Introduction
Modernism and Its Masculinities

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Modernism and Masculinity brings together a collection of essays concerned with the varied dimensions and manifestations of masculinity in the modernist period. The volume reframes the critical terrain of modernist studies by expanding the gendered portrait of modernity through the lens of masculinity. It offers a renewed opportunity to interrogate some of the distinctive features of modernist literary and cultural expression by attending to masculinity as an unstable horizon of gendered ideologies, subjectivities and representational practices. The focused perspectives that these essays bring to the gendered dimensions of modernist literary and cultural production has been made possible by the interdisciplinary field of masculinity studies, which has produced rich conceptual models for the critical analysis of men, masculinity and male privilege. The approaches and arguments of the essays in this collection are nevertheless as diverse as the masculinities that were played out across the early decades of the twentieth century.

Masculinity Studies

Academic and popular accounts of men and masculinity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been routinely marked by a rhetoric of 'crisis' as a way to frame the threatened nature of masculinity, be they bourgeois or working class masculinities deemed 'at risk' from the encroachments of newly visible marginal groups – women, homosexuals, and ethnic, racial and other cultural minorities. This has led some scholars to question the adequacy of the term 'crisis' in light of the common assumption that masculinity in any given historical period will always be marked by instability and contestation.[1] This still begs the question, however, as to why the concept of crisis is rarely applied to femininity. What is it about masculinity and the masculine that recurrently assumes the rhetorical force of vulnerability, anxiety and even extinction? Given the history of male hegemony,

masculinity had largely (until recently) remained unmarked, a transparent and under-scrutinised category.[2] Subsequent attempts to examine the category of masculinity have precipitated a defensive response to a perceived questioning of authority (a reactionary crisis) *and* a constructive attention to the historical complexities and transformations of manhood, masculinity and male privilege. R. W. Connell's sociological analyses have been instructive in developing concepts of masculinity informed by empirical research based on the experiences of men and boys but also firmly rooted in the political goals of social justice. Connell's work was instrumental in defining the field of masculinity studies throughout the 1980s and 1990s, in part because she developed a series of critical concepts that analysed the systemic effects of male privilege and power even while exploring men's experiences of inadequacy and vulnerability.[3] Expanding the conceptual ground of the field through the identification of distinct formations of masculinity ('hegemonic', 'marginalized' and 'complicit'), Connell's work drew attention to the historically mutable nature of masculinity alongside the contemporary social forces that shape the heterogeneous experiences and practices of being a man.

The post-structuralist turn in feminist and queer scholarship sparked an important trans-disciplinary focus that expanded the critical terrain and the political goals of masculinity studies. Drawing on a range of critical tools, including deconstruction, psychoanalytic models, Althusser's theory of ideology, and Foucault's genealogical analysis of modern sexuality, feminist scholarship began to scrutinise more closely masculine forms of power ingrained within the sex/gender system. Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Homosocial Desire* (1985) brought a valuable literary focus to the study of masculinity, defining literature as an important site for understanding the social and sexual bonds that inform the techniques of power and inequality. In a series of close readings of canonical eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary works, Sedgwick examined 'the structure of men's relationships with other men'; the way male social bonds (rivalry, friendship, entitlement, mentorship and homosexuality) facilitated the exchange of women, real or imagined, in ways that empower men and regulate sexual desire and gendered identity.[4] The literature of Western modernity reveals, according to Sedgwick, 'a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power.'[5] While the omnipresence of male homosocial desire rests on the prohibition of men choosing each other as sexual objects, the resulting alignment of homophobia and misogyny functions as a powerful oppressive of

'the feminine' in both men and women. The wider impact of Sedgwick's work for masculinity studies was to bring a fine-tuned literary eye to the analysis of the micro-rituals of power embedded in the social worlds of literary works, moving beyond Foucault's often-broad historical generalisations, which invariably occluded the gendered dimensions of disciplinary power.

With the work of Judith Butler, the idea of crisis or at least 'trouble' has assumed an altogether different turn, signalling the impossibility of a coherent gendered subject and its stable alignment with a sexed body. For Butler, the performative dimension of gendered behaviour allows us to see masculinity and femininity as constitutive effects of 'the regulatory practice of gender coherence' rather than as fixed forms of sexual difference.[6] As Butler argues, 'There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results.'[7] According to Butler's argument, gender both constrains and enables particular expressions and practices that are always tied to the contingencies of time and place. The publication of *Gender Trouble* (1990) assisted in reconceptualising masculinity as tenuous and fragile, a 'stylized repetition of acts' rather than the expression of a core gendered ideal.[8] The provisional nature of gendered performance proffered the possibility of less oppressive and obligatory forms of masculinity, ones in which feminist and queer theorists might actively participate in shaping.[9] Butler's work prompted a renewed attention to the historical operations of masculinity and the dismantling of what Butler defined as the 'illusion of continuity between gender, sexuality and desire' that has served to define heterosexuality as the obligatory sexual orientation. Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (1998) offered an important corrective to that illusion by uncovering a barely visible history of female masculinities, from nineteenth-century invert practices to twentieth-century drag-king performances. In distancing masculinity from its immediate association with men, Halberstam uncovered the diversity of identifications, desires and practices that inform gendered identity. Kaja Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992) similarly turned to marginal and deviant masculine subjectivity in order to expose what she calls the 'dominant fiction' of conventional or phallic modes of masculinity. Investigating male subjectivities that 'eschew Oedipal normalization' in a range of literary and filmic texts, Silverman analysed the psychoanalytic vicissitudes (castration, alterity and specularity) that define a non-phallic openness to the domain of femininity. As Silverman argues, 'saying "no" to power necessarily implies achieving some kind of reconciliation with …

femininity'(3). Providing an important *rapprochement* between psychoanalytic feminism and ideological critique, Silverman insisted on the importance of fantasy – unconscious desire and identification – alongside the role of ideology in the formation of subjectivity. Her analysis offered an illuminating account of conventional masculinity's fantasy of exemplarity, a 'murderous logic' that rests on a belief in 'the commensurability of penis and phallus, actual and symbolic father' (46). But as Silverman's rich case studies reveal, desire and identification also deviate from the expected paths and delineations that make up the 'dominant fiction' of phallic masculinity. Silverman therefore provided an important defence of feminist theory's increasing preoccupation with the analysis of masculinity, defining the book's motivations as steeped in the way 'masculinity impinges with such force on femininity'. Silverman thus contends that '[t]o effect a large-scale reconfiguration of male identification and desire would, at the very least, permit female subjectivity to be lived differently than it is at present' (2–3).

Although fully mapping the terrain of masculinity studies is beyond the scope of this introduction, the work described above illustrates the diversity of the field in overcoming the stifling dichotomies – constructivist and essentialist, historical and ideological – that have traditionally framed accounts of gender within the humanities and social sciences. While the essays in this collection do not always directly address the scholarship of masculinity studies, the volume as a whole is indebted to Sedgwick's call for 'a more historically discriminate mode of analysis' that pays close attention to the individual and structural conditions informing the nexus between modernity and masculinity.[10] The volume interrogates the idea of 'crisis' as it pertains to masculinity in the modernist period but remains open to the possibility of modernism's own self-diagnosis as a period in which men experienced radical transformation, often caught between new and obsolete models of masculinity. If the aesthetic and cultural practices of modernism defined masculinity in relation to cultural fragmentation *and* regeneration, this reflects the broader antinomies of progress and decline that shaped the cultural and discursive space of modernity.

Modernist Masculinities

World War One has long been defined as a collective historical wound gendering modernism as a site of masculine emotional trauma and corporeal fragmentation. The historical work on masculinity during this period has been exemplary in producing nuanced accounts of the protean

experiences of war that both contested and conformed to the military and civilian expectations of men of the period.[11] Elaine Showalter's analysis of male hysteria has revealed the ambivalent psychiatric response to the epidemic of war neurosis, which by 1916 accounted for 40 per cent of British war causalities.[12] Often diagnosed as a lack of discipline or loyalty, military psychologists were reluctant to acknowledge the emotional and psychological vulnerability of men, which reflected a pervasive Victorian masculine ideal of courage, self-control and above all a manly ethos of not complaining. More recently Mark S. Micale has unearthed a more comprehensive, albeit barely visible history of the suppression of male nervous illness by Western scientific and medical discourses, which long upheld an image of male detachment, rationality and objectivity in the face of contrary evidence produced in clinical studies and on the battlefield. In suppressing the fragility of male mental and emotional experience, Micale suggests, Western medical knowledge is marked 'not by the steady, rational accumulation of knowledge, but by anxiety, ambivalence, and selective amnesia.'[13]

Sarah Cole and Santanu Das revise existing studies of First World War experience by examining a distinctive literary voice that captured the intensity, as well as the inexpressibility, of male wartime intimacy. Cole's *Modernism, Male Friendship and the First World War* (2003) turns to the familiar modernist themes of alienation, loss and fragmentation, but newly configures them as the 'excavated' remains of 'lost male comradeship'.[14] Examining the figure of the lost friend together with the beleaguered sense of male friendship in the work of Forster, Lawrence and the war poets, Cole traces the decline of the Victorian institutions (educational networks that fostered Hellenic ideals of male community and military ideals of comradeship and loyalty) that had provided protective and familiar forms of male friendship. Cole argues that the fracturing experience of war intensified the waning of traditional forms of male intimacy, giving rise to unstable and often incompatible forms of male community. Cole's study of the so-called threshold modernists revises the overriding portrait of modernism as an intensely collaborative male enterprise, providing an expanded narrative of how the war opened up a disjunction between private friendship and culturally sanctioned forms of comradeship, which both compelled and constrained male social bonds in the period. In *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (2005) Das, like Cole, is interested in reorienting our familiar sense of male forms of intimacy and the efforts of soldiers and nurses to capture the unrelenting physicality and emotional intimacy of life in the trenches and field hospitals. His optic,

however, zooms in on the localised and transient forms of human contact that emerged from the eviscerating experience of what he terms the 'slimescapes' of the trenches: 'The experience of trench mud was one of the most powerful encounters of the human subject with the immensity and chaos of inert matter … it brought the soldiers to the precipice of non-meaning in a world that was already ceasing to make sense.'[15] Das persuasively argues for the primacy of human 'touch' in a world stripped of the consoling myths of heroic masculinity, noting the irony of how 'the world's first industrial war, which brutalized the body on such an enormous scale, also nurtured the most intense of male bonds.' (136)

If World War One seemed to promise new forms of male-bonding that might ameliorate the Victorian ideal of masculine physical prowess and emotional self-discipline, the figure of the masculine fascist subject would soon haunt the landscape of nationalist masculinity. Klaus Theweleit's two-volume study, *Male Fantasies* has produced a confronting portrait of proto-fascist subjectivity and the psychic repressions of militarised forms of masculinity.[16] Reading the memoirs, letters and novels of the German *Freikorps*, mercenary soldiers employed to contain the spread of communism in Germany between the wars, Theweleit discovered the exaltation of a masculine militarised body in terms of hardness, impenetrability and self-discipline, a body defined as at risk of contamination by the soft, oceanic fluidity of the female body. The intense misogyny and violence directed towards women by the private *Freikorps* army disclose a psychic fragmentation that tied anxieties around the penetrability of the male body to the vulnerability of the nation state. Within this rigidly defined gendered imaginary, the masculine body and the nation state were thus rigidly bordered and protected from foreign contamination: Jews, communists, homosexuals or indeed any form of 'soft' masculinity. Theweleit's study has made a significant impression on recent theories of modern masculinity across a range of disciplines, in part because the thrust of his argument asserts, sometimes controversially, that the fantasies embedded within fascist masculinity are prototypical rather than extraordinary. Implicit in this argument is the idea that all embattled modes of masculinity depend on the pathologisation of those forms of femininity that pose a threat to men's desire for bodily and national control. Historically, Theweleit's study reveals how the fascist 'new man' of National Socialism was forged within a rigid gendered imaginary, the containment of which necessitated ruthless forms of persecution and violence.

The culturally regenerative space of modernism nevertheless provided an opportunity for the critical reappraisal of prevailing and emergent

models of masculinity in Europe, the United States and elsewhere. The increasing fluidity of social and sexual roles made possible by industrialisation, commodification, the extension of the franchise, suffragism, sexology, psychology, urbanisation, and new forms of transport and communication meant that masculinity at the beginning of the twentieth century entered into a protracted period of cultural reflexivity and malleability. As the cultural influx from the colonised world was progressively absorbed into Western forms of social behaviour and self-consciousness, the very idea of 'being a man' came under renewed scrutiny and pressure. The effects of industrial warfare, as we have seen, disrupted long-established conventions of intimacy, honour and manly sacrifice. Conversely, as social mobility and migration became a fixture of everyday life, so 'the Jew' emerged as a distinctly feminised spectre of modernity, whose racial demonisation was to entail new forms of nationalist masculinity, fashioned through the violent protocols of pure bloodlines and fantasies of contamination. As national forms of hegemonic masculinity were being solidified in Germany and Italy, in Britain the visibly disruptive demonstrations of the Suffragists had already radically feminised the public sphere, even as their manifestos and political tracts often problematically tied women's political emancipation to sexual propriety.

The culture and artworks of modernism emerged from the flux of irreconcilable social energies. The 'new woman' and the 'new man' were salient figures in the cultural ideologies of art at the time, in response to the progressive erosion of gender norms in the system of commodity culture and in the ensuing rearrangement of public and private life. But while social, economic and political forces shifted gendered norms and the sexual ideologies that informed them, the ideologies of art reinvented them in unexpected and complicated ways. What emerges from the maelstrom of modernist cultural expression is a range of masculine subject positions, male practices and representations of masculinity, sometimes carrying with them the traces of the very femininity associated with tradition and mass culture (Joyce's Bloom), or the enervation of the emasculated modern man (Eliot's Prufrock). Leopold Bloom, the womanly man, is one prototype of the period: heroically defeating every challenge to his equanimity and humanism, yet lampooned mercilessly as an effeminate parasite and cosmopolitan liberal. Prufock is another model of modern masculinity: confounded by the impotence of his masculinity, his halting cry, 'That's not it at all, that's not what I meant at all', hints at sexual and emotional paralysis. The self-promotional hyper-masculinity of Futurism provides one response to the perceived feminisation of political culture, while the

deconstructed libidos and emancipated emotions of surrealism strike out against the bourgeois values of post-war national reconstruction; between them, a vast array of provisional responses to the changing construction of contemporary masculinity cover the landscape of modernist practices.

But if the concept of masculinity is a contested site within the broader gendered system of modernity, modernism, as a historical, literary and cultural category, is equally under dispute. Rarely can critics agree on what modernism is or where it begins and ends, or what constitute its distinctive features, salient forms of expression or political motivations.[17] Under the banner of modernism, and its revisionist offspring, new modernist studies, sit a whole host of competing and heterogeneous cultural expressions: the formalist experiments of high modernism; the radical contestatory politics of the various avant-gardes; the politicised feminist consciousness in the writing of Woolf and West; the vernacular expressions of modernism emerging from movements such as Mass Observation in Britain; and the anti-colonial expressions of a global modernism, found in Fanon's psychoanalytic Marxism or Césaire's critique of European civilisation. The temporal locations, 'early', 'high' and 'late' modernism, while offering clear signposts to distinctive historical moments, inadvertently convey an historical teleology which cuts across what many critics have come to accept as the uneven development and experience of twentieth-century modernity and the multifarious political, cultural and literary expressions it inaugurated.[18] The modernist maxim, 'make it new' perhaps typifies the ambivalence and precariousness of modernist literary practice and its gendered claims to innovation. Here the verb 'to make' shifts the emphasis away from 'the new' in itself to the obstinate creative act of making something *appear* new. In gesturing towards the privileging of male creative practice as a 'making new' of traditionally feminine biological and reproductive powers, the maxim conveys a defensive reaction against the perceived effeminacy of male artistic labour and the perceived feminisation of the commercial public sphere. The rhetoric of the 'new', ambivalently staged through the precarious indeterminacy of 'appearance' also signals what Marianne DeKoven has defined as the '*sous-rature*' of modernism – its paradoxical conceptual status as 'an unresolved contradiction.'[19] This contradiction encodes modernist cultural expression as simultaneously radical and reactionary, as both old and new, as 'rich and strange'. According to DeKoven, this double movement produced a distinctly gendered reaction: 'male modernists generally feared the loss of hegemony the change they desired might entail, while female modernists feared punishment for that utter change.'[20] In spite of heightened anxieties about

the perceived feminisation of literary culture and the public sphere, male privilege and power still dominated the cultural and political landscape of modernity. As a threshold effect, 'masculinity' thus becomes an exceedingly elastic category that might be mobilised in ways that are reactionary or innovative, rigid or adaptable – and sometimes both at the same time.

This collection absorbs the important wisdom of the increasingly elastic parameters of 'modernism' and the volatility of the 'masculine' in relation to other identity formations, but nevertheless surveys the complicated production and representation of masculinity in key sites of modernist literary and cultural practice across Europe and the United States. From a range of viewpoints and disciplinary positions, the collection addresses the tensions between the production of bodies, emotions, experiences, material practices and intellectual formulations that shaped and interrogated the epistemological certainties and artistic convictions of masculinity in the period. The collection builds on existing work in the field of modernist studies but also subtly contests the prevailing gendered portrait that conventional accounts of modernism presume. While masculinity studies has produced a formidable body of historical work on masculinity and important theoretical tools that have shaped and continue to shape our understanding of the power relations and cultural formations that inform the protean forms of masculine expression and representation, a more expansive analysis of modernist masculinity is long overdue.

Modernism and Masculinity is divided into four sections, each surveying the characteristic domains of modernist masculinity. 'Fields of Production' maps forms of masculine cultural practice that define a distinctive modernist awareness of the changing conditions and the resulting pressures of literary production, including editorial practice, the contested gendered space of literary and media production, new conceptions of authorship and the modernist promotion of literary culture. Rachel Blau DuPlesis opens with a comprehensive portrait of the discrete zones of masculine poetic forms and practices. Locating a tension between the rigid sexed and gendered binaries exhibited in modernist manifestos, essays and letters and a more ambivalent representation of masculinity in men's poetic expression, Blau DuPlessis finds 'multiple contradictions and imperial urgencies, gender ideas both progressive and defensive' in male modernist poetic culture. Without diminishing the often-misogynist inflection of modernist poetic practice, Blau DuPlessis contends that a fascination, sometimes bordering on identification, with 'the feminine' confounds the masculinist cast of male poetic expression. Melissa Hardie turns to male editorial practice in the complicated editing history and the post-publication life of

Djuna Barnes's iconoclastic modernist novel, *Nightwood*. In Hardie's analysis, T. S. Eliot's 'hygenic excisions' from Barnes's text are concerned with representations of sexual exchange that invoke a preoccupation with male bodily continence in ways that allegorically signal male editorial practice as 'forms of remnant and revenant tribute and trimming'. Turning to the intertextual citations and tributes generated by Barnes and her writing, in Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* (1987) and Ford and Tyler's *The Young and the Evil* (1933), Hardie extends her analysis of the pleasures and dangers of the supplementary life of the text and its author in ways that complicate 'the hetorosexual account of editorial exchange'. She argues that the fictionalised and anecdotal appearance of Barnes in two texts published more than fifty years apart 'allegorise the relationship between writer and text by making problematic the questions of chronology, sponsorship and the various nature of textual interventions.' Julian Murphet finds in the broader media ecology of modernism a gendered dynamic in which high modernist art asserts its masculinised 'uniqueness' against putative feminised 'entertainment'. Rehearsing the familiar gendered arguments around high modernism's defensive reaction towards mass forms of reproduction (the cinema, radio, photography, the phonograph), Murphet locates in the arch masculinity of modernist exceptionality 'both a reactive and self-misperceiving phenomenon' that drives its relentless campaign against the traditionally feminine dimensions of cultural production – 'sentimentality, spatiality, popularity' – which were increasingly associated with mechanical media. Concluding that masculine high culture aggressively asserts its claim to distinction as an 'ideological shelter' from the 'industrial deluge' of mechanical media, Murphet nevertheless alludes to the tactical fraternisation – which he allegorises as a scene of masculine seduction – that marked a tentative accord between old and new forms of media.

'Masculinity in Crisis' directly addresses a modernist anxiety enveloping masculine subjectivity and its self-protective expression in a range of literary and cultural sites. Whether perceived as in need of self-conscious reappraisal or subsumed by crippling uncertainty, a sense of crisis often pervaded reactionary and inventive forms of masculinity in the modernist period. Rónán McDonald finds in his account of Irish modernism modes of male inaction that sought to contest the ideology of industrious, active masculinity. Male inaction also informs a reaction against national and racial stereotypes of the Irish character, encompassing both the hyper-feminine image of 'the gentle, vulnerable "Hibernia"' and the hyper-masculine ideal of the violent '"bloodthirsty Fenian"'. As McDonald argues, the resulting contamination of available masculine roles produced 'a