Forty years—a short life by our standards. And yet one that followed its own trajectory, from beginning to end. A finished life? Who can say? It will in any case remain a construct of the biographer. Rembrandt van Rijn, born around the same time as Evert Willemsz, was at the zenith of his fame in 1647, the year of Dominie Bogardus’s death. But that did not prevent him from striking out in new directions in the good twenty years that remained for him. Further sifting of the source material about Bogardus would no doubt yield more evidence of the unity of a person through the years of his life, even in radically changing circumstances.

It is neither possible nor necessary here to discuss all of Evert’s virtues and vices. The reader now has enough cards in his hand to arrive at an independent judgment. On two points, however, I wish to make an exception: Bogardus’s wrath and his excessive drinking. Starting with Kieft, and continuing right through his twentieth-century biographers, these two qualities have been so exclusively linked to his unpleasant character and personal failure that they have led to his historical disqualification as a pastor. By way of conclusion I will then draw attention to a thematic thread running through Evert Willemsz’s entire life, namely his pietism. This will give us a fresh perspective on the early history of New Netherland and on Dominie Bogardus’s unique place in its development.

Wrath and drunkenness

Wrath is an emotion. How do we deal with an element in history that on first sight seems so elusive? Evert’s youthful wrath against the sinful inhabitants of Woerden and his mature rage against the authorities of New Netherland, who with their closeness to his own life struck him as even more sinful, have in the first place a ritual quality. Evert crept into the skin of the Old Testament prophets, and in some cases of Jesus himself, in order to denounce—as a person called by God—the evils that prevailed around him. Evert’s wrath was not merely functional,
however. All indications are that he was also a short-tempered, choleric person. In the moral idiom of his time his anger was a genuine “passion.” Emotion, a much more analytical concept, is not synonymous with passion. But was his passion of wrath perhaps the culturally determined model of an emotion that Evert found available in his environment, and one that his personal make-up enabled him to use with both ease and skill?

Ever since the pioneering work of Johan Huizinga and Lucien Febvre, mentality history has insisted on the importance of emotions as historical categories, but the first impetus towards a more methodological approach came only in the 1980s from American social psychology. Carol and Peter Stearns in particular advocated a historical theory of emotions that recognizes the emotional economy as an important factor in the historical process. Their “emotionology” both identiﬁes emotional standards and offers guidelines for a responsible treatment of historical changes in the emotional economy, to the extent that they are expressed in concretely identiﬁable emotions. The insight that such emotions are not universal psychological constants but are instead saturated with culture is gaining ground in psychology as well. Culture encroaches deeply on the emotional economy, imprinting the basic program and determining which forms of appraisal, motivation, and behavior are chronically accessible or inaccessible. It thus promotes a specific collective repertoire of options, which is anchored in the emotional disposition of the individual and in the social codes of speech, gesture, facial expression, and physical well-being. William Reddy has called this normative order for emotion the “emotional regime” of a given society in a particular time period.

Gestures and facial expressions are fleeting and leave few traces in history. And whatever we do ﬁnd is difﬁcult to interpret, in spite of the visual rhetoric of early modern civility. Historians therefore typically take refuge in the verbal repertoire, whose codes they imagine to

4 Herman Roodenburg, The eloquence of the body: Perspectives on gesture in the Dutch Republic (Zwolle 2004).