



*Royal Rage and the Construction
of Anglo-Norman Authority,
c.1000-1250*

Kate McGrath

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Royal Rage and the Construction of Anglo-Norman Authority, c.1000-1250. By Kate McGrath. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. ISBN 978-3-030-11222-6. ix+220 pp. £59,99.

Kate McGrath, associate professor of history at Central Connecticut State University, examines in this monograph the construction of royal Anglo-Norman authority from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, with a particular emphasis on the depiction of rage and anger by ecclesiastical authors. McGrath's work analyses a number of case studies, and draws upon a range of chroniclers including Orderic Vitalis, Dudo of Saint-Quentin, and William of Poitiers. Understandably, McGrath notes that her work focusses purely on masculine and kingly royal authority, which leaves an opportunity for the examination of queenly anger and authority in a separate work. There is discussion around masculinity and gender roles throughout the monograph as needed, however scholars looking for an intensive examination of royal masculinity would be inclined to source another work as McGrath's research has a broader emphasis. The depth of research that has been undertaken is apparent throughout, with extensive references and bibliographies at the end of each chapter.

The book follows a thematic approach in that different types of royal rage are discussed, and then broken down into further categories for analysis. The book begins by situating the research within the current framework for interpreting emotions, issues with defining feuding and anger in this period. It then moves onto what is a useful discussion of Christian theology and how this beliefs affect medieval ecclesiastics' understanding of royal anger. This lays the grounds for further analysis in the book. However, given the scope of this work, some brevity within this section would be merited. McGrath then moves on to discuss the types of royal rage and how ecclesiastical authors represented and responded to each of these displays of anger. The second chapter focusses on the ecclesiastical culture of anger and the issues surrounding this, namely the limitations of what was righteous anger. McGrath argues that within the appropriate and inappropriate exercises of royal anger, anger could justifiably be utilised to suppress and control rebellions; to maintain law and order; to combat challengers to the king's honour and reputation; and to demonstrate the power of the king in the third chapter on righteous royal rage (109). The different scripts that authors used in order to praise or condemn these expressions of royal anger are convincingly discussed here. McGrath's unpicking of the history of emotions is evident throughout as they establish what Anglo-Norman chroniclers construed the boundaries of royal authority to be. McGrath then moves on to

the opposite of righteousness, namely that of shameful royal rage in the fourth chapter.

Through the analyses of royal, not only kingly, rage, the reader develops a greater understanding of the tenuous nature of royal authority in this period. The examination of royal siblings and how the chroniclers perceived their exercise of emotions is of particular interest, for example when considering the actions of Robert Curthose and his political activities, both within the Anglo-Norman realm and outside it. Monastic chroniclers developed a greater sense of authority through which they could criticise monarchs for ineffectively controlling their emotions. In turn, both monastic and lay individuals could provide counsel for the monarch to appropriately direct their anger (174). The discussion provided in chapter five is a welcome contribution to the wider roles of advisers in the Anglo-Norman period, and is innovative in its approach. Although the historiography of the roles of nobles and ecclesiastics in providing royal counsel is extensive, McGrath's work here brings a new dynamic to understanding the power relationships and how emotions factored into these.

This is an accessible and well-written work, with each aspect of royal anger the recipient of a thorough and extensive examination. It would be useful to extend some of the case studies further, for example the concluding discussion regarding representations of royal anger in French and vernacular texts. As a work which focusses primarily on the Anglo-Norman realm, it is useful to see comparisons with French texts regarding these depictions, as it lays the foundation for future discussions. The new angle through which the analysis of the various chronicles is undertaken here is thought-provoking and will hopefully engender further research in the area of the history of emotions.

This is an excellent contribution to Palgrave's *Studies in the History of Emotions* series as McGrath offers a thought-provoking and thorough examination of the ways in which emotions are ascribed by eleventh and twelfth-century Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical authors to kings, and in turn how these can be analysed to understand the approved exercise of royal authority. This book would be useful to any scholars researching royal authority in the High Middle Ages, particularly those with an interest in representations of anger and rage. Overall, this is an informative and welcome addition to the historiography of Anglo-Norman authority, with its innovative and systematic analysis of the topic.

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