SPECIAL DOSSIER

Affect Theory

Affect Theory Dossier

An Introduction

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There is of course no single definition of affect theory. In one of its incarnations affect theory builds bridges between the humanities and biology or neuroscience. In another it looks back to Søren Kierkegaard and Baruch Spinoza (among others) to refresh our definitions of subjectivity. Some affect theory defends the therapeutic value of embracing unpleasant feelings such as shame, sadness, or loneliness. Its other branches highlight "ugly feelings" (to use Sianne Ngai's phrase) as sources not of self-knowledge but of social critique. Affect theory can be a sociology of accidental encounters. It can be a psychoanalysis without end, both in leaving no stone unturned and in not caring to achieve a stable outcome. Affect theory can also refuse psychoanalysis and try to make feelings speak for themselves, as if they will best do so if the conscious mind does not interfere. Stylistically, it has encouraged intensely personal scholarship as well as scholarship that tries to do away with personality altogether.

In one sense, these various branches of affect theory are all theories of timing. They are theories of the self running ahead of itself: of how much more quickly (fMRIs tell us) our brains might work than we consciously know them to;[1] of how often we start acting on emotions before we recognize what they are; of how rapidly our

boundaries and intimacies change with our evolving relationships and settings. They are also theories of the self catching up with itself: naming and acting on feelings it had previously refused to own; revisiting its past psychoanalyses; redefining the very notion of selfhood. They are, finally, celebrations of Proustian moments when the self and the sensory world, or the conscious and the unconscious self, or the self and another person, fall in step with each other in a way that seems momentarily to make a sliver of experience more vivid and more richly patterned than willful analysis could ever have made it seem.

Another way to describe the preoccupations that affect theorists seem to share is to say that affect theory is grounded in movements or flashes of mental or somatic activity rather than causal narratives of their origins and end points. Brian Massumi calls this shift of perspective "fluidifying."[2] Teresa Brennan describes herself as focusing on the momentary "transmission of affect" rather than on the affective physiology of each particular person.[3] Charles Altieri emphasizes that the "rapture" of each feeling you act on exceeds and reconstellates your prior sense of who you are or what you are driven by.[4] It is in these movements or flash-like outbursts that affect theory founds its most robust notions of knowledge and subjecthood. It is also to these movements and to the philosophical implications of singling them out as objects of inquiry that it points as sources of its most persistent bafflement.

In studying these movements, flashes, or outbursts of feeling, affect theory returns to several key philosophical tensions. The purpose of this dossier is to highlight and explore some of these tensions by juxtaposing against each other a variety of philosophical, critical, literary, and investigative essays, as well as pieces of very recent affect-oriented art. In this introductory statement I will by no means attempt to exhaust the directions affect theory has taken or to describe the whole range of scholarship it has inspired. I merely want to raise several points that will help outline the stakes and interrelationships of the articles this dossier presents.

The first, most basic among the core issues this dossier addresses and exemplifies is the triple disjuncture among what could be termed unconscious affect, affect as an immediate awareness of

reality, and the self-conscious experience of affect *as affect*. The differences among these three (postulated) ways of experiencing affects will show more clearly in a series of examples. I can become angry at or attracted to another person without knowing that my attitude toward her has changed. This is to experience an affect un- or preconsciously. I can also be aware of my anger or attraction and weigh it as a potentially reliable phenomenology, as a potentially true indication of what this other person is like and how I should treat her. This experience is what most theorists understand under the term *emotion*. Or I can attend to my anger or attraction without believing that the perspective it gives me is reliable, focusing primarily on these feelings' movement within me. Their movement and the shapes it takes show me something about my degrees of love, trust, and sensitivity, about my past and present experiences of anger or attraction. This third attitude could be described as aesthetic or post-therapeutic, depending on what practice we believe gave us this combination of acceptance and detachment.

One aim of affect theory has been to ask what the relationship is between unconscious affect and either of the latter two more conscious experiences. Most basically, it is debatable whether these three experiences are really distinct, whether they can be experienced independently of each other, and which of them is "truest"—whatever that might mean—to who we are. In more specific ways, affect theory asks whether we should privilege knowledge of the un- or preconscious derived from the subject's gradual self-analysis or from an fMRI. It asks whether and when an fMRI (or an equivalent scientific instrument) is a tool of discovery or of Foucaultian discipline, whether and when the conscious narratives we create about what we or other persons feel are revealing or self-deluding. Affect theory also opens up the question of whether and when we ever experience or should ever try to experience present emotions with the Proustian vivid detachment with which we can reconnect to past ones. It finally wonders what the relationship is between affect and consciousness in general—whether, as Antonio Damasio has overtly hypothesized and as most affect theorists tend implicitly to assume, there is a special relationship between our capacity to be conscious and our capacity to have emotions or feelings.[5]

One early wave of affect theory centered around Silvan Tomkins, Brian Massumi, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (among others) has aimed primarily to rehabilitate unconscious "intensities" of affect as forces irreducible to the narratives of purpose and intentionality that consciousness tries to rein them into.[6] Ruth Leys has recently accused these scholars of a combination of bad logic and misuse of scientific evidence.[7] She argues that there is no neurological proof that affects are indeed originally non-intentional. To endorse uninhibited "non-intentional affects" without such proof is sloppy and obscures our continued need for sharper philosophical and social criticism. "If you don't understand try to feel," she quips. "According to Massumi it works" ("TA," 434).

Leys's specific criticisms of Massumi's and Sedgwick's use of scientific data are often well grounded. But in generalizing her conclusions about Massumi, Sedgwick, and Tomkins onto affect theory as a whole, Leys neglects to consider that a critique of non-intentional affects might precipitate a dialectical shift within affect theory rather than a shift away from affect theory itself. Leys herself acknowledges that the question of the relationship between conscious and un- or preconscious knowledge has not yet been addressed in a way as to definitively resolve the current debate between top-down and bottom-up theories of mental activity ("TA," 464–72). Especially following Massumi's and Sedgwick's early publications, the turn to affect seems to have been an exercise not so much in non-intentionality but in humility and caution toward both our conscious and our unconscious selves. It has also been the beginning of an attempt to describe the relationship between the two in a way that does not necessarily reduce itself to a power struggle. This more complex philosophical aim becomes explicit in many books that appear shortly after Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual*. Heather Love's and Lee Edelman's versions of queer affect theory both ask about how much choice the conscious self has in privileging some affective states over others, and how much value there is to exploring feelings that do not necessarily bring the self long-term survival or conscious pleasure.[8] Catherine Malabou's *Les nouveaux blessés* explores the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious self both during periods of neural

growth and in the wake of brain lesions that leave the self unaware of the capacities and memories it has lost. In his response to Leys, William E. Connolly notes signs of a similarly careful negotiation of these questions in neuroscientific work on affect by, among others, Walter Kaufmann, Antonio Damasio, and Giacomo Rizzolatti as well as in many cultural theorists whose work these scientists inspired.[9] Rei Terada's *Feeling in Theory* traces worries about emotional awareness (awareness of your own emotions as well as of the emotions of others) back to what may seem to be one of the least affect-driven schools of criticism: the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida and Paul De Man.[10] Many other theorists who write about affects, Kathleen Stewart and Charles Altieri among them, openly allow the tension between conscious and unconscious affects to remain unresolved, pointing to philosophical problems this uncertain causality raises in our understanding of self-expression or empathy.[11] In this dossier, Catherine Malabou's, Massimo Recalcati's, and Joseph Litvak's pieces address this issue most directly.

A second major tension constitutive of affect theory concerns its relationship to notions of aesthetic, scientific, therapeutic, or philosophical usefulness. Damasio suggests (and Teresa Brennan and Brian Massumi often imply) that the insights of affect theory can ultimately be refolded into a scientific vision of the self, structured by strong notions of causality, system, and evolution. Others, such as Sianne Ngai and many of the authors whom Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth assemble in *The Affect Theory Reader*, seem to work with the assumption that affect theory shares most of its aims with political and social critique, opening up new spaces in which this critique can be undertaken.[12] Still others—Brennan, Steven D. Brown, and Ian Tucker among them—seek to use affect theory primarily to reinvigorate and to improve our current notions of mental health and therapy.[13] On the other hand, a branch of affect theory related to queer studies and psychoanalysis seems either unconcerned with or directly opposed to the linear usefulness of affect. Heather Love, Anne-Lise François, Kaja Silverman, and Lee Edelman suggest with various degrees of vehemence that by the very nature of the experiences on which affect theory draws, the pleasure and awareness it gives us deny the reality or usefulness of

a diachronically (re)productive, well-bounded self.[14] Finally, Philip Fisher inverts the claim for affects' usefulness to argue that our notions of critique and justice are built out of and structured around passionate experiences of anger.[15]

Whichever standpoint each of these theorists explicitly defends, none of them seems fully comfortable claiming either that affects are entirely useful or that they are—or should be—entirely useless beyond the pleasure their movement might give. Love, François, and Edelman acknowledge (in tones that range from melancholia to provocation) that the impractical affects they celebrate are potentially destructive and, for the sake of what they call sincerity or self-knowledge, they privilege some form of the Freudian death drive. With far greater optimism, Silverman claims that to enjoy the process of desiring while no longer believing that any real object is going to fulfill this desire will eventually become useful as a foundation for a better system of ethics even if the exact rules of this system have not yet been articulated.[16] Fisher's argument balances between making passions the reason why we find some social institutions fulfilling and arguing that these institutions are useful because they help restrain passions' destructive potential. These scholars' hopes and hesitations all point toward what seems to be a shared concern about affect theory's relationship to cultural and ethnic studies. It remains an open question whether affect theory at its best is a tool for expressing diversity with an unprecedented degree of precision, or whether in pretending to do so it locks cultural politics into a relatively static neurological or hedonistic universalism. In this volume, Elizabeth Abel's piece balances a double aim of taking pleasure in small affective sensations and making these sensations valuable as tools of social critique. Lauren Berlant argues in her interview with *Qui Parle* that it is affects' immediate uselessness that makes them productive. Andrew Moisey's essay explores the tension between affective universalism and particularity in governmental projects for long-term nuclear waste markers.

Embedded in this second question is a third, more abstract one: Could affect theory really, as Silverman hypothesizes it eventually will, ground a new ontology of the self and a new ethics. To try to answer either part of this question now, or even to interrogate any

affect theorist in search of such a system, seems premature. But some shared sets of questions seem to recur within this field that do not easily fold back into any prior philosophical systems. One of these is affect theory's struggle between affective multiplicity and affective pastorality, between the value of (the right or imperative to) mental travel and the value of (the right or imperative to) mental lingering. There is a kind of self-awareness and a kind of empathy (loved and feared by the Søren Kierkegaard of *Fear and Trembling*, loved and no longer feared by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*) that comes from having fallen into many affective experiences and from being ready always to fall into a new one or to experience several affects at once.[17] Yet there is also a form of intellectual and emotional humility, a humility that seems similarly very much like knowledge, to admitting that one's boundaries and experiences tend to return to the same simple core, that any happiness or satisfying self-awareness one seeks to attain will have to keep returning to and lingering in the same small cluster of feelings. Affect theorists tend to disagree with each other most forcefully in their beliefs about which state—the most multiple or the most restrained one—is the best state for a subject to be in, as well as about how this chosen state can be achieved. Brennan and Massumi both favor an affective multiplicity that, they claim, will come about spontaneously once we stop artificially restraining it. They see this multiplicity as conducive to both knowledge and happiness. For Stewart and for Silverman, such multiplicity is also a form of knowledge and happiness, but to experience it requires not spontaneity but a heightened form of self-consciousness. Anne-Lise François and Heather Love each in her way defends the self's right to linger in a chosen affective condition and contemplates this condition in deepening detail without seeking comfort in any other feeling or in any action by which this condition could be altered. Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just* argues that we will treat each other more fairly if we learn to return to and to linger in experiences of aesthetic rapture.[18] Lee Edelman's defense of our right to keep falling into temporary, unproductive affects vindicates affective multiplicity but also forbids us to expect this multiplicity to make our lives feel clearer or more containedly meaningful in the long run.

Rei Terada's recent *Looking Away* gives the general anti-utilitarian trend within affect theory (which she calls "phenomenophilia") an intellectual lineage stemming from Coleridge through Kant and Nietzsche on to Adorno and Freud. Terada ends this book with what she calls the utopia of eternal psychoanalysis—the fantasy of being able to analyze each stray detail of our collective lives, with no goal or end point in mind, into eternity.[19] Paradoxically uniting the desire for multiplicity with the desire for lingering, Terada's utopian model might be one of the first—but surely not the last—philosophical tools affect theorists will keep producing to articulate this new ethical and ontological tangle around and toward which affect theory's most abstract formulations seem to gravitate. These issues of the duration of each affect and of its relationship to more permanent self-knowledge are raised by Cara Benedetto's art included in this issue. Massimo Recalcati's reinterpretation of psychoanalysis, with which this dossier ends, might be a step toward yet another way of formulating this question.

The dossier is bookended by two of its most abstract arguments: Catherine Malabou's reading of Derrida, Lévi-Strauss, and Apollinaire and Massimo Recalcati's reading of Freud and Lacan. Between these pieces are included more detailed applications of affect theory and meditations on its relationship to art, literature, contemporary culture, and politics. Malabou's "Following Generation" opens the dossier with a philosophical treatment of the questions of precedence and causality inherent in affect theory's definitions of consciousness. Malabou's is a multiply layered project: she reads Derrida's reading of Lévi-Strauss's reading of a poem by Guillaume Apollinaire. Apollinaire's poem describes crocuses as "mothers / Daughters of their daughters." This phrase is a longstanding biologists' metaphor for a flower that sprouts before the leaves do. Malabou uses this metaphor to interrogate the relationship between deconstruction and structuralism, as well as more generally between a text and its reading and rereading. Does deconstruction precede and create the structure its methodology allows us to disclose? Or is structure the inherent stiffness of a text whose undoing allows deconstruction to emerge? These are questions of logic, but also more materially of the relationship between

residing in a pattern and being aware of this pattern, of the relationship between what we consider to be textual or worldly facts and these facts' rising into consciousness. Malabou claims that if we persist in asking these questions, the notion of linear reproduction soon falls to pieces:

> [O]ur starting question—what does "following after" signify?—receives more and more complex answers that all point toward the complicated problem of a reproductive dualism that seems, through its excess, to bring reproduction to a halt, to arrive at the impassible serenity of a full yet deconstructed presence, a presence full of its own deconstruction.

"Plasticity" is, then, a capacity not for a linear movement of overcoming but for allowing our origins and end points, our states of awareness and of unawareness, to keep being inverted.

> Plasticity, from the perspective of such an investigation, would no longer be linked to the movement of an eternal post-post-modern ruminating rehearsal, but to the eruption of a reversibility between before and after that modernizes posterity by giving new forms to atomized, nuclear sameness—whether it be vegetal, logical, or ontological. *Following this*, it will be the atoms that split us.

From Malabou's piece we pass into a series of essays in which the question of affective awareness starts to be interlaced with or superseded by the question of affective productivity. Elizabeth Abel's "Skin, Flesh, and the Affective Wrinkles of Civil Rights Photography" reclaims affects as at once politically useful and irreducible to prior definitions of political action. Abel studies the affects of photographs documenting the civil rights movement. In an approach that extrapolates from Massumi and Sedgwick, she seeks in these photographs "those feelings that function beneath the threshold of conscious recognition and semantic legibility, those inarticulate, subliminal sensations . . . that operate across the boundaries between mind and body, action and passion, self and other." Abel claims that to follow and acknowledge these "less legible features of the photographic medium" changes our

understanding both of the civil rights struggle and of the photographic medium itself:

> If seeing is not reading, and if the visual medium is neither transparent nor exclusively visual, but also engages other senses, as the obscured visual referent of the exhibit's title suggests, a photograph so painful that it can only be experienced, in Fred Moten's powerful reading, as the sound of "black mo'nin'," we may need to add a wrinkle to the seamless web of photography, activism, and visibility.

Through such wrinkles, photography has the capacity not only to represent but also to "touch" us. Abel derives this more positive understanding of touch—as a form of contact that is not necessarily a power struggle—from French phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In its final turn Sedgwick's childhood photographs of her own "fat, white" body unresolvedly contrasted with the darker and more muscular bodies of her cousins and siblings, Abel's piece poises itself on the brink between affects as a new space of social critique and affects as primarily a space of self-discovery and accidental empathy, precious precisely because it awakens our attention without instantly transforming this attention into a fact, stance, or deed.

Lauren Berlant, interviewed by *Qui Parle*'s Jordan Greenwald, uses affect theory to critique several very recent moments in culture and politics. Berlant emphasizes that to view politics through the lens of affect is to rethink not only the conditions of political events but also the very concept of an event.

> Something has an impact: What will happen? I call this process the becoming-event of the situation. A situation gets its shape from the way that it resonates strongly with previous episodes, such as, in the case you offer, state-induced assassination, state- and media-orchestrated collective experience, popular imperialist revenge/repair fantasies, politicized erotophobia and so on.

Through close readings of newspaper headlines about Osama bin Laden, of a *YouTube* video about Oprah Winfrey, and of a song by Justin Vivian Bond, as well as through dialogue with other affect

theorists such as Sedgwick, Berlant showcases affect theory's potential as a means of questioning, diagnosing, subverting, reclaiming the culture we live in. She concludes with a commentary on affect theory as such a tool of cultural attention, precious because of how ambiguously it lets us balance between intentionality and non-intentionality.

> The reason so many queer theorists are interested in it, I think, is because while one can't intend an affect, one can become attentive to the nimbus of affects whose dynamics move along and make worlds, situations, and environments. In attending to, representing, and standing for these alternative modes of being, we seek to provide new infrastructures for extending their potential to new planes of convergence. I hope so!

Cara Benedetto's art included in this issue, introduced by Suzanne Li Herrera Puma in "A Nice Clean Space for a Panic Attack," uses affects as a tool of social critique by pausing over their specific qualities: their duration, their structure, their intensity. The pieces are all part of a project on "body bags." Li Puma reads this project through the lens of Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection.

> Functioning in a manner not far from Kristeva's description of the abject, Benedetto's work thus produces "imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us," but it never, as it were, digests us completely. It leaves the reader in a space of destabilization, "[d]iscomfort, unease, dizziness" to be sure, and one in which the "twisted braids of affects and thoughts" might never be fully unraveled from one another.[20]

Benedetto's pieces combine moments of contemplation with moments of an affective intensity that seems unstable and unsustainable. She leaves us unsure, as Li Puma suggests, of what can be done with the sensations her art depicts and tries to evoke—unsure, indeed, if we would have wanted to experience these sensations if we had seen them coming. Benedetto also highlights tensions between textual pathos and the pathos of an object these words are meant to describe, in objects as expected as a photograph and as unexpected as a snail shell.

The affects Berlant studies are fleeting even though the conclusions they allow her to draw seem far more universal. Andrew Moisey's essay explores a diametrically opposed pair of problems. How do you make an affect last forever? How can you make sure that an affectively marked object will eternally keep expressing the content with which you believe you first endowed it? Moisey describes the efforts of two independent sets of governmental committees (Finnish and American) who try perpetually to mark as unlivable sites at which these two countries intend to bury nuclear waste. Nuclear waste takes thousands of years to decompose. These sites therefore need to be marked in a way as to express their danger and the repulsion they should provoke to any possible civilization that could inhabit these territories dozens upon dozens of generations hence. Moisey reviews a recent documentary on Finland's nuclear waste committee and recounts his own interviews with members of two American ones. He also studies sketches of possible projects the two American committees considered implementing. Moisey emphasizes the instant difficulty of expressing affect universally: most of the American team's projects, he says, look like "B-movie pitches" or like calques of war memorials. He also notes the contradiction with which these committee members constantly struggle, between a fear of atomic weapons and a strange pride in having to protect others from them. His essay is thus on a most basic level another close analysis of the unexpected transformations affect can undergo as it filters in and out of subjective awareness. It is also an at once frightening and comical statement of affect's troubled relationship to universality and to selfless or even subject-less modes of being.

Joseph Litvak's piece is similarly focused on negative affects and on their capacity to act as structuring forces; yet his subject is not nuclear warfare but Charles Dickens. Litvak's essay reveals some of the new questions and possibilities affect theory opens specifically for literary theory. He reads *David Copperfield* through the prism of resentment. Resentment, he claims, is the crux of this novel's character construction as well as a prominent structuring principle of its relationship to the reader. "Reading a Dickens novel, after all, is nothing if not a labor of resentment: a vicari-

ous reopening of narcissistic wounds as erotically rewarding as its implicit retaliation for them, a rehearsal—as the French would say, a *répétition*—of past injuries and future revenges." By reading Dickens through resentment, the essay accomplishes a double aim. First, it illuminates the structural relationship between Dickens's famously repetitive minor characters and the protagonist. David Copperfield's psychological depth is, Litvak argues, built out of and supported by an implicit self-righteous resentment toward the repetitive, machine-like characters who surround him and do not seem to notice his gentle, "eager" particularity. Litvak also discerns within *David Copperfield* moments of metatextual awareness of and commentary on this way that resentment directed toward others structures and solidifies the resentful person's sense of subjectivity. In the character of Uriah Heep and in episodes such as Rosa Dartle's suddenly successful singing performance, Litvak shows how these secondary characters' stiffness can suddenly open up into a sense of wider possibility, into the possibility even of our attending to these minor figures as if they were themselves protagonists of the novel we are reading. These possibilities open up when we are made to notice that these other characters might rightfully be resentful, too, both of their fates and of the narrator's treatment of them. To expose Dickens's "resentment-machine" allows us to appreciate his characters' predictable structure but also their "unctuous" instability, the fragility of the patterns through which they are repeatedly constituted and melted away. The implicit notions of character and novel structure with which Litvak is working point us back to an older, formalist understanding of the novel. But Litvak also opens up ways of reconnecting this formalism to socially and ethically driven literary readings with a new fluidity and a heightened attention to the many possible social or ethical meanings of each fictional detail.

The last piece in the dossier, Massimo Recalcati's "Hate as a Passion of Being," continues this interrogation of affect, society, and ethics by rereading Freud and Lacan through an affective lens. Recalcati's argument directly inverts traditional psychoanalytic questions. He does not ask how the self can understand its affects as symptoms of an underlying structure of desire; instead, he claims

that both Freud and Lacan define the desiring subject through the experience of a single, specific passion: hatred. Hatred, Recalcati claims, is the passion that registers the original splitting of the subject from its other. Its experience is the proof and the structure of the self's non-coincidence with its world. In this sense, hate is not merely a symptom of what our selves are like, but seems also at times to become its foundation. "[H]ate accompanies the subjective experience of the exteriority of the object; or rather, the object's 'appearance' implies a simultaneous movement of 'hating.'" As does Catherine Malabou, Recalcati keeps returning to possible causal relationships between the structure of our subjectivity and its affective experiences; but the purpose of these returns is to trouble any such causal connection rather than to clarify it.

> At stake, then, is *an affective-bodily form of hate* that does not result from an encounter with the Other but seems, instead, to determine the very conditions of the Other's existence. Hate appears as a founding condition of exteriority, as a sort of passion of the body that spits out the malignant excess of enjoyment to constitute the very alterity—and exteriority—of the object.

Recalcati traces descriptions of hatred in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* as well as in Freud's and Lacan's writings on child development, envy, and jealousy. In all these passages, hate emerges for Recalcati as an affect endowed with a particular "lucidity" about the structure of the self, a "lucidity" that ultimately seems to make it identical with this structure, or to make it the self's most radical confrontation with "life as such." Recalcati thus continues Malabou's discussion of our relationship to our own self-awareness. With Litvak, he also starts to pose a slightly different but equally unsettling question. Recalcati asks us to imagine not only a self overwhelmed by an affect, but a logic or grammar of subjectivity that treats an affective experience as its objective structure and basis. His argument forces us to ask whether we do indeed always think through the prism of one affect or another; whether it is true that affects stabilize not only our systems of values but also the rational structures through which we try to evaluate them. This essay thus finally also brings us back to the tension between affective

multiplicity and affective closure. If affects do structure our thinking so intimately, then it may be—as Recalcati suggests—that we will find our deepest forms of reasoning in the affect before whose call we are particularly defenseless. Or it may be, instead, that to prevent our reason from stiffening we need to seek out as many different affective experiences as possible—and that the affective returns Recalcati describes are not the goals but the final limits of our thinking.

Notes

1. In neuroscience this question was first opened by Benjamin Libet's experiments conducted in the 1980s. See Benjamin Libet et al., "Time of Conscious Intention to Act in Relation to Onset of Cerebral Activity (Readiness-Potential): The Unconscious Initiation of a Freely Voluntary Act," *Brain* 106, no. 3 (1983): 623–42. Libet's article has since become quite controversial, but the broader issue it raises—how we can learn about the brain in spite of or even through the subject's lack of consciousness of its degrees of activity or malfunctioning—remains alive in neuroscience. Catherine Malabou's recent *Les nouveaux blessés* (Paris: Bayard, 2007) uses the double concepts of positive and negative plasticity to describe some of the research neuroscience has since done on the relationship between the conscious self and the changing neural structure of the brain. Libet's experiment was improved on and repeated in 2007 by Haynes et al. with very similar results. See Chun Syong Soon, John-Dylan Haynes, et al., "Unconscious Determinants of Free Decisions in the Human Brain," *Nature Neuroscience* 11 (2008): 543–45.
2. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 6.
3. Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).
4. Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).
5. Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010).
6. Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and Her Sisters*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

7. Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3 (2011): 434–72. Hereafter cited as "TA."
8. Heather Love, *Feeling Backward* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Lee Edelman, *No Future* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
9. William E. Connolly, "The Complexity of Intention," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (2011): 791–98.
10. Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).
11. Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
12. Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). Elizabeth Abel, "Affective Wrinkles" in this issue; Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). Hereafter cited as *ATR*.
13. Steven D. Brown and Ian Tucker, "Eff the Ineffable: Affect, Somatic Management, and Mental Health Service Users," in *ATR*, 229–49.
14. Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).
15. Philip Fisher, *The Vehement Passions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
16. Kaja Silverman, "Seeing for the Sake of Seeing," in *World Spectators* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).
17. I have in mind particularly Kierkegaard's descriptions of Abraham as capable of experiencing intense joy and intense despair at once; and Woolf's praise of Shakespeare as having attained a state of androgyny in which all selfish and selfless feelings are accessible to him. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (1943; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941); Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929; New York: Harcourt, 1991).
18. Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.)
19. Rei Terada, *Looking Away* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).
20. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4, 19, 1.