

Weeping by the Water:

A Reflection on the Hydraulic Affects and the Political Depression after Sewol in South Korea

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The capsizing of the South Korean ferry *Sewol* on April 16th 2014 has caused a nationwide panic and depression in South Korea, as well as in the Korean diasporic communities abroad. Not only has the tragedy of the event marked an irreparable damage in the lives of the victims' families, but it has also brought a deep nationwide "political depression" (in Cvetkovich's definition) in the country. The event and the subsequent responses by the government officials painfully demonstrated how the country in its hyper-neoliberal state has divested itself from the affective lives of the people, hence is unable to *feel* what people—or, *minjung*, to use more indigenous terminology—*feel*.

Anchoring myself in the emotions ensuing from the broadcasted images of the Pangmok harbor, where the families and numerous anonymous people were weeping and awaiting the news of their lost children, family, and friends by the sea, I intend to explore in this paper the affective possibilities of "water" as an elemental archive/repository of emotions. An affective turn toward the water—beyond the confinement of the identitarian "national" (Korean) context, may allow us to transmit, exchange, share, be affected by, and feel together the temporally and spatially distant emotions (e.g. the massive death of African refugees in the Mediterranean Sea). The "inarticulable" but

affective and relational force of *water* resists the neoliberal designs of pathologization, privatization, and territorialization (compartmentalization) of the negative emotions of people living in the current globalized space. Using and reenvisioning the biblical language of “weeping by the waters” (in Psalm 137), I hope to continue Ann Cvetkovich’s and Sara Ahmed’s reflections on the relationship between (global) justice and affect/emotion.