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Author: Jane Costin

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point, Martin agrees with feminist critics like Suzanne Clarke, who argued that the idea that modernist literature was hostile to sentiment and sympathy was grounded on the association of modernism with “a certain type of masculinity” (13). In a way, Martin overshadows a part of these writers’ work, too. She focuses on their fiction, leaving out Lee’s and Lawrence’s travel writings. I would suggest that works like Lee’s *Genius Loci* (1899) and Lawrence’s *Twilight in Italy* (1916), for instance, reveal a sympathetic, quasi-pantheistic attitude towards landscapes and places. Martin’s argument about modernism and the rhythms of sympathy, however, is convincingly and interestingly developed throughout the book.

Abbie Garrington, *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing*.

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Reviewed by Jane Costin

Abbie Garrington’s study has ambitious aims to illuminate and explain the move towards the haptic that she detects in modernist literature, and to establish that “the haptic ... does not just matter to modernism, but is a peculiarly modernist matter” (19). Quickly identifying the human hand as the “poster boy” of the haptic (16), Garrington begins by discussing the significance of the protagonist’s hand in Sinclair Lewis’s 1922 novel *Babbitt*, showing how Babbitt “falls out of touch, both literally and metaphorically, with his surrounding community” (3). She then goes on to expand our understanding of the word “haptic”. This is usually thought of as solely related to a sense of touch, but Garrington views it as an “umbrella term” that denotes one or more of four complex somatic experiences: “touch (the active or passive experience of the human

skin, subcutaneous flesh, viscera and related nerve endings); kinaesthesia (the body's sense of its own movement); proprioception (the body's sense of its orientation in space); and the vestibular sense (that of balance reliant upon the inner ear)" (16). Acknowledging the difficulty of explaining the term "haptic", Garrington discusses this notion with reference to Rebecca West's novels *The Return of the Soldier* and *Sunflowers*, the thinking of Walter Benjamin (identified as "perhaps modernism's best-known interrogator of the haptic" [20]), the Viennese art critic Alois Riegl, and Aldous Huxley's exploration of the "feelies" in *Brave New World*. This then leads Garrington to make a link between sculpture and touch through her exploration of Johann Gottfried Herder's work *Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative Dream* (1778), and to give her perspective on the connections between the haptic and film.

The larger part of the book is then devoted to analysis of the haptic in texts by four modernist authors: James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and D. H. Lawrence. Garrington presents Joyce's *Ulysses* as an example of self-touching or "masturbatory modernism", then, in discussing Virginia Woolf's novel, *The Waves*, she places emphasis on the palm reading Woolf experienced whilst she was revising the manuscript for this book and her interest in "motorcar kinaesthetics". Consecutive chapters on Richardson and Lawrence offer an interesting contrast because, as Garrington observes, "it is Richardson that moves closest ... to the film theory that dominates contemporary discussion of that 'haptic' term" (142), whereas Lawrence "stands opposed to the subject of my previous chapter" (156). Explaining how Lawrence condemned the visual culture that technology such as the camera encouraged, she highlights how he "mobilises touch to argue for the place and potency of the knowing hand in what he reads as a predominantly visual culture" (156).

It is no doubt Garrington's recognition of Lawrence's well-known preoccupation with ideas of touch that prompts her confession that his work "is a catalogue of haptic material too vast

to rehearse in detail here” (155). Nevertheless, she attempts to give some sense of Lawrence’s wide-ranging engagement with this subject by listing examples from his novels, short stories, plays and poetry that exhibit this tendency. She also makes some useful observations about the way Lawrence connects touch to salvation and his links with Riegl before turning her attention to his novella, *St Mawr*, and his short story, ‘The Blind Man’.

When considering *St Mawr*, Garrington notes its concern with the contrasts between “the visual and the visionary” (156); between Mrs Witt’s retreat into a merely visual life that lacks any deeper consciousness and St Mawr’s dark eyes that “denote ... his otherworldliness ... and his connection to other times” (159). However, her fuller analysis of ‘The Blind Man’ allows her to make a useful comparison between Maurice, a casualty of war whose life has been strangely enriched by his blindness, and the blind man in Joyce’s *Ulysses* whose similar circumstance has diminished his existence. In her conclusion to the Lawrence chapter Garrington stresses the biographical aspect of ‘The Blind Man’ suggesting that “Lawrence, despite the wide range of uses to which he invites us to put his blind man, is at root engaged in a work of self-portraiture” (168). But this would seem to be only a fleeting précis of Michael L. Ross’s more detailed essay, ‘The Mythology of Friendship: D. H. Lawrence, Bertrand Russell, and “The Blind Man”’ (1971), which carefully explains how ‘The Blind Man’ reflects the relationship between Lawrence and Russell in 1915–16.¹ Garrington is clearly familiar with this text because, curiously, she cites it, rather than the Cambridge Edition of the *Letters*, as her source for Lawrence’s admission to Russell that he was “struggling in the dark ... and cut off from everybody & everything”, which she suggests indicates how Lawrence resembles the blind man of his story (168). However, this would seem a somewhat impoverished reading of this letter, which Ross uses to place Lawrence’s comments within the framework of his developing ideas about the symbolic relevance of light and darkness. In addition, Ross’s association of this letter with a later one (also to

Russell), that sets out Lawrence's ideas of blood-consciousness, enables him to illuminate how "In the way it links together darkness, blood-knowledge, and sexuality, it [the letter] strongly foreshadows the path he would follow in 'The Blind Man'".² Furthermore, Ross takes care to highlight the important connection between 'The Blind Man' and Lawrence's thinking about blood-consciousness, which he discusses in some detail. This aspect of the story is also explored in depth in a more recent essay by Nils Claesson that Garrington does not cite.³ Curiously, Garrington avoids any exploration of Lawrence's ideas of blood-consciousness, which is a pity as they provide some of his most persuasive expressions of sympathetic touch. Whilst this is perhaps most clearly expressed in Lawrence's observations of the ancient Etruscans in *Sketches of Etruscan Places*, it is also evident in much of his writing. For example, Lawrence suggests this sensitive connection in his descriptions of the Cornish: "There is a rare ... quality of gentleness in some of them – a sort of natural, flowing gentleness which I love" and "at last I have found a place where some of the men and women really love each other – with a fine softness and rareness that delights me" (2L 495, 496–7).

Indeed, a feature of Garrington's book is that it breathlessly skims over numerous ideas, makes many (sometimes tenuous) connections and (on occasion) questionable statements, but without sufficient exploration of many of them. Garrington then dwells at length on other topics – such as Pygmalion, manicure or palm reading – though adding little new information to points she has already made. In her survey of other work on the haptic, Garrington claims that Constance Classen's edited collection *The Book of Touch* (2005) is one of the books that she has found "influential" (47). This authority certainly seems to extend to Garrington's choice of a front cover for her work, which is strikingly similar to Classen's book. But, unfortunately, it does not stretch to the style of writing, for the clarity that makes Classen's work a joy to read is too often replaced by Garrington's somewhat overworked and frequently convoluted prose.

Nevertheless, for all its stylistic flaws, Garrington's book does shine a light on the connection between modernism and the haptic and concludes with a useful appendix of tactile terminologies. However, in order to establish that "the haptic ... is a peculiarly modernist matter" (19), a much longer book analysing a wider range of modernist texts would be required, but then this slim volume only claims to make a start on that process.

¹ Michael L. Ross, 'The Mythology of Friendship: D. H. Lawrence, Bertrand Russell, and "The Blind Man"', in *English Literature and British Philosophy*, ed. S. P. Rosenbaum (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1971), 285–315.

² *Ibid.*, 298.

³ Nils Clausson, 'Practicing Deconstruction Again: Blindness, Insight and the Lovely Treachery of Words in D. H. Lawrence's "The Blind Man"', *College Literature*, vol. 34.1 (Winter 2007), 106–28.