Allison P. Hobgood tells a new story about the emotional experiences of theatergoers in Renaissance England. Through detailed case studies of canonical plays by Shakespeare, Jonson, Kyd, and Heywood, the reader will discover what it felt like to be part of performances in English theater and appreciate the key role theatergoers played in the life of early modern drama. How were spectators moved – by delight, fear, or shame, for example – and how did their own reactions in turn make an impact on stage performances? Addressing these questions and many more, this book discerns not just how theatergoers were altered by drama’s affective encounters, but how they were undeniable influences upon those encounters. Overall, Hobgood reveals a unique collaboration between the English world and stage, one that significantly reshapes the ways we watch, read and understand early modern drama.

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Dedicated to Fred, Alexa, and Harper, my three greatest passions
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Notes on the text

In citing early modern works (other than play editions) throughout the book, I have retained original spellings but, for clarity, modernized typography such that long $s$ is revised to $s$, consonantal $u$ and $i$ to $v$ and $j$, and vocalic $v$ to $u$. 