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## 1. ABSTRACT

This paper is focused on the modernist style and the typical characteristics of each movement within this period. It also puts the spotlight on american prose and poetry due to the fact that these genres are the most prolific and representative of modernist literature. Therefore, a thorough examination of the context and history of not only realism and naturalism as predecessors of modernism, but specially of impressionism, symbolism, futurism, dadaism, surrealism, imagism, vorticism and expressionism has been realized. Nevertheless, it is important to take into account the fact that most of them were originated in Europe and were disseminated thanks to the emigration of American modernists to this continent. For this reason, the aim of this research is to bring all of them together in order to make more comprehensible and didactic their acquisition, illustrating them with examples that are characteristic of each movement, regardless of their authors but of their suitability to this period, in order to be as objective as possible.

Keywords: Modernism, american, experimentalism, typification, literature and poetry.

Este trabajo está centrado en el estilo modernista y las principales características de cada movimiento dentro de este periodo. Además, está orientado a la prosa y la poesía americana debido a que estos géneros son los más prolíficos y representativos de la literatura modernista. Por esta razón se ha realizado un intenso examen del contexto y la historia de, no solo sus predecesores como son el realismo y el naturalismo, sino también del impresionismo, simbolismo, futurismo, dadaísmo, surrealismo, imaginismo, vorticismo y expresionismo. Sin embargo, debe tenerse en cuenta el hecho de que la mayoría de ellos se originaron en Europa y su propagación se debe a que muchos modernistas americanos emigraron a dicho continente. Por consiguiente, el objetivo de este trabajo es unificarlos con el fin de que su aprendizaje resulte más comprensible y didáctico. Para ello se han ilustrado con ejemplos que son propios de cada movimiento y no de los autores que los representan, con la intención de ser lo más objetivo que sea posible.

Palabras clave: Modernismo, americano, experimentación, tipificación, literatura y poesía.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Realism tried to depict the world as faithfully as possible. However, the effect of modernization, wars, emigration and new ways of thinking pushed artists to reconsider their work. The world no more worthed to be depicted faithfully and a crisis of values took over people. For this reason, it became more interesting to focus on their inner thoughts and ideas that this new world awoke on them instead of their daily lives. With this aim modernism was created, and the necessity of adaptation drifted on major experimentation regarding structures, styles, arguments and characters. However, even though this period was more intensely felt in Europe, it also affected the United States deeply and was lived as a non-return point.

It is also important to explain that we have centered our attention mainly on poetry rather than in prose, due to the fact that modernist style is more visual on the former one. This period started to gain momentum in american literature when it was brought to poetry, and afterwards, prose tried to adapt it to its own field. However, the latter played much more with the argument, language and characters as experimentation with the form created incomprehensible works in some cases - as it is the example of Gertrude Stein or e.e. cummings -. For this reason, and taking into account that this paper is focused on modernist style, we found it highly appropriate to concentrate on poetry as experimentation can be regarded on the structure and language used, which is more effective. Nevertheless, prose examples can be found in almost every movement in order to compare both genres and have a better comprehension of this period.

### 2.a. STATE OF THE QUESTION

There is a huge amount of material regarding modernism based on its history, context, movements, main artists, effects... The main problem with this is that all of them are either too specific - for instance Frederick Morel essay on Ezra Pound or J. W. Walkington's *Mystical Experience in HD and Walt Whitman* - or too general as is the case of Sacvan Bercovitch's *The Cambridge History of American Literature* and Nina Baym's *The Norton*

*Anthology of American Literature*. The first group are very interesting due to the fact that they are focused on a concrete topic and analyze it deeply. Nevertheless, the second one is more helpful since it normally cover most movements and major authors, facilitating a guide to start any research or several examples of modernist texts as in the case of the anthologies.

On the other hand, there is no work that brings a complete and straightforward guide to american modernism regarding the history of every movement and examples of them in prose and poetry. There are different anthologies as the ones used in this paper such as Carter's, Axelrod's and Baym's centered on american or english modernism. However, they try to cover every author and text, so that, apart from their huge size, forget to include all the movements and their influence. For this reason, it is necessary to blend these two groups together in order to fill all the gaps that any of them could leave. That is the aim of this research: to make a clear statement and typify every movement within their context, creating an organized guide to modernism illustrated with examples.

## 2.b. METHODOLOGY

With this purpose, different types of sources were used to carry out this project. Firstly, the anthologies mentioned ahead were needed in order to contextualize the movements, authors and find the most representative texts within every school. Due to the fact that some movements were not very spreaded in the United States, as is the case of futurism or dadaism, further research was precised. However, the most part of the history and context was extracted from Ousby and Barbour work, while the anthologies provided much of the information from the main authors and texts. That being said, the majority of the excerpts, and specially poems, have been extracted from Axelrod's and Baym's anthologies as they have a broad compilation of the most famous ones, while the less known could only be found on the web.

Once all the movements were contextualised and texts selected, a huge labour of completing gaps was required. This was the main issue we faced while covering this topic since, as it has been said before, all the works focused on modernism are either too general or too specific.

As a consequence, finding that specific information was complicated and an extensive amount of material was examined. On account of this is why a project like this one is vital, so that everybody would be able to have a complete and direct knowledge of american modernism, centered on examples more than in authors.

## 2.c. CONTEXTUALIZATION AND HISTORY OF MODERNISM

The brinks of modernism are blurry due to the disparities between the different countries involved and genres within it. For instance, even though poetry was at its highest point at 1910s, for prose it took another ten years to flourish not becoming influential until the end of the First World War. However, as Virginia Woolf stated “on or about December 1910 human character changed” (qtd. in Barbour 11), this date will be set as the beginning of modernism, reaching an end at 1950. Furthermore, it cannot be, strictly speaking, embraced by the label of “movement” as it is actually the sum of different ones such as symbolism, surrealism, imagism, vorticism or dadaism. All of these tendencies, coming from Europe, broke with the past and reacted against traditional canons giving birth to modernism, mainly characterised by its experimentalism.

As modernism was basically “a response to modernization” (Barbour 11), it is necessary to analyze this topic in particular in relation with the chain of events that led to its emergence. One of the major antecedents was, at the end of the 19th century, the rapid industrialization that took place in the United States. It provoked a mass migration of people to cities as the agricultural society was losing its importance against the new job opportunities that metropolitan areas provided. Nevertheless, it was not just a national displacement but an international one as there was also an increase in the population coming from other continents such as Asia and Europe. All of these changes happened so fast that, together with the lost of local communities and consequent anonymity, created a sense of displacement and discontinuity that needed to be brought to literature. Because of this, the customary rural settings inherited from realism and naturalism evolved into mighty metropolis. All of these changes created a sense of loss and downfall in the society of this time and specially in artists, who started to look for new ways of expressing their inner feelings. Writers had

different responses to this chaos and while some of them applauded technological advances - futurism -, others were very critic with the growing materialistic society - expressionism -. (Barbour 11)

Modernism was not just an american revolution, but an international one. European expressionism was a clear forebear of modernism as, for the first time, and artistic movement totally forsook the traditional approaches (as realism in this case) and tried to depict their inner feelings in their paintings (Barbour 16). Having said this, we have to bear in mind that “Impressionists in the 1860s defined a new vision and a technique to match in their painting of modern Parisian life” (Middleton 70), and opened the road to further experimental movements. This wave helped modernist writers to feel understood and identified in such a way that they found the courage to experience with their own works too. American authors felt “free from tradition and tyranny of conventional art” (Barbour 17) breaking with the victorian society’s forms and styles.

Afterwards, the First World War took place. It was the first totally mechanized war and the huge lost of lives that it brought was a double traumatic shock for society. The Great War was a cutoff point from the past, and the earlier celebration of americanism that modernist poetry represented drifted into a disillusioned mood. It was especially demoralizing for those young authors who, whereas they combat in this war or not, expressed a deep feeling of alienation. This group of writers were called “the lost generation” and decided to fight this nihilism by letting the exploration of the individual loose. Moreover, they were very critic with american society, modernity and technology, which were pessimistically regarded. In addition, the chaos of the carnage created a sense of displacement that was brought to art through resources such as the stream of consciousness in prose and fragmentation in poetry. After the First World War some of them fled from their home country and settled in European cities such as Paris. As modernism became more and more international, american writers were even influenced by european authors as was the case of Ezra Pound who had a big french imprintment. The younger ones like Ernest Hemingway or F. Scott Fitzgerald, who were very critic with american society and culture were also a great example of these writers who, despite of the fact of being expatriated, succeeded in their writings by “freeing

themselves from sexual constraints and social conventions and lack of cultural or artistic sophistication” (Barbour 23) of United States.

In addition to these economic, social and cultural changes there were intellectual ones which shove american writers to redefine art. Traditional assumptions were shaken by thinkers coming from different spheres, ergo, new types of art were needed to catch up with them. These arising notions, which supposed a change in the conventional mentality, were led by ground-breakers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud or Karl Marx. In 1859 Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* questioned the existence of a god and “doubts about the stability of the existing order were expressed.”(Carter 319) They rebuilt basic ideas of the universe and human relations pushing american authors to break with the established and try to make sense out of the new world.

From Darwin came the idea that the emergence of human forms was a natural, not supernatural, event that occurred over millions of years, the result of random forces and natural selection. Chance, not divine will, seemed the governing principle of what appeared to be an increasingly accidental universe. From Marx came the view of human society as perpetually engaged in class struggle. In Freud’s work the inner world of humanity was depicted as dominated by unconscious drives and motives, accessible only through dreams and deep exploratory analysis. And from Einstein came the revolutionary principle that time and space, the psychic and physical environment of humanity, were relative, not absolute entities, subject to continuing alteration and redefinition as the mysteries of the cosmos unfolded. (qtd. in Barbour 15-16)

### 3. MOVEMENTS AND TYPIFICATION

As it has been stated before, modernism was originated by the merge of different movements which arose in contrast with previous rationalistic movements that vowed for the faithful representation of low-classes’ daily life. In addition, writers grew weary of a propaganda which idealized the war and patriotism, the use of empty words in literature and the hypocrisy of the current society. To fight this, the modernist author thought about the “ability of the mind and language to describe transcendence” (Barbour 44) and the necessity that language was as simple and straight to the matter as possible. These rebellious movements will be

explained and typified below regarding historical notions as their context or evolution, and formal characteristics like structure, and rhetorical and stylistic devices.

### 3.a. REALISM/NATURALISM

When referring to modernism it is necessary to throw back to realism as it was the reason for its creation. This term, totally against modernist essence, refers to those works that are descriptive and try to depict the world as faithfully as possible following a traditional approach. It was originated in France during the decade of 1850s, and became the mayor genre in novel and theatre during the second half of the century. Represented by a direct and simple prose, realism documents the everyday life of characters belonging to different social classes focusing on their speech and common activities. However, naturalism was a branch of realism more present in modernist movements, as is the case of impressionism or surrealism, regarding the interaction of humans and the environment. It was first used by Émile Zola in 1870s to represent the haunting feeling that humans were genetically and historically determined together with the “survival of the fittest” Darwinian theory (Ousby 708). Furthermore, naturalism is normally more centered on the lower classes and their everyday struggle explained through different perspectives. For this reason, while realism has a more traditional point of view when describing the facts, naturalism is characterized by a harrowing narration.

Naturalism can be regarded in this poem, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (1923) by Robert Frost, even though it does not strictly belongs to this period. This poem focuses on the protagonist who, even though he is astonished by the beauty of the surrounding wood, knows that he has to continue his travel. The influence of this movement is very significant in this example as the determinism is the main force that leads his actions, reinforced thanks to the repetition: “But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep”. In this excerpt we realize that men are determined by nature to perform their duties and die afterwards, as this character states, and that we have no freedom to get off this road.



Regarding the vocabulary used in this poem, it is interesting to analyze the contrast between nature and humanity. Substantives such as “woods”, “snow” and “lake” represents the role of wilderness; in comparison with the hand of man that created “villages”, “houses” and “farmhouses”. The former ones are “lovely” and enchanting for men, who seems tempted to stay in this environment but the voice of reason, which is embodied in the horse, pushes him to perform his duty as social being. This is another characteristic of realism and naturalism, the reasonable - even scientific - point of view personified as another personage who interacts with the protagonist. In this case, the animal “thinks” and “asks”, blurring the line between humans and animal, becoming the main character’s voice of reason and remembering him deterministically that he has a road to follow that he cannot dismiss.

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep. (Baym, 1979, 1133)

The following excerpt belongs to Ambrose Bierce’s *Chickamauga* (1889), where the influence of realism is still present. In relation with this we can see the faithful, even scientific, description of the corpse of a woman, dead as a consequence of the explosion of a

shell. The description of the face “turned upward”, the “deranged” clothes or the hair “full of clotted blood” is extremely specific and the reader gets a very exact image of the actual idea. Nevertheless, even though this description may seem close to reality, it is also extremely surrealist and evocative regarding the use of words such as “temple”, “crowned” and “bubbles”. In this movement, the relation between humans and nature is very reiterative as it can be observed in the vocabulary used to refer to the child -“inarticulate and indescribable cries”, “the chattering of an ape and the gobbling of a turkey”-. This harrowing description of a deaf mute child, who tries to scream after seeing the disfigured dead body of his mother, resembles more to an animal than to a person, exploring the boundaries between both of them.

For a moment he stood stupefied by the power of the revelation, then ran with stumbling feet, making a halfcircuit of the ruin. There, conspicuous in the light of the conflagration, lay the dead body of a woman—the white face turned upward, the hands thrown out and clutched full of grass, the clothing deranged, the long dark hair in tangles and full of clotted blood. The greater part of the forehead was torn away, and from the jagged hole the brain protruded, overflowing the temple, a frothy mass of gray, crowned with clusters of crimson bubbles—the work of a shell.

The child moved his little hands, making wild, uncertain gestures. He uttered a series of inarticulate and indescribable cries—something between the chattering of an ape and the gobbling of a turkey—a startling, soulless, unholy sound, the language of a devil. The child was a deaf mute. (Baym, 2007, 370)

### 3.b. IMPRESSIONISM

Impressionism was born in 1886 leading the avant-garde wave; nevertheless, it was actually a transitional movement from naturalism towards the achievement of modernism. As a result, it was highly criticized for not being enough experimental or innovative and deriving directly from earlier traditional movements such as naturalism. However, impressionism “pay homage to the natural environment and privilege the role of the senses but do not follow conventional modes of composition” (Mansfield 22) as it had very modernist characteristics such as the denial of tradition and history, the representation of industrial everyday life and the disavow of established conventions in art. On the other hand, post-impressionism emerged in 1910 in order to put end to the different disagreements that finished off with the

former movement. Post-impressionists intended to “overturn the superficiality of Impressionism” (The Art Story Foundation N.p.) as the technique had ruled over the subject matter.

For instance, in this excerpt belonging to Stephen Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) different movements assemble between a naturalist tradition towards a more modernist road filled with symbolism and imagism. Having said this, there are traditional notions regarding the spiritual crisis of being a “true man” and the idealism of a bright future after the war, as it is represented in the following sentence “he felt a quiet manhood, nonassertive but of sturdy and strong blood.” However, there is an assiduous use of symbolism referring to war as the “great death”; repetition of the pronoun “he” at the beginning of every sentence in order to emphasize his subjectivity; and the development of the argument around contemporary events such it was the war.

Moreover, it has been given a major prominence to the role of the environment in the emotional response as it provokes an evolution in the protagonist. In *The Red Badge of Courage* we can notice this as the fear that his surrounding companions discover his thoughts about the “error” and the “sin” he has committed, pushes him to rule them out. After clearing his mind he realizes that actually his mistake have led him to reach “assurance” and “manhood”. In addition, there is a considerable focus on the emotions that the main character experiences as events are recounted through his eyes. Adjectives such as “afraid” and “gleeful”, and verbs including “felt”, “mustered” and “discovered” illustrates the impression that events leave on him. This subjectivity in the narration leads to ambiguity since language, in the same way as the current world, is confusing. Words like “blood” referring to courage, “gospel” to beliefs, and “great death” to the war, reflect this notion.

He saw his vivid error, and he was afraid that it would stand before him all his life. He took no share in the chatter of his comrades, nor did he look at them or know them, save when he felt sudden suspicion that they were seeing his thoughts and scrutinizing each detail of the scene with the tattered soldier. Yet gradually he mustered force to put the sin at a distance. And at last his eyes seemed to open to some new ways. He found that he could look back upon the brass and bombast of his earlier gospels and see them truly. He was gleeful when he discovered that he now despised them. With the conviction came a store of assurance. He felt a quiet manhood, nonassertive but of sturdy and strong blood. He knew that

he would no more quail before his guides wherever they should point. He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man. (Crane 172)

Wallace Stevens' *Anecdote of the Jar* (1919) is another example of the impressionist influence in poetry. In this poem we can see the influence of modernity in the symbol of "the jar" which has been introduced in the wild nature, referring to the industrialization of rural areas as Tennessee. This idea is portrayed through ambiguity since common objects and locations acquire a different meaning than their habitual one. On the one side, it is easy to see naturalist notions such as the depiction of primitive areas and the relationship between men and women in society. On the other side, modernist ideas are introduced, like the interference of human machinery and stylistic groundbreaking devices, including repetition - "jar", "wild" and "hill"- or no regular rhyme scheme.

The setting becomes the main character in this poem as protagonism is given to the impression that the placement of a jar on a hill creates in the narrator. Natural elements such as "hill", "wilderness" or "bush" evolve to be "bare" and "gray" taking "dominion" over "Tennessee". In relation with this, it is interesting to point out the great attention to detail that has been kept in this poem, distancing the reader from seeing the whole image. The constant repetition of the same words puts the rest of the scene aside and we only get to know the part that is being presented to us. Due to this fact, several adjectives in relation with death and aridity, for instance "bare" or "gray", are used in order to create a certain pessimistic idea against modernization.

I placed a jar in Tennessee,  
And round it was, upon a hill.  
It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,  
And sprawled around, no longer wild.  
The jar was round upon the ground  
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.  
The jar was gray and bare.  
It did not give of bird or bush,  
Like nothing else in Tennessee. (Baym, 1979, 1171)

### 3.c. SYMBOLISM

Contemporary to impressionism was symbolism, however, this movement happened to be against "the descriptive precision and objectivity of realism and the scientific determinism of naturalism" (Ousby 967). This term was created by Jean Moréas in 1886 although it was popularized before by authors such as Baudelaire or Edgar Allan Poe. The interest was to suggest through the figure of the symbol the relation between different - or even contrary - entities, such as the tangible and the spiritual world. Symbolism was able to bring together various scopes such as music, painting and poetry thanks to its musicality and visuality. Authors like T.S. Elliot saw in this movement the perfect reflection of this "spiritual world", reinforcing consequently the contrast with realism and naturalism.

The following excerpt belongs to Amy Lowell's *Guns as Keys: And the Great Gate Swings* (1917), where she criticizes the imperialism of the United States as well as the control men hold over women. Accordingly, the poem unifies three different modernist characteristics: symbolism, feminism and the influence of the Second World War. The former feature is related to the symbolic figure of America as the man, and the line "pulling apart the curtains of the temple" depicts Japan, which would be the woman. The second and third characteristics are interconnected as America "Force the shut gate with the muzzles of your black cannon", which is clearly related to the expansive and conqueror attitude of this country amongst Japan during the war, similarly to the way women are forced by men who treat them as a piece of cake.

Universality is a major characteristic in this poem as symbolism blends together the importance of topics like war and feminism - that have been analyzed before -, with others such as displacement, commerce and religion. Vocabulary related to exile -"gate" or

“house”-, commerce -“trade”, “shop” or “mission”-, and religion -“curtains”, “temple” or “bless”- are transformed into modern symbols that repudiates the horror of the Second World War and male chauvinism. Furthermore, this universalist intention is achieved through abstract lexicon, for example “map”, “planet” or “seas”, pretending to embrace everybody and escape from immediacy.

Down, down, down, to the bottom of the map; but we must up again, high on the other side. America, sailing the seas of a planet to stock the shop counters at home. Commerce-raiding a nation; pulling apart the curtains of a temple and calling it trade. Magnificent mission! Every shop-till in every bye-street will bless you. Force the shut gate with the muzzles of your black cannon. Then wait — wait for fifty years — and see who has conquered. (Axelrod 80)

However, symbolism can also be found in common objects as in Langston Hughes’ *Harlem* (1951). This poem interprets what happens when we do not fulfill our dreams and encourages the reader not to postpone them through different metaphors. He also repeats the same question-answer structure in order to strengthen his statement and provide a more dreamy atmosphere to the poem. It is a perfect example of symbolist aim of relating contrary entities such as dream and immediate world, in this case, in a very visual way. Hughes uses ordinary objects such as “raisins”, “rotten meat” or “syrup” matching concrete objects with abstract entities like dreams. Therefore, everyday things acquire a second life, maybe in the same way as black people in America reached their freedom. Although common objects ascended to a higher plane, dreams are given qualities that abstract entities cannot have, for instance “dry up”, “fester”, “stink” or “sag”.

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore--

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over--

like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode? (Hughes, "The World's Poetry Archive" 45)

This movement is present in prose as well, even though it is normally used in a more subtle way. This excerpt belongs to Ernest Hemingway's short story *Cat in the Rain* (1925) where symbolism is related to specific signs that are recurrent throughout the story. In this case the main symbols are, as introduced in the title, the "cat" and the "rain" referring to the scope of fertility, babies and obviously sex. In Hemingway's story there is not a huge contrast amongst the two parts of the metaphor, however, a connection between the cat and a baby exists, created through the fertilization of the woman who literally goes under the rain in order to find the cat.

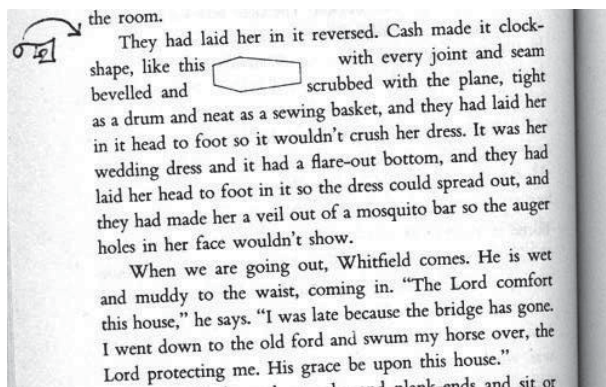
*Cat in the Rain* is a great example of the importance this movement gave to suggestion and evocation rather than describing reality. Sexual references connecting the "umbrella" to condoms, "getting wet" to being fertilized, or George's passiveness to his impotence are only a few examples of this topic that are disseminated throughout this text. There is also an important amount of contrary, and even antonymous, words as symbolism tried to bring opposites together. In relation with this, contradictions like "dry" and "wet", "passive" and "active", or "small" and "important" are used to depict the relation between men and women. Moreover, the focus on female's point of view meets feminist approaches and tries to analyze the psychology of characters that are traditionally forgotten.

They went back along the gravel path and passed in the door. The maid stayed outside to close the umbrella. As the American girl passed the office, the padrone bowed from his desk. Something felt very small and tight inside the girl. The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important. She had a momentary feeling of being of supreme importance. She went on up the stairs. She opened the door of the room. George was on the bed, reading. 'Did you get the cat?' he asked, putting the book down.

'It was gone.' (Hemingway, "Cat in the Rain" N.p.)

"My mother is a fish" (Baym, 1979 1563), a whole chapter of *As I Lay Dying* (1930) is reduced to this sole sentence. This novel is highly experimental and there is an extensive use

of symbolism, nevertheless, this and the following one are the some of most representative examples of symbolism within this novel. This five-words sentence is a great instance of how a common object - a fish - can be extrapolated to an existentialist value like death, due to the fact that *As I Lay Dying*'s plot develops around the death of the mother and how her children try to bear it. For Vardaman, the author of this sentence, to relate her death to the one of a fish helps him to understand her lost. It is also interesting the actual depiction of a coffin within the narration as if comparison felt short, in this case, and tried to explore the boundaries of symbolism. Finally, several modernist texts use devices that are introduced in this novel, such as writing the stream of consciousness sections in italics and the reduction of every chapter to the perspective of a specific character in question.



(Faulkner, *eyegiene.sdsu.edu*)

Moreover, Gertrude Stein most notable motto exemplifies her whole trajectory and probably the whole movement. The main point of her “A rose is a rose is a rose” is to recover the essence of the rose which is seen as an icon of traditional poetry that has been denaturalized by an excess in adjectives. She plays with language in order to “renew relations between poetry and the world around it” (Axelrod 90) so that it becomes the medium to shape reality as the world is composed of words and literature’s job does not simply consists on mirroring it. Therefore, the third “rose” utility is to free this symbol from the excesses of other epoques and break with established ideas.



### 3.d. FUTURISM

Futurism was a movement first released in 1909 through Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto which, essentially, venerated the implements in technology. It advocated the necessity of moving forward to the future and the use of the force to achieve it. This violence was also related to their support towards the First and Second World Wars as the Darwinian idea of the "survival of the fittest" was very present; moreover, some futurists backed fascism. Regarding literature, this movement was centered on the destruction of tradition, focused on the motion of time as well as of space, and to attack the nerves of the receptors in order to forget their everyday issues and explore their conscious.

In the United States the influence of futurism was not as strong as in Europe and there were only a few contemporaneous writers to be involved in it. One of the most important was Hart Crane who was very fond of the importance of machinery, technology and the American metropolis. In the following extract belonging to his long poem *The Bridge* (1930), numerous references to modernity and to industrialization are portrayed with a very optimistic view as it can be read in the sentence "The nasal whine of power whips a new universe". Crane focused on the future and perceived the evolution of technology in a very natural and dynamic manner. Furthermore, its positivity reaches the point that the reader is so amazed by this evolution that forgets about reality and focuses on the beautiful image which is being portrayed.

Futurists aimed to depict technological and scientific changes in a poetic manner in order to be able to portray their beauty as fairly as possible. For this reason they described modern world as they saw it. Industrialization was a dynamic occurrence that required the same treatment in literature, therefore, enjambement is used to create a sense of motion as in lines 67 and 68 "the velvet hummed Of dynamos". Moreover, repetition also helped the description to flow; for example, in this excerpt alliteration can be found in "whine of power whips a new" and "spouting pillars spoor". Technology and machinery brought strength to the world, likewise, artists used revitalizing words such as "power", "whips" and "spout". Finally, contradiction between the modern invention "ammonic" and the traditional "proverb" helps to visualize the wipe out of the past in order to move forward.

The nasal whine of power whips a new universe...  
Where spouting pillars spoor the evening sky,  
Under the looming stacks of the gigantic power house  
Stars prick the eyes with sharp ammoniac proverbs,  
New verities, new inklings in the velvet hummed  
Of dynamos, where hearing's leash is strummed... (Baym, 1979, 1671:63-68)

### 3.e. DADAISM

Moreover, if futurism revered war as a cleansing agent, dadaism arose as a response against the horror of the First World War and aimed to “free (art) from logical constraints and that challenged conventional notions of art and reality” (Axelrod 520). This movement is one of the most rebellious branches of modernism as it plays with language and even reaches nonsense due to the repeated use of double meanings and juxtaposition. Dadaism rejected tradition and established rules, and conciliated extreme notions of nihilism and anarchy that can be found both in the structure and/or argument of its works.

This movement is very visual in poetry as the pattern of the poems is totally illogical. The following excerpt belonging to the poem *Death* (1930, 1934), written by William Carlos Williams, shows a lack of punctuation marks and capital letters, following dadaist rejection of established norms. In addition, there is also a miscarriage in its structure as some stanzas are composed of five lines while others have three, apart from the different number of syllables and the misplacement of the verses. Likewise, there is a repetition of the word “dead”, a fact that, together with the rage of this pessimistic poem, helps to connect with the dadaist challenge of language and tradition, and presents an anarchical representation of death.

For dadaists everything could be considered art, therefore, even though this poem could seem irrational, it is actually the product of the assemblage of a defiant representation of death with a very pessimistic point of view. The vocabulary serves faithfully to this purpose as the intention of words like “bastard” and “godforsaken” is to be provocative, whereas nihilism can be regarded in expressions such as “there's nothing legitimate”, “sick dead” or “he's

nothing”. As it has been stated before, everyday life aspects can conform art as in this poem common words like “potatoes”, “dog”, “dead” or “chair” are included.

He's dead  
the dog won't have to  
sleep on his potatoes  
any more to keep them  
from freezing

he's dead  
the old bastard—  
He's a bastard because

there's nothing  
legitimate in him any  
more

                  he's dead  
He's sick dead

                                  he's  
a godforsaken curio  
without  
any breath in it

He's nothing at all  
                  he's dead  
shrunk up to the skin

                  Put his head on  
one chair and his  
feet on another and  
he'll lie there  
like an acrobat— (Baym, 2002, 1273)

On the other hand, dadaism in prose is not as visual as in poetry due to the fact that it is present especially in the characters and the argument and not that much in the structure. Regarding the next example extracted from Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), dadaist notions of anarchy and nonsense are observed as, for instance, it that does not introduce the characters before they have already spoken their minds, creating a sensation of lost. Moreover, the protagonist is a war veteran and the whole novel reveals an atmosphere of rejection against the First World War and its consequences.

In this example the author questions society and especially the connection between men and women as the relationship between the main characters seems complicated. It is not clear after reading this excerpt if they really love each other, they live together or even their loyalty; challenging every convention about marriage or love. In addition, provocation is reinforced through coarse language like "damned silly idea", "don't be an ass" or "you make me ill". This text also seems to be a reflect of dadaist notion that anything, with little help of the artist, can become art due to the lack of description and the fact that the dialogue could have been transcribed from an actual conversation without mediation. Also, this idea is strengthened by the vulgar vocabulary, the colloquial expressions, and the incorrect syntax: "Got it all at Zelli's. Dozen bottles of Mumms. Tempt you?"

She looked at me, her hand on the table, her glass raised. "Don't look like that," she said. "Told him I was in love with you. True, too. Don't look like that. He was damn nice about it. Wants to drive us out to dinner to-morrow night. Like to go?"

"Why not?"

"I'd better go now."

"Why?"

"Just wanted to see you. Damned silly idea. Want to get dressed and come down? He's got the car just up the Street."

"The count?"

"Himself. And a chauffeur in livery. Going to drive me around and have breakfast in the Bois. Hampers. Got it all at Zelli's. Dozen bottles of Mumms. Tempt you?"

"I have to work in the morning," I said. "I'm too far behind you now to catch up and be any fun."

"Don't be an ass."

"Can't do it."

"Right. Send him a tender message?"

"Anything. Absolutely."

"Good night, darling."

"Don't be sentimental."

"You make me ill."

We kissed good night and Brett shivered. "I'd better go," she said. "Good night, darling."

"You don't have to go."

"Yes." (Hemingway, "The Sun Also Rises" 18)

Nihilist notions are introduced in another Hemingway's story named *A Clean Well Lighted Place* (1933). In this example a very pessimistic view of life is portrayed, emphasized by the repetition of the Spanish word "nada" which means "nothing". In this story there is a huge rejection of any true knowledge either in art, religion or morality. Accordingly, this excerpt states "It was all a nothing and a man was a nothing too" accepting it and encouraging men to just focus on everyday certainties. In contrast with this nihilistic view of life, there is a rebellious branch in the style as there is a scant use of punctuation marks. Apropos of this, the repeated use of the word "nada" creates a sensation of chaos as it makes this paragraph highly complicated to understand and breaks all preconceived rules with the use of foreign expressions.<sup>1</sup>

Syntactically, this excerpt makes sense, however, in terms of meaning it is confusing. Dadaism played with the collage and the assemblage of objects, techniques that have been brought to literature thanks to the extreme repetition of the same structures time after time. This provokes the reader as the irrationality of this example will probably rile him and make him question the role of the artist. This is precisely the aim of Hemingway in this text: to oppose norms and rules regarding language and its composition, shoving the reader to challenge traditional literature.

What did he fear? It was not a fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was a nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada. Our

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<sup>1</sup> The use of foreign words is a very common characteristic in modernism as writers wanted to escape from the United States by travelling to other countries and incorporating words from different languages.

nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee. He smiled and stood before a bar with a shining steam pressure coffee machine.

"What's yours?" asked the barman.

"Nada."

(Hemingway, "A Clean Well Lighted Place" N.p.)

### 3.f. SURREALISM

Following the path that dadaism opened, the term surrealism arose as a branch focused mainly on the inner thoughts that the First World War awakened on its supporters. Surrealism emerged in 1924 and rejected strongly the realism as its rationalism was contrary to their aim of exploring the unconscious in order to free repressed feelings related to sexuality, violence and morality. Furthermore, they were very influenced by freudian principles about the division between the unconscious and the conscious as much as the ones referring to the power of imagination; and marxist theories regarding the necessity of revolting against the established authority.

This is an extract that belongs to Philip Lamantia's *I Touch You* (1970), a highly surrealist love celebrating poem. Surrealist characteristics such as the reflection of inner passionate and sexual feelings, symbolism and a dreamlike atmosphere can be found. The author is imagining a sexual intercourse with his platonic love and the whole scene is filled with metaphors and symbolic expressions like "you rise from the snail's bed of tubular hair" or "the breath of jet planes", giving free rein to repressed fantasies. Furthermore, the repeated expression "I touch you with" resembles the persistent movement of this sexual intercourse as trying to give free reign to suppressed anxieties. It also focuses on the juxtaposition of different, even random, ideas inherited from dadaist collage as these examples show: "spiders of silk", "tobacco eyes" or "one hundred headed giraffes". This is related with the fact that surrealism tried to awake new ways of thinking that caught up with modernist advances exercising the imagination. *I Touch You* reveals forbidden fantasies and the confusing vocabulary reminds to the language of the unconscious, which is irrational and wild.

I touch you with my eyes when you lie under spiders of silk  
I touch you with my one hundred headed giraffes too secret to be seen  
the rods & cones the morning covets awaken you  
with my touch of tobacco eyes  
and you rise from the snail's bed of tubular hair  
I touch you with the breath of jet planes  
and they are gone elsewhere to you too (Fama, 2013)

Surrealism gave birth to the stream of consciousness due to the Freudian influence in literature and its division between the conscious and the unconscious in relation with the dream world. This technique focuses on the subject matter and refers to the exploration of the characters psyche which has no order nor control. For this reason, when transported to the paper, the stream of consciousness seems messy and unintelligible at first sight due to devices such as the lack of punctuation. A great example of this is William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), where the mind of four different characters is examined. The most interesting one is Benji, due to the fact that, because he is retarded, his speech reflects it by being chaotic - as he cannot understand the passing of time -. For instance, in the following excerpt he is watching a scene where his friend Luster is in the garden and the different thoughts that this awakes in him stumbles in his speech: "Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass."

Benji cannot process the information which he receives from the outside and his lack of vocabulary due to the mental illness that he suffers, gives birth to an irrational stream of consciousness. The same words "hitting", "fence", "hunting" or "flowers" are used over and over, and events superimpose as they do not follow any chronological order, leaving the adverb "then" useless. Moreover, this character reflects modernist authors impressions towards modernization as they could not understand the occurrences that were taking place and felt displaced from time and society.

Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower

tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass. (Faulkner, "The Sound and the Fury" 9)

This excerpt, extracted from Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1925), is also related to the stream of consciousness as there is a flow of thoughts observed in the repetitive vocabulary. Apart from the use of juxtaposition within this novel, there is also a scant number of words used throughout the novel, lack of punctuation and an abusive exercise of the present tense. All of these characteristics, together with the absence of chapters during the whole novel, helps to create a surrealist atmosphere in which the unconscious is the main character. Moreover, the stream of consciousness is employed as a device to present the author's perspective against the different wars<sup>2</sup> the United States had to go through.

Similar expressions - "write", "love" or "know"- are repeated in this excerpt as if the author was thinking as she writes with no filter or subsequent edition. In order to reflect the stream of consciousness the text becomes chaotic and irrational trying to set her thoughts free. Stein also juxtaposes her own interest with the one of the rest of the people as she maintains that they all have the same objective: "I write for myself and for strangers". This text is not dreamlike nor imaginative but serves to the aim of bringing "strangers", people "who know" her work, people "who like" it and those who "love it" together, in order to explain their position against the war, and endure its horror, as intimately as possible by exposing her own unconsciousness.

I write for myself and for strangers. I do this for my own sake and for the sake of those who know I know it that they look like other ones, that they are separate and yet always repeated. There are some who like it that I know they are like many others and repeat it, there are many who never can really like it.

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<sup>2</sup> In this novel there is a huge rejection against the several wars that the United States had to go through, not only the First World War, but also the American Revolutionary War and the Civil War.



There are many that I know and they know it. They are all of them repeating and I hear it. I love it and I tell it. I love it and now I will write it. This is now the history of the way some of them are it. (Baym, 1979 1093)

### 3.g. IMAGISM

Another movement enclosed under the modernist wave was imagism, it was specially characteristic of Hilda Doolittle and Ezra Pound's poetry. Imagism took place from 1912 to 1917 both in England and the United States and was influenced by the French symbolism. In 1914 a collection of several poets work was published under the name of "Des Imagistes" creating a new school which comprehended the new tendencies arising in art. It was ruled by some principles as the direct treatment of the "thing" avoiding ornamental words, the use of free verse on poetry, freedom in the choice of subject matter, the scape from generalities or vagueness and, therefore, the ultimate achievement of the essence of poetry. These characteristics had the main objective of distancing poetry from abstractions and bringing attention to the image itself, described as explicitly as possible.

Hilda Doolittle was the first author to publish an imagist poem and she revolutionized the genre as a consequence. The following poem is *Oread* (1915), a perfect example of imagism as there is no rhyme, rhythm, rhetorical devices or argument at all, but a clear image and huge economy of language. There is a major use of typical modernist stylistic devices like the repetition in words such as "pines", "your" or "whirl" in an attempt to blend the idea of the sea and the pines together. Additionally, alliteration can be found in "pointed pines" and epanalepsis in "over us, cover us"; due to the fact that the economy of language pushed the author to look for non-traditional ways of emphasis which escaped from excessive ornamentation. This poem also "juxtaposes two distinctly dissimilar images, turning them into contrasting but intersecting planes of reality and language"<sup>18</sup> (pag 305) which are the sea and the pines' forest. These two planes are interconnected as there is no way of telling whether if the forest is the metaphor within the image of the sea or viceversa. It is achieved through the misuse of vocabulary relating to different scopes such as "splash" referring to pines and "pools" to the fir.

Whirl up, sea—  
whirl your pointed pines,  
splash your great pines  
on our rocks,  
hurl your green over us,  
cover us with your pools of fir. (Axelrod 309)

Ezra Pound's *A girl* is another example of imagist poetry as it is very direct regarding its content and free from poetry's conventionalities. To begin with, the language is straightforward and, even though there is repetition, the vocabulary is not very overelaborated and it is easy to understand. This poem is based on tradition as it explains the myth of Daphne and Apollo, in which she is transformed into a tree, creating a first person sensation as the reader can understand and even feel the metamorphosis. However, it flows as the branches of a tree thanks to the free verse and the lack of rhyme or rhythm, discovering the essence of poetry and being able to communicate it.

The typical imagist economy of language can also be found in this poem as the same words are repeated throughout the poem, as is the case of "tree" or "arms". In relation with this, the whole metaphor in which the poem is based on is achieved thanks to the comparison of nature-like vocabulary with parts of the human body - "branches" with "arms" and "tree" with "breast" -. Furthermore, the use of the same words and structures during the whole description of the metamorphosis helps to create a sense of continuity and evolution to it. Regarding the lexicon, words like "high", "above" or "ascend" contribute to the idea of growth and change, which in addition to "violets", "moss" or "sap" remembers to the germination of a plant. Finally, regarding the structure of the poem, same syntactic constructions are repeated, as in the cases of the first three lines of the first stanza "the... has... my..." and the first two lines of the second stanza "... you are".

The tree has entered my hands,  
The sap has ascended my arms,  
The tree has grown in my breast -  
Downward,  
The branches grow out of me, like arms.

Tree you are,  
Moss you are,  
You are violets with wind above them.  
A child - so high - you are,  
And all this is folly to the world. (Pound, "The World's Poetry Archive" 24)

Within this movement also emerged the objectivism, whose intention was to reduce the world to a simple image, but regarding common objects, insects or plants. William Carlos Williams, the patron of this movement, stated the popular phrase "not ideas but in things", which refers to the unique existence of things themselves. In *The Red Wheelbarrow* (1923) the author tries to copy nature depicting a common object - a wheelbarrow -, an idea reinforced by the form of the poem which imitates the rolling movement of the wheel. Vocabulary belonging to everyday life can be found, as it is the case of "chickens" or "rain" following the freedom in subject choice aim, and the contrast between the "red wheel" and the "white chickens" makes the poem even more visual. Moreover, Williams is playing with language combining different stanzas between two and four syllables, lack of punctuation or capital letters, and lines consisting on one preposition as "upon", in this case.

so much depends

upon

a red wheel

barrow

glazed with rain

water

beside the white

chickens (Axelrod 232)

On the other hand, *Picasso* (1909) belongs to the series of poems gathered under the name of *Portraits* (1908–1913), written by Gertrude Stein. She was influenced by Pablo Picasso and the use of cubism in his paintings in such a way that she incorporated techniques like “fragmentation and abstraction of the image and multiple representation from slightly different angles” (Axelrod 91) in her own work. Following this path, the barriers between prose and poetry were explored being reflected in her prose poems, as is the case of *Picasso*. This poem exemplifies the mixture between a typical plot and characters belonging to the prose tradition with poetry’s imagism and language. This fact can be observed in the extended description of a protagonist around whom the argument of the poem develops, while in contrast, repetition is maintained in the structure as well as in the words used.

We can observe in this excerpt the blending of different scopes, such as poetry with prose and literature with painting; giving birth to a highly experimental work that brings together different modernist movements. To begin with, there is no rhyme nor rhythm due to the influence of prose that eliminates all remains of poetic tempo. The vocabulary used in this poem, even though not being characterized by its complication, is extremely repetitive as is the case of words like “something”, “meaning”, “always” and the employment of the -ing form. The incorporation of the cubist technique explains the fragmentation of this obsessive repetition, which can be chaotic at some points of the narration as it can be regarded in this example “something come out of him and this thing the thing coming out of him”.

This one was one having always something being coming out of him, something having completely a real meaning. This one was one whom some were following. This one was one who was working. This one was one who was working and he was one needing this thing needing to be working so as to be one having some way of being one having some way of working. This one was one who was working. This one was one having something come out of him something having meaning. This one was one always having something come out of him and this thing the thing coming out of him always had real meaning. (Axelrod 95)

### 3.h. VORTICISM

As a consequence of the end of the imagist movement, vorticism flourished between 1913 and 1915 led by Wyndham Lewis even though the term vortex was used before by Ezra Pound referring to the avant-garde movement (Ousby 1035). Vorticism claimed for the “activity and significance in art, and the energy of the individual human mind” (Ousby 1035) but, in contrast to futurism, it did not rejected tradition. “The past is connected to the future in the vortex” (48 Pound) as different movements such as imagism, futurism or cubism were influential in vorticism due to the importance of tradition in the process of creating art. This movement essentially was based on capturing the energy of common things: “The Vortex”, something achieved through restricting everybody who was established within any specific movement from creating vorticist art. Another characteristic was the blending of tradition and modernity as it has been analyzed before, and consequently, the controversialism. In the following poem *In a Station of the Metro* (1913), Pound reflects these characteristics as he conveys imagist theories about depicting everyday situations with the vorticist requirement of finding the essence in them.

In addition, this poem summarizes the energetic instant that this movement wanted to achieve as the whole essence of a moment in a station of a metro is enclosed in an image. Cubism influenced Pound in the fragmentation of his poetry and pushed him to find beauty in daily life instants. Likewise, futuristic notions as dynamism and the celebration of modern world can be found in “the metro” as a symbol of technological advances and motion. However, in contrast with futurism, vorticism did not reject tradition and the structure of the poem reminds to a Haiku. There is also a comparison between “the faces” and “petals” oppositely to “the crowd” and the “black bough” as, even though modernism is optimistically regarded, a certain sense of displacement and alienation is still characteristic of this movement.

The apparition of these faces in the crowd  
Petals on a wet, black bough. (Axelrod 267)

### 3.i. EXPRESSIONISM

Expressionism was created by the painter Julien-Auguste Hervé as an opposite movement to impressionism, advocating for the representation of the inner feelings rather than impressions from the outside world. Therefore, expressionism reflects the very subjective experience whereas impressionism, in the same way as realism, depicts reality in a very objective way. This term, regarding literature, flourished especially in drama, however, it can also be found in American modernist poetry and fiction. Expressionist plots develop around a main character who is looking for his true identity in a very subjective way, while in contrast, secondary characters are very stereotyped. This fact distorts reality as only the point of view of the protagonist is explained, which is normally negative, helping also the reader to evade from reality.

That is the case of this excerpt from *The Waste Land* (1922), which reflects the feelings of the main character, Tiresias, who is able to foresee the events that are about to happen. Therefore, there is a very pessimistic atmosphere as he can see the future of everybody, even his own future, as well as their deaths. For this reason Tiresias' narration is so obscure and nostalgic, due to the fact that even though he is old and the rest of people around him die, he is not able to do so. This poem is very expressionist as the sole perspective of this man is presented, which is warped by sorrow. Different adjectives accompany substantives in relation with this pessimistic view of ageing, such as "violent hour", "old man" or "wrinkled female breasts". Moreover, this movement is centered on the author's emotional response towards sentiments of anxiety and alienation, as well as the exteriorization of these feelings. Therefore, Tiresias uses expressions like "throbbing between two lines" and "I too awaited", referring to his own exile and the angst of getting old but not dieing. Nevertheless, this blind character, who cannot perceive the external world, is able to see the future thanks to his premonitory powers: "perceived", "foretold" and "see". The fact that he is not able to observe reality is a metaphor of the modernist aim of dismissing what immediately surrounds them and focusing on their consciousness.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back

Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits

Like a taxi throbbing waiting,  
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,  
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see  
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives  
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,  
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights  
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.  
Out of the window perilously spread  
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,  
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)  
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.  
I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs  
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—  
I too awaited the expected guest. (Baym, 1979, 1386:215-230)

On the other hand, there are also expressionist examples in prose as is the case of this excerpt belonging to Eugene O'Neill's *The Last Will and Testament of an Extremely Distinguished Dog* (1940). In this short story the reader gets to know the inner feeling of a dog towards his family as he writes his testament. The animal's thoughts are extremely accurately explained and we can understand what he is being through as if we were dogs. In addition, it is interesting to sum the fact that, because the narrator is a dog, the text is focused on his point of view so that the world is oblivious for the reader and reality is distorted.

This example is, in contrast with the former one, positive and tender, making use of pleasant expressions like "never jealous", "kind spirit" or "dogs are good." This text helps the reader to relax and evade from reality, yet rejecting a pessimistic point of view towards death. Furthermore, a vocabulary related to emotions and subjectiveness represents the exaltation of the inner self: "feel", "affection" or "sentiment"; and the narrator asserts that "she cannot life without a dog". Also, the reflection of the ego is built upon the repetition of the same structures, such as "I have always", "I have permitted" and "I have never", in order to reinforce the importance of the emotional experience.

What I would like to feel is that, having once had me in the family, now she cannot live without a dog! I have never had a narrow jealous spirit. I have always held that most dogs are good (and one cat, the black one I have permitted to share the living room rug during the evenings, whose affection I have tolerated in a kindly spirit, and in rare sentimental moods, even reciprocated a trifle). (O'Neill N.p.)

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This project presents the causes that led to the origin of modernism and the context in which it was born. The First World War traumatized society, Industrialization created an unlikeable world to live in, emigration produced a sense of displacement in everybody and intellectuals reformulated all the notions in which the world was supported on. Therefore chaos reigned and it became vital to catch up with all of these changed in order to survive, an urge that was brought to literature, painting, cinema, music... Artists needed an escape mechanism from all these novelties, to break with modernization and new ways of putting their anxiety into words. Different movements arose in order to fulfill all of these feelings which sometimes were even contrary, but that shared an experimental approach towards reality. They were groundbreaking, complex to understand and even chaotic; this is the reason why they have been explained individually and typified focusing on their context, style, form and intention.

Modernism was a reaction against realism and naturalism as they tried to portray the world as accurately as possible, whereas the former one's intention was to evade from it. However, naturalist notions, such as determinism or the relationships between humans and their environment, will influence other movements within this period. For instance, impressionism inherited this interest on the interaction between human beings and nature, nevertheless, their constructions and style were much more experimental. In relation with this, futurism also focused on depicting the real world as faithfully as possible and maintained naturalist determinism culminating in a worship towards the "cleansing" job of wars. Dadaism arose in opposition to futurist violence, positiveness and warlike by playing with language, even reaching nonsense, and a pessimistic-nihilistic point of view which proclaims the most rebellious branch of this period. Modernism was a time of contrasts, as it has been analyzed, and symbolism reflected this fact through the rejection of previous determinism and



objectivism, moving towards a more spiritual world. This movement gave birth to surrealism, a school that centered on the exploration of the unconscious and added dadaist anarchical techniques. A close reading can lead to the realization of the fact that movements influence others; due to the fact that, for example, vorticism resulted after the search for the essence that imagist pursued, futurist rejection of tradition, and symbolist direct treatment of common things. Nevertheless, the movement that probably better reflects modernist displacement and evasiveness was expressionism, as their extreme repudiation of reality pushed them to lock themselves into their own stream of consciousness and, as a consequence, reality was distorted.

To conclude, it is interesting to realize that, as we are used to the experimentation in poetry, changes in its structure and form does not seem very absurd. However, regarding prose, this kind of alterations can even lead to nonsense. If we take as an example Gertrude Stein's *Picasso* (1909) we realize that the incorporation of typical poetic techniques such as repetition and juxtaposition in prose are the responsables of the chaotic result. This has to do with the fact that prose is based on the importance of a compelling argument and the development of characters, therefore, if we get rid of them in order to incorporate poetic characteristics the outcome is nonsense. For this reason experimentation with the form, structure and style were mostly introduced in poetry, whereas prose innovated with perspectives, characters and language.

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