Taylor, Julie, ed. *Modernism and Affect.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015. ISBN 9780748693252. 240 pp. £70.00.

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Modernism is not typically associated with emotion, with affect, with feeling. Modernist literature is thoughtful, stylistically challenging—sharp and unforgiving, in contrast to the comfortable, wide-ranging "baggy monster" of its nineteenth-century predecessor. In such intellectual confrontations, we might assume, modernist literature cares little for the reader and the work's emotional impact. Indeed, as T. S. Eliot famously and acerbically argued in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919),

> Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion: it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things."[1]

And yet, in the turn to trauma and other negative affects over recent decades, modernist literature and art have been particularly well illuminated. Marked as it is by two world wars, the development of deadly mass weaponry, and important socio-cultural and political changes in identity politics, the modernist period is one in which feeling was, perhaps, too much—in which reason and intellect were, in fact, sites of "escape from emotion" which, in a Freudian reading, might threaten total psychological collapse. For Eliot to claim that the "emotion of art is impersonal" is to give art the space to reflect on the overwhelming emotion of the modernist period. Crucially, then, Julie Taylor points out that, in opposition to the cold, "cerebral" versions of modernism with which we might be familiar, "feeling is not opposed to thinking but rather feeling bad becomes a knowledge-producing activity."[2] Although the opposition between thinking and feeling is often a gendered one, derived from Romantic and Enlightenment principles of male intellect and female sentiment (3), modernity, Taylor notes, has always been associated with emotion, and especially with its "shocks, stresses and

[1] T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 21.

[2] Julie Taylor, ed., *Modernism and Affect* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 11. Subsequent citations made parenthetically.

excitements" (1). Modernist art thus became a space in which writers worked through or expressed those emotions, and in which they influenced or even guided their readers. Indeed, it is in this way that we might see Freud's pleasure principle at work in modernism, as the unpleasure of cultural trauma is transformed, through art, into the pleasure of working through. Interrogating the distinctions and connections between thinking and feeling, and in thinking about feeling, is thus critical to the essays included in *Modernism and Affect*.

It is on this point that Taylor begins her introduction to this edited collection. Citing recent re-evaluations of Eliot's essay in particular, and of modernist "feeling" in general, Taylor argues that attending to affect "has helped provide new paradigms, vocabularies and shades of distinction as we re-think modernist feeling" (6). Taylor positions *Modernism and Affect* as an extension of this broader move in humanities research, a project concerned with the multiplicities of feeling as much as with the multiplicities of modernism. Indeed, as Michael Levenson recently put it, "[w]e have more Modernism now, as well as more flexible and perspicuous ways of interpreting it."[3] In this sense, it is clear that Taylor's collection follows earlier studies in a similar vein: Patricia Rae's collection *Modernism and Mourning* (2003) and Tammy Clewell's collection *Modernism and Nostalgia: Bodies, Locations, Aesthetics* (2013), most notably. Where *Modernism and Affect* differs, however, is in its attention to "positive" emotions, such as happiness and love, rather than being limited to the negative emotions such as anxiety and trauma more typically associated with modernism. The move is an important one. As long ago as 1985 Ricardo J. Quinones made the observation that

> Modernism has been characterised by its "negativity"; its stance being essentially adversarial vis-à-vis human institutions, or, more radically, in regard to meaning itself and the assumption of any position. Modernism breaths a kind of discontent, according to this view, and consequently,

[3] Michael Levenson, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-8 (1).

> and almost by definition, is committed to negating any prevalent style or position, including its own.[4]

The essays in Taylor's collection which contradict this position—including those by Christos Hajiyiannis, Joanne Winning, Maria-Daniella Dick, Doug Haynes, and Justus Nieland—are therefore particularly valuable for the way in which we understand more (of and about) modernism. Indeed, for Dick, the representation of positive affect in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) involves attending to the "extra-linguistic" (182), the excesses of literature—the ways in which it exceeds projects of meaning-making.

For Taylor as for many others working in the field of affect theory, the distinction between thinking and feeling is not the only important one to be made. Considering the modulations of meaning between emotion, affect, feeling and passion is also crucial: "we should not assume," Taylor notes, "that this work is united by a single, shared lexicon" (6). Indeed, the relationship between emotion and affect is associated with the relationship between mind and body: whereas the former term describes feeling as it is experienced by the subject, affect describes the outward display of that emotion. In choosing this term as the title of the collection, Taylor emphasises the way in which the body's expression of emotion is critical to the studies included. In Paul Atkinson and Michelle Duffy's essay on modern dance and affect, in particular, we find the way in which the body (the medium of the art work) delivers, intensifies, and even suppresses emotion. Modern dance, they argue, emphasised the way in which the body's movement offers a corporeal communication or performance of affect. Winning, too, in her multidisciplinary study of literature, visual art, and architecture, considers the artwork as a '"transitional space" into which affect might be projected and contained' (112). John Attridge's essay on Henry James explores James's *The Awkward Age* (1899) in similar terms, and considers the novel—influenced by theatre and dialogue narratives, as well as nineteenth-century forays into mental sciences—as a paradoxical representation of the psychological through the physical. The concept of the interaction between body and mind, affect and emotion, as it appears in each essay is reminiscent of

[4] Ricardo J. Quinones, *Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 250.

Virginia Woolf's point about innovations in modernist literature in "Character and Fiction" (1924), that characters are made real not by their association with or representation by material things—"freehold villas and copyhold estates"—but by their memories, reflections, feelings, personality.[5] Character, in other words, is a mode of displaying affect, of imparting emotion. In the body of the modernist character the project of modernist affect is writ small.

Both Robbie McLaughlan and Abbie Garrington, however, see emotion and feeling as a process of becoming or formation. Indeed, for McLaughlan, Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927) posits the Freudian death drive as an affect which responds to the trauma of becoming or perpetual feeling—all "artistic creation," he argues, "is an expression of an unconscious desire for destruction' and 'a yearning for a transcendental form of obliteration" (41). Doug Haynes's essay on modernist happiness follows a similar trajectory, arguing for happiness as "dialectically negative […] discontented with the status quo" (191). In contrast, Garrington sees the body's affective process of becoming as a model for connection, pulling "individual identity and intimate bodily experience into relation with others" (75). Nieland's chapter, too, and in contrast to models of the alienating urban space, focuses on the desire for connection as it is figured in modern architecture. The tension between destruction and connection, alienation and massification, is a familiar one in modernist studies, but that it takes its form in the stylistic concerns of narrative and spatial affect is a new take on the discussion.

Some of the essays in *Modernism and Affect* rehearse the important relationship between emotion and ethics: with reference to T. E. Hulme, Hadjiyiannis argues for an affective reading of war poetry which rejects pacifism; Taylor's contribution attends to the ways in which affect might intersect with performance, animation, and puppetry in African American poetry of the modernist period; while Richard Cole examines emotion as a form of political control in French poetry. In all three the body under duress, suffering oppression or repression, finds its expression in the writing of affect.

[5] Virginia Woolf, *Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 50.

Part of the importance of Taylor's collection lies in its interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary focus. The decision is a useful one for encouraging reflection on the ways in which modernist art in all its forms can be seen to grapple with similar issues, particularly those to do with affect and emotion. However, this split attention may also function as an impediment to the reader unfamiliar with particular research specialisations, and the collection's lack of an overt structure gathering together the shared concerns of particular essays adds to this difficulty. Nevertheless, this is a minor criticism to make of this otherwise finely considered collection, itself an important new contribution to our multiple understandings of both modernism and affect.