Affective Mapping

MELANCHOLIA AND THE POLITICS OF MODERNISM

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Affective Mapping
The writing of this book originated in my desire to explain something that seemed simultaneously self-evident and poorly understood. That is: not all melancholias are depressing. More precisely, if by melancholia we mean an emotional attachment to something or someone lost, such dwelling on loss need not produce depression, that combination of incommunicable sorrow and isolating grief that results in the loss of interest in other persons, one’s own actions, and often life itself. In fact, some melancholias are the opposite of depressing, functioning as the very mechanism through which one may be interested in the world. This book is about these non- or antidepressive melancholias.

Even as understandings of melancholia have changed, the basic cluster of symptoms (sadness, grief, fear, affective withdrawal, loss of interest) it describes has remained relatively consistent. Likewise, whether melancholia has been seen to stem from physiological imbalances (too much black bile or melaina-kole), astrological misfortune (born under the sign of Saturn), failures of faith (the sin of acedia or sloth), or unmourned losses, also persistent has been a sense that there may be a valuable aspect of this condition. Within the discourse of melancholia we find a dialectic between emotional withdrawal and its apparent opposite, the most intense or exceptional devotion of affective energy. Thus, for example, the Aristotelian Problemata asks: “Why do all men of extraordinary ability in the field of philosophy or politics or literature or the arts prove to be melancholics?” Or, moving to the seventeenth century, in his Anatomy of Melancholy, Robert Burton affirms...
the knowledge that might be produced by the creative contemplation uniquely facilitated by melancholy states: “They get their knowledge by books, I mine by melancholizing.” The word Burton uses here, melancholize, long since out of use, suggests that melancholy might not just be a mood state into which one falls, or which descends on one like bad weather. Instead, melancholizing is something one does: longing for lost loves, brooding over absent objects and changed environments, reflecting on unmet desires, and lingering on events from the past. It is a practice that might, in fact, produce its own kind of knowledge.

This book is concerned with a particular mode of modernist melancholizing. My analysis centers on three distinct texts: Henry James’s *Turn of the Screw* (1898), W. E. B. Du Bois’s *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), and Andrei Platonov’s *Chevengur* (1928). What melancholizing produces for James, Du Bois, and Platonov is the knowledge of the historical origins of their melancholias, and thus at the same time of the others with whom these melancholias might be shared. This knowledge, an “affective map,” this book argues, is what, for them and for their readers, makes possible the conversion of a depressive melancholia into a way to be interested in the world.

Several things distinguish late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century understandings of melancholia from earlier ones. Most significant is the connection made around that time between depressive melancholia and the problem of loss, a connection crystallized in Freud’s now famous argument first outlined in his 1917 essay “Mourning and Melancholia.” Briefly, Freud argued there that the mood state long associated with melancholia was caused by the failure to mourn a loss. Instead of mourning, which Freud saw as a kind of libidinal decathection from the lost object, the melancholic internalizes the lost object into his or her very subjectivity as a way of refusing to let the loss go. (I examine the twists and turns, revisions and contradictions of Freud’s theory in Chapter 1.) In laying out this paradigm, I argue, Freud is not so much correcting or improving (as he supposed) our view of melancholia as giving us in his theory of melancholia an allegory for the experience of modernity, an experience (as I will discuss) that is constitutively linked to loss. In this, Freud is responding to the same problem as James, Du Bois, and Platonov: he seeks to find an aesthetic practice that could change one relation to loss into another, which in his case is the practice of psychoanalysis itself.

Where Freud was concerned to develop a universal theory of melancholy that would enable analysts to help patients arrive at individual
cures, Walter Benjamin saw melancholia as a definitely historical problem related to the experience of modernity. In this view melancholia is no longer a personal problem requiring cure or catharsis, but is evidence of the historicity of one’s subjectivity, indeed the very substance of that historicity. In his connection of melancholia to the historical experience of modernity, Benjamin helps me to outline the conception of melancholia implicit to the practices of James, Du Bois, and Platonov. For these authors, insofar as the losses at the source of individual melancholias are seen to be generated by historical processes such as white supremacy (Du Bois), the mass cultural reification of the literary sphere combined with the reification of identity accompanying the invention of homosexuality (James), or the upheaval generated by war and revolution (Platonov), melancholia comes to define the locus of the “psychic life of power” (to borrow an evocative phrase from Judith Butler), the place where modernity touches down in our lives in the most intimate of ways. As such, melancholia forms the site in which the social origins of our emotional lives can be mapped out and from which we can see the other persons who share our losses and are subject to the same social forces. We might say that the melancholic concern with loss creates the mediating structure that enables a slogan—“The personal is political”—to become a historical-aesthetic methodology. This methodology’s questions are: Whence these losses to which I have become attached? What social structures, discourses, institutions, processes have been at work in taking something valuable away from me? With whom do I share these losses or losses like them? What are the historical processes in which this moment of loss participates—in other words: how long has my misery been in preparation? These are the questions, Affective Mapping argues, that must find their way into the heart of an aesthetic practice if it is, in Walter Benjamin’s words, to “arm one” instead of “causing sorrow.”

In writing about this distinctly modern antidepressive melancholia, I aim to contribute to the project Nietzsche called for when he lamented in The Gay Science that we lack a history of the passions: “All kinds of individual passions have to be thought through and pursued through different ages, peoples, great and small individuals . . . so far all that has given color to existence, still lacks a history.” Nietzsche wonders how we can understand things such as friendship or marriage, punishment or asceticism without an examination of the function of affect in these formations. Although he did not, he might have spoken as well of the specific experiences of modernization—urbanization, industrialization,
colonialization and imperialism, modern warfare, the invention of “race,”
the advent of the modern commodity and mass culture, the emergence
of modern discourses of gender and sexuality, and the pathologization
of homosexuality. How can we understand the nature and the impact of
such historical processes without some sense of how they work on and
through affect? It is not hard to see (whether we are thinking, for in-
Land,” *The Weary Blues*, *Nightwood*, or *The Trial*) that many mod-
ernist attempts to find a way to represent the experiences of modernity
have done so by being especially attentive to the affective—as distinct
from the cognitive or the corporeal for example—components of mod-
ern experience. Indeed, behind the extraordinary level of aesthetic ex-
perimentation that we sometimes call “modernism” we can see the
desire to find a way to map out and get a grasp on the new affective ter-
rain of modernity. In doing so, such modernisms have been concerned
not only with the affective impact of modernization but also with the
ways the social forces of modernity work *through* emotions, the ways
we become the subjects that we are by the structuring of our affective
attachments.

“Affective mapping” is the name I am giving to the aesthetic technology—
in the older, more basic sense of a *techne*—that represents the historicity
of one’s affective experience. In mapping out one’s affective life and its
historicity, a political problem (such as racism or revolution) that may
have been previously invisible, opaque, difficult, abstract, and above all
depressing may be transformed into one that is interesting, that solicits
and rewards one’s attention. This transformation can take place, I ar-
gue, not only because the affective map gives one a new sense of one’s
relationship to broad historical forces but also inasmuch as it shows one
how one’s situation is experienced collectively by a community, a
heretofore unarticulated community of melancholics. Of course, this
does not mean that collective consciousness *necessarily* follows—the
functioning of the strands of collective affective attachment is a compli-
cated topic in itself—but I do argue that the desire for that conscious-
ness is always implicit in the writing of an affective map, and it lies
nascent there for the motivated reader to take up.

I propose that we understand the task of turning one’s melancholia
into a mode of vital connection with the world as changing one’s
“mood.” By “mood” I mean Heidegger’s Stimmung, which has also been translated as “attunement.”¹¹ One’s Stimmung, for Heidegger, is one’s primary way of being in the world, “the ‘presupposition’ for, and ‘medium’ of thinking and acting” (FCM, 68). That is, one’s Stimmung is one’s way of having certain things in that world matter to one; it is the atmosphere in which intentions are formed, projects pursued, and particular affects can attach to particular objects. Ontologically, Heidegger insists, Stimmung “is a primordial kind of Being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself prior to all cognition and volition and beyond their range of disclosure” (BT, 175). For Dasein (literally “being there,” Heidegger’s word for “a being,” in the sense of a human being who necessarily finds itself in some “there”), everything about one’s being-in-the-world is filtered through and founded on one’s mood. And because we never find ourselves nowhere, because we always already find ourselves somewhere specific, we are never not in a mood; to be in the world is to be in a mood. We find ourselves in moods that have already been inhabited by others, that have already been shaped or put into circulation, and that are already there around us. As Charles Guignon puts it, “as we grow up in the social order into which we are thrown, we also become masters of a determinate range of possible moods that are ‘accepted’ in our world.”¹² I will say more about Stimmung shortly (in the Glossary), but the point to make here is that depression is the Stimmung in which the world and the people in it seem incapable of sustaining one’s interest or desire. And as anyone who has been depressed knows, one cannot simply decide to see the world differently. Changing one’s Stimmung is not simply a matter of will or decision. Rather, one must invoke or awaken a “counter-mood,” a task for which aesthetic activities of various kinds have long been a resource.

The kind of aesthetic practice I am concerned with here, however, is quite particular in its relation to melancholic moods. It is neither cathartic, compensatory, nor redemptive—probably the most commonly encountered ideas about the uses of aesthetics in relation to melancholia. In such views, art may be seen to transcend the exigencies of everyday life in the realm of beauty, or to relieve repressed emotions through a cathartic release. (In fact, as Herbert Marcuse argued in his essay “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” this compensatory mode may be seen historically as the dominant Western mode of aesthetic experience in general.) This is a tradition that perhaps peaked in the Romantic period and which still produced powerful results within what is sometimes called “high modernism.”¹³ To this day it is probably the
dominant discourse about the relationship between melancholia and aesthetics. \(^{14}\)

The publication of Charles Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du Mal* in 1857 represents a turning point in the history of the relationship between melancholia and aesthetics. With Baudelaire, we see the emergence of a decidedly antitherapeutic melancholic poetry. Its aim is not to make you “feel better” or to redeem damaged experiences but to redirect your attention to those very experiences. One leaves Baudelaire’s poetry not relieved of grief but aggrieved, clearer about what the losses at the origin of one’s grief might be and what or whom may to be to blame for them. At the same time, however, as in “A Une Passante,” for example, we are shown how one’s losses might be a secret source of connection, interest, and perhaps even pleasure. Baudelaire’s could be called a splenetic modernism, for it is his task to transform *ennui*, that “monstre delicat” that renders the world incapable of sustaining emotional involvement, into *spleen*: a state in which one is exceedingly aware of, angry about, and interested in the losses one has suffered. For Baudelaire, it would seem, feeling those losses, losses that in Baudelaire as much as in Freud have penetrated into the very structure of subjectivity, is the only way to be attuned to the unavoidably melancholic nature of modern life. \(^{15}\)

Walter Benjamin wrote that the “decisive ferment” that allows the transformation from *ennui* into *spleen* is “self-estrangement,” and I make a similar claim about the antidepressive effects of the affective map. \(^{16}\) I take Benjamin to mean self-estrangement first of all in the sense of being able to treat oneself as an object, so that one is able to subject one’s emotional life to analysis, reflection, and direction. One must be self-consciously alienated from one’s emotional life for it to become historical datum. But I also read estrangement in the sense of the Russian formalist *ostraneniye* or Brechtian “alienation effect”: making strange or defamiliarizing. My own emotional life must appear unfamiliar, not-mine, at least for a moment, if I am to see its relation to a historical context. The idea is to allow one’s emotions to lose their invisibility and necessity and become instead contingent, surprising, relative. Thus, for example, by way of the experience of loss, Baudelaire identifies alternately with widow and ragpicker, lesbian and drunk. Through poetic identification with this surprising and apparently diverse set of characters, Baudelaire defamiliarizes the experience of loss, lack, and alienation they all share, allegorizing for him and for us elements of the melancholic nature of his own life and of modern experience more generally.
What I am calling an affective map is essentially a mobile machine of self-estrangement. James, Du Bois, and Platonov not only give a narrative or representation of a particular structure of feeling, they seek to produce a particular kind of affective experience in their readers, and at the same time to narrate this very experience. In other words, the affective map narrates the production of its own reader. Thus, for example, in *The Turn of the Screw*, Henry James solicits a kind of epistemological interest from his readers by leaving the reality of the ghosts and the sanity of the governess textually indeterminable. The reader must guess or “read into” (in James’s words) the text to come to any kind of “knowledge” about the ghosts or the governess. At the same time, the story narrates just such an epistemological interest on the part of the governess herself, who is reading into the behavior of the children to try to get at the truth of their intercourse with the ghosts. This will to knowledge on the part of the governess rhymes with the reader’s own, and reproduces the eponymous phenomenon described by Foucault in relation to the knowledge of sexual identity. In a direct allegorical gesture, this pursuit ends in the death of Miles. In this way, James provides a nugget of affective experience for the reader, one with direct historical resonance and relevance, and then also tells the reader something about that experience within the narrative itself. In essence, the reader has an affective experience within the space of the text, one that repeats or recalls earlier, other experiences, and then is estranged from that experience, and by way of that estrangement told or taught something about it. This is the moment of affective mapping.

I mean “mapping” here, I should emphasize, in a slightly unexpected manner. That is, the affective map is not a stable representation of a more or less unchanging landscape; it is a map less in the sense that it establishes a territory than that it is about providing a feeling of orientation and facilitating mobility. I mean the term to suggest something essentially revisable; when it works, it is a technology for the representation to oneself of one’s own historically conditioned and changing affective life. In this sense, it is a map in the sense proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, when they distinguish the rhizomatic map from the tracing: the rhizome is open, connectable in multiple directions, related to the real in an experimental fashion. (I discuss all of this in more detail in Chapter 2.) The revisable, rhizomatic affective map not only gives us a view of a terrain shared with others in the present but also traces the paths, resting places, dead ends, and detours we might share with those who came before us.
For better or worse, this book follows a fairly standard organizing principle: in the first part I explain and contextualize the book’s key concepts and its methodology, and in the second part I make use of these concepts in readings of a range of texts. Of course, the book was not written in this order; I only figured out what concepts were important and what method I was using by way of these readings, and I hope that some of the tension and conversation between the more abstract thinking about concepts and methodology and the readings of particular texts remains legible.

Before anything else, I explain some key terms—mood, structure of feeling, affect, emotion—in a kind of glossary. Then, in a long first chapter, I briefly sketch out the relationship between melancholia and modernity, and the place of modernism therein, and lay out the concepts and arguments from Freud and Benjamin that will be useful for the rest of the book. I examine Freud’s theory of melancholia in relation to the long history of theories of melancholia, proposing that we see psychoanalysis as itself a modernist aesthetic practice. My sense of the distinction between a depressive, depoliticized melancholia and a non-depressing, politicizing melancholia probably owes more to Walter Benjamin’s “On the Concept of History” than to any other text. In this first chapter I read this text, with others by Benjamin, to elaborate my approach to this distinction and also to lay out the reading of Benjamin’s take on melancholia, which will remain axiomatic for the rest of the book.

In Chapter 2, I elaborate this notion of the affective map, drawing on the use of this term and of cognitive mapping in environmental psychology and urban planning—the context from which Fredric Jameson adopted the concept of cognitive mapping, bringing it into the sphere of literary theory. Then, borrowing from Adorno’s ideas about the “aesthetic shudder,” I explain a bit more carefully than earlier what I mean by affective mapping.

From here I move to the primary literary texts. These texts are by no means the only ones I might have written about; Djuna Barnes and Nella Larsen, for example, are other figures I considered. But, besides the fact that James, Du Bois, and Platonov are all authors in my fields of specialization, I have also chosen them strategically as authors who may in one way or another be representative, foundational, or paradigmatic. Henry James is, of course, central to the Anglo-American tradition. And because one of the earliest texts of psychoanalytic literary
criticism, “The Ambiguity of Henry James,” by Edmund Wilson, focused on this story, and Shoshana Felman’s rereading of Wilson’s reading has been an important essay in the establishment of a new, more sophisticated, Lacanian deconstructive criticism, *The Turn of the Screw* in particular is a classic text of psychoanalytic criticism. It is thus an ideal site to engage with and historicize psychoanalytic thought. Du Bois’s *Souls of Black Folk* is foundational for African American letters as aesthetic theory, literary performance, and political, sociological, and psychological analysis, as is well known and much remarked. And Platonov, although very poorly known outside of the Russian reading public (in part because of the difficulty of translating his work, due to its experimental character), is widely acknowledged within that public to be one of (if not the) most important Russian writers of the twentieth century.17 *Chevengur* is his only full-length novel (although he did write several short novels or “tales”). Of the three, Chapter 3 is the shortest, as I wanted to provide a quickly graspable example of the mode of reading I am proposing. A final note on the chapters: knowing how most people read books (or at least how I do), I have tried to write the chapters so that they can usefully be read without reading the chapters that precede them. This means that, occasionally, I repeat myself regarding some point or other from Benjamin, Freud, or Heidegger so that the reader need not go back to an earlier section in order to make sense of whatever local argument I am making about the text at hand.

This is a comparative book. Even though Henry James read *The Souls of Black Folk*, and Du Bois studied with Henry’s brother William and would later become interested in Freud and the Soviet Union and Marxism, and Platonov had recently read Freud when he wrote *Chevengur*, this is not a book about influence, about the social or institutional formations of modernism, or about sites of transnational contact or communication.18 I am not making any claim about actual contact or influence between or among these authors.

That is to say, I am interested only in their shared approach to aesthetic activity as a response to the losses generated by the experience of modernity. I hope through the juxtaposition of these different figures to suggest that they are all responding to distinct but nonetheless parallel experiences of modernization. While it is outside of this book’s scope to prove such a case, I want to propose that the problem with loss, with the loss that cannot be mourned, is common to the experience of
modernity in general. The point is not that modernity is experienced everywhere in the same way but that the experiences are similar, and that melancholia is one site where we can perceive more finely the particularities as well as the similarities among the different experiences of modernity.
The vocabulary of affect can be confusing, in part because there are many terms—*affect, emotion, feeling, passion, mood*—and a long history of debate not only about which terms are the right ones and how to distinguish between them, but about what they mean in the first place. And while there is a great deal of excellent recent work on affect in several disciplines (including literary studies, history, philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, sociology, cognitive science, and neurobiology),¹ this does not mean that a general consensus, or even a common conversation, has emerged. While providing a map of the terrain opened up by this new work is a task beyond the scope of this book, I hope it will be helpful at least to gloss the terms this book uses and give a sense of the theoretical traditions to which I am most indebted.² There are four such terms: *affect, emotion, mood* (or *Stimmung*), and *structure of feeling*. What I aim to provide here is nothing so ambitious as a “theory of affect” but, rather, the understanding of these terms that I will take as axiomatic for the rest of the book. Because this part of the book endeavors to summarize a body of material for the reader who is not familiar with it, readers more acquainted with recent work on affect may wish to skip sections they find covering material they already know.

**Affect and Emotion**

In the long history of work on affect and emotion, sometimes the two terms are taken to be synonymous, other times a sharp difference is as-
serted, and in both cases the meaning of the terms is and has been highly variable. In everyday usage, while the words are often interchangeable, there are significant connotative differences. Where emotion suggests something that happens inside and tends toward outward expression, affect indicates something relational and transformative. One has emotions; one is affected by people or things. Although a strong conceptual distinction between affect and emotion is not central to this book’s argument, I exercise a preference for affect as the more useful term and precise concept in part because it is the relational more than the expressive I am interested in. For the most part, however, it seems least confusing to follow everyday usage of the two terms (that is, more or less synonymous but with the aforementioned connotative differences) and to be explicit about it when I think a difference between them needs to be emphasized.

In the effort to establish a working definition of affect/emotion, Aristotle offers a useful starting place. He defines the emotions as “those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure. Such are anger, pity, fear, and the like, with their opposites.” In this understanding, emotions describe a moment when one’s experience of the world is altered in a way that affects one’s judgment of that world. Together, the emotions constitute one of our basic ways of establishing value, of assessing or judging our world, often prior to cognition or will. In many ways, Silvan Tomkins, whose theory of the affects I more or less follow, is elaborating this Aristotelian understanding when he writes: “It is our theory of value that for human subjects value is any object of human affect. Whatever one is excited by, enjoys, fears, hates, is ashamed of, is contemptuous of, or is distressed by is an object of value, positive or negative” (SIS, 68).

Tomkins argued for treating the affects as a kind of irreducible “motivation system” or “assembly,” one that inevitably interacts with but is nonetheless distinct from the drives, from strictly physiological factors, from perception, and from elements of “cognition” such as belief, thought, and choice. Like visual perception or the reasoning mind, the affects have an internal logic—a systematicity—all their own.

In attributing centrality and specificity to the affects, Tomkins seeks to displace the psychoanalytic emphasis on the drives or instincts as the primary sources of human motivation. Freud, who never really developed a coherent account of the affects, often treated them as the quantitative energy stemming from the drives, a kind of undifferentiated intensity that is given form and content by the ideas or objects to which they were attached. (See Chapter 1 for more on Freud and affect.) On
the whole, however, Freud was not really interested in affect as a thing in itself, attributing basic human motivation and evaluation instead to the libido (or, depending on the period of his career one is considering, other instincts such as the death drive). And although he does offer very interesting considerations of the “emotional tie” (also discussed later), even here his account suffers from lack of explanation of the specific affects that may comprise this tie.

For Tomkins, one of the key differences separating the affects from the drives was their degree of freedom in object and duration; for example, one can be terrified of anything, for any amount of time, but can only breathe air, and cannot do without it for very long. Affects are not necessarily attached to any one object, indeed can attach to any object, and are free to modify each other and to change one’s experience of the drives as well. Tomkins notes, for example, that “the panic of one who experiences the suffocation of interruption of his vital air supply has nothing to do with the anoxic drive signal per se,” but is the result of the amplifying effects of fear. Similarly, the sexual drive could just as easily be diminished by shame, anxiety, or boredom as increased by excitement.

It is, of course, not just Freud to whom Tomkins is responding. In some ways his emphasis on the specific “feeling” of affects, as well as their rootedness in physiological phenomena—facial behavior above all—recalls the famous theory proposed by William James, who held that emotions were essentially the “feeling” of a bodily change or state. James writes: “My thesis . . . is that the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion.” Thus, for example (and counterintuitively), weeping did not follow on sadness, but the reverse: sadness was the feeling of weeping, happiness was the feeling of smiling, and so forth. In this view, one cannot have an emotion without the corresponding bodily change—the surge of adrenaline, hair on end, rush of blood to the face—and one’s qualitative experience of that change is the emotion itself. While Tomkins does pick up on the connection between affects and facial/bodily movements in exploring the particularity of each affect, unlike James, Tomkins would always insist on the autonomy of affect, the extent to which the affects could not be understood exclusively in terms of this bodily response.

During Tomkins’s career, the Jamesian theory was challenged most forcefully by what had come to be called a “cognitive” view of emotion. In the 1960s, the work of Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer signaled a shift toward this perspective. Schachter and Singer conducted a series
of studies in which they injected subjects with adrenaline in different contexts, finding that the emotion the subjects “experienced” depended on the interpretation or label they imposed on the physiological change. They hypothesized that an emotion is a relatively undifferentiated physiological arousal combined with a cognitive interpretation of it. To simplify and generalize, this view, which has been extensively developed not only in cognitive psychology but also in Anglo-American philosophy, is interested in the ways emotions get their “content” from the ideas, beliefs, thoughts, expectations, or other “cognitive” aspects of consciousness that modify corporeal affects. Part of the motivation behind this argument appears to be a desire to defend emotions as rational, not simply “dumb” or undifferentiated physiological phenomena. Tomkins, although he was no less insistent (than defenders of a cognitive theory of emotion) on the internal complexity of affect, always maintained that the affects had their own specificity. Thus, he was an early and energetic critic of the cognitive position, writing that “surely no one who has experienced joy at one time and rage at another time would suppose that radically different feelings were the same except for different ‘interpretations’ placed on similar ‘arousals.’” Affects, in Tomkins’s view, are not productively examined in terms of a body-mind dichotomy; they occur neither in mind nor body but in an assemblage, network, or system that is not comprehensible in terms of its corporeal or cognitive component parts.

Recent research on the brain, as described by Joseph Le Doux and Antonio Damasio, supports Tomkins’s case for the specificity of affect from another angle. Le Doux, for example, argues for “emotion and cognition . . . as separate but interacting mental functions mediated by separate but interacting brain systems.” That affect systems can operate independently from at least some elements of cognition such as object perception and recognition and reasoning is evinced by examinations of a range of brain-damaged patients who lose capacity in an area of the brain that limits their capacity for emotional processing without any effect on their cognitive faculties. Their research also suggests that many affective responses take place automatically, before reasoning, deliberation, or other cognitive functions can begin.

Some recent research also seems to confirm Tomkins’s view that there are basic, more or less universal affects that are linked to corresponding facial expressions and other autonomic bodily responses. The case for innate emotions had been made earlier by Darwin, and has been bolstered more recently by the crosscultural research on facial recognition
by Paul Ekman and Carrol Izard. Although Ekman set out to prove that affects were in fact culturally constructed, he found that basic facial expressions, and understandings of the situations likely to produce such expressions, were surprisingly consistent across cultural contexts. What was variable, he found, were “display rules”: the norms and habits through which people manage their emotional expressions. In other words, while everyone may know what a smile is, or recognize the look of disgust, people can still learn to suppress or modify these facial responses.

Even more culturally variable than display rules are the ways affects combine with their objects. If certain affects are basic, what are not at all basic are the ways our affects are educated as to which objects are right for which affects in which situations (i.e., one should be ashamed of this, but angry about that, disgusted by this other thing, but only if other people are present, and so on). Thus, to claim that there are some basic affects does not mean that people’s experience of these affects is not variable, just that there are elements of invariable, autonomic affective response that we all share. Consequently, an insistence on the irreducibility or universality of certain affects does not necessarily contradict an anthropological or sociological emphasis on the constructedness and diversity of emotions and emotional expression.

In arguing that affects operate according to their own specific logic Tomkins borrowed from cybernetics and systems theory. Put simply, systems theory replaces the model of a whole made out of parts with a model in which systems interact with environments. The basic principle of the system is the distinction between an inside (the system) and an outside (the environment) and the establishment of a “feedback mechanism” or “feedback loop” that takes in (input) the results of an act (output) in order to modify the initial act. The thermostat, for example, is the mechanism by which a heating/cooling system regulates itself, by testing the results of its acts (the turning on or off of the furnace) and takes it back in as information to determine what to do next (the turning on or off of the furnace). The thermostat, like any feedback mechanism, is monologic; it does its work by seeing everything else—the “environment”—only on the terms relevant to the system; nothing about the world matters to the thermostat except the temperature.

Thus, like all systems, affects reduce “infinite to finite information loads” through a kind of functional simplification. As many theorists of affect have noted, affects serve the valuable function of focusing our attention on something very specific—such as a danger, a loss, or the
presence or absence of a smile on the face of an interlocutor. Each affect is a very particular filter: some stuff gets in and gets tested by a feedback mechanism, and other stuff is irrelevant. In a real sense, when one is experiencing shame, a different world is being perceived than when one is joyful or fearful.

Because the reason for the system’s coming into being is precisely to cope with an environment, all systems are always interacting with other ones. By definition, although the system is totalizing and monologic in its own space, it is never singular. Deleuze and Guattari, using the rhetoric of the machine to explain this systemic logic, write that “one machine is always coupled with another . . . a connection with another machine is always established, along a transverse path.” Affects are always amplifying, dampening, or otherwise modifying some other affect, or drive, or perception, or thought process, or act or behavior, resulting in a well-nigh infinite number of combinations between different affective microsystems and their feedback mechanisms in interaction with their environments.

In contrast to affects, then, we might distinguish emotions as the result of the inevitable interaction of affects with thoughts, ideas, beliefs, habits, instincts, and other affects. If affects are not reducible, emotions are, and it is emotions that vary from context to context, person to person. Thus, for example, if we posited joy and interest as basic affects, we might say then that love is an emotion, inasmuch as it includes joy and interest, along with certain ideas about what love is, what a love relationship should look like over a period of time, whom one should or should not feel love toward, expectations or hopes of reciprocity, and so forth. Likewise, shame would be an affect and guilt an emotion, inasmuch as guilt implies the acceptance of or belief in some kind of moral code that has been broken, whereas shame is the momentary reaction to the interruption of an emotional relation. That is, I am not claiming that the attitudes we have about our affects do not affect our experience of that affect, only that the affect itself has an irreducible systematicity that must be taken into account in any analysis of it.

Strictly speaking, affects (unlike moods, for example) are always experienced in relation to an object or objects. Indeed, affects need objects to come into being. They are in this sense intentional. However, the ob-
jects that affects can take are limitless, including other affects, ideas, and imaginary or implicit objects. There is no kind of object that has not at one time or another been linked to one or another of the affects, and thought, of course, greatly expands this range of objects: “Although affects which are activated by drives and by special releasers have a limited range of objects, the linkage of affects to objects through thinking enormously extends the range of the objects of positive and negative feeling” (SIS, 54).

Part of what is interesting about the intentional aspect of affects is that they produce a kind of subject-object confusion. Between an affect and its object there is what Tomkins calls a “somewhat fluid relationship.” That is, it is often difficult to tell whether the affect originates in the object or the affect produces the object. Am I interested in this because it is interesting or because I have interest that needs to go somewhere? Here, as I will discuss shortly, mood is an important concept as well, as a kind of state of readiness for some affects and not others (i.e., in an irritable mood some things are annoying that otherwise may not be).

This “somewhat fluid relationship” can make it difficult to tell where in fact the affect happens, or whether the subject-object distinction holds up at the moment of being-affected. This was one of the reasons Walter Benjamin was interested in affectively charged, emotionally rich experience (one of the significant aspects for him of experience in the Erfahrung as opposed to Erlebnis sense). In this passage from “One Way Street,” Benjamin speculates that love does not exist in one’s head (or one’s heart, for that matter) but in the specific materiality of the object of love.

He who loves is attached not only to the “faults” of the beloved, not only to the whims and weaknesses of a woman. Wrinkles in the face, moles, shabby clothes, and a lopsided walk bind him more lastingly and relentlessly than any beauty. This has long been known. And why? If the theory is correct that feeling is not located in the head, that we sentiently experience a window, a cloud, a tree, not in our brains but rather in the place where we see it, then we are, in looking at our beloved, too, outside ourselves. But in a torment of tension and ravishment. Our feeling, dazzled, flutters like a flock of birds in the woman’s radiance. And as birds seek refuge in the leafy recesses of a tree, feelings escape into the shaded wrinkles, the awkward movements and inconspicuous blemishes of the body we love, where they can lie low in safety. And no passer by would guess that it is just here, in what is defective and censurable, that the fleeting darts of adoration nestle.
If sensory feeling (*Empfindung*), Benjamin hypothesizes, is not experienced in the brain, but in the materiality of the place, then affect travels along the material paths of sensation to find a dwelling place. And here, it is as if beauty is too abstract and generalized; because it produces an overall effect that “dazzles” one, it cannot provide a nestling place for the “fleeting darts of adoration.” Thus, Benjamin’s feelings locate themselves in the more material and particular wrinkles and lopsided walks. For Benjamin, experiences of affective attachment are interesting because they put us—precisely at those moments when we care most, when we feel the value of something—“outside of ourselves.” In a similar way, Proust found that crucial experiences from his childhood were locked in tea-soaked madeleine, because in a sense the experience is located in that madeleine. Powerful emotional experiences—quite different from more cognitively mediated ones—connect us with, even transport us into the materiality of the world around us. In fact, Benjamin contended that because affects come into being through attachment, and because they actually occur in the materiality of the world, affective experience can provide us with a link—unmediated by concepts—to that material world. This has far-reaching implications not only for Benjamin’s analysis of aesthetic experience but also for his historical practice, and the hopes he placed in the possibility of political transformation, as I will discuss.

By way of contrast, we might briefly examine the theory of the emotions offered in Sartre’s book *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory*. There, Sartre holds that emotions are a form of consciousness that arises in relation to thwarted will. We have an emotion, he writes, when “the paths traced out become too difficult, or when we see no path, we can no longer live in so urgent and difficult a world. All the ways are barred. However, we must act. So we try to change the world, that is, to live as if the connection between things and their potentials were not ruled by deterministic processes, but by magic.” Emotion is a magical transformation of the world whereby we trick ourselves into thinking that the world is other than it is, rather than accept that our will is thwarted. It is a sour grapes theory of emotion—we want some grapes, we can’t reach them, so instead we become disgusted by their sourness. And in a sense, a real transformation does take place—except it is our own body that is transformed rather than the world: our body actually experiences that disgust. Because emotions thereby act not on the world but on the body, they represent (in a prefiguring of bad faith) an escapist, ineffective, corrupted form of consciousness.
Clearly Benjamin is quite far from Sartre. Where Benjamin sees emotion as the chief characteristic of experience in its “strict sense” (i.e., Erfahrung), for Sartre emotion is a kind of false, ineffective experience. And whereas emotion for Benjamin is a mechanism of attachment to the material world, for Sartre it is precisely the entry into a completely imaginary world. Nothing, as it were, could be less political for Sartre, since emotions are the barrier to effective action in the world.

In sum, I take as axiomatic, then, the following: affects are irreducible, in the sense that they operate according to their own systemic logic; they involve a transformation of one’s way of being in the world, in a way that determines what matters to one; affects require objects, and, in the moment of attaching to an object or happening in the object, also take one’s being outside of one’s subjectivity.

Mood (Stimmung)

This book argues that there is a set of aesthetic practices concerned with the transformation of one mood, or Stimmung (e.g., depression), into another (a mode of vital connection with the world). Following Heidegger, I take “mood” to refer to a kind of affective atmosphere, as I remarked earlier, in which intentions are formed, projects pursued, and particular affects can attach to particular objects. If I am anxious, for instance, things in the world are more likely to appear as fearful; only when I am curious can new objects present themselves to me as interesting. Whether I am enthusiastic, eager, confident, irritable, despairing, jubilant, indifferent, excited, or nervous—in any one of these moods different objects will come into my emotional view, different memories will come to mind, and some tasks will seem possible or attractive while others will not present themselves at all. In a real way, our mood creates the world in which we exist at any given moment. In this sense it is objectless: we don’t have a mood about any one thing in particular but, rather, about everything in general. Furthermore, even or especially when a mood seems to be isolating in effect (as in depression) it is always a plural phenomenon; we all only have access to the moods that we find around us, the moods into which we have been educated, and the moods that have been shaped or determined by the concrete historical context in which we coexist.

As a concept, mood provides a way to articulate the shaping and structuring effect of historical context on our affective attachments. In fact, extrapolating from Heidegger, we can say that it is on the level of
mood that historical forces most directly intervene in our affective lives and through mood that these forces may become apparent to us. Likewise, it is through the changing of mood that we are most able to exert agency on our own singular and collective affective lives; and it is by way of mood that we can find or create the opportunity for collective political projects.

Heidegger’s case for the foundational quality of Stimmung is directly related to his broader project. Part of Heidegger’s argument about human ‘being’ is that we always find ourselves somewhere, in a given ‘there’ (thus Dasein, being-there). That is, we find ourselves in a particular world or historical context that, as Charles Guignon puts it, “provides us with a determinate range of possible roles and self-determinations.” Thus, for example, in a society where the class divisions are feudal, the possibility of a proletarian consciousness does not present itself. We are all thrust not just into specific historical contexts but are placed in a given position therein. Du Bois finds himself in a white supremacist world in which he is “black,” Henry James in a world where the kind of writing he had been doing loses, with some suddenness, its public. In this sense we are “thrown” or “delivered over” into a world in which we must figure out somehow how to live. Of this, Heidegger writes, “This characteristic of Dasein’s Being—this ‘that it is’—is veiled in its ‘whence’ and ‘whither’, yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call this the ‘thrownness’ [Geworfenheit] of this entity into its ‘there’. . . . The expression ‘thrownness’ is meant to suggest the facticity of its being delivered over” (BT, 174). We do not know how we got to the “there” in which we find ourselves, nor where we are going; what we can apprehend is the “there-ness” of our “there,” the situation we find ourselves in, in its given-ness, and the unavoidability of always finding ourselves somewhere.

This thrownness is disclosed to us, Heidegger asserts, through our “sense of the situation,” “disposition,” or “situatedness” (all possible translations of Befindlichkeit, which everyone agrees is translated incorrectly as “state-of-mind” by Macquarrie and Robinson). The form that this “sense of the situation” takes is always a Stimmung: “what we indicate ontologically by the term ‘state of mind’ [Befindlichkeit] is ontically the most familiar and everyday sort of thing; our mood [die Stimmung], our Being-attuned [das Gestimmtsein]” (BT, 172).

Put more simply, we might say that “moods [Stimmungen] are the fundamental ways in which we find ourselves disposed in such and such a way. Moods are the how according to which one is in such and such
a way” (FCM, 67). On the level of Stimmung, as Michel Haar writes, “the world presents itself as what touches us, concerns us, affects us.” And only when we are touched, when we feel what matters to us, can we appreciate the extent to which we have been thrown into a world that is the way that it is and not some other way. This is because otherwise we could not care about the world and the possibilities that inhere there; it is only through mood that we engage purposively with the world.

For Heidegger, then, moods are not transitory or fleeting elements of everyday life, but are foundational and primordial. They have a power of disclosure “prior to cognition and volition.” Heidegger emphasizes that “moods are not side-effects, but are something which in advance determine our being with one another. It seems as though a mood is in each case already there, so to speak, like an atmosphere in which we first immerse ourselves in each case and which then attunes us through and through” (FCM, 67). (Here, it should be noted, we see especially the way the German Stimmung is closely related to “tune” and “attunement.”) To be in a mood is to “be attuned,” an attunement that is the foundation or starting place for everything else, the “presupposition” for our “thinking, doing, and acting,” (FCM, 67) the medium in which these things happen. One is never not-attuned; one is always in one mood or another. The world never presents itself to us as some kind of value-less set of facts or perceptions—things always appear to us as mattering or not mattering in some way.

It is by way of mood that we attribute value to something. And since value for Heidegger, as for Tomkins, is a question of affective attachment, this is another way of saying that it is only possible to be affected when things have been set in advance by a certain mode of attunement. In fact, “nothing like an affect would come about,” Heidegger insists, unless being-in-the world “had not already submitted itself to having entities within-the-world ‘matter’ to it in a way which its moods have outlined in advance” (BT, 177). For example, he continues, “only something which is in the state of mind of fearing (or fearlessness) can discover that what is environmentally ready-to-hand is threatening. Dasein’s openness to the world is constituted existentially by the attunement [Gestimmheit] of a state-of-mind” (BT, 176).

Even though it is only by way of moods that we know how we are in relation to the situation we are in, this, however, does not mean that we are necessarily aware of our moods. In fact, we are often ignorant of the determinative effect our moods have on the world we see and how we
relate to it. It is usually when moods are suddenly disrupted or when a mood is particularly dramatic or intense that we notice it as such. More often we make our judgments about the world as if they were rational, sensible, not determined by something as subjective as mood: some particular colleague offends one because he or she is insensitive or rude, not because one is anxious or irritable; one likes the film because it was a good film, not because one was in a good mood following an especially stimulating dinner with friends, and so forth. Indeed, acknowledging that our assessment of the world comes to us by way of our mood, within the context of a mood, would make it possible for others to easily dismiss our judgments, since moods are seen as merely personal, transitory, irrational—they interfere with impartial judgment. But it is just such a way of thinking that Heidegger argues against, noting that in fact it is “precisely those attunements [Stimmungen] to which we pay no heed at all, the attunements we least observe, those attunements which attune us in such a way that we feel as though there is no attunement there at all, as though we were not attuned in any way at all—those attunements are the most powerful” (FCM, 68).

Inasmuch as moods are an atmosphere, a kind of weather, they are not “psychological,” located in some interior space we can reach by way of introspection or self-examination. Moods are not in us; we are in them; they go through us. (“It is not at all ‘inside’ in some interiority, only to appear in the flash of an eye; but for this reason, it is not at all outside either” [FCM, 66].) They “assail us.” And in this sense mood is also total, or totalizing. Moods do not shed light on some one thing in particular, but on a whole environment: “Stimmung imposes itself on everything” (66). Any orientation toward anything specific requires a presumed view of the total picture, a presumption that is usually invisible to us—that is just the way the world is. “The mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being in the world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself toward something” (BT, 176). Thus, for example, Baudelaire can write of l’Ennui “swallowing the earth in a yawn”; boredom transforms the entire world at a single stroke. This mood of boredom, Baudelaire knows, is not just his; it is shared by his audience, his “semblables.” And it is by way of this shared mood that Baudelaire seeks to reach his audience. Stimmung is a collective, public phenomenon, something inevitably shared. Moods constitute the “way in which we are together” (FCM, 66).

The knowledge we gain by way of Stimmung is authentic in the sense that it tells us what is collectively possible at that moment; it tells us
what our shared situation is and what may be done within this situation. That this is historical, specific or situated knowledge makes it no less useful in a practical sense. This is why Aristotle, Heidegger notes, devoted himself to understanding the logic of affectivity in *The Rhetoric*. Publics, audiences, collectivities have moods, and indeed can make moods for themselves, and it is these moods that orators and politicians must orient themselves toward. In this sense, Heidegger calls Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, which is concerned with affectivity precisely as a matter of public and political concern, “the first systematic hermeneutic of the everydayness of Being with one another” (BT, 178).

Thus, in general terms, as Baudelaire writes of the boredom enveloping his readers, we might speak of a particular *Stimmung* in Seattle at the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting that allowed the antiglobalization activists to join up with the labor unions, a mood that was shifted at a crucial moment by police violence and mass arrests. Or we might talk about the way an audience was attuned to a Detroit Tigers baseball game in 1967, the kinds of emotional energies that were collectively available because of the rebellion (or so-called riots) that had recently occurred in Detroit, or indeed of the *Stimmung* that allowed for the rebellion to get going in the first place, or the mood following the rebellion, in which workers who had been fired on and/or arrested organized the League of Black Revolutionary Workers. In each instance, certain objects in the world come into view in a particular way, certain persons (or social formations) appear as friends and others as enemies, and some kinds of actions present themselves that might otherwise not even come into view. But we may speak of and seek to analyze in each case the *Stimmung* that made some events possible and others not. Any kind of political project must have the “making and using” of mood as part and parcel of the project; for, no matter how clever or correct the critique or achievable the project, collective action is impossible if people are not, so to speak, *in the mood.*

Heidegger insists that we should not just give ourselves over to moods. On the contrary we must do our best to exert agency in relation to them, singularly and collectively. But since mood is prior to will and cognition, this has to be done tactically, in a mediated fashion. One cannot just decide to change one’s mood. “When we master a mood,” Heidegger writes, “we do so by way of a counter-mood; we are never free of moods” (BT, 136). One must come to know what kinds of practices, situations, or encounters (such as seeing friends, going to a concert, settling down to write, attending a political rally, making a trip) are ca-
pable of producing a counter-mood. Speaking collectively, the understanding necessary for the rousing and guiding of moods is always a specific historical one. Thus, for example, because what could affect mood among enslaved African Americans in the 1830s was not the same thing that could affect mood among middle-class African Americans in 1900, Frederick Douglass had an understanding of the affective value and force of the sorrow songs that was quite different from that of W. E. B. Du Bois.

Heidegger writes that Aristotle’s orator “must understand the possibilities of moods in order to rouse them and guide them aright” (BT, 178). Similarly, any aesthetic practice, if it is to reach an audience, must be able to attune itself with that audience’s mood. All three of the writers I address in this book are fundamentally concerned with this question of mood, not only in the sense that they seek to transform a depressing melancholia into a mood that promotes interest and attachment but also to the extent that this shift in mood can be accomplished only if a text already resonates with an audience’s Stimmung. In order to affect his “fastidious” readers, Henry James had to first catch them, which he does by creating an object of affective attachment within the story that is visible and attractive within his public’s mode of attunement. Only once caught does the audience find itself in another world, that of the novel—which turns out to be another there. The disjuncture between one there and another allows James (and Du Bois and Platonov) to show one, as reader, one’s own mood, estranging one from oneself and one’s mood, so the mood—and what it makes possible, what it precludes, and by what historical forces is it kept tuned—as such can become apparent. And this catching sight of ourselves in the Stimmung we are in is, in itself, the evocation of another Stimmung, one in which Stimmung and those with whom we share it have become themselves objects of interest and attachment.

Structure of Feeling

Insofar as the term “structure of feeling” describes the ways social forces shape or structure our affective lives, it is in some ways similar to Stimmung. Its emphases, however, are different, and thus, so are its uses. The term was coined, as is well known, by Raymond Williams, and is now sometimes used in senses broader than those he described in his relatively brief treatment of the term.40
Williams conceived of the term, however, in a very specific sense. He initially describes the term as useful not only because it enables us to talk about the sociality of affect, but because it enables us to describe those structures that mediate between the social and the personal that are more ephemeral and transitory than set ideologies or institutions. The problem with most forms of social analysis, Williams notes, is that the “habitual past tense” that such analysis falls into creates a set of “finished products”; it fixes the social forms in which we participate. What this inevitably misses is the lived, affective and very unfixed, half-articulated way that most of us experience our lives most of the time. For this more ephemeral, nascent thing—specific qualitative changes in the ways people experience their lives, the ways they think and feel about the world, that have not yet hardened into ideologies—Williams proposes the term “structure of feeling.” The task, Williams writes, is to think in a manner whereby

specific qualitative changes are not assumed to be epiphenomena of changed institutions, formations and beliefs, or merely secondary evidence of changed social and economic relations between and within classes. At the same time they are from the beginning taken as social experience, rather than as personal experience or as the merely superficial or incidental small change of society... they are social in the sense that... although they are emergent or pre-emergent, they do not have to await definition, classification or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action.

Here, Williams is defending the social significance of small, local moments of “practical consciousness.” He emphasizes how important and yet how difficult it is to appreciate the pressures exerted by forces that feel and seem quite personal but that we know are social, but social in a way that is not reducible to a fixed institution or discourse. While Williams’s use of the term “structure of feeling” was intended to describe the nascent or ephemeral, the phrase has lost something of this meaning as it has traveled into more everyday intellectual speech. My sense is that it is this next part of the definition that has really stuck. On the choice of the term “structures of feeling” to describe this moment, Williams explains:

The term is difficult, but ‘feeling’ is chosen to emphasize a distinction from more formal concepts of ‘world-view’ or ‘ideology.’... [W]e are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice
variable (including historically variable). . . . We are talking about characteristic elements of impulses or 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. 41

Williams wants to find a way to speak about how “meanings and values are actually lived and felt.” And they are lived and felt in ways that are variable over time. But, even if they are involved in the flow of time and if they are local and difficult to articulate in set terms, they nonetheless have “specific internal relations.” When certain objects produce a certain set of affects in certain contexts for certain groups of people—that is a structure of feeling. And sometimes structures of feeling are personal and idiosyncratic, but more often they are not: a social group of which the subject is a member shares them. Thus we can talk about particular working-class structures of feeling, or masculine ones, or Russian ones. Generational style, class tastes, shifts in linguistic usage—these are the elements of “practical consciousness” that Williams wants to be able to describe.

When I use the phrase “structure of feeling” I mean it in this more widely applicable sense: “specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships,” elements that function “as a set, with specific internal relations.” For Williams, “structure of feeling” was still a supplementary term that emphasized the fleeting and nascent quality of structures of feeling that could or might later harden into ideologies. I do not think it should be a supplementary term, and I will argue that structures of feeling can be ephemeral but also just as durable and forceful as ideologies, perhaps even more so. I think that structure of feeling should emerge, as it has begun to, as a full-fledged parallel to ideology. If the function of an ideology is to narrate our relation to a social order so as to make our daily experience of that order meaningful and manageable, then structure of feeling would be the term to describe the mediating structure—one just as socially produced as ideology—that facilitates and shapes our affective attachment to different objects in the social order.

Although Williams and Heidegger are coming from different theoretical traditions, I do not think that Stimmung and structure of feeling are incompatible concepts; their points of emphasis are just different. Where Stimmung as a concept focuses attention on what kinds of af-
ffects and actions are possible within an overall environment, structures of feeling are more discrete, less total, and they orient one toward a specific social class or context. For example, depression is a mood, not a structure of feeling; however, we might describe the particular depression of the Russian peasant in the steppe in the 1920s as a structure of feeling, or the depression of the residents of a decimated New Orleans after Katrina as a structure of feeling. Or, to return to an earlier example, we might talk about the structures of feeling created by the civil rights movement and the Black Panthers, structures of feeling that were mobilized within the Stimmung that allowed the 1967 rebellion against the police in Detroit to happen. And although mood will be the more useful concept for me in this book, it is the Marxist tradition in which Williams participated to which I bring my interest in attunement and affectivity. That is, this book is less concerned with being-in-the-world or a reassessment of our understanding of Being than with the way aesthetic practices respond to and represent concrete historical situations, and I hope to suggest the suitability of Heidegger’s concept of Stimmung for this project. My aim, besides my desire to argue for the importance of an antidepressive, political, and politicizing melancholia, and the local arguments the book pursues about the particular practices I am concerned with, is to make a case for the importance of mood and affect to a Marxist concern with the representability of history—“what hurts,” in Jameson’s memorable phrase—and the possibility for our collective participation in and transformation of our own history as it unfolds.42