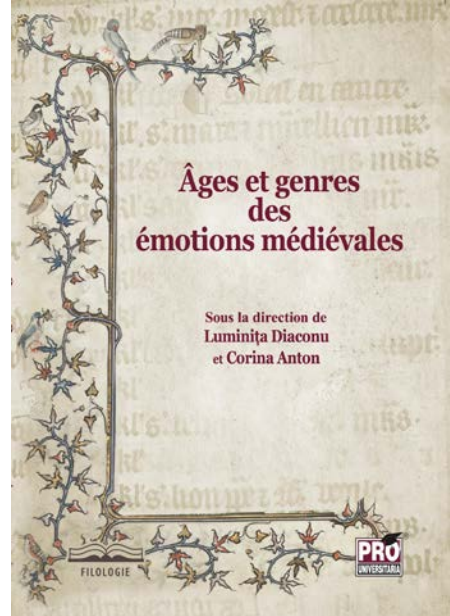


Views on the Middle Ages: Ages, Genders and the Expression of Emotions

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Luminița Diaconu, Corina Anton (dir.), *Âges et genres des émotions médiévales*, București, Editura Pro Universitaria, 2023, 195 pages.



The collective volume *Âges et genres des émotions médiévales* belongs to an academic tradition which may rightfully be termed as illustrious, in the context of the European humanities and social sciences. I am referring, of course, to the intellectual legacy of the Annales School, which has, rather recently (throughout the last three decades or so), joined the generous disciplinary confluence of cultural history/ cultural studies. Throughout its multiple “generations”, the Annales School has evolved from the practice of a predominantly quantitative social and economic historiography, to qualitative approaches geared towards cultural history and historical anthropology. Thence has emerged the preoccupation for the history of ideas and mentalities, and then, for the history of the senses (with the Annales historians studying subjects such as the history of smells, or of color perception, for instance). Finally, throughout the last two decades, cultural historians descended from the Annales tradition have

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dared to venture into the ineffable realm bounded by the study of the history of emotions.

As such, by subscribing thematically to the research field of the history of emotions, the present volume contributes to the development of one of the research paths which is currently commanding the attention of litterateurs and historians, but also of philosophers, theologians, sociologists and anthropologists¹. The volume comprises diverse and original contributions, and its conceptual premise – that of investigating the emotionality of the Middle Ages from an interdisciplinary perspective, in its dynamic relationship with gender, age and the historical period – constitutes, in itself, an innovative approach².

Overall, the tome explores the complex and multifaceted problem pertaining to the modes of expression, codes and social role of emotions in the Middle Ages, in the light of a multitude of thematic approaches which bring to bear the various categories of sources available. In fact, topics run the gamut, including discussions of: diverse aspects and dimensions of emotional expression by protagonists of medieval literary works (see the contributions of Mihaela Voicu, Monica Ruset Oancă, Luminița Diaconu, Caroline Blot, Corina Anton, Tristan Fourré and Davide Artico); the codes of expressing affects in the context of Byzantine diplomatic practice, as found in the accounts of Byzantine chroniclers (see Ecaterina Lung's article); the appropriateness / inappropriateness of the emotional expressions of two queen-mothers of the late Western Middle Ages, in their bitter struggle for the enthronement of their sons (see the article of Melina Rokai); the iconographic portrayal of contemplative suffering (pensive grief) in the medieval imagery (see the pages authored by Simona Drăgan); finally, the complicated relationship between emotionality and 12th century religious music, in light of a certain ancient philosophical tradition which nourishes the reflection of medieval theologians (in the contribution of Mihaela Pop).

¹ See also the first contribution of the Centre for Medieval Studies in this field: Luminița Diaconu & Mihaela Voicu (dir.), *Amitié /vs/ Hostilité au Moyen Âge*, București, Editura Universității din București, collection "Mediaevalia", no. 4/ 2013.

² Luminița Diaconu & Corina Anton, "Émotions médiévales à l'épreuve de l'âge et du genre", in Luminița Diaconu & Corina Anton (dir.), *Âges et genres des émotions médiévales*, Actes du Colloque international organisé par Le Centre d'Études Médiévales, Université de Bucarest (26-27 novembre 2021), București, Editura Pro Universitaria, 2023, p. 7-14.

The great diversity in the themes discussed and in the types of sources studied throughout the volume goes, quite naturally, hand in hand with the mobilization of a varied assortment of methods and theories, characteristic of several disciplines running the gamut of the humanities and social sciences, including: the history of the body, philosophy, historical, social and cultural anthropology, art history and translation studies.

The profoundly interdisciplinary conception and character of the volume *Âges et genres des émotions médiévales* recommends it both to the layman reader desirous of an indiscreet look into the psycho-emotional intimacy of the medieval man, and to the specialist (be she or he a historian, litterateur, anthropologist, philosopher or art historian) interested in one or several of the themes discussed in the pages of this collective tome, the contents of which is as diverse, as it is surprising and interesting.