

This paper focuses on developments from 2010 to the present day, a period of unprecedented market expansion and unparalleled creative vitality in Men's Fashion. The diverse aesthetic propositions of contemporary menswear – on the catwalk, in the fashion media and on the street – are situated in the context of emerging 'inclusive masculinities'. The paper describes how designers like Lucas Ossendrijver, Juun J, Raf Simons and Craig Green have innovated at the level of structure, composition and form in their radical reconceptions of men's dress, drawing parallels between their work and the innovations of seminal womenswear designers such as Madeleine Vionnet and Coco Chanel in the early twentieth century. The resurgence both of sportswear and of more expressive and creative formal attire in menswear is contrasted against the decline of traditional tailoring. These sartorial shifts are explored in the context of a changing landscape of work and family life and linked to sociological data suggesting that 'orthodox masculinity' is losing its hegemony amongst young men in particular.

Designer Kim Jones' debut collection for Dior Homme was unveiled in Paris a few weeks ago – and as the models proceeded along the runway to the strains of Underworld's 'born slippy' many of the major tendencies that have animated men's fashion in recent years were brought together. Hybridised outfits encompassing elements of sportswear, casual clothing and tailoring appeared; decorative, floral motifs and delicate fabrics were allied to utilitarian flourishes to produce curiously refined boiler-suits, soft unstructured trench-coats, and bomber-jackets upon which fronds of baroque botanicals unfurled.

Perhaps gesturing to the disintegration of barriers between formerly distinct genres of clothing, Jones played with transparency throughout the collection: trousers in lightweight shirting exposed the boxer-shorts worn beneath them; a billowing white lace shirt was layered over a chiffon vest – the ornate pattern seeming to float like vapour – veiling the model's naked torso as lightly as dew.

The capaciousness of Jones' silhouette nodded subtly to the 90s, but the haute couture finishings, diaphanous cloth, and sheer inventiveness of his collection for Dior Homme demonstrated emphatically how far men's fashion has come since the turn of the millennium and the innovations of Hedi Slimane, Raf Simons, Ennio Capassa and Helmut Lang (innovations that both I and Nick Rees Roberts have explored in some depth in our work to date). With the transgressive example of subculture as their model, these designers had used menswear to advance a form of "reverse discourse": challenging the values of orthodox masculinity by reclaiming and reframing qualities such as fragility, sensitivity, and sensuality as positive and desirable. Today, as new technologies of manufacture and dissemination, data generated design, and a rapidly transforming luxury sector seem set to disrupt the fashion industry, the developments of the last decade are ripe for reassessment: what do they tell us about shifting cultures of gender, sexuality, identity and visual culture and what do they augur for the future?

Perhaps every discipline experiences a historical period in which it shines with a particular brightness and in which, if only for a moment, it seems to articulate something special and particular about the contemporary world. In painting, we might argue that this époque of importance fell between 1870 and 1900 as artists, in a dialog with emerging technologies, found ways to describe modern life, the experience of nature: (light, water, fresh air) and

the city in flux in new and exciting ways. In womenswear, the era between 1910 and the late 1940s produced radical innovation after radical innovation as hems fell and rose by feet, corsets were rejected and rediscovered, and techniques including the bias cut were pioneered. In this present decade, menswear as a design discipline has experienced a seemingly unprecedented vitality, questioning the sartorial forms inherited from the twentieth century, and finding new approaches to an aesthetic of masculinity.

In the first years of the 2010s a new direction emerged in the work of creative menswear practitioners including Lucas Ossendrijver for Lanvin, Juun. J, Neil Barrett, and Damir Doma who increasingly emphasized a certain toughness that diverged from the aura of luxury and glamor then dominant in much contemporary menswear. But it was a toughness inflected by a sense of questioning, an ambiguity, one that combined fragile and ethereal beauty with unexpected elements of archetypal masculine attire.

Speaking in 2011, Lucas Ossendrijver summarized his Spring/Summer 2012 collection as follows:

It's about oppositions, it's the contradictions between the soft and the hard. We took the first look from security guards one sees in the airport but we have translated it using mousseline, pastel colours, and a technique whereby utility garments are coated in a fine layer of leather which is then pressed on: a technique which allows a certain lightness along with the sense that something lies beneath the surface which, in this way, acts as a metaphor for the collection.

Ossendrijver's colleague Alber Elbaz, in his charmingly accented French characterised the Lanvin models as "*Les Soldats pas de guerre mais les Soldats de la paix*": soldiers not of war but of peace.

Such notions spoke both to the state of men's fashion and to contemporary gender discourse more generally: masculinity as a combination of hard and soft, tough and gentle. It was a play of oppositions on the catwalk that exerted a kind of *Verfremdungseffekt* – an alienating or distancing effect between the garments and their usual significations.

A similar distancing effect or sense of the uncanny, is visible on the runway of Korean designer Juun. J. For Spring/Summer 2014, he presented a collection that combined formal innovation with iconic garments from the worlds of tailoring and American football transformed to become unfamiliar, ambiguous, and otherworldly. Taking archetypal menswear forms, Juun. J exaggerated them to become distorted echoes of their original prototypes: huge oversized football jerseys worn like the Korean Hanbok; slender legs protruding from abbreviated shorts; elements of tailoring cut-off or padded to achieve bizarre, unexpected, compelling proportions.

In these formal reimaginings of menswear it is easy to see parallels with the innovations that took place in women's fashion in the early twentieth century. Just as couturières like Madeleine Vionnet and Coco Chanel brought a new simplicity to dress, as well as a new relationship to the body, so too have menswear designers in this present decade. Womenswear in the nineteenth century had stiffly encased women—literally and metaphorically—in a restrictive femininity, but Chanel and Vionnet, using new lighter fabrics

and inventive approaches to cut and drape, created a feeling of suppleness, liberty, and sensuality. Chanel's borrowings from menswear, sportswear, and tailoring and Vionnet's bias cutting—the intricate seams of her dresses describing and softly caressing the contours of the body beneath—ushered in an aesthetic revolution in which femininity was reimagined and reinvented for a more liberated age.

Perhaps the most direct analogue for the work of Chanel, Vionnet, and the innovators of the early twentieth century can be found in Raf Simons' Spring Summer 2013 men's collection, in which vivid color and precise construction convey an equivalent sense of modernity, clarity, and optimism. Also present is a feeling for softness and drape: most evidently in the supple jersey tunics, decorated by LA artist Brian Calvin, their simple tubular construction and fluent movement recalling the dresses of the 1920s—a silhouette Simons was to reprise, for Spring 2014.

Along with the tunics—printed with enormous, multicolored, abstract faces and teamed with shorts just peaking from below the hem—Simons offered an elegant, pared-back approach to tailoring. Jackets in black, grey, iridescent ultramarine and emerald green—some with exaggerated peaked lapels and some, Modernist and Cardin-like, without revers—were paired with abbreviated shorts in matching cloth, slashed at the front so that the models' upper thighs flashed as they proceeded determinedly along the catwalk. The vivid color, athleticism, the dynamism of the draping tunics, the economy of the tailoring, and the long bare legs of the models all spoke to an energy and sense of liberation. Simons, in a magazine interview of 2013, suggested that this collection had grown out of a desire not to feel “the obligation to be dressed in a uniform” and crucially “about the freedom that a man has to express himself”. In this sense Simons not only proposes a new aesthetic, but also celebrates a new way of being a man no longer bound by a strict, normative masculinity.

Outside of the world of fashion, an interest in new forms of gender expression can be seen in a body of recent scholarly research (published roughly contemporaneously with the collections of Ossendrijver, Jun. J and Simons that I have reviewed). Sociologists such as Eric Anderson, Ann-Dorte Christensen and Sune Qvotrup Jensen, and Richard de Visser have drawn attention to shifting practices of masculinity in contemporary European and American societies, suggesting that more inclusive, egalitarian masculinities were emerging and that orthodox forms are losing their hegemony. Anderson, reporting on his extensive qualitative investigations, found that groups of young men were increasingly practicing what he terms ‘inclusive masculinities’ in ways that are “less concerned with [policing] the expression of femininity among other men”, “supportive of women who perform tasks traditionally defined as masculine” that “displayed irreverence” for essentialist thinking, and even “questioned the usefulness of categorising things as gendered in the first place”.

In various ways, all four of these academics have highlighted significant changes in the organizing structures of contemporary masculinity, especially in comparison to the early 1980s—the point at which Raewyn Connell formulated her highly influential theory of *hegemonic masculinity*.

This recent research, particularly Anderson's large-scale ethnographic fieldwork, points to significant shifts in the structure of gender today, suggesting that men no longer internalize

the values of orthodox masculinity as uniformly or as unquestioningly as hitherto. Similar findings have been replicated in quantitative investigations from the polling organisation YouGov.

In this context, men's fashion has offered a set of discursive practices—ways of dressing, ways of framing the body and identity—that allow men to express alternative and inclusive masculinities and to resist and reject the narrow confines of orthodox gender. This new sense of permission is felt in Margaret C. Ervin's work on metrosexuality from the beginning of this decade in which she argues that metrosexual practices challenge the presumed "naturalness" of orthodox masculinity. While Yumiko Iida, writing of the emergence of highly style-conscious young men in contemporary Japan, states:

The employment of feminine aesthetics and strategies by young men [...] provides them with a means to refute silently imposed ideological assignments and cultural expectations to reproduce the conventional masculine order in the cultural hegemony of Japanese society. In shifting my perspective this way, I view what is described by some as the "feminization of masculinity" as counter-hegemonic practices that challenge conventional masculine values and ideals upheld by the phallogocentric hegemonic discourse.

Clearly, it would be complacent to suggest that this explosion in new forms of masculine subjectivity represents the unequivocal evidence of sexism's demise for good. Paradoxically, the increased visibility of aggressively reactionary forms of masculinity—most powerfully symbolized by the election of Donald Trump—has coincided with radically inclusive forms of gender identity of the sort described by Eric Anderson and others. These mutually opposing forms of gendered practice point to the fragility and internal contradictions of orthodox masculinity which, delinked from its economic basis, becomes either an exaggerated and self-conscious form of bravado, or is replaced by something else.

Nevertheless, the tendency to claim that masculinity has not and cannot change (which is still heard in both conservative and some notionally progressive discussions of gender) is troubling not only because of its essentialist subtexts, but also because of the way it ignores a wealth of empirical evidence to the contrary.

Shifts in men's family and work lives, in their intimate relationships, an evolving set of political and cultural norms, and changing attitudes to the body have all fed into the transformation of men's fashion. As sociologists Mechtild Oechsle, Ursula Müller, and Sabine Hess have stated, "the period in which changes in gender relations and images was restricted solely to the modernization of women's lives is now drawing to a close". For example, research from the US-based Pew Research Centre has demonstrated, that the amount of time fathers spent on housework had more than doubled between 1965 and 2011 and that the amount of time fathers spent looking after children tripled. In recent years the taboo of homosexuality – which served such an important organising principle in upholding hegemonic masculinity – has lessened enormously. Indeed, programmes like 'Queer Eye' work on the assumption that looking gay is a good thing.

Moreover, the rise of the tech and service sectors and of home working has eroded the boundaries between work and leisure, home-life and paid labour.

The lounge or business suit that emerged in something like its current form towards the end of the nineteenth century codified the values of modernity, and of an orthodox respectable masculinity through its sober, rational, anonymous, and conformist aesthetic. Conversely, in this present moment of late or post-modernity the values of creativity, disruptiveness and individuality are prized within the 'knowledge economy' while service-sector and front-facing jobs increasingly demand aesthetic and emotional forms of labour. These developments are reflected in men's fashion on the high-street, and on the catwalk, so that the "uniform market" in which customers bought suits because they were obliged to do so is in decline, but other markets are opening up. As Stefano Gabbana of the design duo Dolce and Gabbana stated in 2016 "What we are selling very, very well is elegant, interesting, and individual tuxedos. And sportswear. But the normal suits? People don't want those." For weddings, and more dressy events, men want tailoring to do a different job, not to make them anonymous and invisible, but to be expressive and fun: and this isn't just a phenomenon in high-fashion, but also amongst affordable brands like Reiss and Topman as you can see from this slide.

As I've suggested, an equally significant development in recent years has been the rise of sportswear and an increasing porosity between formerly distinct genres of clothing. For spring 2019, for example, designers such as Neil Barrett – a pioneer of the athleisure style – combined sneakers, neoprene jackets, cuffed jogging bottoms and boiler-suits with oversized, semi-abstract floral motifs, and more formal tailored garments. Italian tailoring brand Cerrutti's collection of the same season featured capacious long pleated shorts, oversized shirts, silk jumpsuits, and nylon anoraks. While at Paul Smith cycling jerseys were layered under suits, and dégradé nylon bombers appeared with satiny pleated trousers. In this way, contemporary menswear practitioners, including those with a reputation for relatively quiet and understated design use sporty and decorative elements along with tailored garments to propose an aesthetic that feels fresh, flexible, relevant to men's lives today and free of pedantic sartorial codes. In a less refined manner online retailers like Asos and Bohoo Man also feature this hybridised menswear aesthetic, offering young men a ludic, colourful and accessible way of engaging with fashion.