

# The Modernismo and its Spiritual Climate: Cosmopolitan, Blue and Francophile

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Aware that modernist writers closed the nineteenth century and glimpsed the twentieth with their pen, José Emilio Pacheco asserted “para comprender el Modernismo hay que estudiar el lenguaje de fin de siglo”. The language used to capture the fin-de-siècle spirit was revitalized as a necessary measure to narrate that dizzying transition towards *the new* taking place from the turn of the century onwards, with the world witnessing the continued industrialization and capitalization of society and the breakneck advances in communications and transportation. The shortening of distances and the acceleration of global exchange stimulated that cosmopolitan spirit so evident in Modernismo. Letters and journalism promulgated conceptual, scientific and technological innovations; in such a way that other regions of the world began to partake in these philosophical, political or aesthetic exchanges.

Paris in its *Belle Époque* stood as a cultural reference and as an ideal of the modern city with its cafés, boulevards, theatres, museums and cabarets. The ideal of modernity based on the French paradigm crossed borders, and beyond francophone boundaries expressions such as *en vogue*, *impasse*, *le dernier cri*, *troupe* or *pose* were incorporated into fashionable bourgeois discourse. Likewise, the flow of merchandise carried along with them foreign expressions such as the *revue*, the *corset* or the

*chapeau* that ostensibly revealed the French imprint in everyday life and consequently in the use of language. For this reason, it is not surprising that nineteenth-century writers were frequently accused of being xenophile or francophile, how could they not be, if 'from the radiating vortex of Paris' the ideas that ushered in a new era spread. Inevitably, French aesthetics enraptured the literary field. Modernismo, by definition Spanish-speaking and not to be confused with the concept of Modernism in the English-speaking areas, was strongly influenced by the most select of Symbolist and Parnassian letters. Authors such as Alfred de Musset, Charles Baudelaire, Leconte de Lisle, Théophile Gautier, Paul Bourget, Catulle Mendès, the Goncourt brothers, Hippolyte Taine, José María Heredia, Jean Richepin, Émile Zola, Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo had a considerable presence on the pages of modernist magazines (figure 1), both in their original language and in translation.

The intellectual trade also took place between authors united by the same language. From Spain travelled to the New World the works of Ramón de Campoamor, Salvador Rueda, Santiago Rusiñol, Jacinto Benavente, Miguel de Unamuno, Emilio Castelar, Rafael Cansinos Asséns and Emilia Pardo Bazán – one of the few women writers to reach great authorial acclaim in the nineteenth century. Conversely, there was an incipient Latin American presence in Europe, with the work of authors such as Rubén Darío, José Martí, Julián del Casal, Teodoro Guerrero, Nicanor Bolet Peraza, Rufino Blanco Fombona, Miguel Sánchez Pesquera, José Santos Chocano, Amado Nervo, José Juan Tablada, the brothers Max and Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Jorge Luis

Borges, Leopoldo Lugones, Vicente Huidobro, Santiago Pérez Triana and José Enrique Rodó appearing sporadically in European publications.

	Argentina	Chile	Colombia	Cuba	France	Spain	Mexico	Venezuela
<i>Alma Española</i> (Spain)	6	0	5	10	27	406	0	0
<i>Arte Joven</i> (Spain)	0	0	0	0	2	68	0	0
<i>El Nuevo Mercurio</i> (Francia)	7	2	10	7	35	56	17	4
<i>Gente Vieja</i> (Spain)	2	0	1	30	21	1551	2	38
<i>Germinal</i> (Spain)	0	0	0	9	59	357	0	1
<i>Helios</i> (Spain)	13	0	14	0	18	222	0	5
<i>Instantáneas</i> (Chile)	0	66	0	0	7	21	1	2
<i>La Biblioteca</i> (Argentina)	194	1	0	0	74	17	1	0
<i>La Habana Literaria</i> (Cuba)	1	0	1	45	10	1	0	0
<i>Luz</i> (Spain)	0	0	5	5	32	139	0	0
<i>Luz i Sombra</i> (Chile)	2	86	0	6	18	28	3	0
<i>Renacimiento</i> (Spain)	1	0	1	0	9	140	6	0
<i>Revista Azul</i> (Mexico)	10	3	35	74	286	160	725	65
<i>Revista Nueva</i> (Spain)	11	0	0	0	30	172	13	0
<i>Vida Literaria</i> (Spain)	5	0	0	3	9	252	1	0
<i>Vida Nueva</i> (Spain)	0	0	0	4	8	128	0	0
Total	252	158	72	193	645	3718	769	115

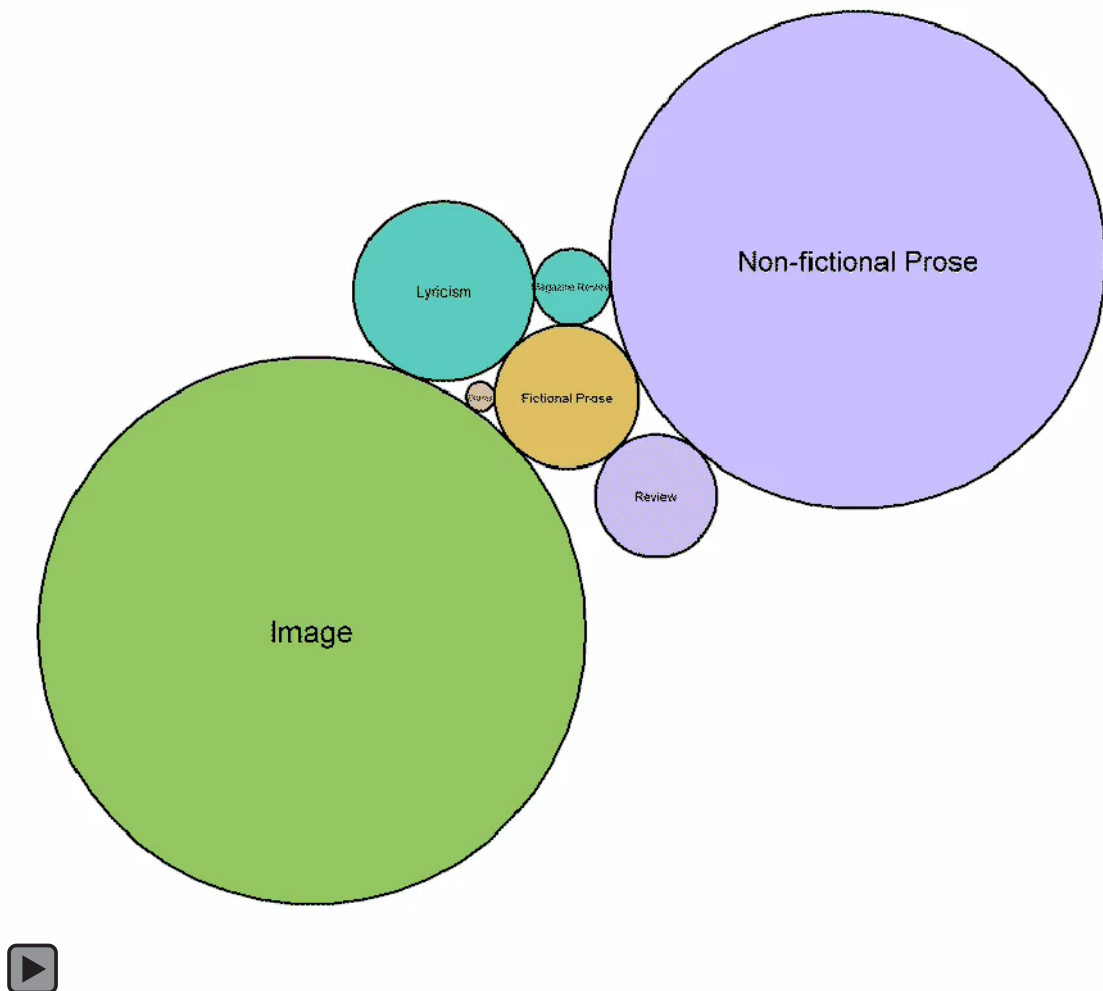
**Table 1:** Number of contributions according to the authors' nationality. Provided by T. Herzgsell.

The information presented is the result of a collective effort of the close reading of 16 modernist magazines: *Alma Española*, *Arte Joven*, *El Nuevo Mercurio*, *Gente Vieja*, *Germinal*, *Helios*, *Instantáneas*, *La Biblioteca*, *La Habana Literaria*, *Luz*, *Luz i Sombra*, *Renacimiento*, *Revista Azul*, *Revista Nueva*, *Vida Literaria* and *Vida Nueva*,

with the cities of origin for these titles being Buenos Aires, Havana, Santiago de Chile, Madrid, Mexico City and Paris. The data obtained, quantitative and qualitative, provide a broad overview that accounts for the multiple narrative forms found in this set of publications. The textual and iconic content was systematized according to a typology of seven categories: nonfiction and fictional prose, lyricism, image, drama, review and magazine review (see files 04\_Teresa-Herzgsell\_Categories and 05\_Teresa-Herzgsell\_Categorization-as-Theory-and-Practice).

The proportions kept between the different genres published (figure 2) in each magazine reveal an individual preference for a genre or an adherence to an editorial policy. In *El Nuevo Mercurio*, *Gente Vieja*, *Germinal*, *La Biblioteca*, *La Habana Literaria*, *Renacimiento*, *Revista Nueva* and *Vida Nueva*, non-fictional prose played a substantial role. *Alma Española*, *Arte Joven*, *Helios*, *Instantáneas*, *Luz* and *Vida Literaria* were characterized by the profusion of images. And in the *Revista Azul* the lyrical predominated.

## Genres in the magazine *Alma Española* (Madrid)



**Figure 1:** *Genre distribution.* Provided by J. Lehmann.

Rubén Darío's *Azul*, its command of literature and culture (especially French), its prolix vocabulary and wide variety of images, resonates in our corpus inasmuch as the modernist magazines "sabe[n] con amor la antigua literatura griega, sabe[n] de todo lo moderno europeo". The Rubendarian imprint was acknowledged by his colleagues,

with Manuel Machado recognising him as “el gran importador de la poesía europea á la lengua castellana”. Darío, cosmopolitan *par excellence*, is present in many of the modernist titles, including *El Nuevo Mercurio*, *Helios*, *Vida Literaria*, *Revista Nueva*, *Alma Española*, *Renacimiento*, *Cuba Contemporánea*, its offspring *Revista Azul*, *La Biblioteca*, *Instantáneas* and *La Habana Literaria*. Not in vain, Rubén Darío is credited as the father of the ‘modernist spiritual climate’; his *Azul* godfathered not just one, but many modernisms.

There were many artistic movements encompassed within Modernismo, as the Argentine Manuel Ugarte realised when he wrote “la palabra ‘modernista’ no debiera servir para designar una escuela determinada, sino para delimitar una situación temporal y común á los diversos movimientos”. Pontificating in the same vein, his Dominican colleague Tulio M. Cestero was even more specific: “el movimiento realizado en París, padre de los cenáculos bautizados decadentismo, simbolismo, romanismo, etcétera, hasta el naturalismo, no poseyó un ismo fijo en la América Latina, hasta la exaltación de la palabra modernismo, amplia tienda de cuyo hogar son huéspedes todos los matices de forma y pensamiento”. In addition to contemporaneity and the French influence, the rupture with the past was another characteristic of this literary revolution, as Manuel Machado surmised: “todos, sí, han roto con las normas de la retórica vieja, pero influido cada uno por tendencias distintas, venidas en su mayoría de Francia, ó bien entregados á su propio temperamento, siguen sendas completamente diferentes sin haber creado escuela”.

The information gathered reveals not only the conversion of prose and verse which sprang from the modernist movement, but also the advent of the illustrated publications, since the graphic arts were a crucial element to understanding and projecting the coming cultural and socioeconomic transformations. The technical advances in image reproduction sparked the proliferation of illustrated magazines, first through engravings and later with photographs. It was a crucial innovation in magazine publishing, as “once the first publication with woodcut illustrations appeared, the rest had to equal it or they were doomed to disappear”.

Illustrated magazines disseminated new aesthetic canons and fashionable styles such as Art Nouveau and Jugendstil. Likewise, the works of Pablo Picasso, El Greco, Santiago Rusiñol, Agustín Querol, Albrecht Dürer, Norah Borges and Joaquín Torres García were glimpsed in the modernist imaginary. Advertising, another invention of the modern era, unveiled newly mass-produced goods as diverse as perfumes, soaps, lamps, furniture, films, cinematographs, drugs, bicycles, and electrical supplies to burgeoning consumer markets.

As was detailed in a previous article on our corpus (cf. 02\_Hanno-Ehrlicher\_The-Corpus), the data compiled comes from a research corpus that comprises over 40 publications from the digital collection of the Iberoamerican Institute of Berlin, the digital newspaper library of the National Library of Spain, and the National Newspaper Library of Mexico, among others. The data collection was carried out from two conceptual-temporal spaces that together are linked via the bridge laid by

modernist writers who, with their renovating stance, reached the borderland of the avant-garde, the most salient examples being the poets Vallejo, Huidobro, Neruda and Borges.

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