

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Histories of Emotions and the Senses

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**Jan Plamper**

*Goldsmiths, University of London*

## THE EVOLUTION OF AFFECT THEORY

*The Humanities, the Sciences, and  
the Study of Power*

Donovan O. Schaefer  
*University of Pennsylvania*



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# The Evolution of Affect Theory

## The Humanities, the Sciences, and the Study of Power

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Donovan O. Schaefer  
*University of Pennsylvania*

Author for correspondence: Donovan O. Schaefer, doschaef@sas.upenn.edu

**Abstract:** Across the humanities, a set of interrelated concepts – excess, becoming, the event – have gained purchase as analytical tools for thinking about power. Some versions of affect theory rely on Gilles Deleuze’s concept of “becoming,” proposing that affect is best understood as a field of dynamic novelty. Reconsidering affect theory’s relationship with life sciences, Schaefer argues that this procedure fails as a register of the analytics of power. By way of a case study, this Element concludes with a return to the work of Saba Mahmood, in particular her 2005 study of the women’s mosque movement in Cairo, *Politics of Piety*.

**Keywords:** affect, evolution, power, Saba Mahmood, Gilles Deleuze

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