own leaders and followers, their own “handbooks.” Some prominent recent models are “cascade processing,” “mirror neurons,” “emotion regulation,” “mental control,” “the chameleon effect,” and so on. Hundreds of studies of emotion–cognition interaction have been built on the well-known “Stroop effect,” first identified in the 1930s. How these various models fit together is a subject of constant discussion at conferences and in occasional anthologies of synthetic essays—but I see no sign of progress toward a single, overarching theory. Most practitioners are acutely aware of this problem. Some of these models have quite different epistemological implications from others—and this is significant when one tries to translate such a model for use in interpretive work—*Geisteswissenschaft*—such as history.

JP: More generally, what do you think of the use of life-science emotions research by other historians? What do you think of such “popularizers” as Antonio Damasio, of the phenomenon of popularizing?

WR: My principal frustration with reading popularizers is that they offer a candidate theory to explain the trends in research as if this candidate were already recognized as the unchallenged, new explanation of brain and mind functioning. They systematically downplay the diversity of the research, in order to extrapolate dramatic answers from a select number of recent, fashionable breakthroughs.

JP: How do you explain the current boom in the history of emotions? Would you call this a “turn”?

WR: I have been very gratified to see the growing interest of historians in the history of emotions in recent years. Perhaps it is not yet a “turn,” but it is certainly a trend. I think my original reasons for attempting to move in this direction (discussed above) have been widely shared.

JP: Which areas should theory-building in the history of emotions focus on?

WR: Two “state of the art” recent studies are Barbara Rosenwein’s *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* and Nicole Eustace’s *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution*.<sup>18</sup> Both of these studies examine effortful self-management (and its failures) in relation to political

18. Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

power. This is the core issue. And, as your questions in this interview indicate, a great deal needs to be specified more clearly in this area. Both theoretical reflection and research will help.

JP: In which direction should the future history of emotions move?

WR: I hope historians will not treat the history of emotions as a special subfield in the study of well-documented aristocratic elites or educated elites. Certainly, we need to study letters and journals, marriage manuals, wills, criminal court records. But there is much more to the history of emotions. In the case study of civil litigation that I carried out on early nineteenth-century France, I took a broad swath of materials that had nothing to do with the “subjective” realm or “personal life” as these are conventionally understood. I found some very surprising uses of emotional vocabulary and expressive modes that pointed toward otherwise invisible issues—such as the capacity of lawyers to experience emotions for their clients, or the “vestiges” of sentimentalism in the way people of the 1820s and 1830s thought about generosity or love. The history of emotions is a way of doing political, social, and cultural history, not something to be added to existing fields.

## II. BARBARA H. ROSENWEIN

JP: Let us start with an exercise in intellectual autobiography. You were trained as a medievalist at the University of Chicago in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and moved to the history of emotions only during the 1990s. How did you get there?

BR: I’ve always been a historian first, a medievalist by specialization. There is a constant in my intellectual career that may help explain how I turned from medieval monasticism to emotions: I have always been interested in the multiple and sometimes hidden meanings in human thought, behavior, and institutions. You can see this in my very first article, which had the title “Feudal War and Monastic Peace: Cluniac Liturgy as Ritual Aggression.”<sup>19</sup> My second article, co-authored with Lester K. Little, took up the “Social Meaning in the Monastic and Mendicant Spiritualities.”<sup>20</sup> Before turning to emotions, I wrote books on the connection of Cluniac monasticism to issues of anomie and social affiliation.<sup>21</sup> And when I looked at medieval immunities, which were documents issued by kings to prevent their own personnel from entering certain territories to carry out their normal duties, I considered this not (as most historians had done) as a symptom of royal weakness but rather as a way for rulers to proclaim the sort of power that is inherent in the declaration of *tapu* (taboo).<sup>22</sup>

19. Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Feudal War and Monastic Peace: Cluniac Liturgy as Ritual Aggression,” *Viator* 2 (1971), 129-157.

20. Barbara H. Rosenwein and Lester K. Little, “Social Meaning in the Monastic and Mendicant Spiritualities,” *Past and Present*, no. 63 (1974), 4-32.

21. Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Rhinoceros Bound: Cluny in the Tenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); *idem*, *To Be the Neighbor of St. Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny’s Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

22. Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).



Emotions are often hidden in the texts that historians use. To be sure, some medieval sources are full of tears and raptures—these include the chronicles that Johan Huizinga drew upon when speaking of the extravagant passions of the Late Middle Ages.<sup>23</sup> But on the whole, historical sources are dry—unless you look carefully! Here, for example, is how one tenth-century charter (a legal document, rather like a modern will) began: “Dilectta uxore mea nomen Doddano, ego . . . Euraldus, in pro hamore et bona volencia tua mihi bene servisti, propterea dono tibi res qui sunt sitas in pago Matisconense, in hagro Galuniacense, in villa Castello; in primis dono tibi manso indominicato, cum omni superposito vel acienciis suis” (“To my beloved wife Doddana. I . . . Euraldus, out of love and good will for you [who] have served me well, for this reason give to you properties that are situated in the *pagus* of Mâcon, in the *ager* of Jalogny, in the *villa* of Château. In the first place I give you a large estate with all upon and connected to it.”) Historians are trained to use a text like this to discuss the people involved in transactions as well as the nature and location of the property. But they are not encouraged to see that the text also contains considerable evidence of feeling, evoking, as it does, a “beloved” wife to whom is given a gift “out of love and good will.” These are normally considered commonplaces of no consequence. But one might wonder why and how such things became “commonplace.” It might behoove us to take such expressions of sentiment seriously. To be sure, “beloved” and “love” are little words. But emotions are often expressed briefly. “I love you” is a very short statement. However, it can have remarkable impact.

In fact, I myself did not see the emotions in historical documents until I was alerted to look for them. This happened when I was asked to comment on three papers—by Lester K. Little, Richard Barton, and Paul Freedman—at a session organized by Sharon Farmer at the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1995 on “The Social Construction of Anger.” The session inspired me to edit a book on the topic (*Anger’s Past*, with the three AHA papers constituting its core), and the book moved me to think more deeply about what historians had—and had not—said about the roles, uses, representations, and transformations of emotions in history.<sup>24</sup>

JP: In 2002 you published an article in *The American Historical Review*, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” that became an instant classic.<sup>25</sup> In the article you take issue with the linear process of emotional control that Norbert Elias posited in his 1939 *The Civilizing Process*, and which you trace back to Johan Huizinga’s 1919 *The Waning of the Middle Ages* and ultimately to the medieval pathology of humors on the one hand and to Darwin’s concept of energy on the other. In Huizinga, Elias, and many others (from Febvre to medievalist Peter Dinzelbacher), emotions behave like fluids, ready to come into the open any min-

23. See Johan Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen: Studie over levens- en gedachtevormen der veertiende en vijftiende eeuw in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1919), drawing largely on chroniclers for the Burgundian court, such as Georges Chastellain.

24. *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

25. Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002), 821-845.



ute—you call this the “hydraulic model” of emotions. Can you explicate the hydraulic model for our readers?

BR: Robert Solomon had already called the “unreasoning” view of the emotions “hydraulic.”<sup>26</sup> The term derives from a view that separates feeling from rational thought, an idea that accords with the way in which emotions are often subjectively felt (for example, “I was overcome with grief”). And, as this quote about grief suggests, the hydraulic view corresponds to many of our “folk theories” about emotions. George Lakoff and Zoltán Kövecses have isolated many of the metaphors used in English (and presumably other languages as well) that imply a hydraulic conception of emotions. “He was bursting with anger” is a common phrase, suggesting that anger is like a gas under pressure, ready to burst out.<sup>27</sup> “She was shaking with fear” suggests that fear takes over the body and agitates it.<sup>28</sup> The hydraulic view of emotions was given theoretical ballast by the James-Lange theory, and it is behind the Freudian psychoanalytic concept of affect.<sup>29</sup>

But it is important to realize that the hydraulic theory, however well it accords with a certain kind of common sense, is, as Martha Nussbaum puts it, “grossly inadequate.”<sup>30</sup> Above all, it does not take into consideration the fact that emotions are about things judged important to us. Emotions overwhelm us only because something has been presented to us or happened to us that matters to our sense of well being: emotions are the result our values and our assessments. This fact underlies the “cognitive theory” of emotions, and it helps us to understand how and why emotions are different in different societies: insofar as both values, and also the objects/ideas to which those values are attached, differ, emotions (for example, what people get angry about and how they express their feelings) will differ as well.

JP: Much of your work on the history of emotions since your 1998 collection *Anger's Past* might be called an extended—critical—dialogue with the Elias paradigm, which argues that emotions were direct, impulsive, and explosive in the Middle Ages and became “restrained” only in the sixteenth century, with the creation of absolute courts and the “civilizing” of impulses that they imposed.<sup>31</sup> In recent years you have also critiqued attempts to validate Elias’s civilizing process

26. Robert C. Solomon, *The Passions* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976), 139-150.

27. See George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), Case Study I.

28. See Zoltán Kövecses, *Emotion Concepts* (New York: Springer, 1990), chap. 5.

29. See William James, “What is an Emotion?” *Mind* 9, no. 34 (1884), 198: “Every perception must lead to some nervous result. If this be the normal emotional expression, it soon expends itself, and in the natural course of things a calm succeeds. But if the normal issue be blocked from any cause, the currents may under certain circumstances invade other tracts, and there work different and worse effects.” Here emotions are like rivers; if dammed up, they attempt to chart a new course. Much the same is true of Freud, who, however, seems to prefer a model of energy discharge rather than of flow. See Sigmund Freud, “The Unconscious” [1915] in *idem, Collected Papers*, transl. Joan Riviere (New York: Basic Books, 1959), IV, 111: “Affects and emotions correspond with processes of discharge, the final expression of which is perceived as feeling.”

30. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 25.

31. See Rosenwein, *Anger's Past*, esp. 237-240.

with a peculiar brand of evolutionary psychology.<sup>32</sup> At present you are writing a book that attempts to replace Elias's paradigm with a new narrative. Could you go back and retrace the path to your current efforts to refute the Elias paradigm? How, in other words, has your thinking evolved on this issue, and where would you situate yourself at the moment?

BR: I should ordinarily not want to refute a thesis that was produced in the 1930s. Rather, I would prefer to appreciate it for its contribution at the time of its writing. Unfortunately, Elias's theory underlies most studies of the history of emotions done even today. For modernists, it presents a convenient *tabula rasa*—a sort of historical “state of nature”—from which modernity, with all its complexity, can arise. Medievalists, on the other hand, have either accepted Elias's theory or have tried to push back the date of “civilizing”—from the sixteenth to, for example, the twelfth century, and sometimes even earlier.

In my first attempts to critique Elias I thought I would succeed in breaking the hold of his theory by arguing (1) that his “hydraulic theory” of emotions was incorrect, and therefore his whole dichotomy of impulse vs. restraint lacked validity; and (2) that restraint and subtle emotions in general were characteristic of Western society long before the sixteenth century.

But I discovered that the lure of a grand narrative such as Elias's could not be vitiated simply by saying that it was incorrect. In my book *Emotional Communities of the Early Middle Ages*, I therefore tried to substitute a new narrative paradigm—involving shifts from one “emotional community” to another—in place of Elias's bipartite (medieval/modern; unrestrained/restrained) periodization. But the period covered in my book was so narrow as to be convincing only to a very few.

It thus seems to me that the only way to open the history of emotions to a new narrative is to write one that bridges the medieval/modern divide. This is my current project. It is a huge undertaking. Its very immensity leads me to admire Elias's achievement—though I still radically disagree with his assumptions and conclusions—rather more than I did originally.

JP: Your best-known conceptual contribution to the history of emotions is the notion of “emotional communities.” You introduced the concept in your 2002 *American Historical Review* article and fleshed it out considerably in your 2006 book *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*.<sup>33</sup> Can you recapitulate for our readers what emotional communities are?

BR: I am still fairly happy with the definition I gave in the *American Historical Review*: Emotional communities “are precisely the same as social communities—families, neighborhoods, parliaments, guilds, monasteries, parish church memberships—but the researcher looking at them seeks above all to uncover systems of feeling: what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them; the evaluations that they make about others' emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they

32. See Barbara H. Rosenwein, “The Uses of Biology: A Response to J. Carter Wood's ‘The Limits of Culture?’” *Cultural and Social History* 4, no. 4 (2007), 553-558.

33. Cf. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, esp. 20-29.

recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.”<sup>34</sup>

More recently I have tried to pare this idea down to its essentials. Thus, I have summarized the idea as “social groups that adhere to the same valuations of emotions and how they should be expressed,” and, in another context, as “groups of people animated by common or similar interests, values, and emotional styles and valuations.”

JP: May I also ask you to recapitulate your method: how do you go about practically, step-by-step, identifying emotional communities?

BR: The definition suggests that any social group with common interests and goals should qualify as an emotional community. One would logically pick a group and read everything that its members wrote, carefully noting the emotions. But what are the emotions? And how should they be evaluated? I shall return to these questions.

Meanwhile, we must admit that not every group that exists or has existed is of interest to the historian and that some groups that are of great interest have produced rather little in the way of primary sources, while other groups are so large and/or prolific that they pose the opposite problem. In *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, I devoted one chapter to the emotional community of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604), even though I had only his own writings to work with. I posited that Gregory wrote for a particular audience, and I tried to understand the emotional norms of that group through the one set of writings—Gregory’s—that existed.

In the modern period, with the advent of the printing press and the diffusion of literacy, the historian may wish to argue that a whole nation—an “imagined community”—was also an emotional community.<sup>35</sup> In that case, taking all written sources into account would be impossible, and the historian must try to find “representative examples.” Luckily, this is something that modern historians are taught to do.

Once you have your texts, the next question is what to do with them. To assume that our emotions were also the emotions of the past is to be utterly unhistorical. Indeed, the very idea of “emotions” as a category is a fairly recent construction, though terms such as “passions” meant much (but not entirely) the same thing as “emotions” do today.<sup>36</sup> It is important, therefore, to know what words signified emotions for the particular emotional community you are dealing with. Sometimes this is quite simple: if you are working with the community of disciples around the thirteenth-century scholastic Thomas Aquinas, you can rely on his lengthy discussion of the “passions of the soul” in his *Summa Theologiae* to give you the vocabulary you need. And I would even venture to say that you would be on solid ground if you assumed that his terms were more generally valid across the entire thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in Western Europe. But con-

34. Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” 35.

35. See Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

36. See Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

sider the tenth-century charter that I quoted above. How do we know that “beloved” and “love” signified emotions in the tenth century? And what about “good will”? What force did that have? Here I suggest a rather complex series of steps that I outlined in *Emotional Communities*.<sup>37</sup> Very briefly, one needs first of all a list of “emotions” that is not ahistorical. For the ancient Greeks, such lists were plentiful, starting with Aristotle’s account of the *pathê* (=emotions) and continuing with the Stoics’ elaborate treatises on the topic. Later, Cicero discussed what he called the *perturbationes*, “translating” and transforming the Stoic *pathê*. For the Early Middle Ages, I took Cicero’s list of *perturbationes* and sought similar words in Jerome’s Vulgate. I employed a method of association: if a “known” emotion word is used as a synonym for, or is frequently associated with, another word that is as yet not identified as signifying an emotion, that unidentified word may be considered an emotion. “Love” and “beloved,” in their Latin forms, were already accepted as emotions in the Roman Empire, and I see no reason to doubt that the affective valence of those terms persisted through the tenth century. As for “good will”: it was already defined as “disinterested love” in Cicero’s discussion of friendship, and this significance remained true in Descartes’s day.<sup>38</sup> In the tenth-century charters, love and good will are nearly always paired. I thus conclude that however anodyne a term “good will” is for English speakers today, it had emotional force in the tenth century. Interestingly, in Italy today, *ti voglio bene* can mean “I love you.”

Let me complicate this just a bit more. Finding an emotion word in a text is only the first step. Then it is necessary to see how frequently and in what context it is used, whether it is “gendered” in its use, and how it is expressed (forcefully, gently, with somatic accompaniments such as blushing, and so on). If this method is employed for each frequently mentioned emotion (noting also emotions that seem to be missing), eventually patterns should emerge—the outlines of an emotional community.

JP: What about images and music as sources?<sup>39</sup>

BR: You’ve already provided a good, if partial, answer to the question as it pertains to images. Let me add to your short bibliography a paper by Elina Gertsman on the various meanings of the smiling figures on the exterior of Gothic churches.<sup>40</sup> Many studies in experimental psychology today deal with facial expressions that are said to express and communicate certain universal emotions.<sup>41</sup>

37. See also Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Emotion Words,” in *Le sujet des émotions au moyen âge*, ed. Piroška Nagy and Damien Boquet (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 2008), 93-106.

38. Cicero, *De Amicitia* 6; Descartes, *Passions de l’âme*, art. 81.

39. Medievalists seem to be at the forefront of the art-historical study of emotions. See, for instance, the work of Jacqueline E. Jung, “The Wise and Foolish Virgins and the Spectacle of Emotion in Gothic Germany,” paper presented at the Center for the History of Emotions, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin (April 21, 2009); *idem*, “Dynamic Bodies and the Beholder’s Share: The Wise and Foolish Virgins of Magdeburg Cathedral,” in *Bild und Körper im Mittelalter*, ed. Kristin Marek, Raphaële Preisinger, Marius Rimmele, and Katrin Kärcher (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2006), 135-160; *idem*, “Viel Spiel: The Baby Jesus and the Play of Art in a Medieval Swiss Convent” (forthcoming). See also Thomas Raff, “Heulen und Zähneklappern: Gedanken zur Mimik in der mittelalterlichen Kunst,” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 56, no. 105 (2002), 375-388.

40. Elina Gertsman, “The Facial Gesture: (Mis)Reading Emotion in Later Medieval Art,” *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 36, no. 1-2 (2010), 28-46.

41. The classic paper is Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen, “Constants across Cultures in the

Art historians are in a very good position to problematize this generalization by showing (as Gertsman does) that the smile is an ambiguous and versatile facial gesture with multiple meanings.

We all know that music is deeply connected to our emotional lives. Yet few of us have the tools or the methods to deal with emotions in music. Martha Nussbaum has made some suggestions about how to understand both “the emotions of the listener, and the expressive properties of the music itself.”<sup>42</sup> The musicologist Susan Boynton has recently written about the ingenious ways in which medieval laments expressed grief through both music and texts.<sup>43</sup>

I would love to see the integration of music, art, and more obvious historical sources in the exploration of emotional communities. This should certainly be possible to do in connection with various princely courts, for example, where patrons gathered musicians and artists around them at the same time as they commissioned texts and hired chancellors. The same potential exists for city governments, monasteries, guilds, capitalist corporations, and national armies—to name a few likely institutions.

JP: The introduction to *Emotional Communities* features the most serious attempt I know to come to terms with William Reddy’s conceptual instruments. Among other things, you make a distinction between Reddy’s “emotional regime” and your own “emotional communities.” You argue that Reddy’s “emotional regime” is embedded in a modern state/society binary and never manages to shed this dualist baggage.<sup>44</sup> It may fit for modern societies, but not for societies (including European medieval ones) in which power was more dispersed and in which a plurality of “emotional regimes” obtained. Your own “emotional communities,” by contrast, are in the plural and very deliberately so, it seems. Personally I am not sure I agree with the diagnosis of a hidden binary structure in Reddy’s “emotional regime.” I also wonder whether the differences between “emotional regime” and “emotional communities” are that stark.<sup>45</sup> Could one make a case for imaginatively fine-tuning Reddy’s “emotional regime” rather than introducing a new term?

BR: “Regime” is a very strong term. It suggests that one set of emotional norms is true for all—except for what Reddy calls “emotional refuges.” And even here, Reddy sees only one sort of “emotional refuge”: the theater, the salon, and so on

Face and Emotion,” *Passions in Context: Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 17, no. 2 (1971), 124–139. For further discussion, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions,” *Journal of the History and Philosophy of the Emotions* 1 (forthcoming).

42. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, chap. 5.

43. Susan Boynton, “Emblems of Lament in Latin and Vernacular Song,” in *The Church and Vernacular Literature in Medieval France*, ed. Dorothea Kullmann (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009), 222–248.

44. “Reddy’s scheme postulates overarching ‘regimes’ that are quite clearly tied to state formation and hegemony. He recognizes one set of emotives for the royal court and another set—a very different one—for emotional refuges. . . . But Reddy’s refuges leave us with a bipartite society: either one is at court *or* one is in a sentimental refuge. It is possible, though doubtful, that modern mass society yields just such limited alternatives.” Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, 23 (emphasis in original).

45. I can think of three reasons here: (1) the history of emotions is still in its infancy, (2) “emotional regime” is rapidly being vulgarized on the ground and getting stripped of some of its original elements (esp. “emotives”), and (3) in “emotional communities” you wish “to allow room for Reddy’s very useful notion of ‘emotives,’ which change the discourse and habitus by their very existence.”

all promote “sentimentalism” against the harsh “emotional regime” of the absolutist court. This is the binary in Reddy’s scheme: there is one “emotional regime” and there is one “emotional refuge” (where the norms of sentimentalism reigned). That’s in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, with the upheaval of the French Revolution behind it, French society has one “emotional regime.” Reddy doesn’t suggest any refuges at all because this nineteenth-century regime promotes rather little “emotional suffering” (Reddy’s term). Here his scheme is monolithic.

Societies are far more diverse than this model implies. To be sure, there often are dominant emotional communities at any given time. I would not mind calling these “emotional regimes.” But they co-exist with many other “marginal” emotional communities that have the potential in their turn to come to the fore. Consider the Late Middle Ages. As popularized by Huizinga, the extravagant emotional norms of the Burgundian court characterized the period as a whole. Huizinga did not see much difference between those norms and the ones cultivated by the *devotio moderna*, whose quiet and pious brothers and sisters lived in many of the same cities as the chroniclers. Nor did he seek to uncover the bourgeois groups that, in turn, had a different emotional style from both the court and the religious communities. Eventually, in the seventeenth century, some elements of these bourgeois styles became dominant, helping to create a new “emotional regime.” But even when that happened, other, very different emotional norms were cultivated in subgroups that had the potential, in turn, to come to the fore.

JP: Your deliberate use of the plural stems from your belief that an individual often belongs to multiple “emotional communities” that are united by different, sometimes diametrically opposed, emotions norms. At bottom, this seems a quintessentially poststructuralist move: it disaggregates the monolithic *Gemeinschaft* that lay at the bottom of Peter Stearns’s emotionology, it deconstructs the autonomous subject, and dissolves him or her into a multitude of fragments. Free-floating, fragmented individuals can move among different communities over very short periods of time and experience little “paradox,” “contradiction,” or “tension.” The question then arises whether this concept holds for individuals of all times, or whether it in fact superimposes a medieval—and postmodern, with which it shares the absence of an imagination of holistic, unified autonomy—individual on other times and places?<sup>46</sup> In short, is this concept too poststructuralist and too medieval?

BR: My use of the plural does not come from a poststructuralist take on the autonomous subject. It comes from the conviction that there are normally many emotional communities at any given time. A member of an emotional community will generally feel quite comfortable with the norms of his or her community (though there can be exceptions and rebels). But it is often possible for a person to move from one community to another without difficulty, as long as the new emotional community’s norms are not radically different from the original.

46. I am grateful to Margrit Pernau, who alerted me to the homology between the non-autonomous conception of both the medieval and the postmodern subjects (e-mail communication, April 21, 2009).



However, if someone moves to—or confronts—a radically different sort of emotional community, he or she most likely will indeed experience paradox, contradiction, and tension. And, because emotions are so closely tied to values and goals, this displaced person will also very likely disapprove of the new community and its practices.

But some people—modern anthropologists for example—find it valuable to participate in radically different emotional communities. And young people often experiment with—and find pleasure in—experiencing different sorts of emotional communities.

JP: To follow up, is the concept poststructuralist enough? How stable are the boundaries between emotional communities? How can we still speak of “community” if these boundaries are in fact highly porous and unstable? In other words, if taken to its poststructuralist extreme, doesn’t the concept dissolve?

BR: I never meant to suggest that community boundaries were *highly* porous and unstable. I meant simply to say that emotional communities could be affected by others and that people could at times move from one to another, though they would do so most easily and comfortably when the norms were similar. Emotional communities have the potential to change over time as the people in them change their goals and values. But this does not warrant the label “unstable.” Rather I would speak of their adaptive potential.

JP: In a similar vein, I was a bit surprised to see you offer a very open definition of “emotional community,” only to then find it circumscribed by the image of “a large circle within which are smaller circles, none entirely concentric but rather distributed unevenly within the given space.”<sup>47</sup> Do you mean to suggest this model of emotional communities as concentric circles can be used for all times? Might there have been slippage between the concrete historical setting you study (“universal Christendom” of the Early Middle Ages as the large circle, “groups smaller than universal Christendom and larger than nuclear families” as smaller circles within the large circle) and other periods of history?<sup>48</sup>

BR: The model is supposed to be of *not* entirely concentric circles, so that some emotional communities intersect with others, while other emotional communities are entirely—or nearly—separate from the rest. A model of “concentric circles” can be used, it seems to me, only when you have communities that conform quite closely to a large and universal set of values and goals. This might work more or less well for “universal Christendom,” but remember that even within Christendom there were heretical groups, independent thinkers, and (a very separate emotional community) Jews. At other periods the “slippage” must be much greater, as in the seventeenth century, when even “Christendom” was clearly fractured by the development of numerous Protestant groups, a redefined Catholicism, and

47. You continue, “The large circle is the overarching emotional community, tied together by fundamental assumptions, values, goals, feeling rules, and accepted modes of expression. The smaller circles represent subordinate emotional communities, partaking in the larger one and revealing its possibilities and its limitations. 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.” Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, 24.

48. *Ibid.*, 199.



some free-thinkers. In short, I think that the notion of concentric circles, if taken literally, is probably never historically accurate!

So why did I not talk simply about intersecting and separate circles? Why did I even mention concentricity? The answer is that very often even different contemporary emotional communities have *some* things in common—some common values, goals, assessments, and emotions.

JP: You have probably heard—and read—the argument of medievalists and others that the kinds of sources (conciliar legislation, charters, hagiography, letters, histories, chronicles) your *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* uses are highly elaborate textual artifacts that should not be subjected to the kind of emotions-historical reading you perform.<sup>49</sup> They may tell us something about the rules governing a particular genre of text or a type of figurative speech, but nothing about how emotions were experienced—so goes the argument. You preempt and counter much of this criticism by arguing (1) that genres aren't fixed but variable, that this variation is open to decoding by the historian, and that metaphors often acquire particular force by using an emotion word and are thus constitutive of (emotional) reality, if you will; (2) that the problem applies not just to emotions but to any other topic. You are admirably careful and conclude, “We cannot know how all people felt, but we can begin to know how some members of certain ascendant elites thought they and others felt or, at least, thought they ought to feel. That is all we can know. But it is quite a lot. How much more do we know about the feelings of the people around us?”<sup>50</sup> Given this carefulness, I wonder if “emotional communities” might be a misnomer and ought better be termed “communities of emotional styles and/or norms”?

BR: It is not as though we can ever see emotions and capture them in their essence. They are always embedded in gestures and words, and they must always be expressed in some way—written out, uttered, marked by cries, demonstrated via bodily writhings or stiff upper lips, and so on. If you could distinguish between a “real emotion” and an “emotion as expressed in a certain way” (that is via a style and a norm) then I would agree that we should reserve the idea of “emotional community” for the first instance and use some other term for what I am talking about. But even in our present world, where we have access to people's reports about how they feel, we are still dealing with oral texts (as it were) that are generally stereotypical and habitual. As outside observers, we must interpret these representations, which are really, to paraphrase myself, about how some people think that they feel. Will we ever know their “real” emotions? What exactly would that mean?

It is true that many psychologists think that emotions “came into being as solutions to certain kinds of problems” in our evolutionary past.<sup>51</sup> “Real” emo-

49. See the review by Bonnie Effros in *H-France Review* 8, no. 103 (2008), 410: “While Rosenwein broadly refutes the impact of genre in her discussion, might it not be fair to ask whether some of the shifts in vocabulary are due at least in part to the type of writings from which Rosenwein draws her examples? Could not some of the changes owe less to a climate in which emotion was associated with spiritual weakness—particularly female weakness (pp. 149-50)—and more to differences between the kinds of words and conventions applied to saints' Lives and poems versus those more appropriate to letters?”

50. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, 196.

51. Keith Oatley, *Emotions: A Brief History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 26.

tions are responses to those problems. Thus fear is the real response to a threat. Even if we accept this premise (and I myself think it is much too simplistic), we still are confronted by the fact that only culture can tell us what a threat is, how we should handle and express our fear, and whether fear or some other emotion should dominate our social lives—or dominate at certain times but not at others. This “shaping” is what we see in “elaborate textual artifacts,” which, after all, are the products of a culture.

I cannot deny that literature and texts have many agendas besides expressing emotions. They may be didactic, idealizing, satirical, or demonizing. The constraints of their genre may not allow certain kinds of statements while privileging others. (That is why it is best, when studying an emotional community, to use a variety of types of sources.) But is all this so very different from a confession of feeling today? It too can be made for an effect that has little to do with the feeling purportedly being expressed. It too can be meant to teach, change, displease, or please its audience. It too can hide, obfuscate, distort, and dissemble the emotions it purports to report.

In short, feelings can never be known out of context. They depend on the values and situations that elicit them, on the narratives that people use to make sense of themselves and their world, and on the accepted or idiosyncratic modes of expression that are employed to communicate them. I thus submit that you will not find “emotional communities” that are not, at the same time, “communities of emotional styles and/or norms.”

JP: How do you explain the current boom in the history of emotions? Would you call this a “turn”?

BR: The current boom in the history of emotions closely follows on the heels of a similar burgeoning in psychology. In 1984, two prominent psychologists wrote: “After many years of neglect . . . emotion has become a vital, almost fashionable topic in the social and behavioral sciences.”<sup>52</sup> Just a year later, Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns outlined a new way to study the history of emotions.<sup>53</sup> Both fields continued to blossom thereafter, and, indeed, psychologists and historians have now been joined by neurobiologists and geneticists.

The movement has been sparked by current American (and—you will know better than I—perhaps European) preoccupations with “how people feel” and with the growth of women’s and gender studies. It may well be a “turn.” I hope so.

JP: I wonder about your take on the life sciences. How should historians of emotions react to this challenge?

BR: The life sciences are contributing enormously to our understanding of the emotions. Historians need to read and absorb this work. At the same time, however, we need to guard against the “presentist” and “universalist” biases of the life sciences. That is, life scientists generally think that today’s emotions were always emotions and will remain so in the future.

52. Klaus R. Scherer and Paul Ekman, “Preface,” in *Approaches to Emotion*, ed. Scherer and Ekman (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1984), xi.

53. See Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, “Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards,” *American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985), 813-836.

Extremely influential is the work of Paul Ekman and his many disciples and followers. They began (in 1971) by arguing that the facial expressions of happiness, sadness, disgust, surprise, anger, and fear were (and are) universal.<sup>54</sup> By now, they consider that hypothesis proven, and their research focuses on various groups' abilities to express or process facial expressions correctly. This is not the place to critique this vast literature. I simply want to mention here that it has been critiqued quite vigorously by psychologists themselves.<sup>55</sup>

At a certain level, to be sure, there is truth to the universalist claim. Emotions have a biological reality, and they may be associated with certain parts of the brain and facial musculature. Without denying that emotions are "hard-wired," I should like to argue that they are like notes in a scale; in context, as they are actually used and expressed, they come out differently—as differently (sometimes) as a fugue by Bach and a hip-hop rap. And, as we know from quarter-tones, even the notes of a scale can be modified.

JP: As a medievalist who has labored hard to debunk the myth of "emotional," "child-like" premodernity, how would you like to see historians of modern emotions change their research in light of the periods that precede theirs?

BR: Historians of modern emotions need to problematize their easy assumptions about the nature of modernity and the primitive nature of the premodern past. This will be hard to do. But because emotions do not depend on technology, the nation-state, or other factors associated with modernity, the study of emotions is a very good place to begin querying the very idea of modernity. It will be necessary to jettison the hydraulic view of the emotions and to recognize that the medieval world (like the modern) hosted a great variety of emotional communities (or "emotional regimes," if you prefer).

JP: You have criticized the fact that "historians have tended to periodize emotional transformations within the broad eras reminiscent of Western civilization courses"—ancient, medieval, modern—and have suggested that this has to do with research designs. What kinds of chronological boundaries do you ideally envision for histories of emotions?

BR: The ideal history—which seems far away right now—will not be a history of the emotions but rather an integration of the history of emotions into "regular" history. Nowadays no one would think of writing a history of, say, Germany between the wars without dealing with issues of gender and the roles and images of men and women. This is the great triumph of what began as "women's history"—it has become a part of general historical narratives. I hope eventually that the same will be the case for the history of emotions.

As for chronological boundaries for histories of emotions, right now they are clearly too broad. A good interim periodization for the history of emotions in Western Europe (though perhaps not "ideal") might well be constructed on a history of the succession of "emotional regimes" and the emotional communities from which they grew. This is not the place to outline this history, for, told in brief,

54. See Ekman and Friesen, "Constants across Cultures in the Face and Emotion."

55. Particularly cogent is James A. Russell, "Is There Universal Recognition of Emotion from Facial Expression? A Review of the Cross-Cultural Studies," *Psychological Bulletin* 115 (1994), 102-141.

it would sound nearly as reductive as the scheme of Elias. But I can say this: it would not be a history of two periods but rather of many. And it would be a history without a teleology, illustrating no “civilizing” process. Rather it would illustrate how emotional communities co-existed with others, sometimes changed, sometimes came to the fore, and sometimes became extinct.

JP: More generally, in which direction should the future history of emotions move?

BR: The history of emotions should take into account the latest scientific advances in our knowledge about emotions without adopting a presentist or universalist approach. Above all, it should be sensitive to the otherness, seriousness, and complexity of the past—even the medieval past.

### III. PETER N. STEARNS

JP: Let us start with an exercise in intellectual autobiography. You were trained at Harvard in French history during the early 1960s and started out as a labor historian of nineteenth-century France. How did you get into the history of emotions?

PS: I did start as a historian working on French social and labor history. I quickly got drawn into larger projects, including comparative work. A project on the history of old age (in France) was the first in which I really tried to sketch out a fairly new historical field, of great topical and contemporary importance, and I liked this a lot.<sup>56</sup> Issues in the 1960s and 1970s moved me more toward gender history, and I did a book on the history of masculinity that helped convince me that explicit work on emotions would be exciting.<sup>57</sup> There were generalizations at the time about men not showing emotion that were clearly off the mark. Also it became clear that work on family history, including parent–child ties, had moved issues of emotional patterns and changes to the foreground. So I decided to jump in with an explicit effort, initially the co-authored work on the history of anger.<sup>58</sup> In the process I discovered the older Febvre (*Annales*) plea for work on emotion, but I was already in the field when I linked to that sentiment.

JP: How would you describe your relationship—today and in the past—to psychohistorical scholarship on the history of emotions and, more generally, to the use of psychological scholarship in the history of emotions?

PS: I have found work by many psychologists and a few psychiatrists quite relevant. They provide guidelines for what’s known about particular emotions before a historian jumps in to test historical propositions. They indicate in some cases how emotional standards affect emotional behavior and experience—the social psychologists are most helpful here. A few, like Rom Harré or Stephanie Shields in the US/UK, working in the constructivist vein, obviously take historical findings

56. See Peter N. Stearns, *Old Age in European Society: The Case of France* (New York: New York University Press, 1976).

57. See Peter N. Stearns, *Be a Man! Males in Modern Society* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979).

58. See Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America’s History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

very seriously and contribute their own research. This is rare. In general I don't find psychologists adequately interested in change or in incorporating historical findings about recent change into their own work; it's not an easy relationship. As to psychohistory, it was unduly cast as largely biographical and heavily Freudian. I would argue that emotions research allows a more relevant connection between psychological and historical issues, with more attention to social contexts and consequences and no necessary Freudian taint at all, but it has not seemed terribly relevant to try to claim this as the *real* psychohistory.

JP: In the 1980s you drew a clear line between emotion and emotionology, defining the latter (in the psychologist-librarian couple Paul and Anne Kleinginna's words) as the "attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintain toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression; ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct, for example courtship practices as expressing the valuation of affect in marriage, or personnel workshops as reflecting the valuation of anger in job relationships."<sup>59</sup> While emphasizing that emotions and emotional norms (=emotionology) were distinct analytical units, you placed these in a relationship. Your example was that of the expression of anger in marital disagreements. If the expression of anger lost its social acceptance during a couple's lifetime, guilt feelings about the continued experience of anger might enter diaries.<sup>60</sup> And yet you let there be no doubt that the history of emotions should to a large extent focus on emotionology. Why?

PS: I have wanted to distinguish between work on emotionology, or cultural standards, and emotional experience, but not because I think the field should focus mainly on emotionology. Rather, we should admit when we're dealing with culture and not pretend it necessarily describes actual experience. And we should admit that culture is a lot more accessible. It is important in its own right, because it affects public policies and behaviors, including the law; and it normally affects actual emotional evaluations including self-evaluations and actual experience as well, though not always with full correlation. I am entirely favorable to efforts, like Reddy's and Rosenwein's, to go beyond culture to actual behaviors, and indeed I think I've done this too, even with the initial anger project.

JP: You have historicized the history of emotions and continue to do so, most recently in 2008.<sup>61</sup> In the past you emphasized the importance of 1970s and 1980s family history—Lawrence Stone and others—as the key step toward the modern history of emotions. Can you explain why and elaborate?

PS: As I said earlier, I did think that work such as Stone's, Flandrin's, and others on family really set up some crucial discussions about emotion, including developments like more explicit emphasis on familial and spousal love, new rules about anger in the family, and so on. I also early on tried to deal with aspects of emotions history that were not familial—the work on anger heavily emphasized

59. Quoted in Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985), 813.

60. See *ibid.*, 825.

61. Peter N. Stearns, "History of Emotions: Issues of Change and Impact," in *Handbook of Emotions*, 3rd ed., ed. Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, and Lisa Feldman Barrett (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 17-31.

changes in the workplace. My more recent research on fear had family links, particularly in the rising fears associated with child safety, but it also went beyond. So my real interest is in the contributions of emotions history generally, with particular attention on changes and the causes and consequences of change. Family aspects fit into this but only as part of the topic.

JP: Do you see the history of emotions as a part of social history? If yes, how so, and why?

PS: Yes, definitely social history, though closely linked to culture. We're well past the point when social historians had to insist that lower-class protesters, for example, were rational as part of establishing the legitimacy of the study. Groups in social history do pursue rational interests, the old crowd studies were not wrong, but they also respond to emotional signals and cues from emotional culture, and this makes emotion an entirely valid, indeed important topic in social history. I think the field has gained ground primarily in links to social history, as part of explaining the nature of life in the past and connections between past and present.

JP: You founded and have been editing *The Journal of Social History* since 1967. It has long been an institutional power base of the history of emotions. Am I correct in thinking that it was your editorial decision to champion the history of emotions—from a 1982 autobiographical reflection by Theodore Zeldin to a 2007 issue on the History of the Senses?

PS: Yes, I've tried to use *The Journal of Social History* to foreground and encourage work on emotion and the senses, just as I've also tried to use it to encourage other (at one time) new fields like the social history of gender, of childhood, and so on. I may have a particular soft spot for the emotions work, and we've had some very good articles, but it's part of a larger policy of promoting the topical and methodological range of the field as a whole.

JP: Despite your prominence within the American historical profession, despite your efforts at institutionalization and professionalization—"The History of Emotions" series at New York University Press, your 1985 article in *The American Historical Review*, your monographs, ranging from *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America's History* in 1986 to *American Fear: The Causes and Consequences of High Anxiety* in 2006—your sponsorship of the history of emotions seems to have been *avant la lettre*. It appears that this subfield of history entered its take-off phase only after 9/11. Why?

PS: Yes, my work on emotion was a bit ahead of wider interest, though there had already been important French work (Delumeau on fear, most notably), and the Dutch work deriving from Elias. I don't know if 9/11 was a vital turning point here, but certainly there are more people working in the field—we have an interesting panel coming up in January at the American Historical Association on where the field is heading, and I think this betokens a growing recognition, in the United States, but also in the UK with the work at Queen Mary University and elsewhere, the interest of the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, and more broadly. I simply think it took time to gain momentum and add commitments from younger scholars.

JP: When and why was "The History of Emotions" series at New York University Press discontinued?



PS: It was a good series but at the time we just couldn't find a sufficiently steady stream of authors. Another university press is inquiring now, and I hope they'll jump in, and of course the Queen Mary project sponsors publications.

JP: May I ask you to tell our readers what *American Fear* is about and what prompted it—why did you write it?<sup>62</sup>

PS: I had included fear in my book on American Cool as well as in a separate article.<sup>63</sup> But I wanted to broaden the discussion when it became clear (at least to me) that American post-9/11 reactions were excessive and excessively manipulated. Here was a chance to deepen the research but also apply it to a vital contemporary issue. I believe that historically informed discussions about contemporary fear have played some role in improving public conversation in the United States, as witness the current willingness to reconsider fear-begetting color-coding and other issues, though we're not out of the woods yet.

JP: What do you think of the deployment of life-science emotions research by other historians? What is your opinion of such "popularizers" as Antonio Damasio, of the phenomenon of popularizing in general?

PS: William Reddy and others have most usefully incorporated life-science findings, and of course we need to use them to help guide historical work, among other things to avoid making too sweeping claims about the role of culture and contingent change as against biological basics. I think Damasio is interesting and I am entirely supportive of responsible popularization efforts—the findings of the field really can help a general public think about emotions issues and responses, including problem areas. That's been one of my goals in writing about fear.

JP: What, in your estimation, are the main areas in which theory-building is necessary?

PS: I would like to see more historically informed theory about, for example, whether there are any generalizations possible about the lag time between introduction of a new emotional standard—like the notion parents should not use fear to discipline children, which began to enter American manuals in the 1820s, and wide acceptance. I am interested in work on existing formulas, like Elias, though I think it can be pushed too far. I wouldn't claim that formal theory is my main interest; I think Bill Reddy among others does better here.

JP: More generally, in which direction should the future history of emotions move?

PS: Future directions: most obviously, to me, more courageous comparative work. We have surprisingly little. I have wanted a collective commitment to work on contemporary fear, to see how it varies among major societies, to see how much fear is "normal," to ask whether fear has somehow changed in contemporary conditions (as Bourke seems to claim) or whether the issue is more focused on particular regions. We also clearly need to tackle some additional topical areas,

62. See Peter N. Stearns, *American Fear: The Causes and Consequences of High Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

63. Peter N. Stearns, *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style* (New York: New York University Press, 1994); Peter N. Stearns and Timothy Haggerty, "The Role of Fear: Transitions in American Emotional Standards for Children, 1850–1950," *American Historical Review* 96, no. 1 (1991), 63–94.



like joy, and to work harder to build interdisciplinary bridges. I think there's a real tension between writing on fairly limited historical topics but framing them in ways that attract, say, other historians of the Renaissance or the Enlightenment, or writing directly to an audience of emotions scholars, and I prefer the latter without entirely ignoring the former (plus the separate issues of trying to reach a wider public).

JP: What are you currently working on in the field of emotions history?

PS: Still doing some work on fear, but especially work on changes in happiness, including the advent of the historically novel idea that children should be happy, and what this has meant; also lots of interest in the increasing role of the media in guiding public emotions responses. The rise of public grief, guided by the media, on occasions such as the Virginia Tech slayings a couple of years back (which can so interestingly be compared with a similar tragedy in Texas forty-one years before, when the public grief was notoriously missing save locally), offers an occasion to look at not only why, but also how media representations catch on, often with people who don't express emotion in the same way at all in more private settings or personal relationships. Thanks for the opportunity to comment; it's a very exciting field.

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