Modernism and Empathy

An International and Interdisciplinary Conference

15-16 June 2018

The Education University of Hong Kong

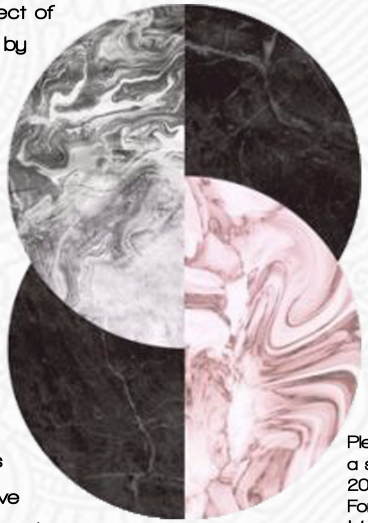
Keynote Speakers

Prof. Derek Matravers (The Open University)

Prof. Patrick C. Hogan (University of Connecticut)

Call for papers

The newly-established Modernist Studies in Asia (MSIA) network calls for abstracts for its inaugural conference on the subject of 'Modernism and Empathy'. The term 'empathy' was coined by psychologist Edward Bradford Titchener in 1909 as a translation of the German term *Einfühlung*, derived from an 1873 doctoral thesis by Robert Vischer on the subject of aesthetic form. Caught between aesthetic theory and psychology at its origins, the subsequent evolution of the concept coincided and intersected with the rise of literary modernism. We invite papers which explore the contours of what Meghan Marie Hammond has recently called 'empathic modernism', as defined against an earlier form of 'sympathetic realism'; that is to say, the degree to which a wide range of modernist writers sought to eliminate the sympathetic distance that realist writers tended to cultivate through offering an immersive access to the minds of their characters while representing cognitive processes in action. We equally welcome papers on those writers, most famously Bertolt Brecht, who advocated estrangement techniques, denying interior access or emotional coalescence on the part of readers or audiences. Building on emerging interests in affect, cognitive literary studies and the ethics of care, this conference sets out to examine the alignments/antagonisms between modernism and empathy in multiple ways. It further aims to stimulate discussion around the vexed question of the moral efficacy of empathetic understanding where modernist writing and its imagined readers are concerned. We also encourage papers which move beyond literary works to address questions of empathy in other areas of modernist cultural production.



Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Empathy and reading
- Authorial empathy
- Empathy and narrative technique
- Selective/Exclusive empathy
- Affective vs Cognitive Empathy
- The Limits/Dangers of Empathy
- Modernism, Empathy and Suffering
- Distinctions Between Empathy and Sympathy/Compassion/Pity
- Modernist Empathy and Traditions of Sentimentalism
- Empathy and Cognitive Science
- Empathy and Altruism
- Manipulation of Empathy
- Modernism and the Emotions
- Empathy and Colonialism/Post-Colonialism
- Empathy and Radio/Film
- Empathy and Epistemology
- Empathy and Imagination
- Empathy and Telepathy
- Empathy, Cultural Identity and Otherness

Please send 200-word abstracts for 20-minute papers along with a short bio to modernismempathy@gmail.com by January 15 2018.
For further information, please visit our website:
https://modernismempathy.wixsite.com/conference