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Matt K. Matsuda, *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. viii + 232 pp. Figures, notes, and index. \$65 U.S., £39.50 (cl.). ISBN 0-19-516294-3; \$21.95 U.S., £13.50 (pb). ISBN 0-19-516295-1.

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In early March 2005, Oscar Temaru was elected president of a group of Pacific islands by the territory's parliament. His victory marked the second such vote in less than a year; he had lost the position following the nullification of contested elections in one electoral district. Negotiations between leaders of Temaru's party and those of the party formerly in power produced an agreement on new elections, which took place in February 2005. Just as the earlier election results had been cancelled by France's highest administrative authority, the Conseil d'État, the negotiations took place 10,000 miles from the election site, in Paris. For the territory in question is French Polynesia, and Temaru the leader of its pro-independence party, though he has said that independence from France is not on the *ordre du jour*.^[1] Just before leaving office, Temaru's predecessor, Gaston Flosse, named a public square in the capital, Papeete, after his political mentor and "friend," Jacques Chirac.^[2]

Such intersections of politics and affection form the core of Matt Matsuda's intriguing and very readable new study. For Matsuda, the Pacific offers a particularly compelling example of the way the French empire depended on artistic and philosophical frameworks to become "a curious concatenation of story and unrealized ambition of possession" (p. 7); he plays here on the multiple meanings of "story" (though the essential one is fiction) and of "possession," which encompasses certain kinds of intimate relations as well as imperial rule. With the exception of what the French called Indochina, colonized relatively late in the nineteenth century, the French presence in the Pacific was scattered and episodic, an assortment of *points d'appui* and *points de relâche* (two phrases taken from contemporary documents that refer respectively to areas of strength, generally with some form of military installation, and to rest stations) in a dispersed maritime and commercial network. Matsuda calls this network an "Empire of Love" (always capitalized) because he finds it recurrently configured by a language of passion and emotion, and because "love was historically implicated in practices of rule, resistance, and alliance" (p. 4).

Organized spatially rather than chronologically, the book includes both sites of French colonial rule (Tahiti, New Caledonia, Vietnam) and places where the French *imperium* was largely or wholly imaginary (Panama, Japan). This arrangement facilitates the exploration of different situations and types of encounter in the period roughly from 1840 to 1920: missionaries in Wallis and Futuna, archeologists laying claim to protection of the historical patrimony of Cambodia, engineers and speculators in the abortive French project for a Panama Canal. But Matsuda begins in the *métropole*, in the Atlantic port of Rochefort, in order to introduce the figure of Julien Viaud (1850-1923), better known under the pseudonym Pierre Loti. Along with his patron, the redoubtable Republican *salonnière* Juliette Adam (1836-1936), Loti, a naval officer, writer, and collector, serves as a unifying motif for the book's geographically disparate parts. His *Le mariage de Loti* (1878), besides its enduringly influential portrayal of a languorous, seductive South Pacific, played a crucial role in proposing marriage as a model for empire as mutual attraction. In his prolific career as a writer, Loti's imperial longings rested above all, for Matsuda, on a yearning for his own childhood, in which vibrant regional traditions, now threatened by Republican schooling and railroads, offered the exotic within France itself. This strand of sentiment tinged with bitterness and longing, quite distinct from the British imperial fictions of Rider Haggard or Rudyard Kipling, takes the reader from Tahiti, via Loti's disappointment with Angkor, to a

concluding chapter on Japan. There Loti's cynical, strikingly unromantic version of the Madame Butterfly story, *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), figures modernizing Meiji Japan as a place incapable of the emotional intimacy on which French civilization was ostensibly based.

Much of the material in *Empire of Love* will be familiar to students and scholars of French colonialism; although the book does present some new archival research, it does not rely heavily upon it. On one level, Matsuda is justified in saying that the fictions of Loti, Paul Gauguin, and others, as well as colonial administrative practices, effectively wrote the French conquest of the Society Islands in the 1840s, and the native resistance to it that lasted over half a century, out of history. Yet the first archivally-based history of that war, by the Australian scholar Colin Newbury, which focuses on the indigenous side but does not neglect the French, appeared a quarter century ago.^[3] Nor does Matsuda add much to the accounts of settler family life and the displacement of the Kanaks in Isabelle Merle's history of New Caledonia or to Ann Laura Stoler's discussion of mixed marriages in French Indochina, the foci of two of his chapters.^[4] Some small but telling errors, moreover, might be enough to send the fact-seeking reader back to earlier works. René Waldeck-Rousseau served as *président du conseil* or prime minister, not president of the Republic, and historians of French colonial ideology generally portray the shift from assimilation to association, which Matsuda attributes to Waldeck (p. 15), as far more gradual and incomplete. Matsuda has Léon Gambetta, who died in 1882, reviewing a book Juliette Adam published in 1905 (p. 24); the citation here has no note. More surprisingly for the author of *The Memory of the Modern*, Matsuda renders "les immémoriaux" as "those without memory" (p. 110); in French as in English, the word "immemorial" means prior to or before memory, with the strong implication of mythic or legendary, but it does not imply a lack of memory.^[5] The notes are also full of inconsistencies (identical titles cited with different publication data) and riddled with small errors; one expects better of Oxford University Press.

Of course, *Empire of Love* does not aspire to comprehensiveness, and its contribution deserves to be judged on its own terms, especially the persuasiveness of its central thesis. Unfortunately the argument itself remains somewhat elusive, and it too often assumes, rather than explores, the relationship between multiple discursive formations—love, affection, passion, desire—that have different senses in different languages and settings. Loti and Adam regarded patriotism as the highest and purest form of love, and Matsuda sets out well the permutations of love of country in their fictions as well as its echoes in journalism and official reports. Much of his argument rests on the ways naval officers, administrators, and colonial propagandists made instilling love of the *mère patrie* as the ultimate goal, and the strongest bulwark, of French colonialism. But "love" of an abstract object or entity, as Sigmund Freud long ago pointed out, has a metaphorical quality that reflects its own quality as a form of repression or projection, often of mourning for a lost love object.^[6] *Empire of Love* is at its best when it is elucidating the rhetorical context of the love in question, notably in the narrative construction by Catholic missionaries, and ultimately the Holy See itself, of the killing of a Marist priest on Futuna in 1843. At other points, the connection seems attenuated and coincidental: popular adulation of the engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps hardly makes any passion other than greed seem central to the Panama scandal.

At times, indeed, Matsuda's analysis seems based on simple mistranslation, as when he uses a report that the "désirs restreints" of the Kanaks did not give them enough motivation to work as the basis for observing that "the administration of desire would be integral to colonialism" (p. 117). But just as the French verb *aimer* encompasses the English "like" as well as "love," both the nominal and verb forms of *désir* can be translated as "wants," in the sense of needs. However one regards the mix of the biological and the psychological in sexual desire—and Matsuda never makes clear his own position—it is certainly not the only physical want that humans feel or express. I'm reminded of a snappily dressed young man in a Paris *patisserie* some years ago who, still making up his mind among the delicacies before him, began his order by slowly drawing out the words "Je désire." Of course the expression of love and the manipulation of physical desire can be, as Matsuda argues, harnessed to diverse forms of power; thus

Madame de Merteuil often refers, in Choderlos de Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses*, to her "empire" over the men attracted to her (the French word is usually translated as "power" or "dominion"). But for textual criticism to work in historical analysis, the reader must have confidence that the texts discussed produce, in the words of Susan Kent, "at least the meanings I identify."^[7] *Empire Of Love* does not always inspire such confidence.

Matsuda is a conscientious enough historian to point out that the force of French arms lay behind professions of attachment to the peoples in territories France wished to colonize or settle. He makes clear, too, that expressions of affection, even love, for France by the colonized came only from the few individuals able to frame them in French. The great strength of *Empire of Love* lies in its consistent effort to present (albeit necessarily in translation) the distinct voices of the Pacific peoples the French encountered. These stories often convey great richness and strength as well as the expected poignancy: the Kanak chief invoking ancestral bonds to urge rebellion against the French; the shades of resistance, from subtle to vocal, among Maohi chiefs to the routinization of French power in Polynesia; the Vietnamese tourist at Angkor, denied access to a whites-only hotel, who finds the ruins inspiring testimony to the possibility of a powerful Asian nationhood. On this basis alone, the book has much to offer upper-level undergraduate courses on colonialism and trans-Oceanic encounters. But the subtleties of some of its parts highlight the conceptual weakness of a book that centers its analysis on the "[negotiation of] tensions provoked by multiple appropriations of and struggles over *amour* for and against empire" (p. 4). Puzzling over what the concept of "love against" might mean, one is relieved to come across the words of a Vietnamese intellectual who, while calling on his own countrymen to show more mutual trust, exposes the hollowness of French protestations of affection (p. 156). For the colonized, there is no empire of love.

Even that wily (post-)colonial subject, Gaston Flosse, who exploited his connections with Gaullists in the *métropole* to fashion an electoral system that was supposed to (but did not) guarantee his party a monopoly on power, understood as much. In dedicating the Place Jacques Chirac, Flosse emphasized not his friendship with the president but the practical reasons for the territory to be grateful: a supplemental grant of 150 million euros per year from Paris since the closing of the French nuclear testing station in Polynesia in 1996. "Nous avons voulu," he declared, "rendre hommage à un homme qui a aidé et qui continue d'aider la Polynésie française."^[8] The Élysée, possibly embarrassed by a tribute so contrary to Republican tradition, had no comment.

NOTES

[1] On Temaru's program, "M. Temaru élu président de la Polynésie française," *Le Monde*, 16 June 2004; on the Conseil d'État's intervention and negotiations for the new election, "Polynésie—Accord de principe sur des élections générales," *Le Monde*, 27 November 2004, http://www.lemonde.fr/web/recherche_articleweb/1,13-0,36-388800, consulted 2 December 2004; on the second election results, "Oscar Temaru devrait retrouver lundi la présidence de la Polynésie," *Yahoo! France Actualités*, <http://fr.news.yahoo.com/050226/5/4amb9.html>, consulted 26 February 2005.

[2] "Gaston Flosse inaugure une place Jacques Chirac à Papeete," *Yahoo! France Actualités*, 26 February 2005, <http://fr.news.yahoo.com/050226/5/4am7z.html>, and "Inauguration de la place Jacques Chirac à Papeete," *Tahiti Presse*, 26 February 2005, <http://www.tahitipresse.pf/presse.cfm?action=open&type=1&idpr=9519>, both consulted 26 February 2005.

[3] Colin Newbury, *Tahiti Nui: Change and Survival in French Polynesia, 1767-1945* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980), especially chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8.

[4] Isabelle Merle, *Expériences coloniales: La Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853-1920)* (Paris: Belin, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia," in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 198-237. Though Matsuda pays tribute to Stoler's work and cites her in the relevant chapter, he does not cite this article.

[5] Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[6] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in James Strachey, trans. and ed., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), v. 14, p. 243.

[7] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 11.

[8] "Gaston Flosse inaugure une place Jacques Chirac à Papeete," *Yahoo! France Actualités*, 26 February 2005.

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See also Matt K. Matsuda's response to this review.

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