

Call for Papers

Special Issue of *Wenshan Review: Literature and Culture*

"Affective Perspectives from East Asia"

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Since the turn of the new millennium, affect studies has 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 years a myriad approaches to affect have appeared one after another, which helped contribute to a discursive heteroglossia in which its scope of influence and visibility proves increasingly vast. Some critics followed in the footsteps of queer theorist Eve Sedgwick’s psychological model, a school which had played a key role in the institution of affect studies per se, whereas some insisted upon the an intervention into affect’s socio-political implications from the perspectives of cultural criticism or classical psychoanalysis. In recent years, the Deleuzian anti-humanistic approach propounded by Brian Massumi and the backward feeling thesis proposed by Heather Love have both come to take center stage, with the latter having further provoked controversies in queer theory, which, in its turn, gave rise to certain critics’ proposed turn to optimism or other positive emotions.

The study of affect in Taiwan has taken a direction not entirely the same as that in the West. Apart from translations of landmark critical works produced therein, we have yet to see a more global, contextualized reflections on those affect theories. Though the past few years did witness the publication of important translated works such as *Queer, Affect, Politics* (酷兒、情感、政治), *The Cultural Politics of Melancholia* (憂鬱的文化政治), we have not been able to fully lay bare the problematic status of the universalized psychological subjects in those works as something derived from the totalizing humanistic premises underlying their treatments of sensations and affective expressions. It remains to be seen how relevant these theories are to the readings and comments we make in the local contexts. A good case in point is the intertextual

resonances between Sedgwick's theorization of shame and Jenpeng Liu and Naifei Ding's critique of the Confucian culture and aesthetics of "reticence," whose subtle gradations of similarities and differences require further endeavors of excavation.

It is our aim that this special issue could serve as a timely point of departure. That we always find ourselves caught in the interstices between Western affect theories and East Asian literary and cultural representations may well be seen as an apt occasion where we begin to consider a plethora of new theoretical and interpretative possibilities. As we undertake to analyze local representations of affects, we are also interested in the following questions: How do we define a peculiar, East Asian (or Taiwanese, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, to name but a few) mode of affect? Is affectivity's affected or animalistic state subject to different modes of manifestations in different cultural contexts? Is it possible to read Western affect theories in a completely different light from our localized vantage point? Do the intricately intertwined affective/political/aesthetic/gender-sexuality nodes of local deployment involve a more profound ontological and ethical premise which is distinctly different from its Western counterpart?

Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture

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