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### Bailey, Amanda, and Mario DiGangi, eds. *Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts: Politics, Ecologies, and Form*

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symbols and metaphors shows how the Ficinian hermeneutic tradition was still relevant in the post-Tridentine humanist milieu, especially in those individuals who defended the grotesques and the ancient world from which they generated. Bombelli's relevance, on the other hand, is that of showing the counter-apologetic side of the dispute. In Bombelli's letters, Aldrovandi's gracious ennoblement of the terms *grotta* and *grottesche* is reversed and plunged into an infernal vision of obscure prisons and pagan rituals dedicated to stygian deities. Similarly, Ligorio's attempted *reductio ad symbola* of the grotesques is harshly recanted, and the images in question are reduced to a disgusting excess of ancient and modern vanity.

Acciarino's edition of these precious unedited letters thus fills an essential gap in academic inquiry into the early modern debate on images and provides an invaluable set of sources to historians of art as well as historians of science and ideas.

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**Bailey, Amanda, and Mario DiGangi, eds.**

***Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts: Politics, Ecologies, and Form.***

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. Pp. xi, 234. ISBN 978-1-137-57074-1 (hardcover) US\$99.99.

Affect studies have changed interpretations of early modern texts by considering different ways in which material, object-oriented, and socio-political culture and theory condition emotional and embodied agency. The scope of the functional relationship between the elements that shape the link between being and acting has been succinctly summarized by the editors of this timely, carefully assembled, and original collection of new essays: "In the past decade, new approaches to embodiment, power, and materialism have transformed our understanding of the relation between subjects and objects, agency and causation, the individual and the collective, and the somatic and the social" (1). This statement positions affect as a concept encompassing many facets of literature and culture that early criticism has addressed over several decades of scholarship. It suggests that affect can be understood to be at once specific and

fluid, easily and equally adaptable to, and producing relations between, several fields of inquiry at once, like “literary studies, cognitive science, philosophy, cultural studies, and political theory” (1). In this regard, Benedict S. Robinson’s statement that “It is not always entirely clear what affect theory is a theory of” (109) should be taken as a productive guiding idea for understanding this collection’s aim: to reveal and interpret the many ways of thinking about affect theory from a historical perspective.

To that end, each essay in this volume addresses one or more of these fields at a point of their intersection, and each one attempts to define what affect can be, when viewed from such distinct fields that “generate physiological and environmental effects beyond the boundaries of a singular subject” (2).

The book focuses more on distilling an early modern theory of affect than on employing modern theories of affect aimed at reading manifestations of affective subjectivities engendered by different materialist phenomena, and corporeal and psychological responses to them. It covers the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and includes many thinkers and writers across time, from Aristotle to Brian Massumi, from Francis Bacon to Lauren Berlant. The comprehensiveness of approaches, writers, thinkers, literary and non-literary texts, cognitive and non-cognitive ideas, and emotional and moral reactions is impressively brought together in a book of just over two hundred pages. The combination of the breadth of topics, authors, and theorists and the historical and generic coverage makes *Affect Theory* an indispensable critical compendium, a kind of casebook of early modern affect, as well as a starting point for further discoveries stimulated throughout by thought-provoking arguments and explorations. Some of the essays are more theoretical in orientation; others, more deeply historicized. Taken together, they explore the difficult question—difficult because evidence of emotions recorded in and by the past is elusive—which David Landreth, echoing Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, describes as the “‘texture’ [Sedgwick] of history in England: how people felt the touch of the past, what the past felt like to them, what they felt about it, and how they felt the work of others’ hands in its crafting” (175). Rhetoric, language, and ideas materialized in surviving texts and authorial marginalia represent the evidential basis from which this book uncovers in illuminating detail traces of feeling in, and of, history that can appear on the surface to have been lost in the mist of time.

In her essay, Amanda Bailey analyzes the politics of emotion and political affect in the word “nothing” in *King Lear*, by way of engaging with occultist

and naturalist comprehensions of sympathy. Mario DiGangi develops his critical understanding of affect—exploring the interlacing relationship between rank, gender, and time—in a critical reading of political agency and affective entanglement in William Rowley’s play *When You See Mee, You Know Me*. Julian Yates begins his essay on the affective phenomenology of “leisure” (*otium*) in Sir Thomas More and Edmund Spenser, aided by and expanding on Lauren Berlant’s thinking about the idea of “hope.” Drew Daniel takes the reader into the world of the phenomenology of death, examining “valorized voluntary self-killing as the ultimate example of the rational control of the passions” (89), as the stoic tradition explained *Romana mors*. He finds examples in Francis Bacon and Benedict de Spinoza, and uses the differing ideas on the processes of death and self-killing to illustrate “emergent materialist accounts of the passions” (90). For Joseph Campana, the notion of crocodile tears illustrates the rhetorical and cognitive context of “the fallacies of affect” (130). Patricia Cahill considers the feeling of history in Marlowe’s tragedy *Massacre at Paris* within the political and religious bloodbath dramatized in that play. In her essay, affect is embodied on the stage as the feeling of re-enactment, against the theoretical background of “the elasticity of temporality” (157). Evelyn Tribble takes up the challenge of staging affect and explores “the susceptibility of audiences to affective states of others” (195), implicitly offering the critically valuable idea of theatre as the most immediate conduit, and scene, for transmitting affect across history and time. The book ends with Gail Kern Paster’s Afterword in which she provides a brief critical rationale of the book’s role in advancing scholarship on affect, offers short overviews of each of the chapters included in the book, and brings the reader back to one of the basic ways of understanding affect in early modern texts, as that which comes out of the interweaving of thinking and feeling, exemplifying this understanding in a focused reading of Shakespeare’s Roman tragedy *Julius Caesar*.

The combination of new scholarship, original connections between ideas and texts, intellectually stimulating criticism, and elegant writing makes *Affect Theory* a volume of essays that will be read and re-read by anyone working on affect theory.