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ERASMUS STUDIES 40 (2020) 97–99

ERASMUS
STUDIES

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Introduction

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I am very pleased to introduce this special issue on Erasmus and emotion. The history of emotions as a field of study is, on one hand, still coming into its own as a distinct discipline and, on the other, has expanded so rapidly and blended with so many other disciplines that it is already too unwieldy and multifarious to define succinctly or adequately. Indeed, in just a short few years it has become a trope in introductions such as this one to lament the fact that one simply cannot keep abreast of the expansive bibliography of history of emotions scholarship. I'll happily revert to that commonplace again here, and apply it also to the short bibliography appended to this issue—the latter contains only a few representative works from the field in general, as well as a sample that focus on medieval and early modern Europe and Erasmus.

What makes a history of emotions approach different from previous scholarship is an explicit focus on emotions and affectivity as an object of study in their own right. It has genealogical roots in the Annalistes' study of *mentalités*, but has moved well beyond that movement and introduced a series of heuristic devices of its own, beginning mainly in the 1990s: emotional communities, emotional regimes and refuges, emotionologies, emotion scripts, emotional practices, and several others. One of the field's generally accepted assumptions is that emotions are culturally constructed, meaning not necessarily that there is nothing biologically universal about emotion among human beings, but that there is a whole lot that *isn't* universal about emotion when considered across time and across cultures. Emotions change and they differ from one time period and one culture to the next. How they are described, adjudicated, governed, thought about, perhaps even felt, depends on time and place. Languages handle emotions in peculiar ways, and translating emotion terms from one language to another is far from easy. This means that scholars have to approach each context or work with care, but it also means that there is a lot of work to be done (and thus ample opportunity to do that work) to uncover the histories of emotion as they have proliferated and changed in human cultures.

As the history of emotions might pertain to Erasmus studies and vice versa, a few things are noteworthy. First, while affectivity has certainly not been

an absent feature of scholarship on Erasmus (it is present in Jacques Chomarat, Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, Manfred Hoffmann, and Lisa Jardine, to name a few prominent Erasmus scholars), there have been only a few—mostly recent—studies that look closely and explicitly at emotions and affectivity in his works. What has been revealed thus far is that Erasmus has an enormous amount to say about emotion, and that (perhaps not surprisingly) it is rather problematic to generalize about the topic across his corpus. Second, while scholars have produced multiple monographs on emotion in Thomas Aquinas, for example, and 'Shakespeare and emotions' is almost a cottage industry, the non-English Renaissance has yet to receive due attention from historians of emotion. And that would only be to think of the problem from the perspective of intellectual or literary histories of a single author's works. Erasmus participated in sixteenth-century European social and cultural practices surrounding emotions and affectivity that themselves were complex and diffuse. Because he's such a keen critic of his own surroundings, from reading him we are able to learn quite a lot about specific emotional practices and attitudes from the period, not just his own. What makes Erasmus such a rich object of study makes him a rich resource for the history of emotions as well. Studies on the *respublica litterarum*, or the early modern printshop, as emotional communities, or on feelings of anger or grief or hope in the sixteenth century would be relevant to Erasmus studies (and vice versa) as well.

One aim of this special issue, then, is to start the conversation about how emotions function in Erasmus' works. This is a loaded topic in itself, and the essays here only hint at how to answer some of the questions that arise: How did he describe emotions? What rules or norms does he prescribe for people feeling them? Are some more permitted than others? At different times or in certain contexts? Should the rhetorician attempt to 'move' them? How much? Are there religious and non-religious affections, and what is the significance of that distinction? And so on. A longer term aim of this conversation would be, ideally, to establish how Erasmus is or is not representative of wider trends in the history of emotions in late medieval and early modern Europe (which will require engagement with other specialized studies in the history of emotions), how Erasmus' works provide insight into how Europeans in the sixteenth century thought about or even felt emotion, and how Erasmus influenced or was received by later writers who write about emotion. By attempting to answer such questions, we will be in a better position to understand broader trends in the field.

We assume that more focused studies like those presented here are necessary before addressing the bigger questions presented above. Thus, Reinier Leushuis, in an expansion of his 2019 Roland Bainton Lecture, demonstrates

the centrality of affectivity, while clarifying the relationship between sensory experience and emotion, in Erasmus' rewriting of the faithful relationships between Jesus and his followers in the *Paraphrases*. Brian Cummings traces literary nuances and subtleties in his essay on the emotions in Erasmus' *Colloquies*, showing along the way that Erasmus is a keen philosopher of feeling in his own right, and that conversation and dialogue are a key locus for finding emotional understanding. In Gordon Raeburn's consideration of the *De Praeparatione ad mortem*, we learn not only about Erasmus' understanding of emotions as they pertain to death and dying, but how Erasmus was situated in the wider context of related attitudes in the early modern period. My own essay focuses on how Erasmus reads Greco-Roman mythology through an emotional lens and how he appropriates classical literature as a framework for understanding the emotions of his time, with a section devoted specifically to what he calls the *tragoedia Lutherana*—the tragic effects of Luther's Reformation, and Luther's own tragic discursive mode. We hope the issue illustrates the diverse possibilities of emotions research for Erasmus studies, and that readers are convinced of the importance of the history of emotions for a fuller understanding of Erasmus and the early modern world.