



## THE FACIAL GESTURE: (MIS)READING EMOTION IN GOTHIC ART

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In the ninth canto of Dante's *Paradiso*, Folco of Marseilles speaks to the poet about his former sins or, rather, about the needlessness of thinking of his former sins in the blissful universe of paradise:

Non però qui si pente, ma si ride,  
non della colpa, ch'a mente non torna,  
ma del valor ch'ordinò e provide.

[Yet we repent not, but we smile,  
not for the fault which returns not to mind,  
but for the Power that ordained and foresaw.]<sup>1</sup>

Folco's smile without regret is simultaneously perplexing and encouraging; it signifies divine forgiveness and dismissal of one's transgressions; it appears a bit self-mocking but laced with pathos; it is a smile of a weak man directed at an all-powerful God.<sup>2</sup> The complexity of Folco's facial gesture points to the importance of studying the body as the site of mediated and elicited emotion expressed through somatic symptoms, in this case a smile.

In the past few years, the study of emotion in the religious, social, and literary history of the Middle Ages has gained particular importance and urgency under the sensitive scholarly guidance of Barbara Rosenwein.<sup>3</sup> Art historians, too, have addressed a variety of visual signs in their quest to explore medieval emotion, although its sustained history is yet to be written.<sup>4</sup> But can a dependable visual vocabulary of emotion be identified, especially one encoded in a gesture? Some psychologists think so: Paul Ekman, one of the leading researchers in the field of nonverbal communication, argues that facial expressions are universal

and can be recognized as markers of one of seven basic emotions—anger, contempt, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise—across cultural (and, presumably, temporal) divides.<sup>5</sup> Historians often agree: writing about pain, for instance, Esther Cohen points out that one would be hard-pressed to misidentify particular visual gestures as expressions of particular emotion, such as grief, for “the turned-down mouth, the drawn brows, the cry, are common to all humans.”<sup>6</sup>

Here, I will briefly consider two issues. In Gothic art, does the gestural/facial expression—a smile, for instance—consistently provide an indication of the emotional state of the individual represented? Can we correctly recognize in it an imprint of emotion? And, in general, did medieval viewers perceive this visual symptom as a reliable somatic expression with a fixed, predetermined meaning? In order to answer these questions we must pay close attention to the contexts—social, bodily, and visual—in which smiles are found, the contexts that offer intelligibility to what is an essentially ambiguous facial gesture. In her groundbreaking work on early medieval emotion, Rosenwein identifies what she calls “emotional communities,” circumscribing “the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.”<sup>7</sup> In an attempt to establish such a community (here, a viewing community), I restrict this brief study to thirteenth-century architectural sculpture placed on the exterior of churches, marking a threshold between the sacred and secular realms.<sup>8</sup>



The ambiguity of Folco’s smile as it is written by Dante offers a glimpse of the varied meanings that can be excavated from Gothic smiling images placed within religious contexts.<sup>9</sup> Yet attempting to read consistency in these meanings is problematic. When Ekman and his colleagues argue for the universal signal value of facial expressions, they suggest the immutability of the connection between a specific facial pattern and a given emotion.<sup>10</sup> Although I do not intend to dispute the intricacies of their theory, I do take issue with their underlying assumption that a facial expression is an accurate snapshot of a particular mental state. Ekman’s team is especially emphatic about linking the smile and the emotion of happiness and joy; and for that connection they rely on visual evidence—in their case, photographs, which, as Ekman and his colleague Wallace Friesen write in *Unmasking the Face*, “show the facial blueprints of the major emotions.”<sup>11</sup> Even though the theory has been challenged by other psychologists,

James Russell among them,<sup>12</sup> it remains a part of the canon to the extent that the stock textbook on social psychology claims that for happiness, as for the other five basic emotions, “universality of facial expression has been established by showing that members of cultures having no visual contact can correctly recognize one another’s expressions.”<sup>13</sup> The implication here is that these cultures can be isolated either geographically or temporally: a smiling face—whether for an inhabitant of New Guinea, or for a medieval layman, or for a modern Westerner—is always a happy face. In other words, Ekman’s stance disallows any cultural differences inherent in the interpretation of an image of a facial gesture (he does, after all, use posed photographs in his key studies) and seeks emotion where one is not necessarily to be found.<sup>14</sup>

Art historians, conversely, would recognize a smiling image, as Paul Binski terms it in his dazzling analysis of the Lincoln Angel Choir, to be “an epiphenomenon of northern Gothic naturalism or humanism.”<sup>15</sup> For Binski, such a verisimilar aesthetic allows for the body to “become the unambiguous sign of the inner moral resources of the protagonists.”<sup>16</sup> A similar statement was made by Moshe Barasch vis-à-vis tears. Although he acknowledges the ambiguous valence of tears in medieval culture, Barasch does see consistency in their appearance in fifteenth-century Flemish painting, and reads them as a positive attribute: “Only figures of inherent sanctity,” he suggests, “are allowed to shed tears.”<sup>17</sup>

Can the same be said about the smile? I do, however I have no quarrel with the idea that the smile is implicated in the aesthetics of Gothic naturalism or even that it is intimately associated with the late medieval acknowledgment of the body’s capacity for metaphysical expression. I do, however, question the notion that smiling images are meant to exteriorize plausibly and consistently the inclinations of the soul.

Nothing is better suited for an examination of the inherent complexity of such a smile than the images that seek to establish clear dichotomies between the blessed and the damned, such as the group of Wise and Foolish Virgins that stands at the north portal of the Magdeburg Cathedral. Originally created in 1250 (whether for the north or west portal is unclear), the group was repositioned on the enlarged north portal in the early fourteenth century. On the viewer’s left, the Wise Virgins gather, their poised curvilinear bodies seemingly swaying in time to celestial music (Figure 1). On the other side of the portal, clutching their empty lamps, the Foolish Virgins weep (Figure 2).

The Magdeburg sculptures are based on a parable found in Matthew 25:1–13:



FIG. 1 The Wise Virgins, Magdeburg.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. And five of them were foolish and five wise. But the five foolish, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps. And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh. Go ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said



FIG. 2 The Foolish Virgins, Magdeburg.

to the wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. The wise answered, saying: Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves. Now whilst they went to buy the bridegroom came: and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage. And the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering said: Amen, I say to you, I know you not. Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.<sup>18</sup>

The doors to the marriage feast hall are now locked; the foolish failed to come into the hall—and therefore into the kingdom of heaven. The *Glossa Ordinaria*, as well as other biblical commentaries, interprets the parable as a tale of warning: the five Wise Virgins are the five senses of the Christian soul, and their oil is the highest virtue of charity; the five Foolish Virgins stand for the five lusts that excite the body, and their lamps no longer burn with the love of God; the slumber of the women, as they wait for the bridegroom, is the slumber of death from which Christ will rouse humanity at the Second Coming.<sup>19</sup> The placement of the Virgins on the porch of the church, across from the equally dichotomous representation of the Church and the Synagogue, is fitting: the very portal of the church, which demarcates the border between the holy and the profane, participates in the visualization of this parable of exclusion.<sup>20</sup>

The emphatic gestures of the protagonists at Magdeburg set the two groups apart more than the entranceway itself: the elegantly expressive body language of the Wise Virgins, who appear to conduct a graceful dance, is contrasted with the movement of the Foolish women, their bodies constituted of sharp angles, who bring their hands to their faces, sometimes pulling their draperies upward. These extreme gestures have been seen as a typical medieval visualization of grief, “bodily displays of emotion . . . as demonstrative acts of public communication meant to highlight the seriousness of a situation.”<sup>21</sup> Such bodily display, ostensibly, is meant to involve the viewer in the lively spectacle of joy and sorrow; it has been argued that the Virgins’ somatic disposition is not a demonstration of but, rather, a response to their place in the parable, meant to “exert [upon the beholders], through their bodily dynamism” a kind of a “psychological pressure.”<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, the Virgins may well be exhibiting emotional responses: one may say that the Wise ones are happy to be admitted into the feast hall, while the Foolish grieve; these are emotions fitting the parable’s narrative. Yet the body language of the two groups points to an additional interpretation. The Foolish Virgins gesticulate, and their gesticulations, while certainly denoting the gravity of the situation, also indicate the body out of control—while their counterparts, collected and composed, do not gesticulate but gesture.<sup>23</sup> What is most remarkable in the Magdeburg sculptures, however, is the way that the gesture/gesticulation dichotomy is underscored through facial expression: the Wise Virgins offer up to the viewer serenely smiling faces, while the Foolish Virgins choke back invisible tears, wiping them dramatically off their contorted faces. Like the bodily gestures, the facial ones point to the difference in the status of the saved and the damned.

The smile is used precisely as such a tool for differentiation: its presence demonstrates the inner goodness of the Wise Virgins and is equated with salvation, while its lack signals the moral weakness of their Foolish counterparts and is likened to damnation. The distinction, located within the bodily response and nowhere else—the women have similar physiognomies and body types and wear similar clothing—inscribes its meaning in the presence of the smile. Such structuring of the difference through bodily and facial gesture is not unique to Magdeburg: although considerably toned down, the body language of the Wise and Foolish Virgins on the exterior of St. Stephen's church in Nuremberg equally designates the Wise by the presence of a smile and the Foolish by the lack thereof. They embody the diametrically opposing tropes of vice and virtue; the moral and the immoral; and at Magdeburg, associated as they are with the Church and the Synagogue, the old and the new.

Both groups at Magdeburg, presumably, are conceived as visual sites of temporal, human activity—the tranquil smiles of the blessed, the writhing bodies of the damned—which are in direct relationship with the somaticism of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century spirituality that put great stock into the expressive performativity of the body.<sup>24</sup> This temporality, often inscribed in sculpted imaginings of real individuals—one readily thinks of the infectious grin of the equestrian statue of Cangrande della Scala of Verona (Figure 3) or of the congenial smile of Reglindis, who stands



FIG. 3 Equestrian monument of Cangrande della Scala.

amid the founder statues at Naumburg Cathedral—implies animation and physicality, and physicality is of course transient and denies eternity.<sup>25</sup>

And yet, it is precisely this eternity that is implied in the facial gesture of the Magdeburg Wise Virgins, the gesture one finds in abundance in the angelic and saintly figures that greet the viewer on the exterior of certain Gothic churches—the Reims Cathedral, for instance (Figure 4)—and are meant to evoke the *gaudium aeternum*, the eternal joy of heaven.<sup>26</sup> For the medieval viewer, the church constituted the image of the city of God on earth, of heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup> John’s Revelation 21:2–27, which tells of the holy city that descended from heaven “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,” found its embodiment in a Gothic church, with its multiple portals, gleaming windows, and high walls. The angels that John saw standing in the doorways (Rev. 2:12) were carved in stone and placed within the context of holy structures—heavenly ambassadors with unforgettable smiles of heavenly joy. Pseudo-Dionysius explicated this joy, described in Luke 15:7–10 as “a truly divine sense of well-being, the good and generous delight at the providence and salvation of those who are returned to God. They are,” he concludes, “unspeakably happy.”<sup>28</sup> These angels greet the viewer by way of greeting saints, and the contrast between the celestial and the terrestrial is underscored in facial gesture: at Reims, one such angelic salutation is directed at the melancholic Saint Denis,



FIG. 4 The smiling angel of Annunciation at the portal of Reims Cathedral.



welcomed to Paradise; and another is reserved for the subdued Virgin Mary, welcomed by a grinning angel, as she is filled with grace.<sup>29</sup> The smile, here, is a sign of Pseudo-Dionysian eternal “divine joy caused by the finding of the lost.”<sup>30</sup>

This divine joy, the elated, thrilling bliss of rapture, is the very *gaudium aeternum* that Dante witnessed in Paradise through the smiling faces: “Faces I saw of charity persuasive/Embellished by His light and their own smile/And attitudes adorned with every grace.”<sup>31</sup> Peter Hawkins draws attention to smiling as Dante’s “hallmark gesture”:<sup>32</sup> as Dante encounters more than a thousand jubilant angels, he sees “at their sports and at their songs/ A beauty smiling, which the gladness was/Within the eyes of all the other saints.”<sup>33</sup> Beatrice smiles the heavenly smile that recalls her past, terrestrial one; planets smile, and the universe laughs; God himself, the Eternal Light, says Dante, “lovest and smilest on Thyself.”<sup>34</sup> The everlasting quality of these smiles is finally underscored in canto 31: there, Dante refers to himself as one who had come not only from the human to the divine realm but also “from time unto eternity.”<sup>35</sup>

The facial gesture at Magdeburg, then, is wrought with complex and at times contradictory connotations: the emotive smile of bliss, which becomes the site of collision between the transient and the eternal, is used as a somatic symptom that denotes and differentiates moral character—and therefore the ultimate fate of the soul. But in order to gauge the extent of this contradiction one only has to turn to the sculpted group of the Wise and the Foolish Virgins at the Strasbourg Cathedral (Figure 5), made just



FIG. 5 The Wise and Foolish Virgins, Strasbourg.

thirty years after the Magdeburg group (ca. 1280).<sup>36</sup> The facial features here are far less expressive than at Magdeburg (in fact, the majority of the figures, the Wise and Foolish alike, appear somewhat dejected, serious, and solemn), although a curious reversal in the meaning of facial gesture takes place here.

The Foolish Virgins are accompanied by the handsome and deceitful Satan, the tightly smiling Seducer, the Prince of Rot, covered with snakes and toads crawling on his hidden, decomposing back. The Foolish Virgin who stands closest to the Prince grins radiantly, fixated on the apple he proffers (Figure 6).<sup>37</sup> Although the original order of the statues has been disturbed, this pair quite likely stands in its original place, and the Foolish Virgin with her joyful smile is cast in the role of the second Eve tempted again by the ill-fated apple. We see precisely such compositional configuration, for instance, in the sculpted group at the Venetian Palazzo Ducale (Figure 7), where Eve accepts the apple from the serpent, her gesture uncannily similar



FIG. 6 The Foolish Virgin and the Seducer, Strasbourg.

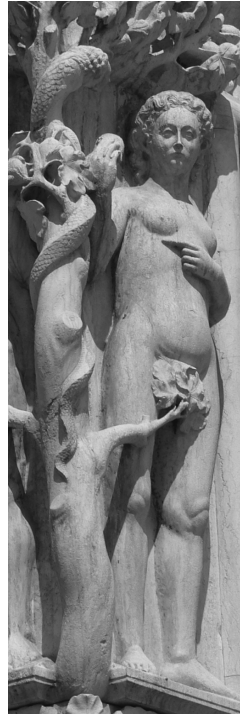


FIG. 7 The Fall, Palazzo Ducale, Venice.

to that of the Strasbourg Virgin. The smile that curves the Foolish Virgin's lips is unquestionably inscribed with the lechery of seduction. It is the same smile, too, that we find on the faces of the Foolish Virgins at the former abbey church of St-Saveur in Charroux, France, carved around the same time as the Magdeburg group, circa 1250 (Figure 8).

The attempt to account for the apparent flexibility of the meaning of this facial gesture by distinguishing between the smile and laughter is problematic: the facial expressions of the Strasbourg Foolish Virgin, desirous and eager, pulled toward the apple held in Satan's hand, and of the St-Saveur Virgins grinning blissfully, as if unaware of their fate, are virtually indistinguishable from those of the Magdeburg Wise Virgins, which mark moral strength in anticipation of heavenly reward, or from the beatific smiles of the Reims angels.<sup>38</sup> What are we to do, then, with the contention that Gothic art, for all its naturalism and humanism, "was premised on the notion of the body as a sign of the soul, or the lack of it"?<sup>39</sup> What kind of a soul does a smile signify? Can a somatic sign really be unambiguous? When confronted with images at Strasbourg and Magdeburg, or, better yet, with the grinning protagonists of the Last Judgment portal at Bamberg Cathedral, one senses that the insistence on the dichotomy between "the neat-lipped smiles of angels" and the toothy "grimaces of the damned" in which a mouth "cracks wide open, exposing the teeth" underscores the artificiality of such clear-cut distinctions.<sup>40</sup>



FIG. 8 The Foolish Virgins, Charroux, France. © Colum Hourihane.

At Bamberg, on the Porch of Princes, on either side of the Man of Sorrows and interceding Mary and John, appear the resurrected souls (ca. 1233–1235, Figure 9).<sup>41</sup> On Christ's right, the blessed smile delightedly, ecstatically: they have been saved (Figure 10). These are surely the angelic, joyful smiles one sees at Reims—the smiles of rapturous, divine elation—albeit the elegant, courtly French smiles here burst into open grins.<sup>42</sup>

The three blessed souls on the far left gather together, hands folded in prayer: their bulbous noses and sly, smug smirks dominate their scrunched-up faces. On the opposite side, the damned appear, of all ranks and levels of society—and they, too, are smiling (Figure 11). Their smiles, however, are accompanied by uncontrolled gesticulations, much like those of the Magdeburg Foolish Virgins—flailing arms, contorted bodies, squinting eyes, raised eyebrows—meant, to remind the viewer of the unholy aspect of the smile, the smile of sin, lechery, and damnation, of hopeless hysteria, and the panicked frenzy of madness before the gates of hell. But the smiles of some of those gathered on Christ's left side are often just as subdued as the angelic smiles, nearly identical to those of the blessed, and only their plaintively raised eyebrows indicate their place among the damned. Indeed, some of the damned open their mouths, to show teeth: but it suffices merely to glance below the tympanum to see

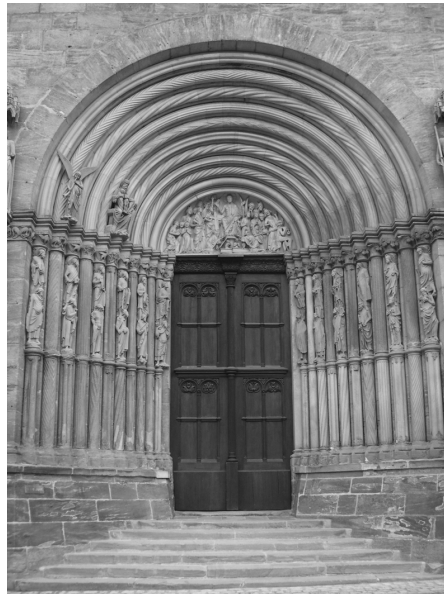


FIG. 9 The Porch of Princes, Bamberg. Photo by the author.



FIG. 10 The saved, Bamberg.



FIG. 11 The damned, Bamberg.

the very same toothy grin with parted lips on the faces of the Bamberg angels and saints (Figure 12).<sup>43</sup> The Porch of the Princes showcases, within a single sculptural ensemble, the contradictory implications of the Gothic smile, simultaneously temporal and eternal: on one hand, the effusion of joy and salvation; on the other, the agony of sorrow and damnation.





FIG. 12 St. Stephen, Bamberg.

It is only fitting that the viewer, poised at the liminal space of the church portal, is greeted by a facial gesture invariably charged with ambiguity—a gesture that can be read as a sign of foolishness and an expression of wisdom; as an indication of erotic desire and of *gaudium aeternum*; as a new aesthetic of Gothic naturalism and as a feature of vernacular expressivity; as a metaphysical sign and as an articulation of the body’s physicality; as a denotation of a variety of emotions or as a contradictory outward sign of the soul. The complexity of its meaning, therefore, seems to call for a break in the so-called universal anthropological equation between gesture and emotion, and for a divorce between the gesture and the “inner passion of the soul.” Like the changing faces that Dante sees through the polished but distorting glass in *Paradiso*, the Gothic smile, recast in different visual contexts, constantly transforms, becoming one of the most versatile and ambiguous gestures in medieval visual language.

#### NOTES

I am tremendously grateful to Barbara Rosenwein, whose own work has inspired and sustained my interest in the history of emotion and gesture, for her invaluable comments on this article. I am also indebted to Peter S. Hawkins, who, some years ago, generously shared with me the typescript of his article (then in preparation) “All Smiles: Poetry and Theology in Dante.” As always, I thank Robert Carroll for his keen editorial eye.

1. *The Paradiso of Dante Alighieri*, ed. Philip Henry Wicksteed and Herman Oelsner (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1908), canto 9, ll. 103–5. All citations from Dante in the original Italian are from this edition, whereas all translations are from *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (New York: Davoe Press, 1909).

2. On smiles in Dante's *Commedia*, see Peter S. Hawkins, "All Smiles: Poetry and Theology in Dante," *PMLA* 121, no. 2 (2006): 371–87.

3. See, most notably, Barbara H. Rosenwein's *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), a challenge to Norbert Elias's teleological model that constructs a "grand narrative" in the history of emotions in the West (see his classic study *The Civilizing Process*, 2 vols., trans. Edmund Jephcott [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994], 1:45–182); "Worrying About Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 821–45; and "Writing Without Fear About Early Medieval Emotions," *Early Medieval Europe* 10, no. 2 (2001): 229–34. See also Barbara H. Rosenwein, ed., *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); and Daniel Lord Smail, *The Consumption of Justice: Emotions, Publicity, and Legal Culture in Marseille, 1264–1423* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). The historiography of the study of emotion is out of place here, but I would refer the reader to the excellent keynote address "Historians and Emotions: New Theories, New Questions" delivered by Piroska Nagy at a recent conference, Cultural History of Emotions in Premodernity (Umeå University, Umeå, October 23–26, 2008), available at <http://emma.hypotheses.org/147>. Resurgence of interest in the study of medieval emotion is witnessed in the International Medieval Congress held at Leeds, July 10–13, 2006, that had "Emotion and Gesture" as its theme; sessions on emotion held at the Medieval Academy of America meetings in Boston (2006) and Chicago (2009); and the formation of the project Emotions in the Middle Ages. For a different approach to emotion as codified gesture, see Gerd Althoff, "Empörung, Tränen, Zerknirschung: 'Emotionen' in der öffentlichen Kommunikation des Mittelalters," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 30 (1996): 60–79. For essays in literary criticism and history, see C. Stephen Jaeger and Ingrid Kasten, eds., *Codierung von Emotionen im Mittelalter/Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003).

4. See, for instance, Henry Maguire, "The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31 (1977): 123–74; Mitchell B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). See also Moshe Barasch's "The Crying Face," *Artibus et historiae* 8, no. 15 (1987): 21–36; *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1976); and *Giotto and the Language of Gesture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). On the possibility of developing a visual vocabulary, see, for instance, Moshe Barasch, *The Language of Art: Studies in Interpretation* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), esp. the chapter on Renaissance laughter.

5. See, for instance, Paul Ekman, "Biological and Cultural Contributions to Body and Facial Movement," in *The Anthropology of the Body*, ed. John Blacking (London: Academic Press, 1977), 39–84, at 67–71; Paul Ekman, *The Face of Man: Expressions of Universal Emotions in a New Guinea Village* (New York: Garland STPM Press, 1980); Paul Ekman, Wallace V. Friesen, and Phoebe Ellsworth, eds., *Emotion in the Human Face: Guide-lines for Research and an Integration of Findings* (New York: Pergamon Press, [1972]). The impact of Ekman's views on current research is tremendous. I am grateful to Barbara Rosenwein who pointed me to Marc D. Pell et al., "Recognizing Emotions in a Foreign Language," *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 33, no. 2 (2009): 107–20; the abstract to the article reads: "Expressions of basic emotions (joy, sadness, fear, disgust) can be recognized pan-culturally for the face."

6. Esther Cohen, "The Animated Pain of the Body," *American Historical Review* 105, no. 1 (2000): 36–68, at 36. Cohen argues, nonetheless, for an entire range of ways pain can be expressed in different situations. See also Wulf Schiefenhövel, "Perception, Expression, and Social Function of Pain," *Science in Context* 8 (1995): 31–46.

7. Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions," 842.

8. For a collection of essays that explore another such threshold, of religious screens, see Sharon E. J. Gerstel, *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2006).

9. For recent studies of the medieval smile, see, first and foremost, Paul Binski, "The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile," *Art History* 20, no. 3 (1997): 350–74, 511; Peter Seiler, "Das Lächeln des Cangrande della Scala," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 63, no. 1

(1999): 136–43; Jan Svanberg, “The Gothic Smile,” *Künstlerischer Austausch/Artistic Exchange*, in *Proceedings of the XXVIIth International Congress of the History of Arts*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Akademie, 1993), 2:357–70; Felice Moretti, *La ragione del sorriso e del riso nel Medioevo* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2001); and Philippe Ménard, *Le rire et le sourire dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen âge <1150–1250>* (Geneva: Droz, 1969). Also worth looking at is Angus Trumble, *A Brief History of Smile* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), esp. 116–22.

10. See, for instance, Paul Ekman, “The Argument and Evidence About Universals in Facial Expressions of Emotions,” in *Handbook of Social Psychophysiology*, ed. Hugh Wagner and Antony Manstead (New York: Wiley, 1989), 143–64; Paul Ekman, “An Argument for Basic Emotions,” *Cognition and Emotion* 6 (1992): 169–200; Paul Ekman, “Facial Expression and Emotion,” *American Psychologist* 48 (1993): 384–92; and David Matsumoto, “More Evidence for the Universality of a Contempt Expression,” *Motivation and Emotion* 16 (1992): 363–68.

11. Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen, *Unmasking the Face: A Guide to Recognizing Emotions From Facial Clues* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 1.

12. See James A. Russell, “Is There Universal Recognition of Emotion From Facial Expression? A Review of the Cross-Cultural Studies,” *Psychological Bulletin* 115, no. 1 (1994): 102–41. For emotion as a cultural construct, see Catherine Lutz, “Depression and the Translation of Emotional Words,” in *Culture and Depression: Studies in the Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Psychiatry of Affect and Disorder*, ed. A. Kleinman and B. Good (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 63–100; for tensions underlying the anthropological study of emotion, see Catherine Lutz and Geoffrey White, “The Anthropology of Emotions,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15 (1986): 405–36. Particularly useful is the section that discusses the concepts of universalism and relativism, as it deals with the notion of pan-cultural and culturally constructed emotion. Universalists, in the words of Lutz and White, are “positive in epistemological orientation” and consider emotion “as a panhuman ability or process that is invariant in essence”; relativists, conversely, are “concerned with the ways in which emotions vary cross-culturally” and “define emotion as a socially validated judgment rather than internal state” (408).

13. Roger Brown, *Social Psychology* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 522.

14. It is important to note that when showing these photographs to his subjects, ostensibly to prove that groups of people, however culturally removed from one another, are capable of recognizing emotions on each others’ faces, Ekman instructed a translator to accompany each photograph with a short story. Ekman’s conclusions have been challenged in part because his experiment was thereby compromised, as it ultimately dealt with reactions, not emotions. Russell suggests that the subjects may have thought that people in the photographs displayed were reacting to particular things that happened in the story (“Is There Universal Recognition of Emotion From Facial Expression?” 127), while E. Richard Sorenson, who witnessed the exchange between the translator and the subjects, observed that this verbal communication may have influenced the subjects’ reactions to photographs. He points out that when shown photographs without the accompanying story, many “displayed uncertainty, hesitation and confusion” (*The Edge of the Forest: Land, Childhood, and Change in a New Guinea Protoagricultural Society* [Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1976], 140). Barbara Rosenwein provides a useful overview of “universalist” attitudes and challenges to them in “Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions,” *Passions in Context* (forthcoming).

15. Binski, “The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile,” 352; see further Henri Focillon, *The Art of the West in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2: *Gothic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 71–107.

16. Binski, “The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile,” 355–56; earlier: “Gothic art is consistently premised on the notion of the body as a sign of the soul, or the lack of it” (353). We see the same contention in C. Stephen Jaeger, “Moral Discipline and Gothic Sculpture: The Wise and Foolish Virgins of the Strassburg Cathedral,” in *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 331–48, at 331.

17. Barasch, “The Crying Face,” p. 36. For a general iconographic study of the theme, see Walter Lehmann, “Die Parabel von den klugen und törichten Jungfrauen,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1916. For a collection of images of the Wise and Foolish Virgins on the jamb, see Willibald Sauerländer, Max Hirmer, and Renate Kroos, *Gotische Skulptur in Frankreich, 1140–1270* (Munich: Hirmer, 1970), pls. 60–61, 145, 160–61, 243, 288, 298–301, 308–9. For the Magdeburg Cathedral, see Helga Möbius, *Der Dom zu Magdeburg* (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1961); Hannelore Sachs, *Die Bildwerke des Magdeburger Doms*



(Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1968); Ernst Schubert and Klaus G. Beyer, *Der Magdeburger Dom* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1984); and Helga Sciarie, "Zur Bedeutung der Chorskulpturen im Magdeburger Dom," in *Magdeburger Dom: Ottonische Gründung und staufischer Neubau*, ed. Ernst Ullmann (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1989), 163–68. Interestingly, the dichotomy between good and evil is also figured on the Magdeburg Cathedral misericords: Elizabeth Porges-Watson, "Images of Good and Evil on the Misericords of Magdeburg Cathedral," *The Profane Arts of the Middle Ages* 4, no. 2 (1995): 75–99.

18. All scriptural citations are taken from *The Holy Bible, Douay-Rheims Version, Translated From the Latin Vulgate and Diligently Compared With the Hebrew, Greek and Other Editions* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1941).

19. See the commentary on Matthew 25:1–13 in *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg, 1480/81*, ed. Karlfried Froehlich and Margaret T. Gibson (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1992). Medieval commentators, including Augustine, Bede, Rabanus Maurus, and Hugh of St. Victor, have sought to interpret the parable, some bothered by the thorny issue that the parable itself is strangely silent about the clear reason the five unfortunate women, armed with purity (virginity) and good works (the lamps), were excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

20. On architectural spaces and their relation to and construction of the human body, see, first and foremost, Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). Perhaps the most telling expression of the meaning of a medieval portal is found in the inscription at Ébreuil in Auvergne: "Adest porta per quam iusti redeunt ad patriam" [The door is at hand through which the just return home], in reference, of course, to Christ's words, "I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved: and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pastures" (John 10:9).

21. Jacqueline Jung, "Dynamic Bodies and the Beholder's Share: The Wise and Foolish Virgins of Magdeburg Cathedral," in *Bild und Körper im Mittelalter*, ed. Kristin Marek et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006), 135–60, at 149. Jung contends, in general, that the representations of the Wise and Foolish women are essentially the same; she sees "the group's physical uniformity" in the courtly garb and ideal beauty. I agree with this observation, but our theses subsequently diverge: Jung does not believe that "bodily comportment distinguish[es] the women's respective moral qualities in any essential way" (147–48), whereas the distinction seems clear to me, especially when it comes to the facial gesture and the handling of the attributes—in this case, the lamps held up by the Wise and turned upside down by the Foolish Virgins.

22. *Ibid.*, 139.

23. See, on gestures and gesticulations, Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Gestus/Gesticulatio. Contribution à l'étude du vocabulaire médiéval des gestes," in *La lexicographie du latin médiéval et ses rapports avec les recherches actuelles sur la civilisation du moyen âge* (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1981), 377–90. For more on gesture, see Schmitt's *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), condensed in "The Rationale of Gestures in the West: Third to Thirteenth Centuries," in *A Cultural History of Gesture From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 59–70. For the characterization of moral and spiritual essence through gesture in the representations of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, see also Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Rotschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland Circa 1300* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 57–59.

24. For an overview of the importance of the body in late medieval piety, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), esp. 183–86.

25. On Cangrande, see Seiler, "Das Lächeln des Cangrande della Scala," where he argues that the smile on Cangrande's face reflects his personality, his *hilaritas*; on the figures in the west choir of Naumburg, see "Die Stifterfiguren des Naumburger Westchores," in *Meisterwerke mittelalterlicher Skulptur*, ed. Hartmut Krohm (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1996), 271–95; on the connection between Naumburg and Reims, see "Zu den französischen Voraussetzungen des 'Naumburger Werkstatt,'" in Krohm, *Meisterwerke mittelalterlicher Skulptur*, 431–58; on the harmony between architectural and sculptural ensembles at Naumburg as well as Reims, see Willibald Sauerländer, "Integrated Fragments and the Unintegrated Whole: Scattered Examples From Reims, Strasbourg, Chartres, and Naumburg," in *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings*, ed. Virginia Raguin, Kathryn Brush, and Peter Draper (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 153–325. On moral character as reflected in the statues, see Helga

Sciurie, “Überlegungen zu den Stifterfiguren im Naumburger Westchor: Herrschaft zwischen Repräsentation und Gericht,” in *Höfische Repräsentation: Das Zeremoniell und Zeichen*, ed. Hedda Ragotzky and Horst Wenzel (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990), 149–70. For a summary of the scholarship on the choir before 1982, see Ernst Schubert, “Zur Naumburg-Forschung der letzten Jahrzehnte,” *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 35 (1982): 121–38.

26. On the connection between Magdeburg and Reims, see Dietrich Schubert, *Von Halberstadt nach Meissen: Bildwerke des 13. Jahrhunderts in Thüringen, Sachsen, und Anhalt* (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1974), 303–4; on Reims, see Peter Kurmann, *La façade de la Cathédrale de Reims: Architecture et sculpture des portails: Étude archéologique et stylistique*, trans. Françoise Monfrin (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1987).

27. See, for instance, Günther Binding, *High Gothic: The Age of the Great Cathedrals* (Cologne: Taschen, 1999), 44.

28. See “Celestial Hierarchy” in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), esp. 190.

29. For a comprehensive analysis of the west portals of Reims, see Kurmann, *La façade de la Cathédrale de Reims*; for a more recent discussion of the historical significance of different styles of facade sculptures, see Willibald Sauerländer, “Antiqui et moderni at Reims,” *Gesta* 42, no. 1 (2003): 19–37; Willibald Sauerländer, *Das Jahrhundert der großen Kathedralen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1990), 142–49; and Frederic Destremau, “L’ange de la cathédrale de Reims ou ‘le sourire retrouvé.’” *Bulletin de la Société de l’histoire de l’art français* (1998): 309–24.

30. *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 190.

31. “Veda di carità visi suadi,/d’altrui lume fregiati e del suo riso,/ed atti ornati di tutte onestadi” (canto 31, ll. 49–51).

32. Hawkins, “All Smiles,” 376.

33. “Vidi quivi ai lor giochi ed ai lor canti/ridere una bellezza, che letizia/era negli occhi a tutti gli altri santi” (canto 31, ll. 133–35).

34. “O luce eternal, che sola in te sidi/sola t’ intendi, e, da te intelletta/ed intendente te, ami ed arridil” (canto 33, ll. 124–26). On the medieval tradition of associations between smiles and light, see John Gage, *Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning From Antiquity to Abstraction* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), 77–78.

35. “Io, che al divino dall’umano,/all’eterno dal tempo era venuto” (canto 31, ll. 37–38).

36. On this group, and the gestural indications of their moral character, see Jaeger, “Moral Discipline and Gothic Sculpture”: “Perhaps their most striking feature is what we might call their moral transparency” (331); he writes further that the “best argument that moral discipline provided the conceptual idiom of the Strassburg virgins is in their smiles” (342). On both the Magdeburg and Strassburg groups, see Erwin Panofsky, *Die deutsche Plastik des elften bis dreizehnten Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Munich: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1924), 143ff.

37. Briefly discussed in Regine Korkel-Hinkfoth, “Sinnbild des Jüngsten Gerichts: Darstellungen der Parabel von den klugen und törrichten Jungfrauen am Basler Münster,” *Unsere Kunstdenkmäler* 3 (1993): 309–22.

38. Binski (“The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile,” 354) also draws distinction between laughter and smiling, a topic beyond the scope of this article. See, for instance, Ménard, *Le rire et le sourire dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen âge*. In “Moral Discipline and Gothic Sculpture,” Jaeger effectively contrasts the calm smile of the Wise and the wide grin of the Foolish to support his argument; while this contention works well in this particular context, it is not applicable to the larger corpus of Gothic sculpture. The desire on the part of scholars to see the smile as a mark of character, or of particular behavior, may sometimes blind them to this similarity: in Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache’s *L’humour en chaire: Le rire dans l’Église médiévale*, the authors reproduce, as Figure 5, a comparison between the two smiling images, claiming in the caption that the Magdeburg smile is “serene” and the Charroux smile is “coquettish” (*Histoire et société*, no. 28 [Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994], 261).

39. Binski, “The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile,” 353.

40. *Ibid.*, 354. For the connection between sculptures at Bamberg and Magdeburg, see Martin Gosebruchs, “Das oberrheinisch-bambergsche Element im Magdeburger Dom,” in Ullmann, *Magdeburger Dom*, 132–40.

41. On the Bamberg sculpture, see Wilhelm Boeck and Urs Boeck, *Der Bamberger Meister* (Tübingen: Katzmann-Verlag, 1960).

42. On the comparison between Bamberg and Reims sculptures, including smiling figures, see Willibald Sauerländer, “Reims und Bamberg: Zu Art und Umfang der Übernahmen,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 39, nos. 2/3 (1976): 167–92. On the connections between

Bamberg and Reims, see Hans-Christian Feldmann, *Bamberg und Reims: Die Skulpturen 1220–1250: Zur Entwicklung von Stil und Bedeutung der Skulpturen in dem unter Bischof Ekkert, 1203–1237, errichteten Neubau des Bamberger Domes unter Berücksichtigung der Skulpturen an Querhaus und Westfassade der Kathedrale von Reims* (Ammersbek bei Hamburg, Germany: Verlag an der Flottbek Jensen, 1992).

43. On the smiling angel at Bamberg, see Herbert Beenken, “Der lachende Engel im Bamberger Dom,” *Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst* 59 (1925–26): 96ff.