Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme

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

George Hoffmann

Volume 41, numéro 3, été 2018

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1085708ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v41i3.31608

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)
2293-7374 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Hoffmann, G. (2018). Compte rendu de [Ibbett, Katherine. Compassion's Edge: Fellow-Feeling and Its Limits in Early Modern France]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, *41*(3), 232–234. https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v41i3.31608

that would be dominant for nearly two hundred years. The establishment of Newton as a great figure in the history of science coincided with the rise of Newton as an important political figure in London. The last chapter of the work treats Newton's final years (1696–1727). The publication of his *Principia* made Newton an international figure as well as a public figure. He continued to debate scientific questions, for example, about the movement of the moon and the establishment of longitude, and he continued to refine his mathematics and views about God, which were based on revisions of his *Principia*. Newton also began investigating and writing a history of human civilization, which he hoped would follow various insights he had about nature.

Guicciardini's solid biography of Newton succeeds in making Newton's complex, sometimes contradictory life, accessible to the reader. The author shows not only the traditional philosopher and natural scientist but also the metaphysician, theologian, public figure, alchemist, and historian.

ANTONIO CALCAGNO
King's University College at Western University

Ibbett, Katherine.
Compassion's Edge: Fellow-Feeling and Its Limits in Early Modern France.
Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. Pp. 296. ISBN 978-0-8122-4970-5 (hardcover) US$79.95.

France's disastrous Wars of Religion loom over historical and literary scholarship not only of the sixteenth century but also, increasingly, of the seventeenth. Like Andrea Frisch's *Forgetting Differences* (2015), *Compassion's Edge* scrutinizes the wars' aftershocks and the pervasive trauma they bequeathed to an era that had not recovered so completely as it would have liked. As does the earlier study, Ibbett's book develops a reflection on spectatorship: what does it mean to observe another's suffering and do nothing? Compassion creates a response without a relationship and kindly feeling without friendship—at least until Corneille. Yet this distance, Ibbett argues, also constructs a potent space of reflection and imagination about others.

Insofar as it can be related to toleration, compassion counts as a political emotion. Whereas toleration emphasizes one's own suffering in putting up with

people different from oneself, compassion putatively emphasizes the suffering in those others. Although Ibbett quickly recalls Lynn Festa's scathing analysis of compassion as "a system which usurps the voices of sufferers to insist upon 'the humanity of the feeling subject'" (24), she is interested in the positive potential of compassion as it slowly becomes differentiated throughout the seventeenth century from a "weaker" self-regarding pity.

Ibbett's reading proves both eclectic and thorough, and she introduces her reader thoughtfully and efficiently to a vast range of thinking about compassion in the opening pages. As she acknowledges, compassion was often used interchangeably for pity, sympathy, sensitivity, commiseration, tenderness, and various further shades of fellow feeling. Her introduction skilfully unknots these past and present confusions where possible, but she prefers to trace the productive slippages of the term. Originally a devotional sentiment identified with women, compassion shifted to a masculine register during the Wars of Religion, Ibbett argues, through a chorus of calls to read "with feeling" images, faces, and textual accounts of various calamities.

While Ibbett eschews overly easy justifications of literature that claim reading serves primarily to induce empathy, she nonetheless explores how early modern France expanded the narrow Aristotelian focus on the evacuation of pity into a broader spectrum of fellow feeling. The inflection point comes with the Protestants' elevation of pity—at the spectacle of their own persecution—into a mode of piety. This confessional context returns in force with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in which the invocation of compassion in thinking about religious difference allowed, among some observers, for a new, more robust conception of the sentiment to suggest a richer practice of toleration as understanding rather than mere forbearance.

One of the more fascinating strands that Ibbett teases out of her kaleidoscope of materials involves the centrality of Vergil's Dido. From humanist schoolboys learning sympathetic identification by reciting lines of Latin poetry to Pierre Nicole's careful ruminations on the figure's ability to inspire charity through the imagination, Dido emerges as a flashpoint for thinking about the creative uses of fellow feeling that escape the classical stigmatization reducing all pity to self-pity. Dido carries forth the old gendered version of pity as feminine, reconfigured as an exercise in self-knowledge through knowledge of others. This gendering of compassion returns in a brilliantly counter-intuitive reading of how *The Princess of Clèves* resonated with the politics of compassion

that emerged from the Wars of Religion, suspending actors in an intense moment of mutual fellow feeling, but one that disjoined them and exerted little consequence upon subsequent events.

Yet, a capacity to feel the same emotion as others (rather than, condescendingly, feeling an emotion *toward* them) marks the major French departure from Greek thinking about *catharsis*, according to Ibbett. The potential of emotion to be imitated and, eventually perhaps, interiorized underpinned missionaries' strategies for the conversion of Amerindians. Ibbett studies the unexpected entailments of this policy in Montreal among the hospital nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu. Here, in an institutional setting, in response to dire circumstances and informed by the *Hospitalière* rule, compassion nevertheless took on warmth and community. Ibbett plumbs Jesuits' writings for fascinating reflections on near versus far objects of compassion centuries before Peter Singer popularized the issue in the contemporary philosophy of ethics: should one privilege proximity in awarding one's charity? Conversely, is it right to ignore the needs of one's intimates in favour of distant causes? She explores seventeenth-century responses to these questions for what they tell about the ineluctability of setting boundaries around one's compassion, what she cleverly calls "a gerrymandering of emotional communities" (116).

Although she shuns teleological histories of the emotion, Ibbett clearly is searching for the rise of a type of compassion that does not erase difference but rather sensitizes us to it. She does not spare her criticism for misuses of the sentiment, noting that talk of compassion "has often surrounded the dismantling of state response to social difference" (8). One of this study's most compelling attributes lies in the sureness with which Ibbett relates the early modern to the "late" modern, weaving in and out of contemporary theory and Old Regime France, orienting each to illuminate the other. Compassion proves central to histories of affect because it constitutionally invokes intersubjective feeling. Finally, we possess a thorough and thought-provoking pre-modern treatment of the subject.

GEORGE HOFFMANN
University of Michigan