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978-1-107-04128-8 - *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England*

Allison P. Hobgood

Excerpt

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INTRODUCTION

Pondering playgoers

ANTONY

Thy heart is big. Get thee apart and weep.
 Passion, I see, is catching, for mine eyes,
 Seeing those beads of sorrow stand in thine,
 Began to water.

*Julius Caesar*¹

This book takes quite seriously Mark Antony's worry in the above epigraph that "passion," or emotion, is "catching." In the monologue preceding this angst-ridden command, Antony begs Caesar's pardon for being "meek and gentle with these butchers" (3.1 258) and rails against the "hand that shed this costly blood" (261). Guilty and angry over Caesar's death, he curses the "limbs of men" (265) and makes ready to "let slip the dogs of war" (276). Just seconds later, Octavius's man enters the stage and, prompted by the stunning discovery of Caesar's newly murdered body, cries out "O Caesar!" (284). The servant's exclamation and overwhelming passion begin to move Antony, in barely a moment, from prophesies of blood and destruction to deep sadness. Antony experiences an almost instantaneous emotional transformation incited by his encounter with Octavius's affected servant. Fearful that the servant's tears will spur his own, Antony orders Octavius's man to "Get thee apart and weep" (285). For Antony, even "seeing" the servant's "beads of sorrow" (287) might summon the same response in him.

What might it mean, I wonder throughout *Passionate Playgoing*, that, upon encountering another's sadness, Antony metamorphoses from a man bent on conjuring Caesar's spirit "ranging for revenge" (273) into the weeping embodiment of a "mourning Rome" (291). What are the implications of his emotional transformation for a practice like Renaissance playgoing

¹ This epigraph appears in William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* in S. Greenblatt, W. Cohen, J. E. Howard, and K. Eisanman Maus (eds.), *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 1525–90, 3.1 285–88.

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so bound up in the performance and provoking of passions? How were spectators to staged affect moved, like Antony in *Julius Caesar*, towards comparable feelings, often in spite of their predispositions towards those feelings? Most crucially, what part did theatergoers play in the emotional life of Renaissance drama; how did their affectivity impact the stage? Antony's certainty that emotions are acutely transmissible – that embodied affect can stimulate similar affect in another – undergirds my exploration of Renaissance playgoing and the emotional experiences of spectators at the turn of the seventeenth century. Following the early modern assumption that passions indeed are catching, *Passionate Playgoing* supposes a dangerously vibrant affective interplay between theatergoers and the English Renaissance stage. In discerning how playgoers were altered by encounters with “catchable” dramatic affect and likewise were undeniable influences upon those encounters, this book uncovers an emotional collaboration and reciprocity between world and stage that significantly reshapes the ways we watch, read, and understand early modern drama.

To date, few scholars have examined early modern playgoing from the perspective of playgoers themselves.² Not surprisingly, a certain amount of reluctance has surrounded the task of imagining what it might have felt like to attend Elizabethan or Jacobean theater. There are at least two sensibilities, Bruce Smith usefully argues, that lead current scholarship to ignore the feelings and sensations of early modern audiences: “They are the possessions of individuals ... and hence cannot be generalized,” and moreover, “they cannot be written.”³ To be sure, plenty of admirable work has recreated for us the precise material conditions of early modern playgoing. Seminal stage and performance histories have illuminated, among other things, the kinds of spectators in attendance, their costuming, their habits, even their interface with early modern actors.⁴ Unfortunately though, I contend, a seeming dearth of what some New Historicist scholars might call “necessary evidence” has prohibited us from exploring another key aspect of early modern theater: the embodied experiences of those spectators.⁵

² One important, recent exception to this dearth is Charles Whitney's *Early Responses to Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³ B. Smith, *Phenomenal Shakespeare* (Chichester, UK; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 7.

⁴ See especially A. Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), J. E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), A. Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), and J. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark; London: University of Delaware Press; Associated University Presses, 1985).

⁵ Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton surmise that contemporary literary historicism “has grown far more fact-oriented and precise. Historicist criticism has, at the same time, grown less

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While my methodology owes much to New Historicism, *Passionate Playgoing* nonetheless acts as a rejoinder to that mode's sometimes inflexible demand for archival documentation of literary-historical phenomena, or what Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt call "a touch of the real."⁶ Certain important phenomena like the feeling of playgoing can elude obvious record, especially when that record primarily took shape in an evolving print culture that rarely incorporated the actual voices of less educated, often illiterate participants; very little pertaining to playgoers' felt encounters with drama has been preserved in the "official" record of Renaissance theater. With these pressing silences in mind, my book aims to rectify the way critical study has avoided early modern audience experience because of its supposedly unverifiable nature: "invisible things," as Toni Morrison aptly puts it in her recovery of African American literary traditions, "are not necessarily 'not there.'"⁷

As I outline just below, I take up existing historical "proof" of early modern emotion, drama, and performance to give shape to a virtually unrecorded story of how playgoers cultivated and determined the affective power of theater.⁸ One of my primary goals in *Passionate Playgoing* is to recover early modern spectatorship – specifically the formally undocumented feelings and sensations of playgoers – as worthy of pursuit, and to establish this pursuit as, in its own right, invested in "a confident conviction of reality."⁹ In other words, I am concerned with a new, less overtly accessible kind of material history in theater. I want, as modern social theorist Brian Massumi remarks, to "put matter unmediatedly back into cultural materialism, along with what seem[s] most directly corporeal back into the body."¹⁰ *Passionate Playgoing* functions as a study that widens the

speculative (or perhaps less sophisticated) in drawing connections between text and context"; moreover, they contend that "if we maintain a blinkered pursuit of evidence, we run the danger of simply doing history, with the potential of doing it badly"; *Rethinking Historicism From Shakespeare to Milton* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6. See also M. Garber, "Historical Correctness: The Use and Abuse of History for Literature," in *A Manifesto for Literary Studies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 3–25.

⁶ C. Gallagher and S. Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 31.

⁷ T. Morrison, "Unspeaking Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 28.1 (Winter 1989), 11.

⁸ For more on what counts as "evidence" and the nature of empiricism in historical scholarship, see M. McKeon, "Theory and Practice in Historical Method," in *Rethinking Historicism*, 40–64.

⁹ C. Gallagher and S. Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, 31. On theatergoing as "a multi-sensory experience" that can be traced in surviving plays, see F. Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare's Theatre and the Effects of Performance* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2013), 3.

¹⁰ B. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 4. On "the texture of lived experience," see B. Smith, "Afterword," in T. Pollard and K. Craik, *Shakespearean Sensations* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 210.

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scope of what performance matter counts as “legitimate” material, and in this case, the materials that matter to me most are the feeling bodies of Renaissance theatergoers.¹¹

My unabashed interest in “unclear and indistinct matters” like “sensations, feelings, emotions, [and] aesthetic pleasure”¹² situates *Passionate Playgoing* in a growing body of work on historical phenomenology of the early modern period.¹³ The book assumes, like these other texts, that although we can never be at the center of what Smith calls “an inter-subjective ‘field of perception,’” we can still “[project] ourselves into the historically reconstructed field of perception as far as we are able.”¹⁴ I second Smith’s contention that the “subjective experience of poems and plays written 400 years ago can be approached from the outside in culturally specific and politically aware terms,” and that while “we may not be able to understand such experience in the literal sense of standing under or within it, [we] can at least carefully examine and consider it.”¹⁵ In contrast to other phenomenological work in the period, however, *Passionate Playgoing* takes on a very different subjective experience; the field of perception most crucial to my endeavor is located at the incredibly porous periphery between the Renaissance stage and its audiences and in the dynamic emotional interfaces that arise in the midst of this “in-between-ness.”¹⁶ As I broach something affectively distinct from, say, Gail Kern Paster’s interest in the early modern body’s embarrassments or Cynthia Marshall’s concern with its psychic fracture and undoing, I examine feeling early modern bodies to uncover the ways

¹¹ My commitment to a new kind of materialism is motivated in part by studies like Gina Bloom’s *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), which radically returns the body to voice studies.

¹² B. Smith, *Phenomenal*, 7.

¹³ For example, G. Kern Paster, K. Rowe, and M. Floyd-Wilson, *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); M. Floyd-Wilson and G. Sullivan, *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); M. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); K. Craik, *Reading Sensations in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave, 2007); C. Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); D. Hillman, *Shakespeare’s Entrails: Belief, Scepticism and the Interior of the Body* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and J. Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and B. Smith, *Phenomenal*.

¹⁴ B. Smith, *Phenomenal*, 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xvi. Paster, Rowe, and Floyd-Wilson argue similarly but specifically about the study of emotions in history; see their introduction to *Reading the Early Modern Passions*.

¹⁶ I borrow this term and sentiment from Melissa Gregg and Greg Seigworth in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 1.

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they forced drama to reckon with and acknowledge their significant role in making sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English theater emotionally meaningful.¹⁷

In considering the phenomenological experience of Renaissance playgoing, *Passionate Playgoing* works to counter anxieties about how we might “prove” audience engagement and, even more so, properly hypothesize and historicize feeling.¹⁸ A broad, scholarly orientation towards affect in recent years absolutely confirms that emotion (and all its nuanced iterations: feeling, affect, sensation) can be articulated and theorized. While modern and postmodern theories of emotion lurk palimpsestically beneath this book’s surface, my work operates as a sort of back-story for these “infinitely multiple iterations of affect and theories of affect: theories as diverse and singularly delineated as their own highly particular encounters with bodies, affects, worlds.”¹⁹ In other words, I focus on possible encounters in a very particular world to imagine, in the context of early modern theatergoing, what Gregg and Seigworth might call a “new regime of sensation”;²⁰ and a reconstructive archeology²¹ of this new sensory regime brings with it an alternative set of questions and concerns to those taken up by scholars of modern affect. For one, the differences so troubling to contemporary theorists between “affect” and “emotion”²² – and their relationship to the mind versus the body – are less relevant to my study since the conception underlying that current debate is wholly post-Cartesian and, thereby, entrenched in a division between psychology and physiology, conscious

¹⁷ See G. Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); and C. Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*.

¹⁸ Cynthia Marshall argues that in contemporary Renaissance scholarship “too often the moment or event of textual response is evacuated, and meanings based upon the phenomenology of reading or viewing are eclipsed”; *Shattering of the Self*, 31. See also her introduction to the book, especially 5.

¹⁹ M. Gregg and G. Seigworth, *Affect Reader*, 4. See also T. Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); S. Tomkins and E. V. Demos, *Exploring Affect: The Selected Writings of Silvan S. Tomkins* (Cambridge, UK; New York; Paris: Cambridge University Press; Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1995); E. Kosofsky Sedgwick and A. Frank, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2003) and *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1995); and S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004) and *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); and B. Massumi, *Parables*.

²⁰ M. Gregg and G. Seigworth, *Affect Reader*, 340.

²¹ I borrow this wholly apposite phrase from Matthew Steggle in *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres* (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 4.

²² For a cogent example that traces the vexed relationship between affect and a post-Cartesian mind-body dualism, see Michael Hardt, “Foreword: What Affects are Good For,” in P. Clough and J. O’Malley Halley (eds.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

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feeling and unconscious sensation that was, as we see in what follows, only just barely coming to fruition in the early seventeenth century.²³

So while my ideas here are indebted to the “affective turn”²⁴ of late and to postmodern senses of affect as “potential” and emergent out of “muddy, unmediated relatedness”²⁵ between bodies and even things, *Passionate Playgoing* functions, in light of this more contemporary discourse, as a period-specific prequel concerned with theorizing emotion in more historically and culturally situated terms.²⁶ These terms differ significantly from our own Western, postmodern emotional terrain in which, as Paster rightly points out, we have experienced a “post-enlightenment dematerialization of psychological process.”²⁷ As I probe the feeling of early modern playgoing, I rematerialize – in order to blur – the post-Cartesian, post-Enlightenment line so often drawn between mind and body, psychology and physiology. My insistence upon a very particular kind of early modern embodiment reveals emotive spectators to be conscious, collaborative co-creators, alongside drama, of felt experience in Renaissance theater.²⁸ In *Passionate Playgoing*, playgoers are imagined as both respondents to and catalysts of intense, emotionally charged encounters between the world and the stage. Responsible for more than just the financial solvency, aesthetic choices, or cultural potency of the theater they attended, theatergoers, I maintain, had the capacity to transform drama just as they were transformed by it. I examine their vital partnership in making emotional meaning out of English theater in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.²⁹

²³ For more on this conceptual shift catalyzed in large part by publication of Rene Descartes’s *Passion of the Soul* (1649), see S. James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1997); D. Hillman and C. Mazzio, *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1997); A. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Putnam, 1994); and T. Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*.

²⁴ For more on this idea, see the introduction to P. Clough, *Affective Turn*.

²⁵ M. Gregg and G. Seigworth, *Affect Reader*, 1, 4.

²⁶ For a book with similar historicist interest and impulses, see D. Gross, *The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle’s Rhetoric to Modern Brain Science* (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

²⁷ G. Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 87. Michael Schoenfeldt clarifies: “Whereas our post-Cartesian ontology imagines psychological inwardness and physiological materialism as necessarily separate realms of existence ... the Galenic regime of the humoral self that supplies ... writers with much of their vocabulary of inwardness demanded the invasion of social and psychological realms by biological and environmental processes”; *Bodies and Selves*, 8.

²⁸ That is to say, I disagree with Kai Wiegand’s recent assessment that theater audiences do not participate in stage action; *Crowd and Rumour in Shakespeare* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012).

²⁹ For a very different but wonderfully apt examination of theatrical production as a mutual endeavor in which both “actors and audiences share in the work of the play” (134), see W. N. West, “Understanding in the Elizabethan Theaters,” *Renaissance Drama* 35 (2006), 113–43.

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In addition to provoking scholarly investment in impassioned Renaissance spectators, I offer in the pages that follow a psycho-physiological argument about playgoing that, in its attendant historicist impulses, aims to bridge conversational gaps between performance studies, cultural criticism, and theater history. As I explore what D. J. Hopkins calls the “interactions between performance and representation along with the material consequences of those interactions,”³⁰ I rely on all three aforementioned methodologies.³¹ With spectators at its core, this study is indebted to performance studies; but since the spectators at issue are early modern, its focus is historical; and yet my emphasis on the emotions of those spectators also requires an understanding of affect culled from broader cultural studies. In *Passionate Playgoing*, these methodologies work coincidentally, not competitively, using concern for the phenomenological experiences of early modern playgoers as the linchpin that unites them. My interdisciplinarity responds to the critique that theater histories, in particular, not only “demonstrate a preference for printed language over enacted performance by neglecting the affective, overwhelming aspects of theatre, [but that] they have also ignored the crucial role that audiences play in shaping theatrical events.”³² Audiences, I hope to show here, provide the vibrant locus for unearthing new stories about early modern theater and performance, stories that attend more overtly to the affective force of performance and the role of spectators in creating that force.

In their recent, groundbreaking collection *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558–1642*, Jennifer Low and Nova Myhill clarify how the study of audiences specifically fosters unique alliances across disciplines that *ought* to be conversant already:

if the audiences with which both cultural critics and theater historians work are imaginary creations, assemblages of ambiguous fragments of textual and external evidence, there is a great deal to be said for allowing these pieces of evidence to speak to each other, not in search of an answer, but to develop hypotheses that let us conceive of the early modern audience as a vital partner in the production of meaning in early modern England.³³

³⁰ D. J. Hopkins, *City/Stage/Globe: Performance and Space in Shakespeare's London* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 19.

³¹ In her essay “What Was Performance?,” Mary Thomas Crane agrees that we can best understand early modern theater when we “view discourse and embodiment, representation and experience, as mutually constitutive aspects of performance”; *Criticism* 43.2 (2001), 171.

³² R. Ormsby, “*Coriolanus*, Antitheatricalism, and Audience Response,” *Shakespeare Bulletin* 26.1 (2008), 44. On this worry, see also K. Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 2nd edn. (New York: Routledge, 2002).

³³ J. Low and N. Myhill, *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558–1642*, 1st edn. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 10.

Low and Myhill advocate for a critical dialogue between scholarship invested in the places, spaces, people, and practices of Renaissance theater and work that takes as its emphasis the cultural and social import of that theater. As they attest, much has been made, for example, of Renaissance audiences “as either a demographic entity or an object implied in the dramatic text,”³⁴ but few books have combined these important projects. Even more problematically, both kinds of scholarship often ignore spectators as “vital partners” in theatrical meaning-making, tending to view the audience as a “stable entity – one that emerges from its encounter with the other [e.g., performance/text] largely the same as it went in.”³⁵

Passionate Playgoing makes visible a far less stable, much more collaborative relationship between audiences and early modern drama. The chapters herein evidence Low and Myhill’s suggestion that performance is a “dialectical activity” in which audiences play a part “in all stages of the life of the drama.”³⁶ My book significantly differs from their work, however, insofar as the most determinative factor in this dialectal relationship is, for me, playgoers’ capacities to confer and receive emotion and to mutually correspond with the stage in an affective give and take. The essays in Low and Myhill’s collection certainly posit the audience as “a partner in the production of meaning on the early modern stage” but do so by focusing on, among other things, drama’s creation of “audience competencies” and “crowd control,” space and stage design as determining “audience perceptions,” and playwright intention as it informs “what the audience believes they are seeing onstage.”³⁷ I instead concentrate on the feeling bodies of early modern theatergoers, and the cultural history of affect that informed those bodies, to narrate a new account of the role of passionate, emoting spectators in determining the affective power of Renaissance theater.

But, one might still ask, even as we acknowledge the vitality of early modern audiences and imaginatively reassemble them from “ambiguous fragments of textual and external evidence,” how can we *actually know how participants felt* during or after a performance of *Macbeth* in the early seventeenth century?³⁸ How do we properly project ourselves, to recall Bruce Smith’s encouragement, into largely unrecorded, subjective experiences so distant from our own? As Gay McAuley has pointed out, performance-centric studies that attend to audience response and the phenomenology of spectatorship even in our own moment raise various methodological questions: does anecdotal evidence from spectators serve

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2. ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1. ³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10, 11, 13. ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

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as valid data; can performance results really be communicated to those who have not seen the performance; and to what extent is performance itself, in its ephemerality, ever convincing evidence?³⁹ After all, performance – early modern *and* contemporary – seems to be in fundamental conflict with practices of historicization.⁴⁰

Given the challenge of capturing performance – and its even more slippery partner, felt audience response – this book looks to, among other sources, an early modern cultural history of affect. In other words, because of the paucity of extant records like diaries, letters, or reviews that might illuminate the phenomenological experience of theatergoing, *Passionate Playgoing* explores spectatorship by examining, in great part, early modern ideas about emotion.⁴¹ I contend that a useful and viable “invisible” record of such felt experience lies in “the stories that [The Historical William Shakespeare] and his contemporaries told themselves about perception, about what was happening in their bodies and brains when they looked, listened, read, and loved.”⁴² Further, the faultlines between early modern humoral theory, philosophical and medical treatises, pro- and antitheatrical literature, and drama of the early modern period contain a productive narrative about what it might have felt like to participate in early modern theatergoing. Significantly different, then, from a text like Charles Whitney’s invaluable *Early Responses to Renaissance Drama*, *Passionate Playgoing* recreates possible emotional experiences of playgoers not via the “citation of dramatic material” found in the “commonplace book” or “tossed-off topical allusion” – what Whitney calls “interpretation-as-application” – but via juxtaposition of the period’s theatrical, medical, and philosophical discourses about passions and perception and the dramas that staged those discourses.⁴³

³⁹ G. McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 10.

⁴⁰ See E. MacKay, *Persecution, Plague, and Fire: Fugitive Histories of the Stage in Early Modern England* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), as well as R. Shaughnessy’s “One Piece at a Time” and W. N. West’s “Replaying Early Modern Performances,” in Sarah Werner (ed.), *New Directions in Renaissance Drama* (Houndmills; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁴¹ Some existing accounts can be found in the following: John Manningham’s *Diary*; an entry in Simon Forman’s diary, *Booke of Plaies*; a note in Thomas Platter’s *Travels in England*; Sir John Chamberlain’s letters to Dudley Carleton; and a description of *Henry VI* in Thomas Nashe’s *Pierce Penilesse*.

⁴² B. Smith, *Phenomenal*, 34.

⁴³ C. Whitney, *Early Responses*, 3, 1, 1. In the first chapter of his book, Matthew Steggle reviews Renaissance constructions of weeping and laughter via early modern medical and religious discourses, but then his study moves almost exclusively to the stage itself to examine “the representation of these actions on the stage, and ... what can be reconstructed about the laughter and weeping of theatrical audiences themselves”; *Laughing and Weeping*, 1.

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Adopting in particular the early modern belief in “affective contagion,”⁴⁴ a salient but too seldom noted strain in Renaissance discourses of feeling, as one of its guiding principles, I rethink early modern theatergoing – what it felt like to be part of performances in English theater – as an intensely corporeal, highly emotive activity characterized by risky, even outright dangerous bodily transformation. More significantly, I illustrate that this transformation, as it is figured in the epigraph above, for instance, might have happened not just to spectators but to the plays themselves. Early modern drama, as I conceive of it, relied for its emotive force on the spectators in which it conjured affectivity, and in that reliance became enmeshed in transactions in which spectators had the power to augment, deny, and alter its force. Drama not only depended on the emotionality of audience members for its effect, that is, but was reciprocally reshaped and mutually constituted, sometimes in surprising and unintended ways, by those affected, and affecting, spectators.

Undoubtedly, there are a number of alternate directions in which a study of emotional encounter in Renaissance theater might have proceeded. I could have focused intently on playing spaces – details like public or private houses, natural or artificial light, variable stage structures, spectator proximity – and the impact these material conditions had on the affective exchanges therein. Throughout *Passionate Playgoing*, I understand playhouses as “communicable” spaces both challenged and invigorated by the dilemma of containing emotions within their boundaries. Thus, one can picture another version of this book that more aggressively imagines space, as Henri Lefebvre would have it, as “social morphology”⁴⁵ and conceives of diverse performance locations as functional components of theatrical affectivity. Or, given the manifold nuances of the early modern humoral body, various chapters could have addressed how playgoers’ specifically gendered or racialized bodies and individual somatic dispositions influenced emotional encounters. Or perhaps this book could have been oriented primarily towards genre to consider how emotional collaboration between stage and world might influence our categorization of early modern drama and complicate the notion of genre as, for instance, a pat contractual agreement in which the stage fulfills an affective obligation, and spectators, most often, revel in confirmation of that expectation.

These possibilities, and surely others, are visible in the chapters that follow and are compelling agendas for other studies. In fact, occasionally

⁴⁴ This is Katherine Rowe’s term in *Reading the Early Modern Passions*, 176.

⁴⁵ H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 94.