

Compassion's Edge: Fellow-Feeling and Its Limits in Early Modern France.
Katherine Ibbett.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. 296 pp. \$79.95.

Scholarship on emotions, feelings, and sentiments has lately been an important component of early modern studies. Ibbett's book does much more than inscribe itself in this trend; it is probably one of the most impressive pieces of scholarship recently produced on the subject. Indeed, *Compassion's Edge* is a precious work. The author examines how compassion, an emotional state that is not often studied and analyzed, should be considered an essential component of the culture of the period, and a crucial factor in any study of the period: "I restore the severe face of early modern compassion, and suggest what we lose if we turn away from its historical significance" (1). It is important throughout her analysis, however, to understand that compassion was not, most of the time, a benevolent feeling; she explains in her epilogue that "the language of compassion tends instead to point to our failure to live well together, or to let others live well" (223).

Ibbett's work is an enthralling foray into the many facets of compassion. Her analysis is powerful, intelligent, and deeply erudite. What is striking is the cultural importance of her project. From Foucault to Butler to the Frankfurt School, her use of theory profoundly anchors her analysis in contemporary theoretical questions. The scope of her research—the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—gives the reader a better understanding of the historical origins of the idea of compassion (from the ashes and the trauma of the French wars of religion). Ibbett thus creates a narrative of its inclusion in the sociocultural climate of the period. Her methodology combines literary, historical, cultural, and societal perspectives. Genre, periodization, and gender are a few of the topics that she addresses in her introduction, which launches the reader into the core of her book.

Ibbett's chapters address both canonical texts and lesser-known ones; her six chapters are extremely complementary and shape the evolution of her narrative. Chapter 1, "Pitiful Sights: Reading the Wars of Religion," examines readings and retellings of the pity of the Wars of Religion, notably through an analysis of Ronsard and Agrippa d'Aubigné. Chapter 2, "The Compassion Machine: Theories of Fellow-Feeling, 1570–1692," examines how pity was theorized in the early modern period, and how it was set into words for all to understand. In chapter 3, "Caritas, Compassion, and Religious Difference," Ibbett tackles the importance of religious difference in conceptions of compassion—mainly of *caritas*—with particularly impressive readings of Moïse Amyraut and Pierre Jurieu. Chapter 4, "Pitiful States: Marital Miscompassion and the Historical Novel," focuses on *La Princesse de Montpensier*, *La Comtesse de Tende*, and *La Princesse de Clèves*. Ibbett studies the misplaced compassion displayed in these works and its implication in the national representation of a post-Edict of Nantes France. Chapter 5, "Affective Absolutism and the Problem of Religious Difference," continues the

reflection that she started in chapter 3; she focuses in this chapter on compassion concerning the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and analyzes how Protestants reacted to this momentous event. Chapter 6, entitled “Compassionate Labor in Seventeenth-Century Montreal,” is the most intriguing and exciting chapter in this fantastic book. Here, Ibbett examines texts written to and by women of the Hôtel Dieu hospital in seventeenth-century Montreal. She notably focuses on how the idea of compassion was understood and disseminated by the nuns who took care of these women. Marie Morin’s *Histoire simple et véritable*, one of the pieces she analyzes in this chapter, is a fantastic testimony, which she masterfully dissects.

Katherine Ibbett’s book is bound to become one of the most critical sources of scholarship on compassion. It will become a classic, and anyone working on the subject will have to read it in order to be considered a specialist. *Compassion’s Edge* will grow in the years to come as a great classic of cultural studies.

Charles-Louis Morand Métivier, *University of Vermont*
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Pierre de L’Estoile and His World in the Wars of Religion. Tom Hamilton.

The Past and Present Book Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xviii + 237 pp. \$100.

The book is based on Tom Hamilton’s University of Oxford doctoral dissertation. It deals with accounts written by the amateur historian Pierre L’Estoile (1546–1611), who is best known for his depiction of life in Paris during the French Wars of Religion. L’Estoile’s preserved material consists of several diaries/journals, treatises, and miscellaneous writings that include both original pieces and copied material from other sources. While some were previously published, others are still not easily accessible. The author sets two goals: the first is to reassess L’Estoile’s role as collector of histories in the historiography of the Wars of Religion. The second goal is to reconstruct L’Estoile’s own personal world to discover the prism through which he, as a historian, viewed contemporary events. The underlying idea is that this reassessment will reshape researchers’ understanding of period. The book is divided into an introduction, a conclusion, and six chapters. Drawing on a large number of primary sources, which include not only those written by L’Estoile but also notary records, as well as secondary literature, Hamilton creates a well-researched study that deals with the personal collection of L’Estoile, which included books and other artifacts (chapter 1); a detailed account of the Palais de Justice where L’Estoile worked during his productive years (chapter 2); discussion of his personal life (chapter 3); and a discussion of three historical periods on which corresponding historical pieces were written by L’Estoile, but never published