

Book Reviews

Merridee L. Bailey and Katie Barclay, eds. *Emotion, Ritual and Power in Europe, 1200-1920: Family, State and Church*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. xxii + 320, £63, ISBN: 978-3-319-44184-9

The Palgrave Studies in the History of Emotions series grows apace. This offering, centred heavily on the scholars of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, is perhaps the most ambitious volume to date, aiming to explore a vast array of rituals across an enormous time span, analysing the essential relationship among ritual, (production, expression and performance of) emotion and dynamics of power. In its temporal scope alone, the book marks a welcome shift from standard periodical delimitations, suggesting the potential for historians of emotion to read and practice across historiographical and geographical boundaries. The book is organised in three sections, on familial and personal rituals, on civic and nation-building rituals, and on religious rituals. It hangs together thematically, and several chapters, especially those on religious rituals, cohere particularly well. The chapters, in my view, achieve an overall effect that is perhaps greater than their individual impact. Given that the book implicitly resists an appeal to one period or place, but rather insists on the primacy of its theoretical, methodological and thematic approach, it will probably be best read *in toto*.

Insofar as the book is wonderfully illuminative regarding the richness of historical rituals, defined in different ways, but carefully documented in each case, it nevertheless suffers from a lack of editorial rigour concerning the object that those rituals were supposed to invoke and/or express, namely the ‘emotions’. I place the word in inverted commas because we are not dealing with a single category here, but a whole variety in different languages with different meanings and implications. This point goes essentially unrecognised in the volume as a whole, as the repetitive use of the word ‘emotional’ tends to indicate. Unless we subscribe to a universal understanding of the emotions (which neither this reviewer nor the editors do), then such an adjective is often an empty signifier, no more effective analytically than the word ‘very’.

As a case in point, the chapter by Hotchin on nuns’ ritual coronation in late medieval Germany employs the adjective ‘emotional’ more than three-dozen times in 16 pages, the vast majority of which are wholly redundant. Rather than explore the affective dimension of young nuns’ spirituality and piety, the categories of ‘spiritual and emotional’ are

categorically and anachronistically separated. There is an implicit appeal to something called ‘emotional’ that is supposed to be readily understood by the reader, which stands in stark contrast to the fascinating glimpses of the affective experience of the nuns themselves. We are not, in the end, dealing with ‘emotion’, but with *affectio*, the import of which has different overtones to our contemporary psychological category. Yet the distinction is not acknowledged. We are also dealing with *passio*, but the emphasis on suffering that this implies is not fully explored. Still, we are given a serious hint when we are told that the ‘love’ of Christ is to be a ‘wound’ and a bodily transfiguration, carried out through ‘actions’, ‘affections’ and ‘thoughts’ (p. 176). This is intermixed with ‘fear’ (p. 180). This ‘love’, which surely demands a deeper analysis, for it is not a love readily accessible to the contemporary reader, is effortfully worked towards through complex ritual practices designed to invoke it, involving not a simple plane of ‘feeling’, but a process of contemplation in the heart (pp. 183–4). That image alone requires explication. By continually returning to a surface of the ‘emotional’, the historicity of this particular love, fear, spirituality and piety and their associated practices is overshadowed. This is a pity, because a fascinating historicization of emotive rituals lies tantalizingly within reach.

I do not mean to single-out this chapter for particular criticism, for there are similar patterns across the whole volume. To call a thirteenth-century German ritual or an eighteenth-century French ritual an ‘emotional experience’ is to say nothing at all about its historical significance as an experience. Against this general pattern, chapters such as that by Helen Hills, on architecture, affect and miraculous liquefaction in baroque Italy, stand out as exemplars for how the subject matter in this book might have been approached. Though stylistically somewhat forbidding, Hills’ chapter eschews simplistic explanations in favour of a radical attempt to understand the relationship among material, architecture, miracle, ritual, society and affect (in the substance of reliquary blood, in the witnesses to its liquefaction, in material relations between elements, humours, the divine and the earthly) in historically specific terms. It is precisely the point of such chapters to highlight the complexity of historical affective commonplaces, readily accessible to historical actors, but opaque and difficult to understand for us. Making the historical specificity of affect plain to contemporary readers involves complex and involved analysis. The world of affect associated with the miraculous in seventeenth—and eighteenth-century Italy is so radically unfamiliar to the category of the ‘emotional’, that the importance of the history of emotions emerges acutely and urgently. Done well, as this is, it transforms our understanding of the past.

The editors are candid in their introduction that the book’s turn, in the conclusion by Whitehouse and François, to ‘constants in biology’,

and ‘evolutionary anthropology’, might be ‘confronting’ to some historians (pp. 7, 14), and indeed they seem themselves to dismiss such approaches at the outset (p. 15). It is difficult to understand why they chose to end the book with an advertisement for ‘the need for standardised theoretically informed variables’ for emotion and ritual across the whole of time and space. The difficulty in historical writing of avoiding rhetorical and anachronistic appeals to the ‘emotional’ notwithstanding, I doubt many of the contributors in this volume find such an appeal attractive. Certainly, from my perspective about the important purpose of the history of emotions precisely to historicise emotions, I find such a conclusion not merely ‘confronting’, but unhelpful.

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Pedro De Ribadeneyra's Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England: A Spanish Jesuit's History of the English Reformation, trans. and ed. Spencer J. Weinreich, Leiden: Brill, 2017, pp. xxvi + 826, with 12 illustrations, £220, ISBN: 978-9-0043-2395-7

This rich and lengthy volume makes available to English speakers the Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra's Spanish adaptation of Nicholas Sander's Latin text, *De origine ac progressu schismatis Anglicani (Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism, 1585)*. Broadly published in two parts in 1588 and 1593, Ribadeneyra's adaptation is important for the study of British and Irish Catholicism because it discloses both Spanish perceptions concerning the English Reformation and the engagement of Spanish Catholics with their English co-religionists.

In addition to a clear sense-for-sense translation that renders masterful early modern Spanish rhetorical flourishes into elegant English, Weinreich's volume features a wide array of valuable critical tools. Its bibliography and set of notes are almost encyclopedic. Weinreich identifies historical information and documents that Ribadeneyra employed, at times attempting to fill in gaps by suggesting works that Ribadeneyra was likely to have consulted when the Spaniard does not specify his sources. Red lettering signals textual variants between the printed editions, and an extensive topical index is supplemented by a biblical index. The book also contains five appendices relevant to the *Historia*. It includes English translations of Ribadeneyra's writings on the Armada, Luis de Granada's laudatory preface to the history, a partial copy of a long-lost 1591 letter from John Cecil to Joseph Creswell, and a previously unpublished list of martyred seminarians held at the Archivum Britannicum Societatis Iesu in London. Moreover, the robust introduction of over one