years at least the prime cause was the debasement of the coinage. Somerset depended upon debasement to pay the troops needed in the Scottish war. His obsession thus led him into wishful thinking about the causes of inflation. It led him to regard enclosures, sheep farming and men's greed as the major causes of rocketing prices and thus by carrying on with debasement to make an already horrific economic situation even worse.

Dr. Bush's general theory carries conviction, except at one point. He contends that Somerset's fellow councillors agreed with him in principle, disapproving only of his timing and tactics. However, Professor D.E. Hoak's book, *The King's Council in the Reign of Edward VI*, published a few months after Dr. Bush's work appeared, throws very serious doubts upon this contention. Professor Hoak shows quite clearly that Somerset, as far as he could, tried to ignore the council and, as far as he could, governed alone.

With this one exception Dr. Bush's book is to be highly recommended. It is clearly written, without a trace of jargon, interesting to read and makes a major contribution to current reinterpretations of the history of Tudor England.

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Moshe Barasch. *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art*. New York: New York University Press, 1976. Pp. x, 162. \$35.00

Cognizant of the fact that art historical studies of gestures have remained restricted to the highly conventionalized ones, performed as part of religious or political rituals, Professor Barasch has "concentrated on some more emotional, spontaneous gestures" (introduction). He wisely limits himself to those which are expressive of despair and stays mainly in Italy with his choice of examples. To trace their appearance and transformation from classical sources (sarcophagi and illuminated manuscripts) through the fourteenth century, when they become fully articulated, to the fifteenth, is a task for which the author is eminently suited. Well-known for his studies in eastern medieval sculpture and also iconography, he is especially sensitive to the language of body movements and their meaning.

Using the focal medieval theme of the *Last Judgment*, he identifies despairing gestures of sinners, principally performed by arms raised to the face and denoting fear, at times anger. His catalogue consists of throwing hands up and backwards, holding them to the mouth or covering the eyes, biting of the hand or tongue, rending of the mouth, tearing and lacerating of the face, pressing cheeks, and tearing of hair or beard. Acts of self-injury, apparently, were not explicitly depicted before the end of the thirteenth century and reached a climax in the fourteenth, while still persisting in the emotionalized *Last Judgments* of Fra Angelico. Professor Barasch suggests that this situation is largely explainable with the contempt of early medieval churchmen for ostentatious gestures of despair. He contends that Dante's *Inferno* is most influential for their subsequent pictorial form, although descriptions of such gestures are found in hell literature from the apocryphal *Apocalypses* of Peter and Paul to the widely distributed *Saint Patrick's Purgatory* and the *Vision of Tundale*. The latter works are not even considered by the author.

In the second part of his book—not indicated as such—Professor Barasch leaves the fearful and irate inhabitants of hell and studies violent gesticulation in a central theme of late medieval iconography, the *Lamentation*. (The differentiation between it and the *Entombment* is not always clearly made, cf. figs. 42, 44, 45.) Emerging in western art at a time of heightened emotionalism, it provides an excellent vehicle for the depiction of unrestrained gestures, now performed by sacred personages and expressive of mourning and grief. Their meaning has undergone a transformation and the author, to explain this process, turns to some literary sources, chosen to demonstrate parallel phenomena (Ch. VII). Unfortunately, his closest match is a narrative passion poem by the minor Siennese poet Cicerchia and not the most influential and visually descriptive work of popular religious literature, the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*. Yet, it is certainly not fortuitous that the *Meditations* and a large number of Barasch's pictorial examples of grief gestures (figs. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 42 from the church of St. Francis, Assisi) are intimately connected with the Franciscan movement. Obviously, the high emotional pitch of Franciscan piety with its decided emphasis on the devotion to Christ's passion, combined with the tendencies of naturalism in trecento art, stands behind the vehemently expressed gestures of despair in *Lamentations* and related scenes.

The author concludes his study with two chapters, one on sculptural passion scenes by Donatello and his pupils and a short final one on the humanistic tomb, which show "the interaction and blending of classical and late medieval conceptions" (p. 123). They serve nicely to connect the end and beginning of the book but do not add significantly to it.

Although Professor Barasch makes no claim to completeness and traces the history of but one specific group of gestural motifs, limited in time and place, one feels that the slender format of the volume restricted his investigation and, as a result, necessitated choices of pictorial and literary material which will not convince all his readers. Why does he not use *Apocalypse* depictions, frequent in the middle ages and full of situations of despair? If he adduces the *Expulsion from Paradise*, why not other Old Testament scenes? *Terence* manuscripts are treated briefly for just one motif (hair and beard tearing); yet the *Chanson de Roland* or the *Alexander* story might have proved more lucrative for despair gestures. Perhaps Professor Barasch should have dispensed altogether with secular subject matter for the sake of greater cohesion and further elaboration of the religious themes.

Finally some small criticisms. Several gestures seem too narrowly defined: hands held to the mouth can, of course, express many other emotions apart from despair; likewise the rending of the mouth is a familiar gesture of mocking, especially in northern painting. A few examples appear unnecessarily ambivalent (fig. 10) and could have been replaced by more convincing ones. The quality of the illustrations does not always allow the reader to verify the descriptions given by the author; least adequate seem to be some from his private photographic collection (figs. 41, 44, 55). The list of illustrations is slightly inconsistent in the data provided; fig. 7 gives no title of the manuscript, fig. 44 no location. Further, in a divided Berlin the museum should be indicated. A closer dating of the works of art and literature would also have been desirable, as well as greater care in the editing of the book.