



## TEACHING FEELING:

### MEDIEVAL LITERATURE, EMOTIONAL ETHICS, AND THE CASE OF COMPASSION

**Paul Megna**

*Postdoctoral Research Fellow, ARC Centre of Excellence  
University of Western Australia*

#### I. FROM EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO EMOTIONAL ETHICS

As a student and teacher of medieval literature, I have for some time been simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by the phrase “emotional intelligence.” Coined by Michael Beldoch in 1964,<sup>1</sup> the phrase was widely popularized in the mid-1990’s by Daniel Goleman whose “mixed model” conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a complex of competencies involving self-awareness, self-regulation, social skill, empathy and motivation.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, at a time when humanistic inquiry is under constant attack,<sup>3</sup> I find the phrase useful in justifying not only the importance of reading and composing literature, but also the relevance of teaching literature. Encouraged by recent psychological studies affirming that reading literature enhances theory of mind,<sup>4</sup> I am tempted to claim that reading literature enhances emotional intelligence in order to launch a polemic asserting the social value of literature, especially since many of our social problems (e.g., school shooters, neoliberal hedge fund managers, and hateful religious fundamentalists) can be all too easily explained as so many paucities of emotional intelligence. On the other hand, my studies in Middle English ideologies of emotion have quickly and unequivocally convinced me that standards of emotional intelligence are cultural constructs and

therefore dictated by biased individuals possessing the privilege to construct culture: the so-called winners who write the history books. This insight explains, for example, why most medieval chroniclers of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 depict the insurgents as a bestial horde carried away by sinful (if not demonic) emotions, rather than a revolutionary political formation of oppressed people zealously and strategically combatting centuries of exploitation.<sup>5</sup>

We need, therefore, to think deeply and teach our students to think deeply about how judgments regarding emotional intelligence are produced by and reinforce uneven social structures. We also need to think deeply and teach our students to think deeply about the fact that others often seem to lack emotional intelligence due to their prolonged exposure to harsh circumstances of which we are entirely unaware. But these pedagogical necessities do not liberate us from the corollary imperative to help our students to better use their own emotional judgments to make ethical decisions. In fact, such necessities impel us to instill within our students an emotional awareness nuanced and supple enough to enable them to reject the unethical "emotional communities" to which they belong and amend their own un-contextualized snap judgments regarding the emotional intelligence of others.<sup>6</sup>

Despite its rhetorical usefulness for justifying the relevance of humanistic education, we should, I think, dispense with the term emotional intelligence and its diagnostic counterpart emotional quotient (EQ). Like all ideological standards designed to striate the human community, emotional intelligence is in the eye of the beholder and is, therefore, inextricably bound up with the beholder's social circumstances.<sup>7</sup> We cannot, however, afford to leave a gaping void in the cultural space that these terms currently occupy. I propose that instead of ranking students according to an ostensibly universal standard of emotional intelligence, we start teaching them to practice emotional ethics. Unlike emotional intelligence, emotional ethics is not a set of normative and normalizing skills and competencies to be inculcated into students'

psyches, but a liberal art—an inter-subjective, improvisational practice in which we teach each other how to more ethically enjoy the human condition.

Emotional ethics is not simply a matter of rendering emotion voluntary or subject to cognitive control, an agenda that implicitly privileges cognition over emotion, rather than deconstructing the cognition/emotion binary. It is instead a matter of recognizing the ways that emotion always already undergirds ethical decision-making. Indeed, emotion evolved out of and in tandem with ethics. In his book on Spinoza, Antonio Damasio imagines a “dire scenario” in which “humanity had dawned with a population deprived of the ability to respond toward others with sympathy, attachment, embarrassment, and other social emotions.”<sup>8</sup> Therein, he surmises “that in the absence of social emotions [. . .] even on the unlikely assumption that other intellectual abilities could remain intact, the cultural instruments we know as ethical behaviors, religious beliefs, laws, justice, and political organization either would not have emerged, or would have been a very different sort of intelligent construction.”<sup>9</sup> Damasio’s observations of the social difficulties experienced by those lacking the capacity to make emotional judgments demonstrate that emotion is not simply an archaic hindrance to cognition.<sup>10</sup> Instead, emotional judgments feed imperceptibly into ostensibly rational action. Emotion, in other words, is the root of cognition and, by proxy, ethical decision-making. Given Damasio’s account of the inextricable interrelation of emotion and cognition in the evolution of ethics, it is crucial to begin teaching ethics, not as a frigid set of logical suppositions, but as a patently emotional practice.

Medieval literature presents us with at least two pedagogical opportunities vis-à-vis emotional ethics: first, by studying the written instructions—or “emotion-scripts,” as Sarah McNamer productively calls them<sup>11</sup>—through which medieval subjects solidified various emotional communities, students can glean the means by which socially solicited emotional performances inform ethical subjectivity; and, second, by reading medieval texts with the benefit

of hundreds of years of hindsight, students can easily recognize that any standard of emotional intelligence is always already tied up in often-toxic regimes of Foucauldian knowledge/power, prompting them critically reflect upon the subtler ways that their own cultural biases inform their often unconscious judgments regarding emotional intelligence.

## II. THE CASE OF COMPASSION

During the Winter quarter of the 2015-2016 academic year, I taught an upper-division undergraduate course in the University of California, Santa Barbara's English department entitled "Feeling Medieval: Emotional Ethics in Middle English Literature." Two primary pedagogical goals animated this course: First, to help students develop their cognitive map of the network of various, often overlapping, and always imagined emotional communities that produced and were sustained by the Middle English literary texts that we read together; and, second, to challenge students to use their newfound understanding of medieval England's practices of emotional ethics to reassess how their own perceived membership in various emotional communities shapes their ethical commitments (*a vice versa*). In addition to modeling the process through which I bring my understanding of historical emotional communities to bear on my own participation in modern emotional communities, I also created a number of in-class and written assignments asking students to likewise apply the lessons learned from studying the history of emotions to their understanding of contemporary culture. On the first day of class, I introduced students to Martha Nussbaum's understanding of emotions as embodied judgments;<sup>12</sup> Damasio's aforementioned hypothesis that emotional judgments were integral to the evolution of ethics; and some basic aspects of medieval English history (e.g., feudal class structure, sacramental theology, and landmark events such as the Black Death and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381). Thereafter, we proceeded through units on compassion, anger, dread, wonder/shame, bliss/envy, love/hate and laughter/tears.<sup>13</sup> For the remainder of this essay, I'll detail my

approach to teaching medieval and modern discourses on compassion during the opening weeks of this course.

I introduced students to compassion etymologically, explaining that the word derives from the Latin *cum patior* (to suffer with) and alerting them to the frequency with which Middle English devotional texts take advantage of the phonic kinship of “compassion” and “Passion” to explicitly solicit or valorize compassion for Christ’s suffering on the cross.<sup>14</sup> Compassion, I explained, is among of the most frequently discussed emotions in medieval studies and absolutely central to “affective piety”: a structure of feeling predominant in High and Late Medieval European Christian culture that left in its wake scores of devotional emotion-scripts designed to generate compassion for Christ by narrating his suffering in gruesome detail.<sup>15</sup> I suggested to students that compassion-soliciting emotion-scripts had both material and social effects on their performers: since emotional experience facilitates neuroplasticity (i.e., the process through which the brain alters its own material structure),<sup>16</sup> medieval subjects quite literally inscribed a standard of emotional intelligence centered on Christian compassion on their brains by repeatedly performing these emotion-scripts. On a social level, collective performance of emotion-scripts solidifies emotional communities. I shared with the students that the gender of the emotional communities initially responsible for proliferating affective piety is the subject of much scholarly debate. While older scholarship attributes affective piety’s invention to male theologians including St. Anselm of Canterbury and Bernard of Clairvaux,<sup>17</sup> McNamer more recently argues not only that affective piety originated in female emotional communities, but also that, for medieval Christians, compassionate devotion was gendered female and, thus, “to perform compassion is to feel like a woman.”<sup>18</sup> I also alerted students to scholarly disagreement regarding whether compassionate emotion-scripts empowered or disempowered their female performers.<sup>19</sup> Finally, I shared with them passages in which still other scholars, drawing from a poststructural

theoretical apparatus, object to the essentializing and binarizing nature of the whole debate over the gender of affective piety.<sup>20</sup> By walking students through a few of the historiographic disagreements over affective piety, I prepared them to ask questions about the role of gender and power in compassion-centered emotional communities without giving them the impression of singular scholarly consensus answering such questions. Students were generally fascinated to learn about the gendered history of compassion and several pointed out that the modern cultures of compassion in which they partake frequently (though by no means always) associate compassion with femininity.

Over the course of three classes, we read “The Wooing of Our Lord,” Peter Singer’s “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (class one); the York “Crucifixion” Play (class two); and the Prioress’ portrait, “Prologues” and “Tale” (class three).<sup>21</sup> From my aforementioned summary of the scholarly debate on gender and affective piety, we segued into a discussing “The Wooing of Our Lord,” an Early Middle English treatise through which a male spiritual advisor instructs an anchoress how to woo Christ through emotional performance.<sup>22</sup> I began by outlining the anchoritic lifestyle to the class. I shared some photographs and medieval drawings of the exterior and interior of various anchorholds.<sup>23</sup> Students were fascinated by the fact that a lifestyle that most of us would imagine as intensely claustrophobic inspired profound claustrophilia in medieval subjects who considered lifetime occupation of the anchorhold a great privilege.<sup>24</sup> They were equally compelled by the intensely erotic manner in which “The Wooing” scripts the anchoress’ compassion for Christ’s suffering.<sup>25</sup> It is only after rhapsodically commending Christ’s physical beauty that the speaker tearfully turns towards the torments of the Passion. As the bride of Christ (*sponsa Christi*), the performer of “The Wooing” must hang alongside him on the cross, but the experience of doing so is described, not as painful, but as filled with ecstatic sweetness and love: “Ah Jesus, so sweet it is to hang with you. For when I look on you who hang beside me,

your great sweetness snatches me strongly from pain.”<sup>26</sup> Although students used analogies to pop songs and other modern genres to make sense of various aspects of “The Wooing,” many were quite taken aback by the erotically charged religiosity its original performers practiced.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, I stressed that we too, like the original performers of “The Wooing,” enact emotion-scripts designed to solicit compassion. Singer’s essay, which asks us to imagine every decision to buy new shoes as tantamount to our failing to save a drowning child, provides a powerful example of the import and efficacy of such modern emotion-scripts. Like “The Wooing,” Singer’s hypothetical thought experiment (or meditation) is designed to generate compassion for the suffering of people who are otherwise out of sight and therefore out of mind. Despite the plethora of communicative technologies available to us today, such modern-day affective meditations remain crucial to ethical praxis. When asked to provide their own examples of compassion-soliciting emotion-scripts, students discussed heart-rending television commercials from organizations such as St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital and the ASPCA, social media images depicting the suffering of Syrian refugees, documentary exposés such as *Blackfish* and hip-hop songs depicting the struggles of the urban poor. Although they noticed that such modern emotion-scripts are designed to generate compassion to fuel political action, rather than religious devotion, students also acknowledged that many modern overtly religious texts suggest—as does Jesus himself (Matthew 25.40)—that compassion for Christ’s suffering ought to fuel efforts to alleviate that of the living poor and hungry.

Where our first class on “The Wooing” focused on markedly private performances of enclosed nuns, our second class on the York “Crucifixion” play focused on elaborately staged, public spectacles designed to both perform and inspire compassion for Christ’s suffering on the cross. I began the class by outlining the liturgical origin, ambitious scope and original performance practices of Corpus Christi cycle dramas of which the York cycle is a prominent

example. If they were less than thrilled to learn the basic definition of the medieval guild, students were duly impressed to learn the sardonic humor underlying the fact that the Pinner put on the “Crucifixion” play. I shared with them Sharon Arson-Lehavi’s thesis that the actor playing Christ attempted to actually *live* the pain of the crucifixion (rather than merely simulating it), thereby anticipating Bertolt Brecht’s notion of “total acting.”<sup>28</sup> Students remarked insightfully both on Christ’s relative silence throughout the play and the degree to which his few lines overtly demand a compassionate response: “All men that walk by way or street,/ Take heed—ye shall trevail tine—/Behold mine head, mine hands, my feet,/ And fully feel now eye ye fine/ If any mourning may be meet/ Or mischief measured unto mine” [“All men that walk by road or street,/ Take heed, you shall miss none of your labour./ Behold my head, my hands, my feet,/ And fully feel now before you pass,/ If any mourning may be equal,/ Or misfortune measured against mine.”]<sup>29</sup> Again, I asked students to not only appreciate the radical alterity of a culture so unified by a Christian ideology of compassion, but also to recognize the queer continuities between medieval cultures of compassion and our own.<sup>30</sup> Of course, it did not take them long to mention Mel Gibson’s massively successful *The Passion of the Christ*, which naturally led into a discussion of the relation of Christian compassion and anti-Semitism that segued neatly (if sadly) into our discussion of the Prioress’ portrait, “Prologues” and “Tale.”

After a brief introduction to Chaucer and *The Canterbury Tales*, we moved on to a careful analysis of the Prioress’ portrait in the “General Prologue,”<sup>31</sup> the heavy-handed irony of which begs us to question, not whether or not the Prioress is compassionate, but whether or not her compassion is ethical (or, at least, as ethical as it could be). Chaucer’s narrator tells us that the Prioress directs compassion towards mice caught in traps and her hungry lapdogs.<sup>32</sup> If compassion also drives her to help the poor and hungry, we certainly do not hear about it. Chaucer’s portrait of the Prioress, therefore, characterizes its subject as prone to misdirected

compassion, which aptly prepares us for a Tale that simultaneously solicits compassion for Christian suffering and sadistic enjoyment of Jewish suffering. Sadly (for a certain audience at least), this obviously hateful tale leaves the Canterbury pilgrims all too impressed, immersed in a haze of wondrous sobriety.<sup>33</sup> Thankfully, my students were quite a bit more overtly critical of the “Prioress’ Tale” than the Canterbury pilgrims. One student pointed out that the harsh legalism with which the Christian sovereign punishes the Jews—“Therefore with wilde hors he dide hem drawe,/ And after that he heng hem by the lawe” [“Therefore with wild horses he had them torn apart/ And after that he hanged them by the law”]<sup>34</sup>—is ironically discordant with the ideal of mercy medieval Christians upheld to differentiate them from Jews. Some students argued that Chaucer’s Prioress embodies medieval culture’s idealization of compassion, but Chaucer’s parodic treatment of her registers a certain distrust for unethically directed compassion, while others contended that both Chaucer and his Prioress indulge in anti-Semitic enjoyment in proliferating this popular tale.

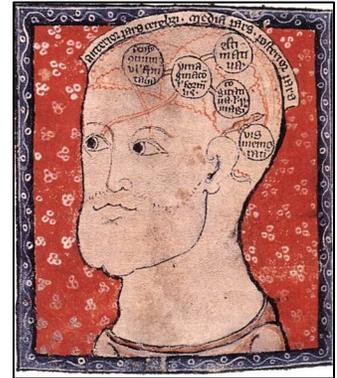
Unsurprisingly, some among the former group of students drew analogies between the Prioress and Mel Gibson, also known for intermingling zealous Christian compassion and not-so-subtle anti-Semitism. We agreed that many groups conjure compassion to justify sadistic hatred of another group. For example, one student remarked that a great deal of contemporary jingoistic emotion-scripts justify Islamophobic rhetoric by soliciting compassion for the victims of terrorism or U.S. troops abroad. Another student wrote an insightful final paper comparing the “Prioress’ Tale” to the Wounded Warrior Project,<sup>35</sup> which produces emotion-scripts designed to solicit compassion for wounded U.S. soldiers, but conspicuously avoids soliciting compassion for the suffering of Muslims wounded in the same conflict. She was one of eight students in my thirty-five-student class who chose to devote her final paper to comparing medieval and modern compassion-soliciting emotion-scripts. Although the majority of the modern emotion-scripts these

papers examined were made by secular organizations such as UNICEF, one student compared the texts that she read during her religious upbringing in an evangelical Protestant church to “The Wooing of Our Lord,” remarking that the former texts solicited a similar (though markedly less erotic) compassion for Christ’s Passion.

Upon a generous reading, medieval emotion-scripts designed to inspire compassion for Christ’s suffering enhanced their performers’ capacity for compassion and, in so doing, fueled their subsequent compassion for actual, living people. Upon a less generous reading, medieval Christians not only ironically ignored the suffering of others by conjuring compassion for a long dead Christ, but also channeled that compassion’s emotive energy into a zealous anti-Semitism. During the opening weeks of “Feeling Medieval,” I tried to equip students with both the generous and the less generous readings of medieval cultures of compassion, prompting them to think critically about compassion’s complex relation to their day-to-day ethical decisions. More generally, I tried to impress upon them that they must be vigilantly skeptical of discourses on compassion without relieving them of the responsibility of figuring out what it means to cultivate, engage, and critically direct compassion. Is the appropriate object of compassion rats in traps, lap dogs, Jewish gurus who died more than two thousand years ago, drowning children or starving Africans? Does directing our compassion towards one object enhance or exhaust our ability to direct it at others? Instead of telling them where they should direct their compassion, I challenged them to determine for themselves how compassion already informs their ethical decisions and how it might inform them differently in the future. By not only teaching, but also assigning medieval practices of ethical meditation, I tried, not to make students more emotionally intelligent, but to make them better practitioners of emotional ethics.

#### APPENDIX I: FEELING MEDIEVAL COURSE SYLLABUS

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** A great deal of medieval English literature devotes itself to exploring the complex, mind-body process through which our emotional judgments about the world around us inform our ethical decisions about how to behave well and vice versa. In their literature, medieval folks wrestled with complex, humanist issues pertaining to how we ought to manage and learn from emotions including anger, anxiety, shame, bliss, envy, love and hate. Middle English literature, therefore, has much to teach us, not only about how the denizens of medieval England constructed communities centered on shared emotions, but also how we continue to do so today and might do so differently in the future.



Each week of class will focus on a specific emotion as it's treated in a specific Middle English text or genre, reading it alongside modern philosophies of emotion in order to explore how the medieval past continues to shape our emotional identities and communities.

**GRADE BREAKDOWN:** attendance and participation (10%), reading journal (15%), midterm examination (25%), final examination (25%), research-paper (25%)

**ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:** Attendance is taken at the beginning of class. Any absences will adversely affect your attendance and participation grade. Attendance alone will not earn you an “A” for this portion of your grade. In order to earn an “A (-),” you must also frequently, meaningfully and respectfully participate in class discussions and activities.

**READING JOURNAL:** In order to succeed in this class, you must do the assigned reading before class. The reading journal is designed to ensure that you have read and reflected upon the assigned reading before coming to class. Before every class for which there is reading assigned (starting this Wednesday), you must email me a word document 200-word reflection that 1) summarizes the reading to the best of your ability and 2) discusses how the reading's take on emotion and ethics is similar to and/or different from your own.



**RESEARCH-PAPER:** You will compose a 6–7-page research-paper on a topic related to the class. Your paper will use the course material and other sources to make a unique argument about what the philosophies of emotional ethics in Middle English literature can teach us about how to better inhabit our own world and culture. You are expected to substantially engage at least two works of Middle English literature assigned in class and at least one other medieval or modern work dealing with emotion and ethics not assigned in class.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF EMOTIONS**

1/4: Introductions

1/6: Sarah McNamer's "Feeling" pp. 1–10; "The Wooing of Our Lord"; Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

#### WEEK 2: THE OBJECTS AND LIMITS OF COMPASSION

1/11: York Mystery Cycle's "The Crucifixion of Christ"

1/13: Geoffrey Chaucer's The Prioress' Prologue and Tale from *The Canterbury Tales*<sup>36</sup>

#### WEEK 3: RIGHTEOUS ANGER MANAGEMENT

1/18: No class, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

1/13: "The Confession of the Seven Deadly Sins" from the A and B Versions of *Piers Plowman* (reader);<sup>37</sup> "Readings on the Peasants' Revolt of 1381"<sup>38</sup>

#### WEEK 4: BETTER LIVING THROUGH DREAD

1/25: Julian of Norwich's "Four Types of Fear" (Short Text); Julian of Norwich's "Four Types of Fear" (Long Text);<sup>39</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe*;<sup>40</sup> "An Epistle of Prayer"<sup>41</sup>

1/27: *Piers Plowman* A.10; *Piers Plowman* B.9; *Piers Plowman* C.10;<sup>42</sup> Brome "Abraham and Isaac";<sup>43</sup> *A Treatise on Playing Miracles*<sup>44</sup>

#### WEEK 5: COURTING WONDER AND SURVIVING SHAME

2/1: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Fitts I and II

2/3: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Fitts III and IV;<sup>45</sup> McNamer "Feeling" pp. 11–17<sup>46</sup>

#### WEEK 6: MIDTERM

2/8: No reading. In-class midterm review: Jeopardy!

2/10: In-class midterm examination

#### WEEK 7: HEAVENLY BLISS AND EARTHLY ENVY

2/15: No class, Presidents' Day

2/17: *Pearl*<sup>47</sup>

#### WEEK 8: COURTLY LOVE

2/22: Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* Books I-III

2/24: Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* Books IV-V<sup>48</sup>

#### WEEK 9: TEARS AND LAUGHTER

2/29: *The Book of Margery Kempe*;<sup>49</sup> Thomas Malory's "The Healing of Sir Urry" from *Le Morte Darthur*<sup>50</sup>

3/2: Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales*<sup>51</sup>

#### WEEK 10: FAREWELL AND FINAL

3/7: No reading. In-class final review: Jeopardy!

3/9: In-class final examination

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Beldoch, "Sensitivity to Expression of Emotional Meaning in Three Modes of Communication," in *The Communication of Emotional Meaning*, edited by J.R. Davitz et al. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 31–42.

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More Than IQ* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), 3–12. Goleman’s concept of emotional intelligence has met with substantial criticism in the field of psychology. See, for example, Edwin A. Locke, “Why Emotional Intelligence is an Invalid Concept,” *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 26.4 (2005) [425–31].

<sup>3</sup> For an account of the neoliberalization of the contemporary university and the concomitant devaluing of the humanities, as well as a stunning plan for the survival of the Liberal Arts, see L.O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Staying Alive: A Survival Manual for the Liberal Arts* (Brooklyn: punctum books, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano, “Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind” *Science* 342.6156 (2013) [377–380].

<sup>5</sup> For contemporary pejorative accounts of the rebels see Henry Knighton, *The Chronicle of Henry Knighton*, edited and translated by G.H. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), (fol. 174<sup>r</sup>); Thomas Walsingham, *The St. Albans Chronicle: The Chronica maiora of Thomas Walsingham: Volume I*, edited by John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs and Leslie Watkiss (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), fol. 287<sup>r</sup> and John Gower, *Vox Clamantis*, in *The Complete Works of John Gower: Volume IV*, edited G.C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 20–81. For a more favorable, modern account of the 1381 Rising, see Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For an account of the Rebels’ rhetoric of righteous anger see Paul Megna, “Langland’s Wrath: Righteous Anger Management in *The Vision of Piers Plowman*,” *Exemplaria* 25.2 (2013) [130–151].

<sup>6</sup> For a definition of the term “emotional communities” as “social groups whose members adhere to the same valuation of emotions and their expression,” see Barbara Rosenwein, “Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions,” *Passions in Context* 1 (2010) [1–32], 1.

<sup>7</sup> Although I much prefer the term “emotional literacy,” it also tempts us to sort society into a spectrum of emotional competences. See Claude Steiner, “Emotional Literacy,” *Transactional Analysis Journal* 14 (1984) [162–73].

<sup>8</sup> Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2003), 155.

<sup>9</sup> Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, 156–57.

<sup>10</sup> Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1999), 66–67.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 11–14.

<sup>12</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of the Emotions*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 19–88.

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<sup>13</sup> See the Appendix for the course syllabus. Unlike the units on love/hate and laughter/tears, those on bliss/envy and wonder/shame did not posit these dyads as diametric oppositions, but instead explored the often-surprising ways that their components are juxtaposed in the medieval texts under discussion.

<sup>14</sup> McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive introduction to “affective piety,” see its Wikipedia page, available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affective\\_piety](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affective_piety). Although its production was, of course, a collective effort, the entry’s extremely comprehensive account of the scholarship surrounding affective piety is largely due to the efforts of Mary Agnes Edsall. For a definition of the “structure of feeling,” see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128–35.

<sup>16</sup> For a popular introduction to neuroplasticity, see Norman Doidge, *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* (New York: Penguin, 2007), xv, 97–98. For a more philosophical take on its implications, see Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brains?*, translated by Sebastian Rand (New York: Fordham UP, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953), 219–258.

<sup>18</sup> McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 8–85, 110–119. For a dissenting position, see Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 12, which asserts “affective piety is at its foundation neither female- nor lay-oriented.”

<sup>19</sup> See Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); and *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), which influentially assert that medieval women responded to anti-feminist discourses that associated them with the sins of the flesh by powerfully aligning themselves with Christ’s corporeality. See also David Aers, “The Humanity of Christ: Reflections of Orthodox Late Medieval Representations,” in *Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture* (College Park: The Pennsylvania State UP, 1996) [15–42], 30–34. Arguing against what he calls Bynum’s “empowerment hypothesis,” Aers counters with his “disempowerment hypothesis,” which holds that affective devotional practices actually disempowered women and the laity in general.

<sup>20</sup> E.g., Kathleen Biddick, “Genders, Bodies, Borders: Technologies of the Visible,” *Speculum* 68.2 (1993) [389–419], 397; and Amy Hollywood, “Feminist Studies,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Arthur Holder (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005) [363–86].

<sup>21</sup> “The Wooing of Our Lord,” in *Anchoretic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, edited by Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (New York: Paulist Press, 1991) [245–258]; Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1.3 (1972) [229–43]; “The York Play of the Crucifixion,” in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume 1*, 8th edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006) [398–406]; Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by

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Larry D. Benson, 3rd edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 25–26, 208–13.

<sup>22</sup> As an introduction to “The Wooing,” students read both Nicholas Watson’s short introduction to their edition in *Anchoretic Spirituality*, 245–47; and McNamer’s brilliant reading of “The Wooing” as an emotion-script in Sarah McNamer, “Feeling,” in *Middle English: Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature*, edited by Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) [241–57], 249–50.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, <http://www.oldwillingham.com/History/SMAS/Lander/image001.jpg>; [http://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/anchorites/pic\\_9.jpg](http://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/anchorites/pic_9.jpg); and [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f3/Anchorites\\_Skipton.JPG](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f3/Anchorites_Skipton.JPG).

<sup>24</sup> On the claustrophilia, see Cary Howe, *Claustrophilia: The Erotics of Enclosure in Medieval Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> On the erotics of the anchoritic lifestyle, see Lara Farina, *Erotic Discourse and Early English Religious Writing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> “The Wooing of Our Lord,” 256.

<sup>27</sup> If the erotic religiosity of “The Wooing” is jarring for a modern audience, it is not altogether foreign to our culture. Although I opted against sharing with students excerpts from “Christian Rock Hard” an episode of *South Park* in which Eric Cartman composes Christian rock songs expressing an intensely erotic love for Jesus, I profoundly regret doing so.

<sup>28</sup> Sharon Aronson-Lehavi, *Street Scenes: Late Medieval Acting and Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 115–26.

<sup>29</sup> “The York Play of the Crucifixion,” 9, ll. 253–58.

<sup>30</sup> For examples of a queer historiography attentive to past’s infinitely multifaceted impingement on the present, see Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); and Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 25–26, ll. 118–62.

<sup>32</sup> Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 25–26, ll. 144–50.

<sup>33</sup> Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 212, ll. 691–92.

<sup>34</sup> Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 211, ll. 633–34.

<sup>35</sup> Although I was unaware at the time of the class, the Wounded Warrior Project has been discredited as fraudulent.

<sup>36</sup> For citations of these readings, see Note 20 above.

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<sup>37</sup> William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The A Version*, edited by Míceál F. Vaughan (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 80–87; *Piers Plowman* [B Version], edited by Elizabeth Robertson (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 62–97.

<sup>38</sup> “The Uprising of 1381,” *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Norton Topics Online*. Available at [https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/middleages/topic\\_1/uprise.htm](https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/middleages/topic_1/uprise.htm).

<sup>39</sup> Julian of Norwich, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, edited by Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 117–19 (Short Text); 355–59 (Long Text).

<sup>40</sup> Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, edited by Barry Windeatt (D.S. Brewer: Cambridge, 2004), 118–23.

<sup>41</sup> “A Pistel of Preier,” in *Deonise Hid Devinite, and Other Treatises on Contemplative Prayer Related to the Cloud of Unknowing*, edited by Phyllis Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 49–59.

<sup>42</sup> Langland, *Piers Plowman: The A Version*, 111–16; *Piers Plowman* [B Version], 128–35; *Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C Version*, edited by Derek Pearsall (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008), 193–97.

<sup>43</sup> *The Brome Play of Abraham and Isaac*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Available at: [https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/noa/pdf/13BromePlay\\_1\\_12.pdf](https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/noa/pdf/13BromePlay_1_12.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> Translation in Aronson Lehari, *Street Scenes*, 128–44.

<sup>45</sup> *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, edited and translated by James Winny (Orchard Park: Broadview, 1992).

<sup>46</sup> See Note 21 above.

<sup>47</sup> *Pearl*, in *The Complete Works of the Pearl-Poet*, edited by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1993), 44–101.

<sup>48</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, edited by Stephen Barney (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006).

<sup>49</sup> Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 332–85.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Malory, “The Healing of Sir Urry,” in *Complete Works*, edited by Eugene Vinaver (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971), 663–69.

<sup>51</sup> Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 68–77.

