

movingly in her own article—*El caballero de Olmedo* could not be abstracted from the early modern world of its creation. *Comedias* bring with them the capacity for new life, yet Birmingham shows that they also harbor an old magic whose power has not been extinguished.

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**Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England.** By Allison P. Hobgood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014; pp. x + 236. \$99.99 cloth, \$80 e-book.

**The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare.** By Steven Mullaney. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015; pp. x + 231, 1 illustration. \$35 cloth, \$35 e-book.  
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What do we talk about when we talk about affect? Conversations about emotions, senses, and bodies are currently flourishing across disciplines and periods, but these terms signal different meanings, and reflect different investments, to different readers. Critics exploring affect in early modern theatre might agree that the stage represents a privileged site for conjoining bodies, minds, words, and feelings. We might also agree that open-air amphitheatres offered more sensory cues than our own darkened halls, and that early theatregoing habits gave audiences more active roles than our own social codes allow. Yet we draw different conclusions about what a given set of texts and circumstances can tell us about how, why, and to what ends plays moved their audiences.

Recent conversations about early modern emotions have taken their cues especially from the legacy of Galenic medicine, in which changeable liquid humors course through receptive bodies and animate them with feeling. Humoral readings vary in premises and goals, but typically share some common foundations—often historicist, materialist, and/or feminist. Recently, critics restless with this model have turned to varying forms of intellectual history, especially theological, to propose alternative accounts of how and why early moderns experienced emotions; just as evolving understandings of Greek medicine shaped conceptions of what people felt and how, so too did the shock waves that reverberated from the Protestant Reformation. In two recent books, Allison P. Hobgood and Steven Mullaney illustrate some important commonalities and distinctions between humoral and theological approaches to understanding emotions in early modern theatres, taking different routes to arrive at some strikingly similar ideas about the reciprocal affective exchanges through which the period's plays and audiences shaped each other.

In *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England*, Hobgood builds on studies of early modern humoral thought to explore “the feeling bodies of

Renaissance theatergoers” (4). Drawing on a model of affective contagion, she argues that audiences not only absorbed the emotions of the plays they watched, but actively contributed to them; far from passive consumers, “playgoers transformed drama even as they were transformed by it” (33). Playwrights, in Hobgood’s model, explicitly acknowledge and engineer these reciprocal exchanges, developing metatheatrical scenes of spectatorship in order to direct, disrupt, and dramatize audiences’ emotional reactions. Although she takes her primary critical foundation from humoral accounts of early modern bodies and emotions, Hobgood’s emphasis on playgoers’ active roles also reflects growing scholarly interest in the collaborative nature of early modern London’s theatre community. Far from self-contained textual entities, plays acquire their meanings from the collective agencies not only of coauthors, actors, company members, and backstage laborers, but also of those who came to watch, cheer, jeer, weep, laugh, and feel.

Hobgood’s argument is appealing, and makes intuitive sense; actors know that audiences shape performances, and playgoers themselves recognize how others’ reactions affect their experiences. As she acknowledges, we have little specific information about how early modern playgoers reacted to plays; her readings, rooted in the plays’ own depictions of emotional responses, are accordingly speculative, but she makes her cases cogently and persuasively. Different plays invite different emotional responses, and Hobgood explores a range of affective strategies in her chapters. Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* forces audiences to wrestle with the experience of fear and dramatizes its potential dangers; Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* establishes crucial parameters for the revenge tragedy genre by engaging playgoers in the grief and mourning that spur its culminating violence. Thomas Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness* dramatizes the threats of capitulating to unruly affections, and *Twelfth Night* forces us to wrestle with the experience of humiliation. Ben Jonson’s *Volpone* shows the catalytic effect of a warmly appreciative audience—and the risks of overestimating one’s control over an audience’s reaction. As these capsule summaries suggest, Hobgood focuses primarily on the painful, rather than pleasurable, consequences of play-going, prompting questions about why audiences would willingly, even eagerly, surrender themselves to uncomfortable emotional experiences. Her thoughtful readings suggest that playgoers recognized and appreciated the ways plays depended on their unscripted and unpredictable responses.

In *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare*, Steven Mullaney shares many of Hobgood’s claims, but differs in his explanatory principles. Like Hobgood, he emphasizes “the social and intersubjective dynamics of early modern performance” (50) and assigns audiences a central role in shaping theatrical experience: “[T]he play is produced and consumed,” he writes, “by an audience in collaboration with a playwright and a company of actors” (50). Yet despite this similar sense of an affective reciprocity at the heart of theatrical performance, Mullaney turns to particular historical factors to understand the moving forces that early modern audiences brought into playhouses. As his title suggests, his book identifies the Protestant Reformation as the crucial epistemic shift behind radical changes in early modern emotional experience. Adapting Patrick

Collinson's emphasis on the period's radical theological uncertainty, he suggests that Elizabethans "did not know what to *believe*, whether in terms of their own faith or the spiritual identities of those around them, and that they also, perhaps even as a consequence, did not know what or how to *feel*" (16, emphasis in original). Gradually eliding the "perhaps," Mullaney goes on to argue that the historical trauma of abandoning Catholicism fundamentally shaped the affective investments of plays and the audience members who animated them. Plays do not present answers to the problems of religious schism, but as "a form of embodied social thought" (6), they show the workings of collective reflections on these problems.

Mullaney's argument is persuasive, beautifully written, and often moving. He is at his best when tracing ambivalent early modern responses to the ghosts of unacknowledged affective pasts that haunt the theatre. Playwrights' explicit engagements of these ghosts suggests, to him, "that the drama of post-Reformation England served as a kind of affective laboratory ... designed to test and explore the affective faultlines that ran deep in its large and diverse audience" (49). Early revenge tragedies such as *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* both elicit audiences' affective reactions and challenge them with forms of alienation and irony; the plays in Shakespeare's first history tetralogy explore memory, forgetting, and trauma through probing loss and its consequences.

Although Mullaney eloquently demonstrates the contributions of religious change to conversations about early modern emotions, he deliberately separates his claims from others' contributions by dismissing Galenic readings. Elaborating on his account of emotions as social and transactional, he insists that feelings are "neither humoral nor hormonal, even though humors and hormones have often been thought, at different historical moments and regimes of medicine, to play a role in the workings of the emotions" (56). But why should these models be mutually exclusive? Many would argue that feelings are always both social and somatic, rooted simultaneously in minds, bodies, souls, and experiences. Mullaney usefully describes plays as "idioms of affect" or some of "the many kinds of stories we tell to ourselves, about ourselves, and for ourselves when we want to make sense of our collective as well as individual selves" (20). Yet he is reluctant to count the language and assumptions of Greek medicine as constituting other forms of these stories—alternative idioms that provided early moderns with additional ways to make sense of themselves. This seems short-sighted; the social and medical fictions of the Galenic idiom in no way contradict or detract from his own model, and their complex interactions with religious thought suggest valuable directions for further probing.

Reading Hobgood and Mullaney alongside each other highlights both the liveliness and the tensions inherent in current conversations about emotions. Their commonalities, as well as their differences, suggest that in the realm of emotion, as in other areas of literary, social, and intellectual history, taking seriously the friction and overlaps between classical and Christian systems of belief will offer the most fruitful veins of inquiry. In their insights into the potent agency

of audiences, and the reciprocal construction of emotions in playhouses, both offer substantial payoffs for our current investments in thinking through affect.

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**Dramatic Spaces: Scenography and Spectatorial Perceptions.** By Jennifer A. Low. London and New York: Routledge, 2016; pp. xi + 207, 16 illustrations. \$145 cloth, \$54.95 e-book.

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Discourse on scenography tends to divide among a limited number of species: historical survey, documentation of a particular artist's work, or divining contemporary trends in the field. There are exceptions to the rule, with cross-historical texts that examine the larger role scenography plays in the construction of theatre and performance history—Arnold Aronson's *Looking into the Abyss*, Marvin Carlson's *Places of Performance*, Una Chaudhuri's *Staging Place*, and Greg Giesekam's *Staging the Screen*, to name a few. Jennifer A. Low's *Dramatic Spaces* takes a decidedly interdisciplinary and intertextual approach. The author mobilizes playtexts, contemporary criticism and ephemera, art and philosophical histories, critical theory, and, when available, performance documentation, all in an effort to understand the matrix of forces at work in shaping the creation and spectating of performance. The chronological frame of the book is just as ambitious, with examples ranging from Plautus's *The Menaechmi* to David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*. Low's structure and evidence are clear, so even when a surprising new voice or piece of evidence is introduced, its place is immediately discernable. Low writes in the introduction, "I assert the primacy of spatiality, its centrality to the relation among performers and audience members, even shaping the choices of the playwright" (2), and sets a course for a complex set of considerations in how theatre is both produced and consumed by the space that sets and blurs the lines between audience members and performers.

To maintain focus in such a large project, Low frames the work as phenomenological encounter, for herself as a historian and for the subjects she studies. Frequent citations of Gay McAuley, Keir Elam, and Stanton B. Garner establish a clear tradition and approach to meaning making through scholarship. The significance of where bodies are onstage in relation to the play's themes, for example, dominate discussions of "penetration" in Ford's *Tis Pity She's a Whore* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (51). While such imagery has been discussed at length with regard to textual analysis, Low brings the text to the potential uses of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stages, considering the visuality of the *locus* and *platea* both for staging the theme as well as implicating the audience in the act of looking, so that "crowds and (ultimately) the whole stage come to 'stand in' for a body" (61). A number of scholars have examined how stage and