Rhythmic Modernism: Mimesis and the Short Story. **Helen Rydstrand. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. x + 247 (hardcover).**

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In the chapter on rhythm in Caroline Levine's *Forms*, she charts the complex ways in which rhythm overlays modern life:

> the rhythms of social experience, both modern and premodern, are multiple and heterogeneous, drawing their patterns from such disparate sources as seasonal changes, religious rituals, kinship norms, the demands of labor, reproduction, war, and changing technologies.[1]

Levine explains that rhythm unites the formal and the social, thereby "refus[ing] the distinction between aesthetic form and other forms of experience" by collectively engaging life's poetic, bodily, social, economic, technological, and global spheres (50, 53). For Levine, rhythm is significant because it imbricates reality through "repetition and difference, memory and anticipation," all of which are ubiquitous forces in human life (53). Her blending of rhythm and modernity signals rhythm's significance to the new modernist studies. Building on works such as *Sounding Modernism: Rhythm and Sonic Mediation in Modern Literature and Film* (2017), edited by Helen Groth, Penelope Hone, and Julian Murphet; Robert Brain's *The Pulse of Modernism: Physiological Aesthetics in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (2015); and Michael Golston's *Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science: Pound, Yeats, Williams, and the Modern Sciences of Rhythm* (2008), Helen Rydstrand's perceptive *Rhythmic Modernism* further establishes how rhythm is at the center of modernist culture.

Where modernism in general aims to bring the world's "intangible but vital rhythms out of obscurity," Rydstrand announces that it is literature in particular that most capably draws out these hidden forces, and that many of the most powerful examples of this are short stories.[2] Harnessing poetry's and the novel's most salient affects, the short story uniquely conflates brevity and content by

[1] Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 51. Subsequent references are made parenthetically.

[2] Helen Rydstrand, *Rhythmic Modernism: Mimesis and the Short Story* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), 1. Subsequent references are made parenthetically.

exposing how literary rhythm mimetically imparts life's fundamental elements while at the same time highlighting other modernist mainstays, such as the uses of epiphany. In this light, among modernism's many ruptured, compressed, elliptical, and fragmentary forms, Rydstrand perceives the short story as the "ultimate prose form" because it rhythmically encases charged moments to provide a closer look into the elaborate realities of war, new media, and urbanization (21). Here, through rhythm, the short story is not a rehearsal for the novel but an innovative narrative site unto itself. To explain, Rydstrand analyzes rhythm in D. H. Lawrence's, Katherine Mansfield's, and Virginia Woolf's short stories and theoretical writing.

In the Introduction and Chapter 1, Rydstrand helpfully realigns modernism's intellectual and aesthetic spheres by demonstrating how rhythm and the short story are mimetically central to modernist culture. Building on Henri Lefebvre's theory of rhythm as a paradox,[3] Rydstrand proposes that rhythmic patterns not only enable mimesis but also define it. In short, while rhythm is at once naturally occurring and artificially made, Rydstrand argues that mimesis creates something artificial in order to depict the natural. In effect, through paradox, rhythm and mimesis display a "shared grounding" that is more than coincidence (6). If the world is but an immense rhythmic construction or, quoting physicist Michio Kaku, a universe comprised of "tiny, vibrating strings," then mimesis—the thing responsible for looking deeper into the world's quintessence—must be, at its core, a rhythmic blending of the biological and environmental, the quantum and cosmic, the temporal and cyclical.[4] Though Rydstrand's study is not a scientific one, her survey highlights modernism's desire to comprehend reality's imperceptible strata, seen in how modernists used the affordances of science to engage the inner dynamics of bodies and texts.[5] New theories about acoustics, radiation, light, and gravity enabled modernist writers to express how the

[3] Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythm Analysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

[4] Michio Kaku, *Hyperspace: A Scientific Odyssey through Parallel Universes, Time Warps, and the Tenth Dimension* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), xii.

[5] See Michael Golston, *Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science: Pound, Yeats, Williams, and Modern Sciences of Rhythm* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); William Martin, *Joyce and the Science of Rhythm* (New York: Palgrave, 2012); and Kirsty Martin, *Modernism and the Rhythm of Sympathy: Vernon Lee, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

invisible was affective. In this view, physics provides modernist writers an alternative means to engage with life's unseen emotional and spiritual registers. This point also demonstrates how Rydstrand resists those who assert modernism is inherently anti-mimetic.[6] Instead, modernism's rhythmic purview more fully portrays reality. Furthermore, from this perspective, mimesis exhibits an ethical dimension. When short stories provide a reliable eye to the world, they merge ethics and representation. Essentially, while stories depict life's myriad subjectivities, they consequentially challenge readers to expand their capacity for compassion.[7] And while mimesis is essential to modernism's aesthetic and ethical gestures, it is the short story that provides the ideal conditions for verbally conjoining rhythm and mimesis. Therefore, Rydstrand views the modernist short story as central to a rhythmic mimesis because, more so than other genres, it fused narrative "realism" and "poetic lyricism" (20). The result of such a literary contrast, for modernists, was that the short story redoubled mimesis's concern with life's "fugitive registers of experience," which rhythmically occur in the body and the outer world (20). In these ways Rydstrand demonstrates how the short story mimetically and rhythmically uses the word to more authentically see the whole of life.

Chapter 2 further explores rhythm's spiritual and ethical mimetic underpinnings through D. H. Lawrence's short stories and critical work. Noting Lawrence's varying scope, which has garnered both admiration and denunciation, Rydstrand resituates Lawrence's position through rhythm, expressing a more coalesced vision of his assorted and contradictory themes. For Lawrence the nuances of selfhood, personal interrelations, social cohesion and discord, and the immensity of nature and the universe all happen through interdependent rhythms. Likewise, Lawrence's metaphysics about human perception and cosmic forces, or his

[6] See, for instance, Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds, *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890–1930* (New York: Penguin, 1991); Peter Nichols, "Apes and Familiars: Modernism, Mimesis, and the Work of Wyndham Lewis," *Textual Practice* 6.3 (1992): 421-38; David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis, and the Professionalization of English Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Emmett Stinson, *Satirizing Modernism: Aesthetic Autonomy; Romanticism, and the Avant-Garde* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017).

[7] For a contemporary argument in favour of mimetic ethics, see Gunter Garber and Christop Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

"thermodynamic aesthetic," exhibit an ethical component, rhythmically emerging through his short stories in "theme, structure, and syntax" in ways that suggest how to live according to a "comprehensive worldview" (61). One example is his story "Odour of Chrysanthemums," in which, Rydstrand argues, different registers of Lawrence's rhythmic system influence the whole of life, seen through a single night in the married life of Elizabeth Bates. Waiting late into the night for her husband to return from the mines, rhythm shapes her "personal experience[,] to that of her community, to the cycle of life and death" (76). Before long, Elizabeth learns her husband has died. Rydstrand demonstrates how the inner cycles of grief, what could appear as nothing more than the modern absurdities of chance, are instead the symbolic customs of community, society's technological habits, and the patterns of nature all working in tandem. In this way, Rydstrand shows Lawrence organizing human and non-human forces through a rhythmic universe.

Her scholarly exploration of the short story makes the New Zealand writer Katherine Mansfield an essential inclusion to Rydstrand's study, which forms the focus of Chapter 3. Although Mansfield is the "preeminent short story writer of British modernism" (26), Rydstrand asserts that her geographic location, gender, and preferred genre, in addition to her life prematurely ending, all contribute to scholars often considering her a peripheral figure. In response, Rydstrand's work seeks to relocate Mansfield at the center of literary modernism. Despite Mansfield's current standing, her literary innovations, rhythmic focus, and dedication to the short story speak well to *Rhythmic Modernism*'s argument. Conflating natural and subjective events, Mansfield expresses how "rhythms of the ordinary" permeate "daily habit and routine" for which "patterns of thought, speech, and action" expose the nuances of identity and one's connection to the world (101). One such story is "Miss Brill," which recounts the protagonist's Sunday routine attending a park concert. Since life's inward and outward truths are not mutually exclusive, Mansfield mimetically embeds "innate rhythm[s]" in Miss Brill's voice that Rydstrand reads as being like the cadence of "a musical composition," portrayed through the pace of her thought and speech (117-18). Rydstrand examines how Mansfield, by substituting plot with verbal affect to explore subjective states, is in conversation with Lawrence's rhythmic intentions. This chapter promises to be an important contribution to Mansfield studies.

Rounding out her book, Rydstrand turns to Virginia Woolf in Chapter 4. Even though Woolf is best known for her novels, what makes Rydstrand's analysis refreshing is her attention to the often-neglected aspects of Woolf's oeuvre. Since her experimental narratives focus on characters' subjective fluctuations, reading Woolf's works for rhythm is an appealing concept, especially considering her belief that a "hidden order" orchestrated art and life (149). Ranging from the infinitesimal to the infinite, Woolf often imports life's vast currents to observe individual perspectives, mediated through the rhythmic interplay of social life. Such narrative acts, Rydstrand points out, involve Woolf mimetically illustrating complex rhythmic processes in order to display how "perception" and "consciousness" take part in "apprehending reality" (150). Regarding this rhythmic juncture of the external and internal, Rydstrand asserts that Woolf saw the merging of poetry and prose as an opportunity to aesthetically represent how everyday life contained unseen realities. Until now, the primary scholarly focus has been on Woolf's novels, observing how she infuses rhythmic qualities in long form. For example, in *The Voyage Out* Woolf juxtaposes music's rhythmic and repetitive qualities with images of water, affecting her characters through a kind of aesthetic and political tide. However, Rydstrand argues that these rhythmic strands are most present in Woolf's short fiction, making this genre, as with Lawrence and Mansfield, a vital one for understanding modern literary expression as rhythmically mimetic. In Woolf's short fiction rhythm can no longer work unexposed. Thus, in her short stories rhythm "almost exclusively" focuses on one's subjectivity and personal development (162). "Slater Pins," for example, focuses on young Fanny Wilmot's ideas amid the sensations of her gradual sexual attraction to her piano teacher, Miss Julia Craye (163). This attention to rhythm most strikingly reveals the struggle between conventional and experimental modes of not just narrative but life itself, which signify the difficulty that came with rethinking non-normative female identity and its place in modern history.

Overall, Rydstrand's reading of Lawrence, Mansfield, and Woolf is a remarkable contribution to many fields: modernist studies, narrative theory, the history of the short story, and rhythmic studies. Her book deserves a wide readership and I highly recommend it to anyone interested in modernist fiction and the study of rhythm in general.