These are just a few of the important issues raised by Sang's rich contribution to our understanding of gender relations in twentieth-century China, global economies of sexual knowledge, and the lived experience of lesbianism in transnational China today.

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Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity. By EVE KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003. Pp. 195. $54.95 (cloth); $18.95 (paper).

> I was under the influence of Eve Sedgwick whose instruction, as any of her students will report, is the most potent of all aphrodisiacs.
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> —Rafael Campo, *The Desire to Heal: A Doctor's Education in Empathy, Identity, and Poetry*

Eve Sedgwick is one of the most amazing scholars of our time. Her erudition, brilliance, passion, and unusual combination of interests thrill. Sedgwick's latest book, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, excites, demands, perplexes. One of the difficulties of Sedgwick's book is that she demands that readers begin thinking about "nondualistic thought and pedagogy" (1). To overcome binaries, the curse of Western culture, is not an easy task. Sedgwick's writing throws the reader into a state without dualisms, much like the unconscious. While turning the pages of Sedgwick's masterful book, one wonders whether one is reading or dreaming. The writing is terse, poetic, playful, brilliant, tough, eloquent, beautiful. But because so many ideas pour out at once, it is at times difficult to understand. As Sedgwick explains, the essays that comprise her book "explore a sense of exciting and so far unexhausted possibility—as well as frustration—stirred up by four difficult texts: J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, the introductory volume of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, and the first three volumes of Silvan Tomkin's *Affect Imagery Consciousness*" (2). Although the book's structure is clear, the prose unsettles by its complexity, and pretty soon the reader gets lost—in a good way—inside the difficult phenomenological world of affect. Most readers will feel that they have been thrown into a swirl of words, into a swirl of complexity.

One of the most interesting ideas Sedgwick introduces is that of the "beside" (8). Beside is a word that is between this and that. Hence, to be

beside something is to escape the problem of duality. To be beside one's self is an emotional statement: I am beside myself, I am in a sense not-myself, but I am myself. This is perplexing. To be beside, to be in-a-state-of-beside, sets up the rest of the book as a beside. Sedgwick addresses "aspects of experience and reality that do not present themselves in propositional or even in verbal form alongside others that do" (6). The world of affect is not the world of propositions, it is the world of the beside.

In *Touching Feeling* (without a comma between them) Sedgwick attempts to articulate what is, in a sense, beyond articulation. But one thing she knows is that touching feeling, although hard to articulate, has "texture" and "an intimacy [which] seems to subsist between textures and emotions" (17). Her writing is certainly texture-ful, innovative, and delightful. It is also maddening: a reader must struggle to understand what Sedgwick is trying to do and will always seem to lag behind her genius. Sedgwick addresses all sorts of affective experiences, ranging from her own illness to paranoid schizoid and reparative pedagogies, from shame and queer theory to literary analyses. She provokes the reader, who will experience not one but a multitude of whirling emotional states. She seems to be eager to get away from dealing only with one affective framework, to burst beyond the edges of this and that, and to throw the reader into chaos.

Toward the end of her book Sedgwick states that, counter to what she is doing, a "disturbingly large amount of theory seems explicitly to undertake the proliferation of only one affect, or maybe two, of whatever kind—whether ecstasy, sublimity, self-shattering, jouissance, suspicion . . . horror . . ." (146). Theorists, in other words, usually end up splitting psychologically, needing to take sides: Either I like you or I don't. Either I read Klein or I read Freud. Either I like queer theory or I don't. Sedgwick attempts to show that it is time for theorists to get beyond splitting, beyond dualistic thinking, to the place of the beside. The beside reflects phenomenologically the ways in which affects work. Affects are not split, but the ego splits them to protect itself from being overwhelmed. Reading Sedgwick is hard, even overwhelming, and takes time, but it is well worth the effort.

There are other striking ideas in *Touching Feeling*. Sedgwick proposes to move beyond paranoid readings (such as those reflective of Paul Ricoeur's insistence on suspicion) to more reparative ones. Here she draws on the work of Melanie Klein, who suggests that reparative practices move alongside those of paranoid ones. These ways of being in the world are fluid and moving. They are not stages but rather different ways of seeing the world that change as we change throughout life.

As a professor of education I find very helpful Sedgwick's suggestion that a paranoid pedagogy cannot tolerate surprises, but a reparative pedagogy embraces them: "To a reparatively positional reader, it can seem

realistic and necessary to experience surprise. Because there are terrible surprises, however, there can also be good ones" (146). When pedagogies are open to surprise they are open to the New, which can seem both terrible and good. Students are not always open to the New. In fact, as Deborah Britzman points out, they are often psychologically resistant to it: "Not only will students refuse to learn but so too teachers will defend themselves against new knowledge."[1] To engage in reparative pedagogy when students are shut down in paranoia and suspicion is an idea I find fruitful for my own practice. To repair wounds that impair students' learning and emotional growth—this is my goal as a teacher.

One specific affect that Sedgwick spends time teasing out is shame and its relation to queer theory. In her words, "the protoaffect shame . . . floods into being as a moment, a disruptive moment, in a circuit of identity—constituting identificatory communication" (36). It is an affect that is almost beside or beyond articulation because it overwhelms. Much of the queer theory talk, ironically, skips over affective states altogether because it is so entrenched in defining what it means to *be* queer, not what it means to *feel* queer. Queer theory tends to be yet another battlefield between men and women arguing over its urban-white-male connotations. As Sedgwick notes, queer no longer has anything to do with radical politics. In fact, if it means something like "Queer eye for the straight guy," which is not queer at all, then queer is meaningless. "Queer eye for the straight guy" is more like normalization for the queer guy and queering the straight guy to make him more normal. What is queer, though, is Sedgwick's reading of Henry James. Now that is queer! James, the darling of literary scholars, engaged in queer practices that shock. I do not want to tip my hand here but instead entice readers to grapple with Sedgwick's text. Thus, one small quote from Sedgwick on James will have to do: "When we tune in to James's language on these frequencies it is not as superior, privileged eavesdroppers on a sexual narrative hidden from himself; rather, it is an audience offered the privilege of sharing in his exhibitionistic enjoyment and performance of sexuality organized around shame" (54). Shame is an affect queers know well. It can't be gotten around. But how to articulate it? Sedgwick does a masterful job at capturing elusive states such as shame and connecting them to queer theory and literature, which is her trademark, of course. Interestingly enough, many queer theorists work hard to define what they mean when they talk about queer theory or homosexuality. Sedgwick has no truck with such banal discussions: "The thing I least want to be heard as offering here is a 'theory of homosexuality.' I have none and I want none" (61).

[1]Deborah Britzman, *After-Education: Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, and Psychoanalytic Histories of Learning* (New York, 2003), 72.

In sum, Sedgwick's book is a marvelous read. Literary scholars and professors of education, put your seatbelts on, for Sedgwick certainly takes you on an interesting ride. She once again makes a significant contribution to not just one but many intersecting fields—literary criticism, education, queer theory, cultural studies, and autobiography. If scholars are not yet in love with Eve, they will be after reading this book. Let me end with an observation by James Kincaid: "Now I know why no one in love with Eve Sedgwick (all of us) can write about her. Consider that—'write about her'—we are all able to write and we all are inspired by her; it's the about we trip over."[2] Certainly, I found myself tripping over myself to write about this amazing thinker.

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[2]James Kincaid, "When Whippoorwills Call," in S. M. Barber and D. L. Clark, eds., *Regarding Sedgwick: Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory* (New York, 2002), 229–41, 229.