

1 Introduction

This Element serves as an invitation to architectural historians of modern European imperialism to embrace the insights and claims of the history of emotions. We issue this invitation with an important caveat: the Element is not a call for an ‘intimate’, ‘affective’ or ‘emotional’ history. The examples we examine are primarily limited to a select number of buildings, mostly constructed by missionaries and administrative officials in the British and French Empires during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We do not aim to provide an exhaustive or detailed analysis of these structures, nor do we explore a wide range of emotions. Rather, we attempt to show how the omission of emotions as mere effects of historical circumstances, devoid of reason, judgment and rationality, combined with a failure to historicise both emotions themselves and the relationship between buildings and feelings, impoverishes our understanding of European imperial architecture. Their inclusion enables a more nuanced grasp of imperial missions and their biocultural imprint.

The history of emotions claims that emotions are reducible neither to biological responses nor to physiological expressions nor to cultural dispositions. They have history and make history. Underpinned by this claim, Section 1 highlights the close correlation between how emotions are defined and how power is enacted. This connection reveals subtle intricacies regarding the relationship between emotion and reason. Section 2 advances the argument that the causes and effects of emotions are not linked in any straightforward and universal manner to ideas of place, space and environment. It advocates for historicising the relationship between the built environment and emotions. The section builds on previous efforts to move beyond frameworks developed in Europe and North America, seeking to write histories of emotions that incorporate non-Western perspectives and ‘indigenous theories of emotions’ (Chatterjee, Krishnan and Eaton Robb, 2017; Gammerl, Nielsen and Pernau, 2019; Honarmand Ebrahimi, 2023a; Lam, 2018; Prestel, 2017; Takao, 2021). While space constraints prevent an exhaustive exploration of these theories, we highlight their capacity to unsettle prevailing understandings of the relationship between the built environment and emotions and of the possible experiences of imperial buildings.

Shifting focus to these claims underscores the importance of placing the history of emotions at the centre of historiographical practices within the field of imperial architecture. It positions the history of emotions not merely as an auxiliary discipline from which scholars can draw insights, but as a vital contributor to advancing the study of imperial architecture as a ‘more dynamic field’ (Bremner, 2020: 15). To achieve this, scholars should not overlook

the core principles of the history of emotions in favour of convenient inclusions. Even if we approach the history of emotions as a supplementary lens, rather than a comprehensive framework for historical inquiry (Boddice, 2014: 163; Plamper, 2010: 249), failing to engage deeply and critically with its ‘internal debates’ risks producing ahistorical claims, instead of cultivating methods that enrich understanding (Cooper, 2005: 6).

In what follows, we begin with a reference to a remark made in 1935 by the French architect Joseph Marrast (1881–1971) about obtaining the ‘sympathie’ of local people through architecture. We consider this reference a good starting point, as Marrast’s statement has been translated readily from French to English, interpreted and compared with those of other imperial actors. It has also been used to illuminate local experiences of imperial buildings. The Element complicates precisely these forms of analysis. Continuing with Marrast’s case, the final part of the Introduction addresses the enduring debate surrounding the divide between emotion and reason. As the eminent Professor of Anthropology and Historical Studies Ann Laura Stoler has noted, “‘the supremacy of reason’ has often been taken to be the prevailing import of Enlightenment precepts for colonial governance’ (2016: 205). Despite a growing body of scholarship exploring the connections between emotions and empire (Alexander, 2023; Eustace, 2014; Gandhi, 2006; Lydon, 2020; McLisky, 2014, 2008; Swartz, 2017; Vallgård, 2015a), European imperial projects continue to be predominantly framed through the lenses of ‘universal reason’ and ‘totalizing systems of knowledge’ (Stoler, 2016: 205). This framing is especially evident in the historiography of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European imperial architecture (El Chami and Honarmand Ebrahimi, 2024: 337). No scholar has more consistently and incisively challenged the emotion–reason divide in the historiography of European imperialism than Stoler over the past three decades. We elaborate on her research by placing it in dialogue with the history of emotions and Sara Ahmed’s work on the promise of happiness to interrogate and destabilise the emotion–reason dichotomy.

1.1 Two Pleas

Architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright is the first to examine Marrast’s remark. Marrast travelled to Morocco in 1915 at the behest of Henri Prost (1874–1959), who served as the principal urban planner under Resident-General Hubert Lyautey (1854–1943). Lyautey championed an ‘Arabizing style’ and oversaw the construction of several significant administrative and residential structures. Among these was the Palais de Justice in what is now known as the Mohammed V Square in Casablanca, designed by Marrast

(Bloom and Blair, 2009: 546). In her 1991 book, Wright examines Marrast's fascination with incorporating indigenous Moroccan motifs into the colonial government's official buildings. She notes that 'the architect saw another reason, beyond sheer aesthetic delight', and quotes Marrast's own words: 'and thus, little by little, we conquer the hearts of the natives and win their affection, as is our duty as colonizers' (Wright, 1991: 1). What stands out in Wright's interpretation is the suggestion that emotions played a significant role in the decision-making process surrounding the projects. Unfortunately, she does not delve deeper into this aspect, resulting in a missed opportunity for a more thorough examination of Marrast's statement. Moreover, Marrast used the word 'sympathie' rather than 'affection': 'Ainsi, peu à peu, se gagne le coeur des indigènes et se conquiert cette sympathie qu'il est du devoir des colonisateurs d'obtenir' (Marrast, 1935: 24). Though the distinction between these terms might appear minimal, examining them within the broader context of emotions and their biocultural implications reveals that these nuances are vital for historical understanding. Wright interprets Marrast's proposition as an attempt to 'quell the Moroccans' hostility toward European domination' (1991: 1). However, without an examination of *sympathie*, Marrast's intentions remain unclear. Since the publication of Wright's book, many scholars have relied on her translation and interpretation, often without consulting the original source (Bentley, 2002: 15; Coslett, 2015: 356; Demissie, 2012: 1; Njoh, 2007: 31).¹ Our first appeal is to pay close attention to the specific contexts surrounding emotions. *Sympathie* and *affection* are not synonymous; each has its own etymology and distinct social and cultural histories. Instead of viewing them as universal and unchanging, our analyses should be grounded and nuanced. In essence, any assessment of Marrast's statement is lacking without understanding what he meant by *sympathie* and how his perspective differed from that of his English counterparts or nineteenth-century French imperialists.

Sympathy could be characterised as an affection in the early twentieth century. We elaborate on this point in the first section, but it is worth noting here that this alone demonstrates how nuances can be lost in simple translations and interpretations of emotions. Attending to the situated meanings of emotions across cultural and historical registers invites a mode of inquiry that resists straightforward comparisons across imperial geographies. Section 1 explores British colonial administrators and missionaries' understandings of winning affection. Among them were notable figures such as Charles Metcalfe

¹ An exception is Nicola Cooper's examination of 'Urban planning and architecture in colonial Indochina' (2000: 82).

(1785–1864), Sir John Shore (1751–1834), Rev. R. Chambers (dates unknown) and Sidney Gaster (1873–1946). Although all were active in British India, their perspectives varied due to differing understandings of bodily interaction and attachment. Our analysis problematises Maja Hultman and Sophie Cooper’s call to ‘refocus the debate away from definitions’ (2023: 5). While we share Hultman and Cooper’s concern with recovering ‘resources, ambition and imagination’ of marginalised groups, we worry that their argument may not effectively deepen our understanding of those groups’ experiences. Instead, we argue that it is crucial to consider emotions (and emotional expressions) in conversation with shifting ambitions, forms of imagination and cognition (Lemmings and Brooks, 2014: 3). It is also essential to examine the experiences of various communities in relation to their understandings of different emotions. This involves a thoughtful exploration of how they express and interpret emotions, both in themselves and in others. At the heart of Hultman and Cooper’s contention is the idea that certain resources, ambitions and imaginations are unmediated and purer. However, as Kristine Alexander, Stephanie Olsen and Karen Vallgård (2023) have reminded us, ‘voices are always produced in relationships, and they are always performative, always mediated’. Rob Boddice, Mark Smith and Bettina Hitzer have likewise offered well-grounded critiques of the notion of authenticity (Boddice, 2022; Boddice and Hitzer, 2022: 3–23; Boddice and Smith, 2020: 30–31, 51–2). Simply searching for and discussing emotions is insufficient for understanding past experiences. A deeper engagement with their situated meanings and implications is crucial. When examining emotions, we must avoid assuming that their meanings are universally understood or that we can access a pure, unmediated and authentic experience.

We acknowledge Hultman and Cooper’s call to reconsider our sources. But we maintain that revealing ‘alternative’ experiences is *impossible* without attending to the situated meanings of emotions. More critically, a shift away from definitions risks ‘reterritorializing’ minority experiences, treating them as ‘an ancillary or extraneous topic’ rather than recognising them as ‘objects of knowledge’ (Spillers et al., 2007; Weheliye, 2014) in their own right, and for the challenge they pose to ‘core assumptions’ about the ‘environment’ and ‘human/environmental interactions’ (McMurray, 2021: 82). If we accept the ‘basic assumption’ that, as Boddice notes, ‘relations with the environment, the ecosystem and the city were different in the past to what we find in the present’ (2018: 8), we must reflect on the meaning of environment and on the relationship between human – especially human beyond the ‘liberal humanist subject “man”’ (Weheliye, 2008: 322) – and the environment. This leads us to our second plea: we cannot rely solely on delving into past experiences,

memories, expectations and desires within ‘the self-referential framework of the discursive/linguistic traditions of the [post-Enlightenment] West’ (Liu, 1993: 83) to reveal, even in fragments, local and minority experiences.² To clarify this further, we return to Wright’s analysis of Marrast’s statement.

Wright suggests that ‘the design did win the affection of the city’s residents, if not their souls’ (1994: 233). This suggestion is unfounded, as it overlooks how winning sympathy through local architectural motifs was mediated through culturally specific modes of perception. It reflects a broader tendency in scholarship to treat the relationship between emotions and the built environment through universal and timeless lenses, rather than in relation to specific contexts. In Section 2, we address the critical need to historicise this relationship, unsettling the works of phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991), architectural and art historians and feminist geographers (Clark, 2015; Listerborn, 2002; Tsiftsi, 2017). These works are valuable, particularly in their emphasis on the ‘lived space’ of architecture over its physical dimensions. However, much of this scholarship tends to universalise the body–brain–world relationship. Our plea for historicisation resists viewing buildings unequivocally as emotional prescriptions or as ‘materialities of the social’ (Barclay, 2017: 169). After all, what constitutes sociality? As R. A. Judy has argued, ‘a determinate discursive sociality’, rooted in the ‘etymon of *person* in the Latin term *persona*’, was used to ‘sever the captive enslaved body from its motive will and active desire.’ (2020: 4). Our plea also extends the work of historians of emotions, who have explored the relationship between the built environment and emotions (Großmann and Nielsen, 2018; Pernau, 2014, 2015b). These scholars contend that the ‘connection between an emotion and a particular building can change over time’ as bodies ‘bear the imprint of the spaces they are moving through and have moved through’ (Pernau, 2014: 541). While we acknowledge this argument, we emphasise that how bodies bear such imprints can only be comprehended through attention to the diverse ‘ways of *being* bodies’ in the world (Kuriyama, 1999: 13). These include embodied, embrained, ‘disembodied mind’ (Harris, Robb and Tarlow, 2013: 172), ‘ensouled’ (Paster, 2004) and ‘a psycho-physical casual one’ (Taylor, 1989: 188–89), among others. There is certainly nothing ‘natural’ or ‘innate’ about objects. However, if we rely solely

² One must bear in mind the distinction Edward Said recognised between ‘the art of memory for the modern world’ and the ‘art of memory in classical antiquity’, and his observation that the former is ‘a specifically freighted late twentieth-century phenomenon that has arisen at a time of bewildering change, of unimaginably large and diffuse mass societies, competing nationalisms, and, most important perhaps, the decreasing efficacy of religious, familial, and dynastic bonds’ (2000: 179). Also, see *A Cultural History of Memory in the Long Twentieth Century* (Berger and Niven, 2022).

on embodiment to understand the connection between bodies and the built environment, we risk overlooking the historical contexts in which people navigated and inhabited their surroundings. There is a historicity to the act of moving through, and by extension, to the ‘relationship between materiality and subject’ (Barclay, 2017: 170), which is deeply entangled with histories of science, religion, race, gender, technology and globalisation. Some art and architectural historians have emphasised the ‘deeply historical character’ of the way people interact with their surroundings (Crary, 2001; Klonk, 2009, 1996). In his discussion of embodiment, culture and environment, David Howes have similarly gestured towards this historical character by noting the shift from bodily ways of knowing such as ‘skin knowledge’ to ‘mechanised ways of knowing’, which are enormously important to Westerners and other “wired” societies’ understanding of perception (2005: 30). Additionally, Sigrid de Jong has explored the emergence of architectural experience in the second half of the eighteenth century (de Jong, 2017), while Karen Burns has examined the appearance of ‘new environmentalism’ in Christian high culture from the late 1830s, which led to new conceptions of ‘art as a medium of sensory effect’ (Burns, 2016). These studies have often been sidelined in favour of the universal and ahistorical notion of ‘emotion-landscape mingling’ (Lam, 2018).³ A biocultural whole model, or a body–brain–world dynamic model, proposed particularly by Rob Boddice, calls for a mutable and unstable understanding of the relationship between the built environment and emotions. This model demands a move beyond the ahistorical and pre-cultural framing of building-emotion mingling.

1.2 Against ‘Beyond Reason’

Historians have often been reluctant to reassess the divide between emotion and reason within the context of histories of imperialism. When Wright published her book examining Marrast’s statement on ‘sympathie’, Ann Laura Stoler had begun to question the ‘superiority of reason’ and to argue for an ‘*affective genealogy of security*’ (emphasis in the original) (2016: 205). This contention has remained central to her work ever since. But as we (the authors) reviewed Stoler’s extensive scholarship spanning four decades, we were confronted with a challenging question: does her work collapse the dichotomy between reason and emotion? The answer is unresolved to us. In her writings from the late 1980s through the early 2000s, Stoler focuses primarily on how ‘intimate domains – sex, sentiment, domestic arrangement and child rearing – figure in the making of racial categories and in the management of imperial rule’ (2001: 263). Her

³ Ling Hon Lam’s critique of the notion of emotion-landscape mingling is an exception.

emphasis lies in exploring the entanglements between colonisers and the colonised and the intersections of the political with the personal and the public with the private, rather than in directly interrogating the emotion–reason binary. We learn about domesticity, sexuality and the shifting interpretations of what it meant to be and remain European men and women, and the close attachments of various kinds and their management in the making of imperial domination.⁴ When Stoler speaks of ‘the education of desires’, she highlights the colonial states and imperial figures’ vested interest in shaping private lives. Affect, sense and sensibilities become ‘the real stuff of official archives’ (2010: 12) within the confines of private and intimate lives. Much like the turn to intimacy, gender, emotions and everyday life among social scientists in the 1970s and the 1980s (Brooks, 2014: 52–4),⁵ her analysis positions the ‘intimate’ as another criterion besides evidence of rationality, reason and progress, rather than affect, emotions or sensibilities, at the centre of historiographical practices. It is the intimate that deepens our understanding of identity, race, gender and class in imperial formations rather than emotions.

In her later works – specifically *Along the Archival Grain*, *Duress* and *Interior Frontiers* – Stoler moves past examining the intimate sphere to address the complexities surrounding the binary of reason and emotion. While her intention appears to be dismantling these distinctions, her argument treats sentiments as ‘the very opposite’ of reason (2007: 58). In these texts, she challenges the notion of ‘Enlightenment-as-imperialism’ and ‘the ready distinctions between sentiment and political rationality’. She not only contends that ‘the sentiments and passions’ were central to Enlightenment thought, attitudes and practices, but also asserts that ‘Reason’, with a capital R, is ‘an elusive – indeed, moving – target, mobile in meaning, unfettered by scale, historically contingent, radically altered by context’ (2016: 214).⁶ Nevertheless, she tends to position sentiments and passions in a space characterised as ‘beyond reason’. Her formulation is more concerned with the inadequacy and failure of reason than with exploring how sentiments and emotions were theorised and experienced. When Stoler states in chapter one of *Along the Archival Grain* that the ‘political rationalities’ were grounded in the management of ‘affective states’, she goes on to assert that ‘colonial states “kept watch” through a fuzzier set of conceptual distinctions that the rubrics of “reason” versus “passions” imply – through a blurred rather than a sharp Cartesian lens’ (2009: 60). Yet ultimately, her introduction of emotions and sentiments as being as important as reason and

⁴ Stoler’s initial focus on marriage, domesticity and childrearing was criticised by Mary A. Renda (2001). Stoler expands her focus to intimacies of various kinds in *Carnal Knowledge* (2002).

⁵ For example, see Ann Hochschild’s book, *The Managed Heart* (1983).

⁶ She draws on studies by Dalal Asad (1993) and Partha Chatterjee (1986).

rationality and her reference to them as ‘other criteria’ or as part of a ‘history in a minor key’ preserves the emotion and reason duality, offering them, at best, a ‘shared space of governance’ (Stoler, 2009: 5, 52, 66).

We do not wish to downplay the importance of Stoler’s otherwise thought-provoking works. We share her unease with the dominant focus on ‘the superiority of reason’ in the writing of imperial histories.⁷ Her argument has been central to our work, and our point of departure aligns with hers. Nevertheless, our approach differs in that we do not identify a distinct ‘*affective genealogy of security*’. Instead, we see genealogies of emotions as entangled within broader systems of knowledge production, fundamental to imperial practices and to the construction of environments and the world. What is striking, when reading across Stoler’s oeuvre, is the absence of the history of emotions literature.⁸ This literature shows that the heart was considered the seat of emotions in Europe from the classical period up until the nineteenth century, encompassing soul, mind and the body in a complex union. Shifting medico-scientific understandings gradually relocated the site of emotions to the brain from the nineteenth century onwards (Alberti, 2010: 16–40; Harris, Robb, Tarlow, 2013: 164–95). Stoler’s analysis overlooks these significant transformations. By employing the term ‘carnal knowledge’, she locates the site of emotions invariably in the body, disregarding how contemporaries thought about the body and its relationship to knowledge. The shift towards viewing emotions as rooted in the brain marked a crucial ‘regime of truth’ (Stoler, 2002: 2) that shaped colonial discourses and policies. This perspective underpinned arguments about the supposed inferiority of indigenous populations, who were believed to lack the advanced frontal brain development attributed to the average European (McCulloch, 1995: 47).

Stoler’s articles and books rank among the most cited in the field. Catherine Hall has described *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* as ‘captivating’ and recognised it as ‘a must for all scholars of colonial rule’ (2004: 532). However, historians of modern European imperial architecture have largely disregarded Stoler’s call for an affective genealogy of security, even when they engage with her work (Lagae and Holst, 2023; Tennakoon, 2023). Meanwhile, historians of imperialism have yet to challenge the authority of reason as forcefully as Stoler might have hoped. Critics of her earlier works have asked ‘what’s love got to do with it’, accusing her of neglecting ‘violence and discrimination’ in favour of ‘colonizing the hearts and minds of women, children, and men’ (Gutiérrez, 2001: 869). Ramón Gutiérrez’s note is telling: Stoler’s ‘method will surely help us write affective histories, devoid of the blood and sweat and tears of which

⁷ Frederick Cooper has also contemplated this unease (2005).

⁸ Stoler refers to works by Peter N. Stearn and William Reddy in *Along the Archival Grain*.