Warning Concerning Copyright Restrictions

The Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If electronic transmission of reserve material is used for purposes in excess of what constitutes "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.
This book presents a series of studies in the aesthetics of negative emotions, examining their politically ambiguous work in a range of cultural artifacts produced in what T. W. Adorno calls the fully "administered world" of late modernity. This is the world already depicted by Herman Melville with startling clarity in "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" (1853)—a fiction in which the interpretive problems posed by an American office worker's affective equivocality seem pointedly directed at the political equivocality of his unnervingly passive form of dissent. What, if anything, is this inexpressive character feeling? Is Bartleby's unyielding passivity, even in the polemical act of withholding his labor ("I prefer not to"), radical or reactionary? Should we read his inertness as part of a volitional strategy that anticipates styles of nonviolent political activism to come, or merely as a sign of what we now call depression? In Melvillean fashion, the following chapters dwell on affective gaps and illegibilities, dysphoric feelings, and other sites of emotional negativity in literature, film, and theoretical writing, to explore similarly ambivalent situations of suspended agency. They
thus draw together two seemingly disparate philosophical definitions—Hannah Arendt’s claim that “what makes man a political being is his faculty of action” and Baruch Spinoza’s description of emotions as “wavering of the mind” that can either increase or diminish one’s power to act—and attend to the aesthetics of the ugly feelings that index these suspensions.

Recalling the corner of the office in which Melville’s scrivener is wedged and cordoned off by a screen, we might think of this book’s project as Bartlebian in a more reflexive sense, in that it privileges the circumscribed standpoint of the literary to examine problems whose greatest import arguably lies beyond the sphere of the aesthetic per se. For Bartleby’s powerful powerlessness can also be thought of as exemplified by literature or art itself, as a relatively autonomous, more or less cordoned-off domain in an increasingly specialized and differentiated society. As Adorno’s analysis of the historical origins of this aesthetic autonomy suggests, the separateness from “empirical society” which art gains as a consequence of the bourgeois revolution ironically coincides with its growing awareness of its inability to significantly change that society—a powerlessness that then becomes the privileged object of the newly autonomous art’s “guilty” self-reflection (AT, 225). Yet one could argue that bourgeois art’s reflexive preoccupation with its own “powerlessness and superfluity in the empirical world” is precisely what makes it capable of theorizing social powerlessness in a manner unrivaled by other forms of cultural praxis (104). In this manner, the discussion of aesthetic autonomy in Aesthetic Theory suggests that literature may in fact be the ideal space to investigate ugly feelings that obviously ramify beyond the domain of the aesthetic proper, since the situation of restricted agency from which all of them ensue is one that describes art’s own position in a highly differentiated and totally commodified society.

Each of the feelings explored in the following chapters—envy, anxiety, paranoia, irritation, a racialized affect I call “animatedness,” and a strange amalgamation of shock and boredom I call “stuplimity”—can thus be thought aesthetic and the political in a nontraditional approaches emotions as unusually important indications of predicaments—that is, in different registers of problem (form but conjoin these problems in a disjunctive focus, however, is on the negative predicaments posed by a general state of other human actors or to the social charged with political meaning regulation is actual or fantasized, or whether individual or collective. These situations disclosed and interpreted by ignoble empowered for the powerful) or privileged status as a small subject in a “total society as allegories for an autonomous or asigned and pessimistic understanding political action. At the core of Ugly predicament—the question of relev the discipline of literary and culture would suggest that the very effort of political together—a task whose urgency to its difficulty in a increasingly differentiated society—is a prime one.

Yet I want immediately to emphasize that affects often seem to be the psychic, envy, paranoia, and all the emotions marked by an ambivalence that on the one hand, their reduction to mere great and on the other, their counter-values” to the problems they highlight is part of this book’s agenda to reative affects for their critical product.
mingly disparate philosophical definitions that “what makes man a political animal” and Baruch Spinoza’s description of the mind” that can either increase or diminish and attend to the aesthetics of the ugly sensations.2

The office in which Melville’s scrivener is by a screen, we might think of this in a more reflexive sense, in that it standpoint of the literary to examine port arguably lies beyond the sphere of deBlay’s powerful powerlessness can also by literature or art itself, as a relatively ordered-off domain in an increasingly divided society. As Adorno’s analysis of the aesthetic autonomy suggests, the separate-ironically coincides with its growing to significantly change that society—a names the privileged object of the newly self-reflection (AT, 225). Yet one could acquire preoccupation with its own “powe-the empirical world” is precisely what social powerlessness in a manner un-cultural praxis (104). In this manner, the nomy in Aesthetic Theory suggests that ideal space to investigate ugly feelings and the domain of the aesthetic proper, red agency from which all of them en-own position in a highly differentiated society.

ored in the following chapters—envy, a racialized affect I call “animated-ation of shock and boredom I call “stuplimity”—can thus be thought of as a mediation between the aesthetic and the political in a nontrivial way. As a whole, the book approaches emotions as unusually knotted or condensed “interpretations of predicaments”—that is, signs that not only render visible different registers of problem (formal, ideological, sociohistorical) but conjoin these problems in a distinctive manner. My exclusive focus, however, is on the negative affects that read the predicaments posed by a general state of obstructed agency with respect to other human actors or to the social as such—a dilemma I take as charged with political meaning regardless of whether the obstruction is actual or fantasized, or whether the agency obstructed is individual or collective. These situations of passivity, as uniquely disclosed and interpreted by ignoble feelings like envy (of the disempowered for the powerful) or paranoia (about one’s perceived status as a small subject in a “total system”), can also be thought of as allegories for an autonomous or bourgeois art’s increasingly resigned and pessimistic understanding of its own relationship to political action. At the core of Ugly Feelings, then, is a very old predicament—the question of relevance—that has often haunted the discipline of literary and cultural criticism. The evidence here would suggest that the very effort of thinking the aesthetic and political together—a task whose urgency seems to increase in proportion to its difficulty in a increasingly anti-utopian and functionally differentiated society—is a prime occasion for ugly feelings.

Yet I want immediately to emphasize the deeply equivocal status of the ugly feelings featured in this study. For although dysphoric affects often seem to be the psychic fuel on which capitalist society runs, envy, paranoia, and all the emotional idioms I examine are marked by an ambivalence that will enable them to resist, on the one hand, their reduction to mere expressions of class resentment, and on the other, their counter-valorization as therapeutic “solutions” to the problems they highlight and condense. Admittedly it is part of this book’s agenda to recuperate several of these negative affects for their critical productivity, but no one warns us bet-
ter about the danger of romanticizing them than Paolo Virno, for whom the classic "sentiments of disenchantment" that once marked positions of radical alienation from the system of wage labor—anxiety, distraction, and cynicism—are now perversely integrated, from the factory to the office, into contemporary capitalist production itself: "Fears of particular dangers, if only virtual ones, haunt the workday like a mood that cannot be escaped. This fear, however, is transformed into an operational requirement, a special tool of the trade. Insecurity about one's place during periodic innovation, fear of losing recently gained privileges, and anxiety over being 'left behind' translate into flexibility, adaptability, and a readiness to reconfigure oneself." Here we see how capitalism's classic affects of disaffection (and thus of potential social conflict and political antagonism) are neatly reabsorbed by the wage system and reconfigured into professional ideals. Nothing could be further from Fredric Jameson's more widely known thesis about the "waning of negative affect in our contemporary moment." Instead, Virno shows how central and perversely functional such affective attitudes and dispositions have become, as the very lubricants of the economic system which they originally came into being to oppose. Yet while irreversibly integrated into the contemporary, post-Fordist organization of labor, these ugly feelings remain, for Virno, "open to radically conflicting developments" ("AD," 26). For example, while there is nothing redeeming about the "eager" disposition of opportunism, its "truth"... what might be called its neutral kernel, resides in the fact that our relation with the world tends to articulate itself primarily through possibilities, opportunities, and chances, instead of according to linear and univocal directions." As Virno points out, "This modality of experience, even if it nourishes opportunism, does not necessarily result in it" (25). For other kinds of behavior, and even kinds diametrically opposed to opportunism, "might also be inscribed within an experience fundamentally structured by these same possibilities and fleeting opportunities. We can discern such radical and transformative behavior, however, only by tracing in the opportunism so widespread of experience to which this behavior even if in a completely different way..." extrapolate from Virno's claims to a stage of capitalism that defines our emotions no longer link up as such models of social action and transform Thomas Hobbes, and others under whose emotions like anger or fear. In sociopolitical itself has changed in classical political passions, though ambient, Bartlebyan, but still diag...jectivity, collectivity, and agency norrists of the commonwealth. This is... e tractive feeling like opportunism, which to shape "transformative behavior... feeling calls attention to a real social... of historical truth.

While this book makes a similar rial significance of its own fundament of disenchantment" (an ambivalence... all are mobilized as easily by the po...histories of disgust and paranoia ill...call that with notable exceptions like...in the state, it is the discourse of...than that of political philosophy... have traditionally played the most... Immanuel Kant on the sublime (pe...itly nonbeautiful feeling appearing...ment), to the twentieth-century mu...my chapter on stuplimity. Or, to tr...the seventeenth-century "Affect T...atize the correlation of musical for
omanticizing them than Paolo Virno, alienation from the system of wage labor—cynicism—are now perversely internalized. The office, into contemporary capitalist particular dangers, if only virtual ones, are my, and these cannot be escaped. This fear, an operational requirement, a special about one's place during periodic gaining of privileges, and anxiety over the into flexibility, adaptability, and a oneself. Here we see how capitalism's in and thus of potential social conflict the neatly reabsorbed by the wage system. Nothing could be further a widely known thesis about the wanton contemporary moment. Instead, and perversely functional such affective have become, as the very lubricants of they originally came into being to operate integrated into the contemporary, posterior, these ugly feelings remain, for Virno, developments" ("AD," 26). For examplistic about the "eager" disposition what might be called its neutral kernel our relation with the world tends to thorough possibilities, opportunities, and illing to linear and univocal directions. As duality of experience, even if it nourishes largely result in it" (25). For other kinds diametrically opposed to opportunism, thin an experience fundamentally struc
ties and fleeting opportunities. We can transformative behavior, however, only by tracing in the opportunism so widespread today the specific modality of experience to which this behavior might indeed be correlated, even if in a completely different way" (25). Indeed, one could extrapolate from Virno's claims to argue that in the transnational stage of capitalism that defines our contemporary moment, our emotions no longer link up as securely as they once did with the models of social action and transformation theorized by Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, and others under the signs of relatively unambiguous emotions like anger or fear. In other words, the nature of the sociopolitical itself has changed in a manner that both calls forth and calls upon a new set of feelings—ones less powerful than the classical political passions, though perhaps more suited, in their ambient, Bartlebian, but still diagnostic nature, for models of subjectivity, collectivity, and agency not entirely foreseen by past theorists of the commonwealth. This is why, for Virno, even an unattractive feeling like opportunism can provide the "kernel" from which to shape "transformative behavior." For all its pettiness, the feeling calls attention to a real social experience and a certain kind of historical truth.

While this book makes a similar if more modest claim for the social significance of its own fundamentally ambivalent "sentiments of disenchantment" (an ambivalence demonstrated by the fact that all are mobilized as easily by the political right as by the left, as the histories of disgust and paranoia illustrate so well), it is useful to recall that with notable exceptions like Hobbes or Niccolò Machiavelli, who made fear central to their theories of modern sovereignty and the state, it is the discourse of philosophical aesthetics, rather than that of political philosophy or economy, in which emotions have traditionally played the most pivotal role—from Longinus to Immanuel Kant on the sublime (perhaps the first "ugly" or explicitly nonbeautiful feeling appearing in theories of aesthetic judgment), to the twentieth-century mutation of this affect I describe in my chapter on stuplumity. Or, to trace another exemplary arc, from the seventeenth-century "Affect Theorists" who tried to systematize the correlation of musical forms and genres to specific emo-
tions, to Susanne Langer's analysis of music as a "tonal analogue of emotive life" in *Philosophy in a New Key*, to my own attempt to reanimate the concept of literary "tone" by means of the atonal but no less musical concept of noise. The investigation of how new theories of affect might expand the discourse of aesthetics thus continues a long-standing intellectual project, even as it sets this book apart from cultural histories of specific emotions (as, for instance, *American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History*, by Tom Lutz; *Anatomy of Disgust*, by William Ian Miller; and *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion*, by Julie Ellison), as well as from new philosophies of emotion that inquire into what feeling is (*Parables for the Virtual*, by Brian Massumi; *Feeling in Theory*, by Rei Terada; and *The Vehement Passions*, by Philip Fisher). In a sense, the book's turn to ugly feelings to reanimate aesthetics is simply the flip side of its privileging of the aesthetic domain as the ideal site to examine the politically ambiguous work of negative emotions.

More specifically, this book turns to ugly feelings to expand and transform the category of "aesthetic emotions," or feelings unique to our encounters with artworks—a concept whose oldest and best-known example is Aristotle's discussion of catharsis in *Poetics*. Yet this particular aesthetic emotion, the arousal and eventual purgation of pity and fear made possible by the genre of tragic drama, actually serves as a useful foil for the studies that follow. For in keeping with the spirit of a book in which minor and generally unprestigious feelings are deliberately favored over grander passions like anger and fear (cornerstones of the philosophical discourse of emotions, from Aristotle to the present), as well as over potentially ennobling or morally beatific states like sympathy, melancholia, and shame (the emotions given the most attention in literary criticism's recent turn to ethics), the feelings I examine here are explicitly amoral and noncathartic, offering no satisfactions of virtue, however oblique, nor any therapeutic or purifying release. In fact, most of these feelings tend to interfere with the outpouring of other emotions. Moods like irritability are defined by a flatness or ongoing "suddenness" on which Aristotle's system, unlike rage, which cannot be sustained, feelings like envy and paranoia have a rationale. If *Ugly Feelings* is a bestiary one filled with rats and possums rather than, say, feeling generally being, well, weak.

This weakness and nastiness not only affects in this study have much to offer feelings once widely in currency feelings of "neurasthenia" acquiring a colloquial status that broadened the dilemmas they can be used to in culture, thus be examined in a cultural context in which the antagonistic as feeling of "envy" becomes especially charged or at stake, ranging from over the perceived problem of aggression text in which the antagonistic as, for example, the feeling of "envy" becomes especially charged and expressive subjects I call "animatedness" became and animatedness could thus be defined in the sense of being "historically complex[es] which can project [the system]," but also, more simply, as and stake of various kinds of **sym**...
analysis of music as a "tonal analogue of a New Key, to my own attempt to re-
try "tone" by means of the atonal but
rise. The investigation of how new the-
discourse of aesthetics thus contin-
tual project, even as it sets this book
of specific emotions (as, for instance,
An Anecdotal History, by Tom Lutz;
ian Miller; and Cato's Tears and the
Emotion, by Julie Ellison), as well as
notion that inquire into what feeling is
Brian Massumi, Feeling in Theory, by
ment Passions, by Philip Fisher). In a
feelings to reanimate aesthetics is sim-
leging of the aesthetic domain as the
lically ambiguous work of negative

turns to ugly feelings to expand and
esthetic emotions," or feelings unique
orks—a concept whose oldest and bes-
s discussion of catharsis in Poetics. Yet
otion, the arousal and eventual purga-
possible by the genre of tragic drama,
oil for the studies that follow. For in
book in which minor and generally elab-
nercornerstones of the philosophical dis-
ristotle to the present), as well as over-
ally beatific states like sympathy, mel-
ons given the most attention in liter-
iques), the feelings I examine here are
aric, offering no satisfactions of vir-
ny therapeutic or purifying release. In
end to interfere with the outpouring
of other emotions. Moods like irritation and anxiety, for instance,
are defined by a flatness or ongoingness entirely opposed to the
"suddenness" on which Aristotle’s aesthetics of fear depends. And
unlike rage, which cannot be sustained indefinitely, less dramatic
feelings like envy and paranoia have a remarkable capacity for du-
ration. If Ugly Feelings is a bestiary of affects, in other words, it is
one filled with rats and possums rather than lions, its categories of
feeling generally being, well, weaker and nastier.

This weakness and nastiness notwithstanding, most of the nega-
tive affects in this study have managed to endure in a way that
other feelings once widely in circulation (like the nineteenth-cen-
tury feelings of "neurasthenia" and "amativeness") have not, ac-
quiring a colloquial status that broadens the range of sociohistorical
dilemmas they can be used to interpret. Each ugly feeling will
thus be examined in a cultural context where it seems particularly
charged or at stake, ranging from contemporary feminist debates
over the perceived problem of aggression between feminists (a con-
text in which the agonistic as well as pejoratively feminized
feeling of "envy" becomes especially problematic) to an American
cultural discourse that from the antebellum period forward has
found it compelling to imagine the racialized subject as an exces-
sively emotional and expressive subject (a situation in which the af-
fect I call "animatedness" becomes especially problematic). Envy
and animatedness could thus be described as affective ideologemes,
in the sense of being "historically determinate conceptual or semic
plex(es) which can project [themselves] in the form of a 'value
system,'" but also, more simply, as concepts that become the site
and stake of various kinds of symbolic struggle. While this book
pays close attention to the conditions under which these struggles
unfold, and singles out specific contexts in which they become par-
ticularly intense, it is not a history of feelings. Its overarching proj-
ject is rather a theoretical one, calling for a more fluid reading
across forms, genres, and periods than is the prevailing norm in ac-
ademic criticism today. Hence, texts are frequently read in what
may seem like jarring juxtapositions: Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* and Martin Heidegger’s analysis of anxiety in *Being and Time* read with Melville’s *Pierre*, for instance, in my analysis of anxiety’s curious elevation to a place of prominence in Western intellectual life. In the tradition of Barbara Johnson’s book *The Feminist Difference*, this method of disjunctive alignment is intended to allow the texts to become “readable in new ways” and thus generate fresh examinations of historically tenacious problems.9

In this manner, the strength of this book resides not in the historical detail it will supply, but in the theoretical groundwork it will construct. In fact, by not just analyzing but mobilizing affective concepts to investigate a wide range of dilemmas, the book makes arguments that provide motivation for further historical research by explaining why these feelings might be interesting enough to merit attention in the first place. It also demonstrates how feeling can be used to expand the project of criticism and theory. Just as one chapter mobilizes envy to disclose the unusual difficulty feminine aggression has posed for an otherwise versatile and capacious psychoanalytic theory on which feminist film criticism has strongly relied, another invokes the affect I call “stuplimity” to highlight certain limitations in classic theories of the sublime that prevent it from adequately accounting for the experience of boredom increasingly intertwined with contemporary experiences of aesthetic awe. Marshaling its minor affects to investigate impasses in contemporary theory and criticism that might otherwise remain unseen, the book attempts to demonstrate how emotion might be recuperated for critical praxis in general, shedding new light on the intimate relationship between negative affect and “negative thinking,” Herbert Marcuse’s shorthand for ideology critique in the dialectical tradition.10 In general, like a vaudeville show or revue film (where Max Horkheimer and Adorno find “the negative” to “glimmer for a few moments” in their otherwise unhesitating indictment of the culture industry), this book spotlights a large and transatlantic ensemble of texts by authors across genres and periods.11

Despite an array that may seem texts by these authors—Sigmund Tomkins, Harriet Beecher Stowe, John Yau, and Melanie Klein, among by the kinds of negative feeling I have I follow the lead of Hobbes. In this instance, of the role played by fear in which social order in the common the human fear of “invisible society, superseded our fear given rise to a specific form or genre as “a form of speech, added to a prayer, signifieth, that unless he performeth, signifieth, that unless he performeth his God.” “And this,” he adds, “might be the greater.”12 Specific kin to determine specific “literary literacy” one that will strategically intensify (Fisher, VP, 8). In a similar vein, the book could be said to give rise to a form of suspended “action”) and depoliticization of a Bartlebyan sort—rect activism supposedly incited, become American folklore, by Har court sympathy and the genre of sentiment as one can study fear through the rise, such as the oath, the alibi, or film, my book examines the synthesis “stuplimity” through a literature of mutations, paranoia through a transcontinental raises the question of whether or outside its author, and the rise through the screen genre of animation.

The equivocality of the Bartleby
positions: Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* of anxiety in *Being and Time* reads my analysis of anxiety's curi­ominence in Western intellectual life. Johnson's book *The Feminist Difference*, alignment is intended to allow the texts ways and thus generate fresh exami­nus problems.

Much of this book resides not in the his­but in the theoretical groundwork it just analyzing but mobilizing affects a wide range of dilemmas, the book ide motivation for further historical these feelings might be interesting in the first place. It also demonstrates pnd the project of criticism and the­лизies envy to disclose the unusual diff­as posed for an otherwise versatile and story on which feminist film criticism invokes the affect I call “stuplimity” to in classic theories of the sublime that accounting for the experience of bort­ed with contemporary experiences of minor affects to investigate im¬its criticism that might otherwise remain to demonstrate how emotion might be in general, shedding new light on the negative affect and “negative think­and for ideology critique in the dia­l, like a vaudeville show or revue film d Adorno find “the negative” to “glim­their otherwise unhesitating indictment book spotlights a large and transatlant­ors across genres and periods.

Despite an array that may seem idiosyncratic, the selection of texts by these authors—Sigmund Freud, Ralph Ellison, Silvan Tomkins, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Gertrude Stein, Nella Larsen, John Yau, and Melanie Klein, among others—has been determined by the kinds of negative feeling I have chosen to emphasize. In this I follow the lead of Hobbes. In his discussion in *Leviathan*, for instance, of the role played by fear in securing the covenants upon which social order in the commonwealth depends, Hobbes argues that the human fear of “invisible spirits” (which, prior to the time of civil society, superseded our fear of the power of other humans) gave rise to a specific form or genre: the oath. Hobbes defines this as “a form of speech, added to a promise, by which he that prom­iseth, signifieth, that unless he perform, he renounce the mercy of his God.” “And this,” he adds, “that the fear of breaking faith might be the greater.” Specific kinds of emotion thus could be said to determine specific “literary kinds”—and, in Hobbes’s example, one that will strategically intensify the very emotion at its origin (Fisher, *VP*, 8). In a similar vein, the noncathartic feelings in this book could be said to give rise to a noncathartic aesthetic: art that produces and foregrounds a failure of emotional release (another form of suspended “action”) and does so as a kind of politics. Such a politics is of a Bartlebyan sort—very different, say, from the di­rect activism supposedly incited, according to what has now become American folklore, by Harriet Beecher Stowe’s poetics of sympathy and the genre of sentimental literature as a whole. Just as one can study fear through the specific forms to which it gives rise, such as the oath, the alibi, or complex genres like the horror film, my book examines the synthesis of boredom and shock I call “stuplimity” through a literature of exhausting repetitions and per­mutations, paranoia through a transcription-based poetry that contin­ually raises the question of whether writing comes from inside or outside its author, and the racialized affect of animatedness through the screen genre of animated cartoons.

The equivocality of the Bartlebyan aesthetic suggests that there
is a special relationship between ugly feelings and irony, a rhetorical attitude with a decidedly affective dimension, if not a “feeling” per se. For the morally degraded and seemingly unjustifiable status of these feelings tends to produce an unpleasurable feeling about the feeling (a reflexive response taking the form of “I feel ashamed about feeling envious” or “I feel anxious about my enviousness”) that significantly parallels the doubleness on which irony, as an evaluative stance hinging on a relationship between the said and the unsaid, fundamentally depends. In their tendency to promote what Susan Feagin calls “meta-responses” (since it is hard to feel envy without feeling that one should not be feeling envy, reinforcing the negativity of the original emotion), there is a sense in which ugly feelings can be described as conducive to producing ironic distance in a way that the grander and more prestigious passions, or even the moral emotions associated with sentimental literature, do not. This is why the aesthetic examples in this book tend not to be drawn from the more recognizably “emotional” genres—such as melodrama, sentimental fiction, tales of supernatural horror, or lyric poetry—to which literary critics interested in such matters have traditionally turned. While the ironic as well as the non-cathartic aspect of ugly feelings drives this book’s preference for “constructivist” rather than “expressivist” forms as ideal sites for examining the social and symbolic productivity of emotion in general, it is another key aspect of these negative feelings—that of being noticeably weaker in intensity than what Philip Fisher calls the “vehement passions” underwriting canonically major forms and genres like Homeric epic and Shakespearean tragedy—which informs its preference for texts that even seem oddly impassive: texts that, like “Bartleby,” foreground the absence of a strong emotion where we are led to expect one, or turn entirely on the interpretive problems posed by an emotional illegibility. The fact that this book reads the tonally ambiguous Confidence-Man rather than the rage-driven epic Moby-Dick, Nella Larsen’s superficially “irritated” Quicksand but not the melodrama of jealousy that is Passing, and Beckett’s exhausting poetry of despair as opposed to the Romantic lyric, presage on the ignoble cousins of the philic strivings featured in Fisher’s study. With the administered world’s many tribulation for the minor employee, or “grub-worm,” who dutifully assem that open Moby-Dick rather than such as Ahab, Othello, or Lear, instead of anger, envy rather than jealousy to the transcendent feeling of the sphere that while the texts chosen for feelings are drawn from both socially and historically minor. Something about these prefer higher passions and emotions were not only incapable of producing disabled the works they do drive fiction.

Still, while partly a response to or of feeling with a more idiosyncratic trate on analyzing the features of the “negativity” of the feelings in that the classic emotions share. Like such as envy can be described as dyative, in the sense that they evoke particular, in the sense that they evoke particular, in the sense of repulsion rather than attraction from” rather than philic strivings “explicitly agonistic emotions, inform calls the global affect of “against,” rhythmic or operational, rather than
ugly feelings and irony, a rhetoric-affective dimension, if not a “feeling” led and seemingly unjustifiable status induce an unpleasurable feeling about taking the form of “I feel ashamed feel anxious about my enviousness”) doubleness on which irony, as an a relationship between the said and tends. In their tendency to promote meta-responses” (since it is hard to feel should not be feeling envy, reinforc- nal emotion), there is a sense in which as conducive to producing ironic dis- der and more prestigious passions, or ciated with sentimental literature, doc examples in this book tend not to be nizably “emotional” genres—such as ion, tales of supernatural horror, or ary critics interested in such matters. While the ironic as well as the non- ngs drives this book’s preference for ‘expressivist” forms as ideal sites for abolic productivity of emotion in gen- t of these negative feelings—that of intensity than what Philip Fisher calls underwriting canonically major forms c and Shakespearean tragedy—which texts that even seem oddly impassive: reground the absence of a strong emo- one, or turn entirely on the intern- on emotional illegibility. The fact that ambiguous Confidence-Man rather than sick, Nella Larsen’s superficially “irri- melodrama of jealousy that is Passing, and Beckett’s exhausting poetry of permutations and combinations as opposed to the Romantic lyric, proceeds directly from its emphasis on the ignoble cousins of the philosophically canonical emotions featured in Fisher’s study. With the turn to the ambiguous affects of the administered world’s many “Sub-Subs”—Melville’s appellation for the minor employee, or “mere painstaking burrower and grub-worm,” who dutifully assembles the cetological “Extracts” that open Moby-Dick—rather than those of more iconic figures such as Ahab, Othello, or Lear, my focus will be on irritation instead of anger, envy rather than jealousy, and “stuplimity” as opposed to the transcendent feeling of the sublime. It is interesting to note here that while the texts chosen for the way they highlight these feelings are drawn from both high and mass culture, all are canonically minor. Something about the cultural canon itself seems to prefer higher passions and emotions—as if minor or ugly feelings were not only incapable of producing “major” works, but somehow disabled the works they do drive from acquiring canonical distinction.

Still, while partly a response to one philosopher’s call for a study of feeling with a more idiosyncratic focus than those that “concentrate on analyzing the features of a handful of classic emotions,” the “negativity” of the feelings in this book obtains at several levels that the classic emotions share. Like rage and fear, ugly feelings such as envy can be described as dysphoric or experientially negative, in the sense that they evoke pain or displeasure. They can also be described as “semantically” negative, in the sense that they are saturated with socially stigmatizing meanings and values (such as the “pettiness” one traditionally associates with envy); and as “syntactically” negative, in the sense that they are organized by trajectories of repulsion rather than attraction, by phobic strivings “away from” rather than philic strivings “toward.” In the case of these explicitly agonistic emotions, informed by what one psychoanalyst calls the global affect of “against,” the negativity at stake is algorithmic or operational, rather than value- or meaning-based, in-
volving processes of aversion, exclusion, and of course negation. It is these multiple levels of negativity that make the ugly feelings in this study so useful for conjoining predicaments from multiple registers—showing how sociohistorical and ideological dilemmas, in particular, produce formal or representational ones. The affect I call animatedness, for instance, will allow us to take the disturbingly enduring representation of the African-American as at once an excessively “lively” subject and a pliant body unusually susceptible to external control and link this representation to the rhetorical figure of apostrophe (in which a speaker animates or “gives life” to nonhuman objects by addressing them as subjects capable of response), and, further, to connect these to a symptomatic controversy surrounding the televisual aesthetics of dimensional animation, a technique in which clay or foam puppets are similarly brought to “life” as racialized characters by being physically manipulated and ventriloquized.

In this manner, even as the exaggerated expressiveness and hyperactivity associated with animatedness marks an important exception to the Bartlebyan aesthetic fostered by the other feelings in this book, it similarly draws our attention to the politically charged predicament of suspended agency from which all of these ugly feelings ensue. As the translation, into affect, of a state of being “puppeteered” that points to a specific history of systemic political and economic disenfranchisement, racialized animatedness actually calls attention to this predicament in a particularly emphatic way. It is the situation of passivity itself, and the allegorical significance it transmits to the ugly feelings that both originate from and reflect back upon it, to which I now want to turn in closer detail, by examining several moments of narrative inaction from two other American stories of the corporate workplace: the crime melodrama Double Indemnity (Paramount, 1944; directed by Billy Wilder, based on the novel by James M. Cain) and the conspiracy film The Conversation (Paramount, 1974; directed by Francis Ford Coppola). Like Melville’s “Story of Wall Street,” both films depict a worker’s increasingly alienated relationship to him, as well as to the institutions of film noir, a postwar genre (at the point of cliché) as being aesthetic by an entire spectrum of dysphoria, greed, jealousy, and so forth.

The inertial moments from these films could not be more different from the ebullient moments of intense emotion, with significant actions propelling them. In the case of Double Indemnity, the kiss that helps his lover kill her husband is the “mere recital” of events, which in the spectacle for the maximization of narrative image needs that of their actual narration, in which the things take place, he who shall be filled with horror and pity. While it has been noted that the films that concern us involve a narrative stretch over which “discourse time” becomes “narrative time,” often resorting to sequences to “cruder solutions ... to take in the entire story almost said to reflect the difference between postwar film noir and the fear that feeling without a clearly defined aesthetic, very different from the “suddenemics of fear.” The anticathartic device any particular incident takes place which these uneventful moments.
of course negation. It describes the ugly feelings in social predicaments from multiple representational and ideological dilemmas, in historical and ideological contexts. The affect I will allow us to take the disturbance of the African-American as at once emotional and a pliant body unusually susceptible to this representation to the rhetorical effectiveness of dimensional animation, a process by which exaggerated expressiveness and hyperanimatedness marks an important aesthetic fostered by the other feelings in our attention to the politically charged specificity of systemic political and racialized relationships actually existing in a particularly emphatic way. It is, and the allegorical significances that both originate from and reflect and want to turn in closer detail, by examining two other American workplace: the crime melodrama Double Indemnity, directed by Billy Wilder, based on the conspiracy film The Conversation, directed by Francis Ford Coppola). Like street, both films depict a worker’s increasingly alienated relationship to the corporation that employs him, as well as to the institutions of the state. Both are also examples of film noir, a postwar genre commonly understood (even to the point of cliché) as being aesthetically and ideologically driven by an entire spectrum of dysphoric feelings: paranoia, alienation, greed, jealousy, and so forth.

The inertial moments from the two films I want to examine could not be more different from the films’ more highly memorable moments of intense emotion, which (unsurprisingly) correlate with significant actions propelling the plot forward: such as, in the case of Double Indemnity, the kiss that seals the protagonist’s decision to help his lover kill her husband, the murder itself, his final confrontation with the femme fatale, and so forth. In contrast to the “mere recital” of events, which Aristotle finds superior to visual spectacle for the maximization of catharsis (“mere recital” entailing a summary in which the duration of events narrated greatly exceeds that of their actual narration, such that “even without seeing the things take place, he who simply hears the account of them shall be filled with horror and pity”), the moments from the noir films that concern us involve a narrative expansion or stretch, in which “discourse time” becomes considerably longer than “story time.” While it has been noted that cinema in general “has trouble with summary,” often resorting to devices ranging from montage sequences to “cruder solutions . . . like peeling calendars,” the preference for the narrative stretch over a compression that “forces us to take in the entire story almost instantaneously” might also be said to reflect the difference between the paranoia that suffuses the postwar film noir and the fear that drives classical tragedy; as a feeling without a clearly defined object, paranoia would logically promote a more ambient aesthetic, one founded on a temporality very different from the “suddenness” central to Aristotle’s aesthetics of fear. The anticathartic device of dilating the time in which any particular incident takes place thus accentuates the manner in which these uneventful moments mirror the general situation of
obstructed agency that gives rise to all the ugly feelings I examine, allowing them to function as political allegories in Arendt's sense above. But despite their obvious difference from scenes of high drama keyed to emotional tonalities which we are intended to recognize instantly, and even as their own affective quality remains comparatively undefined, these moments of conspicuous inactivity remain affectively charged. What seems indeterminate here, however, is actually highly determined. In fact, I would suggest that what each moment produces is the inherently ambiguous affect of affective disorientation in general—what we might think of as a state of feeling vaguely “unsettled” or “confused,” or, more precisely, a meta-feeling in which one feels confused about what one is feeling. This is “confusion” in the affective sense of bewilderment, rather than the epistemological sense of indeterminacy. Despite its marginality to the philosophical canon of emotions, isn’t this feeling of confusion about what one is feeling an affective state in its own right? And in fact a rather familiar feeling that often heralds the basic affect of “interest” underwriting all acts of intellectual inquiry? Turning to our two films, we may find it useful to refer to this very specific state of affective indeterminacy as the negative feeling of “disconcertedness”—the feeling of not being “focused” or “gathered.” Such an ugly feeling is intimately tied (as we shall see) to the “loss of control” explicitly thematized in each moment of stalled or suspended action. Most important, in both films the dysphoric affect of affective disorientation—of being lost on one’s own “cognitive map” of available affects—is concretely rendered through a spatial confusion made possible by a notoriously unstable narrative technique that film scholars have credited the genre of film noir with most fully instrumentalizing: subjective or first-person camera.

My first example involves a tracking shot from Double Indemnity that eventually captures the wounded protagonist, Pacific All-Risk Insurance agent Walter Neff (Fred McMurray), as he speaks into a dictaphone and concludes his narration of the events that have led up to his present condition (Figure 1). Neff’s self-recorded narration, participation in two murders, is directed by his boss and mentor at the insurance company, Howard G. Robinson, who has also hired him to us through a series of voiceovers to the scene of narration for the film, which Neff has been recorded to us through a series of voiceovers to us through a series of voiceovers. We turn to this very specific state of affective indeterminacy as the negative feeling of “disconcertedness”—the feeling of not being “focused” or “gathered.” Such an ugly feeling is intimately tied (as we shall see) to the “loss of control” explicitly thematized in each moment of stalled or suspended action. Most important, in both films the dysphoric affect of affective disorientation—of being lost on one’s own “cognitive map” of available affects—is concretely rendered through a spatial confusion made possible by a notoriously unstable narrative technique that film scholars have credited the genre of film noir with most fully instrumentalizing: subjective or first-person camera.

The cut to the compositionally strong point of view (Figure 1h), a long view revealing Keyes’s response. The implication is strong. Just as Keys’s response...
rise to all the ugly feelings I examine, political allegories in Arendt’s sense—what we are intended to recognize their own affective quality remains this moment of conspicuous inactivity. What seems indeterminate here, how

s the inherently ambiguous effect of general—what we might think of as a “unsettled” or “confused,” or, more precisely, one feels confused about what one is in the affective sense of bewilderment, the sense of indeterminacy. Despite its technical canon of emotions, isn’t this feeling one is feeling an affective state in its other familiar feeling that often heralds underwriting all acts of intellectual films, we may find it useful to refer to affective indeterminacy as the negative—the feeling of not being “focused” or feeling is intimately tied (as we shall see) explicitly thematized in each moment of . Most important, in both films the disorientation—of being lost on one’s available affects—is concretely rendered made possible by a notoriously unstable in scholars have credited the genre of instrumentalizing: subjective or first-person.

A tracking shot from Double Indemnity wounded protagonist, Pacific All-Risk (Fred McMurray), as he speaks into a "tracking shot from Double Indemnity" wounded protagonist, Pacific All-Risk Fred McMurray), as he speaks into a self-recorded narration, which eventually discloses his contribution in two murders, is directly addressed to his avuncular boss and mentor at the insurance company, Barton Keyes (Edward G. Robinson), who has also been a major character in the story which Neff has been recounting and which the film presents to us through a series of voiceover-flashbacks. The shot that returns us to the scene of narration for the last time seems, initially, unambiguously objective—as would be thematically appropriate, given the symbolic import of the “impartial” recording instrument into which Neff speaks his story, and the fact that the depiction of a narrator in the actual act of telling or narrating (in this case, a technologically mediated, quasi-documentary act) will always have a stronger claim to objectivity than his subjectively filtered tale. As the camera comes to rest on the actor’s profile, however, in a view so uncomfortably close that we can see the beads of sweat on his avverted face, Neff slowly turns his head from the dictaphone to ward the camera, as if to signal a realism-breaking awareness of its presence, or, more simply, a growing consciousness of being watched (Figures 1d–g). Our sense of the emotional tension that comes to inflect the shot is subsequently confirmed as Neff says, “Hello Keyes.”

The cut to the compositionally contrasting shot that follows (Figure 1h), a long view revealing Keyes standing in the opened office door, unsettlingly reveals that the point of view of the preceding shot has in fact been that of Keyes, and that Keyes—in keeping with his general role as Neff’s intellectual superior as well as the film’s one representative of law and order—has been watching and listening to Neff’s confession, unbeknownst to both Neff and the film’s audience, for an indefinite time, if not all along. “How long have you been standing there?” asks Neff. “Long enough,” is Keyes’s response. The implications of the objective shot’s curiously stealthy and related—subjectivization are as serious as its affective intensity is strong. Just as Keyes “sneaks up” on Neff at the level of
discourse as well as at the level of story, and visually as well as narratively, as his point of view steals into and claims authorship over a gaze initially owned by no subject in the diegesis, Neff is in a double sense “caught,” since it is understood that his capture in the visual field surreptitiously overtaken by Keyes will entail his capture by the law. In fact, in the original, bleaker version of the film which did not survive its studio censors, the arresting shot leads not only to Neff’s imprisonment, but to his execution by the state in a gas chamber. In this manner, the moment when Keyes steps out of the subjectively filtered world of the story told by Neff and enters the more objective world in which Neff’s act of telling takes place is not only a moment designed to reaffirm his character’s power and authority (only Keyes, among those contained in the flashback sequences, is carried into the present), but one that produces and qualitative change in the relation.

Variations of this alternation between framing, and its use for the purpose of specific feeling of feeling uncertain about “disconcertedness,” which, in this case, more articulated pathos of feeling “bloody-minded” and its generic descendants. In French-era conspiracy film The Conversation, effects of the technique maximized paranoia of a surveillance profession gaze one would expect him to comp Risk Insurance agent and Melville’s Caul (Gene Hackman) is a white-excessively alienated from and, even more toward the organization that employs him, in this opposition take the form of an full-blown stoppage (in “Barber descript as an attempt to “crook the protagonist with much greater autonomy in his work than his fictional predecessor, with frustrated agency of the film’s major structural and thematically explicit. For while Harry’s stunted “faculty” of an individual problem, the film synecdoche for a much larger social exemplified by the collective apathy of homeless men (who may or may not be crowded public park—a setting that
and authority (only Keyes, among all the other characters contained in the flashback sequences, is able to cross over from the past into the present), but one that produces an affective disorientation and qualitative change in the relationship between the two men.

Variations of this alternation between subjective and objective framing, and its use for the purpose of producing the highly specific feeling of feeling uncertain about what one is feeling—the "disconcertedness" which, in this case, heralds and morphs into the more articulated pathos of feeling "busted"—abound in film noir and its generic descendants. In Francis Ford Coppola's Watergate-era conspiracy film *The Conversation* (1974), we find the emotional effects of the technique maximized when it is used to produce the paranoia of a surveillance professional apprehended in the very gaze one would expect him to command. Like Cain's Pacific All-Risk Insurance agent and Melville's Wall Street scrivener, Harry Caul (Gene Hackman) is a white-collar worker who becomes increasingly alienated from and, eventually, overtly antagonistic toward the organization that employs him. Though we have already seen this opposition take the form of a work slowdown culminating in a full-blown stoppage (in "Bartleby"), as well as what Neff describes as an attempt to "crook the house," in *The Conversation* it appears as an effort to thwart a corporate conspiracy, revealed by a protagonist with much greater autonomy and libidinal investment in his work than his fictional predecessors had. Yet here the link between the moment of suspended action in the film's story and the frustrated agency of the film's male protagonist is much more structurally and thematically explicit as well as politically charged. For while Harry's stunted "faculty of action" appears in the guise of an individual problem, the film immediately reveals it as a synecdoche for a much larger social and in fact national ill, as exemplified by the collective apathy the eponymous conversationalists in the crucial opening scene discuss, as they observe sleeping homeless men (who may or may not be Vietnam war veterans) in a crowded public park—a setting that itself suggests a miniaturized
representation of the social whole. Moreover, what we have elsewhere examined as a passivity with political resonance or implications is presented here as a passivity with respect to the domain of politics proper. For we learn that in an earlier phase of his surveillance career, while employed by a state prosecutor, Harry has refused, in the name of the "objectivity" conveniently idealized by his profession, to concern himself with the content of the surveillance cases assigned to him, regardless of the violent ends (including the murder of a local union official) which he suspects his government work may have furthered. Indexed here by the specific feelings of paranoia and guilt, rather than an affective absence or illegibility, Harry's political passivity, and correlative obsessions with maintaining his privacy and solitude, will become most evident in his inability to prevent a murder engineered by the private corporation for which (in a trajectory that neatly reverses Bartleby's move from the postal service's Dead Letter Office to a lawyer's firm on Wall Street) he has left the Attorney General's office to work—an inability he cannot overcome despite the technical expertise that has given him advance knowledge of the plot and thus his chance to redeem his past detachment. The allegorically charged moment of narrative stasis that concerns us occurs in the hotel room in which this murder (a sign as well as a direct consequence of Harry's political impotence) has taken place.

Dramatized, again, by a high ratio of discourse time to story time (and tellingly silent in the context of a film about conversations), the scene opens as Harry reenters this room after the traumatic experience of overhearing, from an adjacent room, the actual sounds of the crime. The take that concerns us begins with a view of Harry cautiously peering through the half-open door (Figure 2a). Moving in the direction of his gaze, the camera drops him from its visual field as it very slowly and methodically, much like a highly skilled surveillance professional, pans across the enigmatically unoccupied and immaculate room (Figures 2b–h). Because Harry has abruptly disappeared from our view and continues we are made to understand he has disappeared already undergone a transition from the room to a state of stasis. Without any break in its content the shot's surreptitious change in view is completed by the shot's surreptitious change in view as it were, to get used to its subject's appearance in a shot designed to reestablish the uncertainty over the authorship of the surveillance process and self-entanglement in the corporate image, if we follow Fredric Jameson (and late capitalism itself) in which the otherwise uneventful and unemotional enunciated content, or what we are otherwise "nothing to see"), Harry loses control of the desubjectifying discourse that anti-formation into an object of surveillance. The private corporation that has hired him, as the film's final move, debug his own apartment ominous cunning re-objectivization suggests the subjective back to objective appearance in a shot designed to reestablish the uncertainty over the authorship of the surveillance expert's grasp of the visual field.

Though Double Indemnity has a nation between subjective and objective status becomes inherent to
whole. Moreover, what we have else­
ty with political resonance or implica­
tivity with respect to the domain of
that in an earlier phase of his surveil­
bly by a state prosecutor, Harry has re­
jectivity” conveniently idealized by his
self with the content of the surveillance
less of the violent ends (including the
jial) which he suspects his government
index is here by the specific feelings of
an an affective absence or illegibility,
and correlative obsessions with main­
de, will become most evident in his in­
terdevelopment by the private corporation
at neatly reverses Bartleby’s move from
ner Office to a lawyer’s firm on Wall
General’s office to work—an inabil­
spite the technical expertise that has
ge of the plot and thus his chance to re­
The allegorically charged moment of
us occurs in the hotel room in which
a direct consequence of Harry’s politi­
ance.
high ratio of discourse time to story
the context of a film about conversa­
arry reenters this room after the trau­
ing, from an adjacent room, the actual
ke that concerns us begins with a view­
g through the half-open door (Figure
of his gaze, the camera drops him
slowly and methodically, much like a
professional, pans across the enigmati­
ulate room (Figures 2b–h). Because
Harry has abruptly disappeared from the visual field, as the pan continues we are made to understand that we are seeing what he sees. Without any break in its continuity or flow, the shot has thus already undergone a transition from objective to subjective. The relatively long duration of the pan seems intended, in fact, to secure the shot’s surreptitious change in valence, to give the viewer time, as it were, to get used to its subjectivization. But as the camera completes its near 180-degree turn around the room, we are surprised by Harry’s sudden reappearance at the far right edge of the visual field (Figure 2i). Here the shot undergoes its second transition, from subjective back to objective—for how else could Harry appear in a shot designed to represent his own gaze? In this case, the uncertainty over the authorship of the visual field highlights the pathos of the surveillance professional’s increasing impotence and self-entanglement in the corporate conspiracy (a ghostly after­image, if we follow Fredric Jameson’s lead, of the social totality of late capitalism itself) in which he hopes to intervene. In this otherwise uneventful and unemotional scene (one in which the enunciated content, or what we are shown, is that there is precisely “nothing to see”), Harry loses control of his own gaze—through a desubjectifying discourse that anticipates his own eventual trans­formation into an object of surveillance by the very corporation that has hired him, as the film’s final scene depicting his failed effort to debug his own apartment ominously makes clear. In fact, the shot’s cunning re-objectivization suggests just how uncertain this surveil­lance expert’s grasp of the visual field has perhaps been all along.

Though Double Indemnity has already shown us how this alternation between subjective and objective enunciation can be used to produce irony as well as the uncanny affect of disconcertedness, the technique is used in The Conversation to produce another highly determinate feeling—paranoia—that not coincidentally replicates the subjective/objective oscillation in its basic structure: Is the en­emy out there or in me? Confusion about feeling’s objective or sub­jective status becomes inherent to the feeling. Our readings of the
FIGURE 2

Bartlebyan moments of inaction highlighted above have thus prepared us for a crucial reversal of the familiar idea that vehement emotions—in particular, the strongly intentional or object-directed emotions in the philosophical canon, such as jealousy, anger, and fear—destabilize our sense of the boundary between the psyche and the world, or between subjective and objective reality. In contrast, my argument is that a systematic problematization of the distinction between subjective and objective enunciation lies at the heart of the Bartlebyan feelings in this book—minor affects that are far less intentional or object-directed, and thus more likely to produce political and aesthetic ambiguities, than the passions in the philosophical canon. For just as the question of whether one's para-
Marked by this conversion of a polemical engagement with the objective world into a reflection of a subjective characteristic, the confusion over a feeling’s subjective or objective status that we have seen become internal to paranoia also seems internal to envy. Both are feelings that contain, as it were, models of the problem that defines them. Even an ostensibly degree-zero affect like animatedness has a version of this subjective/objective problematic at its core—namely, the question of whether “animation” designates high-spiritedness, or a puppet-like state analogous to the assembly-line mechanization of the human body famously dramatized by Charlie Chaplin in Modern Times. In the form of a dialectic of inside/outside, the subjective/objective problematic will likewise haunt Heidegger’s and Hitchcock’s strikingly similar conceptions of “anxiety,” and will motivate the spatial fantasy of “thrownness” that sustains the affect’s intellectual aura and prestige. In the form of a tension between psychological interiors and bodily exteriors, the subjective/objective problematic will become similarly integral to

noia is subjective or objective is internal to paranoia, the historically feminized and proletarianized emotion of envy has another version of this problematic at its core. While envy describes a subject’s polemical response to a perceived inequality in the external world, it has been reduced to signifying a static subjective trait: the “lack” or “deficiency” of the person who envies. Hence, after a person’s envy enters a public domain of signification, it will always seem unjustified and critically effete—regardless of whether the relation of inequality it points to (say, unequal ownership of a means of production) has a real and objective existence. In this manner, although envy begins with a clearly defined object—and it is the only negative emotion defined specifically by the fact that it addresses forms of inequality—it denies the very objectivity of this object. In doing so, it oddly bears a much closer resemblance to feelings lacking clearly defined objects, such as anxiety, than it does to an intentional emotion like jealousy. Envy is, in a sense, an intentional feeling that paradoxically undermines its own intentionality.

Marked by this conversion of a polemical idea that vehemently intentional or object-directed emotion, such as jealousy, anger, and the boundary between the psyche subjective and objective reality. In conquest of the familiar idea that vehemently intentional or object-directed emotion, such as jealousy, anger, and the boundary between the psyche subjective and objective reality. In conquest of the familiar idea that vehemently intentional or object-directed emotion, such as jealousy, anger, and the boundary between the psyche subjective and objective reality. In conquest of the familiar idea that vehemently intentional or object-directed emotion, such as jealousy, anger, and the boundary between the psyche subjective and objective reality. In conquest of the familiar idea that vehemently intentional or object-directed emotion, such as jealousy, anger, and the boundary between the psyche subjective and objective reality. In conquest of the familiar idea that vehemently intentional or object-directed emotion, such as jealousy, anger, and the boundary between the psyche subjective and objective reality. In conquest of the familiar idea that vehemently intentional or object-directed emotion, such as jealousy, anger, and the boundary between the psyche subjective and objective reality. In conquest of the familiar idea that vehemently intentional or object-directed emotion, such as jealousy, anger, and the boundary between the psyche subjective and objective reality. In conquest of the familiar idea that vehemently intentional or object-directed emotion, such as jealousy, anger, and the boundary between the psyche subjective and objective reality.
the affect of irritation—defined, as Nella Larsen will show us, by its very liminality as an affective concept (weak or mild anger), given its unusual proximity to a bodily or epidermal one (soreness, rawness, inflammation, or chafing).

The striking persistence with which the feelings in this book reflexively “theorize” or internalize the confusion between the subjective status and objective status of feeling in general can be taken as following from their relatively weak intentionality—their indistinctness if not absence of object. Indeed, while it is widely agreed that “emotions play roles in forms of action,” the feelings in this study tend to be diagnostic rather than strategic, and to be diagnostically concerned with states of inaction in particular. Even the objects of envy and disgust, the most strongly intentional and dynamic feelings among my set of seven, and the only two that can be classified as emotions proper, are imbued with negativity. While envy, as we have seen, aggressively casts doubt on the objectivity of the very object that distinguishes it from other agonistic emotions (the social relation of inequality), disgust is constituted by the vehement rejection of exclusion of its object. Hence while disgust is always disgust toward, in the same way that envy is envy of—whereas it makes no sense to speak of stuplumity of or animatedness toward—its grammar brings it closer to the intransitive feelings in this study than to the other emotions with which it is traditionally classified. For while envy and disgust are clearly object-directed, their trajectories are directed toward the negation of these objects, either by denying them or by subjecting them to epistemological skepticism.

Not surprisingly, the boundary confusions built into the structure of these feelings, whether in the form of inside/outside, self/world, or psyche/body, reappear in the aesthetic forms and genres they determine. They will therefore return in the series of representational predicaments I will mobilize these ugly feelings to read: ranging from controversies about the use of the “ugly” cinematic technique of clayimation (dimensional screen animation) as a format for representing racial minorities bad or contagious mimesis—resulting between female self and female other, archaic identifications and observable acup in accounts of female envy such as Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (Freud, White Female. While important to the presentational controversies, the question of subjective status has in fact been central to investigations into the exact role and aesthetic encounter. These investigations in Aristotle and katharsis to refer to some audience is that takes place in the trap, refers to a response undergone by the event produce in the object viewed) force one away from “the mere issue of material describing “esthetic emotion.” T. S. Eliot’s is the related attempt to from “the mere issue” which he describes production tropes which are not in counter to, on the part of Enlightenment aestheticists, to use emotive or static elements of taste (so as to give, a/v/active judgments of taste); and Gérard has in fact been the exact role and aesthetic encounter, and the possibility or value recognition, subjectivity, objectification, or “esthetic I
introduction

—defined, as Nella Larsen will show us, by an affective concept (weak or mild anger), intimacy to a bodily or epidermal one (soreness, n, or chafing).

Intimacy with which the feelings in this book or internalize the confusion between the subjective status of feeling in general can be taken in relatively weak intentionality—their indis­

tribute states of inaction in particular. Even the ob­
gust, the most strongly intentional and dy­
my set of seven, and the only two that can be proper, are imbued with negativity. While aggres­sively casts doubt on the objectivity of dis­tin­

brates it from other agonistic emotions inequality), disgust is constituted by the ve­

clusion of its object. Hence while disgust is s, in the same way that envy is envy of—

dense to speak of stultification of or animated­

umar brings it closer to the intransitive feel­

lar to the other emotions with which it is For while envy and disgust are clearly ob­

tories are directed toward the negation of by denying them or by subjecting them to

1. Boundary confusions built into the struc­

whether in the form of inside/outside, self/­

reappear in the aesthetic forms and genres will therefore return in the series of repre­

s I will mobilize these ugly feelings to read: s about the use of the “ugly” cinematic n (dimensional screen animation) as a for­

mat for representing racial minorities on television, to the kind of bad or contagious mimesis—resulting in a symptomatic confusion between female self and female other, and even between phantas­
matic identifications and observable acts of imitation—which crops up in accounts of female envy such as those found in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (Freud) and the lurid film Single White Female. While important to these specific aesthetic or rep­

resentational controversies, the question of feeling’s objective or subjective status has in fact been central to numerous philosophical investigations into the exact role and status of emotion in the aes­

thetic encounter. These investigations include debates over whether Aristotle uses katharsin to refer to something that takes place in the audience or that takes place in the tragic drama (that is, whether it refers to a response undergone by the viewing subject or to an event presented in the object viewed); John Dewey’s effort to di­

vorce expression from the “mere issuing forth or discharge of raw material” by describing “esthetic emotion” as “objectified” emotion; T. S. Eliot’s closely related attempt to separate “personal emotion” from “art emotion,” which he describes as a mixture or cocktail producing “feelings which are not in actual emotions at all”; the counterintuitive effort, on the part of Edmund Burke and other Enlightenment empiricists, to use emotional qualities to “objectify” or standardize judgments of taste (so as to avoid the problem of relativism it inevitably poses); and Gérard Genette’s unapologetically subjectivist theory of aesthetic judgment as a mode of illusory proj­

ction, in which a quality or value reflecting the negative or positive feeling inspired by an object’s appearance, in what amounts to a fundamentally subjective appraisal, is treated “as if” it were one of the object’s own intrinsic properties. For Genette, who claims to “out-Kant” Kant by fully acknowledging the relativism Kant’s subjectivist theory of aesthetic judgment attempted to sidestep (by asserting the claim for universality in the judgment itself), aesthetic judgment is this illusory objectification. It is this process that pro­

duces what Genette calls “esthetic predicates,” affective-aesthetic
values like “precious,” “stilted,” “monotonous,” or “imperious,” created from, or based upon, the feeling of pleasure or displeasure that accompanies our initial perception of the aesthetic object (AR, 90). Genette in fact describes these objectifying predicates, which bear a close resemblance to what I. A. Richards called “aesthetic or ‘projectile’ adjectives,” as descriptive terms that “sneak in” evaluations of the object based on feelings about the object. There is thus a sense in which the “aesthetic relation,” which for Genette is more or less synonymous with “objectification,” can be understood as an oblique effort to justify the presence of feeling in every aesthetic encounter.

The subjective-objective problematic, magnified by the relativism of aesthetic judgment and other classic problems in the discourse of aesthetics (including the contested notion of special “aesthetic feelings”), is central, as we have seen, to the ugly feelings in this book, as well as to the artistic forms and genres they generate. It will be a particular concern in my discussion of “tone” (Chapter 1), the affective-aesthetic concept that will implicitly inform all the analyses of the aesthetics of specific feelings that follow. Yet the subjective/objective problematic so central to the philosophy of aesthetics can also be traced back to the philosophy of emotion in general. It has become the über-question of recent theoretical writing on feeling in particular, as evinced in the analysis of emotion after “the death of the subject” (Rei Terada) or attempts to differentiate “emotion” and “affect” on the grounds that the former requires a subject while the latter does not (Lawrence Grossberg, Brian Massumi). These questions reflect the extent to which the subjective dimension of feeling, in particular, in seeming to undercut its validity as an object of materialist inquiry, has posed a difficulty for contemporary theorists. The present spotlight on emotion in literary criticism can be understood partly as an attempt to redress its earlier exclusion on such “subjectivist” grounds, including its failure to be grasped by the more positivistic kinds of cultural-historical analysis and the more dryly technical kinds of semiotic analysis.
stilted,” “monotonous,” or “imperious,” on, the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, or the perception of the aesthetic object (AR, AR, these objectifying predicates, which to what I. A. Richards called “aesthetic or descriptive terms that “sneak in” evaluations, feelings about the object.” There is thus an aesthetic relation,” which for Genette is more objectification,” can be understood as an absence of feeling in every aesthetic problem, magnified by the relativist and other classic problems in the distancing the contested notion of special “aesthetic. As we have seen, to the ugly feelings in artistic forms and genres they generate. Tern in my discussion of “tone” (Chapter 1) that will implicitly inform all the of specific feelings that follow. Yet the dramatic so central to the philosophy of aesthetics, the philosophy of emotion in the question of recent theoretical writing evinced in the analysis of emotion after (Rei Terada) or attempts to differentiate the grounds that the former requires affects not (Lawrence Grossberg, Brian as reflect the extent to which the subject—in particular, in seeming to undercut its inquiry, has posed a difficulty for the present spotlight on emotion in literature as an attempt to redress its subjectivist” grounds, including its failure to positivistic kinds of cultural-historically technical kinds of semiotic analysis that dominated literary studies in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as by poststructuralist theories of literary language prevailing in the 1980s and early 1990s. In the former case, feeling’s marginalization stemmed from its perceived incompatibility with “concrete” social experiences; in the latter (as Terada most fully examines), from its perceived incompatibility with poststructuralism’s skeptical interrogation of the category of experience itself. Though emotion once posed an embarrassment to these very different critics for very different reasons, most critics today accept that far from being merely private or idiosyncratic phenomena, or reflecting a “romantically raw domain of primitive experiential richness” that materialist analysis will be unable to grasp (Massumi, PV, 29), feelings are as fundamentally “social” as the institutions and collective practices that have been the more traditional objects of historicist criticism (as Raymond Williams was perhaps the earliest to argue, in his analyses of “structures of feeling”), and as “material” as the linguistic signs and significations that have been the more traditional objects of literary formalism. Although feeling is not reducible to these institutions, collective practices, or discursive significations, it is nonetheless as socially real and “infrastructural” in its effects “as a factory” (Massumi, PV, 45).

The affect/emotion split originated in psychoanalysis for the practical purpose of distinguishing third-person from first-person representations of feeling, with “affect” designating feeling described from an observer’s (analyst’s) perspective, and “emotion” designating feeling that “belongs” to the speaker or analysand’s “I.” Yet Massumi and Grossberg have made claims for a stronger distinction, arguing not just that emotion requires a subject while affect does not, but that the former designates feeling given “function and meaning” while the latter remains “unformed and unstructured” (Massumi, PV, 260, note 3). As Grossberg puts it, “Unlike emotions, affective states are neither structured narratively nor organized in response to our interpretations of situations.” Similarly, Massumi argues that while emotion is “a subjective content, the
sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal,” affect is feeling or “intensity” disconnected from “meaningful sequencing, from narration” (PV, 28). The difficulty affective “intensity” poses for analysis is thus strikingly analogous to the analytical difficulty which Williams coined his term “structures of feeling” to address—that is, the kind posed by social experiences which “do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and action.” In escaping qualification much like Williams’ structures of feeling, which as “social experiences in solution” lie “at the very edge of semantic availability” (ML, 132), affective intensity clearly creates difficulties for more positivistic kinds of materialist analysis, even as it always remains highly analyzable in or as effect (Massumi, PV, 260, note 3).

While strong arguments have thus been made—primarily on the basis of a subjective/objective divide, but also in terms of oppositions like narrative/nonnarrative or semiotic/asignifying—for the idea that emotion and affect “follow different logics and pertain to different orders,” some aspects of this taxonomic division will be more useful and important to this book than others (Massumi, PV, 27). Certainly less narratively structured, in the sense of being less object- or goal-directed, the intentionally weak and therefore often politically ambiguous feelings in this book are in fact much more like affects, in accordance with the definitions above, than emotions—which, for Martha Nussbaum, are “closely connected with action; few facts about them are more obvious.” Tied intimately, in contrast, with situations of what Dewey calls “being withheld from doing,” the feelings in this book are obviously not as strategic as the emotions classically associated with political action; with their indeterminate or undifferentiated objects, in particular, they are less than ideally suited for setting and realizing clearly defined goals. Whereas Hobbes and Aristotle have shown how the principle of mutual fear actively binds men into the contracts that sup-
The quality of an experience which is from
and as personal," affect is feeling or "inten-
meaningful sequencing, from narration" ef
fective "intensity" poses for analysis is to
the analytical difficulty which Wil-
structures of feeling" to address—that is, ex-
periences which "do not have to await r rationalization before they exert palpative limits on experience and action." In
such like Williams' structures of feeling,
es in solution" lie "at the very edge of se-
(32), affective intensity clearly creates dif-
tic kinds of materialist analysis, even as it
yzable in or as effect (Massumi,
266, as have thus been made—primarily on the
tive divide, but also in terms of oppos-
narrative or semiotic/assignifying—for the
fact "follow different logics and pertain to
pects of this taxonomic division will be
to this book than others (Massumi, PV,
ely structured, in the sense of being less
ntentionally weak and therefore often
nings in this book are in fact much more
the definitions above, than emo-
Nussbaum, are "closely connected with
em are more obvious." Tied intimately,
us of what Dewey calls "being withheld
s in this book are obviously not as strate-
gally associated with political action; with
differentiated objects, in particular, they
l for setting and realizing clearly defined
and Aristotle have shown how the princi-
binds men into the contracts that sup-
port the political commonwealth, and how anger advances the re-
dressing of perceived injustices through retaliation, it is difficult to
imagine how either of these actions might be advanced by an affective state like, say, irritation. While one can be irritated without re-
alizing it, or knowing exactly what one is irritated about, there can
be nothing ambiguous about one's rage or terror, or about what one is terrified of or enraged about. Yet the unsuitability of these
weakly intentional feelings for forceful or unambiguous action is
precisely what amplifies their power to diagnose situations, and sit-
ations marked by blocked or thwarted action in particular.

While the distinction between affect and emotion is thus helpful
here in a number of ways, I will not be theoretically leaning on it to
the extent that others have—as may be apparent from the way in
which I use the two terms more or less interchangeably. In the
chapters that follow, the difference between affect and emotion is
taken as a modal difference of intensity or degree, rather than a
formal difference of quality or kind. My assumption is that affects
are less formed and structured than emotions, but not lacking form
or structure altogether; less "sociolinguistically fixed," but by no
means code-free or meaningless; less "organized in response to our
interpretations of situations," but by no means entirely devoid of
organization or diagnostic powers. As suggested above, ambient af-
ffects may in fact be better suited to interpreting ongoing states of
affairs. What the switch from formal to modal difference enables is
an analysis of the transitions from one pole to the other: the passages
whereby affects acquire the semantic density and narrative com-
plexity of emotions, and emotions conversely denature into affects.
At the end of the day, the difference between emotion and affect is
still intended to solve the same basic and fundamentally descriptive
problem it was coined in psychoanalytic practice to solve: that of
distinguishing first-person from third-person feeling, and, by ex-
tension, feeling that is contained by an identity from feeling that is
not. Rather than also trying to dissolve this subjective/objective
problematic by creating two distinct categories of feeling, this study
aims to preserve it for its aesthetic productivity. We see this not just in the meaningful ironies or specific feelings generated by film noir's oscillations between first-person and third-person point of view, but also in the concept of cinematic or literary tone. For as anticipated by film noir's demonstration that certain kinds of ugly feeling (paranoia, disconcertedness) become maximized when we are most uncertain if the "field" of their emergence is subjective or objective, the tone of an artwork—which obviously cannot be reduced to representations of feeling within the artwork, or to the emotional responses the artwork solicits from its viewers—is a concept dependent upon and even constructed around the very problematic that the emotion/affect distinction was intended to dissolve.

By "tone" I mean a literary or cultural artifact's feeling tone: its global or organizing affect, its general disposition or orientation toward its audience and the world. Hence, while the concept I refer to includes the connotations of "attitude" brought to the term by I. A. Richards and other New Critics, I am not referring to the same "tone" they narrow down to "a known way of speaking" or a dramatic style of address. Instead, I mean the formal aspect of a literary work that makes it possible for critics to describe a text as, say, "euphoric" or "melancholic," and, what is much more important, the category that makes these affective values meaningful with regard to how one understands the text as a totality within an equally holistic matrix of social relations. It is worth noting here that literary criticism's increased attention to matters of emotion has predominantly centered on the emotional effects of texts on their readers, and, in the predominantly historicist field of nineteenth-century American studies, where the surge in the discussion of emotion has seemed particularly intense, on the expressivist aesthetics of sympathy and sentimentality in particular. But what gets left out in this prevailing emphasis on a reader's sympathetic identification with the feelings of characters in a text is the simple but powerful question of "objectified emotion," or unfelt but perceived feeling, that presents itself most forcefully in the aesthetic concept

The absence of attention to the concept of "tone" in literature not only is specific to narratologists and narratologists' concern for narrativity and narrative strategies, it turns artworks into "contingent events" (Adorno, AT, 275). For as anticipated by film noir's demonstration that certain kinds of ugly feeling (paranoia, disconcertedness) become maximized when we are most uncertain if the "field" of their emergence is subjective or objective, the tone of an artwork—which obviously cannot be reduced to representations of feeling within the artwork, or to the emotional responses the artwork solicits from its viewers—is a concept dependent upon and even constructed around the very problematic that the emotion/affect distinction was intended to dissolve.
aesthetic productivity. We see this not just in specific feelings generated by film or literature. For example, the first-person and third-person point of view in cinematic or literary tone. For as demonstration that certain kinds of ugliness become maximized when we "feel" the emergence of subjective or cultural artifacts feeling tone: its general disposition or orientation to the world. Hence, while the concept I refer to as "attitude" brought to the term by New Critics, I am not referring to the phenomenon as a known way of speaking or a tone. Instead, I mean the formal aspect of a text's emotional effect. Its global affect for the construction of substantive arguments about literature and ideology or society as a whole. The "euphoria" Jameson ascribes to a cluster of late twentieth-century artworks, for instance, is designed to do nothing less than advance his critique of postmodernism as the logic of late capitalism, in the same way that Walter Benjamin's isolation of "a curious variety of despair" in the Weimar poetry of Erich Kästner enabled him to diagnose a much broader "left-wing melancholy" that, as Wendy Brown notes, extends just as problematically into our contemporary political discourses.

Tone does a great deal of diagnostic and critical work for these writers and many others. Yet compared to other formal categories relied on the analysis of literature in society, "tone" in my explicitly feeling-related sense, as a cultural object's affective bearing, orientation, or "set toward" the world, remains notoriously difficult to define. In fact, because tone is never entirely reducible to a reader's emotional response to a text or reducible to the text's internal representations of feeling (though it
can amplify and be amplified by both), the problem it poses for analysis is strikingly similar to the problem posed by uncertainties concerning a feeling’s subjective or objective status. For we can speak of a literary text whose global or organizing affect is disgust, without this necessarily implying that the work represents or signifies disgust, or that it will disgust the reader (though in certain cases it may also do so). Exactly “where,” then, is the disgust? Similarly, the “joyous intensity” Jameson ascribes to the work of Duane Hanson in his aforementioned essay on postmodernism does not imply that Hanson’s hyperrealistic sculptures of tired, elderly museum guards and sagging, overweight tourists represent or express joy, or that they make the viewer feel joyous—as opposed to, say, mildly amused or unsettled. Who is the subject, then, of the euphoria to which Jameson refers? Should this feeling belong to a subject? How is it even produced by the object from which it ostensibly emanates?

I ask these questions not to dispute the tone Jameson attributes to these postmodern artifacts—the exhilaration he is speaking of is clearly of the capitalist “special effect”: flawless verisimilitude as a spectacular display of technological skill and power—but to underscore how central the subjective/objective problematic is to the concept of tone itself, such that to resolve or eliminate the problem would be to nullify the concept or render it useless for theoretical work. Tone is the dialectic of objective and subjective feeling that our aesthetic encounters inevitably produce, much in the same way we have seen paranoia, the global affect of the noir films above, materially constituted by the systematic alternation of first- and third-person enunciations within a single shot. The fact that tone will always pose special difficulties as an object of analysis, particularly in the case of the frequently “atonal” texts foregrounded in this study of Bartlebyan feelings, does not imply that one must make its definition more positivistic: the concept’s power resides precisely in its amorphousness. Accordingly, the goal of my first chapter is not to make the concept of "noisy" but to develop a more precise that tone is. My primary guide in this published novel, The Confidence-Man (that offers a useful allegory of the very its aesthetic work. It demonstrates how subjective boundaries in a series of exchange of writing and money for affect.

This book thus begins with what is question, by addressing one of the most examined aesthetic functions of feeling, will examine one of the most "basic" will publicly visible in an age of mechanical innervated “agitation” or “animatedness” of being “animated” implies the most questions (that of being “moved” in one way that implies being “moved” by a particular feeling, which not only takes other intentional feelings as someone’s being “animated” by a particular mood like nostalgia or depressing effect on those affected its associations with movement, a semantic proximity to “agitation” in the philosophical discourse of effects to its articulation into a more convex the contemporary meaning of. Yet while animatedness is bound even political action—in this way, it will be on the social power...
chimerical), the problem it poses for me to the problem posed by uncertainties objective or objective status. For we can pose global or organizing affect is disgust, implying that the work represents or signifies disgust the reader (though in certain fact, "where," then, is the disgust? Similarly) Jameson ascribes to the work of Duane "iodized" essay on postmodernism does not resemble sculptures of tired, elderly humans, overweight tourists representing or expressing viewer feel joyous—as opposed to, say, ad. Who is the subject, then, of the eurefers? Should this feeling belong to a produced by the object from which it ost to dispute the tone Jameson attributes the exhilaration he is speaking of is special effect": flawless verisimilitude as a biological skill and power—but to under- objective/objective problematic is to the contact to resolve or eliminate the problem concept or render it useless for theoretical of objective and subjective feeling that inevitably produce, much in the same way the global affect of the noir films above, the systematic alternation of first- and within a single shot. The fact that tone difficulties as an object of analysis, particularly "atonal" texts foregrounded in feelings, does not imply that one must positivistic: the concept’s power resides in its chapter is not to make the concept of tone less abstract or less “noisy” but to develop a more precise vocabulary for the “noise” that tone is. My primary guide in this venture will be Melville’s last published novel, *The Confidence-Man* (1857), a notably “talky” text that offers a useful allegory of the very problem enabling tone to do its aesthetic work. It demonstrates how feeling slips in and out of subjective boundaries in a series of transactions involving the exchange of writing and money for affective goods.

This book thus begins with what might be called a pre-affective question, by addressing one of the most important though underexamined aesthetic functions of feeling in general. After that, we will examine one of the most “basic” ways in which affect becomes publicively visible in an age of mechanical reproducibility: as a kind of innervated “agitation” or “animatedness.” On one hand, the state of being “animated” implies the most general of all affective conditions (that of being “moved” in one way or another), but also a feeling that implies being “moved” by a particular feeling, as when one is said to be animated by happiness or anger. Animatedness thus seems to have both an unintentional and intentional form. In a strange way, it seems at once a zero-degree feeling and a complex meta-feeling, which not only takes other feelings as its object, but takes only other intentional feelings as its object. For we can speak of someone’s being “animated” by a passion like anger, but not by an objectless mood like nostalgia or depression, which tend to have a de-animating effect on those affected by them.

In its associations with movement and activity, animatedness bears a semantic proximity to “agitation,” a term which is likewise used in the philosophical discourse of emotions to designate feeling prior to its articulation into a more complex passion, but that also underlies the contemporary meaning of the political agitator or activist. Yet while animatedness is bound up with questions of action—and even political action—in this general way, my primary focus will be on the social powerlessness foregrounded by its
racialized version. It is precisely this racialization that turns the neutral and even potentially positive affect of animatedness "ugly," pointing to the more self-evidently problematic feelings in the chapters that follow. For as an exaggerated responsiveness to the language of others that turns the subject into a spasmodic puppet, in its racialized form animatedness loses its generally positive associations with human spiritedness or vitality and comes to resemble a kind of mechanization. At the same time, the minimal affect is turned into a form of emotional excess, and similarly stripped of its intentionality. Hence, in Uncle Tom's Cabin it no longer matters what emotion, negative or positive, moves or animates the African-American slave; rather, his or her animated state itself becomes the primary object of the narrator's quasi-ethnographic fascination. In this manner, the racialization of animatedness converts a way of moving others to political action ("agitation") into the passive state of being moved or vocalized by others for their amusement. The disturbing consequences of this conversion are most forcefully demonstrated in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, which draws on a "primal scene" of racial puppeteering to dramatize the death of a rising political leader, in a particularly violent account of the African-American "agitator" turned "animator" (or entertainer). Animatedness thus brings us back to the politically charged problem of obstructed agency that all the categories of feeling in this book will be used to interpret. It facilitates the transition from the general question of feeling in literature to the aesthetics of complex and highly particularized feelings such as envy, irritation, anxiety, stuplminity, paranoia, and disgust.

Given the predominant attention that critical work on emotion has devoted to the aesthetics of sympathy in recent years, we should note that it is precisely the obstruction of this "moral feeling" that "Bartleby" pointedly stages, as if Melville's intent were to create a character so emotionally illegible as to foreclose the possibility of sympathetic identification altogether (and also, in an interesting way I will elaborate later, charity and pity). As the following chap-
Precisely this racialization that turns the positively affect of animatedness "ugly," evident in the feelings in the exaggerated responsiveness to the subject into a spasmodic puppet, loses its generally positive associatedness or vitality and comes to resemble Uncle Tom's Cabin. At the same time, the minimal affect is an exaggerated "agitation" into the passive state by others for their amusement. The conversion are most forcefully shown as envy, irritation, anxiety, disgust. Attention that critical work on emotions of sympathy in recent years, we should not obstruct of this "moral feeling" that is, as if Melville's intent were to create a stage for envy, to create a moral feeling that transforms social weakness from an undesirable situation one must struggle to overcome into a "blessedness" or virtue (GM, 34).
"emerges from the powerless to avenge their incapacity for action, ... enact[ing] their resentment of strengths that they cannot match or overthrow."36 It is an account, in other words, of how a problematic valorization of powerlessness as "good" can easily emerge from the same situation of "withheld doing" that produces the ugly feelings foregrounded throughout this book. Here, then, is a rejection of the sentimental politics of Stowe that parallels the antisentimental aesthetic of "Bartleby," though made much more aggressively and from a very different place. There can be something useful, as Wendy Brown and other political theorists have stressed, about Nietzsche's assault on the idea that there is something morally beatific about being poor, weak, or disenfranchised,37 even though Nietzsche is not interested in how one might actually eliminate the conditions that produce this "slave morality" from the viewpoint of the slave.38 But despite its superficial resemblance to the "vengefulness of the impotent" that is Nietzsche's resentment, the ugly feeling of envy actually demonstrates that the two cannot be confused (GM, 37). For envy makes no claim whatsoever about the moral superiority of the envier, or about the "goodness" of his or her state of lacking something that the envied other is perceived to have. Envy is in many ways a naked will to have. In fact, it is through envy that a subject asserts the goodness and desirability of precisely that which he or she does not have, and explicitly at the cost of surrendering any claim to moral high-mindedness or superiority. Indeed, if envy and resentment have something in common, it is their shared status as targets of the very moral disapprobation (driven often by hate and fear) that Nietzsche summons the theory of resentment to attack. This correlates with what Jameson describes as resentment's "unavoidable autoreferential structure," where the manager resents his employee, and what he resents most about him is the employee's resentment.39 Hence, while the theory of resentment becomes productive for Brown's critique of contemporary feminism's "preference for moral reasoning over open po-

"that this ostt more than an expression of annoyance lower-class agitation, at the apparently of the social boat." As an affective matical explanation" for revolutionary or pducas social antagonisms to deficiencies "private dissatisfaction," Jameson not ment, wherever it appears, will always the production of resentment."40 Even same feeling, then, as this moralizing p a matrix of a number of affects that canagonistic response to a perceived ineq similar reasons—especially, I argue, w man.

The political and aesthetic problems racialized feelings I examine in the "Animatedness" converge in my dis Quicksand. The oft-noted psychological racial heroine has led to critical perpleated by Bartleby. Though thinkers from have highlighted anger's centrality to t Larsen's novel prefers the "superficial", spicuously weak or inadequate form of bears an unusually close relationship to Hyperbolized in Larsen's image of her sore," the novel's irritated aesthetic enploration of the ideologically fraught a tion, race, and aesthetics as it comes to Harlem Renaissance. The Bartlebyan agency persists in the following chapter ex-

litical contest,"40 it is ultimately on t
less to avenge their incapacity for action, or to match strengths that they cannot match in other words, of how a problemlessness as “good” can easily emerge from the “good” that produces the ugly feeling about this book. Here, then, is a rejection of Stowe that parallels the antisentimental place. There can be something used by other political theorists have stressed, on the idea that there is something more poor, weak, or disenfranchised, even even more aggrieved place. There can be something used by other political theorists have stressed, on the idea that there is something more poor, weak, or disenfranchised, even even more aggrieved place. There can be something used by other political theorists have stressed, on the idea that there is something more poor, weak, or disenfranchised, even even more aggrieved place. There can be something used by other political theorists have stressed, on the idea that there is something more poor, weak, or disenfranchised, even even more aggrieved place. There can be something used by other political theorists have stressed, on the idea that there is something more poor, weak, or disenfranchised, even even more aggrieved place. There can be something used by other political theorists have stressed, on the idea that there is something more poor, weak, or disenfranchised, even even more aggrieved place.

The political and aesthetic problems posed by the gendered and racialized feelings I examine in the chapters titled “Envy” and “Animatedness” converge in my discussion of Nella Larsen’s *Quicksand*. The oft-noted psychological illegibility of the novel’s biracial heroine has led to critical perplexities rivaling those generated by *Bartleby*. Though thinkers from Aristotle to Audre Lorde have highlighted anger’s centrality to the pursuit of social justice, Larsen’s novel prefers the “superficial” affect of irritation—a conspicuously weak or inadequate form of anger, as well an affect that bears an unusually close relationship to the body’s surfaces or skin. Hyperbolized in Larsen’s image of her protagonist as “an obscene sore,” the novel’s irritated aesthetic enables us to continue the exploration of the ideologically fraught relationship between emotion, race, and aesthetics as it comes to a head in the context of the Harlem Renaissance. The Bartlebyan predicament of suspended agency persists in the following chapters, as I explore how the intellectual prestige of “anxiety” is oddly secured by a male analyst’s
fantasy of himself as a “thrown projection,” or passive body hurled into space, and as I also examine the paradoxical convergence of excessive excitation (shock) and the lack of excitation (boredom) in twentieth-century artforms ranging from Gertrude Stein’s Making of Americans to the late modernism of Samuel Beckett’s novels. While Kant’s sublime involves a confrontation with the natural and infinite, the unusual synthesis of excitation and fatigue I call “stuplimity” is a response to encounters with vast but bounded artificial systems, resulting in repetitive and often mechanical acts of enumeration, permutation and combination, and taxonomic classification. Though both encounters give rise to negative affect, “stuplimity” involves comic exhaustion rather than terror. The affective dimensions of the small subject’s encounter with a “total system” are further examined in the chapter titled “Paranoia,” where Melville’s scrivener reappears in the more contemporary guise of the poet-as-transcriber. He will return in person—but also as a figure for art itself, or rather the “harmlessness” that Adorno describes as the “shadow” of art’s “autarchic radicalism” in a fully commodified society—in my afterword, which discusses the ugliest of all ugly feelings: disgust. As the allegorical personification not just of art but art’s social inefficaciousness in a market society marked by the “pluralism of peacefully coexisting spheres”—the situation of limited agency from which all the ugly feelings and their attendant aesthetics ensue—Bartleby will preside over our final examination of the challenge that disgust’s aesthetic of the intolerable poses to what Marcuse describes as the friendly or “repressive tolerance” that makes the scrivener seem “safely ignorable,” for all his insistent negativity and ability to make his social invisibility as obtrusively visible as Quicksand’s “obscene sore.” Art thus comes to interrogate the problematically limited agency of art foregrounded in the aesthetics generated by ugly feelings, and in a fashion, I will argue, unparalleled by other cultural practices. Whether in a direct or indirect manner, this Bartlebyan problem is
**introduction**

...projection," or passive body hurled 
aamine the paradoxical convergence of ex-
and the lack of excitation (boredom) in 
s ranging from Gertrude Stein’s *Making 
modernism of Samuel Beckett’s novels.
volves a confrontation with the natural 
synthesis of excitation and fatigue I call 
to encounters with vast but bounded arti-
repetitive and often mechanical acts of 
and combination, and taxonomic clas-
counters give rise to negative affect, 
ic exhaustion rather than terror. The 
small subject’s encounter with a “total 
ained in the chapter titled “Paranoia,” 
reappears in the more contemporary 
ber. He will return in person—but also 
rather the “harmlessness” that Adorno 
of art’s “autarchic radicalism” in a fully 
y afterword, which discusses the ugliest 
st. As the allegorical personification not 
al inefficaciousness in a market society 
of peacefully coexisting spheres”—the 
y from which all the ugly feelings and 
—Bartleby will preside over our 
the challenge that disgust’s aesthetic of the 
Marcuse describes as the friendly or “re-
makes the scrivener seem “safely ignor-
negativity and ability to make his social 
visible as Quicksand’s “obscene sore.” Art 
the problematically limited agency of art 
osti generated by ugly feelings, and in 
paralleled by other cultural practices.

one to which all of the following chapters will repeatedly return, 
even as animatedness, envy, irritation, anxiety, stuplimity, paranoia, 
and disgust are mobilized to investigate a multiplicity of other rep-
resentational and theoretical dilemmas.