CHAPTER 1

The Ethics of Compassion in Early Modern England

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In today's terms at least, compassion would seem to be unequivocally A Good Thing. Does compassion *need* ethical investigation? Cicero, for one, answers in the affirmative. Here is what his chief spokesman M— says in John Dolman's 1561 translation of *Tusculan Disputations*:

> So as pity is a grief conceived of other men's adversity, so is envy a sorrow, for other men's prosperity. Whosoever therefore is subject to pity, he is also sometimes troubled with envy. But to envy is no point of a wise man: wherefore neither to pity.[1]

Any such *perturbation* – 'a motion contrary to reason, and against the nature of the mind' (sig. W5) – should be avoided by a wise man. Cicero's M— (is that Marcus Tullius Cicero himself? *Magister*, Master?) distances himself somewhat from such 'crooked conclusions' by dogmatic Stoic philosophers like Zeno, even as he commends the way these philosophers ground their arguments 'upon the stoutest and manliest opinion' (sigs. O2v–O3). Cicero's framing of the question is focused not on the object of pity, but on the person who feels pity, in the words of Katherine Ibbett in the chapter that succeeds this one, 'on the appropriateness of the self who metes out such an affective response'. What Cicero most definitely endorses in these passages from *Tusculan Disputations* is the need to *question* pity, envy and 'motions' in general. The full title of Cicero's dialogue in Erasmus's edition, printed and reprinted six times in London from 1574 to 1636, is *Quaestiones Tusculanae*, translated by Dolman as *Those five questions, which Mark Tully Cicero, disputed in his manor of Tusculanum*. Cicero's question-asking is an exercise in ethics.

For sixteenth- and seventeenth-century readers, Cicero's question-asking was even more urgent, given the way Stoic advice on pity runs absolutely counter to the examples of Christ's acts of compassion in the New Testament. The gospel of Mark, chapter six, records how Christ and his disciples were seeking rest by taking a ship to a deserted place when

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Christ caught sight of the crowds waiting for him on shore. 'Then Jesus went out, and saw a great multitude, and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep which had no shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.'[2] Mark 6:34 provides a verbal template for how Christ's miracles are narrated in other New Testament passages – most of the recorded miracles begin with a feeling of compassion on Christ's part – as well as an implicit lesson for how Christ's followers should themselves feel in the face of other people's suffering and need. What would Zeno have made of *that*? The ethics of compassion in early modern England was rife with conflict. Recognising that fact should prevent us, looking back from the twenty-first century, from assuming on the one hand a sentimental universalism about compassion or on the other hand a monolithic cultural construction applicable to every early modern subject. When it comes to feelings as well as practices, ethics acknowledges conflicts. Ethical discourse is talk about choices. That fraught situation is evident in conflicts between Protestant and Counter-Reformation ethics, as well as conflicts within each of these confessions. This chapter will reveal some of the fault lines within Protestant ethics; Katherine Ibbett's chapter in this volume attends to differences of opinion within Counter-Reformation ethics.

By and large the history of feelings has been written in terms of nomenclature and cultural practices, and the reasons are not hard to seek. Names for particular feelings can be charted genealogically; evidence for particular ways of experiencing feelings and acting upon them can be catalogued and analysed objectively. The history of words like 'pity', 'compassion', 'sympathy' and 'empathy' can readily be traced in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Each has a different linguistic source, each first comes into use, drifts in meaning, or falls out of use according to changing cultural circumstances. 'Pity', with its etymological associations with 'piety', is the oldest of the four terms.[3] *Compassioun* passed into English from French in the century of Chaucer, along with a great many other French words. Did 'compassion' refer to the same feeling as the indigenous Old English words it replaced? Was 'compassion' merely an updating of *besárgung* (literally, 'besorrowing') and *earmung* (taking pity) and their descendants in Middle English *sorwing* and *erending*?[4] The literal meaning of *besárgung* – sorrowing *about* or *near* – suggests something more physical and immediate than 'compassion'.[5] What's in a name? A great deal, when the subject at hand is the history of affects. As for cultural practices, we can find early modern indices of compassion in acts of *charity*, acts that are urged in books of conduct and piety, acts that can be observed in works of art, acts that can be quantified in wills and bequests.

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Ethics takes into account these distinctions in language and deed, but it goes further. Aristotle in his *Poetics* gives us an entry point. *Ethos* (literally, 'character') is 'that kind of utterance which clearly reveals the bent of a man's moral choice (hence there is no character in that class of utterances in which there is nothing at all that the speaker is choosing or rejecting)'.[6] Ethos is also a set of social arrangements: 'the characteristic spirit of a people, community, culture, or era as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations', as the *OED* defines it ('ethos, *n.*', 39.b.3).

Ethos offers a way of understanding social institutions – in particular social institutions situated in particular geographical, architectural and acoustic spaces. It should come as no surprise that Roman Catholic ethics with respect to compassion should differ from Protestant ethics and that different Protestant confessions should manifest their own differences. As a qualifier to 'people, community, culture, or era', the *OED* adds 'the prevailing character of an institution or system'. Since institutions can often be located geographically – church, school, law court and theatre are examples – I would add 'place' to the meanings of ethos. Putting together character, culture and place, we arrive at a fourth definition of ethos: as an object that can be represented in words or visual media or music. Note the second phrase in the *OED*'s definition of 'ethos': 'character or characterization as revealed in action *or its representation*'. These four senses of ethos allow us to come at compassion from multiple directions. Ethics allows us to bring together four things: (1) character, (2) sets of protocols for behaving, (3) particular sites for that behaviour ('accustomed place' in the original Greek) and (4) ways of *representing* these entities of character, behaviour and action. Ethos marks the spot where character meets culture.

I have opted to refer to compassion as a 'feeling' because, in my view, it is a more capacious word than alternatives like 'affect' (in early modern English a synonym for 'intention' or 'disposition'), 'passion' (a physiological state) or 'emotion' (a synonym for 'commotion', 'disturbance' or 'agitation' that could be applied to political events as well as mental states). 'Feeling' does not eliminate the precise meanings of the other terms; it enfolds them. In English at least, 'feeling' can refer to (1) the *act* of sensing, (2) the *capacity* to sense, (3) the *state* of sensing and (4) the *consciousness* of sensing. An additional advantage of the term 'feeling' is that it comes to us already theorised in Raymond Williams's concept 'structures of feeling'. In *The Long Revolution* (1977), Williams demonstrated the phrase's utility in bringing together political ideology, subjective experience (individual and collective), genre and media. Williams is the inspiration for the attention I give to drama in the analysis that follows. No less important to my

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discussion is Williams's late idea of the 'pre-emergence' of new 'structures of feeling' in works of fiction, especially drama. That is to say, works of fiction may facilitate new ways of being and feeling and not just represent already-existing ways of being and feeling, as cultural materialist critics assume. Shakespeare attempts that 'pre-emergence', I believe, throughout his dramatic works (his contribution to the co-authored play *Sir Thomas More* will be examined below), but particularly in late works like *The Tempest*.

Character, custom, sites, representations: I shall take up these four aspects of ethos one by one and consider how each helps us understand the workings of compassion in the culture of early modern England. I will be limiting my frame of reference to the period I know best, 1560–1660. Politically, these dates extend from the first year of Elizabeth I's reign to the last year of the Commonwealth and the Restoration of monarchy with the accession of Charles I. Throughout this hundred-year period there was religious discord, ever more intense, which finally erupted in the establishment of a more radically Protestant church and then a return to the more liberal religious arrangements that had been overthrown. Amid these political changes, as we shall see, compassion toward religious dissenters became a huge issue. Philosophically, the period 1560–1660 witnessed a shift from an eclectic Humanistic philosophy that combined elements of Stoicism with Christian doctrine to the beginnings of Enlightenment rationalism, with important consequences for 'feeling' as a component of 'thought'.

Ethos as Character

Choice and utterance: those two external markers of ethos as character are explicitly addressed in philosophy books, advice books and religious writings. As I noted in the beginning of this chapter, early modern philosophy entertained two quite opposite ideas about compassion. Against the examples of Jesus Christ and the Good Samaritan had to be weighed condemnation of all the passions, even compassion, in Stoic philosophy. Bacon's encomium of compassion in his essay 'Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature' can stand as an expression of the Christian idea:

> The parts and signs of goodness are many. If a man be gracious, and courteous to strangers, it shows, he is a citizen of the world; and that his heart is no island, cut off from other lands; but a continent, that joins to them. If he be compassionate, towards the afflictions of others, it shows that his heart is like the noble tree, that is wounded itself, when it gives the

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> balm. If he easily pardons and remits offences, it shows, that his mind is planted above injuries; so that he cannot be shot. If he be thankful for small benefits, it shows, that he weighs men's minds, and not their trash. But above all, if he have St. Paul's perfection, that he would wish to be an anathema from Christ, for the salvation of his brethren, it shows much of a divine nature, and a kind of conformity with Christ himself.[7]

Diametrically opposite to such sentiments is the stark advice voiced by Cicero in *Tusculan Disputations.* Compassion is condemned as just another 'perturbation' of the mind that, according to the Stoics, a wise man will avoid. But the ideal, Cicero's spokesman M— ultimately concludes, is finding a middle way between conflicting passions: 'For virtue, is not contrary to any perturbation but a mean betwixt two of them' (sig. T3). It is worth observing that the Stoics' sense of passions, all passions, as 'perturbations', survives in our word 'emotion'. 'Every perturbation', M— observes, 'because of opinions troublously tossing to and fro, is always moving' (sig. T3). Movement, powerful movement, is common to both 'perturbations' and 'emotions'. As Michael Schoenfeldt has demonstrated in his book *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*, control of the passions was crucial to creating a sense of 'inwardness' – the very opposite of 'getting in touch with your feelings'.[8]

A middle way between Stoic control of the passions and Christian encouragement of compassion is spelled out in Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1604, rev. ed. 1630). It is ironic that someone generally so hostile to passions as Wright has become in our own time a major authority on early modern psychology. Steven Mullaney in *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* argues that most recent commentators on *The Passions of the Mind in General* have attended to only the first of Wright's concerns, the somatic workings of sensation, to the exclusion of his two other concerns: social formations (including rhetoric) and the rational soul, as the entity that is in ultimate control of 'mind' – or should be. The passions, as Mullaney quotes from Wright, are neither material like bodily humours nor immaterial like the soul. Rather, 'they "stand betwixt these two extremes," as Wright tells us, "and border upon them both", so that they "inhabit both the confines of sense and reason"'.[9]

Even in this more expansive scheme, however, Wright regards the passions as potentially dangerous. He makes an exception for compassion:

> if the passions of the mind be not moderated according to reason ... immediately the soul is molested with some malady. But if the humors be kept in a due proportion, they are the preservatives of health, and

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> perhaps health itself. By this discourse may be gathered that passions are not only not wholly to be extinguished (as the Stoics seemed to affirm) but sometimes to be moved and stirred up for the service of virtue, as learnedly Plutarch teacheth: for mercy and compassion will move us often to pity, as it did Job. . . . 'Compassion grew with me from my infancy, and it came with me out of my mother's womb'. Therefore he declareth what succor he gave to the poor (Job 31:18).[10]

If ethos as character is a moral choice, Wright offers here a way of combining Stoic restraint with an embrace of compassion's 'out-going-ness', if I can put it that way: compassion's emergence out of the compassionate person's very body.

Early modern writers recognised this bodily out-going-ness in the frequency with which they allied 'compassion' and 'bowels'. A proximity search of 'compassion*' and 'bowel*' in the database Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership turns up no fewer than 3,264 instances within 40 characters of each other in books published in English between 1470 and 1699. The very first hit, a 1600 book of sermons on the Book of Jonah preached by George Abbot at St Mary's Church Oxford can serve as an example. Abbot told his listeners,

> the Savior of the world, according to those different inclinations, which his manhood brought unto him, did rouse himself the more, and did pierce the hearts of his hearers, with more pathetical speech, when he saw such troupes come about him, that he was forced to go to a mountain, or betake him to a ship, to teach so many of them. He who was moved in his bowels, with compassion, to see so many as sheep without a shepherd, may be more moved, in and with his tongue, to satisfy such a multitude.[11]

In such associations of compassion with bowels we should realise that we are not dealing here with a passion like other passions – anger, fear, lust, for example – which overwhelm the body from without. Rather, compassion is *visceral*, in the literal sense of that word. (For more on bowels, see Kristine Steenbergh's Chapter 6 in this volume.) Aristotle may locate character as ethos in moral choice and utterance, but compassion is first and foremost an internal matter, a bodily feeling. Unlike the other passions in Wright, which begin with sensations of sight and hearing, compassion begins in the guts.

Ethos as Cultural Values

John Donne in an undated early sermon hears Christ's words on the cross ('Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' [Luke 23:24]) and

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addresses Christ directly, marvelling at Christ's forgiveness of his tormentors and executioners. It was one thing, Donne says, to show compassion to the thief who asked Christ directly for forgiveness of his sins; it was quite another thing for Christ to show compassion to his tormentors and executioners when they hadn't even asked for it: 'Was not thy passion enough, but thou must have compassion? And is thy mercy so violent, that thou wilt have a fellow-feeling of their imminent afflictions, before they have any feeling?'[12]

Christ may have displayed compassion to all mankind, but early modern men and women did not go so far. Proclamations and laws issued during the reigns of Elizabeth and James specify entire categories of people who are not deserving of compassion: 'masterless men', 'rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars', 'Negars and Blackamoors', the last group being further described as 'infidels, having no understanding of Christ or his gospel'.[13] Most of these people never got to speak up for themselves, but pamphlet literature in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is full of 'complaints' from other categories of people, including common soldiers just back from religious wars on the Continent who never received the pay they were promised. It is remarkable how many of these categories of people not worthy of compassion – the homeless, people who refuse to work, military veterans – are precisely the same categories from whom compassion is widely withheld today. Foreigners – 'strangers' as they were called – constitute another ostracised group.

Concerning 'strangers', the manuscript of the group-authored never-produced play *Sir Thomas More* features a scene, usually ascribed to Shakespeare, in which More turns back a London mob intent on attacking immigrants from France and the Low Countries. More's appeal is to compassion, and again the parallels with the plight of migrants today is striking:

> You'll put down strangers,
> Kill them, cut their throats, possess their houses
> . . . . . .
> Say now the King
> Should so much come too short of your great trespass
> As but to banish you: whither would you go?
> What country, by the nature of your error,
> Should give you harbour? Go you to France or Flanders,
> To any German province, Spain or Portugal,
> Nay, anywhere that not adheres to England:
> Why, you must needs be strangers. Would you be pleased

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To find a nation of such barbarous temper
That, breaking out in hideous violence,
Would not afford you an abode on earth,
Whet their detested knives against your throats,
Spurn you like dogs, and like as if that God
Owed not nor made not you, nor that the elements
Were not all appropriate to your comforts,
But chartered unto them? What would you think
To be thus used? This is the strangers' case,
And this your mountainish inhumanity.
(scene vi, ll. 133–35, 137–55)[14]

More's rhetorical ploy works. Through his speech More creates a new ethos in multiple senses of the word: he changes the character of his listeners by urging upon them a compassionate moral choice, he appeals to existing protocols by reminding them of their own status as subjects to the king, he turns the London street into a site for compassion, he represents compassion by word and example. (See Richard Meek's analysis of More's speech and the questions it raises about the relationship between self and other in Chapter 5.)

In the course of his survey of the passions, Wright takes up hatred and provides a list of precise reasons for hating 'a community, kingdom, province, or any society'. It is all right to hate people

- 'if they be our ancient enemies, if by nature bloody, crafty, proud, insolent in government, impatient of superiors or equals, if cozeners, extortioners, invaders unjustly of others' dominions, aiders or abetters of rebels or our adversaries
- 'if their religion be paganism, Judaism, heresy, or "Turcise" [i.e., Muslims]
- 'if in their temporal laws they have enacted any tending to tyranny and oppression, if to further vice and hinder virtue
- 'if they hold, pretend, or endeavour to bereave our state of any part of preeminence, dignity, signiory, province or country thereunto belonging, if they abused or injured our state, prince, or subjects any way . . . ' (sig. S8–8v)

Needless to say, none of these people is worthy of compassion.

In general, compassion in early modern England seems to have been a commodity that was rationed carefully. There are only fourteen mentions of 'compassion' in Shakespeare's plays and poems, and the majority of them have to do with compassion graciously granted or stringently

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withheld by someone in power. Compassion is explicitly mentioned in a very unlikely assortment of plays, most of them early in Shakespeare's career: *Henry VI, Part One* (in which Gloucester and Winchester dole out compassion as royal favours), *Titus Andronicus* (in which Marcus cannot believe that heaven will not 'compassion' the suffering Titus) and most notably *Richard III* (in which Tyrrell reports that the 'fleshed villains' who murdered the young princes 'melted with tenderness and mild compassion' when they told him of their deed (IV.iii.6–7).

To be sure, certain categories of people in early modern England seem to have been deemed worthy of compassion: the physically ill, orphans, Protestant refugees and perhaps under certain circumstances beggars. Wright discusses beggars' tactics in the course of investigating the power of music to move 'mercy and compassion':

> for this purpose many beggars with songs demand their alms, and specially the Germans, where the man, the wife and their children make a full begging choir, according to the Italian proverb:
>
> *Cosi Vanno cattando*
> *Li Tudesci cantando,*
> *Li Francesi piangendo,*
> *Li Spagnioli biastemando.*
> Thus go a-begging
> The Germans singing,
> The Frenchmen weeping,
> The Spaniards cursing. That is, the poor needy
> Spaniards will sometime curse if a man deny them alms.
> (sig. M4)

In the contest for who was deserving of compassion, the biggest challenge was posed by religious differences. When the Puritan polemicist William Perkins declares that 'our hearts should be pitiful, full of compassion for the poor afflicted members of Christ: seeing they be our fellow members', one wonders if he was limiting 'the members of Christ' to John Calvin's 'chosen'.[15] Donne is more liberal. In a sermon preached on Candlemas Day 1623 on the scripture 'Therefore if thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirst give him drink; for, in doing so thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head' (Romans 12:20) stresses the *com-*, the 'with', in compassion:

> How much and how often St. Paul delights himself with that sociable syllable *syn*, *con*, *conregnare*, and *convisicare*, and *consedere*, of reigning together, and living, and quickening together. As much also doth God

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> delight in it, from us, when we express it in a conformity, and compunction, and compassion, and condolency, and (as it is but a little before the text) *in weeping with them that weep*.[16]

It is telling that Wright's list of 'communities' to be hated for religious differences does not include Catholics. He himself was a Jesuit priest. Increasingly in the first four decades of the seventeenth century people in England found it difficult to make community with fellow citizens whose religious convictions were different from theirs. Compassion for religious differences was in shorter and shorter supply.

John Milton, who was Latin secretary to Oliver Cromwell in the more deeply Protestant Commonwealth established in 1649, argued for tolerance of religious differences – but he drew the line at Catholics. In *Areopagitica* (1644), a plea for freedom of the press five years before the Commonwealth was established, Milton writes,

> if all cannot be of one mind, as who looks they should be? this doubtless is more wholesome, more prudent, and more Christian that many be tolerated, rather than all compelled, I mean not tolerated Popery, and open superstition, which as it extirpates all religions and civil supremacies, so itself should be extirpate, *provided first that all charitable and compassionate means be used to win and regain the weak and the misled* . . . .[17]

Note that qualifying phrase: 'all charitable and compassionate means' should be used to reason with people who hold different religious opinions. Ultimately Milton won his case for freedom of the press, if not toleration of especially aberrant sects like Quakers. Beginning in the early 1640s and continuing throughout the years of the Commonwealth (1649–1660) the number of religious and political books with the word 'compassion' and 'compassionate' in their titles increased exponentially. Take, for example, the following:

- *England's complaint, or the church her lamentation, pitifully bemoaning herself to her children, to move them to compassionate her, now in this troublesome time, and to bring them to a mutual agreement and reconciliation.* (1642)
- *The compassionate Samaritan unbinding the conscience, and pouring oil into the wounds which have been made upon the separation, recommending their future welfare to the serious thoughts and careful endeavours of all who love the peace and unity of Commonwealth's men, or desire the unanimous prosecution of the common enemy, or who follow our Saviour's rule, to do unto others what they would have others do unto them.* (1644)

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- *Wholesome severity reconciled with Christian liberty. Or, the true resolution of a present controversy concerning liberty of conscience. Here you have the question stated, the middle way betwixt popish tyranny and schismatizing liberty approved, and also confirmed from Scripture, and the testimonies of divines, yea of whole churches: the chief arguments and exceptions used in* The Bloody Tenet, The Compassionate Samaritan, M.S. to A.S. *&c. examined. Eight distinctions added for qualifying and clearing the whole matter. And in conclusion a paraenetic to the five apologists for choosing accommodation rather than toleration.* (1645)
- *Bowels of compassion towards the fettered seed. Or a visitation to all, who hath been seeking the resting place, but hath not found it, the cause why showed, and the way to it manifested, wherein is something showed also, of the emptiness, and unsoundness of all profession, without the light of Christ, to be the guide. Also an information to all the honest-hearted who desires to know the truth in the simplicity of it concerning us, the people of the most high who is by the world called Quakers.* (1659)

The proliferation of books during the English republic turned on the 'common' in 'Commonwealth'. Religious reformists were partly responsible for the abolition of monarchy and the establishment of a republic in 1649. Once they had gained power, the question arose of how far religious liberty was to be extended to other dissident groups like Diggers, Muggletonians, Quakers, Ranters and of course Roman Catholics.[18] Each of these groups had in effect its own ethics. The question of how much compassion religious dissenters were due was ultimately a test of ethical boundaries. If the boundaries between worthy and unworthy objects of compassion seem severe in the English texts that I have cited, Katherine Ibbett's account of three Catholic writers in the following chapter reveals how central the questions of social differences were to the ethics of compassion that each of the three writers formulated.

Ethos as Place

The institutional 'character' of compassion, if I can be permitted that metaphor, invites us to consider the social geography of compassion: the sites in early modern England where compassion was fostered. Schools and universities would constitute one such site, since moral philosophy was part of the curriculum. We have seen already that the case for compassion in moral philosophy was anything but clear.

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Law courts might be another site, especially in the levying of punishments. The evidence in Edward Coke's legal textbooks suggests an investment in the letter of the law, but digests of the court records for the counties around London during the reigns of Elizabeth and James reveal surprisingly low rates of conviction. Did local juries take into account more than the letter of the law? Were they more compassionate toward some defendants than others? Those possibilities have to be left as questions. We do, however, have the exhortation of no less an authority than Bacon, Queen's Counsel from 1594 and Attorney General from 1613, that offenders in some circumstances deserve compassion. In *The Wisdom of the Ancients* (published in Latin 1609, English translation 1619), Bacon has this observation to make about the story of Diomedes, who followed Pallas's order to wound Aphrodite if he encountered her during battles at Troy and was put to death for the crime by his host King Daunus:

> let there be never so nefarious an act done, yet there is some place left for commiseration and pity, that even those that hate offences, should yet in humanity commiserate offenders, and pity their distress, it being the extremity of evil when mercy is not suffered to have commerce with misery. Yea, even in the cause as well of religion as impiety, many men may be noted and observed to have been compassionate.[19]

How often Bacon's counsel was taken by his contemporaries is hard to determine from surviving legal records.

More certain as sites for compassion were 'hospitals' for housing and maintaining not only the ill, but also the elderly, the orphaned and the poor. Originally these were religious institutions – St Bartholomew's and St Thomas's hospitals in London are examples that still exist – but with the disestablishment of the Catholic Church and its monastic institutions during the Reformation, support shifted to private foundations. Under both regimes – the church and private charity – hospitals were devoted to long-term custodial care more than to cure. After the Reformation, stricter rules were established for the poor: they had to be 'the *deserving* poor', people who were unable to work and support themselves.

The two most important sites for fostering compassion in early modern England were, in my judgement, churches and – a shock, I'm sure, to Puritan detractors – theatres. We have seen already how sermons by Donne and Abbot explicitly exhorted compassion among the congregants.

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The preacher's art and the actor's art were not so far apart as anti-theatrical writers like Philip Stubbes might assume. Wright in *The Passions of the Mind in General* remarks on the way orators solicit compassion at the beginning of their speeches: 'A small trembling voice proceedeth from fear, and such an one commonly have great orators, or at least it were good they should have in the beginning of their orations, for thereby they win a certain compassion and loving affection of their auditors' (sig. K3). Donne was a master at stirring compassion in his listeners – and so, as we shall see in a moment, was Richard Burbage. The same people might flock to theatres as well as churches. The diary of John Manningham, a law student at the Middle Temple, contains notations not only about the sermons he eagerly attended but also about the first recorded performance of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* during Candlemas festivities in February 1602.[20]

In churches, it was not just sermons that encouraged compassion but liturgical music as well. Truth be told, compassion in this context most often came from Christ to the congregants and not from the congregants to other people. A stirring example is William Byrd's four-voice motet 'I will not leave you comfortless', based on two passages from the Gospel of John in which Jesus shortly before his arrest and crucifixion – that is to say, shortly before his Passion – promises his disciples, 'I will not leave you comfortless: but I will come to you' (14:18), 'And ye now therefore are in sorrow: but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you' (16:22).[21] The effect of 'elevated' music on listeners is acknowledged by Wright: 'A sword serveth to defend right and is also an instrument to work wrongs: music in like manner elevateth the mind to devotion and piety, and abaseth the soul with effusion and levity' (sig. M2).

Testimony to the 'elevating' power of music on the mind is provided by the English world traveller Thomas Coryate, who describes the liturgical music he heard in Venice in 1608 on the feast day of San Rocco as being 'so good, so delectable, so rare, so super excellent that it did even ravish and stupefy all those strangers that never heard the like. But how others were affected with it I know not; for mine own part I can say this, that I was for the time even rapt up with St Paul into the third heaven.'[22] Coryate alludes here to 2 Corinthians 12:2–4, in which St Paul describes being in the presence of God. The site for Coryate's passionate experience may have been, given the occasion, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco. If so, the music he heard may have been composed and directed by Giovanni

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Gabrieli, who was composer-organist at the Scuola as he was at St Mark's Basilica. The warmth of Coryate's response is remarkable, given that his father was a parish priest in the Church of England and that Coryate himself later in his travels risked reprisals for the vehemency with which he publicly lambasted the Catholic Church.[23]

No less remarkable in Coryate's account is the way he situates his intense feelings in the context of other people. He imagines that the performance did 'ravish and stupefy' anyone present who had not heard the like before – 'strangers' like himself – but he doesn't venture to speak for them. 'How others were affected with it I know not', Coryate says before describing his own ascent into St Paul's third heaven. In this juxtaposition of the public and the private Coryate points toward a dynamic at the heart of worship services. Each worshipper has his or her own experience at the same time that he or she is part of a 'congregation'. In spaces like St Paul's, Byrd's motet would have been taken to heart by worshippers as individuals even though the words that Byrd has set were originally spoken by Christ to the disciples as a group. So it would have been to all the congregants, not to individuals, that the choir would have sung. With respect to feelings, the situation would have left each listener in a double subject position. Mullaney notes in *The Reformation of Emotions* how many times during the sixteenth century the state-sanctioned religion changed, leaving individual worshippers in potentially conflicted positions vis-à-vis the worship services that the law compelled them to attend. The situation in London's churches, Mullaney argues, was replicated in London's public theatres. Both spaces functioned as arenas for playing out conflicts, not just in ideology but in feelings.

Ethos as Representations

The ethics of compassion in early modern England finds its most powerful exemplar, not in London's streets or even in its churches, but in London's theatres. Given the self-dramatisation of the title character's suffering, *Richard II* has some claim to being Shakespeare's most compassionate play. 'It boots thee not to be compassionate', Richard tells the just-banished Mowbray in I.ii. 'After our sentence, plaining comes too late' (1.2.168–69). This is typical of the power dynamics of compassion in *Henry VI, Part One*, and *Titus Andronicus*: a king grants or withholds compassion. By the end of the play, however, Richard himself is in need of compassion. When the defeated Richard, being escorted to the Tower

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under guard, encounters his wife on a street in London, he advises her there is nothing left but for her to tell the tale of his defeat by Bolingbroke:

> Tell thou the lamentable fall of me,
> And send the hearers weeping to their beds;
> For why the senseless brands will sympathize
> The heavy accent of thy moving tongue,
> And in compassion weep the fire out . . .
> (V.i.44–48)

In the ensuing scenes, the imprisoned Richard, soon to be executed, puts the assembled *audience* in that position of compassion.

As Joseph Roach has demonstrated in *The Player's Passion*, a book that charts changing ideas of the actors' art, *com*-passion, 'feeling with', was the stock-in-trade of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century actors like Richard Burbage, who likely played the role of Richard II in 1595. In Roach's formulation,

> The rhetoric of the passions . . . endowed the actor's art with three potencies of an enchanted kind. First, the actor possessed the power to act on his own body. Second, he possessed the power to act on the physical space around him. Finally, he was able to act on the bodies of the spectators who shared that space with him. . . . His passions, irradiating the bodies of spectators through their eyes and ears, could literally transfer the contents of his heart to theirs, altering their moral natures.[24]

The combination of Galenic psychology and classical rhetoric rendered the theatre a potent site of *com*-passion, even more potent, I would propose, than the church.

Prospero in *The Tempest* I.ii recognises compassion in Miranda's response to the shipwreck and at the same time elicits the audience's compassion as they hear the story of his overthrow and exile. Perhaps, as a storyteller, Prospero begins with the 'low' if not 'trembling' voice that, according to Wright, inspires 'a certain compassion and loving affection' on the part of auditors. Certainly before he begins his story Prospero puts aside the garment that gives him his power over other men. He is left with only his voice:

> 'Tis time
> I should inform thee farther. Lend thy hand,
> And pluck my magic garment from me.
> *Miranda removes Prospero's cloak,* [*and he lays it on the ground*]
> Lie there, my art.

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Miranda's tears he reads as an index of her compassion:

> – Wipe thou thine eyes; have comfort.
> The direful spectacle of the wreck, which touched
> The very virtue of compassion in thee,
> I have with such provision in mine art
> So safely ordered that there is no soul –
> No, not so much perdition as an hair
> Betid to any creature in the vessel
> Which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw'st sink. Sit down;
> For thou must now know farther.
>
> (I.ii.22–33)

And so begins the tale of the wrongs he has suffered.

At the end of the play Prospero himself shows compassion toward his malefactors, just as Bacon advises in *The Wisdom of the Ancients*. It is Ariel who gives Prospero his cue:

> Your charm so strongly works 'em
> That if you now beheld them your affections
> Would become tender.
> PROSPERO Dost thou think so, spirit?
> ARIEL
> Mine would, sir, were I human.
> PROSPERO And mine shall.
>
> (V.i.17–20)

The very sight of the shipwrecked nobles, Ariel says, would move compassion. We as spectators/listeners have, from the very beginning, been made *com*-passionate in witnessing and hearing the fictions of the play. That is how early modern theatre worked.

Virtue

When Prospero commends 'the very virtue of compassion' in his daughter, he is endowing the word 'virtue' with three meanings: a character trait or moral way of behaving (*OED*, 'virtue, *n*.', I.1.a), conformity to moral standards held by society (I.2.a) and 'power, efficacy, worth' (II.8), as in the power of a medicine. The third sense, in this particular context, extends to theatre as a site of compassion and to representation as a way of bringing compassion to life, both in actors and in their spectators/audiences. Prospero epitomises the entire play when he moves compassion in Miranda through the spectacle of shipwreck that he has staged with Ariel's help.

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The 'ethics' of compassion is, in all the senses that we have explored here, a matter of virtue, and not just in the sense of feeling compassion or performing it. Cicero's sense of virtue as a middle way between two perturbations can be extended to virtue as a middle way among the multiple considerations embraced by ethics. 'Much virtue in if': Touchstone's quip in *As You Like It* about how to avoid a sword-fight (V.iv.101) extends to theatre itself. Theatrical performance is a particularly powerful – that is to say, particularly 'virtuous' – mode of representation. Theatre is fundamentally about hypothetical possibilities, about 'if', about virtuality as something 'that is such in essence, potentiality, or effect, although not in form or actuality' (*OED*, 'virtual, *adj*. and *n*.', II.4.a). With respect to compassion, let me take a cue from Touchstone and conclude thus: 'Much virtue in virtue'.

Notes

1 Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Quaestiones Tusculanae*, trans. John Dolman as *Those five questions, which Mark Tully Cicero, disputed in his manor of Tusculanum: written afterwards by him, in as many books, to his friend, and familiar Brutus* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1561), sig. O2v. In this and all other quotations from early modern English texts spelling has been modernised but original punctuation retained. Further references are cited in the text by signature number.

2 Mark 6:34 in *The Geneva Bible* [1560], facsimile rpt. ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), sig. EE4.

3 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 'pity, *n*.', etymology, I.1, *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. www.oed.com. Future citations from the *OED* will be given in the text.

4 Middle English Dictionary, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/, 'compassioun', 'sorwing', 'erending' and *OED*, 'be-, *prefix*'. I am grateful to my colleague David Rollo for helping me get beyond the usual translation of *besárgung* as 'compassion'.

5 For the etymology of 'sympathy' see Richard Meek's Chapter 5 in this book.

6 Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), pp. 28–29.

7 Francis Bacon, 'Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature' in *The Essays and Councils, Civil and Moral*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 40–41.

8 Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

9 Steven Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 55.

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10 Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General*, rev. ed. (London, 1630), sig. C1. Further quotations from Wright are cited in the text.
11 George Abbot, *An Exposition upon the Prophet Jonah Contained in Certain Sermons, Preached in St. Mary's Church in Oxford* (London, 1600), sig. BB3v.
12 John Donne, *LXXX Sermons* (London, 1640), sig. K2.
13 Statute of the Realm 14 Eliz. I, chap. 5 (Vagabonds Act, 1572); Statute of the Realm 39 Eliz. I, chap. 4 (1597–98); 'Licensing Casper van Senden to Deport Negroes [draft]' (1601), in *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), vol. III, pp. 221–22.
14 William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, 2nd ed., gen. eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). Further quotations from Shakespeare and taken from this edition and are cited in the text by act, scene and line numbers.
15 William Perkins, *Lectures upon the First Chapters of The Revelation* (London, 1604), 66 (sig. K1v).
16 John Donne, *Fifty Sermons. The Second Volume* (London, 1649), sig. CC4v.
17 John Milton, *Areopagitica: A Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, to the Parliament of England* (London, 1644), sig. E4, emphasis added.
18 For a survey of the issues see Blair Worden, *God's Instruments: Political Conduct in the England of Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 313–54. Primary texts relevant to the controversies are collected in David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell, *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 201–44.
19 Francis Bacon, *The Wisdom of the Ancients, Written in Latin by the Right Honourable Sir Francis Bacon Knight, Baron of Verulam, and Lord Chancellor of England*, trans. Arthur Gorges (1619), rpt. in *The Essays, or Councils, Civil and Moral, of Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, Viscount St. Alban … and a Discourse of The Wisdom of the Ancients* (London, 1969), sig. R5–R5v.
20 John Manningham, *The Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple 1602–1603*, ed. Robert Parker Sorlien (Hanover, NH: University of New England Press, 1976), excerpted in William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night: Texts and Contexts*, 2nd ed., ed. Bruce R. Smith (Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 2015), pp. 1–6.
21 *The Geneva Bible* (1560), introd. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). (Performances of Byrd's 'I will not leave you comfortless' can be found on YouTube; professional performances are available on iTunes and Amazon.)
22 Thomas Coryate, *Coryat's Crudities* (1611), excerpted in Carol MacClintock (ed.), *Readings in the History of Music in Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 115.

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23 Michael Strachan, 'Coryate, Thomas (1577?–1617)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online ed. Oct. 2006, www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/view/article/6364.

24 Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), p. 27.

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