



BOOK REVIEWS

Tanya Agathocleous, *Disaffected: Emotion, Sedition, and Colonial Law in the Anglosphere*. Cornell University Press, 2021, 211 pp.

Postcolonial literary studies has always been committed to justice, as is clear from its earliest scholarship, in work by Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, and in foundational literary texts by authors such as Chinua Achebe, Sam Selvon, and Mahasweta Devi. For at least twenty-five years, postcolonial studies primarily invoked justice in a broadly ethical sense, analyzing the human costs of territorial dispossession, labor exploitation, state violence, and racial domination. Only relatively recently has the field begun to take a specifically legal approach to justice, recognizing that both colonial and postcolonial governments employed particular legal mechanisms to build and maintain power. In their attentiveness to the interplay between literary and legal contexts, these works register a more general move in literary studies from abstraction to granularity. A wave of recent monographs examines discursive and representational engagements with colonial legal regimes and their postcolonial successors, variously addressing personhood and sovereignty,¹ human rights,² political persecution,³ and censorship and copyright.⁴ Like these works that analyze legal documents and processes, including statutes, cases, protocols, and treaties, Tanya Agathocleous's *Disaffected: Emotion, Sedition, and Colonial Law in the Anglosphere* offers an important addition to postcolonial law and literary studies through its analysis of sedition law in late-colonial British India.

When colonial Britain imported a modified version of its sedition law into the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in 1870, Agathocleous argues, it also introduced disaffection as a novel legal concept, and this newly affective framing of a common-law offense shaped both anticolonial resistance and modernist

¹ Angela Naimou, *Salvage Work: U.S. and Caribbean Literatures amid the Debris of Legal Personhood* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015); Leila Neti, *Colonial Law in India and the Victorian Migration* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

² Joseph Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007); Elizabeth S. Anker, *Fictions of Dignity, Embodying Human Rights in World Literature* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2012).

³ David Farrier, *Postcolonial Asylum: Seeking Sanctuary Before the Law* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011); Stephen Morton, *States of Emergency: Colonialism, Literature and Law* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

⁴ Peter D. McDonald, *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and Its Cultural Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Isabel Hofmeyr, *Dockside Reading: Hydrocolonialism and the Custom House* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022).

aesthetics. Unlike English sedition law, which prohibited written and verbal incitements to rebellion, Section 124a of the IPC made hating the government a crime. Whereas British sedition law banned concrete actions like documented plots to overthrow the government, colonial Indian law prohibited mere dislike of colonial rule, criminalizing feeling to expand sedition's purview. Through legal actions like 1891's *Bangavasi* prosecution, when a conservative Hindu newspaper was charged with sedition, the colonial state attempted "to control not only the public sphere but also the *feeling* of colonial subjecthood" (60). By rhetorically analyzing both disaffection's legal coding as excess and the colonial state's contradistinctive framing of political affection as appropriately contained feeling, Agathocleous recognizes that colonial Britain racialized affect as part of its governing strategy. Most convincingly, she demonstrates that sedition law's framing as disaffection shaped print culture and activist tactics: she shows how legal codes shape discursive and aesthetic forms.

Agathocleous addresses sedition law's motivating logics and its legal implementation in her introduction, first chapter, and conclusion, while chapters 2 through 4 focus on the colonial state's surveillance of India's print culture. Chapter 1 pairs Oscar Wilde's 1895 prosecution for gross indecency with the *Bangavasi* trial to establish that both English and colonial Indian law framed sedition as racialized excess. In an insightful analysis of transimperial legal influence, Agathocleous argues that both trials reveal Britain's fear that "aberrant masculinity might create new circuits of affect between the educated elite and the working classes" (65). Chapter 2 argues that Indian magazines like *Hindi Punch*, a close cousin of British *Punch*, employed parody as an oppositional strategy to at once evade charges of disaffection and "reshape the Indian Anglosphere" (97). Chapter 3 formally analyzes methods of review, including comparison, assemblage, and citation, to argue that Indian journals established new counterpublics by offering near imitations of British models. Whereas British journalist W. T. Stead's *Review of Reviews* was "an attempt to create a white supremacist empire in print" (119), Prithwis Chandra Ray's *Indian World* "hypothesized an Indian nation situated within a world republic of letters" (130). Chapter 4 turns from disaffection to affection, arguing that early-twentieth-century Indian intellectuals used syncretic form to produce anticolonial formulations of global relation. At the Universal Races Congress of 1911 and in the modernist Indian journal *East and West*, Indian thinkers "participated in a discursive shift from the notions of East-West dialogue and reconciliation to that of pan-Asian and nonaligned solidarities" (182). Agathocleous concludes with a rich rhetorical analysis of Mahatma Gandhi's 1922 trial for sedition, which "marked the end of the tactics of evasion and transferred affect from coercive to consensual community" (189).

Agathocleous's argument is most innovative when it is tied explicitly to the law and its operations. While this reader would have appreciated an expanded focus on sedition's legal forms and a more extended theorization of

affect's racialization, *Disaffected* clearly registers the necessity for both legal and affective frameworks in postcolonial analysis. In her exceptional rhetorical and formalist analyses of popular discourse and satirical cartoons, Agathocleous reveals disaffection's circulation within late-colonial Indian publics and models the intellectual value of sustained close reading. Delivering a fascinating account of how legislative systems circulate discursively and materially, *Disaffected* provides a generative model for law and literature scholarship.

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Bola Dauda and Toyin Falola, *Wole Soyinka: Literature, Activism, and African Transformation*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021, 312 pp.

Wole Soyinka, African literature's first Nobel laureate, has through a series of memoirs given critics a wealth of biographical material to digest. Reading his oeuvre, spanning seven decades and every literary genre imaginable, as well as his continuous political activism alongside his biographical accounts of his life proves, however, a daunting task. Grasping Soyinka's aesthetic and philosophical experiments with Yoruba cosmology throughout his drama, poetry, and prose is difficult enough, causing many critics to avoid his writing for the more easily accessible work of Anglophone African literature's other giants (Kole Omotoso's title *Soyinka or Achebe?* remains a poignant framing of Soyinka criticism in this respect). In addition to the formal complexity of Soyinka's literary output, the mass of extraliterary artifacts he has produced—from his chairing Nigeria's Federal Road Safety Corps to his infamous radio station holdup, from his anti-apartheid activism to his experiments in popular music and cinema—make any summary of Soyinka's lifework difficult.

In this regard, Bola Dauda and Toyin Falola's *Wole Soyinka: Literature, Activism, and African Transformation* is a welcome addition to scholarship. Although multiple monographs on Soyinka do exist, Dauda and Falola take a different tack than most. They set out to write an unauthorized biography of the "greatest literary mind from Africa" (xiii), focusing less on situating Soyinka's oeuvre within literary history or postcolonial criticism than on offering a historical account of Soyinka as a cultural icon. This is not to say Dauda and Falola sidestep literary scholarship (they draw frequently from the work of Biodun Jeyifo, James Gibbs, Derek Wright, and Tunde Adeniran, for instance). Rather, their unique contribution to scholarship lies less in interpreting Soyinka's writing than in historicizing the man as a sociopolitical phenomenon who has for seventy years and counting "engaged in social engineering and reengineering using different