

Chapter Title: Introduction

Book Title: Affective Disorders

Book Subtitle: Emotion in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature

Book Author(s): Bede Scott

Published by: Liverpool University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvt6rj7f.4>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.



Liverpool University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Affective Disorders*

JSTOR

# Introduction

[T]he affective quality of the world matters more than its geography.

Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, 1953

[Feeling] is nothing without form.

Gustave Flaubert, Letter to Louise Colet, 12 August 1846

## I

I would like to begin, if I may, in a rather unpredictable place: provincial France in the summer of 1789. At this time, the country was undergoing a political and economic crisis that has been well-documented. The harvest had failed, food prices were rising, and unemployment was rife. In Paris, the Revolution was gathering momentum, and as news of the fall of the Bastille filtered through to the provinces, a number of rumours began to circulate. It was said that the aristocracy were planning to subdue the uprising by force, and that they had recruited foreign soldiers and 'brigands' in order to do so. It was also said that this army of mercenaries would be marching through the provinces to quell the various disturbances that had taken place there too. These rumours travelled with astonishing speed, and as they moved from village to village, they produced a particular kind of affective response

that has come to be known as the Great Fear of 1789. People everywhere experienced an overwhelming sense of panic and anxiety, but this was not a vague and intangible national mood; it was a circulation of feeling whose speed and specific coordinates, at any given point in time, can be traced with remarkable accuracy (see Figure 1). According to Georges Lefebvre, the fear travelled from Clermont-en-Beauvaisis to the Seine, a distance of about fifty kilometres, in twelve hours. As it moved more slowly at night, it covered the five hundred kilometres from Ruffec to Lourdes in nine days, while elsewhere it travelled ‘from Livron to Arles – a hundred and fifty kilometres – in forty hours, which makes [an average of] four kilometres an hour, night and day’ (Lefebvre, *Great* 155).<sup>1</sup> In his classic study of the Revolution, Lefebvre was able to follow the progress of this emotion as it was transmitted throughout the provinces:

A ‘disturbance’ at Nantes alarmed Poitou. At Estrées-Saint-Denis, in the Beauvais, another spread fright in all directions. A third in southern Champagne sowed terror through the Gâtinais, Bourbonnais, and Burgundy. A fourth, originating near the Montmirail forest, close to La Ferté-Bernard, alerted Maine, Normandy, Anjou, and the Touraine. From the edge of the Chizé forest fear struck Angoulême, spread into Berry and the central mountains, alarmed Aquitaine as far as the Pyrenees. In the east, agrarian revolts in Franche-Comté and the Mâconnais drove fear to the shores of the Mediterranean. (*French* 123–24)

By exploring this phenomenon in such detail, Lefebvre was attempting to rectify a tendency, among other historians of the period, to ignore the affective dimensions of the Revolution – or to ascribe the events of that year, in passing, to the irrational and pathological nature of ‘crowd psychology.’ For Lefebvre, by contrast, the Great Fear played a central role in the Revolution of 1789. It emerged as a response to quite specific political and economic circumstances, and it directly influenced the subsequent course of the Revolution – by mobilizing various rural militias, by bringing disparate communities together, and, above all, by disseminating revolutionary fervour throughout the provinces, so that many of those who experienced the Great Fear would later participate in the uprising against the ‘seigneurial regime’ (Lefebvre, *Great* 211).

1 If Balzac is to be believed, however, this was a good deal slower than the speed at which rumour moved through the residential areas of nineteenth-century Paris – i.e., nine miles (or roughly fourteen kilometres) an hour (Robb 52).

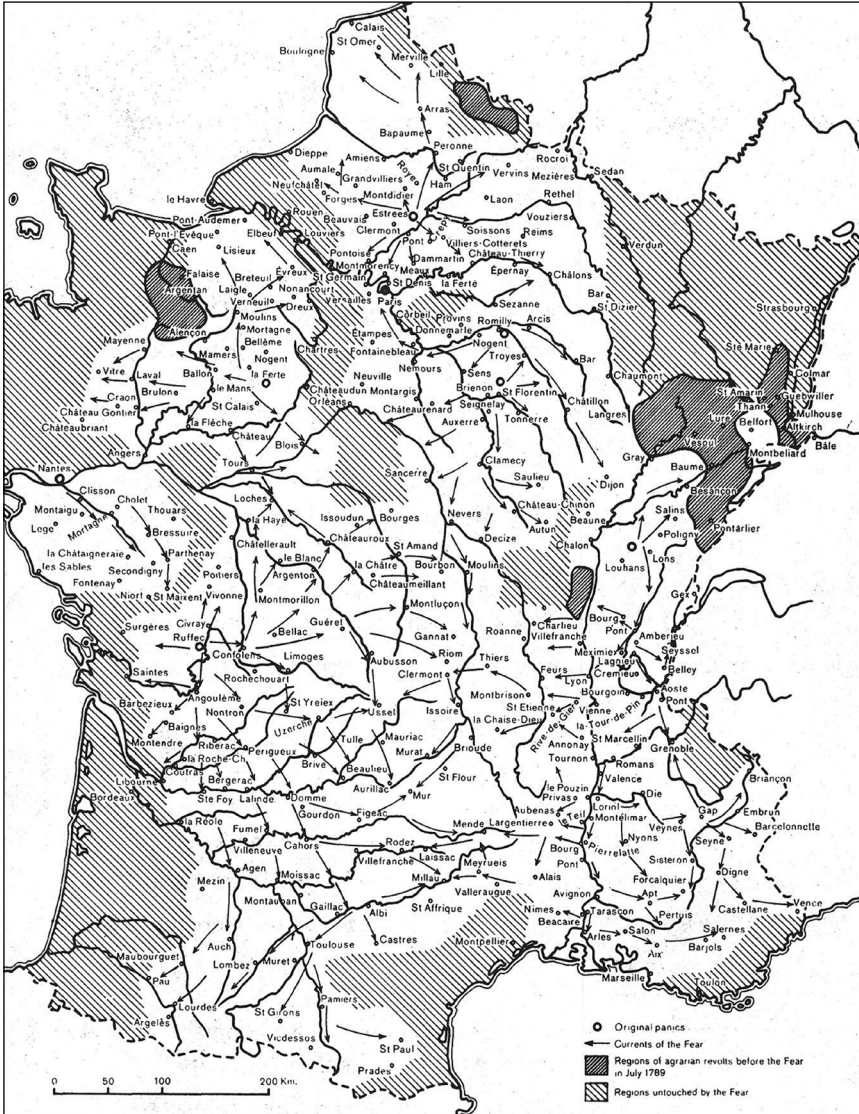


Figure 1. The Great Fear of 1789

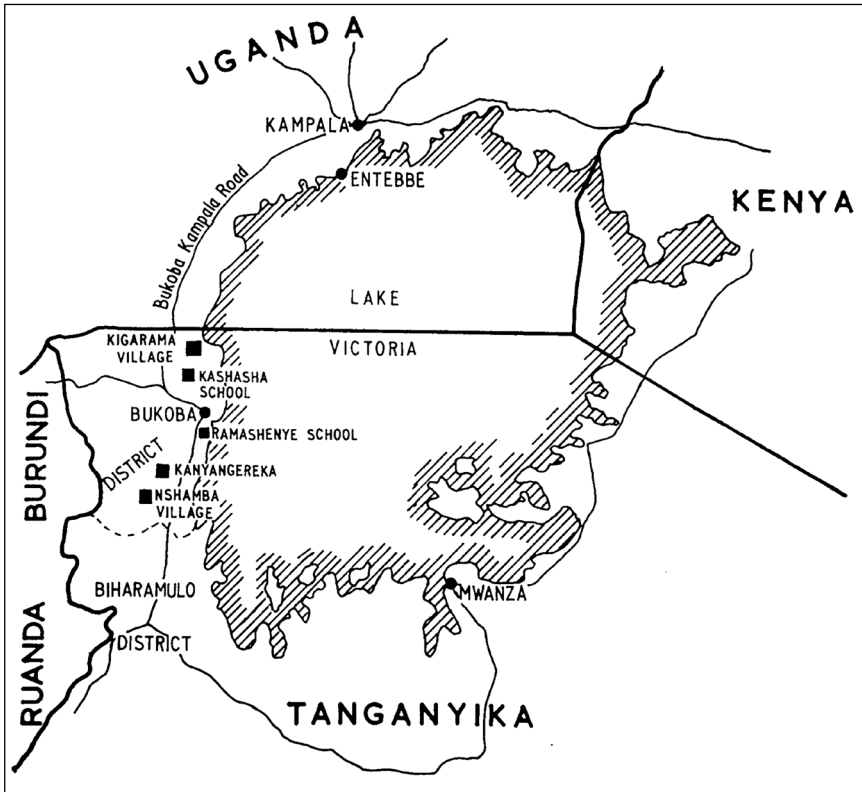


Figure 2. The Tanganyika Laughter Epidemic of 1962

As we shall see, the Great Fear demonstrates many of the features that will be essential to my discussion of emotion in *Affective Disorders*. But I could easily have begun elsewhere too – in Tanganyika (Tanzania), say, in the early sixties. On 30 January 1962, three girls in a mission school in the village of Kashasha (see Figure 2) started to laugh uncontrollably. This laughter spread rapidly throughout the student body and showed no sign of diminishing as the weeks passed. By the time the school was forced to close, on 18 March, ninety-five out of 159 students had been infected. During this period, the ‘disease’ was also transmitted to the neighbouring villages of Nshamba (where 217 people were infected), Ramashenye (where forty-eight were infected), and Kanyangereka (where the rate of infection was not recorded). In every case, the symptoms were the same: the afflicted person would succumb to hysterical laughter that might last anywhere between a few minutes and a few hours, followed by a respite and then a recurrence. This pattern

would be repeated for several hours or up to sixteen days, depending on the severity of the episode, during which time the individual would be unable to perform his or her normal duties and would be difficult to control. An epidemic of this kind was unprecedented, and so there was no traditional name for it in the local languages. The Bahaya people, who constitute the majority in north-western Tanzania, referred to it either as *enwara yokusheka* ('the laughing disease') or as *akajanja*, which simply means 'madness.' Although some people believed that the disorder was a consequence of poisoned maize flour, this possibility was quickly eliminated – as was the theory that the laughter may have had a viral aetiology. In a contemporary article on the subject, A.M. Rankin and P.J. Philip conclude that as none of the infected people demonstrated any physical abnormalities, and the possibility of poison had been eliminated, the condition was almost certainly 'culturally determined' – that is to say, it was a type of 'mental disorder' that had been influenced by the precise social and cultural circumstances in which the afflicted found themselves (170). 'As the commoner epidemics are caused by the spread of viruses, bacteria, or parasites,' Rankin and Philip write, 'there is a tendency to forget that abnormal emotional behaviour may spread from person to person and so take on an epidemic form' (167). In this instance, the emotion that was being transmitted was not as congenial as it may have appeared to be at first glance. Such episodes were often accompanied by feelings of restlessness and anxiety, as if the person was 'frightened of something' (168) or being pursued; and in some cases, they would become so agitated that they would have to be physically restrained. As François Sirois observes, hysteria of this kind frequently coincides with a 'state of ideological or cultural transition' and may also occur during 'periods of uncertainty and social stress,' such as those occasioned by war, famine, or even rapid technological change (106). In the case I have just outlined, it may be worth noting that Tanganyika had gained full independence on 9 December 1961, less than two months before the outbreak of the 'laughter epidemic' – and some of the uncertainties generated by this moment of profound social and political transformation may well have contributed to the 'abnormal emotional behaviour' that subsequently occurred.<sup>2</sup>

2 Along with the political and economic difficulties it was facing during this period, Tanganyika had also been suffering from a famine since 1960 (the worst for seventy years); and as the country declared its independence, nearly half a million people were still receiving famine relief (Iliffe 576). According to Robert R. Provine, the 'laughter epidemic' only came to an

In this study, I will be exploring the process by which certain sociopolitical forces give rise to dominant 'structures of feeling' within colonial and postcolonial societies. I shall be arguing, furthermore, that these affective qualities also make their presence felt within literary discourse, where they penetrate even the deeper reaches of form, genre, and style.<sup>3</sup> In order to make such an argument, I will be placing particular emphasis on three characteristic features of emotion (as demonstrated by the Great Fear and the 'laughter epidemic') – namely, (1) the fact that emotion is both psychogenic and sociogenic (i.e., socially transmitted); (2) the fact that emotion may be determined by quite specific historical processes; and (3) the fact that emotion is inherently mobile, a quality of feeling that moves easily from one body to another, from one structure to another, and from one place to another (see Figures 1 and 2).<sup>4</sup> Of course, all three of these features are interrelated and mutually enabling. In other words, it is precisely because it is sociogenic (and subject to various historical contingencies) that emotion acquires such mobility; and this is also why it is able to penetrate the deeper reaches of literary discourse, for good or for ill. Once emotion becomes detached from the individual consciousness, circulating freely within the larger community, it becomes, to quote Mikel Dufrenne, 'a supervening or impersonal principle in accordance with which we [might] say that there is an electric atmosphere or, as Trenet sang, that there is joy in the air' (168). And once an emotion becomes depersonalized in this way, once it merges with the general 'atmosphere' of a particular place or time, it very quickly achieves a kind of ubiquity, percolating into almost every

---

end two and a half years later, in June 1964, having infected an estimated one thousand people (131). For more on this subject, see Hempelmann.

3 It goes without saying that the study of emotion has a long transdisciplinary genealogy – encompassing philosophy, evolutionary biology, anthropology, aesthetics, history, sociology, rhetoric, psychology, cognitive science, psychoanalysis, neurobiology, and literary and cultural studies. For a useful overview of these intertwined genealogies, see Plamper; and for an intellectual history of the 'emotion sciences' that traces their development since the 1960s, see Leys.

4 If we turn to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, we find that the etymology of the word itself alludes to each of these characteristics. Originally derived from the Latin *emovere* ('to remove,' 'to shift [or] displace'), 'emotion' would go on to accrue a social significance ('a public commotion or uprising' [1562]), an historical connotation ('any strong mental or instinctive feeling [deriving] from one's circumstances' [1602]), and a sense of mobility ('[a] movement from one place to another; a migration' [1596]).

area of social and cultural life.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, I would go so far as to argue that emotion (thus understood) is what ultimately unites the categories of the literary-aesthetic and the sociopolitical – not only in a straightforward mimetic sense, but also at a deeper, discursive level, as the literary artefact itself internalizes the dominant structures of feeling circulating within society at large.

Rather than understanding emotion as necessarily subjective or individualized, then, I shall regard it here as a relational practice that may be socially or even politically determined. Or to put it another way, I will argue that literary representations of emotion need not be interpreted solely at the level of character, individual psychology, or the contingencies of plotting, but could also be related to wider historical processes. This shift in emphasis acknowledges the intersubjective quality of such emotional responses and, in so doing, challenges some of the boundaries that have traditionally insulated the individual from the collective, the psychological from the social. In *The Transmission of Affect*, Teresa Brennan makes a similar point, arguing that the feelings of ‘one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another’ (3). According to Brennan, this process of affective transmission ‘alters the biochemistry and neurology of the subject. The “atmosphere” or the environment literally gets into the individual. Physically and biologically, something is present that was not there before, but it ... was not generated solely or sometimes even in part by the individual organism or its genes’ (1). Although such a claim may blur the boundaries between self and other, subject and object, the psychological and the social, I believe it is important to maintain *some* distinction between these ‘opposing’ categories – rather than seeing ourselves as mere repositories of disembodied affective energies, whether they be positive or negative, euphoric or dysphoric. And this is

5 In *Melancholy and Society*, for instance, Wolf Lepenies describes the collective sense of boredom that plagued the French aristocracy as they were increasingly marginalized by Louis XIII and Louis XIV. ‘This boredom,’ he writes, ‘which stemmed directly from the position of an aristocracy both disempowered and relieved of its duties,’ was ‘socially transmitted and a phenomenon of interpersonal action’ (40); it ‘took hold of everyone, the members of the salon as well as the [courtiers], the former Frondeurs as well as nobles loyal to the king’ (39). One may also be reminded of the ‘objective neurosis’ that Jean-Paul Sartre, in his multivolume biography of Flaubert, attributes to Second Empire society following the Revolution of 1848 – and the connection he draws between this social pathology and the ‘subjective neurosis’ of Flaubert himself (*Family* 619).



something that Brennan herself readily concedes: 'We may influence the registration of the transmitted affect in a variety of ways,' she writes, as 'affects are not received or registered in a vacuum. If I feel anxiety when I enter [a] room, then that will influence what I perceive or receive by way of an "impression" (a word that means what it says)' (6).<sup>6</sup> So although I will be arguing here that emotion is at least partly sociogenic, I shall also be retaining some sense of individuality (or the 'subject') in order to acknowledge our capacity to *resist* affective interpellation – our ability to defy the 'psychology' of the crowd, or the social rules that govern our emotional behaviour, or the dominant structures of feeling that may be characteristic of the historical period in which we live.

I have employed the phrase 'structure of feeling' more than once now, and I should probably define this term more precisely before proceeding. It is, of course, derived from the work of Raymond Williams, who uses it to describe the 'specifically affective elements of consciousness' (*Marxism* 132) that could be said to characterize any given historical period. For Williams, the term 'structure of feeling' designates the affective quality of our lives at a particular point in time – not the dominant ideologies or doctrines of the day, but the way in which these more 'concrete' and easily delineated forces are registered at an intuitive, emotional level. 'The most difficult thing to get hold of, in studying any past period,' Williams writes in *The Long Revolution*,

is [a] felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time: a sense of the ways in which the particular activities combined into a way of thinking and living ... The term I would suggest to describe it is *structure of feeling*: it is as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity. (63–64)

The structure of feeling was, for Williams, a way of collectivizing our affective lives. Although we may register the 'atmosphere' of an

6 Similarly, in *The Promise of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed argues that 'to be affected by another does not mean that an affect simply passes or "leaps" from one body to another. The affect becomes an object *only given the contingency of how we are affected*. We might be affected differently by what gets passed around ... If bodies do not arrive [somewhere] in neutral, if we are always in some way or another moody, then what we receive as an impression will depend on our affective situation ... [H]ow we arrive, how we enter this room or that room, will affect what impressions we receive' (39–40).

historical period individually, the fact that we are all doing so at the same time gives these individual feelings a broader social significance:

We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity. We are then defining these elements as a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. Yet we are also defining a social experience which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis ... has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies. (*Marxism* 132)<sup>7</sup>

Such feelings are, by definition, ephemeral and elusive. They are barely registered at the time, and as they lie at 'the very edge of semantic availability' (Williams, *Marxism* 134), they leave few traces in the historical record. According to Williams, the 'best evidence' of a structure of feeling can be found encoded within 'the actual conventions of literary or dramatic writing' (*Politics* 159) – in the affective and aesthetic qualities, the phobic and philic impulses, that achieve a certain salience within a work of literature. In *Politics and Letters*, for instance, Williams observes that 'one of the determining characteristics of so much of the English writing of the late 1840s was an anxious oscillation between sympathy for the oppressed and fear of their violence' (166). This combination of sympathy and fear, he argues, constituted one of the dominant structures of feeling in England during the 1840s, and can be identified in a number of literary narratives produced during this period. Williams' structure of feeling is particularly useful for our purposes as it delineates the same affective qualities that I will be emphasizing in the following pages. Here, too, emotion will be seen as essentially sociogenic, as a response to specific historical processes, and as a quality of feeling – an 'atmosphere,' if you like – that infiltrates literary discourse, with often profound formal and generic consequences. In other words, using the structure of feeling as a general theoretical principle, I shall be exploring

7 It is important to acknowledge the fact that a particular historical period may have more than one structure of feeling – so, for example, we could speak of an aristocratic structure of feeling (as Lepenies does, without explicitly saying so, in *Melancholy and Society*), an imperial structure of feeling, or even a generational or gendered structure of feeling.

the process by which sociogenic and historically contingent feelings are 'materialized' within literary narratives, transforming the 'affective elements of consciousness,' such as 'impulse, restraint, and tone,' into a tangible structure 'with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension.'<sup>8</sup>

As suggested earlier, the fact that emotion becomes detached from the individual consciousness and assumes the quality of an objective 'atmosphere,' circulating freely throughout the public and private spheres, makes it possible for such structures of feeling to find their way into literary narratives. Once they do percolate into literary discourse, they are most easily identified in the form of the atmospheric or tonal qualities that any given narrative generates.<sup>9</sup> This is what allows us to describe a particular work of literature as melancholy, say, or joyful, although it may be difficult to ascertain precisely where this affective quality resides. Typically, we register it as a vague, all-encompassing 'climate' or feeling-tone – the kind of feeling that Mikel Dufrenne calls a 'world atmosphere' (178). 'When we name the world of the aesthetic object by its creator,' Dufrenne writes, 'we emphasize the

8 There are, of course, other ways of theorizing the sociality of emotion. We have, for instance, Sara Ahmed's notion of *affective economies* ('emotions [that] circulate or are distributed across a social as well as psychic field, [following] the logic of capital' [*Cultural* 45]); Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns' *emotionology* ('the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression' [813]); Barbara H. Rosenwein's *emotional communities* ('groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions' [2]); Arlie Russell Hochschild's *feeling rules* (the social guidelines governing the 'type, intensity, duration, timing, and placing of [our] feelings' [85]); William M. Reddy's *emotional regimes* ('[t]he set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime' [129]); and Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman's *group style* ('recurrent patterns of interaction [and emotional behaviour] that arise from a group's shared assumptions about what constitutes good or adequate participation in the group setting' [737]). Although these are all productive theories, I have found Williams' notion of the structure of feeling – combining as it does the social and the literary, the affective and the 'structural' – more suitable for my particular purposes.

9 For a fascinating discussion of the relationship between emotion and literary tone, one that has influenced my own understanding of the subject, see Ngai, *Ugly* 38–88.

presence of a certain style, a unique way of treating a subject' (167). In the case of literature, this quality saturates the discourse, creating an 'internal cohesion which is amenable only to the logic of feeling' (180). For Dufrenne, the unity of such an atmosphere emerges out of 'the vital metaphysical element in all men, [their] way of being in the world which reveals itself in a personality.' Simply put, just as someone who is feeling euphoric may be surrounded by a 'nimbus of joy' (177), so too an aesthetic object – whether it be a novel, a painting, or a piece of sculpture – will radiate a particular affective quality, a 'world atmosphere,' that gives it both substance and unity. To gain a better understanding of how this 'world atmosphere' actually operates, it may be useful to refer to Erich Auerbach's masterly reading of Balzac's *Old Goriot* (1835). In his analysis of the novel, Auerbach focuses on its opening pages, where we are offered a lengthy description of Madame Vauquer and her rather squalid boarding-house on the rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève. ('The atmosphere has the stuffiness of rooms which are never ventilated, and a mouldy odour of decay. Its dampness chills you as you breathe it, and permeates your clothing. Smells of all the meals that have been eaten in the boarding-house linger in the air' [31], etc.) As Auerbach notes, this opening passage produces 'an intense impression of cheerless poverty, shabbiness, and dilapidation'; and 'with the physical description the moral atmosphere is [also] suggested' (468). Like Stendhal, he goes on to argue, Balzac not only

places the human beings, whose destiny he is seriously relating, in their precisely defined historical and social setting, but also conceives this connection as a necessary one: to him every milieu becomes a moral and physical atmosphere which impregnates the landscape, the dwelling, furniture, implements, clothing, physique, character, surroundings, ideas, activities, and fates of men, and at the same time the general historical situation reappears as a total atmosphere which envelops all [of] its several milieux. (473)

For Auerbach, as for Dufrenne, the affective or tonal quality of a narrative permeates every level of the discourse, settling nowhere in particular yet influencing everything it touches. And this may be why it is so difficult to identify exactly where this feeling resides – because of its discursive ubiquity, because of the fact that it can be found in every piece of furniture and every article of clothing, but also because it resides within the reader, too, who is obliged to register the atmosphere of a work of literature, even if they find themselves resisting it (as may sometimes be the case).

Although Dufrenne's notion of the 'world atmosphere' is a productive way of theorizing this tonal quality, this governing structure of feeling, it may also be useful to invoke the Indian aesthetic concept of *rasa* (which literally means 'essence,' 'juice,' or 'flavour'). In classical Indian aesthetics, the term *rasa* refers to the artistic transformation of certain core feelings (*sthāyī bhāva*) into an objective, impersonal mood that is communicated to – and shared by – the audience or reader. According to Bharata's *Nāṭyashāstra* (c. second or third century AD), there are eight core *sthāyī bhāvas*, all of which are relatively stable emotional states. These feelings are as follows:

1. *rati* – sexual love, desire
2. *hāsa* – laughter, merriment
3. *shoka* – sorrow, grief
4. *krodha* – anger, rage
5. *utsāha* – enthusiasm, courage
6. *bhaya* – fear, terror
7. *jugupsā* – disgust, horror, hatred
8. *vismaya* – astonishment, wonder<sup>10</sup>

Needless to say, in a theatrical performance or a work of literature, it is impossible to render such states in their ontological totality, so instead they are subject to a process of artistic distillation (*rasa*) by which the audience or reader is offered a 'taste' of the *sthāyī bhāva* that is being evoked. In order to create this 'flavour,' a performer or writer is obliged to transform the core feelings listed above into eight corresponding *rasas* (Dharwadker 1384–87).<sup>11</sup> It is only at this level, once the *sthāyī bhāva* has been transformed into an objective or impersonal *rasa*, that an emotional state can be experienced (or 'savoured') collectively. And here, too, it becomes difficult to identify the precise location of such affective qualities – whether they reside in the aesthetic object

10 In the *Nāṭyashāstra*, Bharata delineates a further thirty-three transitory feelings (*vyabhichārī bhāva*), each of which can be ascribed to one of these core emotional states (*sthāyī bhāva*).

11 These *rasas* are: (1) *śrṅgāra* – eros; (2) *hāsyā* – mirth; (3) *karuṇā* – compassion; (4) *raudra* – fury; (5) *vīra* – heroism; (6) *bhayānaka* – terror; (7) *bībhatsa* – revulsion; and (8) *adbhuta* – wonder (Dharwadker 1387).

or performance itself, or whether they only ‘come to life’ through the hermeneutical act of reading, viewing, or listening. In fact, as Sheldon Pollock observes, this is ultimately a false dichotomy. With specific reference to literature, he argues that *rasa* can be ‘regarded as a property of a text-object, a capacity of a reader-subject, and also a transaction between the two. The whole process ... exists as a totality even while its several moments can be analytically disaggregated.’ In this respect, *rasa* ‘precisely resembles the “taste” it metaphorically references, which may be regarded as existing at once in the food, the taster, and the act of tasting’ (26).<sup>12</sup> Despite their cultural and historical differences, then, both Dufrenne and Bharata theorize the relationship between emotion and aesthetics in a remarkably similar way – emphasizing the ‘impersonality’ of aestheticized emotion, its collective quality, and also its capacity to defy the boundaries that traditionally insulate the (perceiving) subject from the (aesthetic) object, the phenomenal world of the reader from the purely referential world of discourse.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to note that the structures of feeling that find their way into literary discourse may in some cases acquire a pathological dimension; and this is particularly so within colonial or postcolonial societies, where one frequently encounters accelerated processes of social transformation, sudden historical ruptures, civil instability, authoritarian governance, and profound socioeconomic disparities. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon describes a range of pathologies that came about as a direct consequence of the colonial war in Algeria (1954–62). As a psychiatrist, Fanon was especially attuned to these pathologies, and in a

12 For more on the subject of *rasa*, see Appadurai 92–112, Rowell 327–34, and Schwartz.

13 In his article on the *Nāṭyashāstra*, Vinay Dharwadker expresses surprise at the extent to which the treatise anticipates modern theories of emotion such as those found in Charles Darwin’s *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), William James’ *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), and even Silvan Tomkins’ *Affect Imagery Consciousness* (1962–92). ‘These intersections across time and space,’ he writes, ‘are not the result of accidental or idiosyncratic textual juxtaposition. For reasons that we still cannot formulate after nearly three centuries of intellectual excavation, the fabric of thought in several modern European languages, as in Latin and Greek previously, is thickly interwoven with the thought that started to emerge in Sanskrit early in the first millennium BCE. Far from being foreign, Bharata’s concepts and categories have been domesticated in European culture for a long time, in the intertextures of word and idea beneath the visible tissues of textuality’ (1381–82).

chapter entitled 'Colonial War and Mental Disorders,' he provides us with a fascinating series of case studies. In Case No. 2 (Series A), for example, we are told of an Algerian *fellah* who had survived a massacre perpetrated by the French forces, and who subsequently developed a pathological 'aggressivity' (260) that manifested itself in the form of indiscriminate homicidal impulses. Similarly, in Case No. 1 (Series B), Fanon discusses the murder by two young Algerian boys of their European schoolmate, and he concludes that this crime was a consequence of the 'atmosphere of total war which reign[ed] in Algeria' (270) at the time. As we read these case studies, it becomes clear that the colonial presence in Algeria not only gave rise to a number of quite specific 'psycho-affective injuries' (218), but also produced a more general 'pathology of atmosphere' (289) that influenced every aspect of Algerian society. Under such circumstances, as I have suggested, these pathologies also infiltrate literary narratives, creating significant disturbances both at the level of character psychology – be it individual or collective – and at the level of form and structure, where the narrative itself may experience a series of discursive or generic crises. In an essay on the Arabic novel, for instance, Edward Said explores some of the underlying differences between Naguib Mahfouz (whom we shall be discussing in Chapter 1) and writers of a later generation from Lebanon and Palestine. According to Said, Mahfouz's work has always been able to depend on the stability, continuity, and 'vital integrity' of Egyptian civil society. '[T]hroughout all the turbulence of the country's wars, revolutions, and social upheavals,' he writes, 'civil society was never eclipsed, its identity was never in doubt, was never completely absorbed into the state' ('After' 319). In Lebanon and Palestine, however, such discursive stability is simply impossible to achieve – given the 'fractured, decentered, and openly insurrectionary' (320) nature of these societies. Instead, we find narratives such as Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* (1962) or Elias Khoury's *Little Mountain* (1977), whose 'underlying aesthetic form,' Said notes, is characterized by 'rejection, drift, errance, [and] uncertainty' (325).<sup>14</sup> For these writers, who are obliged to contend with the 'fragmented realities' (323) of civil war and social disintegration, form is 'an adventure, narrative both uncertain and meandering, [and] character less a stable collection of traits than a linguistic device, as self-conscious as it is provisional and ironic' (321).

I believe that Said is quite right when he draws this connection between the sociopolitical circumstances in which a work of

14 An earlier version of Said's essay, with only minor stylistic differences, was published in 1989 as a foreword to Khoury's novel.

literature is produced and the formal or stylistic qualities of the narrative in question.<sup>15</sup> But how, precisely, does this process of transmission occur? What is it that ultimately unites the domains of the sociopolitical and the literary-aesthetic? In what follows, I will be suggesting that emotion, as I understand it here, serves as an intermediary between these two categories. Once the literary artefact has internalized the affective energies that are circulating within a particular society at a given point in time, it processes or ‘materializes’ these energies at the subliminal level of form, structure, and style – before integrating them into the affective economy of the narrative itself in the guise of a ‘world atmosphere’ or governing structure of feeling. As the Brazilian critic Roberto Schwarz argues, the original historical circumstances in which a novel is produced (or situated) reappear ‘as a sociological form ... on the fictional plane and as a literary structure.’ In this sense, he writes, ‘forms are the abstracts of specific social relationships, and that is how ... the difficult process of [transforming] social questions into properly literary or compositional ones ... is realized’ (‘Importing’ 53). Consider, for example, Ato Quayson’s notion of the systemic uncanny (which we will be exploring in more detail in Chapter 1). According to Quayson, when an individual is confronted by a situation of ‘acute political chaos or the general collapse of the social order,’ he or she will often convert this ‘perception of ... systemic disorder into a negative affect’ (a feeling of guilt, say, or anxiety) that may not be traceable to its original source (*Calibrations* 80). Within literary narratives, this ‘repressed negative energy’ generates a strong sense of the uncanny and ultimately gives rise to a particular kind of discursive pathology – one that Quayson refers to as ‘symbolization compulsion.’ He employs this term, more specifically, to describe a narrative’s drive toward an ‘insistent metaphorical register even when this register does not help to develop the action, define character or spectacle, or create atmosphere.’ In fact, Quayson says, such an excessive use of figurative language serves as a defence mechanism for the discourse itself, a way of avoiding or denying a traumatic experience that ‘cannot be named except through symbolized digressiveness’ (82).<sup>16</sup>

15 Of course, the ‘sociology of form’ has a long history too. See, for instance, Adorno, *Aesthetic* 225–61, Jameson, *Political* 89–136, and Moretti, *Signs* 1–41.

16 For more on the systemic uncanny and symbolization compulsion, see Quayson, ‘Symbolization’ and *Aesthetic* 141–46.



Quayson's discussion of this subject is located within a precise set of sub-Saharan coordinates; yet in the following pages, I shall argue that the social, psychological, and literary-aesthetic dynamic he describes here can be identified elsewhere too – whether it be Rio de Janeiro during the nineteenth century, Cairo in the early forties, or Sri Lanka at the height of the civil war.

## II

*Affective Disorders* is situated at the juncture of three different critical perspectives. In addition to its obviously postcolonial qualities, it also engages with the areas of affect studies and narratology. Over the last few decades, there has been a tendency in postcolonial literary studies to focus on the purely traumatic consequences of colonialism – to the exclusion of all the other feelings that achieve a certain prominence, for one reason or another, in colonial and postcolonial societies.<sup>17</sup> In an essay published in 2012, the South African critic Gerald Gaylard discusses this omission in some detail, asking 'why it is that [postcolonial] literature is still associated with social issues and politics rather than feeling.' After all, he writes, 'it is hardly the case that [such] literature is lacking emotion'; and yet for some reason, '[w]hen emotion in postcolonial literature has been explored, this has usually been in the guise of trauma studies' (99). In *Affective Disorders*, then, I have decided to focus on a wider range of feelings than is typical for a work of postcolonial criticism – discussing states such as anger, jealousy, and boredom – while also engaging more substantially with the field

17 See, for example, Craps, Ifowodo, and Ward. This entirely legitimate emphasis on the traumatic consequences of the colonial project has also led to a number of studies that focus on the psychic/affective states of mourning and melancholia (see Gilroy, Durrant, and Khanna). More recently, however, some postcolonial critics have begun to explore feelings that are not necessarily 'traumatic' in origin (see Kim, Majumdar, and Bewes). In *Prose of the World: Modernism and the Banality of Empire*, for instance, Saikat Majumdar argues that '[b]anality and its often-attendant emotion boredom need to be understood as key motifs for colonial and postcolonial literary criticism as they help to aestheticize the relation between the imperial metropolis and the colonial periphery' (4). According to Majumdar, the 'material, economic, and infrastructural inadequacies felt across the margins of the historical expanse of the British Empire' move their 'victims not only toward the intense theatre of trauma but also toward the pervasiveness of banality and the iterative cycle of boredom' (23).

of affect studies (as a broadly construed, interdisciplinary enterprise). The third major critical perspective I employ here is that of narratology. Once again, there has been a tendency in postcolonial studies to neglect or deprioritize the formal and stylistic qualities of a narrative in favour of thematic readings or ideological critique. As the editors of the *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* put it, 'literature and the aesthetic at large have suffered a regrettable abeyance as prime sites for generating theoretical perspectives on the conditions of the postcolonial' (Quayson et al. 6). In this case, however, I will be emphasizing the formal and structural consequences of the aforementioned emotional disturbances – exploring the way in which feelings such as anger or boredom can often destabilize narratives, provoking crises of representation, generic ambivalence, and discursive rupture. By bringing all three critical perspectives together in this manner, I hope to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between various sociopolitical forces (colonial modernity, bureaucracy, communal violence, etc.) and the affective and aesthetic 'disorders' to which they give rise.

As the reader may have noticed, I have chosen to focus on an historically and geographically diverse range of narratives, some of which originate in quite different corners of the colonial and postcolonial world. Proceeding chronologically, we begin with Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis' *Dom Casmurro* (1899), which is set in Rio during the reign of Dom Pedro II (1831–89). Although Brazil achieved independence from Portugal in 1825, many colonial practices, such as slavery and patronage, continued well into the postcolonial period – creating, as we shall discover, a peculiar dissonance within nineteenth-century Brazilian society. Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* (1947) is set in Cairo during the Second World War, a time when the city was occupied by over 140,000 Allied soldiers. Under the terms of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, Egypt was obliged to accommodate an unlimited number of these foreign forces for the duration of the war, although the country itself would remain officially neutral until the spring of 1945. Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993) surveys the early years of Indian independence, focusing in particular on a period spanning from 1950 to 1952, when the fundamental features of the postcolonial nation-state, as envisaged by Jawaharlal Nehru, were being established.<sup>18</sup> In Upamanyu Chatterjee's

18 The so-called Nehruvian Consensus involved the general acceptance of four basic principles: socialism, secularism, democracy, and a foreign policy of non-alignment with any major power bloc. For more on this 'consensus' (and its eventual collapse), see Vanaik 301–3.

*English, August: An Indian Story* (1988), we return to India several decades later to find that the optimism of the 1950s has long since dissipated and the Nehruvian nation-state, which held so much promise in those early, formative years, has become notorious for its bureaucratic inefficiency, petty corruption, and 'rule-bound incompetence' (Nandy, 'Culture' 68). The action in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000) takes place during the Sri Lankan Civil War (1983–2009), a brutal conflict that claimed an estimated 100,000 lives. Although the war itself lasted for twenty-six years, the novel focuses on a particularly violent period in the late eighties and early nineties that came to be known as the *beeshana kalaya* – or the 'time of great fear.' And finally, in Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* (2006), we make our way to Mumbai at the turn of the twenty-first century, where we discover a city that has been deeply traumatized by the communal violence and terrorism that occurred in 1992–93 (following the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya), and whose inhabitants continue to suffer the malign influence of majoritarian politics, corruption, and organized crime.

Although a chronological overview is always beneficial, I have decided, for the purposes of analysis, to trace the various stages of the colonial/postcolonial life cycle as it unfolded in these different locales. We therefore begin our journey in colonial Cairo during the Second World War (*Midaq Alley*), before exploring India's transition from colony to postcolony during the late forties and early fifties (*A Suitable Boy*). In the following chapters, we advance even further into the postcolonial period, albeit in different places and at different times. After visiting nineteenth-century Rio (*Dom Casmurro*), which for many years served as the capital of a postcolonial monarchy, we return once more to India, roughly four decades after independence (*English, August*). We then travel to Sri Lanka during the 'time of great fear' (*Anil's Ghost*), before bringing our journey to an end in a Mumbai that is recognizably contemporary (*Sacred Games*). By structuring *Affective Disorders* in this way, I am not suggesting that every colonial or postcolonial experience is perfectly analogous. Quite the opposite. In the case of *Dom Casmurro*, for instance, I will be focusing on the colonial legacy of slavery and the fact that Brazil would remain a slave-owning economy until 1888 (by which time it would be the only such economy in the Western world). When I come to discuss *English, August*, on the other hand, I will be addressing the bureaucratic legacy of the British Empire, which survives to this day in the form of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Although both of these practices could be considered a colonial 'inheritance,' they are, of course, more notable for their differences than

for their similarities. But this is precisely what makes it so interesting to consider one alongside the other – and to explore the different emotions that these quite distinct historical experiences generate. In Brazil, as I shall argue, we have a destructive and pathological jealousy that emerges out of the conflict between the social reality of slavery and the liberal ideologies to which the élite ostensibly subscribe. Turning to *English, August*, however, we find an altogether different type of feeling – an overwhelming sense of boredom that is a direct consequence of the bureaucratic procedures of the IAS. This is the kind of ‘minor’ emotion that is characterized, in Sianne Ngai’s words, by its ‘flatness or ongoingness,’ by its ‘remarkable capacity for duration’ (*Ugly* 7); and given the nature of Indian bureaucracy, it is entirely appropriate that this should be the case.

The similarities between such disparate narratives can also be instructive. Despite their obvious differences – despite the intensity of the jealousy we encounter in *Dom Casmurro*, for example, and the languid, apathetic quality of the boredom we find in *English, August* – there are a number of fundamental correspondences that all six narratives share. To put it briefly, these similarities can be summarized as follows:

1. All six narratives trace the process by which certain social, political, or economic forces penetrate the private sphere, where they induce corresponding (although frequently displaced or sublimated) affective states.
2. All six narratives demonstrate the way in which such affective states assume an intersubjective quality, becoming depersonalized ‘structures of feeling’ (although this collective quality may not always be recognized by the characters themselves, who in some instances continue to regard their feelings as ‘private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating’ [Williams, *Marxism* 132]).
3. All six narratives reveal the narratological consequences of these affective disturbances, as in each case the dominant emotion (whether it be anger, jealousy, or boredom) infiltrates the structure of the narrative itself, which thereby comes to serve as a discursive correlative for the social, political, or economic forces mentioned above, and for the various affective disorders to which they give rise.

In addition to these general correspondences, it may also be useful to provide a more detailed summary of what can be found in the following

pages – beginning with Chapter 1, which seeks to explain the ubiquity of anger in Naguib Mahfouz’s *Midaq Alley*. I argue here that this dominant emotion could be read as a collective response to the contradictory social forces, the radical disjunctures and discontinuities, initiated by colonial modernity. I then move on to discuss the role of rumour in the novel and the significance of its pronounced melodramatic qualities, both of which represent an attempt to contain or ‘quarantine’ such dysphoric feelings. As we shall see, though, this strategy ultimately fails, and the melodramatic conclusion that we are expecting never arrives. Instead, the novel itself suffers something of a generic crisis, shifting without warning from the melodramatic mode into the tragic. Rather than focusing on a particular emotion, Chapter 2 explores the way in which strong feelings of any kind are actively discouraged in Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy*. In the days following the Partition of India in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru delivered numerous speeches in which he asserted that social and political unity could only be achieved by renouncing ‘hatred, violence, [and] anger’ (*Speeches* 23). This rhetoric, I suggest, profoundly influences the novel’s affective disposition, its ‘world atmosphere,’ causing it to internalize the Aristotelian virtue of *metriopatheia* (or ‘equanimity’) and obliging the reader to adopt a similar stance if he or she is to survive 1,349 pages of carefully modulated prose. Chapter 3, as indicated above, focuses on the significance of jealousy in Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis’ *Dom Casmurro*. On the face of it, this fictional memoir relates a straightforward story of marital infidelity from the perspective of the ‘betrayed’ husband, Bento Santiago. As the narrative progresses, however, the story we are told becomes increasingly implausible, and we begin to suspect that Bento’s wife may have been unjustly maligned. Although our narrator locates the source of his jealousy in the private sphere, I propose that it actually arises out of the conflict between the archaic socioeconomic practices of nineteenth-century Brazil (i.e., slavery and patronage) and the liberal principles that were so closely affiliated with European modernity. In Chapter 4, I turn my attention to the subject of boredom in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *English, August*. Here, I explore the connection between bureaucracy, boredom, and realist discourse. More specifically, I argue that the narrative internalizes many of the features that we tend to associate with the Indian Administrative Service and, in so doing, becomes ever more lethargic, repetitive, and ‘boring.’ Although these qualities undermine the novel’s governing aesthetic principles, the fact that it survives such a grave challenge suggests that realism may be a good deal more agile and accommodating, as a mode of representation,

than is often allowed. Chapter 5 discusses the climate of fear that dominates Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*. We can find ample evidence of such fear at the representational level of the narrative – where all the violence and torture and enforced disappearances take place – but it also penetrates the novel's underlying structure, activating a phobic response on the part of the discourse itself. After analysing this response in some detail, I explore the way in which it defies the generic imperatives that would typically govern a narrative of this kind, making it impossible to achieve the linearity, the hermeneutic closure, and the 'localization of culpability' that we associate with classic crime fiction. Finally, Chapter 6 addresses the affective (and aesthetic) consequences of violence and criminality in Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games*. I begin by discussing the minor crimes to be found within its pages (the petty burglaries, the routine corruption, the domestic disputes, etc.), before moving on to address various instances of 'exceptional' criminality, such as the communal violence that took place in Mumbai in 1992–93, killing an estimated 900 people, and the retaliatory bombings that occurred on 12 March 1993, claiming another 257 lives. The affective state that emerges out of this combination of the mundane and the extraordinary, I argue, could best be described by invoking Sianne Ngai's notion of 'stuplimity' – a somewhat contradictory aesthetic response in which 'the initial experience of being aesthetically overwhelmed involves not terror or pain ... but *something much closer to an ordinary fatigue*' (Ugly 270).

So what is to be gained, then, by approaching these works of colonial and postcolonial literature from the perspective of affect studies? In the first place, I would contend, it provides us with a deeper understanding of the way in which the social, political, and economic forces that are produced under such circumstances influence the affective lives of ordinary people – whether these forces are encountered in the form of colonial modernity (Chapter 1), communal violence (Chapter 2), slavery and patronage (Chapter 3), bureaucracy (Chapter 4), civil war (Chapter 5), or crime and terrorism (Chapter 6). By analysing the affective consequences of these historical processes, we are able to gain a 'felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time' (Williams, *Long* 63). And as such experiences typically lie at the 'very edge of semantic availability' (Williams, *Marxism* 134), the evidence they leave behind can be identified most clearly, I would argue, at the level of literary form, structure, and style. Hence the emphasis on narratology in what follows; and hence my decision to combine narratology with affect studies (broadly construed). Only thus are we able to trace the

process by which a sociogenic feeling penetrates the private sphere, and then infiltrates the structure of the literary narrative itself, where it makes its presence felt in the form of proairetic sequences, plot nuclei, temporal anachronies, and so on. In the opening pages of *The Bourgeois*, Franco Moretti discusses the relationship between the study of literature and that of history. 'What kind of history,' he asks, 'what kind of [historical] *evidence*' do we find in literature?

Clearly, never a direct one: the mill-owner Thornton in *North and South* (1855), or the entrepreneur Wokulski in *The Doll* (1890), proves exactly nothing about the Manchester or Warsaw bourgeoisie. They belong to a parallel historical series ... where the spasms of capitalist modernization are matched and reshaped by literary form-giving ... [I]f we accept the idea of literary form as the fossil remains of what had once been a living and problematic present; and if we work our way backwards ... then formal analysis may unlock ... a dimension of the past that would otherwise remain hidden. Here lies its possible contribution to historical knowledge: by understanding the opacity of Ibsen's hints to the past, or the oblique semantics of Victorian adjectives, or even ... the role of the gerund in *Robinson Crusoe*, we enter a realm of shadows, where the past recovers its voice, and still speaks to us ... But speaks to us *only* through the medium of form. (14–15)

While it may be difficult to prove, incontrovertibly, the connection between the diminution of the proairetic code in *English, August* and the bureaucratic procedures of the IAS, or between the abundance of 'catalyzers' that can be found in *A Suitable Boy* and the placatory content of Nehru's speeches during the late forties and early fifties, the formal *correspondences* between these narratives and their actual or imagined historical circumstances, the structural *analogies* that serve to conjoin the literary-aesthetic and the sociopolitical in such cases, will, I hope, prove to be reasonably persuasive. As Roberto Schwarz writes, an argument of this nature 'requires a moment of extraliterary reflection, whose relevance, impossible to prove on the model of  $2 + 2 = 4$ , can be substantiated in the increased understanding [of the narrative that] it ... allows' (*Master* 20). And that will certainly be my objective in *Affective Disorders*, too, where the reader will be asked to pursue these often elusive feelings as they take on a decentred, intersubjective quality, as they colonize the private sphere, and as they saturate the very tissue of the narratives we will be discussing. Such a process may not yield incontrovertible 'proof' in the manner of  $2 + 2 = 4$ , but it

does provide enough circumstantial evidence, I believe, to make a plausible (even compelling) case.<sup>19</sup>

Something else the reader will be asked to do in *Affective Disorders*, as we have noted, is to follow a rather meandering historical and geographical itinerary, one that includes destinations as diverse as Rio during the reign of Dom Pedro II, wartime Cairo, and contemporary Mumbai. So what logic has informed the selection of these particular texts, and what do we learn by bringing them together in such a way? By choosing to focus on four different countries and two different empires, I am attempting to emphasize the international (or, as Robert Young might say, the ‘tricontinental’) nature of the processes outlined above, while also revealing the various correspondences and specificities that only become clear once we bring these narratives into direct contact with each other.<sup>20</sup> Generally speaking, then, I have selected these six narratives precisely *because* of their historical and geographical range

19 By arguing that literary discourse internalizes the dominant structures of feeling within a particular society, and by identifying the traces of such feelings in the formal, generic, and stylistic qualities of these individual narratives, I have clearly consigned the figure of the author to the periphery of my analysis – and I have done so quite deliberately. As a matter of critical principle, I believe that literary narratives assume a certain autonomy from their author and are ultimately responsible for generating their own (polysemic) meaning. I also believe that literature is capable of internalizing various social, political, and economic forces, and that we may learn more about this process by analysing the formal qualities of a narrative than by discussing the biography of its author (although in some cases this may be a productive enterprise too). More specifically, however, given the nature of this particular project and my attempt to move away from individualistic or subject-centred theories of emotion, it seemed important that the affective qualities I explore here should not be seen to originate from an authorial figure (even if such a figure were merely serving as an ‘intermediary’), but instead should be allowed to circulate freely between the public and private spheres, between the domains of the sociopolitical and the literary-aesthetic, as a disembodied and depersonalized structure of feeling.

20 In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Young uses the term ‘tricontinental’ instead of ‘postcolonial’ or ‘Third-World’ in order to emphasize the international dimension of anti-colonial and postcolonial resistance. ‘Above all,’ he writes, ‘the tricontinental marks an identification with the great Havana Tricontinental [Conference] of 1966, which initiated the first global alliance of the peoples of the three continents [i.e., Africa, Asia, and Latin America] against imperialism, and the founding moment of postcolonial theory in its journal, the *Tricontinental*’ (5).



– because of their differences, but also because each one demonstrates, in a nuanced and multilayered way, the process by which a collective structure of feeling can infiltrate literary discourse, whether the narrative in question is produced (or situated) in Rio in 1899 or Cairo in 1947. Moreover, all six narratives emphasize the tendency, in colonial and postcolonial societies, for such feelings to acquire a pathological quality; and it is in this regard that the aforementioned similarities and differences become especially instructive.

In Chapter 1, on *Midaq Alley*, we are confronted by an anger that emerges out of the various inequalities, disparities, and instabilities generated by colonial modernity. Yet given the political circumstances in which the characters find themselves (living in a city under military occupation), this anger must be severely repressed; and as a consequence, it undergoes a process of displacement, being directed instead at more easily mastered substitutes such as wives, employees, and acquaintances. This is what makes the anger in the novel so disproportionate and ‘ill-fitting’: the fact that it is a product of obstructed agency, the fact that it is an emotion *looking for a cause*, and the fact that it denies the characters the possibility of genuine cathartic release.<sup>21</sup> Chapter 2, which offers a close reading of *A Suitable Boy*, is slightly different to the other five chapters in that it does not explore a particular emotional state, but focuses instead on the *attenuation* of feeling, on the discipline and self-control that Nehru promoted in response to the communal violence that accompanied Partition in 1947. Even so, the fact that this reticence acquires such prestige within the narrative, and within the society it delineates, draws our attention to the volatility (the underlying ‘passion and prejudice’ [Nehru, *Speeches* 33]) that made the imposition of such a rigid ‘emotional regime’ necessary in the first place. Moving on to *Dom Casmurro*, in Chapter 3, we also encounter a disproportionate and displaced feeling. In this case, however, the pathological jealousy that our narrator experiences emerges out of the conflict between his professed liberal values and the archaic system of slavery on which his socioeconomic privilege relies; and it could thus be seen as an affective correlative for the more general tendency among the Brazilian élite to misrecognize

21 I have borrowed the phrase ‘obstructed agency’ from Sianne Ngai, whose 2005 book *Ugly Feelings* explores some of the ‘negative affects’ (envy, anxiety, paranoia, etc.) that such an obstruction produces, ‘regardless of whether [it] is actual or fantasized, or whether the agency obstructed is individual or collective’ (3).

the true nature of their social reality. Such jealousy also became a dominant structure of feeling during this period as a consequence of the patronage that continued to serve as Brazil's primary form of social mediation, encouraging a fierce competition for favour at every level of society. Chapter 4 focuses on *English, August* and the debilitating boredom that arises out of the bureaucratic procedures of the Indian Administrative Service (which, prior to independence, was known as the Indian Civil Service [ICS]). In some ways, we could relate this boredom to the renunciation of strong feeling advocated by Nehru in Chapter 2 – for boredom also de-intensifies our lives, leaving us, as Heidegger observes, 'equally distant from despair and joy' (*Introduction* 2) – but again there are some fundamental differences that ought to be acknowledged. The 'reticence' in *A Suitable Boy*, for example, is designed to protect the narrative from dangerous upsurges of intradiegetic feeling, while the boredom in *English, August* brings it to the verge of a complete discursive collapse. And whereas the emotional regime in *A Suitable Boy* still endorses moderate affective states, in *English, August* the attenuation of feeling assumes a pathological quality that leaves our lethargic hero utterly drained of energy and desire. In Chapter 5, which explores *Anil's Ghost*, we discover a feeling of fear that has also acquired a pathological quality. During the Sri Lankan Civil War, the use of violence and intimidation as a deliberate political strategy gave rise to a general 'culture of terror' within the country. By the late eighties, as one Amnesty International report indicates, violence had become 'so widespread that it [was] often difficult to establish with certainty who the agents of specific killings were – or even to identify the victims,' whose bodies may have been 'grossly mutilated' or 'burned to ashes' (qtd. in Senaratne 146). Under these circumstances, as we shall see, the kind of fear that is created cannot be easily localized in the form of an unidentified corpse or a representative of the state, but instead moves from body to body, and from place to place, creating a dysphoric atmosphere that permeates every level of the discourse. Finally, in Chapter 6, we address the significance of stuplimity – the conjunction of the stupefying and the sublime, the boring and the astonishing – in *Sacred Games*. As mentioned earlier, this term was first employed by Sianne Ngai to 'highlight certain limitations in classic theories of the sublime,' which fail to account for the boredom that has become 'increasingly intertwined with contemporary experiences of aesthetic awe' (*Ugly* 8). In Chandra's novel, however, the feeling of stuplimity assumes a broader social significance. Instead of being inspired by an encounter with an aesthetic object, it is generated

by the intermingling of two different types of crime: the 'ordinary' criminality that has become a feature of everyday life in Mumbai, and the episodes of 'spectacular' criminality, such as communal violence and terrorism, that have also come to be associated with the city.

Before proceeding any further, I would like to clarify precisely what I mean when I use the word 'emotion.' In some recent theoretical writing within the field of affect studies, a crucial distinction has been drawn between affect and emotion – the former term being employed to describe pre-subjective, asignifying bodily 'intensities,' while the latter refers to feelings that have been recognized as 'subjective' and granted both social and linguistic significance. According to Brian Massumi, for instance, affect and emotion follow 'different logics and pertain to different orders.' Whereas affect is 'embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body, at its interface with things' (25), emotion involves the 'sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal' (28).<sup>22</sup> Although I have found this formulation useful at times, by and large I agree with Sara Ahmed that the distinction between affect and emotion can 'under-describe the work of emotions which involve forms of intensity, bodily orientation, and direction that are not simply about "subjective content" or [the] qualification of intensity' (*Promise* 230). In other words, drawing such an emphatic distinction between affect (as an asignifying bodily 'intensity') and emotion (as a clearly defined, subjective feeling) can conceal the extent to which these categories merge into one another. It is possible, as Ahmed notes, to 'separate an affective response from an emotion' at a theoretical level – to separate the bodily sensation of fear, say, from the *feeling* of being afraid – but this 'does not mean that in practice, or in everyday life, they are separate' (*Promise* 231).<sup>23</sup> In the present study, therefore, I shall not be observing this particular theoretical distinction. For one thing, my interest lies not in dividing the bodily from the cognitive, but in exploring the interaction between these two categories. Or to put it another way, I shall be focusing on the point at which feelings such as anger or boredom achieve a certain discursive

22 For more examples of this theoretical distinction, see Grossberg, *We Gotta* 79–87, Terada 4, and Jameson, *Antinomies* 28–44.

23 Other critics who have chosen not to make use of such a distinction include Brennan 3–6, Ngai, *Ugly* 25–28, and Flatley 12. For an especially forceful critique of the affect/emotion dichotomy, see Greco and Stenner 10–12.

legibility, coming into view by way of the ‘impression’ they leave on the literary narratives they infiltrate. These are the structures of feeling we discussed earlier – the feelings that lie at ‘the very edge of semantic availability’ (Williams, *Marxism* 134) yet nonetheless reveal themselves in ‘the actual conventions of literary or dramatic writing’ (Williams, *Politics* 159). Although such structures of feeling have assumed a certain signficatory presence, this does not mean that they have lost their physiological qualities. On the contrary, what literature provides is a site where the subjective and the objective, the semiotic and the asignifying, the cognitive and the somatic, can come together; and it is the conjunction of these different categories, as revealed, enacted, or produced within the domain of the literary-aesthetic, that we will be exploring in the following pages. As we do so, I shall be using the term ‘emotion’ to describe *a state of feeling that combines, to varying degrees, the categories of the physiological, the psychological, and the sociocultural*. And I will also be emphasizing the three characteristic features of emotion that I mentioned at the beginning of this introduction – (1) the fact that it is both psychogenic and sociogenic, (2) the fact that it is historically constituted, and (3) the fact that it is inherently mobile, an affective quality that slides all over the place, defying all boundaries, even those that would distinguish between a feeling you register on your skin, as a bodily ‘intensity,’ and your cognitive understanding of what that sensation signifies.

As we have seen, the texts I have chosen to analyse in this study are notable for their diversity – encompassing four different countries, two different empires, and three different centuries. By discussing such a wide range of narratives, I am not suggesting, of course, that emotion can be easily universalized. Again, quite the opposite: I view emotion not as the product of some ahistorical psychic essence, but as a ‘felt response’ to specific social, political, and economic forces (hence my reliance on the ‘structure of feeling’ as a theoretical principle). At the same time, however, this does not mean that our affective lives are *entirely* determined by our circumstances, or that the anger we feel in Cairo in 1942 bears no resemblance at all to the anger that may be felt elsewhere in the colonial or postcolonial world at different historical junctures.<sup>24</sup> Rather than opting for a biological *or* a cultural understanding of emotion, then, I shall be attempting to combine these

24 For more on the universality of certain narrative structures and affective states, analysed from a cognitive perspective, see Hogan, *Affective and Mind*.

two categories by situating various emotional ‘utterances’ (or *parole*, to use Saussure’s linguistic terminology) within a larger affective structure (or *langue*) that is not confined to any one culture.<sup>25</sup> If we are to deny the humanistic notion that different cultures share certain underlying similarities, many of which may be located in the psyche or the realm of the affective, then we create a world of unassimilable, untranslatable cultural difference, which immediately forecloses the possibility of meaningful intercultural dialogue.<sup>26</sup> Earlier, if you recall, we compared the affective and aesthetic theories of Bharata, the author of the *Nāṭyashāstra* (c. second or third century AD), and Mikel Dufrenne, the author of *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (1953). This would not have been possible if these two writers did not share at least some similarities (despite their various differences); and I believe it is the responsibility of the literary critic to identify such correspondences, however unlikely they may be, while also remaining alert to the cultural and historical specificities that situate every narrative, every theory, every aesthetic object or representational gesture, within a particular place and time. It might be best to elaborate on this point, in conclusion, by discussing the example of psychoanalysis.

Traditionally, the relationship between psychoanalysis and postcolonialism has been a rather fraught one. According to its critics, psychoanalysis as a discipline is grounded in, and serves to perpetuate, certain racist ideologies and colonial binaries, such as the opposition between the civilized and the savage.<sup>27</sup> It has also

25 As the reader may know, Ferdinand de Saussure employed the term *langue* to refer to the underlying structure of a language (which is ‘both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty’ [9]) and the term *parole* to describe an individual utterance or act of linguistic communication.

26 Ernesto Laclau makes this argument very persuasively in *Emancipation(s)* 20–35.

27 One need only read the opening passage of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1913), subtitled *Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, to understand what motivates such a critique. ‘There are men still living,’ Freud writes, ‘who, as we believe, stand very near to primitive man, far nearer than we do, and whom we therefore regard as his direct heirs and representatives. Such is our view of those whom we describe as savages or half-savages; and their mental life must have a peculiar interest for us if we are right in seeing in it a well-preserved picture of an early stage of our own development’ (1).

been accused of universalizing a particular Western model of subjectivity that is inapplicable to other cultures (where subject-formation occurs in contrasting ways and 'subjectivity' itself may be understood differently). Such critiques are to be taken seriously, but in some cases they may underestimate the cultural pliability of psychoanalysis, the manner in which it changes shape as it moves from one place to another (again depending on the precise circumstances in which it is employed). It is this pliability that makes it possible for Frantz Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, to use the psychoanalytical categories of narcissism and neurosis to explore the pathological consequences of the colonial presence in the French Antilles. Or, elsewhere, this is what allows J.M. Coetzee to analyse the psychopathology of South African society during the apartheid era, as demonstrated by the obsessive and neurotic writings of Geoffrey Cronjé (19–22). Or to offer yet another example, it is this pliability, this shape-shifting quality, that enables the anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere to invoke the Freudian notion of transference when describing his relationship with an informant in Sri Lanka (9, 231–36). In each of these cases, we see the way in which a body of thought that originated in a particular place and time (Western Europe at the end of the nineteenth century) can be used in other places and at other times to understand the formation of individual or collective identities, the pathologies to which they may give rise, and the complicated psychosocial dynamic they bring into being. In his discussion of *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), Edward Said freely acknowledges Freud's Eurocentric perspective, yet he also recognizes the wide-ranging applicability of psychoanalysis. Freud, he writes,

was an explorer of the mind, of course, but also, in the philosophical sense, an overturner and a re-mapper of accepted or settled geographies and genealogies. He thus lends himself especially to rereading in different contexts, since his work is all about how life history offers itself by recollection, research and reflection to endless structuring and restructuring, in both the individual and the collective sense. That we, different readers from different periods of history, with different cultural backgrounds, should continue to do this in our readings of Freud strikes me as nothing less than a vindication of his work's power to instigate new thought, as well as to illuminate situations that he himself might never have dreamed of. (*Freud* 27)

In what follows, then, I shall be exploring different feelings as they emerge in different places and at different times. But I also believe it is

important to identify some of the cultural and historical correspondences that make such a study possible in the first place. Even if we do not always experience feelings in precisely the same way, it is essential, in my view, to acknowledge the fact that such feelings *can be shared*; and if we go so far as to acknowledge the possibility of a 'structure of feeling' that may be characteristic of a particular society or a particular culture, at any given point in time, then we also need to consider the possibility that there may be qualities of feeling, shades of emotion, that we share with other people, with still larger collectives, elsewhere and at other times. Or to end this introduction where it began, I would like to suggest that there may be some connection, however slight, between the fear experienced by a French peasant in the summer of 1789, as rumours of invading armies spread throughout the provinces, and the anxiety felt by a young Tanganyikan schoolgirl in 1962, as her country negotiated the various social, political, and economic challenges that accompanied its declaration of independence.