

Modernism, Masculinity, and Misogyny

Leila Bellour
Department of Foreign Languages
Mila University Centre, Algeria

Abstract:

This paper evinces that Modernism, in poetry, is gendered masculine. Male Modernists coin their artistic theories, which are abrasive, in tune with their misogynistic predilection. These theories adamantly refuse personality and emotions. They vituperate subjectivity and sentimentalism because they are feminine. Since the modern age is threatened by femininity, they promote a kind of masculine writing marked by objectivity, scientificity, impersonality, difficulty, hardness, virility, and elitism.

Le résumé :

Cet article démontre que le Modernisme en poésie est un mouvement masculin. Les hommes modernistes ont inventé leurs théories artistiques qui sont abrasives, au diapason avec leur prédilection misogyne. Ces théories refusent catégoriquement la personnalité et les émotions. Elles vitupèrent contre la subjectivité et le sentimentalisme, car ils sont féminins. Depuis que l'âge moderne est menacé par l'objectivité, ils ont promu un genre d'écriture masculine marquée par l'objectivité, la scientificité, l'impersonnalité, la difficulté, la dureté, la virilité et l'élitisme.

المخلص :

يوضح هذا المقال أن الحداثة في الشعر حركة رجالية. فقد صاغ رجال الحداثة نظرياتهم الفنية التي تكشف المرأة و النسائية تناغما مع نزعتهم الماقتة للمرأة. ترفض هذه النظريات الشخصية و العواطف رفضا قاطعا. فراحت تعيب العواطف و الذاتية و الحساسية لأنها أنثوية. و منذ أن أصبحت النسائية تهدد العصر الحديث، أحسوا أولئك بضرورة خلق نوع من الأدب الرجالي يتميز بالموضوعية و العلمية و اللاذاتية و الصعوبة و الصلابة و الرجولة و النخبوية.

The modernist artist is earmarked the job of a savior, whose role is to save literature and culture, which are threatened to be sapped of their virility and masculinity. Male modernists find in virility, hardness, scientificity, and objectivity, characteristics that define the contours of their literary endeavours. Modernism is determined not to allow any space for the feminine in literature. Hence, literary values are gendered masculine as opposed to feminine values like sentimentality and subjectivity. In Modernism, the calls for innovations in art were strident, especially that literature seems to be taunted by masculinity and threatened by an Other, which is the feminine. Indeed, male poetics entails gender conflicts. John XirosCooper states that Modernism is largely seen by recent critics as a masculine movement. In his words, “A more recent current of opinion sees white, male modernists as racist and sexist exemplars of patriarchal, imperial, phallogocentric society.”¹

Modernists, like T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme and Ezra Pound, promote aesthetic theories, which are gendered masculine. Modernists aspire to construct a culture and a literary movement, which are manly. So, they called for a kind of literature, which is hard, impersonal, objective and devoid of softness and emotionalism. Pound’s rallying cry to ‘make it new’ comes to be understood as a break or a detachment from all that is feminine. In his discussion of D.H. Lawrence’s artistic project, Paul Sheehan states that “The modernist urge to make it new is taken up by him as the imperative to break with feminine literary form and engage with masculine ‘separation’ ”²

Their misogyny and intense fear of feminism, which might erode and distort artistic creation compels male Modernists to define Modernism in opposition to all what is related to the feminine treats. Katherine Mullin contends that Modernism is defined mainly as a male movement. In her words, “manifestoes and definitions of modernism tend to present the movement as virile and manly, in contrast to the feminine flabbiness of nineteenth century writing and , in particular, the ‘social problem’ of the ‘New Women’ novelists”³. The critic Janet Wolff, in turn, points out that Modernism is concerned exclusively with male experience. As she puts it,

The literature of modernity describes the experience of men [...] The actual date of the advent of ‘the modern’ varies in different accounts, and so do the characteristics of ‘modernity’ identified by different writers. But what nearly all the accounts have in common is their concern with the public world of work, politics and city life. And these are areas from which women were excluded, or in which they were practically invisible⁴

Otherness and the binary opposition male/female are central to D.H Lawrence’s novels and his critical essays. Lawrence stresses sexual binaries as follows: “The whole mode, the whole everything is really different in man and woman...the vital sex polarity...the magic and the dynamism rests on Otherness”⁵ Lawrence evinces that the evasion of the binary polarization of mind/body seems to be irresistible. As he points out,

Man, in the midst of all his effeminacy, is still male and nothing but male. And woman, though she harangue in parliament or patrol the streets with a helmet on her head, is still completely female. They are only playing each other’s roles, because the poles have swung into reversion. The compass is reversed. But that doesn’t mean that the North pole has become the South pole, or that each is a bit of North. (*Fantasia of the Unconscious* 129)

So, Modernism is an attempt to find an art, which is purged of the stains of the feminine. It aspires to find a movement, which is purely masculine. Virility and hardness become the rallying slogan of male Modernists. In his essay "A Retrospect", the critic Ezra Pound states the major tenets of modern poetry. He writes:

As to twentieth century poetry, and the poetry which I expect to see written during the next decade or so, it will, I think, move again poppy-cock, it will be harder and saner, it will what Mr. Hewle calls 'nearer the bone'. It will be as much like granite as it can be, its force will lie in its truth, its interpretative power (of course poetic force does always rest there); I mean it will not try to seem forcible by rhetorical din, and luxurious riot. We will have fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it. At least for myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from emotional slither.⁶

In fact, male modernists' theorization of poetry asserts the rigid polarity man/woman. At the hands of its practitioners, Modernism is depicted as a masculine tough literary movement. Pound eulogizes James Joyce because he endorses the quality of hardness. As he puts it, "Mr. Joyce writes a clear hard prose"⁷ Indeed, Pound's virile poetry has found a reverberant echo among Modernists. In emphasizing the clarity and hardness of literature that Modernists should write, Pound states:

The terror of clarity is not confined to any one people. The obstructionist and the provincial are everywhere, and in them alone is the permanent danger to civilization. Clear, hard prose is the safeguard and should be valued as such. The mind accustomed to it will not be cheated or stampeded by national phrases and public emotionalism."⁸

Indeed, male modernists' theorization of literature as hard might be read as a response to effeminacy and the crisis of masculinity, which started to appear with the advent of Modernism. To emphasize the virile art that Modernists should write, Pound uses the scientific metaphor of the energetic poetry. He states that "the thing that matters in art is a sort of energy, something more or less like electricity or radio-activity, a force transfusing, welding, and unifying. A force rather like water when it spurts up through very bright sand and sets it swift motion. You may make what image you like"⁹ For male Modernists, art must be strong and energetic. It requires herculean efforts, something like a physical strength or energy.

In discussing the objectivity and hardness that characterize modern poetry, the critic Robert Scholes states that modernists believe that "poetry should be hard and definite. There is nothing uncertain about an objective correlative. The Modernist poets all agreed, however, that common emotions and common thoughts were the stuff of rhetoric, while uncommon thoughts and emotions were the goal of poetry"¹⁰ In reference to Romanticism, which is marked by an extravagant depiction of an ideal life, Hulme writes: "The dry hardness which you get in the classics is absolutely repugnant to them. Poetry that isn't damp isn't poetry at all. They cannot see that accurate description is a legitimate object of verse."¹¹

Very much like Pound's doctrine of hardness, the critic T.E. Hulme calls for a kind of literature, which is solid. He writes: "With perfect style, the solid leather for reading, each sentence should be a lump, a piece of clay, a vision seen; rather, a wall touched with soft fingers. Never should one feel light vaporous bridges between one solid sense and another. No bridges-all solid: then never exasperated."¹² Hulme uses the concept of solidarity to insist that it is the solid and not the soft literature that the reader must read. In reading books, T.E. Hulme recommends: "Rather choose those in old leather, which are *solid*. Here the man did

not talk, but saw solid, definite things and described them.” (“Notes on Language and Style” 80)

The avantgard movement, whose call for innovation in art is strident, also comes to be seen as masculine. As Andreas Huyssen maintains, “In relation to gender and sexuality, though, the historical avant-garde was by and large as patriarchal, misogynist, and masculinist as the major trends of modernism.”¹³

In Modernism, there is a revival of classicism, which is a corrective force to Romanticism, which is deemed feminine, T.E. Hulme writes:

I have still to show that in the verse which is to come, fancy will be the necessary weapon for the classical school. The positive quality I have talked about can be manifested in ballad verse by extreme directness and simplicity [...] But the particular verse we are going to get will be cheerful, dry, and sophisticated, and here the necessary weapon of the positive quality will be fancy. (“Romanticism and Classicism” 103)

Rhetoric is detrimental to modernist art because of its extravagance. Classicism, in Ana Garden-Coyne’s view, is a protective shield against the threat of an effeminate age. In her words, “Classicism provided what I describe as an ‘aesthetic of healing’ and modernism an erotic promise of the future.”¹⁴ Classicism seems to be a redemption of art from the romantic extravagance. In his comments on Joyce, Pound writes: “He is not presenting a macabre subjectivity. He is a classicist in that he deals with normal things and with normal people.” (“Dubliners and Mr. James Joyce” 29) Indeed, classicism is an attempt to expunge the taint left by the romantics from the English literature. It is preferred as a poetic option because it does not give absolute freedom to the author’s imagination as in Romanticism. In this regard, T.E. Hulme writes: “What I mean by classical in verse, then, is this. That even in the most imaginative flights there is always a holding back, a reservation.” (“Romanticism and Classicism” 96) Classicism, unlike Romanticism, is conservative. Modernists cling to classicism also because of its universality. Like the classicists, male modernists want to write a literature, which is permanent and universal because universality is a male and not a female attribute. T.E. Hulme states that the ancients wanted “to construct things of permanence which would stand fast in this universal flux which frightened them. They had the disease, the passion, for immortality. They wished to construct things which should be proud boasts that they, men, were immortal.”¹⁵

For Modernists, emotions are so repellent. Thus, in their critical writings, They express their indictment of humanism and sentimentality. In criticizing emotionality, Hulme insists on viewing art as something concrete or material. In his words, “All emotion depends on real sordid vision or sound. It is physical.” (“Notes on Language and Style” 78) In emphasizing the idea that the artist should purge his art from sentimentalism, Hulme, in his description of visual poetry, states that “Each word must be an image *seen*, not a counter.” (“Notes on Language and Style” 79) In fact, Hulme has a repulsive attitude towards the body, which emanates from his fear of women’s sexuality. Edward P. Comentale states that: “His avowed disgust with the body cannot be divorced from his absolute fear of all things feminine: women appear in his writing in mocking and often freakish poses, dancing in the mud, hiding behind bushes, tittering in the street.”¹⁶ Hulme’s misogyny is shared by many Modernists, who always associate Romanticism with effeminacy. Miranda B. Hickman states: “Of the terms associated with the twinned categories of effeminacy and femininity, the terms ‘sentimentality’ and ‘romanticism’ are especially assailed.”¹⁷ In the same vein, Felski maintains that “The alignment of the feminine with an aesthetic realm of spontaneous feeling was reaffirmed in Romantic depictions of woman as redemptive refuge from the constraints of

a modern civilization identified with a growing materialism, the worship of scientific reason, and an alienating urban environment.”¹⁸ So, criticism of Romanticism is a reaction to its femininity and its overemphasis on emotions and feelings. Modernists, in order ‘to make it new’, strive to free themselves from the taints of Romanticism. Robert Scholes points out that “The Modernist critics, from Richards through all the New Critics, had an almost pathological fear of sentimentality”¹⁹ Ezra Pound praises Joyce mainly because of his anti-sentimentalism. As he puts it, “Mr. Joyce’s merit, I will not say his chief merit but his most engaging merit, is that he carefully avoids telling you a lot that you don’t want to know. He presents his people swiftly and vividly, he does not sentimentalise over them, he does not wave convolutions.” (“Dubliners and Mr. James Joyce” 27)

As a reaction to Romanticism, Modernists write a kind of art, which is pessimistic. In this regard, Comentale defines sadness

as the primary emotion capable of pushing us beyond the polemics of purity, as a kind of feeling that is at once critical as well as immanent, capable of judgment as well as generosity, if not simple compassion. For this, we can turn to Hulme’s formulation of Original Sin as it provides the most concise definition of sadness and its productive potential. (“Hulme’s Feelings” 224)

So, in contrast with the Romantics’ optimism and their belief in the perfection of the human being, Modernists, mainly Hulme, insist on the idea of the original sin and the limitations of the individual. Indeed, all modernists’ writings are marked by sadness, pessimism and nihilism. The war, which has left the modern man physically and psychologically wounded, has shattered the individual’s hopes and his ideal and optimistic vision of life. Unlike the Romantics, the Modernists conceptualise the world as empty and devoid of love and romance.

In fact, Romanticism, for male writers, is repudiated not just as a mode of artistic creation but as a philosophy of life as well. The Romantics foster belief in the perfection of the individual. They promote the idea of a boundless freedom. The latter, as the Modernists believe, makes the modern man sink into a squalid panorama of futility and anarchy. Hulme writes:

People of all classes, people who stood to lose by it, were in a positive ferment about the idea of liberty [...] They had been thought be Rosseau that man was by nature good, that it was only bad laws and customs that had suppressed him. Remove all these and the infinite possibilities of man would have a chance. This is what made them think that something positive could come out of disorder, this is what created the religious enthusiasm. Here is the root of all romanticism: the man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities, and if you can so rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get progress. (“Romanticism and Classicism” 94)

Hulme’s criticism of Romanticism is partly due to its call for emancipation. In many ways, Modernism is anti-Romanticism. So, feminism seems to be an obstacle for those who attempt to ‘make it new’. In his vindictive criticism of women and their sentimental art, Hulme writes: “The carcass is dead, and all the flies are upon it. Imitative poetry springs up like weeds, and women whimper and wail of you and I alas, and roses, roses all the way. It becomes the expression of sentimentality rather than of virile thought.” (“A Lecture on Modern Poetry” 69) Romanticism is denied and rejected because of its denial of any authority,

and this is what makes things sink into chaos. D.H. Lawrence's view seems to collide head on with that of T.E. Hulme. According to him, "Liberty is all very well, but men cannot live without masters. There is always a master."²⁰ This rejection of liberty is all about the fear of women's emancipation.

Due to the fear of feminism, male writers denounce democracy. In her discussion of male Modernists' antagonistic attitude to democracy, Rachel Potter writes:

While the attack on democracy is a foundation for high modernist definition of art, then, a belief in the inherent value of democratization fuels the contemporary critique of high modernism. Women modernist writers tend to be read in relation to this central opposition between democratization and elite modernism. In these accounts, women writers are seen to identify their interests with less authoritarian aesthetic values²¹

Women writers are excluded from the high elite Modernism because they adhere to less authoritative and more democratic aesthetic theories unlike male authors, who are too critical of democracy and all the aesthetic theories that are pertinent to it. So, male Modernists are staunch critics of Rousseau's Romantic principles of equality, legality and rights. According to Potter, the principles of art that Modernists use, before the First World War, were against equality, legality, and rights. Male Modernists like T.E. Hulme, Irving Babbit, Windham Lewis, and T.S. Eliot, defined art in terms of authority in contrast with Rousseau's principles of equality and rights (Modernism and Democracy 7) Modernists' vehement criticism of liberalism, equality and rights is a response to women, who are increasingly attaining more rights and liberality, especially after the First World War.

Male Modernists' repulsion for Romanticism hides a deep revulsion for women. Their attacks on Romanticism is due to their distaste for romantic emotions in real life. T.E. Hulme defines Romanticism as a non-religious literary movement. He writes: "You don't believe in God, so you begin to believe that man is a god. You don't believe in Heaven, so you begin to believe in a heaven on earth. In other words, you get romanticism. The [...] Romanticism then, and this is the best definition I can give of it, is spilt religion." ("Romanticism and Classicism" 95) Similar to Hulme's view, D.H. Lawrence defines immorality in art as the artist's inability to have control over his emotions in the act of writing. In his words, "The immorality lies in the novelist's helpless, unconscious predilection. Love is a great emotion. But if you set out to write a novel, and you yourself are in the throes of the great predilection for love, love as the supreme, the only emotion worth living for, then you will write an immoral novel."²² So, excessive expression of love is deemed immoral. This view emanates mainly from male Modernists' misogyny. Potter views male writers' attack of Romanticism and democracy as a rage against women and their entrance into the public space, which is masculine. She writes: "When these writers attacked romanticism, democracy, and legalism, they were also partly attacking women's recent attainment of political, social, and cultural freedom." (Modernism and democracy. 134)

In response to feminism, Modernism rejects Romanticism's subjectivity and prioritizes objectivity. In his comment on Flaubert's Madame Bauvary, Huysen makes a distinction between what he calls low literature, which is subjective and associated with women and authentic literature, which is objective and associated with men ("Mass Culture as Woman" 46) Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane state that what Modernists share is "the concern to objectify the subjective [...] to defamiliarise and dehumanize the expected, to conventionalise the extraordinary and the eccentric [...] to intellectualise the emotional"²³ The qualities of Modernism stated above are in sharp contrast with Romanticism. Those

features, which come to characterize Modernism, are anti-feminist; they are the antitheses of female writing. According to Juan Antonio Suárez,

erasure of femininity took place in aesthetic and cultural terrains. The modern ethos of technological rationality had its artistic counterpart in a cult of functionalism, of the machine form, and of the artist- as engineer that swept through the arts in the early decades of the century. This vogue, which rejected all forms of ornamentation and decorativism, was emphatically encoded as male by its earliest and most influential theorist.”²⁴

Clive Bell criticizes the view that beautiful art is that, which evokes emotions and feelings, because the latter are always associated with femininity. According to Bell, “The art that they call ‘beautiful’ is generally closely related to the women. A beautiful picture is a photograph of a pretty girl; beautiful music, the music that provokes emotions similar to those provoked by young ladies in musical farces”²⁵ One might say that modernist aesthetic theories are essentially masculine.

Vitriolic critics of high Modernism, including feminists, dismiss Modernism as an elitist movement. This elitism is conceived as masculine. In this respect, Marianne DeKoven states that “The Anglo-American modernists are commonly charged with obscurantism, with overuse of an erudition, that is traditionally a male and upper- class educational prerogative, with an allusive difficulty smacking of elitism.”²⁶ Modernism comes with the project of hard, difficult, and serious poetry, proclaiming the end of what is described as soft/feminine literature. Modernists’ innovative techniques are but manifestations and assertions of a literary movement, which is conceptualized by many authors as masculine. The high moderns, who claim to belong to a high elitist culture insulate themselves from popular culture by promoting an elevated and difficult style. In contrast to male writings, women’s writings are said to be less difficult and less elitist. Potter remarks that “There has been an assumption that the work of these women modernists”, like Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Mina Loy, Marianne Moore, Katherine Mansfield, “forms a more liberal, less elitist literary tradition.” (Modernism and Democracy 2)

In trying to situate female writers, like Villa Cather, in the modernist canon, Michael North states that her writings do not fit into the male modernist tenets. He argues that “Cather may seem to epitomize the kind of writing that literary modernism notoriously sought to displace. Her works were stylistically conventional, popular, nostalgic, and regional at a time when writers like Eliot and Pound were demanding that literature be difficult, up-to-date , and international.”²⁷ North points out that Modernists fulminate against ‘ladylike’ literature that Villa Cather exemplifies. This literature is marked by nostalgia, simplicity, and popularity. These qualities “made up one of the early modernism’s announced targets: the ladylike” (Reading 1922 173) Cather’s writings are female in that they are simple, popular and romantic in their nostalgia. Goldman contends that female writers are difficult to situate into the modernist canon because they do not use masculine poetics. In her words,

If a rejection of such ‘masculine poetics’ is happening in H.D ‘s and Stein’s poetry, it suggests that this search for a revival of a feminine tradition in poetry is at odds with the agenda of male modernist poets like Pound and Eliot. It does not appear that H.D is looking for a Fisher King! How does this fit with theories of modernist poetry and impersonality.²⁸

As a major critical modernist school, New Criticism, is criticized as a male school, which excludes minorities, like women and black writers. DeKoven points out that

New Critical modernism [...] omitted from its canon works like these by white women, and works by the black writers of the Harlem Renaissance, but also valorized, at the expense of the progressive implications of its forms, modernism's reactionary features: hierarchical, totalizing myth, externally imposed order, ahistoricity, deadlocked irony, the idea of 'well wrought', perfectly balanced form as an end in itself, the only interesting end of art. (Rich and Strange 11)

Indeed, New Criticism, which defines art as an autotelic artifact sets criteria, which contradict its major tenets because it is elitist, discriminatory, and exclusive. Male modernists call for an art, which is autonomous. According to Marshall Berman,

Modernism, then, was the quest for the pure, self-referential art object. And that was all it was: the proper relationship of modern art to modern social life was no relationship at all [...] Modernism thus appeared as a great attempt to free modern artists from the impurities, vulgarities of modern life. Many artists and writers-and, even more, art and literary critics-have been grateful to this modernism for establishing the autonomy and dignity of their vocations.²⁹

So, Modernism aspires towards an impersonal art. Personal experience and real life, in general, seem to have no place in the work of art, which is regarded by Modernists as sacrosanct. The autonomy of art is an attempt to rescue the artist from the taints of modernity and its seamy side of life. According to Berman, "One of the fundamental problems of twentieth-century modernism is the way this art tends to lose touch with people's everyday lives. This is not, of course, universally true-Joyce's *Ulysses* may be the noblest exception-but it is true enough to be noticed by everyone who cares about modern life and art." (All That is Solid 146)The critic Rod Rosenquist also shares the view that Modernism is characterized by a poetics of detachment. As she points out, "High modernists had gathered, even during their own age, a reputation of detachment, even to the point where they were considered aloof to critical or popular culture."³⁰ So, Modernists call for an art, which has no touch with reality or with one's daily life experience; otherwise, it will turn into mass culture. Modernists are so indifferent to the social life that they are accused of having no commitment or responsibility for their culture.

In their objectivity and detachment from real life, the artist and the mathematician are very much alike. In the world of art, according to Bell, "the emotions of life find no place. It is a world full of emotions of its own." ("The Aesthetic Hypothesis" 73) In his criticism of the artist's representation of reality, Clive Bell states: "Representation is not of necessity baneful [...] Very often, however, representation is a sign of weakness." ("The Aesthetic Hypothesis" 73) Along similar lines, Huysen points out that one of the major qualities of modernism is that:

The work is autonomous and totally separate from the realms of mass culture and everyday life [...] Only by fortifying its boundaries, by maintaining its purity and autonomy, and by avoiding any contamination with mass culture and with the signifying system of everyday life can the art work maintain its adversary stance: adversary to the bourgeois culture of everyday life as well as adversary to mass culture and entertainment which

are seen as the primary forms of bourgeois cultural articulation. ("Mass Culture as Woman" 53-54)

Modernists' tendency towards an autonomous art is a reaction against mass culture, which is detrimental to modernity. The autonomy of art is meant to make it addressed to an elite minority. In addition to being an abstention from mass culture, the doctrine of autonomy is a bulwark to defend modernity itself.

Futurism, as a sub-literary movement in Modernism, is also very critical of women and their art. Mullin quotes F.T. Marinetti's Futurist manifesto as follows: "We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind, will fight moralism, feminism, every opportunist cowardice." ("Modernisms and Feminisms" 137) Futurism's masculinist project can be summed up in F.T. Marinetti's following statement: "We intend to glorify war-the only hygiene of the world-militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of anarchists, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and contempt for woman. We intend to destroy museums, feminism, and every utilitarian or opportunistic cowardice."³¹ In response to feminist movement, Valentine De Saint-Point states that

Feminism is a political error. Feminism is an intellectual error on the part of women, an error which their instinct will eventually recognize. It isn't necessary to give women any of their rights demanded by feminism. To accord them these rights wouldn't produce any of the disorders sought by the futurists. But on the contrary would bring about an excess of order.³²

Futurism, as the name of the movement evinces, aspires to break with tradition because the latter is effeminate. F.T. Marinetti and Christopher Nevinson give the signal for battle against "The worship of tradition and conservatism of Academies, the commercial acquiescence of English artists, the effeminacy of their art and their complete absorption towards a purely decorative sense."³³ In fact, Futurism is a revolution against Romanticism. Marinetti and Nevinson state they want to have "an English Art that is strong, virile, and anti-sentimental." ("Futurism and English Art" 197)

Imagism, a literary movement, which emerges at the beginning of the 20th century, seeks to depart from the sentimentalism of the 19th century. Imagists are among the first poets to shift from Romanticism and Victorianism to Modernism. The critic Natan Zach highlights Imagism's hardness as follows:

Imagism is perhaps best viewed as a doctrine of hardness, the commonest, the widest-ranging concept in the movement's vocabulary. On a naïve level, the Imagist's 'hardness' may simply express his preferences in the selection of materials-thus hard stone or hard bones as against mellow notes of music, soft hues, soft perfumes or the softness of silk, all of which had enthralled the alternately melancholy and hedonistic spirit of the nineties.³⁴

Zach views hardness, which is masculine, as a major tenet of Modernism. He adds that "In its preoccupation with hardness, Imagism constitutes a truly twentieth-century movement." ("Imagism and Vorticism" 238)

The critic Flemming Olsen views imagism as an intellectual movement, which is opposed to sentimentalism. He states that the originality of the imagists' poetry "consisted in the choice of a suitable image. They went directly to the point, and the thrill they intended to prompt in the reader was intellectual rather than sentimental. They eliminated the poet's

personality and, with that, the kind of private emotion and moralizing that occurs in poet-centred verse.”³⁵ According to Olson, “only abstraction can give intellectual strength back to art.” (*Between Positivism and T.S. Eliot* 21) The major tenet of Imagism is its brevity and its bafflement of the poet’s emotional discharge; it rather seeks to leave an intellectual effect in the reader.

One of the tenets of the Imagist manifesto is the use of the language of everyday life instead of an extravagant rhetoric. Its use of free verse and its break with the Romantics’ regular rhyme and rhythm is an attempt to trammel the poet’s emotional flow:

Pound and the other imagist poets took the meaning of free verse to new ground. They believed that rhythm expressed emotion [...] Therefore, limiting rhythm to the fixed stanza, metre, and other rhythmic standards of conventional poetry disallowed a full rendering of those emotions. In other words the individuality of the poet’s emotions would be thwarted by following traditional rules, and thus the overall effect of the poem would become inauthentic and insincere.³⁶

Along similar lines, Ronald Carter and John McRae state that imagism is a reaction to the Romantic soft poetry. In their words, “Imagist poems tend to be short, sharp glimpses, which contrast with the lushness of Romantic and Victorian verse. Imagism was a movement designed to replace the ‘soft’, discursive narrative voice of Victorian verse with a harder, more condensed, Imagistic language-‘nearer the bone’.”³⁷

The vortex, whose proponents are Windham Lewis and Ezra Pound is also gender biased. Goldman states that “The Vortex is a gendered image.” (*Modernism, 1910-1945* 165) As a literary movement, Vorticism also attempts to purge poetry from effeminacy. In this regard, Miranda B. Hickman points out that

Vorticism, ultimately, was not all that concerned with what such ‘rigidity’, ‘sharpness’, and ‘hardness’ could connote, whether pure form, essences, buildings, machines, or skeletons. Vorticism concerned itself instead chiefly with the way such forceful severity, precision, hardness, and rigidity in their own right, whether natural or no, whatever else they mapped on to, could combat effeminacy on symbolic terrain.³⁸

Symbolism, as a literary movement, pays close attention to language, treating it as a material object. Clive Scott writes: “What then did the Symbolist revolution achieve? Most fundamentally, it awakened an acute consciousness of language. Language was no longer treated as a natural outcrop of the poem but as a material with its own laws and its own peculiar forms of life.”³⁹ In this regard, symbolism, like imagism and vorticism, breaks with soft and sentimental literature.

Male modernists, following the tradition of Baudelaire, have used the symbol of the modern hellish city as woman, which is an indication of misogyny. Jane Goldman states:

The impact of gendered readings of ‘modernism’ has been to show how certain male modernists (re)produced an ‘unreal city’, reviled as infernal and populated by semi-automated and monstrously disfigured humanity. This male modernist view perpetuates a misogynist French symbolist tradition that transferred Romantic

vision of a feminized nature to equally disturbing Decadent visions of the City as a woman, following Baudelaire. (Modernism, 1910-1945 168)

According to Felski, aestheticism is a misogynist movement in art, which tries to defend literature against the horror of feminism. In her words,

A parodic subversion of gender norms reveals a persistent identification of women with vulgarity, nature, and the tyranny of the body, allowing the aesthete to define his own identity in opposition to these same attributes. [...]cult of aestheticism contains a misogynistic dimension that is closely linked to, rather than dissolved by, its antirepresentationalism and antinaturalism. (The Gender of Modernity 112)

Feminists make violent assaults on the tenets of male poetics, which are said to be stained with misogyny and masculinity. Despite the feminist writers' contribution to Modernism, the latter is widely seen as a masculine movement. As Marianne Dekoven points out:

Despite the powerful presence of women writers at the founding of Modernism and throughout its history, and despite the near-obsessive preoccupation with femininity in all modernist writing, the reactive misogyny so apparent in much male-authored Modernism continues in many quarters to produce a sense of Modernism as a masculinist movement. Instances of modernist advocacy of firm, hard, dry, terse, classical masculinity, overagainst the messy, soft, vague, flowery, effusive, adjectival femininity of the late Victorians, abound, and instances of male modernist antifeminism and misogyny are legion.⁴⁰

So, despite female writers' contribution to this movement, Modernism is widely conceived as a masculine movement; this is very apparent in male Modernists' theorization of art. The waves of feminism, according to Dekoven, result in male writers' obsession with gender, which is discerned at the level of form as well as the content. Male modernists take a more repulsive attitude to women, but at the same time, they show a fear from the new burgeoning feminist movement. In her words,

The radical implications of the social-cultural changes feminism advocated produced in modernist writing an unprecedented preoccupation with gender, both thematically and formally. Much of this preoccupation expressed a male modernist fear of women's new power, and resulted in the combination of misogyny and triumphal masculinities that many critics see as central, defining features of modernist work by men. ("Modernism and Gender" 174)

For DeKoven, the fathers of Modernism "James, Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and Joyce, are credited not with giving birth to modernism-that metaphor itself would change, and is intended to change, the picture-but with *inventing* modernism: the figure of 'invention' locates modernism within the discourse of 'male' technology." (Rich and Strange 10-11) The metaphor of giving birth to Modernism is replaced with invention because birth is aligned with the womb, and hence, with the feminine. However, invention is aligned with the mind

and masculinity. In the same vein, the critic Peter Childs views Modernism as an essentially masculine movement. He writes: "Modernism has predominantly been represented in white, male, heterosexist, Euroamerican, middle-class terms, and any of the recent challenges to each of these aspects introduces another one of a plurality of modernism."⁴¹

In her comment on the modernists' doctrine of impersonality, the critics Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer state that it is anti-humanistic because it deprives some people of their rights:

there is some sort of correlation between a modernist 'formal' sense of aesthetic experience and an ability to overlook (if not participate in) gross violation of human rights and dignity. It has been argued that the kind of 'impersonality' that formal conceptions of poetry-that is, formalist criticism-suggest might lead (or at least be conducive) to certain kinds of disregard for human rights."⁴²

The critic Cassandra Laity also expresses her dissatisfaction with Modernists' theory of impersonality. She maintains that "It has become a critical commonplace that the purist New Critics considered incursions of the author's biography, personal feelings, or politics detrimental to the 'impersonal' creative process whereby the author's disinterested discovery of a form (objective correlative) exactly matches an 'aesthetic emotion'"⁴³ The aesthetics of detachment is also reproached by feminist critics as an attempt to save masculine Modernism from the threat of effeminacy. According to DeKoven, the New Critics, in particular, epitomize Modernism in their misogyny and elitism. She writes: "It fell to the victorious New Critics, with the cooperation of those aspects of modernism indisputably in harmony with their project, to define modernism as the politically retrograde phenomenon-sexist, racist, elitist, fascist, even 'royalist'-that has become so easy to condemn." (Rich and Strange 12) Marianne Dekoven adds that "New Critical tradition [...] placed male modernist writers at the center of a rigorously exclusive canon, and also celebrated those features of modernist writing associated with masculinity, hardness, toughness, a terse, cerebral economy." ("Modernism and Gender" 182) In her criticism of Modernism, which is mainly concerned with male experience, Janet Wolff states that "The problem is, though, that it is also the literature of modernity which has been impoverished by ignoring the lives of women. The dandy, the *flaneur*, the hero, the stranger-all figures invoked to epitomize the experience of modern life-are invariably male figures."⁴⁴ So, for Wolff, the experience of women in Modernism would have greatly enriched this movement, which remains within male borders.

Felski, who is critical of the Modernists' technical innovations, claims that "modernism's emphasis on rigorously experimental, self-conscious, and ironic aesthetic is interpreted as embodying a hostile and defensive response to the seductive lures of emotion, desire, and the body." (*The Gender of Modernity*, 24) Felski agrees with feminist critics, who attack Modernism of being exclusively masculine and indifferent to women's experience. She says: "I am in sympathy with feminist critics who argue that theories of both the modern and the postmodern have been organized around a masculine norm and pay insufficient attention to the specificity of women's lives and experiences." (*The Gender of Modernity* 15) In the same vein, Potter views male modernists' preoccupation and privilege of the autonomy of art as an attempt to maintain art at the monopoly of a small male elitist group. It is an endeavor to exclude women from Modernism as a literary movement. In her words,

Politically, the individual liberal subject is seen as a bearer of rights and choice in a cultural market-place. In the face of this notion of democratic freedom, the claims of modernist writers to

literary autonomy are seen as attempts to defend an elite minority culture against the values of a rapidly expanding market-place. (Modernism and Democracy 4)

So, autonomy is meant to protect art and the artist from capitalism and a liberal society, which is likely to accord women more power. Recent critics, including Bonnie Kime Scott, view Modernism as a logocentric movement. As she puts it, "In the 1980s and early 1990s many scholars, including feminists, perceived modernism as authoritarian, exclusive of female traditions, and, in deconstructive terminology, logocentric."⁴⁵ Felski, who questions the place of women in the modernist canon states that "The dethroning of the white bourgeois male as privileged subject of history reopens and leaves unresolved the question of what modernity might mean for women and other subaltern groups."⁴⁶ Since man is the privileged subject of history, feminists question the place of women in the modernist canon, which seems to include male writers exclusively. The response is that modernity relegates women and situates men at the top of the pecking order. In her criticism of male writers, who always depict Modernism as a masculine movement, Felski remarks that Modernism, at the hands of male writers, is gendered masculine. She writes:

Until recently, however, most writers on modernism have depicted it as a purely masculine affair, drawing on the rhetoric of Oedipal struggle and fraternal rivalry, on close readings of the works of great men and on the history of male avant-garde sub-cultures in order to convey the distinctive qualities of modernist consciousness. ("Modernism and Modernity" 230)

The critic Marjorie Perloff spells out her vitriolic criticism of Hugh Kenner's book The Pound Ezra. She asks: "Can a period study be as one-sided as is The Pound Ezra and still be a necessary book? Can we overlook such curious Kenner blind spots as his total neglect of Gertrude Stein, one of the great language innovators of the period?"⁴⁷ In fact, feminists' assault on male Modernism is on account of its elitism and exclusion of women and other minorities.

Very much like feminist critics, Postmodernists criticize many features of Modernism. Fredric Jameson has summed up the qualities, which make Modernism subject to criticism by postmodern writers. According to him, the modernist features, which vitiate modernism includes logocentrism, phallogentrism, authoritarianism, and elitism.⁴⁸

Conclusion

Modern theorization of poetry is a stinging criticism of the feminine, who remains the Other of the One in the modernist canon. Despite the feminist waves of change, masculinity in art still holds firm. Artists are liable to adapt to a masculine society, which always regards women with abhorrence. Since they regard feminism in art as the enemy that has to be vanquished, male authors' critical theories attempt to protect literature from the demeaning stains of the feminine and to exclude women from literature to save its masculinity. Modernism attempts to confirm and consolidate a masculine and patriarchal discourse. The paper has demonstrated that modernists' aesthetic theories are masculine and misogynistic. They consider femininity and women as defiling and pernicious. Modernists' railings against sentimentalism and Romanticism is due to his loathing of femininity not just in art but in real life as well. To anchor poetry, which is hampered by femininity, modernists propose objectivity, impersonality, scientificity, difficulty, elitism, hardness, and classicism.

Endnotes and References

- ¹John Xiros Cooper. *Modernism and the Culture of Market Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004):3-4.
- ²Paul Sheehan, *Modernism, Narrative and Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004):118.
- ³Katherine Mullin, "Modernisms and Feminisms", *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*, Ed. Ellen Rooney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006):139.
- ⁴Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity", *Modernism*, Ed. Michael H. Whitworth (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007): 199-200.
- ⁵D.H. Lawrence, "Fantasia of the Unconscious", *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 103.
- ⁶Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect", *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, Ed. T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1974): 12.
- ⁷Ezra Pound, "Dubliners and Mr. James Joyce", *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, With Pound's Essays on Joyce*, Ed. Forrest Read (The Viking Press, 1967):27.
- ⁸Ezra Pound, "At Last the Novel appears", *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, With Pound's Essays on Joyce*, Ed. Forrest Read (New York: The Viking Press, 1967): 90-1.
- ⁹Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist", *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*. Ed. T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1974):49.
- ¹⁰Robert Scholes, *Paradoxy of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006): 105.
- ¹¹T.E. Hulme, "Romanticism and Classicism", *20th Century Literary Criticism*, Ed. David Lodge (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1972):99.
- ¹²T.E. Hulme, "Notes on Language and Style", *Further Speculations*, Ed. Sam Hynes (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1955): 79.
- ¹³Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other", *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986):60.
- ¹⁴Ana Garden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009):4.
- ¹⁵T.E. Hulme, "A Lecture on Modern Poetry", *Further Speculations*, Ed. Sam Hynes (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1955): 71.
- ¹⁶Edward P. Comentale, "Hulme's Feelings", *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2006): 218.
- ¹⁷Miranda B. Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H.D, and Yeats* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005):50.
- ¹⁸Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995):38.
- ¹⁹Robert Scholes, *Paradoxy of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006): 123.
- ²⁰D.H. Lawrence, "The Spirit of Place", *20th Century Literary Criticism*, Ed. David Lodge (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1972):124.
- ²¹Rachel Potter, *Modernism and democracy: Literary Culture 1900-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006):4.
- ²²D.H. Lawrence, "Morality and the Novel", *20th Century Literary Criticism*, Ed. David Lodge (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1972): 129.
- ²³Malcolm Bradbury, and James McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism", *Modernism: 1890-1930*, Ed. Malcolm Bradbury & James McFarlane (New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 1976):48.
- ²⁴Juan Antonio Suárez. "Modernism and Gender Trouble", *Cuadernos de Filología Inglesa*, Vol. 6, N°1, (1997): 14.
- ²⁵Clive Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis", *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Francis Francina and Charles Harrison with the assistance of Deirdre Paul (New York: Westview Press, 1987):67.
- ²⁶Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991):10.
- ²⁷Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999):173.
- ²⁸Jane Goldman, *Modernism, 1910-1945: Image to Apocalypse* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004):185.

- ²⁹Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988):30.
- ³⁰Rod Rosenquist, *Modernism, the Market and the Institution of the New* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009):5.
- ³¹F.T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism", *Futurism: An Anthology*, Ed. Lawrence Rainey and Christine Poggi, et.al (New Haven, and London: Yale University Press, 2009):51.
- ³²Valentine De Saint-Point, "Manifesta of the Futurist Woman", *Futurism: An Anthology*, Ed. Lawrence Rainey, and Christine Poggi, et.al (New Haven, and London: Yale University Press, 2009): 111.
- ³³F.T. Marinetti and Christopher Nevinson, "Futurism and English Art", *Futurism: An Anthology* Ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, Laura Wittman (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2009): 196.
- ³⁴Natan Zach, "Imagism, and Vorticism", *Modernism 1890-1930*, Ed. Malcolm Bradbury, and James McFarlane (New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 1976):238.
- ³⁵Flemming Olson, *Between Positivism and T.S. Eliot: Imagism and T.E. Hulme* (University Press of Southern Denmark, 2008):19.
- ³⁶Author, *(Literary movements for students: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Literary Movements* (New York, San Francisco: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009): 418.
- ³⁷Ronald Carter, and John McRae, (*Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998): 358.
- ³⁸Miranda B. Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H.D, and Yeats* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005):46.
- ³⁹Clive Scott, *Symbolism, decadence and Impressionism, Modernism 1890-1930*, Ed. Malcolm Bradbury, and James McFarlane (New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 1976): 212.
- ⁴⁰Marianne Dekoven, "Modernism and Gender", *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Ed. Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005):176.
- ⁴¹Peter Childs, *Modernism* (New York: Taylor, and Francis e-library, 2000):12.
- ⁴²Robert Con Davis, and Ronald Schleifer, *Criticism and Culture: The role of critic in Modern Literary Theory* (Harlow: Longman Group, 1996): 66.
- ⁴³Cassandra Laity, "Introduction: Eliot, Gender, and Modernity", *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot*, Ed. Cassandra Laity, and Nancy K. Gish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 9.
- ⁴⁴Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Modernism*, ed. Michael H. Whitworth (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007):205.
- ⁴⁵Bonnie Kime Scott, "A Tangled Mesh of Modernists", *Modernism*, ed. Michael H. Whitworth (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007): 219.
- ⁴⁶Rita Felski, "Modernism and Modernity: Engendering Literary History", *Modernism*, ed. Michael H. Whitworth (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007):228.
- ⁴⁷Marjorie Perloff, "Modernism Under Review: Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Ezra*". *Modernist Cultures*, Vol.5.N°2 (2010):184.
- ⁴⁸Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (Verso: London, 2002):1.