As early as 1941, with the world in the throes of a war that produced horrors unlike anything witnessed in the modern era, Lucien Febvre challenged historians to reflect upon the emotions, observing that hate, fear, cruelty and love “will tomorrow have finally made our universe into a stinking pit of corpses”. Emotions simply could not be side-lined. The history of emotions is currently one of the most vibrant areas of historical study, with new academic centres (in the UK, USA, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and Australia), journals, conferences and publications stimulating a welter of activity and debate. The aim of the Symposium is to explore the characteristics of this flourishing field and to distinguish some of its major currents. The Italian setting will provide an invaluable opportunity for a seminal exchange of ideas between prominent guest speakers and a selected group of established and younger Italian historians. After all, when the word “emotion” was first printed in English (according to the OED, in 1579), it was as a translation of several Italian words.