

**MELISSA GREGG & GREGORY J. SEIGWORTH
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The collection summarizes, highlights, and exemplifies the 'affective turn' in cultural studies of the past 15-20 years. Reacting against the previous 'linguistic turn,' attention to affect has brought bodies to the attention of cultural studies scholars, not merely as sites for the inscription of power relations by transcendent institutions, but as sites whose immanent potentials allow for relations with other bodies that participate in fluctuating power relations. With the affective turn, bodies as thought in cultural studies have thus moved from a blank slate to living beings, from clay to be molded to creatures feeling their way through ever-changing worlds.

The editors' very useful Introduction pinpoints 1995 as a 'watershed moment' in the affective turn, as it saw the publication of two essays that together provide the conceptual framework of the affective turn, and of the present volume. The first grounding essay, 'Shame in the Cybernetic Fold,' is by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (to whose memory the book is dedicated) and Adam Frank, and served to introduce Silvan Tomkins to a new generation of cultural studies writers. The second, 'The Autonomy of Affect,' is by Brian Massumi, and brought a Deleuzian-Spinozist perspective to bear.

Tomkins's work is available in a 1995 collection edited by Sedgwick and Frank, *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Duke University Press), in which 'Shame in the Cybernetic Fold' serves as the Introduction. Well aware of how Tomkins's investigations of nine neurobiologically hardwired and recombinant affects (in their high intensity modes: joy, excitement, startle, rage, disgust, 'dissembl,' anguish, terror, humiliation) will strike the 'antibiologism' of mid-1990s cultural theorists, Sedgwick and Frank acknowledge that 'some of what we're up to is the ordinary literary-critical lover's

discourse: we want to propagate among readers nodes of reception for what we take to be an unfamiliar and highly exciting set of moves and tonalities' (Sedgwick and Frank, 1995: 23). It may now be somewhat difficult to recall this time before neuroscience became an accepted cultural studies framework, before Damasio and Edelman became single-name referents, but we should try to imagine how strange this might have sounded to readers for whom social constructivism was the only game in town. It's a measure of how far the field has come that Tomkins is now alongside Deleuze as a primary figure in affect theory.

Although Deleuze and Guattari's work was certainly well known to cultural studies before Massumi's 'Autonomy of Affect,' that essay did focus attention on the Spinoza connection. As several essays in the Gregg and Seigworth collection explain, affect for Deleuze-Spinoza is two-fold: the change in the material relations of an affected body and the concomitant change in the interactive potentials of that body (its 'power'). Intertwined with Deleuze's virtual/actual distinction, this scheme enables affect to be 'an entire, vital, and modulating field of myriad becomings across human and nonhuman' (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010: 6).

So we can see Tomkins and Deleuze-Spinoza not really as two poles of a continuum of affect theory, but as two modes of engaging affect: an embodied, biological, drive mode (Tomkins) and a boundary-crossing, assemblage-producing transversal mode (Deleuze-Spinoza). In their very useful Introduction, Gregg and Seigworth, although acknowledging the importance of these two modes, also see a number of other approaches in contemporary affect theory: various elements of bodily scaffolding with technological objects, as in 'extended mind' discourses; cybernetics; 'processual incorporeality' or Spinozism; bio-cultural interweavings or socialized desire; investigations of the felt and lived experience of marginalized peoples; the biological, neurological, and cognitive sciences; sociological and philosophical work on the emotions; and science studies (6-8).

What steps to the fore of affect theory then – if I may be permitted a rough-and-ready connection of the Tomkins and Deleuze-Spinoza modes – is an acknowledgement of the bio-cultural reality of human nature, the way in which our biology is such to be open to our culture, our nature is to be open to nurture. We are hard-wired with regard to the patterns of basic affects, but their triggers and thresholds are experientially formed as we move in and out of bio-

social-technical assemblages. All in all, it's a roughly Nietzschean outlook: our consciousness is shaped by our (inter-)corporeal natures, which make themselves known in affective pushes and pulls, highs and lows. This outlook isn't restricted to 'continental philosophy'; it can be found in one of the most interesting recent works of moral psychology, Jonathan Haidt's 'The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tale' (2001: 814-834). For Haidt, moral judgment mostly follows intuition, the sudden appearance in consciousness of an awareness of what is the right thing to do in a situation. Such intuitions are affect-laden, and insofar as the production of affect-laden intuition is dependent on the state of one's body at any one time (Haidt briefly refers to Damasio's 'somatic marker theory' at this point in his essay), we see something of the same basic insight as affect theory, a general relegation of cold, rational consciousness to a subordinate or perhaps even fully epiphenomenal status, the limit case of a cooling of affect to its minimal intensity.

Such is the rich theoretical background of the essays, which themselves include theoretical reflections linked to cultural studies analyses of novels, poems, policy statements, journalism, film, websites, and other sites of what we now have to call bio-cultural production. Among the more theory-intensive essays are those by Brian Massumi, Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie, and Patricia Clough; among the more object-oriented, if we can put it like that, are those by Sara Ahmed, Ben Highmore, and Melissa Gregg. These are only relative emphases; like the other essays, these will each have a theoretical and applied component.

Rather than a comprehensive review that attempts to say something about each essay, I'll just highlight two passages I particularly enjoyed; this enjoyment is of course my own affect-laden response, and shouldn't be taken to imply that the volume as a whole isn't of high quality. If I were to blurb the volume, I'd say 'it's definitely worth the time and attention necessary to read carefully each essay, and that such reading will pay off in valuable insights into both theory and the particular objects examined.'

Sara Ahmed's essay, 'Happy Objects,' looks to happiness and "affect aliens": feminist kill-joys, unhappy queers, and melancholic migrants' (30). After a nice reading of the way in which *Bend It Like Beckham* is a feel-good movie, Ahmed provides a valuable insight into the temporality of affect as seen in demands for 'affirmation': 'bad feelings are seen as oriented to the past, as a kind of stubbornness that "stops" the subject from embracing the future.

Good feelings are associated here with moving up and getting out.’ But it’s this distinction, Ahmed argues, that ‘allows historical forms of injustice to disappear’ because in rushing to get happy, in criticizing the appearance of bad feeling, we see focusing on injustice as ‘a form of melancholia (as if you hold onto something that is already gone).’ Rather than putting bad feelings to the side in the hopes of healing social ruptures in a feel-good future, we may ‘want to reread melancholic subjects, the ones who refuse to let go of suffering, who are even prepared to kill some forms of joy, as an alternate model of the social good’(50).

Ben Highmore’s essay ‘Bitter after Taste,’ following an intense encounter with disgust in Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier*, concludes with a reading of British lads looking for the hottest dish possible when they ‘go out for an Indian’ after a night of drinking. Entitled ‘Vindaloo,’ the section highlights Highmore’s notion of ‘social aesthetics,’ which looks to the imbrications of ‘affect, sensual and sensorial culture, perception, and so on’ (135). Deftly reading an account from the proprietors of South Asian eateries in the UK, Highmore points to the ‘affective density of this scene ... the intense gustatory relish’ which carries two vectors. There is a ‘vector of bitterness-aggression’ with a ‘potential racist inflection’ nonetheless signifying to the working class lads the ‘entrepreneurial and aspirational culture’ of the restaurant owner. And there is at least the possibility of ‘a vector animated by xenophilia-openness,’ making it potentially the ‘scene of a sensual pedagogy’ (134). Highmore concludes by bringing his observations back to traditional political philosophy, whose self-described ‘form of rational persuasion for progressive ends’ might seem hindered by social aesthetics. But if we take seriously the bio-cultural outlook of affect theory we see the possibility of the ‘transformation of ethos through experiments in living.’ Rather than sitting locked into our intuition-producing bodily structure (we might refer here to Jonathan Haidt’s appropriation of Damasio’s work), we can see how ‘social aesthetics points to the mutability and dynamism of ethos and habitus’ (135). One of the lessons of affect theory then seems to be: change your body, change your mind.

References

Haidt, J. (2001) 'The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tale,' *Review* 108 (4), October: 814-834.

Sedgwick, E.K. & Frank, A. (eds) (1995) *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.