

Berberich, Christine, Neil Campbell and Roberts Hudson (eds.) 2015. *Affective Landscapes in Literature, Art and Everyday Life: Memory, Place and the Senses*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing. 251 pages.

The affective turn is part of a long line of turns in the humanities such as the linguistic and the cultural turn of the 90s and some more recent ones: the ethical, the material, or the animal turn. These turns create a shift in theoretical perceptions leading to new methodological approaches. So far, affect has generated a varied and diverse application. Its importance was marked by publications such as *The Affective Turn* (2007) or *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010). The high interest in this evasive and complex theoretical term is induced by the desire to capture that what is beyond reason since “[t]he importance of affect rests upon the fact that in many cases the message consciously received may be of less import to the receiver of that message than his or her non-conscious affective resonances with the source of the message.” (Shouse 2005: n.pg.). However, as this collection illustrates, capturing these ‘non-conscious affective resonances’ is quite challenging as it involves the translation of subtle bodily reactions to the logic of language. Though affect cannot be fully described by language, since unlike emotions and feelings, it is a purely bodily response, ‘a moment of unformed and unstructured potential’ (Shouse 2005: n.pg.), it is important to engage with its examination as it ‘plays an important role in determining the relationship between our bodies, our environment, and others’ (Shouse, 2005: n.pg.). Thus, the contributors of this collection, who explore affective landscapes in their various forms, encounter a significant yet rewarding challenge.

Framed by the writings of two eminent theorists, Kathleen Stewart and David Crouch, this collection explores the multiplicity of ways in which our perceptions and emotions shape the spaces, be it real or imaginary, we embody or envision. In their writings, both theoreticians attempt to capture the elusive meaning of affect and to grasp the moment before it transcribes into defined emotions. While Stewart presents her conflicting feelings induced by her ‘being in the landscape’ of her hometown in a poetic prose, Crouch’s text has a different formula. Examining the theoretical field of the concept, he draws an academic map of affect’s subtle definitions. Penned in divergent styles, these two articles reach a similar understanding of affect as they capture the

concept in its everyday manifestations. As a conclusion, Crouch 'bring[s] reflections around affect towards the numerous small actions, living and affects in terms of everyday life' (241). He also demonstrates how the combination of affect, particularly ordinary affect and landscape undermines the relation to landscape as a mere background to our everyday mundane lives.

Furthermore, the 'Introduction' written by the editors and the essay presenting the dialogue between Richard Keating and Sue Porter form another framework since both writings reflect upon the politics of affect, a topic that, although not explored openly in the other articles, simmers just below the surface. The editors highlight 'the generative power' (2) and 'the quiet and gentle politics' (4) of affect. The generative power is created by the concept's various interpretations as it evades 'a single definition or line of enquiry' (2). Its 'quiet and gentle politics' is not concerned with meta-and grand narratives. On the contrary, it is interested in disruptions, in the 'the aleatory dynamics of experience' (3). The politics of affect emerges from the individual's immersion into the world and the 'various feelings of belonging and becoming in space, and in [her/his] relations to its complexities and frustrations' (5). Keating and Porter's essay is one of the best examples of the gentle politics affect can inspire. The dialogue between them constitutes a self-reflection forming each other's perceptions.

The deeply personal involvement and connection of the authors with their subject matter facilitates the analysis of affect. For example, the articles by Victoria Hunter and Katharine Norman present researches based upon (their own) experiments of embodying particular spaces. Hunter examines the interaction between dancer and landscape in two cases of 'site-dance explorations' (190). The beach constitutes a particular site as it offers 'the opportunity to dig into the landscape' (192), to closely engage with it by playing with sand, feeling the waves or walking barefoot on pebbles. The ten dancers were asked to perform several exercises in order to 'excavate the site' by discovering its texture, weight shifts, rhythm and horizon line. She then concentrates on building a strong theoretical framework that allows her to excavate the emotional and affective aspects of 'immediate reciprocal relationship between body and site' (202).

From Hunter's kinetic and wide coastal-sites, Norman's article transports us into the enclosed spaces of her home. As a composer and

sound artist, she is interested in ‘what part listening can play in the affective landscapes of everyday life’ (208). The familiar sonic background of our everyday life requires special attention. However, once listening is incorporated in exploring ‘how the space feels’ (210), its affective and emotional role unfolds. While Hunter considers the connection between personal histories and affect, Norman, reflecting upon her work *London E17*, regards how the affectiveness of landscape is shaped, in this case through sounds, not only by the individual but also by a community. The topic of the interactivity between the private and the public connects this article not only to Hunter’s but also to Keating and Porter’s dialogue on how personal affective responses to landscape can be turned into catalysts of local activism.

Similarly to Norman, Andy Lock examines his own photographic work of ‘Britain’s quotidian, post-war landscapes’ (114). He considers the tension created between photography’s typified objective realism and the subjective, ‘irrational potentials’ (113) it can induce. The mundane reappears again in this essay, as Lock employs some of the concepts of the British ethnographic movement Mass-Observation, which focused on the examination of everyday objects and activities. The process of detailed observation breaks the established familiarity of everyday life and brings forth its surreal and radical potentials. Lock aims to rediscover the ‘intangible frisson’ (116) of capturing and viewing architectural photographs depicting buildings from the 1950s and 1960s. While he presents a valuable analysis of how this frisson is formed, he does not apply the term affect even though the topic he discusses – the surreal feeling, the ‘intangible frisson’ of everyday landscape images – strongly intertwines with feelings of affect.

Several articles in the collection do not immerse in a deeper analysis of their topic through the lens of affect. For example, the first two essays rather focus on the symbolic and cultural values attached to homelands in peripheral cultures such as the Irish and the Scottish. Deirdre O’Byrne examines the poetical figures of loss and lack used to ‘vividly conjure the very landscape [. . .] that they mourn the absence of’ (32) in the work of three women poets of Irish descent. David Dunn presents the cultural appropriations of Scottish landscapes in the television programmes *Castaway 2000* and the soap opera *Machair*. Though in the introduction of the article, he identifies the modality of affect culturally embedded in this ‘harsh’ Scottish landscape as ‘an absent landscape of remote

sentimental affect' (34), the article's focus shifts towards the cultural representational politics of these Scottish islands.

The difficulties of applying the term affect in various interpretations and analysis, however, should not be considered a defect. On the contrary, by illustrating the struggle to capture the modalities of affect, the collection subscribes to the term's elusiveness and its constant shifts. Thus, instead of regarding it as a deficiency, this 'flaw' becomes helpful for all those engaging in research on affect. However, a rather less controversial and valuable aspect of this book is the multifarious combinations of affect and landscapes presented. Reading through the whole collection, we are transported from Irish and Scottish landscapes to roadside crash shrines in Texas and motorways intertwining with countryside roads in England; from estates in the American West to suburbs in Chicago, New York and Britain; from South Staffordshire to the Great Plains and Antarctica; from the East Yorkshire coast and West Wittering Beach in West Sussex to Katharine Norman's house in London E17.

The essays also use very different primary sources such as poems, novels, photographs, documentaries, nature writings, performance art, a 'composed audio journey' (215) and walks in the countryside. Due to this large variety of applications, the collection succeeds in presenting the complexity and the generative power of affect. These elements of affect unfold as the authors discuss its 'quiet and gentle politics', its convoluted interconnections not only with spaces but also with memories, the body, the senses, language and the ordinary. Moreover, this edited volume also demonstrates the effect of deeply personal involvement in academic writing, when the researcher is no longer an objective observer but rather becomes what Kathleen Stewart describes as 'a point of impact, curiosity, and encounter' (236). This kind of approach seems to stimulate a more rewarding engagement with affect and substantiates Sara Ahmed's assertion that 'to be affected by something is to evaluate that thing' (Ahmed 2010: 31).

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