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Introduction

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Compassion is a response to suffering, be it before our eyes or imagined at a distance: in seeing an afflicted person, hurt physically or otherwise, we are moved to suffer with the sufferer, whether or not we act on that feeling. It slides on various scales: it can figure the response of an individual or of a nation. This emotional sharing, variously hailed or rebuffed throughout history, provides an extraordinary prism through which to see at similarly multiple perspectives. It is sometimes hailed, even pushed on us, as an anti-politics: we should show *compassion*, voters in both Britain and the United States were told in 2016, for those who voted in ways that displeased us. In this exhortation's figuring of the emotion, compassion knows no borders: it erodes the distance between us. But compassion also provides a way to read or sometimes reinforce social and political fault lines, as 2020's response to the pandemic suggests: in asking us to attend to suffering, it also draws attention to inequities, including our unequal capacities for response.

We write at a time when public capacity for compassion appears to be severely reduced; in writing of emotion in an early modern world riven by crises over religious and racial difference and facing the large-scale migrations that stemmed from them, it is hard not to think of our own response to such scenarios today. Perhaps the study of historical compassion always invites such comparisons: for Lauren Berlant, scholarly work on compassion will always be a history of the present because 'the word *compassion* carries the weight of ongoing debates about the ethics of privilege'.[1] One of compassion's latter-day privileges has been to regard itself as a private and sentimental response. In our contemporary culture compassion is universally and often facilely hailed as a good, a cheap shot for politicians looking to buffer their image but often failing to bring about any substantive relief. In response to that trumpeting of public emotion, scholars have proffered critiques of contemporary compassion, tracing the compassionate vocabularies that veil and sustain immigration's repressions[2] or censuring what

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Lauren Berlant calls the 'reparative compassion' that allows US liberalism to tune out a violently racist history: 'Compassionate liberalism is, at best, a kind of sandpaper on the surface of the racist monument whose structural and economic solidity endures.'[3] Berlant's rejection of compassion recalls that of Hannah Arendt, who thought compassion's attention to the singular case or contingent sufferer made compassion ungeneralisable, and no fit basis for political action: 'Because compassion abolishes the distance, the worldly space between men where political matters, the whole realm of human affairs, are located, it remains, politically speaking, irrelevant and without consequence.'[4]

Early modern texts can throw a different light on these concerns. For seventeenth-century theorists of the emotions, compassion could be surprisingly akin to anger: Nicolas Coeffeteau, for example, defines mercy as 'a Griefe or feeling which we have of another mans miseries, whom we hold worthy of a better fortune' and views it as the flip-side of indignation, which 'proceeds from the discontent we receive to see the wicked flourish'.[5] Compassion's capacity for judgement, that is, partakes of a fiercer quality than that usually imagined. If Arendt worried that compassion, in attending to singular cases, shut down any larger political capacity, many texts from other traditions and times suggest that compassion can multitask: it makes room for *both* an attention to individual pain and a larger reading of social structures. Taking compassion seriously means taking seriously its capacity for change.[6]

Modern views of compassion often draw on eighteenth-century secular views on the social roles of compassion. Eighteenth-century debates about compassion were central to larger considerations of the social sphere, and they rewrote the classical and Christianised vocabulary of the early modern period into a new and seemingly transparent lexicon: the term 'sympathy' takes precedence in this period, referring not only to the sharing of misery but to the larger sharing of any sort of emotional state. Many Enlightenment deliberations considered the emotion's role as a building block in larger relational structures, be they private or public: for David Hume in the *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739–40), the tracing of sympathy's structural relations allows for an appraisal of the ways different selves relate spontaneously to one another; for Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the *Discourse on Inequality* (1755), a spontaneous and natural pity cancels out our human tendency to self-regard, and is thus central to political community (although in his *Letter to D'Alembert* he worried that such an emotion could be displaced by the false emotion we feel at the theatre); in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Adam Smith similarly imagined

compassion at the heart of human society. These eighteenth-century discussions are often drawn on in discussion of compassion today – see, for example, Luc Boltanski's discussion on media and emotion in *Distant Suffering*, which takes its model of compassion from Rousseau – but their secular structures of sympathy look quite different from the forms we trace in this book. Instead of drawing on an Enlightenment intellectual history to understand compassion's power, we suggest that digging into compassion's early modern entanglements provides a different way for thinking through emotion today.

Compassion: A History

Before we turn to these early modern entanglements, we look briefly at compassion's shapes and practices in the classical and medieval periods. Compassion was a contested concept in classical literature and philosophy. In ancient Greece and Rome, the capacity for compassion – principally known by the Greek *eleos* and *oiktos* and the Latin *misericordia* – was often considered necessary to humanity. Across such diverse texts as Homeric epic, Roman tragedy and the treatises of Aristotle, pity appears as a morally right response to another person's suffering, while a lack of pity is a sign of a base character.[7] In Stoic philosophy, however, pity is seen as a dangerous passion considered irrational, painful and as incompatible with justice.

These contrasting judgements on the value of compassion in society are shaped, in part, by a difference in definitions. Aristotelian pity is more objective, cognitive and less overwhelming. Although he describes pity (*eleos*) as 'a kind of pain', Aristotle does not envisage it as involving shared suffering.[8] As David Konstan explains, 'the subject and object of pity do not merge but rather maintain distinct emotions – that of the pitier is precisely pity'. The observer is not a participant in the feelings of the other, but regards the pain of others from the outside.[9] Perhaps influenced by the rhetorical context in which he wrote, Aristotle sees pity as a strongly cognitive emotion. It is preceded by an evaluation: only when the suffering person did nothing to warrant their grief does the observer experience pity. And lastly, Aristotelian pity is kept within bounds because it is initially a self-directed feeling. The person perceiving the suffering needs to recognise him or herself in the sufferer in order to be able to feel pity. The emotion hinges on a similarity: of age, character, disposition, social status and family. For this reason, pity and fear are coupled in Aristotle's description of catharsis: we pity the other's suffering precisely because we fear that such a situation might also befall us.[10] An Aristotelian audience would for

example not experience pity for the suffering of slaves, since they didn't share their social situation.[11]

The Stoics, on the other hand, viewed compassion as a dangerous feeling. They made a fierce moral distinction between *misericordia* and *clementia* (clemency), seeing the former as 'the vice of a petty mind that collapses at the sight of the misfortune of others'. (These distinctions return throughout the history of philosophy: like the Stoics, Kant too made the distinction between a rational and necessary emotion that he called sympathy, and what he saw as a more worrying contagious compassion.) Pity is, in this analysis, a disturbance of the mind, and Seneca gendered it as feminine, considering it a passion typical of old women. Whereas clemency is considered a virtue, *misericordia* is dangerous because it does not involve a cognitive judgement: 'pity looks to the condition, not the reason, whereas clemency assents to reason'.[12] This does not mean the Stoics would not respond to the suffering of another person: they would endeavour to remove the cause of suffering, and could thus be said to act compassionately, but these actions would not spring from a sense of shared suffering. This Stoic resistance to compassion lies firmly behind the many early modern authors who worried about compassion as infection or contagion, and behind the figure of the judicious male compassionate, apportioning emotion reasonably, who so often figures in their texts.

If Greek and Latin philosophers urged emotional distance and decorum, early Christian authors in the fourth to the seventh century reassessed the need for positive emotions such as love and compassion. Susan Wessel argues that the beginnings of 'an affective compassion – of deeply sympathizing with another person's suffering' can be traced to the early Christians.[13] The first uses of the word *compassio* also date from this period.[14] Early Church fathers used the Latin *compassio* to translate the Greek *sympatheia*: both these words literally mean 'feeling or suffering with'.[15] In the Gospels, compassion was central to Jesus' ministry, and figured as an embodied experience often referred to as '*splanchnizomai*', deriving from '*splanchna*', meaning 'guts' or 'entrails'. Even more central than Christ's compassion with the sick and the poor in this reassessment of the moral and ethical function of compassion was the idea that the Son of God became human and suffered in the flesh.[16] Compassion in early Christianity became a mode of mediation between human beings and their God. As Karl Morrison notes, 'in the developing humanist tradition represented by Aristotle and Cicero, fellow feeling had been a human affair, closed at the highest ranges, as Aristotle observed, since gods did not have friends'.[17] In Christian doctrine, compassion and mercy were

central to the relation between the believer and God, through the mediation of Jesus. The notion of Christ's bodily suffering was pivotal for the early development of a theology of compassion. Compassion was not an unproblematic affective response, however. Christian authors inherited Stoic philosophy's rejection of *misericordia*, and struggled to view bodily, affective compassion as a virtue. 'Compassion as an emotional response was rarely, if ever, taken for granted', Wessel writes.[18]

In the high Middle Ages, attention to Christ's bodily suffering was at the heart of the cult of affective piety. Whereas in the eleventh century Christ on the cross was still represented as a triumphant saviour, from the thirteenth century onward a different image of Christ, *Christus patiens*, became dominant: 'naked and disfigured, covered with blood, Christ ha[d] become a vulnerable human victim'.[19] The idea that Christ experienced bodily pain on the cross as a human being was central to late medieval devotion. His kinship with mankind enables both the meditator's compassion with Christ's suffering and Christ's compassion with man.[20] Late medieval piety was therefore characterised by a 'heightened experiential awareness of the humanity of Christ'.[21] Indeed, as Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen writes, 'because Christ's anguish is so physically graphic and outwardly visible, it lends itself so well to sustained meditation, and . . . is open to human participation'.[22] The devotee's concentration on the physical and mental suffering of Christ was intended to kindle an intense experience of compassion.

We may wonder whether this co-suffering with the crucified Christ is the same emotion as Aristotle's *eleos*, since it occurs in such different contexts, involved different practices and shaped a different bodily experience. In meditations, prayers and reading, devotees were encouraged to concentrate on vivid images of Christ's suffering or the grief of his mother, Mary, in order to feel their pain as their own. Recall that Greek *eleos*, especially as we find it in Aristotle's writings, is characterised by an emotional distance between the pitier and the pitied. In affective devotion, in contrast, devotees are urged to enter into the suffering of Christ, to feel it as their own. For Aristotle, the sight of one's son being led to death is not pitiful, but terrible, since a son is so closely related that we would feel as if we were in danger ourselves.[23] Yet in late medieval affective devotion, it is precisely this familial situation that kindles compassion. Gendered feminine, it is predicated on the love of a mother for her son and of a female spouse for her beloved.[24] The drawing of the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' shifts across different historical contexts.

In analysing the social and political roles of compassion, we therefore insist on the significance of such historical differences. The cultural archive of compassion can help us to think beyond modern definitions of pity and compassion. Lauren Berlant's observation, for example, that 'in operation, compassion is a term denoting privilege: the sufferer is *over there*', applies more to Greek *eleos* than to late-medieval compassion. In the following section, we signal how conflicting historical traditions of thinking about and practising compassion come together and are reinterpreted at the time of a volatile mix of Neo-Stoicism and religious Reformation, and suggest how a richer engagement with the early modern period might bring us to a more complex understanding of compassion's operations today.

Early Modern Compassion

In the early modern period, the feeling and practice of compassion were recalibrated in a pressure cooker of social, religious and political changes. The rich philosophical heritage of classical ideas about the role of pity in virtuous citizenship and prudent statesmanship and the embodied practices of late-medieval affective meditation on compassion with the suffering of Christ jostled against new contexts of civil war, colonisation and capitalism. Cities such as London, Paris and Amsterdam expanded into metropoles, absorbing migrants from abroad as well as from the surrounding countryside. Notions of neighbourliness, charity and compassion became elastic as communities changed shape. With the opening of Exchanges in major European cities and an accompanying growth of credit culture, the beginnings of a capitalist economy shaped new economic relations among citizens that were experienced as conflicting with Christian ideals of compassion. Early empirical science gnawed at the foundations of humoral theory and its notion of bodily compassion when it confronted occult notions of sympathy between natural elements. Encounters with others, and exploitation of them, in travel, trade and imperial expansion invited a recalibration of the Christian circle of concern in the exercise of compassion; sometimes, disturbingly, they asked Europeans to imagine their violence against others as a form of compassion in itself.

Compassion's traditional practices and institutional affordances were revoked or reshaped in the context of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, while authors all over Europe sought to reconcile Christian views of compassion with the revival of Stoic philosophy's problematisation of its social and political role. A seventeenth-century English sermon

suggests how compassion ought to be experienced: 'hee must both haue compassion inwardly; and hee must shew it too outwardly: *Affectu*, and *Effectu*; pitying them in his heart, and helping them with his hand. It is not enough for him to see the Blinde, and the Lame, and the Poore; and to be sorry for them: but his compassion must be reall. Hee must lend his eyes to the blinde, to direct them; and he must lend his feet to the lame, to support them; and he must pitie the Poore as a father doth his children, so pitie them, that hee doe something for them.'[25] The sermon's distinction between inner emotion and exterior action is typical of debates in the wake of the Reformation that marked changing understandings of the path to salvation. If the discourse of a fervent inner emotion was in the first decades of the Reformation a peculiarly Protestant domain, Catholic responses to the Reformation later began to trouble that distinction. The growing Counter-Reformation interest in charitable practice, stemming from an understanding of the importance of the works of mercy to salvation, was also accompanied by a new emphasis on discourses of *caritas*. Both Protestants and Catholics argued the tension between abstract considerations of compassion and an exhortation to assistance, but the ways they conceptualised or drew distinctions between 'inner' and 'outer' were often different. Although both Catholics and Protestants drew on a rich textual tradition of compassion – reading the Stoics, Saint Augustine and sometimes even works of medieval piety – they often responded to it in different ways as their understanding of Christian charitable action shifted. Attention to the shifting scales of compassion, pity and fellow-feeling grants us a new look at the changes of the early modern period.

Our cover image, a detail from *Visiting the Sick*, part of the Master of Alkmaar's multipanel painting *The Seven Works of Mercy* (Rijksmuseum, 1504), suggests something of the changing practices of compassion in the context of the Reformation. The painting is assumed to have been commissioned by the regents of the Holy Spirit Almshouse in Alkmaar, who may be represented in the foreground (with Christ among them). An inscription on the frame encouraged charitable donations, promising that the reward for practising compassion with the sick 'will multiply eternally'. During the iconoclasms of the 1560s and 1570s in the Netherlands, the painting was severely damaged. Faces as well as the gifts carried by depicted figures were scraped away with knives, and the painting was later described as 'pitifully' damaged with black paint. With their removal of the proffered gifts, the iconoclasts seem to have targeted specific pre-Reformation practices of compassion, critiquing the outward performance of compassion in charitable donations.[26]

It was not only paintings that were changed. The Reformation brought about an anxious delineation of community, subject to constant redraftings. Where we tend to think of compassion as a warm or embracing emotion, the early modern emotion, drawing on Stoic tradition and anxious about the differences wrought by the Reformation, often stemmed from a series of restrictions. If compassion appeared as what John Staines terms for seventeenth-century England 'one model for public politics', then that understanding of the public was often hemmed in by enclosure or constraint.[27] Early modern compassion was also shaped by an extraordinary degree of confessionally marked violence across Europe. Katherine Ibbett has argued, for instance, that the restrictive form of compassion that marks seventeenth-century writing in France stems from the sectarian rhetoric of the 'pitiful spectacle' that marked the verbal storm accompanying the Wars of Religion, in which compassion was meted out within fiercely confessional structures of desert and worthiness, and those on the other side were deemed uncompassionable.[28] For others, as one disturbing example from France suggests, wartime atrocity brought about only a horrified sense that although onlookers might feel compassion, they could do little to intervene. The military man Henri de Campion, seeing the rape of local women by soldiers, writes that it made him feel 'a pity that I cannot express, but we couldn't do anything to stop it taking place'.[29] The large-scale devastation and suffering of conflict could make the compassionate gesture seem negligible. But, as many examples demonstrate in these chapters, compassion was also lived at the most intimate and neighbourly scale; sometimes it involved surprising reaches to those outside a narrowly defined community, sometimes it managed only to define that community more tightly still.

Early Modern Compassion and the History of Emotions

Our view of early modern compassion as entangled in a web of traditions, practices, sites and communities offers us a fresh way into a number of debates in emotion history. As Susan Matt has written, doing the history of emotions by tracing particular emotion words presents certain difficulties: 'We may have different words or no words for emotions and concepts that earlier cultures thought central, and vice versa. Even within a single society, at a given moment, the meaning of those words and the feelings they describe may be understood differently by different individuals.'[30] If we focus on the early modern English example of the word 'compassion', the complexity of the issue immediately becomes clear. The *Oxford English*

Dictionary stages an account of compassion that tells a particular seventeenth-century story. The word changes meaning in this period: its sense of 'suffering together with another, participation in suffering; fellow-feeling, sympathy' disappears from the dictionary around 1625.[31] In its newer and still current sense, 'compassion' refers not so much to a shared suffering, but to the feeling when a person is moved by the suffering of another, and by the desire to relieve it. Around the same time, the words 'sympathy' and 'fellow-feeling' begin to take flight as cognates of compassion. The noun 'sympathy' is first used to refer to shared suffering in the 1590s.[32] Also around the turn of the seventeenth century, the word 'fellow-feeling' is introduced into the English language to refer to the 'participation in the feelings of others, sympathy'.[33] Thomas Hobbes's writing testifies to the intermixing of these cognates in the period: he writes that 'griefe for the calamity of another is Pitty, and ariseth from the imagination that the like calamity may befall himselfe, and there fore is called compassion, and in the phrase of this present-time a fellow-feeling'.[34] As David Konstan also notes for antiquity, 'the notions conveyed by such terms as compassion, sympathy, pity, forgiveness, clemency, . . . are not neatly bounded, and there are broad areas of overlap and combination'.[35]

Faced with this diversity in definitions and usages of compassion and its cognates, emotion historians have used various strategies to demarcate their source material. In his cross-historical study of sympathy Eric Schliesser took a conceptual approach to his object of study. He chose to define five underlying features 'incorporated in or presupposed by most usages of the term "sympathy"'.[36] Sarah McNamer, on the other hand, wonders if such a cross-cultural approach is possible, as she finds significant differences between ancient Greek *eleos* and late-medieval Christian compassion. 'Does "compassion" have an irreducible essence?' she asks, and therefore 'can these variations even be considered iterations of the same emotion?' Other historians base their selection of material on the use of a particular word. Seth Lobis, for example, focuses on the word 'sympathy' in seventeenth-century England, warning against 'semantic lumping – treating "pity", "compassion" and "sympathy", among other terms, as virtual fungibles – [since it] can yield a false sense of conceptual coherence'.[37] He signals that while sympathy and compassion are close cousins, their histories cannot be collapsed into one.

And yet, early modern authors were not too careful about the distinctions between compassion and its cognates. In early modern dictionaries, compassion, pity, fellow-feeling, commiseration, mercy, ruth/rue, yearning

and other cognates are often defined as each other's synonyms. In his *World of Wordes*, John Florio translates the Italian *compassione* as 'pitie, compassion, or ruthe', *misericordia* as 'mercie, pittie, ruthe, compassion' and *pietà* as 'reuerent loue, naturall affection or zeale, reuerence, remorse, conscience, pitie, ruth, mercie, compassion, commiseration or compunction of anothers harme'.[38] Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae* translates *misericors* as 'Merciful: pitifull: that hath pitie or compassion: that is sorie for an others ill: tender hearted: ful of compassion'.[39] At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Randle Cotgrave renders the French *pitié* as 'pitie, ruth, compassion, commiseration; charitie, kindnese, or tendernesse of disposition; also, grace, clemencie, mercifulnesse'; at its end, also in France, Antoine Furetière sees compassion as a 'Movement of the soul which brings us to have some pity'.[40] These often exhausting cross-references serve to remind us that, in contrast to the seamless definitions laid out by thinkers such as Arendt, early modern compassion (pity, mercy and so on) trips up constantly as it tries to set out semantic similarities and differences. Several contributors will return to the question of distinction and etymology in this volume's exploration of the diversity of compassion.

More broadly, early modern treatises on the passions can also sometimes be seen to question the desire to apply neat distinctions between quickly altering and ephemeral passions. Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Mind in General* seems to mock the very idea of dividing the passions into categories. After introducing Aquinas' model of eleven passions (which include love, fear and sadness, but not compassion), he writes: 'If every diversity or change we finde in passions, were a sufficient reason to encrease their number, without doubt I could adde welnie eleven more; as, Mercy, Shamefastnesse, Excandescencie, Envy, Emulation, Anxitie, Confidence, Slouthfulnesse, Zelotypia, Exanimation, Iactation or Boasting, with many more.'[41] Wright's indeterminacy points to the precarious status of compassion: in many texts, compassion appears less like the early modern understanding of a passion that buffets the body, and something more like a virtue drawing on a set of classical exemplars; in still others, it looks more like a willed social practice. Where scholars often draw overly neatly on passion theorists to establish a norm for early modern emotional terms, this volume seeks to explore the confusion and diversity of compassion.

Early modern compassion was shaped by a broad range of different situated practices in early modern Europe. The present volume is neither a cross-historical exploration of one concept, nor a study of one emotion

word in a specific historical setting and language. The chapters in this book negotiate different languages, different religious contexts and different practices of compassion. Our focus is on England, but we also reach to its European neighbours, and to its reflections on its imperial engagements; in placing a tradition usually considered in isolation in conversation with other places, we want to allow for a reflection on compassion's shared traditions, derived from a common if contested classical and Christian heritage, as well as its local practices and inflections. The authors in this volume take an equally broad approach to their sources. Rather than focusing on the use of the word 'compassion' and excluding its interrelations with sympathy, mercy, and other related concepts, they take an inclusive approach. Let us describe this as a compassionate methodology: overly strict definitions or concepts elide often productive entanglements and complexities. If compassion, in its ideal form, reaches across differences to form a new understanding, we hope that our clustering of diverse approaches to compassion's multiple forms can do the same.

Compassion in Practice

Our contributors bring the complex relations between different concepts of compassion into focus by tracing the kinds of words used in their source texts, in English, French, Spanish or Polish, and the contexts in which these words are used. Compassion's history is inseparable from the history of translation. Béatrice Delaurenti has shown, for example, that medieval medical texts in dialogue with Aristotle chose the term *compassio* instead of *sympathia* to figure the contagious bodily response of one being to the movements of another (ranging from the feeling of emotion for a sufferer to the need to urinate in seeing someone else do so). In Delaurenti's reading, scholastic inquiry thus bundled together the vocabulary of antiquity with later Christian overtones.[42] Compassion, which involves a reading and response of another's pain, also compels a careful reading and interpretation of the many forms of other traditions and texts that inhabit its vocabularies. Our authors therefore note not only the interrelations and overlaps between the various cognates for compassion, but also the ways in which compassion relates to other passions, and how other emotions can transition into or out of compassion. They also look beyond words, bringing into focus the rituals and practices, spaces and buildings, images and songs used in the evocation and experience of early modern compassion. For compassion hovers between a textual invocation and a lived practice, and the relation between the two was central to contentious

debates. In some of the material covered in this volume, compassion is a set formula, borrowed from Aristotle or from the Bible, and recycled into a slew of different texts; in others, compassion appears as a spontaneous reaction to an event, as a gesture arising where least expected. This variance suggests something of the slipperiness of addressing such an ephemeral and yet erudite phenomenon as compassion. On the one hand, we tackle this project through textual traditions, and we take seriously the notion that these textual instances do something in the world. Yet we also try to glimpse, amidst the compassionate lexicon, something closer to a phenomenological experience of emotion: in gestures, in glances, in music, in audience response.

Much of today's critical impatience with compassion is predicated on its failure to follow through on its rhetoric, its incapacity to practice as it preaches. Yet early modern compassion was not merely an erudite textual tradition: it was also a set of practices that took on differing importance in different social and religious groups. These practices were impacted by and in turn shaped textual representations of compassion. The chapters in this volume analyse a broad range of sources to access the interplay between texts and practice in the early modern period. Some of our authors draw on prescriptive texts, such as Stoic philosophy, sermons or Counter-Reformation advice on self-compassion; others use literary texts as a source for discovering common emotional practices and to see how these texts shaped new emotional styles and vocabularies. Legal and administrative documents, too, can provide insight into practices of compassion: one of the chapters uses an archive of alms petitions to chart the ways compassion was exercised in early modern London. These petitions, like sermons, plays and literary texts, are not only useful to trace various discourses of compassion that circulated and conflicted in the period; they are also themselves what Monique Scheer has called emotional practices: 'habits, rituals and everyday pastimes that aid us in achieving a certain emotional state'.[43] As Bruce Smith notes in this volume, the pulpit and the theatre were probably two of the most important spaces for the kindling of compassion. Textual traces of sermons and plays provide insight into early modern emotions-as-practice. The affective impact of sermons, poems, petitions and plays thus blurs the dividing line between discourse and practice, between prescriptive and descriptive, since words have a performative effect: to extend Scheer's work to literary concerns, these are texts-as-practice.

In the field of the history of emotions, literary texts are sometimes regarded with a touch of distrust: cultural historians worry that poets

and playwrights do not represent actual historical emotions, but only fictional feelings.[44] Literary texts are considered to be overly determined by genre characteristics and rhetorical traditions, and as such not trustworthy as sources for finding historical truth. Erin Sullivan and Marie Louise Herzfeld-Schild note that therefore 'in-depth studies of the arts . . . have played a relatively muted role in the shaping of the history of emotions as a field'.[45] And yet, literary texts provide unique access to historical experiences of the emotions. Not only do these plays represent emotions at work, they also elicit an emotional response in their audiences. The complexity and performativity of literary texts make them especially fit sources for the exploration of the entanglements of compassion in the early modern period. Precisely because literature does not simply reflect existing vocabularies, theories and emotion scripts, but actively shapes them, it should be an integral part of the field of the history of emotions. In this volume, we take seriously the idea that literary topoi might, despite their familiarity, speak from and shape deeply felt emotion.

Structuring Compassion

Since compassion involves a confrontation across similarity and difference, we have organised our contributors into sectional pairs. Their paired descriptions of and responses to seven key aspects of early modern compassion sometimes bring out intellectual sympathies, and on other occasions suggest disagreement. They suggest the breadth of material encompassed by the exploration of compassion, as well as its capacity for a fine-grained response to the otherness of the past.

Theorising

Our first pairing addresses the theories of compassion which punctuated both secular and religious writing of the period. In 'The Ethics of Compassion in Early Modern England', Bruce Smith takes the conflict between Stoic and Christian views of compassion as his starting point for an exploration of the ethics of compassion in early modern culture. Taking up four aspects of ethics – character, culture, place and representation – he asks how they help in understanding the workings of compassion in the culture of early modern England. Smith's vision of compassion, which he relates to virtue theory rather than passion, allows for the emotion's generous relation to the other. In contrast, in 'The Compassionate Self

of the Catholic Reformation' Katherine Ibbett worries over compassion's restrictions and its inwardness. Suggesting that the Stoic denial of the self was rewritten in some discourses of the Counter-Reformation, Ibbett explores how three writers of the Continental Catholic Reformation – François de Sales, Roberto Bellarmino and Pierre Le Moyne – understand compassion not only as a response to the suffering of the other, but also as an exercise of the will and a way to address the significance of the self. In these French and Italian writers, the engaged ethical compassion traced by Smith looks something more like a sociable civility.

Consoling

Our second pairing moves from theory to more practical questions, seen not at the scale of generalities sketched by the theorists but pitched to individuals responding to a particular suffering, be it emotional or physical. In '"Hee Left Them Not Comfortlesse by the Way": Grief and Compassion in Early Modern English Consolatory Culture', Paula Barros explores the changing role of compassion in the consolation of the bereaved in the early modern period. She shows how the sixteenth-century humanist tradition of consolation, which despite its Stoic rigor showed a real warmth of fellow-feeling, was perceived to be waning in the late sixteenth century. In this context, she reads Spenser's *Daphnaïda* as a defence of the humanist consolatory ethos. Barros demonstrates that the history of consolation cannot be understood as a linear progression towards a secularised understanding of sorrow and compassion, since early seventeenth-century sermons resist this linear movement and develop an ethics of shared vulnerability grounded in medieval traditions of spiritual mourning. Alongside Barros, Stephen Pender explores the role of compassion in doctor-patient relationships and conceptions of the ideal physician in 'Friendship, Counsel and Compassion in Early Modern Medical Thought'. Like Barros, Pender's chapter pushes against standard chronologies, here seeking to overturn the account of the physician's role seen in the standard history of medicine. Exploring the role of affective relations between patients and their doctors in philosophical, theological, medical and popular texts, he argues that compassion was central in physicians' roles of counsel and friendship in bedside practice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Taken together, these chapters suggest that the professionalisation of affect traced by sociologists like Arlie Hochschild has deep roots in a humanist assessment of emotion.[46]

Exhorting

Compassion is, of course, a response to another other person or being. But it can also be an exhortation to the other to respond to still another person. Our third pairing turns to the ways in which writers and orators sought to bring about compassion in other hearts, focusing on the theatrical draw of sermons. In '"Compassion and Mercie Draw Teares from the Godlyfull Often": The Rhetoric of Sympathy in the Early Modern Sermon', Richard Meek traces the transition in the meaning of the word 'sympathy' from a generalised sense of correspondence to a transferral of woe in late sixteenth-century sermons as well as in the theatre. Exploring the tensions between sympathy as a natural and automatic response, yet at the same time one that needs to be actively encouraged in sermons, he shows how the term is initially used by preachers to enforce a sense of a Christian body in which all members hurt if one part of the body experiences pain. Later sermons begin to use 'sympathy' as an imaginative, rather than a bodily, engagement with the other, paradoxically accompanied by a greater awareness of the separateness of individuals. Meek traces this treatment of the concept also in dramatic texts from the late sixteenth century, such as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and his contribution to *Sir Thomas More.* Alongside Meek, in 'Mollified Hearts and Enlarged Bowels: Practising Compassion in Reformation England', Kristine Steenbergh views sermons from the perspective of practice theory, which takes as its starting point that emotions are engrained into body and mind through repeated practice. In early seventeenth-century sermons, the bowels of compassion are seen as the seat of fellow-feeling. These bowels need to be soft, tender and moist to enable them to enlarge and stretch towards the suffering other. Steenbergh argues that early seventeenth-century Protestant clergymen on the one hand laud the Reformation's eradication of late-medieval practices of compassion, but on the other hand can be seen to struggle to shape new practices for keeping the bowels of mercy soft and lithe. In both chapters, the Christian body, be it figurative or literal, is reworked through the exhortation of compassion.

Performing

The performance of the sermon model shifts sites in our fourth pairing, which turns its attention to the representation of compassion on stage. This section also takes us far from the Western European familiarities that dominate early modern scholarship. In 'Civic Liberties and Community

Compassion: The Jesuit Drama of Poland-Lithuania', Clarinda E. Calma and Jolanta Rzegocka analyse how compassion functions in the plays of Jesuit colleges in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multilingual context of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Although the Jesuits were invited to Poland-Lithuania by the Catholic church authorities to strengthen the Counter-Reformation, their school plays do not map the limits of compassion onto religious fault lines. The objects of compassion in the school plays shift according to political allegiances as well as religious principles, responding to both Protestantism and Islam with a supple sense of political contingency. Calma and Rzegocka show how a familiarly Aristotelian understanding of compassion could be adapted for local circumstances. In 'Compassion, Contingency and Conversion in James Shirley's *The Sisters*', Alison Searle returns us to the English stage, analysing the formal procedures connected to compassion in James Shirley's *The Sisters* (1642), and focusing on its objects, performance, limits and role in policing community boundaries in the early modern Protestant state. Viewing compassion from the perspective of performance, she argues that compassion is figured in the play as inherently theatrical and politically contagious. It both responded to and shaped local political circumstances; indeed, she suggests, the compassion elicited by the theatre helped to pave the way for political revolution in the 1640s.

Responding

How did early moderns account for these performances which might push them to pity? Our fifth pairing examines the understanding of spectatorship and audience response elucidated not just in dramatic theory but also in canonical Shakespearean stagings of the response to suffering. In 'Mountainish Inhumanity in Illyria: Compassion in *Twelfth Night* as Social Luxury and Political Duty', Elisabetta Tarantino analyses the relations between compassion and community in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Starting from the question of whether Malvolio evokes audience compassion, she argues that even if the plot of the play focuses on the gulling of Malvolio, the play's semantic and compositional strategies undermine the idea of 'us' versus 'the other' as a discriminant for social and political action, thereby recommending compassion as a politically provident attitude. Eric Langley draws out the philosophical significance of this response to spectacles of suffering in 'Standing on a Beach: Shakespeare and the Sympathetic Imagination'. He explores how early modern writers revisit Lucretius' piteous spectacle of an observed shipwreck as the occasion for

either sympathetic compassion or antipathetic dispassion. This topos provided occasion not only for the praise of sympathetic vulnerability, but also for a reassessment of the cost of emotional interaction. Langley's sensitive exploration of the oscillation between proximity and distance, contagion and isolation, tender sensibility and dispassionate rationality in early modern responses to Lucretius' commonplace, carefully traces not only Shakespeare's ethics but also his poetics of compassion.

Giving

Our sixth pairing takes up the practices of compassion, derived from medieval charitable traditions, and considers their relation to more abstract notions of fellow-feeling that emerge after the Reformation. In '"To Feel What Wretches Feel": Reformation and the Re-naming of English Compassion', Toria Johnson argues that the concept of compassion changed during the Reformation, moving away from the legacy of medieval charity towards concepts of interpersonal connection such as pity, fellowship and compassion. She reads the pre-Reformation morality play *Everyman* and Shakespeare's *King Lear* side by side to reveal this shift, and shows that changing discourses of compassion also change the way compassion is perceived by the characters in the plays. Alongside Johnson, Rebecca Tomlin takes up the question of the changes wrought by the Reformation in more practical questions of almsgiving. In 'Alms Petitions and Compassion in Sixteenth-Century London', Tomlin focuses on a specific practice of begging in sixteenth-century London, that of beggars equipped with alms petitions. Drawing on an archive of circa three hundred alms petitions at London's St Botolph's Church, she argues that these petitions moved parishioners to become donors not by emotive descriptions of their suffering, but by focusing on the economic consequences of disasters. In Tomlin's assessment, compassion for the other is also a form of insurance for the self.

Racialising

We investigate compassion's sharp assessments further in our final and most far-ranging pairing. How did compassion's gestures respond to, reach across or reify racial difference? In 'Pity and Empire in the *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1552)', Matthew Goldmark describes the place of compassion in the work of the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas, suggesting how affect's deployments helped

organise the hierarchical differences necessary to imperial projects. Goldmark's chapter carves out a long genealogy for the imperial affect discussed by scholars of later periods. Likewise, in '"Our Black Hero": Compassion and Friendship for the Other in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*', John Staines considers compassion's restrictions and reach at a moment when a newly enlarged world put pressure on older models of fellow-feeling. Staines asks what room for difference, and especially racial difference, could be made within languages of humanity and friendship. Although Staines traces the failure of compassion in Behn's text, he shows too how by the eighteenth century it became a key text for abolitionists. Like Goldmark, Staines points to how the early modern period's understanding of affective relations to difference have come to shape our post-imperial shrinking world. We want to acknowledge that our field has been marked by a failure to attend to questions of racial identity in the early modern period and by a concomitant failure to build racial equality in the academy. In placing the work of Goldmark and Staines at the end of our volume's conversations, we suggest that a compassionate early modernism must take the history of race and of the violence wrought upon Black bodies seriously.

Early modern compassion, we have noted, marks a distinctive stand in the history of emotion's grappling with social division. It is not merely a preamble to the great Enlightenment projects of secular universalism that are usually associated with a later language of sympathy; we lose something when we draw on a genealogy that skips from the Stoics to Adam Smith. Goldmark's and Staines's gestures to later entanglements suggest how early modern compassion's distinctiveness provides us a painful purchase on our own times. They look not to the eighteenth century of philosophical abstractions, but to the global injustices of slavery and imperialism that underwrite our inequities today. Where Enlightenment thought pushed such questions aside to focus on the role of compassion in what Smith called the 'immense machine' of human society, early modern compassion draws attention to what makes that machine tick: in wrestling with the violence of religious and racial difference, it reveals the ghost in the affective machine of our own modernity.

In the final chapter, 'Contemporary Compassions: Interrelating in the Anthropocene,' Kristine Steenbergh explores how this volume's analyses of early modern forms of compassion might feed into the current pressing need to reshape more-than-human interrelations. The chapters in this volume trace the Reformation as a fault line in early modern concepts and practices of compassion. Our recent realisation of humanity's

destructive impact on the planet similarly invites a radical rethinking of concepts and practices of witnessing and suffering-with. The final chapter connects the volume's exploration of early modern compassion to the work of Donna Haraway, Deborah Bird Rose and Thom van Dooren, and finds that the ecological crisis stimulates a search for new practices of compassion evoking similar questions of belonging and exclusion, identity and alterity, and inflecting them in new ways.

Notes

1 Lauren Berlant, 'Introduction: Compassion (and Withholding)' in Lauren Berlant (ed.), *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 1.
2 Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Miriam Ticktin, *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
3 Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. xii; 6.
4 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2006), p. 76.
5 Nicolas Coeffeteau, 'Of Mercy and Indignation' in *A Table of Humane Passions: With Their Causes and Effects* (London, 1621), pp. 357 and 375.
6 On the unorthodox effects of compassion, see also Heather James, 'Dido's Ear: Tragedy and the Politics of Response', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 52:3 (2001), 360–82.
7 David Konstan, *Pity Transformed* (London: Duckworth, 2001), pp. 125–26.
8 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 2.8.2, quoted in Konstan, *Pity Transformed*, p. 34.
9 Konstan, *Pity Transformed*, p. 60. But see Fred C. Alford, 'Greek Tragedy and Civilization: The Cultivation of Pity', *Political Research Quarterly*, 46:2 (1993), 259–80, for the argument that Aristotle misinterpreted the Greek tragedians' use of *eleos* and *oiktos*.
10 Martha Nussbaum, 'Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency: Plato and Aristotle on Fear and Pity' in Amélie Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* (Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 274.
11 See also Konstan, *Pity Transformed*, p. 18.
12 David Konstan, 'Senecan Emotions' in Shadi Bartsch and Alessandro Schiesaro (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Seneca* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 180.
13 Susan Wessel, *Passion and Compassion in Early Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 24.
14 Early Christians used *misericordia, compassio* and *caritas* in the Latin, and *splanchnon, eleos, sympatheia, oiktos* and *agapē* in the Greek (Wessel, *Passion*

and Compassion, p. 22). The Greek word *sumpatheia* is relatively rare in the vocabulary of the classical period, where it was used to refer to a sense of physical interrelatedness. In later Greek, particularly among Christian writers, the term comes to supplement pity (*eleos*). Konstan suggests that this may in part have happened because *eleos* 'had acquired something of the sense of "mercy" (it is often translated as such) and lost some of the quality of an emotion' in this period. Konstan, 'Pity, Compassion, and Forgiveness' in Michael Ure and Mervyn Frost (eds.), *The Politics of Compassion* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 181.

15 Konstan notes that it has been suggested that *compassio* was coined as a replacement for the older Latin term *misericordia*, which had shifted in meaning from 'feeling with' to 'charity' or 'charitable works' (*Pity Transformed*, p. 106).

16 Wessel, *Passion and Compassion*, p. 17.

17 Karl Morrison, 'Framing the Subject: Humanity and the Wounds of Love', in Karl F. Morrison and Rudolph M. Bell (eds.), *Studies on Medieval Empathies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), p. 9.

18 Wessel, *Passion and Compassion*, p. 2.

19 Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 2.

20 See also Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 50.

21 Steven E. Plank, 'Wrapped All in Woe: Passion Music in Late-Medieval England', in A. A. MacDonald, Bernhard Ridderbos and R. M. Schlusemann (eds.), *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), p. 94.

22 Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen, *Pain and Compassion in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2012), p. 63.

23 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1386a.

24 McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, pp. 10 and 40. For a comparison between classical and medieval compassion, see also Ulrich Berton, *Eleos und Compassio: Mitleid im antiken und mittelalterlichen Theater* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2016).

25 Robert Sanderson, *Ten Sermons Preached* (London, 1627), pp. 162–63.

26 Master of Alkmaar, *Panel of a Polyptych with the Seven Works of Charity: Visiting the Sick*, 1504 (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, SK-A-2815-6). See J. P. Filedt Kok, 'Master of Alkmaar, Polyptych with the Seven Works of Charity, 1504', in J. P. Filedt Kok (ed.), *Early Netherlandish Paintings*, online coll. cat. Amsterdam 2008: hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.9048.

27 John Staines, 'Compassion in the Public Sphere of Milton and King Charles', in Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe and Mary Floyd-Wilson (eds.), *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 92.

28 Katherine Ibbett, *Compassion's Edge: Fellow-Feeling and Its Limits in Early Modern France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

29 Henri de Campion, *Mémoires de Henri de Campion*, ed. Marc Fumaroli (Paris: Mercure de France, 1990), p. 87.

30 Susan J. Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of the Emotions' in Peter N. Stearns and Susan J. Matt (eds.), *Doing Emotions History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), pp. 43–44.

31 Interestingly, the majority of examples for this definition concern an attraction between two bodily parts, which was described as 'sympathy' from 1579 onwards. The *OED* signals that the entry has not yet been fully updated since its first publication in 1891.

32 The *OED*'s first example is from 1600. For the argument that this sense of sympathy was used earlier, see Chapter 5 by Richard Meek in this volume.

33 *OED*, 'fellow-feeling, *n*.', 1. The *OED* dates the first appearance of the word to 1604; a search in Early English Books Online (EEBO) renders earlier examples from 1578 onwards.

34 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 43.

35 Konstan, 'Pity, Compassion, and Forgiveness', p. 179.

36 Eric Schliesser (ed.), *Sympathy: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 7.

37 Seth Lobis, *The Virtue of Sympathy: Magic, Philosophy, and Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 5.

38 John Florio, *A Worlde of Wordes, or Most Copious, and Exact Dictionarie in Italian and English* (1598), pp. 78, 228 and 277.

39 Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae* (1565), sig. GGgg3r.

40 Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionary of the French and English Tongues* (1611), sig. Ppp6r; Antoine Furetière, *Dictionaire universel*. 2 vols. (La Haye et Rotterdam: Leers, 1690), s.v. 'compassion.'

41 Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1604), sig. C5v.

42 Béatrice Delaurenti, *La contagion des émotions. Compassio, une énigme médiévale* (Paris: Garnier, 2016), pp. 24–25.

43 Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory*, 51:2 (2012), 209.

44 See also Sarah McNamer, 'Feeling' in Paul Strohm (ed.), *Middle English* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 245.

45 Erin Sullivan and Marie Louise Herzfeld-Schild, 'Introduction: Emotion, History and the Arts', *Cultural History* 7:2 (2018), 120.

46 Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).