

The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare. Steven Mullaney.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. x + 232 pp. \$35.

The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries. Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan, eds.
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015. xii + 276 pp. £70.

How can we read the emotions of the past? A recent surge of scholarship has sought to uncover the fundamental importance of the emotions to early modern society, culture, and lived experience, with much work focusing on the inseparability of emotions from the humors and bodily processes (e.g., Paster, Floyd-Wilson, Rowe, Schoenfeldt). Both *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* and *The Renaissance of Emotion* seek to broaden our frame of reference, locating early modern emotions within a wider cultural framework of religion, philosophy, politics, and rhetoric.

In *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare*, Steven Mullaney explores what happens inside the recesses of the mind and soul when the present is brutally and abruptly severed from the past. He begins with a memorable account of events in London in April 1549, when the Duke of Somerset ordered the contents of the great ossuary of the Pardon Churchyard at St. Paul's to be emptied into a marsh outside Moorgate. One plausible reason was to make room for the remains of the more recently deceased. But the decision to desecrate 400 years of English human history with the city's filthy "soylage" is more troubling. This extraordinary episode resonates powerfully with Mullaney's account, later in his book, of the Gonja tribe's violent obliteration from the history of Northern Ghana by officials of the British Empire in the early twentieth century. In both cases, the erasure of the past for present purposes inflicts a profound "wound to the social," creating a calculated episode of affective amnesia.

England became a nation of converts during the mid-sixteenth century, and the consequences were felt not only in individual hearts and minds, but also through social consciousness. The Elizabethan popular theater emerges as a kind of "affective technology" uniquely equipped to link emotional communities before and after the Reformation by speaking feelingly with the dead. Mullaney's first chapter, on revenge tragedy, explores the sudden ruptures in sympathy that occur when a character's feelings become startlingly different from an audience's. When Marcus speaks in highly abstract, aestheticized terms of the mutilated Lavinia in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, for

example, audiences find themselves unexpectedly immersed in his alienating point of view. If revenge tragedy is by this means able to probe the violence done to “the social *individuum*,” history plays reveal how whole nations are affected by acts of forgetting. How can a country’s chronicle history be sketched out when an entire generation is “affectively dis-affected” from the previous one? Mullaney sees Shakespeare’s first tetralogy dramatizing this disjuncture, through language (constructed archaisms), plot (incongruity, disjunction, inconsistency), and consciousness (hauntings, dreams, false imaginings). This is fully realized by Talbot, who is never again called to memory after his strange and unhistorical vanishing in *1 Henry VI*. Talbot is in fact only ever remembered before he is forgotten — by the Countess of Auvergne, who reflects upon his painted portrait, or “shadow,” long before his death. The character is himself an aporia, a person “missing yet felt.”

The essays in Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan’s collection *The Renaissance of Emotion* also consider the high stakes involved in retrospective history-telling in the wake of the Reformation. Ann Kaegi’s chapter shows Shakespeare filling *Richard III* with grieving women at a time when excessive displays of public mourning were regarded with suspicion. The sorrowful widow Anne only falls victim to Richard’s flattery because she has failed properly to remember Prince Edward. But when Margaret refuses to be consigned to “woeful banishment,” she is able to resist her own erasure from English chronicle history. *The Renaissance of Emotion*, however, fosters a wider, more plural understanding of early modern interiority. Part 1 focuses on theology and philosophy, beginning with Sullivan’s own clear-minded essay on Thomas Wright’s *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1601) — a favorite text among those interested in early modern emotion and embodiment — which is here revealed as an important source for understanding disembodied affective experience. By the same token, Mary Ann Lund’s excellent essay on the *Anatomy of Melancholy* shows Burton’s indebtedness not only to medical frameworks, but also to Augustinian theories of beauty, rapture, and sensuality. These chapters are complemented by David Bagchi’s on the affective language of the Book of Common Prayer, which proved foundational to early modern Christian subjectivity; and Sara Coodin’s on thrift as a form of Christian and Jewish self-management that helped to develop individual moral agency.

Exploring further the place of emotions in early modern subjectivity, the collection’s second section turns to the interface between emotion, words, and language. Nigel Wood’s essay on Shakespearean comedy explores different meanings of “spleen” as a rush of emotion beyond reason, and a loss of linguistic control. Richard Chamberlain considers “hap” as a version of fortune and luck that emerges in *Hamlet* not through any sustained portrait of contentment but fleetingly through fortunate coincidence. And Meek’s own remarkable chapter on *Richard II* and the representation of grief explores “sympathy” as a fundamental mark of humanity — and an imaginative process that leaves us starkly vulnerable. Sorrow, pity, and compassion are central to the plot of Shakespeare’s play, but also to its reception among readers who have never fully sympathized with the king.

The book's final section, on politics and performance, charts particularly interesting new territory. Frederika Bain shows that anticipated emotions sometimes fail to materialize — such as in the notably affectless accounts of execution and murder in early modern broadsides. Andy Kesson's striking essay on movement in the plays of John Lyly reveals emotion as a kinetic process akin to dance, involving doubt, amazement, and giddiness. And R. S. White and Ciara Rawnsley's closing contribution uncovers emotion as something “discrepant” (constructed, complex) that resists our attempts to consider it either singly or in isolation, suggesting the importance of developing a more nuanced framework of understanding than the compartments of humoralism can provide.

As Mullaney points out, it is difficult enough to access the affective lives of those we know most intimately and presently, let alone the lives of strangers from whom we are separated by a gulf of more than 400 years. We cannot ourselves be nor really know the “true-hearted Christians” to whom John Foxe addressed his *Book of Martyrs*, whatever we may truly believe today. Both volumes, however, advance in important new directions the critical understanding of early modern emotion toward what Peter Holbrook describes, in his stimulating afterword to *The Renaissance of Emotion*, as a greater appreciation of emotional freedom beyond our shared set of body-based “scripts.” Part of the challenge for historians of emotional experience — especially those explicitly or implicitly interested in the political present — still resides in scholarship's rules of engagement, which have tended scrupulously to contain readers' emotions along with those of the past. One of the most intriguing fissures revealed by both of these books, then, lies between emotional landscapes (past and present) and the value of emotional involvement in the traditional academic study of literature.

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