

INTRODUCTION

History departments around the world appear to have taken the ‘emotional turn’.¹ In the last decade, an astonishing number of books and articles, as well as centres for research, have appeared specifically to address emotions in history.² There are already a number of theoretical and methodological tools, generated by historians, that address what emotions are and what historians should do with them. Historians of emotions have engaged with – sometimes borrowing, sometimes abusing – other disciplines, most notably anthropology and the neurosciences, in the process of carving out a space in which the history of emotions can exist.

At the heart of this process are a series of radical claims that this book aims both to describe and, in many ways, defend: 1) Emotions

¹ Tracking who is teaching the history of emotions is not straightforward, but I have found history of emotions programmes for undergraduates at the University of York, London School of Philosophy, Rutgers, Duke, Berkeley, Georgetown, Memorial (Newfoundland), Toronto, Chinese University of Hong Kong and Tampere, and for graduates at Goldsmiths, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Newberry (Chicago), Loyola, Carleton (Ottawa), Lethbridge and Melbourne.

² The principal centres of research are the Centre for the History of Emotions at Queen Mary, University of London; Center for the History of Emotions, Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin; the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (across Australia); the Hist-Ex (History and Philosophy of Experience) group, based at the Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales del CSIC, Madrid. Many of the field’s developments are documented by the project *Les Émotions au Moyen Âge* (EMMA), run between the Université d’Aix-Marseille and the Université du Québec à Montréal. The first strictly historical journal focusing on emotions (*Emotions: History, Culture, Society*) has just been launched, with editorial input from across the world of expertise in the field.

change over time: that is to say, emotions are as much the subject of historical enquiry as anything else; 2) Emotions are not merely the effect of historical circumstances, expressed in the aftermath of events, but are active causes of events and richly enhance historiographical theories of causation; 3) Emotions are at the centre of the history of the human being, considered as a biocultural entity that is characterised as a worlded body, in the worlds of other worlded bodies; 4) Emotions are at the centre of the history of morality, for it is becoming increasingly unlikely that any account of human virtue, morals or ethics can be devoid of an analysis of its historical emotional context. Taken together, the history of emotions is, therefore, putting emotions at the centre of historiographical practice. Emotions cannot be sidelined as another (soft) category of historical analysis, peripheral to the weighty subjects of identity, race, class, gender, globalism and politics. The history of emotions enhances our understanding of all these things.

With the recent proliferation of works in this field, it is extremely difficult for the newcomer to know where to begin. When Jan Plamper wrote in 2012 that the history of emotions is a rocket ship taking off, I doubt even he realised the altitude it would reach in such a short time.³ His own 'Introduction' to the field necessarily concentrated not on what historians have done with emotions, but on what anthropologists and psychologists did with them, and the way in which the field opened up to historians in the twenty-first century. Now, five years later, there are hundreds of works identified explicitly as contributions to the literature on the history of emotions; a lot of people are actively practising this new discipline, but few have had the chance to take the temperature of the field as a whole as it now stands.

There are a number of general appraisals of what is at stake in

³ J. Plamper, *Geschichte und Gefühl: Grundlagen der Emotionsgeschichte* (Munich: Siedler, 2012). Only seven years prior to this, Peter Burke wrote with a great deal of uncertainty about whether a cultural history of emotions was even possible. Suffice to say that a great many scholars have since answered that it is, but this makes the field particularly difficult to enter at this moment. The unusual rapidity with which it is developing makes a suitable entry point difficult to find. Burke's article, which by ordinary standards might be considered 'recent', has been superseded. See P. Burke, 'Is there a cultural history of the emotions?', in P. Gouk and H. Hills [eds], *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 35–48.

the history of emotions, but the points of reference only get wider, and the *how* of the history of emotions remains in disparate sources, undigested, incoherent.⁴ Much of what has been produced in the last few years, as well as numerous conferences and panels throughout the historiographical community, therefore feels the need to ask basic questions of theory and method, going over old ground where it is not really necessary, struggling with conceptual innovations that might already be well developed. This book aims to cut short this kind of unnecessary labour and instead give the field a point from which to move forward and develop. In so doing, it addresses, in one place, the kinds of questions that until now have been answerable only by extensive bibliographical research. How does one *do* the history of emotions? What are its internal debates, challenges and weaknesses? What are its principal theories and assumptions? In short, what does one read first? It is my hope that this book will be the first port of call, not only for students who are new to the history of emotions, but also for established historians of all ranks who wish to find out what the history of emotions can do for them. More importantly still, I hope that this book will reach beyond the discipline of history and, in a substantial and meaningful way, be received and engaged with by psychologists, neuroscientists, anthropologists and philosophers.

Emotions scholarship has, for generations, been fractured along disciplinary lines.⁵ It is not an unfair characterisation to say that the emotions in philosophical works are not the same emotions as in psychological works, though they may share some first principles.⁶

⁴ Recent surveys include B. Rosenwein, 'Problems and methods in the history of emotions', *Passions in Context*, 1 (2010): 1–32; S. Matt, 'Current emotion research in history: Or doing history from the inside out', *Emotion Review*, 3 (2011): 117–24; R. Boddice, 'The affective turn: Historicizing the emotions', in C. Tileagă and J. Byford [eds], *Psychology and History: Interdisciplinary Explorations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); J. Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁵ See Plamper's able summary of the distance between anthropological and psychological epistemologies of the emotions, for example, in his *History of Emotions*.

⁶ The philosophical literature is legion, but readers could do worse than studying M.S. Brady, *Emotional Insight: The Epistemic Role of Emotional Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) to see how radically different philosophical approaches are to other humanities disciplines. See also M. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

These are problems of semantics, but also of fundamental incommensurabilities of purpose. History has long been an interdisciplinary bridge builder, happily borrowing insights and methods from a variety of other fields to suit its own purposes. It is true, however, that the direction of interdisciplinary flow has tended only to be inward. Historiography has projected very few of its own ideas back into those disciplines from which it freely borrows. This is partly because historians themselves see no need to make such contributions, but also because other disciplines have never really seen a substantial value in history for the purposes of their own scholarship and research. In the case of emotions, many historians are beginning to make forceful arguments that this can no longer be the case. Our understanding of what emotions are (and have been), how they work and what they mean, cannot be fenced off from other disciplines in which emotions are thought to be something else, to work otherwise and to mean different things.

Since there are deep convictions among historians of emotions that our findings are far from fanciful, that they are based on strong evidence about emotional experience, expression and practice, it seems imperative to find a way to bring other disciplines to a point of engagement with us. Indeed, historical appraisals of emotional experiences in the past can serve as direct challenges to contemporary scholarship in other disciplines that would narrowly and transhistorically define what emotion is. Happily, recent years have seen the potential for rapprochement between some neuroscientists and anthropologists, with history as the outward-looking bridge.⁷ Few people yet recognise the importance of this coming together, but this book's presentation of the potential harmony of constructivist, historicist, genetic and neuroscientific approaches suggests an exciting future, both in terms of research contexts and for our understanding of what makes us tearful, what makes us timorous or amorous, and what makes us tick.

The book is organised in such a way as to represent the diversity

⁷ See, for example, J. Carter Wood, 'The limits of culture? Society, evolutionary psychology and the history of violence', *Cultural and Social History*, 4 (2007): 95–114, and Barbara Rosenwein's critical response, 'The uses of biology: A response to J. Carter Wood's "The limits of culture"', *Cultural and Social History*, 4 (2007): 553–8. See also W. Reddy, 'Saying something new: Practice theory and cognitive neuroscience', *Arcadia*, 44 (2009): 8–23.

of research being undertaken in the history of emotions. It is at once a review of the field and an appraisal of its varied methods and theories. A grand narrative, or an actual history of the emotions, will have to wait for another book,⁸ though this one is coloured and exemplified by histories of emotion across time and from around the world. There are no special instructions for reading this text. It is designed precisely to be an introduction to the field, and therefore is best begun at the beginning. The opening chapter takes a broad overview, looking at the place of emotions in historical writing that pre-dates the formulation of a history-of-emotions project per se. It also looks at the presence of emotional historicism in other fields, tracing the reasons why the emotions failed to be addressed by historians until relatively recently. A brief review of some of the key innovators in the history of emotions is offered at this point, though in-depth analysis will run throughout the book. This, in turn, requires an analysis of the failed psychohistory movement that attempted to apply psychoanalytical methods to the practice of history, as well as relations with the psychological sciences more generally. This leads to an introductory appraisal of the social neurosciences and the possibilities for the history of emotions in this context.

Chapter 2 looks at the long and important history of emotion language, what language can tell us about the concept of types of emotion and, more importantly still, about the historical experience of emotions. The overarching observation here is that a sensitivity to language in a historical context has to be matched with a sensitivity to contemporary language used in historical practice. We are engaged in a history of the 'emotions'. Is that a satisfactory label for what we do? What does it reveal and what does it obscure? In sum, this chapter suggests that the risks of employing 'emotion' as a master category for our research outweigh the potential rewards; conversely, remaining open to the mutability of language and concepts does not make comparison impossible, or analysis redundant, but enriches them both.

Chapter 3 deals with some of the most important theoretical and methodological innovations in the history of emotions for working out the social dynamics of emotions in the past, putting together

⁸ The other book is planned: R. Boddice, *A History of Feelings* (London: Reaktion, forthcoming).

emotional regimes, emotional communities and emotional styles (or emotionologies) in order to compare and contrast their merits. Broadly speaking, these are, respectively, the work of William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein and Peter Stearns. The influence of each is measured, with suggestions for ways in which the weaknesses of each might be shored up, and their respective strengths united for a common purpose.

Historians tend towards analysis of humans in groups, even where the focus is biography. The history of emotions can challenge this preference by opening up the potential to explore the biological history of individuals. I will come to this shortly. Chapter 4, however, seeks to extend the possibilities for social analysis by exploring the ways in which emotional experience happens dynamically. So much of emotions research in all fields is about the way emotional experiences are part of social interactions and the dynamics of power.⁹ This chapter looks at the ways in which emotional prescription is expressed, enforced and reinforced, as well as examining what happens when emotions do not accord with expected norms.

There is a great deal to say here about expression and emotional practice, and therefore there is a good deal of overlap with chapter 5. In this chapter, however, there will be a much greater focus on what individuals go through (or have gone through) in order to emote in different kinds of context. This fills out the picture of dynamic emotional relations, but also re-emphasises the possibilities for a history of the biological individual as a mutable biocultural being. It unites the history of emotions with the history of biology, the history of the body and some key interdisciplinary insights on empathy.

Focus on the body and on biology leads naturally to a consideration of the senses. Generally speaking, the history of the senses has developed separately to the history of the emotions, and it has its own established historiography. Still, there are good reasons for putting the two together, especially when one considers the languages of 'feeling' and of 'sensibility' that intertwine with other emotions concepts. The history of the senses also has in common with the history of emotions a desire to disrupt universalising dis-

⁹ See, for example, the monumental interdisciplinary collection (though with history excluded), C. von Scheve and M. Salmela [eds], *Collective Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).



courses and to explore the endless variety of senses in the past. Chapter 6 serves as introduction and appraisal of this field, with suggestions for fruitful joint efforts in the future that indicate a rich historiography of experience. The emphasis on the historical body/mind invites a fuller appraisal here of the possibilities of neurohistory, and the extent to which historians of emotion must acquire literacy in the neurosciences. Only one sense – the moral sense – is omitted here, for coverage in the last chapter.

For all the talk of social and cultural emotions, we have yet to discuss the spaces and places where socio-emotional interactions take place, or the objects and material culture that are part of the emotional meaning-making process. Chapter 7 discusses these emotional worlds, the ways emotional prescriptions are embodied in architecture and the arrangement of social space, and the ways in which cultural associations with objects are essential to the inscription of emotional wiring in, or the imprint of encounters on, the biocultural brain. This completes the picture of the emotional body, the emotional brain and the emotional society.

This leaves just one key aspect: morality. The final chapter underlines the importance of the history of emotions by attaching it to a category that gives it greater weight. By showing the historical connections between emotions and morals, I am not attempting to force two categories together, but rather to give expression to a dramatically dynamic relationship that has persisted, in many different forms, throughout human history. This is not to assert a universal relationship of emotions and morals, but rather to emphasise that the mutability and historicity of emotions can newly explain and add weight to existing narratives of the historicity of morality. This is the key to what constitutes value in human societies, and makes the history of emotions more than an end in itself. It has the potential to unlock – at the level of experience – that thing that historians have always searched for: namely, what it means to be human.

