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Final Essay

High modernism which was going on from the beginning of World War I till about World War 2 is shaped a lot by what was happening in the world during those times. Fast technological development makes life simpler and faster. Art and literature develop in the same direction. Although, high modernism is also based mostly on the early modernism ideas. Early modernism was like a good start to what eventually developed in high modernism.

Many ideas from early modernism transferred to high modernism, but in a more radical way. One of the first and main features in modernism is subjectivism. It started all the way back in impressionism. In high modernism, we observe subjectivism in art in a super extreme level. For instance, Dada movement even goes against art itself as a crafting; it is all about how you see the object the artist presents to you. Duchamp was one of the main figures of Dada. Many of his works were “readymade” art, so it requires no skill from the artist. However, the artist makes people look at “readymade” as a piece of art and from our subjectivism make sense out of it. That is a super subjective view and awakening of the unconsciousness levels, which brings us back to Freud’s ideas from early modernism. Surrealism movement is super close to Dada, but it is more dreamlike, so it is even closer to Freud’s ideas. It does not reject art as much and there are a lot of paintings, but they are non-sense. So, there is still radical form of subjectivism - how the specific person understands this art.

Subjectivism also goes to the literature. High modernism brings in a new feature – imagism: authors lay out their ideas in the simpler and shorter way, through use of precise images. The way the reader understands the images and what he or she gets out of it is super subjective. Ezra Pound would be one of the main figures in imagism movement. He is the one who wrote an essay on imagism. Another way subjectivism is expressed in high modernism is the use of autobiographies. Many authors write based on their lives or reflect their experience which is their subjective view of life. James Joyce's book *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is one of the best examples. This book is considered semi-autobiographic, so it is his subjective look on his life, subjective expression of his experience. Virginia Woolf with her *Mrs. Dalloway* and T. S. Eliot with *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* also express their subjective view on life. Eliot had some neurotic disease and we see his view of the world and himself. Authors also, by looking at their lives, do self-analysis and self-investigation. This self-analysis reminds us Freud's ideas of exploring unconsciousness and psychoanalysis.

Exploring of unconsciousness began before Freud and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a great example. However, Freud had multiple works on psychoanalysis so the idea of psychoanalysis is associated with him. Psychoanalysis along with subjectivism are the most important features of modernism. In high modernism literature, Freudian ideas become even more popular. We can observe a clear psychoanalysis of the child development from early age to adulthood in Joyce's work. Also in *The Portrait*, we see some Oedipus complex references such as Stephen's relationship with his father. Joyce's book might be compared to Freud's works but it is more modernist: more subjective and more impressionist. Woolf's book *Mrs. Dalloway* is a clear representation of the Freud scheme of our mind: ego, id, and superego. In the book, ego is represented as Clarissa, Id – Septimus, and superego – Peter. Woolf shows how these three interact with each other and Septimus' character is a great representation of

Id because he himself is the representation of the unconscious desire that does not want to be restricted. Septimus can be compared with the *Heart of Darkness* character – Kurtz, who is also a great representation of id. Freud also researched neurosis, and Eliot's works are a good example. The character that Eliot shows us and the way he himself looks at life is a good example of neurosis. The problem of impotence/sexuality in the *Prufrock* can be compared to the Dora case. Both characters had sexual desire but did not get what they wanted, so we see neurotic behavior instead. In the art explore of unconsciousness also goes to the new level. To get at least some meaning from Dada and surrealist works one should really awake his or her unconsciousness.

Primitivism and sex desire ideas also transferred from early to high modernism. Artists continue depicting nude women just in the more extreme modernist way. One of the examples would be Marcel Duchamp's painting "Nude descending the staircase." It is hard to find sexuality in this picture, but this is a problem of one's subjectivity which is super radical in high modernism. Sex desire also is an example of our unconsciousness since it comes from our id. In the literature, we also notice primitivism. For example, in *The Portrait*, Stephen meets and describes the prostitute as a doll with her legs apart.

While early and high modernism have a lot in common, high is different for a lot of reasons and has its distinctive features. In the beginning of early modernism Baudelaire was saying that we should go away from the classical, however, in high modernism art goes back to classical but with a modernist approach. Such a feature is called neo-classicism. Modernists turn back to Greek art for clarity and directness. Imagism movement is based on neo-classicism. Imagism poetry sounds like the classical Greek poetry of Homer or Sappho. Also, modernists use the ideas of the Greek myths such as when Joyce uses the Daedalus/Icarus myths. Joyce even uses Daedalus' name as a last name for his character.

Outside world obstacles also influence the development of art. Scientific development made technology super popular in our world, so use of modern technologies in the art was popular in high modernism. For example, in Dada art we see a lot of technologies involved, such as Raoul Hausmann's sculpture *Spirit of Our Time (Mechanical Head)*. Another use of technologies in high modernism are photos and films. Surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou* became the most famous short film ever because it was like opening doors to irrationality without any meaning behind it. That is true representation of exploring of unconsciousness. Also, technological development kept making our life faster, so early modernism's futurism was still noticeable in art work. However, in high modernism there was new movement where artists combine cubism and futurism together – extra simplicity and the motion. Stop motion photography is an example of how this movement is combined with the use of technologies.

Besides a rapid technological growth there are also wars going on during those times. For Europe WWI, was a disaster that brought a lot of illness and despair in the world. These obstacles affect art and literature as well. Illness becomes a motif in modernism. Surrealist film is one of the examples because off all the disgusting, painful and not pleasant things showed in the film, like cutting the eye. In literature Eliot's poems are the best example of the illness motif. His poems are full of despair. Even the title *The Waste Land* shows his attitude towards life. The images Eliot uses are not pretty and at some point, he shows that the world order collapsed. The facts of the impotence shown in *Prufrock* is also a representation of illness and reflection to the outside world. Woolf also represents illness in her book; her character Septimus is traumatized by the WWI. Such a representation shows that illness comes from war. Illness as a motif of modernism takes its place as well in *The Portrait* when small Stephen got sick and was going home in the train from the college. Moreover, in art we often see artists representing the war.

In modernism, people were not afraid to brake the world order. As the result, another major movement arose in the world – feminism. Women wanted equal rights not only politically but also socially. They wanted to challenge the ideology of patriarchy itself and negotiate the system. Mina Loy and Rebeca West are major figures in the feminist movement. Mina Loy is the author of the *Feminist Manifesto* which was written in the futurist style of Marinetti. Rebeca West has a lot of works related to feminism where one of the topics she talks about is shifting gender relations to create empowered women and depowered men. Feminists also see marriage as an imprisonment for both men and women. Mrs. Dalloway is a good representation of the female plot after marriage. Also, Woolf in her book shows how the world is divided into female and male spaces; she shows Clarissa breaking out of the domestic/female space to the urban/male space which is patrolled by men. Such a division represents patriarchy and we can see in the book how Woolf is against it. Woolf's book is about problems in male's authority, that women should get this authority as well. She does a good job of challenging gender roles by putting Clarissa in a position of super high, excellence authority at home and Septimius without any authority outside on the streets. Even though female status has changed a lot since then, the feminist movement is still very popular nowadays.

Another representation of freeing the unconsciousness and being not afraid to free themselves is homosexuality. We already saw homosexuality in Dora case when she had sexual desire toward Frau. In high modernism, homosexuality becomes even more popular. Homosexuality is another example of breaking the norms and negotiating the system. It is also an example of unrestrained id: people do what they want to do regardless of the norms. There are instances of homosexuality in Joyce and Eliot's works but Woolf gives us a very clear example. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the reader observes the sexual tension between Clarissa and

her female friend. Wolf even shows us a kiss during which Clarissa got a female orgasm that was interrupted by the male authority – Peter.

In modernism, art became much more than just entertainment; it became a way to represent world social and political problems as well as human psychoanalysis. Over the years, the status of art has changed and the importance of art increased. Modernist art gets popular everywhere very fast. American artists go to Europe to get the experience. Finally, in 1913 modernist art comes to America thorough the “Armory show” - the international art exhibit in New York City. This exhibition showed New York something they have never dreamed of and had a huge success. Over a short time, modernist ideas became super popular in USA and this fact shows the importance that art had those days. After the “Armory Show”, modernism in USA became so popular that they even built museums for modern art, for example, Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim. Along with that, many American artists started to follow modernism, as an example, the painter Marsden Hartley whose works were very similar to the Cezanne’s paintings.

As the importance of art arises, art spreads everywhere. Even in literature, authors talk about art a lot. Joyce’s book is a huge project of investigating the development of the artist. He shows how the young artist is different from other kids. The young artist is aesthetic; he has an acute sense of perception. The emphasis that the author puts on the color and symbols is the reflection of the post-impressionism, which another distinctive feature of modernism. When the artist grew up, he had to make a choice between art and religion, and he chose art. This is a very important point that Joyce brings in because this is what eventually happened in the world. Artists became an alternative source of personal and cultural value. People find meaning through art and therefore artists at some instances even replace the priests. Such a shift also follows the path of modernism – unrestricted ideas and thinking. Art over religion is like id over ego because religion shapes our thinking to their norms and in modern art there

are no restrictions. So, an artist has much more value in high modernism because Christianity loses its authority and people follow the art. At some point, artist becomes like an uberman as well the artist can be compared to a smithy.

The ideas became more unrestricted and art along with artists became more valuable in the world. So, artists start to rise and even critique topics that people were afraid to talk about earlier such as political and social institutions. The truth is that some people would always be unhappy with political or social situations in the world, just at this point they were not afraid to speak up anymore. Since all the wars were going around, the early 20th century was a perfect time to speak up. WWI had a huge impact and obviously, people were not happy with politics because it led them to war. For example, Dada movement, especially German, was a response to all the brutality, violence and bad politics that caused WWI. In Germany we can also trace how politics changes art. In 1937 there was “Degenerate Art” – unstructured and formless. But from 1937 to 1944 there was “Great German Art” which is a true representation of Nazi and Aryan race ideas of pure, structured and proportional. Also “Great German Art” had a lot in common with ancient Greek art which reminds us an idea about neo-classicism in high modernism.

In literature authors also critique politics as well as social institutions. In *The Portrait*, Joyce raises the Ireland independence question. All different revolutions and fights for independence were popular. Especially after the WWI when big powers became weakened, small countries got their independence including Ireland. Along with political questions, Joyce critiques the church saying that the church abuses its power. Woolf also talks about social and political questions. Septimus’ character is a representation of how bad is the impact of WWI on the people. Her criticism of authority, especially figures of authority, along with patriarchy questions, and male/female spaces in the city are the examples of the critique on social institutions. The poet Auden is probably the most critical on politics and

social institutions in literature. His poems are about all these modern issues like bureaucracy and how the state regulates everything (the authority question). Also, he talks about the war, for example, the poem “September 1, 1939”. In the poem, he shows that authority brought us to the war that has only bad impact on people. The fact that art critiques politics openly supports that art had a huge value and impact on people because people actually followed the ideas that art represented for them.

The great summarizing for the high modernism is the Picasso painting “Guernica”. This painting contains most of high modernism features. On the painting, we see synthetic cubism, surrealism, expressionism, futurism as well as some impressionism. So, it does look like a mess and to make sense out of it there is subjectivism and some psychoanalysis involved. Picasso represents human and animal next to each other which recalls primitivism. We also observe a lot of illness which is the motif of modernism. Along with that there is also a strong political and social criticism: this art work is a response to the bombing in Guernica. The disorder represents how the world order collapsed, so apparently, it represented the situation of those times. So, in this art work Picasso shows how wasted our world is. Such a painting reminds us Kurtz words from *Heart of Darkness*: “The Horror, The Horror!” It is also similar to the Eliot’s poem *The Waste Land*. They both represent this unpleasant reality, to which all the politics and social institutions led us to.

Unfortunately, our world did not change a lot since those times. Politics and social institutions still lead us the wrong, bad direction. Feminists are still trying to fight for their rights, even though they made a huge progress. Homosexuality same as feminism is still fighting for its place in the world. People keep questioning religion and follow all the technology development even more than they follow God. All we can do know is to make ourselves go the right direction that will bring good for ourselves and for people around us.