

***Doing Emotions History*. Susan Matt and Peter Stearns, eds. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014. 218 pp. £15.93 paper (ISBN 978-0-252-07955-9).**

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EMOTION as a key influence in human activity has traditionally been relegated to academic sidelines, treated as at best, a frivolous whim, and at worst, an unnecessary adjunct to scholarly focus on rational motivations. However, with a contemporary re-appreciation of the *Annales* School and its focus on the *mentalités* and a *longue durée* approach to studying society (Matt and Stearns 2014: 2-5), the epistemology which Stearns terms *emotionology* has gained broader acceptance in contemporary critical studies in the humanities and social sciences. In the context of this Cultural Turn the edited anthology *Doing Emotions History* is both groundbreaking in its focus and a refreshing alternative to rationalist historiography.

Formal, *rational* accounts of society cannot compete with the symbolic, fundamentally *arational* approach in which emotionology stands. This informs the core tenet of the book, which follows the rejection of what Max Weber termed the ‘iron cage’ (*stahlhartes Gehäuse*) epistemology of treating humans as purely rational, systematic actors. Instead, *Doing Emotions History* follows the finest traditions of the *Annales* School in focusing on what Alf Lüdtke (1995) termed “*Alltagsgeschichte*” or “everyday narratives”, helping the scholar to understand the ‘prosaic banalities’ (Crum 2001) of everyday practices which not only resonate with emotion, but place emotion as a definitive motivation in human action.

As EH Carr (1961: 7-9) recognised in his landmark contribution to historiography, it is not possible to view history through neutral lenses. Just as the actions of past individuals have been influenced by emotions, so too have the interpretations of those historians studying the past. This realisation frames *Doing Emotions History*. The editors are correct to point out that emotions can be studied either for their own sake, or as illuminations of ‘broader facets of the human experience and social patterns’ (Matt and Stearns 2014: 5). While it is impossible for historians to truly appreciate the emotions felt by individuals in the past, studying the perceptions and documentation of such emotions offers insight to dominant attitudes on social values and the political expression thereof. This is reflected in the book’s structure and content.

Following a brief but richly-packed introduction, the book’s nine chapters are divided into four Parts, each focusing on a particular issue. In Part I, Peter Stearns and Susan Matt illuminate the epistemological development of emotionology, and its core methodologies, respectively. Part II offers a regional analysis, with Norman Kutcher introducing readers to emotion in Chinese narratives of the past, and Mark Steinberg challenging orthodox Marxist teleologies through an investigation of emotions history east of the Iron Curtain. In Part III specific emotions are interrogated, with Darrin McMahon performing a sophisticated Nietzschean genealogy of joy and Pamela Epstein uncovering the surprisingly discordant relationship between marriage and love in the Western Christian tradition. Finally in Part IV, the power of emotions in shaping society receives three unique chapters. John Corrigan traces the fundamental foundations of religion in emotion, while Nicole Eustace investigates political change as expressions of public emotive change, segueing into Brenton Malin’s critique of contemporary connectivity between mass media and mass emotion. A short afterword summarises the book’s goals and exhorts readers to consider emotion as a tool not merely for historians, but for scholars across disciplines. Each digestible, self-contained chapter is rich in source material and further readings, and the book is complemented by a highly detailed index.

Selected chapters attend to identifying emotions and their change over time, in specific settings. The editors (2014: 9-10) acknowledge that it is not easy to trace the role of emotions across time and space; as this would be both methodologically and practically infeasible. Consequently the book's case-study chapters offer rich and detailed analyses of theoretical aspects of emotions history or specific case studies, but a potential criticism is that the overall structure can read as a *pastiche* of isolated cases which bear little relation to one another. However, as the editors (2014: 11) clearly state, 'the goal is to illustrate key issues, without pretending to provide comprehensive coverage' and 'to focus on some leading issues and opportunities in the field, to spar further discussion' (Matt and Stearns 2014: 3). Through its rich investigation of how emotions in time- and place-specific contexts impacts upon social structures, cultural values, and the political expression of these malleable social constructs, the collected authors in this book certainly fulfil their intentions.

Each individual chapter offers a rich and refreshing insight into how past societies did not always operate within Weber's *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, making a valuable contribution to history by suggesting new lines of investigation and novel methods of historiography. But perhaps the book's greatest contribution is that by demonstrating the power of emotions in the past, the authors inadvertently illustrate the crucial power of emotions in the present. Like history, disciplines including political science, political philosophy, international relations and human geography are increasingly developing a focus on the power of emotions in shaping our political and social structures. While the book's explicit focus is on historical societies, the themes investigated within are clearly visible in the present day: notably the European Union, studies of which have traditionally been focused in staid Functionalist analyses and rational dissections (Foster 2014), but which is increasingly interrogated through the lens of emotion – the emotional responses of citizens to policymaking decisions (Foster 2013) and the subsequent reactions of policymakers to these public expressions of sentiment (Bottici and Challand 2013; Bialasiewicz 2009). *Doing Emotions History*, Part IV in particular, offers an exemplary defence of this shift towards studying arational and irrational motivations for contemporary political behaviour. By demonstrating the importance of emotion in the past, the collected authors beat a path for scholars across the Humanities and Social Sciences to look beyond the bars of the *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, not simply at *what* people do and *how*, but *why*.

This highly interdisciplinary book addresses a major *desideratum* in the humanities and social sciences. By taking a 'plunge into the darkness where psychology wrestles with history' (Matt and Stearns 2014: 8), *Doing Emotions History* combines critical insight into methodology and historiography with a novel focus on the foundation of social interaction, not at the level of Acton's 'ultimate history' (Carr 1961: 7) nor with a naïve Rankean belief that the historian 'can simply show how it really was (Carr 1961: 8). This work demonstrates not only the significance of emotions in history, but the book's epistemological and methodological approaches are an excellent introduction to researchers seeking to understand the significance of emotions today. Ultimately, this anthology emphasises the need for researchers in the humanities and social sciences not to ignore but to acknowledge, and indeed harness, emotions. And these emotions, as the writers of *Doing Emotions History* correctly identify, had a profound influence on the inhabitants of the past which is no less significant than the influence of emotions upon the opinions, values, and actions of citizens of the present and the future.

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