Emotional Latitudes: The Ambiguities of Colonial and Post-Colonial Sentiment

Matt Matsuda

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Professor of History at Rutgers University

Alice Bullard

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*Formerly Associate Professor of History at the Georgia Institute of Technology,
currently J.D. Candidate at Georgetown University Law Center*

Abstract • A collection of essays dedicated to the history of sentiment and emotions in the constitution of imperial and colonial projects. Subjects range from eighteenth-century marriage and military careers, to ethnically mixed couples during the Great War, to contemporary “arranged marriage” television programs in Madagascar. The collection also traces constructions of nineteenth and twentieth-century female slavery in Morocco, and meditations on family rooted and professional contexts in Laos and New Caledonia, complicating links between personal experience and historiographic knowledge. A closing essay draws together many of the themes with a detailed reading of key texts in colonial and postcolonial psychiatry.

Keywords • sentiment, emotion, empire, colonialism, intimacy, history

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This special issue offers a widely ranging geographic approach to Franco-phone studies and is especially attentive to work emanating from the Pacific, Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and the Indian Ocean. Within this international framework, our contributors have focused on twin themes: the history of emotions and the role of emotion in the imaginary construction of histories. These themes are manifested in investigations of empathy, affection, soul, psyche, exchange, reciprocities, gifts, reflections, and memories. Crossing hemispheric boundaries and engaging temporalities over the last three centuries, the following studies mark out peregrinations toward the intersections of “Emotional Latitudes.”

The analyses are elaborated from state policies and life histories and are held together by sources that include military archives, popular televi-

sion programming, colonial letters, anthropological investigations, religious texts, and photographs. The collective project aims to chart colonial and postcolonial relations without privileging the French Empire or the French Republic. In particular, these pieces are all marked by serious contemplation of the status of historical knowledge in relation to variegated and often very local constructions. Each contributor wrestles with the status of a particular archive or personal experience, interrogating the manner in which complex feelings, especially those of attraction, inflect questions of inclusion, exclusion, and memory.

Over many years, in works such as *The Navigation of Feeling* (2001), William Reddy has conceptualized a number of these themes by organizing his scholarly interests around the historicity of emotions. For this issue, he expands upon the interconnections between politics and attraction in a study of the career of Benoît Leborgne, later known as Bennett de Boigne, an eighteenth-century French military officer. Reddy examines the sources and implications of one man's life writ large: his politics, idiosyncratic colonial views, and marriage choices—both in India and in France. Focusing on Boigne's military loyalties and his marriage to both a Persian "colonial wife" in India and a metropolitan woman in France, Reddy plays out the tensions within attachments defined by class, culture, color, and eighteenth-century Sentimentalism.

Framing Reddy's piece at the other end of a chronological spectrum, Jennifer Cole examines a popular French television "reality" program claiming to document arranged marriages between men from France and women from Madagascar. The motives of the couples and the histories they carry both in France and Madagascar are analyzed in relationship to how attitudes about cross-cultural marriage are inflected by post-colonialism and immigration strategies. Cole's work also focuses on small-town French cultures and local Merina communities negotiating status claims in the context of Malagasy nationalism. Finally, Cole illustrates how new political issues arise through public reactions to the documentary.

Richard Fogarty also examines the roles of "mixed" couples, in his case by excavating the complexities of Asian and African soldiers in France during and after the Great War. Where Cole examines French men and Malagasy women, Fogarty details the narratives of men from Indochina and the Maghreb, and the pleasures, challenges, and contempt created in forging relationships with French women. Of particular note in his work is the excavation of soldiers' personal letters and memos discussing relationships—some amorous, others pragmatic. By discerning both desire and fear in the stories that he examines, Fogarty details the sophisticated logic behind affections and liaisons, always framed by tensions over race and culture and conditioned by gender assumptions.

Chouki El Hamel plays out the conundrums of gender and politics by examining constructions of female slavery in Morocco in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He clarifies the personal, familial, and emotional ties that regularly linked "masters" and "slaves." El Hamel looks to the

Moroccan concubinage system within which women were defined by complex status orientations rather than racial criteria. Women engaged actively in sophisticated struggles of distinction within the institution of slavery. Through a careful reading of Muslim scholars, French reportage, and a rich documentation of first person accounts, El Hamel outlines the conflicted, yet emotionally fluid nature of slavery and its representation in North African and European scholarly literatures.

The memorialization, or distortion, of events is also given detailed examination by Panivong Norindr. Norindr carefully surveys documents and family photographs that complicate the lines between intimate memory and diplomatic history. Norindr reflects on the traces left by his father, who was sent by the French government as a young man to study in Laos and Cambodia, and he reinterprets the attractions of “nation” and “modernity” for this man who became the Laotian envoy to the U.S. during the Nixon administration. Norindr assembles an alternative and personally defined narrative of Southeast Asian history sharply critical of some well-known analyses of Laotian politics.

An equally meditative project takes shape in Frédéric Angleviel’s scholarship on the forging of common, or complementary identities for French metropolises, Caldoche settlers, and Kanak peoples in New Caledonia. Angleviel demonstrates the ways in which French New Caledonian history has been articulated upon the necessary erasure of Kanak cultures. Yet paradoxically, he also shows how hopes for a new society are possible, based on a “common destiny” of shared histories. Angleviel’s work highlights the impassioned debates over memory and the possibilities of resolving conflicts through historical understanding.

Alice Bullard’s concluding essay pulls together many of the themes of the issue with a discussion of classic works of colonial and postcolonial psychiatry, notably Octave Mannoni’s *Prospero and Caliban*, Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* and Marie-Cécile and Edmond Ortigue’s *L’Oedipe Africain*. Bullard writes, “Psychoanalysis, as is often remarked, is called on when love fails. As it happens, there is a strong tradition in French scholarship of analyzing colonial and inter-racial relationships via psychoanalysis.” Bullard suggests how important the concept of transference can be in grasping colonial relationships. Examining individual clinical cases, broad political debates, and conflicting theories of race and sexuality, she offers a prospectus for a richer understanding of emotions and histories.

What readers might find unexpected in these essays is how intimacy proves to have such global resonances, appearing and manifesting itself in far-flung family narratives, colonial love relations, travel and displacement stories, or attempts to commemorate and remember entire populations. Servants, lovers, soldiers, diplomats, clinicians, philosophers, marriage seekers, slaves, laborers, merchants, or local peoples: all appear to have revealing places in the colonial configurations that we have chosen to call Emotional Latitudes.