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The Persistence of Modernism: Loss and Mourning in the Twentieth Century

Madelyn Detloff

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The Persistence of Modernism: Loss and Mourning in the Twentieth Century Madelyn Detloff Modernism is commonly perceived as a response to the cataclysmic events of the early twentieth century. To what extent then can we explain its continued persistence? Madelyn Detloff argues for modernism's relevance to our own age, a time of escalating loss, retribution and desire. Some of the social formations that inspired modernist cultural production - xenophobic nationalism and imperial hubris - are still with us. Writers such as Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein, who saw themselves as outsiders with a precarious sense of belonging to their dominant culture, are, Detloff claims, still able to give us insight into our contemporary narratives of loss, recovery, memory and nation. Detloff extends her conceptualisation to include current writers like Pat Barker and Hanif Kureshi, who have taken up the modernist thread in their own work; the result is an ambitious study that will appeal to all students and scholars of modernism.

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