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# ASPECTS OF EMOTION IN LATE IMPERIAL CHINA

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC SECTION

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Jeder Satz, der über Gefühle gesagt wird, ist von Traditionen  
getragen, aber auch belastet, und in jedem Fall strittig.<sup>1</sup>  
[Every single statement about emotions is borne by traditions, but at  
the same time also distorted by them, and in any case disputable.]

### Introduction<sup>2</sup>

Emotions and feelings<sup>3</sup> cannot be removed from historical contexts. They are shaped by history just as much as they in turn shape history. However, emotions in history are not easy to trace. Emotions are hidden in language, in pictures and architecture, in written fragments, in birth registers, legal case descriptions, even in official titles or in names; they may be traced in reference books, in introductory notes, in letters, in novels and poems, in medical case histories and in philosophical statements. Written sources themselves, however, are never linguistic expressions of emotions. Moreover, there is no general agreement on any all-embracing definition of emotion that could be applied to all places and all times. By necessity, historical research approaches emotional processes via the reconstruction of knowledge as applied to emotions at specific times and places. However, the reconstruction of emotion knowledge<sup>4</sup> at specific times and places must include, and must go beyond, the obvious in terms of semantics, logic, rules and values.

Any knowledge regarding emotions needs to be concerned with the question of practice. As a “nexus of doings and sayings”,<sup>5</sup> the issue of practice is

1 BÖHME, 1997: 527.

2 I wish to thank Roland Altenburger and Rudolf Pfister for numerous helpful suggestions and corrections.

3 In the present article I use the terms “emotion” and “feeling” interchangeably.

4 On the application of the term *Gefühlswissen*, see FREVERT, 2011a and 2011b.

5 See SCHATZKI, 2008: 89.

referring to *social* practice, which is primarily performed by bodies.<sup>6</sup> This particular approach has been put forward only recently and is considered useful to the study of the history of emotions.<sup>7</sup> It differs from previous Western scholarship on emotion, which, since its beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, looked at emotions as universal and principally unchanging affects, and as a-historical bodily processes. For centuries, the dichotomies of *emotion* and *ratio*, body and mind, or body and culture underpinned the perspectives of Western philosophers and physicians. The most famous metaphorical description of this opposition is Descartes' body-machine, much elaborated on by medical mechanists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> Passions were clearly separated from mental events such as thoughts, judgments and ideas. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when academic psychology began to be institutionalized at German universities, "psyche" (or the "soul") and "soma" became alternative terms for the *emotion-ratio* dualism. Psychologists subsequently discussed the nature of the "psychic", that is the affective and emotional states: How many basic emotions are there? What is their function? How can they be distinguished from cognitive processes?<sup>9</sup> An assumed opposition of emotion and cognition directed this line of research. Most historical and sociological studies of emotions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century followed along these ideas. As a pioneering attempt, Huizinga's *Waning of the Middle Ages*, first published in 1919, showed great concern for feelings and forms of thought. Later, both Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre emphasized the necessity of a diachronic view on emotion.

Norbert Elias, in his much quoted monograph *The Civilizing Process* (*Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, 1939), reconstructed the history of Europe's transition to modernity from 800 to 1900. Focusing on the emergence of the absolutist state, he detected changes in emotional behaviour in conjunction with a gradual display of modesty. He shows that emotions are not simply the product of some psychological and bodily mechanisms, but rather should be viewed as being informed by political, social and cultural processes. However, Elias is associating emotionality with a somewhat naïve and pure human disposition that he attributed to pre-modern people. Projecting onto the past an original "golden age" in which people lived guided by feelings and primordial needs he pointed out gradual transformations due to social regulatory restrictions. Thus he estab-

6 See RECKWITZ, 2008: 191, referring to BOURDIEU, 1977.

7 See the instructive article by SCHEER, 2012.

8 On medical mechanism, see DUCHESNEAU, 1982: 79–86. On the competing discourses on this issue, see HAGNER, 1997: 25–62.

9 See ROTH / MÜNTHE / HEINZE, 2007: 252.



lished a meta-narrative that conveyed a romantic view of the Middle Ages, and he was also prejudiced towards the *emotion-ratio* dualism. Elias' work has clearly influenced the presuppositions of subsequent researchers.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1980s, anthropological and socio-cultural research began to study the patterns of emotions, their interpretation and evaluation, or in other words, the "rules of feeling"<sup>11</sup> at particular times and places. This line of research challenged the traditional oppositions of thinking and feeling, of body and mind, and of nature and culture.<sup>12</sup> However, similar preconceptions continued to shape historical research on emotions. Take, for instance, the well-known concept of "emotionology". It assumes the existence of a clearly defined set of historically changing rules of feeling, i.e. the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward certain basic emotions and their appropriate expression. Within the concept of emotionology, people constantly act on the basis of what they consider their "true" emotions in relation with these rules of feeling. This concept was developed by Peter N. and Carol Z. Stearns based on empirical material in the US-American context gathered from the 1960s up to 1985. Assuming tensions between a person's emotional life and the standardization imposed by society, the Stearns' research was significantly shaped by the dichotomy of individual and state.<sup>13</sup> A major problem with the concept of emotionology concerns the presupposed naturalness of "real" feelings. How could one still believe that feelings may be "real" but nevertheless historically shaped? Moreover, on what basis can we assume that people living in different places and periods had a psychic structure that was similar to ours nowadays?

In the 1990s, neuroscience for the first time could demonstrate that it is impossible to conceive emotion as separate from cognition.<sup>14</sup> This provided an important clarification regarding the nature of emotions. However, without any access to long-term feelings and dispositions, neuroscience has since been

10 Elias was much criticized by DÜRR, 1988–2002; see especially vol. 1: 9–12 and vol. 3: 9–33, where Dürr questions the view according to which a more authentic emotional self, or a true self, developed towards a rational estranged self. On this critique, see NIESTROJ, 1989: 136–160. Cf. especially ROSENWEIN, 1998, for a substantial critique of Elias' preconceptions and for evidence regarding the existence of more than just one kind of emotional community in the Middle Ages and beyond.

11 See HOCHSCHILD, 1983; VOWINCKEL, 1983; HARRÉ, 1986; LUTZ, 1988.

12 See especially ABU-LUGHOD, 1986.

13 See STEARNS / STEARNS, 1985.

14 PANKSEPP, 1998.



limited to localizing and measuring momentary emotional events. Therefore, its fundamental epistemological framework tended to reduce the social world to a set of learned behaviours, and to simplify the complexities of social interactions and their essential role in emotional processes to a narrow set of bodily processes.<sup>15</sup> Thus, neuroscience partially ignores the entire world of language, despite the crucial role it plays in the circulation of ideas and the ways of constructing the self.

The renowned historian of emotion William Reddy confronts the history of emotion with insights from cognitive psychology and the neurosciences. Based on findings from cognitive psychology, neuroscience and historical sources, he reconstructed the “emotional regime” of the French Revolution. His suggestion that emotions are constantly being developed via expression moves the performative act itself into the focus of research. Accordingly, any expression of feeling both shapes the “inner world” and interacts with the world of the other.<sup>16</sup> On this basis, Reddy elaborated the notion of “emotives”, which denotes the linguistic expression of forms of emotion. “Emotives” have been criticized for their implied “linguistic imperialism” that forces “verbal utterances on such non-verbal body practices as smiling or crying”.<sup>17</sup>

These critical remarks lead us to the actual focus of the present special section. The emerging awareness of non-reflected dualisms in historical research requires that we look for categories that go beyond the dichotomies of “inner and outer”, “body and mind”, and “nature and culture”. This is a particularly important point to consider in the case of Chinese emotion history. As will be shown in the following, the complex relationship between emotional practices and the human body can be an intriguing field of exploration.

## Searching for Emotional Knowledge in Chinese History

Marking a new approach, the term emotional knowledge replaces conventional perspectives such as the theory of emotion or the conceptual understanding of emotions.<sup>18</sup> As pointed out previously, it is to be sought in the realm of *social*

15 KIRMAYER, 2012: 307.

16 See REDDY, 1997 and 2001; cf. the discussion of Reddy’s views in PLAMPER, 2010: 237–265.

17 PLAMPER, 2010: 241; HITZLER, 2011.

18 JANKE, 2002: 9.

practice. Emotional knowledge is viewed as being situated in contexts of different knowledge domains such as aesthetic knowledge, philosophical knowledge and medical knowledge. With this approach in mind, emotional knowledge clearly comprises cognitive processes, implicit knowledge as well as learned practices.

For a long time, emotions would not have been considered an integral part of Chinese historical research. As late as 1996, the renowned historian Dorothy Ko still had to strive to convince her colleagues that the

cultural construction of emotion constitutes a worthwhile subject of study – no less important than a peasant rebellion.<sup>19</sup>

In philosophical studies, at least, sinologists repeatedly raised the question whether or not the term *qing* 情 in ancient China had already meant “emotion”.<sup>20</sup> This implied the fundamental question whether there existed a domain of psychological knowledge in ancient China, and whether an individual’s inner states had been conceptualized.<sup>21</sup> With few exceptions,<sup>22</sup> these studies were not concerned with any particular sentiments or feelings, but with the definition of key terms such as *qing* 情 (emotion, matter, fact), *xin* 心 (heart, mind)<sup>23</sup> and *xing* 性 (human nature). Due to its reductionist tendency, this approach is open to criticism, for it disregards the diversity of ideospheres which might have given rise to different usages of *qing* at various times and in different regions.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1990s, Paolo Santangelo was among the pioneers who systematically collected terms of emotion and emotion-related terms from Chinese texts, and towards establishing emotions in Ming-Qing China as a new field of research.<sup>25</sup>

19 Ko, 1996: 62.

20 Graham’s view maintaining that *qing* in pre-Han texts never meant emotion (“passions”) but simply referred to “something which was the case” (GRAHAM, 1990: 59–64), has since been questioned. Cf. HANSEN, 1995: 181–203; HARBSMEIER, 1999 and 2004.

21 See ROTH, 1991, and BRINDLEY, 2006.

22 See, e.g., EBERHARD, 1977; TRAUZETTEL, 1992; HARBSMEIER, 1999.

23 See, e.g., LINCK, 1996.

24 EIFRING, 2004: 22.

25 Cf. SANTANGELO, 1992. Since the year 2000 he has initiated annual conferences on various topics related to emotions in Chinese history. Some results from these conferences were published in the journal *Ming Qing yanjiu*, but in most cases they were collected in conference proceedings. See, e.g., SANTANGELO / MIDDENDORF, 2006; SANTANGELO / GUIDA, 2006; SANTANGELO, 2007, 2012; and TAMBURELLO, 2012. On the various topics covered, see furthermore SANTANGELO, 2003: 247–454.



At the same time, a number of contributions in cultural and literary studies explored emotions, love, passion, the “cult of emotions”<sup>26</sup>, and friendship as important new research topics.<sup>27</sup>

The “cult of emotions” refers to the emphatically propagated “teaching of passion” or even “religion of love” (*qingjiao* 情教). Due to its opposition to the mainstream Neo-Confucian “teaching of rites” (*lijiao* 禮教), it has inspired historians to explore the social contexts of certain phenomena with regard to various authors, such as the “marketplace eremitism” (*shiyin* 市隱) of Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1616) und Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610). Both of them were holders of the highest examination degree (*jinshi* 進士), and both, after having been employed as officials for a while, refused to serve in official positions and pursued individualistic lifestyles.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, how can the success of this “cult of emotions” actually be verified? Would people not have known similar things and behaved in similar ways long before? Or were they “emotionalized” and had learned only now how to feel and act in new and exciting ways, particularly through reading the literature of the time?<sup>29</sup> Recently, historians have emphasized that the widening gap between norms and social realities in the urban sphere of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was not bound to give rise to any notions of “subjectivity” or private emotional states.<sup>30</sup> This is an important objection, since the terms “subjectivity” and “inner emotions” were derived by and large from the field of the Western history of emotions. Moreover, these terms are closely related to the history of the self. When historians began to inquire how Chinese people in the past conceived of their own selves, by necessity they based their reflections on Western “regimes of scholarly commonsense truth”.<sup>31</sup> Historians who dealt with this question by studying the “styles of being”<sup>32</sup> and the practices of the self,<sup>33</sup> realized that they needed to concern themselves with the epistemologies of the body.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the body and

26 On this term, see WANG, 1994; XIONG / LÜ, 1999; and SANTANGELO, 2000: 439–499.

27 See, for examples, WANG, 1994; CARLITZ, 1994; EPSTEIN, 1999; HUANG, 2001; KUBIN, 2001; SANTANGELO, 2003; IDEMA et al., 2006; HUANG, 2007; EIFRING, 1999 and 2004.

28 See CHOU, 1988.

29 Such questions have also been raised with regard to the European history of emotions. See, e.g., HANSEN, 1990.

30 See, e.g., KO, 1994: 24; McDUGALL, 2002.

31 See ZITO / BARLOW, 1994: 1.

32 See KURIYAMA, 1999: 195–270.

33 See ISHIDA, 1989: 41–71.

34 See HAY, 1994: 42–77; WU, 1997; LINCK, 2001. Cf. also MITTLER, 2003; MESSNER, 2006: 41–63; ZHOU, 2005.



body practices have gradually proven to be a productive field for research on the Chinese history of emotion.

## Corporealities of Emotions and Self

In research on expressions of emotions in modern Chinese language, such as anger and happiness, there is a growing amount of evidence that emotions tend to be conceptualized, more often than in English, by relating to various parts of the body. States of anger are most often related to internal parts of the body, such as the spleen, the liver-intestines as well as liver-fire and the stomach. The gallbladder is mentioned particularly frequently in relation to either courage, cowardness or fear/fright.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, this same line of research argues for a close parallel between Chinese everyday language and medical jargon.<sup>36</sup> Such insights strongly support a shift away from an exclusive focus on canonical texts towards covering a much broader spectrum of sources, also including technical writings.<sup>37</sup> Ming- and Qing-dynasty medical literature provides insights into the ways emotions were conceptualized and focused on in the context of medical diagnosis and therapy.<sup>38</sup> In research on the history of emotions, corporeality is thus brought to the foreground.<sup>39</sup>

Take for instance the term *nu* 怒 (anger) as it is found in a number of 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century texts. One can count the number of occurrences that can be related to and compared with the numbers of occurrences of other terms of emotion. In addition to *nu*, there are various other terms which equally denote “anger”, but several of which only by implication. In order to understand the various grades and nuances of anger, the given epistemological frame needs to be reconstructed, and the conceptualization of emotion in a specific temporal and regional context needs to be considered. Therefore, in addition to literary texts, it is essential to include knowledge derived from various other types of text from the same period and region. Knowledge about emotions may comprise both po-

35 See YU, 2009: 48–60.

36 See YU, 2009: 25; MAALEJ / YU, 2011.

37 Among the most important contributions in this regard are FURTH, 1999: 187–223; UNSCHULD, 2003: 227–234; and FARQUHAR, 2007: 286–296.

38 Among the earliest observations in this regard was UNSCHULD, 1980: 172ff. Among the earliest works on this specific issue was SIVIN, 1995.

39 See FARQUHAR, 2007.

pular views as well as specialists' conceptualizations. Views on the constitution and texture of human beings, whether in physiology or psychology, depend on theory. Chinese 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century literary texts add evidence to the assumption that medical knowledge provided a significant epistemological framework. Both medical and literary texts of this period refer to particular physical states, due to either utmost distress, disappointment or frustration, or in the face of unspeakable pain and despair. Terms of emotions appear throughout in conjunction with the Five viscera (*wu zang* 五臟, i.e. heart, spleen, lung, kidney and liver). The physiology of the Five viscera is systematized in terms of the Five Phases (*wu xing* 五行) paradigm.<sup>40</sup> Emotions are assigned to each of the five visceral systems. They are not simply perceived as processes correlating to the viscera (such as the heart to joy or happiness, the spleen to worrying or thinking, the lung to sadness, grief or anxiety, the kidney to fear, alertness or fright, and the liver to anger); rather, they are conceived of as sharing in an analogy of interaction among the organs. This interaction is viewed as being directed by complex cycles of production (*sheng* 生) and restraint (*ke* 克). The sequence of production of the Five Phases is the following: wood produces fire, fire produces earth, earth produces metal, and metal produces wood. Correspondingly, in the human body, the liver facilitates the functions of the heart system; the heart facilitates the spleen functions; the spleen facilitates the function of the lung; the lung facilitates the functions of the kidney; and the kidney facilitates the function of the liver.

The system of Five Phases, together with the *yin-yang* theory, provides the epistemological framework in which all the conditions of illness and related crises can be mapped out. Emotions form an integral part of this body-mapping system, and the cognitive processes can likewise be mapped on the body. Consequently, emotions neither appear as substantial counterparts to any "reason", nor are they represented exclusively as physiological processes. This specific conceptualization of emotions needs to be explored in terms of corporeality, which, in turn, is related to the concept of embodiment in cognitive linguistics. There is a growing body of research suggesting that cognition is body-based and situated, and indicating, moreover, that the environment is also part of the cognitive system. Therefore, "putting the body back into the mind"<sup>41</sup> is a major con-

40 On the significant role of this paradigm in early Chinese contexts, see ZHANG, 1998; and for its role in contemporary Chinese clinical settings, see ZHANG, 2007: 66–74.

41 LAKOFF, 1987: 267.



cern at issue here.<sup>42</sup> This also refers us to the basic and inescapable fact that human beings are corporeal beings. The notion of corporeality requires a slightly different perspective. This leads to the question of the practices people employ to conceptualize their everyday emotional lives, in relation to their body as well as to the world. In medical contexts, emotions are conceived in terms of *qi* 氣 (vital energy), e.g., as a conglomeration of “essence and *qi*” (*jingqi* 精氣). Whenever 17<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese medical texts refer to emotions, they always, mostly implicitly, do so in terms of the Five Phases paradigm, with each phase denoting one of the Five viscera (*wu zang*) as the places where unbalanced emotional processes can be detected by the physician.

Interestingly enough, this particular knowledge of emotions was not separated from moral discourses. Just as 18<sup>th</sup>-century European medical writings focusing on emotional distress show strong evidence for the inextricability of the “physical and the moral”,<sup>43</sup> 17<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese medical perspectives on emotions also include ideas of moral self-cultivation, or “self-refinement” (*xiu shen* 修身).<sup>44</sup> In conventional moral philosophy, emotions were conceived of as powers that affected the ideal state of equilibrium (*zhong* 中). The gradual transformation of emotional knowledge shifted the focus of a person’s self-cultivation in a way that led people to experience emotions primarily as bodily processes within the five *yin*-viscera, thus emphasizing the issue of corporeality.

A glance at the taxonomies of emotions in Chinese texts indicates that there were fundamental differences between ancient and late imperial times. The “cult of emotions” in 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century China, with its emphasis on sensitivity, emerged as a rather new phenomenon. As has already been mentioned before, the rise of the concept of *qing* can be viewed as a significant element of ongoing shifts in the socio-economics and socio-politics of the time. In the Jiangnan macro-region (comprising parts of the present-day provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui), *qing* played a particularly important role in the literary, philosophical and theatrical discourses.<sup>45</sup> The gradual shift from a word to a concept and to a cult resulted from actual human experience, where it started to modify attitudes towards objects and towards the persons themselves. Thus, love and passion were increasingly viewed as intrinsic parts of human nature.

42 JOHNSON, 1987. Cf. SLINGERLAND, 2008: 13; MAALEJ / YU, 2011: 6.

43 See WILLIAMS, 2010: 358–386. On psychophysical characteristics and “visceral cognitions”, see ADÁM, 1998.

44 See MESSNER, forthcoming.

45 See WANG, 1994; EPSTEIN, 2001: 61–79; HUANG, 2001: 45–85; ROPP, 2006: 203–228; SANTANGELO, 2003: 186–205.



Literary texts often refer to emotions very prominently, but rarely in self-evident ways. Even if the difficulties of translation from classical Chinese and of dialect expressions<sup>46</sup> are set aside, a major problem remains to be dealt with. Even when texts explicitly refer to love or anger, the semantics of love and anger do not necessarily correlate with those in present day Anglophone texts. In other words, analysing terms which explicitly name and/or implicitly denote different emotional processes requires an alert reconsideration of these terms in relevant contexts. This, moreover, requires a heightened methodological awareness to the triangular relation between words, concepts and objects. According to Reinhard Koselleck,

the concept is bound to a word, but is at the same time more than a word: a word becomes a concept when the plenitude of politico-social context of meaning and experience in and for which a word is used can be condensed into one word. [...] Concepts are thus the concentrate of several substantial meanings.<sup>47</sup>

Koselleck's approach opens up new possibilities of reconstructing historical knowledge and domains of practice. Applying a database for collecting, ordering, translating, correlating and ultimately interpreting selected terms of emotion can be a useful methodological instrument of analysis. Yet, there are lexico-semantic problems which mainly derive from the fact that there simply is no "theory-lessness"<sup>48</sup> of practical lexicography. Therefore it does not suffice to search for words of emotion and their semantic contexts in the texts from late imperial China. The foremost concern should rather be the elusive relationship between terminology, conceptualization and the actual words employed, including metaphors and metonymies.

## On the Organisation of the Present Thematic Section

The articles collected in the present thematic section on "Aspects of of Emotion in Late Imperial China" resulted from a series of Villa Vigoni Research Conferences, held in 2009, 2010 and 2011, entitled "Reconstruction of Emotion-

46 On the strong significance of the Wu dialect in Feng Menglong's writings, see ÔKI / SANT-ANGELO, 2011, and the recent review article McLAREN, 2012.

47 KOSELLECK, 2004: 84.

48 SWANEPOEL, 1994: 12.

Knowledge in Late Imperial China”.<sup>49</sup> With a focus on the coherent period of the Ming and Qing dynasties (ca. 1400–1900), the contributed papers aimed at a series of intertwined studies of medical, literary and philosophical texts. The project sought to explore the relationships between the terminology of emotion and the related conceptualization processes. A systematic collection of words of emotion and related terms from the various fields of discourse (literature, philosophy and medicine) served to provide the empirical data. Initially, these data were fed into a database.<sup>50</sup> Irrespective of the fact that detailed preoccupation with the issues of practical lexicography was vital for the theoretical discussions, preference was ultimately given to a descriptive philological method. Therefore, the three articles that follow mainly provide close readings of selected texts.

Historically focusing on the period of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the contributions move in a field of tension between the profound challenges of the “cult of emotions”, on the one hand, and the collapse of the Ming dynasty and the Manchu conquest of China,<sup>51</sup> on the other. Both of these aspects had particular significance for the Chinese history of emotion. Each of the three articles offers a different and particular perspective on emotional practices in the Jiangnan area of the time.

Barbara Bisetto’s article, entitled “The Composition of *Qing shi* (The History of Love) in Late Ming Book Culture” addresses the specific ways in which mentality, culture and values were interrelated in late Ming cultural history. Focusing on the interrelations between the specific setting of the text, its author(s) and the sociopolitical environment, this article aims clearly beyond

49 After a preparatory meeting at the Free University Bolzano in 2008, conferences were held at the German-Italian Center of European Excellence Villa Vigoni, sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation).

See <<http://www.villavigoni.eu>> (last visited January 14 2013).

50 The database that originally had been established with literary texts in mind is basically organized according to the prototypic approach which forces the researcher to select the terms of emotion according to their belonging to a particular category. However, the newly elaborated glossaries developed from medical and philosophical fields partly resisted the prototypical order. The medical texts rather require a dimensional approach, the emphasis of which is on emotions according to tendencies in direction (e.g., up and down), intensity (e.g., high or low), or in the infinite numbers of movements, each with specific characteristics, such as the multiple flowing processes of *qi* in the human body. For philosophical texts, a categorical approach would be appropriate, since categorical terming only works with a limited number of terms of emotion. The overall integration of these three approaches into the database was a difficult task.

51 For a general assessment, see STRUVE, 1993; KO, 2005.



contextualization. Analyzing Feng Menglong's anthology *Qing shi* (History of Love, ca. 1628–1630), the core text of the so-called “cult of emotions” in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Bisetto presents a challenging perspective on the history of emotions in China. In contrast to previous research that mainly aimed at interpreting the notion of *qing* 情 (love, sentiment, emotions) in this anthology, Bisetto expands the scope of inquiry, addressing the issue of the appropriation and re-interpretation of the traditional encyclopaedic discourse in *Qing shi*. This particular mode of discourse, Bisetto argues, was an integral component of the cultural project under the key term *qing*. She demonstrates that *qing* served as the keyword to a cultural movement that began as a sentimental culture for literary amusement and gradually moved towards a sentimental culture of self-cultivation. Her insights into the gradual shifting of meaning of the notion of *qing* towards a category of philosophical engagement are further supported by the article contributed by Angelika Messner as well as by the work of Paolo Santangelo.

Angelika C. Messner's article “Towards a History of the Corporeal Dimensions of Emotions: The Case of Pain” juxtaposes passages from *Yangzhou riji* 揚州十日記 (Record of the Ten Days in Yangzhou, 1645) and *Qing shi* with Chen Shiduo's 陳士鐸 (1627–1707) medical accounts. In each of these texts, suffering due to extraordinary emotional pain is expressed through torturing corporeal sensations. The logic of the concrete, i.e. the Five viscera serving as a conceptual framework, is found in both medical and literary sources.

Rudolf Pfister, in his article entitled “A Theoretical Vignette on the Postulated Effects of a Simple Drug by Chen Shiduo (1627–1707): Japanese Sweet Flag, the Opening of the Heart Orifices, and Forgetfulness”, offers additional insight into the logic of the concrete in Chen Shiduo's medical writings. Studying the ways in which Chen describes the effectiveness of drugs in curing forgetfulness, Pfister uncovers a particular explanatory model that relies as much on the details of the culture-specific concept of the heart as the activator and commanding centre in the breast, as on the postulated effects of the prescribed drugs. Pfister meticulously traces the various trajectories that support the explanation of the effectiveness of the drugs applied. He also traces Chen Shiduo's main argument to the origin of forgetfulness. The study of the specific interplay between the heart and the urogenital system serves as an appropriate example for the epistemological tools that shaped the knowledge about memory and the cognitive functions at the time.



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