

FOREWORD

Since the turn of the new millennium, studies of affect have emerged as one of the most burgeoning fields within literary and cultural studies, a theoretical trend in the West which we now designate as “the affective turn.” Over the past twenty years or so, scholars have drawn on increasingly diversified methodological approaches to tackle a wide array of issues related to affect or emotion. An edited volume published in 2010, *The Affect Theory Reader*, even went so far as to suggest eight theoretical trajectories that the editors thought frequently informed current academic discourses on affect: 1) phenomenology and post-phenomenologies of embodiment; 2) assemblages of the human/machine/inorganic such as cybernetics and neurosciences; 3) the non-humanist traditions in philosophy which have inspired feminists like Rosi Braidotti and theorists like Brian Massumi and Giorgio Agamben; 4) psychological and psychoanalytic inquiries exemplified by, say, Silvan Tomkins, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, and Sigmund Freud; 5) politically engaged works in feminism, queer theory, and disability discourse, as well as critiques enunciated by other subaltern groups of people; 6) a turn away from the so-called “linguistic turn” toward work that took place alongside or well before the linguistic turn, such as Raymond Williams’s “structure of feeling” or Walter Benjamin’s “sensual mimesis”; 7) discourses of emotion that tackle atmospheres of sociality, crowd behavior, and contagion of feelings, among other things; and 8) practices of science and science studies (Gregg and Seigworth 7-8).

As the co-editors admit, this is not a comprehensive list (8). Given affect theory’s inchoate contours, scholars in the past have taken advantage of the flexibility thus derived to experiment with ways of addressing affect’s manifestations or representations in various contexts. The apparent diversity notwithstanding, unfortunately, most of the theoretical discussions have centered upon the West as their main object of study, with Anglo-American critics as their designated interlocutors. There is an unfounded

theoretical presumption that takes the Cartesian feeling subject as a universal given even at the moment of its non-Cartesian dissolution. Any attempt to apply wholesale these theories to a non-Western context such as East Asia will be immediately doomed to failure insofar as the cultural specificity of the context in question persistently resists and eludes the totalizing grasp of these discourses on affect. How, for example, do we account for the idea of *qing* (情) in the renowned martial arts novelist Jin Yong's classic *Tianlongbabu* (《天龍八部》), in which affect is mainly understood in Buddhist terms to the extent that it disrupts, instead of shoring up, individual boundaries, turning human beings homogeneously into animal-like existences characterized by their animalistic instincts and lust? This Buddhist understanding of *qing* is non-humanist in that it diverges from the Christian notion of the Great Chain of Being in its understanding of humanity as equal to all animals and plants (which together constitute a world inhabited by *zongsheng* [眾生]). It is also non-individualistic because people always find themselves, willy-nilly, contextualized in and constrained by a limitless karmic network or social relation formed by these *zongsheng* even under the mostly unlikely circumstances. Apparently, we need to develop our own critical vocabulary and theoretical framework when we seek to understand affect in our local contexts. Not that we should dispense altogether with Western affect theory, but that, I would suggest, we may well work around it to see how the non-humanist and non-individualist strains of affect theory may become a point of intertextual affinity from which we can further proceed to tease out a different affective logic which nonetheless is still informed by that intertextuality.

The three papers included in this issue seek each in its own way to challenge the universalizing hegemony of Western affect theory. Though they work from completely different theoretical premises, the contributors share an incentive to read affect *socially*—not in the sense that it is an individuated feeling that arises from a particular social context, but that from the outset affect is an East Asian collective formation existing independently of individual will. As Amie Parry's apt phrase "exemplary affect" suggests, affect

needs to be figured by way of example to achieve the cohesive ideal of social conformity. Such a non-individualist understanding of affect strikingly resonates with Ron S. Judy's discussion of "the faciality machine" and Haiyan Lee's conception of emotion as ritualized acts.

In "The Pathos of Patriotism: Nativism and the Nationalist 'Faciality Machine' in Huang Chun-ming's *Sayonara, Zaijian!*" Ron S. Judy uses the much acclaimed nativist writer Huang Chun-ming's novella *Sayonara, Zaijian!* as the main textual exemplar to illustrate how the logic of face functions in a patently nationalist setting. Though the male protagonist Mr. Hwang ostensibly mobilizes a jarring critique of Japanese imperialism, his unquestioned reliance upon face *qua* ethnic pride indicates a very conformist aspect of nationalism which is, in and of itself, rather Confucian. Aligning Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the "abstract machine of faciality" with Taiwanese psychologist Huang Kuang-kuo's important study of face or *mianzi* (面子) as a Confucian affect, Judy argues that the machine of the nationalist *visag  t  *, driven by a hegemonic logic of reterritorialization, has to be kept intact to fabricate the illusion of a stable social identity, which in turn enforces conformity by accentuating what is fitting for face and what is not.

In contradistinction to Judy's overall negative appraisal of face as a community-driven affective ideology, Haiyan Lee's positive understanding in "Chinese Feelings: Notes on a Ritual Theory of Emotion" of the formalism of Chinese communitarianism serves as a complementary reminder that there is an aesthetic dimension to our culture's stress on ritualized propriety which ought to be espoused rather than denounced. Beginning with an analysis of a recent film about the legendary Peking Opera performer Mei Lanfang, Lee contends that under the impact of Western imperial modernity, Chinese people in the twentieth century and beyond have lost the art of ritualized presentation epitomized by classical theater in favor of a representational regime exemplified by film. While the latter is informed by Western romantic individualism which privileges sincerity over formal etiquette, the former functions in accordance with a logic of the shared subjunctive (codified as "as if")

that renders the “as is-ness” of authenticated personal feelings irrelevant. Lee, however, is wary of the binarism seemingly evidenced in the above formulation. Toward the end of the paper she turns to a nineteenth-century memoir *Six Records of a Floating Life* (《浮生六記》) to indicate that there exists an aesthetic possibility where presentation and representation, and ritual and sincerity, may coexist in an unstable but playful dialectic.

Like Lee, in “Exemplary Affect: Corruption and Transparency in Popular Cultures,” Amie Parry is also concerned with the problematics of sincerity and transparency, but her critique of transparency differs tremendously from Lee’s since she has shifted her analytic lens from the aestheticized dimension of ritual to the socio-political realm where transparency, whether interpersonally or in the public sphere, is defined as the antithesis of corruption. Sincerity, in other words, is construed as the affective definitive core of democratic politics where innocence is supposed to rule out any trace of deceit or falsity. Feeling exemplary in this sense suggests a structure of feeling in East Asia that takes pride in the exemplary status of appearing politically pure and simple. Such an exemplary affect is a specific East Asian construct in that the entire discourse on transparency and corruption is a product of the US Cold War tactic that uses surveillance apparatuses to spot in these developmental states conduct that exceeds social norms and political expectations. Through a reading of Satoshi Kon’s anime film *Paprika*, as well as the science fiction novel upon which it is based, Parry rejects the seemingly progressive neat opposition between transparency and corruption by pinpointing the nightmarish nature of transparency in institutional contexts.

All in all, though the three articles collected here ostensibly take as their objects affective representations in different times and geographical locations (Judy on a 1970s Taiwanese novel, Lee on a memoir from nineteenth-century China, and Parry on contemporary Japanese and Taiwanese cultural texts), from the intertextual resonances among them one can readily discern an understanding of East Asian affect which actually transcends geopolitical boundaries. This is in great measure due to the fact that Confucianism and,

sometimes, Buddhism have proved central to the making of the non-individualist and non-humanist worlds people find themselves in. Although it is imperative to critique the disciplinary impact induced by the above discourses' ideological thrust, it is equally important to be reminded that romantic sincerity and transparency are not necessarily a utopian solution to the alleged evils of the conformist pressures imposed by transnational collectivities. More often than not, an equilibrium between individuality and collectivity might turn out to be a more effective strategy to handle the above conundrums. To put it somewhat differently, this special issue intends to seek out affective perspectives from East Asia, but claiming the theoretical specificity of *the* East Asian perspectives does not necessarily translate into employing East Asia as a faciality machine that endlessly solidifies and re-territorializes an essentialized identity through chauvinistic discourse. Sometimes, losing face or an affectively exemplary status might suggest an ethical and affective possibility otherwise undetected. Here I would like to return once again to *Tianlongbabu*. The tragic pathos therein is, in point of fact, premised upon the degradation of humans into the herd of the animistically rendered *zhongsheng*, but it is precisely this very degradation process that helps to occasion a non-individualist version of sympathy, one that sees all these animalistic beings, including the reader in question, as karmic replications of one another. Instead of targeting a particular individual known as the tragic hero, in the present context the reader's fear and pity is dispersed into an objectless void created from a subjectless pool whose non-transparency affectively brings together everyone in the pool. Nothing can be more enabling than this loss of subjectivity.

Te-hsuan Yeh
Taipei

Works Cited

Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. *The Affect Theory Reader*.
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