



Student's Name

Professor's Name

Course

Date

Modernism as a Revolt Against the Norms & Traditions

By definition, modernism as a literary movement represents a 'conscious break with the past' in all forms, including the established rules, archetypes, and conventions in poetry and prose (Gillies 2-3).

It was a response to the changing world where the old social rules no longer seemed to apply. This response is best exemplified by the experimentation of creators like E. E. Cummings, Virginia Woolf, and Franz Kafka.

In poetry, there is no better way to explore this revolt against the conventional than by examining the works of E. E. Cummings. First, his poems are a prime example of free verse as a rebellion against the conventional rhyming rules. Second, the poet stepped away from the rules of punctuation, syntax, and spelling.

For example, Cummings' poem [*i carry your heart with me(i carry it in)*] (1952) takes a creative approach towards the use of brackets and spaces. Besides, no word in the poem starts with a capital letter: all words, including 'I', are lowercase (Cummings 79).

On the other hand, modernist prose and fiction experiment with narrative devices and invent new ones. Case in point: Virginia Woolf and her pioneering approach to narration as a stream of consciousness. This is the revolt against the traditional omniscient narration style, in which the events are described as if by an all-seeing narrator (Herman 442).



For example, in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Woolf intentionally blurs the line between direct and indirect speech, speaking to oneself out loud and internal monologue. At the same time, omniscient narration is also present in the text, blurring the line even further. (Dowling 46)

In *To the Lighthouse* (1927), on the other hand, Woolf focuses on philosophical introspection instead of describing events and moving the plot further. As a result, the novel involves little dialogue and few actions; instead, the text is composed of internal thoughts and observations.

Other characteristics of this revolt against the conventional include absurdism and symbolism. Franz Kafka's body of work is one of the best examples to illustrate this. Take *The Metamorphosis* (1915): the story's premise is nonsensical – a salesman transforms himself into a huge insect one fateful day.

The plot, however, can be interpreted in several ways (as usual for modernist symbolist works). Some found the story to be an allegory of the writer's father complex, while others interpreted the protagonist's family as general social circumstances (Abraham 203).

In conclusion, the modernist literary movement was marked by a revolt against conventional narrative devices, poetic rhyming, syntax norms, and the proliferation of symbolism and absurdism. This is best exemplified by the works of E. E. Cummings, Virginia Woolf, and Franz Kafka, respectively.



Works Cited

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