AFFECT AND LITERATURE

This book considers how Affect, the experience of feeling or emotion, has developed as a critical concept within literary studies in different periods and through a range of approaches. Stretching from the Classical to the Contemporary, the first section of the book, ‘Origins’, considers the importance of particular areas of philosophy, theory, and criticism that have been important for conceptualizing affect and its relation to literature, including ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, eighteenth-century aesthetics, Marxist theory, psychoanalysis, queer theory, and postcolonial theory. The chapters of the second section, ‘Developments’, correspond to those of the previous section and build on their insights through readings of particular texts. The final ‘Applications’ section is focused on contemporary and future lines of enquiry and revolves around a particular set of concerns: media and communications, capitalism, and an environment of affective relations that extend to ecology, social crisis, and war.

ALEX HOUEN is author of Terrorism and Modern Literature (2002), and Powers of Possibility: Experimental American Writing since the 1960s (2012). His edited publications include: a special issue on ‘Affects, Text, and Performativity’ of Textual Practice 25:2 (March/April 2011); and (with Jan-Melissa Schramm), Sacrifice and Modern War Literature: Battle of Waterloo to the War on Terror (2018). He also co-edits the international journal of poetry, Blackbox Manifold.
Cambridge Critical Concepts focuses on the important ideas animating twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary studies. Each concept addressed in the series has had a profound impact on literary studies, as well as on other disciplines, and already has a substantial critical bibliography surrounding it. This series captures the dynamic critical energies transmitted across twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary landscapes: the concepts critics bring to reading, interpretation and criticism. By addressing the origins, development and application of these ideas, the books collate and clarify how these particular concepts have developed, while also featuring fresh insights and establishing new lines of enquiry.

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**Introduction: Affect and Literature**

*Alex Houen*

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