

Modernism and Gender Issues in Kay Boyle's Early Short Fiction

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to focus on the early stage of Kay Boyle's writing career, which began while she was living in Europe and which was clearly influenced by Modernism. Some critics have argued that she is an unknown and unacknowledged member of the so-called Lost Generation, as far as she rarely figures in anthologies of this group. At any rate, Kay Boyle wrote extensively during her life and her short fiction is specially diverse and prolific. In order to properly analyze her *oeuvre*, this work gives an overview of her life in order to better examine the stories as examples of her Modernist and gender-concerned style.

In the textual analysis I will deal with the innovations related to style, form, content, the presence of strong characters, autobiographical elements (if any), and any external influence that Kay Boyle might have received during these early years.

In relation to the modernist influence in her work, this research will deal with issues such as the treatment of time, which in Kay Boyle was explored as psychological, and the stream of consciousness technique. Likewise, I will also engage in the open nature of the endings of Boyle's stories as another manifestation of the modernist influence. Finally, the analysis of the stories will also provide an insight on the role of women and their position concerning traditional values and male influences in their lives.

I hope to prove that there is indeed a pattern in Boyle's writing style, especially related to the influence of the American expatriate writers in Paris and the Modernist proposals, which she more specifically developed in her contribution to the "Revolution of the Word" manifesto.

Key words: Gender, Kay Boyle, Modernism, Revolution of the Word.

1. Introduction

Kay Boyle's life has always been considered more interesting than her literary career. She was a complex individual who witnessed many of the most significant events of the twentieth century in Europe and, indeed, her writing reflects those experiences. For this reason, it would be misleading to separate her life from her work since both of them are closely intertwined. As she herself recognized, the private and the public spheres come together in her texts, and her overall vision was not restricted to one single aspect either of her private life or her social reality (Spanier, "Kay Boyle" 66). Kay Boyle believed that women should not sacrifice any aspect of their lives in order to become writers. She actually managed to integrate both of them in her writing. As a consequence, it is absolutely necessary to study this writer bearing in mind the connection of her works with her life. As her own words make clear: "I believe my life as a woman was as a full-time writer, a full-time mother, and a full-time stepmother" (Spanier, "Kay Boyle" 67).

As a feminist, Kay Boyle was involved in politics and the struggle against all kinds of injustice and, at the same time, she refused to sacrifice anything of the private sphere. Some critics deem her an important writer of the Lost Generation, although this was not recognized by her contemporaries throughout the twenties, thirties, and even forties. The interest on Kay Boyle was sparked by the feminist critics who began to dig out from oblivion a good number of women writers who had been silenced or just forgotten. In this respect, we owe the bringing to light of Boyle's career to Sandra Whipple Spanier, who published the first critical account of Boyle's writing in 1986. However, a lot of her works still remain out-of-print.

We could say that her rebel spirit was born with her, although it is true that her family contributed very much to the forging of her life and work. She was born in Minnesota, in 1902, so that she was able to witness the Suffragist Movement's fight for the vote, which was finally achieved in the United States in 1920, when Boyle was eighteen. Initially, she felt that she belonged to a regular American family, although she quickly understood that this was not the case.

Kay Boyle spent her childhood traveling around the country. The family enjoyed a good economic position due to her grandfather, Jesse Peyton Boyle, who had been the co-founder of the West Publishing Company (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 6). He kept the family together not only through financial means, but also as the typical patriarchal figure. Both her grandfather and

father were conservative men. Boyle described her father, Howard Peterson Boyle, as a “frustrated person who could not express his feelings” (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 7) and who was, in fact, the opposite of his wife. Katherine Evans Boyle was a strong woman, a liberal activist highly involved not only in politics, but also in the *avant-garde* artistic movements of that time. She became a key figure in Boyle's life and a role model. Mrs. Boyle educated her daughters in her own way. Boyle even tried formal schooling for a while at various schools and institutions, but she always considered her mother as “her education,” far more inspiring than any academic learning (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 7). Mrs. Boyle encouraged her daughters to read and introduced them to Modernist literature and, at the same time, her strong ideals influenced Kay greatly and sparked her political interest.

In addition to her mother, there were other female figures that inspired Kay during her childhood and adolescence. Her grandmother was one of the first women who worked for the Federal Government and her aunt, Nina Evans Allende, was a cartoonist who participated actively with her art in the suffrage campaign (Spanier, “Kay Boyle” 67). As a teenager, Kay Boyle was already a rebellious and unconventional girl, whose maternal influence made her support the radical labor movement (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 9). Both her grandfather and father disliked very much the revolutionary and artistic spirit that Mrs. Boyle had awakened in Kay Boyle, as well as her open-minded behavior.

Later on, she would meet Richard Brault, a French exchange student at the University of Cincinnati, who understood and shared her ideas. This situation deteriorated the relations within the family. There were two sides, “the belligerent powers” (her grandfather and father) and “the allies” (formed by her mother, Richard, and herself) (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 10), both in a constant state of conflict. However, Boyle managed to get benefit from it: “Because of my mother, who gave me definitions, I knew what I was committed to in life; because of my father and my grandfather, who offered statements instead of revelations, I knew what I was against” (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 8).

Boyle left Cincinnati in 1922 and joined her sister in New York, where she was working as an illustrator in *Vogue* (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 11). She soon found a job with the American editor of *Broom* magazine, Lola Ridge, an Australian-Irish poet who wanted to spread the political awareness of social injustice (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 11). Ridge introduced Kay Boyle to the writing scene and she had the chance to meet other authors such as Marianne Moore,

William Carlos Williams, and John Dos Passos (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 11). She started to write her own poetry and found herself encouraged when William Carlos Williams published one of her poems in *Contact*, the literary magazine that he had founded in 1920 jointly with Robert McAlmon. Soon after her arrival, she married Richard Brault and they travelled to France a year after to meet Richard's family. It was going to be a three-month retreat but it became the beginning of her life in Europe, which would last for almost twenty years.

At first, when they arrived to France, they spent some time with Richard's conservative family. Soon after, they left for Paris, where Richard continued his search for a job and she spent her time exploring cafés where numerous writers gathered. She never dared to enter in contact with them until she met Robert McAlmon, an American writer and editor who would be a key figure in her future life. Her first novel was an autobiography that disappeared after sending it to a Chicago editor. This novel was found years later and published in 2001 under the title of *Process*. After that, she continued writing about Richard's family in a novel called *Plagued by the Nightingale*, which would be published in 1931 without much public recognition (Spanier, "Kay Boyle" 7).

In 1924, Ernest Walsh contacted her because he had liked her poems included in *Broom* and wanted to invite her to contribute in a new *avant-garde* magazine called *This Quarter*, along with other authors such as her friend McAlmon, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and James Joyce. During the winter of 1926, she was –wrongly– diagnosed of tuberculosis. Walsh, who was also sick, invited her to stay with him and with his wife in the south of France.

Living with Ernest Walsh and his wife helped Kay Boyle to stay positive and made her feel "less expatriated and more American than I ever did in my life" (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 17). She got involved in a relationship with Walsh and, when he died in 1926, she was pregnant with his child. The relationship between Boyle and Richard Brault had remained cordial so, after her daughter Sharon was born, she left France to live with him again in London. Her life with both Richard Brault and Ernest Walsh would be portrayed in her autobiography *Year Before Last* (1932). Walsh's death influenced her writing heavily, which is clearly seen in her early work of fiction. In *Wedding Day and Other Stories* (1930), for example, there are various texts which offer a complex analysis of how a young woman is affected by the death of her lover, concluding that the ultimate betrayer of love is death (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 37).

During her stay in London, she contributed to another *avant-garde* magazine, *transition*, whose editor, Eugene Jolas, would be a great influence. Eventually, she moved again to Paris. Throughout all this time, Boyle lived in the midst of the artistic circles of the English and American expatriates in Paris. She always thought that the descriptions frequently given of this period and that group of people were not accurate: “all this glorification of that wonderful Camelot period is absurd” (Spanier, “Introduction” xi). In spite of her skeptic view, she became friends with many authors, but not with all of them. Gertrude Stein, for example, thought that she was “as incurably middle-class as Ernest Hemingway” and did not invite her anymore after the first visit, yet Kay Boyle disliked both Hemingway and his writing (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 24).

In Paris she also contributed regularly to several magazines, especially *transition*. In June 1929, this magazine published the manifesto called “Revolution of the Word,” which included twelve points about a new philosophy of writing. Kay Boyle was among the sixteen artists who signed this manifesto.

During her stay in Paris, Kay Boyle met Laurence Vail, a surrealist writer and painter who would become her second husband. Known as “King of Bohemia,” Vail offered her a life she had craved for greatly: “we would write books, and translate the books of the French writers we liked; and we would paint pictures, and climb mountains, and cross glaciers, and travel with all our children, forever together” (Spanier, *Kay Boyle* 29). They were together thirteen years (1929-1942) and had three children, in addition to Sharon and two children from a previous marriage of Vail (“Kay Boyle’s Life”).

In 1943, after her divorce from Vail, Boyle married Baron Joseph von Franckenstein, a diplomat from Austria who had escaped the Nazis. The couple had two children and lived almost twenty years together. During this period, Kay Boyle worked as a foreign correspondent for *The New Yorker*, travelling throughout France, Germany, and Spain. Simultaneously, she wrote several novels dealing with Nazism and its consequences, for example a short novel called *The Bridegroom’s Body* (1940, 1958) and the novel *Generation Without Farewell* (1960).

In 1953, Franckenstein was dismissed from his job in the Public Affairs Division of the United States State Department and, although he was later cleared of all charge, he was alleged of being married to a dissident and potentially dangerous woman (“Kay Boyle’s Life”).

Subsequently, Kay Boyle was fired from *The New Yorker* and blacklisted by the most important magazines, which meant a huge damage to her career.

Soon after, they returned to the United States, where Franckenstein worked as a teacher and Boyle took various jobs. In 1963, he died of lung cancer and she accepted immediately a job at the San Francisco State University in order to sustain her large family. Throughout the following years, she became an activist on behalf of human rights and against the Vietnam War. She believed “that the writer, the artist, does not make the choice to fight against oppression. It is his art itself which does not allow him to remain in silent” (Spanier, “Kay Boyle: No Past” 247). In her later years, she participated in different activist organizations and she continued writing until her death in 1992.

Throughout her life, Kay Boyle received several awards, including the O. Henry Award of Best Short Story of the Year in two occasions (1935 and 1941), a Senior Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1981. Likewise, she was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (Spanier, “Introduction. Kay Boyle” 247).

In conclusion, Kay Boyle was a liberal, self-fulfilled woman who did not live in the glamour, but was an expatriate in the *avant-garde* Paris of the twenties and the thirties, together with renowned artists. Her eventful life includes three marriages, six children of her own and two stepsons, but most importantly, a prolific literary career with nearly twenty novels, eleven collections of short stories, nine volumes of poetry, and six books of essays. Archibald MacLeish once said, “She has the power and the glory. I believe in her absolutely when she writes – even when I want not to” (Spanier, “Introduction” xi).

The huge size of Kay Boyle’s literary production and the diverse interests she maintained throughout her life prevents a full analysis of her *oeuvre*, and this has made me select only a few short stories of her early period. As said above, Boyle was involved in the modernist revolution of the 1920s and I have decided to focus on this aspect of her work. Hence, I will devote the next chapter to a brief overview of the most significant principles of modernist aesthetics, in order to address subsequently Boyle’s own contribution to Modernist literature, triggered by her adherence to the “Revolution of the Word” manifesto. However, Boyle articulated her innovative style in conjunction with her interest in gender issues as well. This second approach will be the content of chapter three, where I deal with Boyle’s particular development of a modernist language that she would apply to her gender concerns.

Subsequently, chapter four contains the analysis of the short stories in the hope that they will prove insightful about what I have called Boyle's *gendered revolution of words*.

2. Modernism Revisited: A Brief Overview

The literary movement known as “Modernism” emerged in Europe around the end of the nineteenth century and developed mostly during the first two decades of the twentieth-century. Breaking with the Realistic tradition, Modernism represented a new approach to literary creation that re-articulated the stylistic principles in art, on the one hand but, on the other hand, re-interpreted as well the concepts of reality and life. The social atmosphere at that time in Europe was influenced by a series of economic changes –the development of industrialism–, political events –the First World War–, and scientific discoveries –Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity. Writers engaged with all these issues in one way or another and concluded that the old conventions had lost their validity and that it was necessary to explain and express life in a different way and using different means. A group of them found sensible possibilities in Modernism.

British editor R.A. Scott-James was the first critic to apply the term “modern” to literature (Stevenson 2). In his study *Modernism and Romance* (1908), he concluded that although the changes in literature were not particularly original, there were abounding evidence of innovation to consider it a new movement (Stevenson 5). Modernism emerged to fulfill the interests of the new era, and although there was no collective agreement, most writers acknowledged the numerous similarities among their work. Virginia Woolf, for example, believed that Modernism was born from the need not to change, but to “keep moving” (“Modern” 629). According to Woolf, those writers who refused to adapt their methods to the new style were following outdated conventions.

Modernism was actually a diverse and complex literary movement with a wide array of manifestations in poetry, fiction, theater, and other types of art. It becomes quite hard to give a full account of all of them in a work such as this, given the limitations of length I must obey. As a consequence, I have chosen to focus only on those aspects of Modernism that can be observed in the short stories of Kay Boyle. To my mind, the Modernist features that most importantly apply to Boyle’s fiction are the following: the autonomy of language, the autonomy of art, and the new treatment of time. I will engage with them in the pages that follow.

2.1. The autonomy of language

Modernist writers claimed that the autonomy of language was an essential element when writing literature, since they saw it not as a “transparent medium” (Stevenson 181) or communicative system but as a self-sufficient mechanism that referred to and re-created itself. In order to represent life veraciously, they deemed necessary to forget static and austere forms because life and reality are fluid and in constant change (Stevenson 182). Conversely, Realism had promoted the use of a fixed language, without the intervention of individual creativity, because realist writers conceived life as a static and predictable event. Accordingly, the focus on language would be a distraction from what was actually more important for realists, that is to say, the content. On the contrary, Modernism implied, among other things, the re-conceptualization of language as an autonomous realm that re-created reality but not necessarily in a purely mimetic or referential guise. As a matter of fact, modernist writers advocated for the use of a dynamic language which evolved in a constant process of self-formation simultaneously with the mental processes of the writer’s mind and the ever-changing nature of reality and life.

2.2. The autonomy of art

Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity helped to fully express the modern consciousness, or what might be defined as a sort of critical moment in Western history. After the failure of human rationality implicit in the disaster of the First World War, individuals seemed to lose the certainties that had formerly been part of their mental, and their belief in a number of well-established ideas. In this respect, Modernism proposed a new approach to the making of an autonomous literature, free from the tyranny of meaning, purpose, moralizing aim or political function. This new concept, sometimes referred to as “Art for Art’s Sake,” was closely intertwined with that of the *avant-garde*, a reaction against bourgeois sensibility and its insistence on absolute and immanent values. The development of the *avant-garde* can be understood also as a response to previous artistic movements, which were seen as warrants of the old values that no longer applied to the new consciousness. In short, the notion of art as a medium for self-expression, independently of rationality or coherence impositions, became a crucial element within Modernist aesthetics. As a consequence, a short story, for example, did

not need to have any resemblance to real life as it is commonly understood. I am aware of the elusiveness which characterizes the notion of “real life,” but this concept, no matter how difficult to define, was actually called into question, and this suspicion about what “reality” or “life” were, actually became the core meaning of the autonomy of art.

2.3. The new treatment of time

The literary rendering of the passing of time was also deeply affected by Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity, which had established a link between space and time in the sense that there are three dimensions of space (forward-backward, left-right, and up-down) and a single time dimension (past-future) (“Extra Dimension”). We could say that time does not have to be an absolute and immanent concept (Stevenson 129), but a more individualized and relative notion that each person perceives according to his/her particular psychological circumstances. This idea amounts to the dichotomy between psychological time vs. clock time.

A further influential figure in the modernist reconceptualization of time was the French philosopher Henri Bergson, who believed that time could not be divided or measured down into separate units, because it is not a quantity (Stevenson 108). Accordingly, the clock is just a misleading tool and an obstacle that prevents us from understanding the true experience of time, what he calls “*durée*” or duration (Stevenson 107). A similar concept to that of Bergson’s *durée* is the one developed by Virginia Woolf as “time in the mind”. She explained it in *Orlando* (1928) in the following terms:

Time, unfortunately, though it makes animals and vegetables bloom and fade with amazing punctuality, has no such simple effect upon the mind of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time. [...] This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation (69).

Woolf’s words point to the complexity involved in the human perception of time, and highlight the opposition between two types of time, so to speak, time in the clock, which is artificially measured, and time in the mind, which is individually and psychologically perceived. The concept of “psychological time” became an important element within modernist literature, since writers tried to render how time occurs inside the mind in

opposition to the “mechanical succession” that the clock establishes (Stevenson 96). Most characters in modernist literature are uncomfortable with, or even hostile to clocks (Stevenson 105). The striking of the clock seems to be a threatening element, to the point that it sometimes becomes another character, even the protagonist of the story. We find an example of this in Woolf’s *Orlando*, where the main character perceives the clock as a menace: “The clock ticked louder and louder until there was a terrific explosion right in her ear. Orlando leapt as if she had been violently struck on the head. Ten times she was struck. In fact it was ten o’clock in the morning” (211). A hostile attitude, sometimes violent, of the characters against the clock is then a frequent characteristic of Modernist literature (Stevenson 90). However, this does not necessarily mean that modernist writers abandoned completely the notion of clock time, but rather that they broke with the traditional rendering of chronological time (Stevenson 91).

In a similar vein, life is not understood as a series of well-ordered events, but as an almost chaotic occurrence of episodes that are depicted psychologically in a much more accurate way than if they were “realistically” accounted for. As Virginia Woolf argued, writers are freer when they are not constrained or feel enslaved by time (“Modern” 631). The conception of time as a flexible and relative experience leads to the idea of non-linear time which is also another feature of modernist literature.

In this respect, Sigmund Freud’s notion of the interconnection of past and present in the human mind became also a further concept explored by modernist writers. However, this connection is not linear or chronologically ordered but occurs at random and outside of any time-structured frame. Frequently, our past influences our future, which means that the past still exists in the future through memories and experience (Stevenson 109). It was another philosopher, William James, who coined the term “stream of consciousness” in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), where he argued that consciousness does not exist as a succession of different events, but is made of a flowing current of memories. Molly Bloom’s soliloquy at the end of Joyce’s *Ulysses* is a perfect example of the continuous activity of the mind when Molly relates the present to the past, and then she associates that memory to another one, and so forth.

Resulting from Freud’s influence, Virginia Woolf also made emphasis on the importance of memory, especially of those unintended moments that bring the past to the present.

However, she concluded that any method is right as far as the writer expresses whatever he wants to express. She emphasized, once again, the autonomy of art and the writer (“Modern” 632).

In conclusion, Modernism rejected previous conventions and social values following the need for a change triggered by different historical and social events. This situation affected writers greatly, especially in France, where it was especially influential in the popular and trendy Paris.

The city was the point of convergence among expatriate writers who embraced the new movement. Kay Boyle witnessed the rise of authors like James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence. She also contributed with some of her writings to the small literary magazines that were appearing regularly. Most of these magazines were edited by the writers themselves and welcomed writings and reviews that helped to spread the modernist word. One of the most important supporters of the Modernist movement was Eugene Jolas, who co-founded together with his wife the influential journal *transition* in 1927. Eventually, Jolas, together with Boyle and other writers, decided to compose and sign a proclamation to support the new tendency. The twelve points of this manifesto for “The Revolution of the Word” explain the break with the old conventions and the proposal of new tendencies. It is worth briefly analyzing the principles proclaimed in the manifesto, as long as they constitute Boyle’s particular contribution to the Modernist aesthetics but more importantly because they are reflected in her fiction. The manifesto begins with a proclamation, a reaction against the values of Realism:

Tired of the spectacle of short stories, novels, poems and plays under the hegemony of the banal word, monotonous syntax, static psychology, descriptive naturalism, and desirous of crystallizing a viewpoint... (“Revolution”)

The realistic tenets were considered oppressive and tyrannical. This manifesto rejects authoritarian conventions, such as syntax or descriptions, because they encouraged monotony and superficial characterization. In other words, realism could not portray life accurately. In the first place, the manifesto mentions the revolution in the English language: “The revolution in the English Language is an accomplished fact” (“Revolution” #1). Eugene Jolas defended that the world should recognize the autonomy of language. This can be linked to two different sections: “The expression of these concepts can be achieved only through the rhythmic

'hallucination of the word' ("Revolution" #5) and "The literary creator has the right to disintegrate the primal matter of words imposed on him by the textbooks and dictionaries" ("Revolution" # 6). We can understand that this means a new approach to the relationship between form and content, one in which form is no longer subordinated to content, but both are equally important.

In the second section, the manifesto points out that the exaltation of the imagination is crucial in Modernism: "The imagination in search of a fabulous world is autonomous and unconfined" ("Revolution" #2). There should be no boundaries when exploring original themes and forms in order to make possible to treat anything even when it has never been treated before. While during Realism writers focused on real-life situations, Modernism encourages writers to experiment: "He (the writer) has the right to use words of his own fashioning and to disregard existing grammatical and syntactical laws" ("Revolution" #7). Innovation is one of the main pillars of the movement and it influences the use of language as well.

Section nine deals with the autonomy of art: "We are not concerned with the propagation of sociological ideas, expect to emancipate the creative elements from the present ideology" ("Revolution", #9). As said above, the avant-garde aesthetics defended that art should be the expression of itself. In this case, the manifesto supports this idea because, rather than being a proclamation that defends any concrete ideology, it tries to provide literary language with independence from any political or social circumstances.

In addition to this, the autonomy of time is also another main theme of this manifesto in its defense of the idea that "Time is a tyranny to be abolished" ("Revolution" #10). The treatment of time in Modernism can differ from one author to the other. However, all of them acknowledge that time is not fixed or anchored and that memory and the stream of consciousness notion are clear evidences that the concept of time as being psychological and flowing eclipses the subjection to the clock.

In relation to this, the manifesto also argues that "The writer expresses. He does not communicate" ("Revolution" #11). We can track this concept back to what these writers had previously announced in the proclamation, that they were tired of monotonous descriptions. Likewise, the denouement of this manifesto declares that "The plain reader be damned" ("Revolution" #12), which is a taunting ending addressed especially to those who opposed the

new movement and branded it as obscure and inaccessible. Throughout the “Revolution of the Word” manifesto, the writer perceives the rebellious spirit of the sixteen writers that signed it, which was born from a tumultuous period and aimed to communicate to the literary world their non-conformism with the traditions of the past and the incompatibility of the present.

The following chapter will be a discussion of the gender elements that can be found in Kay Boyle’s fiction. This analysis will help me to better analyze her stories in chapter four, which will conflate the technical aspects connected with the modernist style, the ethos behind the “Revolution of the Word” manifesto and the gender concerns discussed in the following pages.

3. Kay Boyle's Gendered Revolution of Words

Modernist women writers such as Virginia Woolf, Mina Loy, Gertrude Stein, and Hilda Doolittle, among others, faced a huge dilemma. They had to choose between the aesthetic innovations proposed by the Modernist movement, regardless of gender issues, and a particular and gendered-concerned language which incorporated both the revolutionary notions implicit in Modernism and their own critique of the gendered social structures prevalent in their time. Kay Boyle clearly opted for the latter alternative.

In addition to the influence of women of her family during her childhood and youth – discussed in the introduction–, Kay Boyle's thinking was also affected by other women during her adult life. Lola Ridge, editor of the magazine *Broom*, introduced her to new circles and encouraged her career. After that, during the first part of the twentieth century, her colleagues in Paris also played a key role and influenced her art (Spanier, "Kay Boyle: In" 67). Actually, the bohemian and intellectual atmosphere of Paris helped her develop a more open and radical view about women's roles and rights. This radicalism was reflected simultaneously in her approach to the writing of literature, which showed an unconventional stance. Although she signed the "Revolution of the Word" manifesto along with other writers, Boyle's *revolution* was characterized by the inclusion of a gender perspective that becomes manifest in the delineation of characters, the development of plots, and the use of an alternative language based on subjectivity and relativism. She articulated an alternative perspective in the expression of women's realities, quite different from the conventional modernist approach (Clark, "Revolution" 323). Although she followed the main principles of the movement, Boyle created an *oeuvre* which showed no separation between literature and everyday life (Clark, *Sentimental* 41). Her literature turned out to be less polemical than the rest of her colleagues because she refused to omit gendered elements from her writing (Clark, "Revolution" 323). Her characters and her plots rebel against women's subordination, but she reflected reality as it was from the point of view of an unconventional woman: a world full of inequalities but with some sparkles of discontent that fed the revolution (Clark, *Sentimental* 40). This alternative perspective is revealed, for example, in the construction of female characters who try to make sense for their lives in the midst of a hostile world (Spanier, "Kay Boyle: In" 66). These characters go against imposed traditions and achieve, in the end, an empowerment quite new for women at that time, to the extent that some of them become

heroic figures (Clark, "Revolution" 326). In other words, most of the times Boyle's writings deal with women who struggle to break free from negative male influences in their lives (Spanier, "Kay Boyle: In" 66). Boyle calls into question and reveals the truth behind social conventions and cultural discourses that have historically defined women as weak and subservient creatures, on the one hand, or as evil and menacing figures for the social order, on the other hand. As a matter of fact, she does not use common concepts like "executioner" and "victim" to portray her characters. On the contrary, she avoids these categories. However, she also took issue with the label of "women's writing" when applied to her work, thus showing her independent stance (Clark, "Revolution" 328). In agreement with the view articulated by Virginia Woolf, Boyle believed, nonetheless, that women writers had to create a new language which adapted better to the depiction of women's realities (Woolf, *Women* 48), even though, or precisely because, this meant the rejection of a language and social organization established and shaped by the male majority (Woolf, *Women* 48). This adjustment would ensure that women write what they want the way they want to or, in other words, that they would be free and independent from old conventions (Woolf, *Women* 49).

Accordingly, Kay Boyle tried to avoid absolute categories, including the dichotomy of male-female, the line between reason and passion, and the separation between public and private (Clark, *Sentimental* 21). However, at the same time, she rejected the widespread misconceptions of women as "the Other of male discourse" or as determined figures (Clark, "Revolution" 332). The inherited tradition had always considered that the only "serious" literature was the one created by male writers (Clark, *Sentimental* 19). Far from believing this, Boyle coined a unique language that avoids controversial issues and binary styles. She leaves behind any kind of extremism promoted by Modernism and she rejects both, the omission of women as subjects of literature and the association of women with the "Other in a male discourse" (Clark, "Revolution" 332). Her "gendered" revolution of the word consisted in a specific attention to women's expressive needs through a language that did not follow these conventional rules or the previous conventions about women's psychology and social role.

In addition to this, there are other formal characteristics that defined Kay Boyle's style of writing. She insisted on the rendering of time as psychologically conceived: In other words, the notion of time depends on the reader and how he/she interprets characters and plot. In some cases, Boyle opts for the use stream of consciousness, a more innovative and experimental tool in order to express reality in a more truthful way.

Kay Boyle's fiction is character-driven, which means that the plot itself depends on the evolution of the characters and does not rely solely on the events that happen during that specific situation. In this sense, some of her short stories might seem fragmented or incomplete. This is due to the fact that, rather than offering a monotonous and fixed version of the story, she provides the reader with an open ending in order to encourage the use of imagination.

Kay Boyle's personal style, or refusal to follow strictly the tenets established by the Modernist framework, may have caused a lack of recognition of her work. The critical school that emerged after modernism, in some way, defeated the older literary conventions excluded women from the literary canon (Clark, *Sentimental* 35) and there was an agreement to establish as major figures those male writers who followed the modernist binary style (Clark, *Sentimental* 34). In this regard, readers would approach literature expecting a "masculine experience" (Spanier, "Kay Boyle" 66). Boyle developed a writing style with a more sympathizing approach towards women, rather than an absolute interpretation (Clark, "Revolution" 332). She adopted what was considered feminine but gave it a personal twist that called into question patriarchal dogmas about femininity, granting at the same time a layer of authenticity to the literary recreation of female experiences (Spanier, "Kay Boyle: In" 66). Boyle tried to achieve her own "Revolution of the Word" through a style that ignored conventions on gender and her words relied on the power of strong, heroic women who, as she herself did, rebelled against social customs and traditional discourses.

4. Analysis of the texts

In the following pages, I will analyze four stories corresponding to Kay Boyle's early fiction. I have chosen them because they show a number of elements that are related to Modernism, on the one hand, and to Boyle's particular style, on the other hand. The amount of stories written by Boyle is so huge that it was difficult to pick these ones, but I hope they will be significant enough in order to prove my points.

4.1. "Astronomer's Wife"

This short story follows the monotonous routine of Katherine Ames, married to an astronomer whose only interest in life is his job. He does not pay attention to his wife's needs or requests and rarely speaks or spends time with her, as the narrator says: "At times he lay still for hours, at others he sat upon the roof behind his telescope" ("Astronomer's" 27-28). Mrs. Ames keeps herself busy in order to find some relief for her solitude, but it is obvious that she does not enjoy this boring life.

However, this routine would soon be broken by the arrival to the villa of a plumber who is going to fix a water leak in her house. Since the astronomer-husband is still in bed and seems to be uninterested on these matters —"He was a man of other things, a dreamer" ("Astronomer's" 27) —, his wife leads the plumber through the house. Mrs. Ames quickly realizes that the plumber is a man far different from her husband. He appears to be a strong man, used to physical work, who speaks directly to her. On the contrary, her husband is an introspective man with a distant and unconcerned personality.

Mrs. Ames's life and routine seem to have been shaped according to her husband's temper: "The mystery and silence of her husband's mind lay like a chiding finger on her lips" ("Astronomer's" 28). Mr. Ames does not include his wife in his world, that is to say, the passion he feels for astronomy. More than a couple, they seem to be strangers who avoid each other although living in the same house. There is a moment in the story when Mr. Ames hears them talking, in spite of his wife's efforts to speak softly so they would not disturb him: "'Katherine!' said the astronomer in a ringing tone. 'There's a problem worthy of your mettle!'" ("Astronomer's" 30). Whenever his husband used to address her, she received his

words with gratitude. However, this is no longer the case and this remark sounds like a mock to Mrs. Ames, who blushes and feels somewhat ashamed in front of the plumber.

The comparison between both men is developed throughout the story, “Her husband was the mind, this other man the meat” (“Astronomer’s” 33). It is clearly seen that the arrival of the plumber implies a relevant change and gives Mrs. Ames hope. Not only was the marriage broken long time ago before this happened, but this new element in her life — represented by the plumber— is more attractive to her than her monotonous routine. Mrs. Ames now feels that her questions can be answered, that someone is concerned with her words: “There was a young and strange delight in putting questions to which true answers would be given” (“Astronomer’s” 33). The plumber realizes about this situation and explains that there is always an answer for every problem. The short story ends when she follows him to fix the pipe underground, a place where she is not supposed to go, but she does not mind anymore what her husband would say, who, nevertheless, is still in bed. The plumber convinces her: “‘I once had a cow that lost her cud’ [...] ‘But I made her another in no time’, he was saying, ‘out of flowers and things and whatnot.’” (“Astronomer’s” 34).

This short story is a clear example of Kay Boyle's writing style. She does not aim to communicate or represent faithfully with words, but to suggest and express (cfr. “Revolution” #11), and she reproduces a brief period of time in the life of the characters in which we do not have access to a complete acknowledge about their lives or feelings. She gives us some brushstrokes about these people that turn out to be enough to understand the short story, and even to imagine them without actually a full explanation.

The author provides the characters with different schedules, nighttime for the astronomer and daylight for his wife. The astronomer enjoys his job during the night and sleeps during the day: he is still in bed when the plumber arrives. Mrs. Ames seems to refuse to live in the night, as her husband does, and tries to keep herself busy during the day and to sleep during the night. In this sense, this notion of time with the different schedules creates an incompatibility. The author uses time as another characteristic to define and shape her characters and their behavior. For instance, the introduction at the beginning of the story offers background information to understand the protagonist’s feelings and actions. There is a description, in particular, of Mrs. Ames’s routine and how she seems to be trapped inside it: “The day would proceed from this, beat by beat, without reflection, like every other day”

(“Astronomer’s” 27). We could say that the temporal sequence repeats itself day after day and it has confined Mrs. Ames to a circular framework from which it is hard to escape. Precisely, the arrival of the plumber is the way-out that she was searching for in order to free herself from domestic unhappiness and lack of love. In other words, he represents the fragmentation of her conventional perception of time, because his presence in her life implies the breaking of her daily routine and a potential change of her circumstances. Here, we can see how Boyle engages with principle #10 of the “Revolution of the Word” manifesto, which deals with time as a tyranny to avoid.

There is not a clear ending in this short story. As Sandra Whipple Spanier explains, the reader may think that “very little ‘happens’” in Kay Boyle’s short stories, or that there is an open ending (“Introduction” xiv). However, Boyle does not seek to end the story with a resolution, she just wants to focus on a specific moment in the life of a character and to end with a revelation (Spanier, “Introduction” xiv). In this sense, “Astronomer’s Wife” is an example of how Kay Boyle explores all the possibilities and gives the characters a certain hope of a change, but we, as readers, do not get to see this actually fulfilled (Spanier, “Introduction” xvii).

With this short story, Kay Boyle tries to break with the tradition and the old values in literature, and she also seeks to promote an alternative perspective for women. Following the ideas described in chapter three, Mrs. Ames is an example of Boyle’s empowered female characters: she struggles to break free from imposed routines and from the negativity in her life, which, in this case, is represented by her husband.

4.2. “Letters of a Lady”

Sibyl Castano is a lady in every sense of the word. Throughout a series of letters written by her own hand we can witness an event that happened during the summer of 1929. While Sibyl was living in the countryside, far away from London, her daughter gets very sick. In her first letter to a well-known doctor, Sir Basil Wynns, she asks for his help since, as she states, someone has recommended him profusely. This is the beginning of a strange friendship between the two of them that will unfold to us through her letters to him.

After his first visit, he leaves behind his medicine case but does not notice it. A week later, Sibyl writes to tell him. We can suppose that this was not accidental, but actually intended: when the doctor comes back to the house and Sibyl is not around, he refuses to give his letter to a servant and drops it in the garden, where they used to meet. One of the matters that they discuss is how men and women should behave. Sibyl concludes that men should behave as proper Englishmen and women should act as if they were from Spain, like her: “men should be taught to believe in the dignity of their profession, to follow a life led by interminable niceties of the mind; and that women should be schooled to elaborate this masculine faith with an embroidery of fidelity and passion” (“Letters” 44-45). In spite of this, and although the doctor had suggested that her daughter should be raised as a boy, Sibyl believes that the English customs and codes do not allow enough space for curiosity or imagination, and she does not want a regular and traditional life for her daughter (“Letters” 45).

In the next letter, Sibyl thanks the doctor for the flowers he sent for her garden and for the miniature for Sibyl’s daughter. The doctor has been included in the family matters, to the point that he is even informed of Sibyl’s concern about money, when she explains that “despite my faith in women’s dauntlessness, I feel that I have mismanaged affairs, for I find myself again this month obliged to dispense with two more members of my gradually diminishing staff” (“Letters” 47). It seems that Sibyl is in a difficult situation, being a single woman without no other economic support from her family, although she rejects her cousin’s help because she cannot return the favor appropriately. Apparently, Sibyl is looking for another gentleman with whom she can have a serious relationship, or so is the impression the readers get.

The next letter written by Sibyl deals with a conversation they had about moral issues. The behavior of the doctor seems to be far from what Sibyl considers proper of an Englishman, especially when he speaks about love: “Hence your remarks upon the free nature of love I cannot take seriously as my life has been lived upon principles so antithetic to those you sponsor that I find them strange and flavorless.” (“Letters” 49). Sibyl doesn’t agree with the liberal character that the doctor gives to love and suggests indirectly that what her daughter and herself need is a father and a husband, respectively, hence making clear that she believes in marriage as the ideal situation for her.

The story ends with two letters that show clearly the position of both characters. The doctor has sent Sibyl a photograph of his wife and children, thus destroying her hope in having him propose to her. However, she answers with a fake polite tone, very sarcastic, reflecting on the idea that, despite all the time he spent with her — something she is thankful for — he did not even mention that he was married or had children. She is clearly resentful of his lack of sincerity and even a bit of bad intentions since he, in some way, made her believe that he was single. Finally, she refuses to give him back the miniature: “I can readily see how grievously your wife must take to heart the presumable loss of the miniature, which in reality you were good enough to present to my daughter. [...] I cannot see my way clear to demanding an immature understanding of an adult’s indecisions.” (“Letters” 51). However, Sibyl sends him back the flowers that he had given her, dahlias, which, ironically, symbolize the union between two people and, at the same time, betrayal and dishonesty.

The character of Sibyl Castano is another example of a strong and empowered woman that Kay Boyle used to portray in her works. Sibyl is a single mother who is able to take care perfectly of her daughter without the help of any man. Kay Boyle does not depict her as a product of social discourses: as a woman, she is not seen as the “victim,” but rather as an unconventional woman who is not subjugated to any other person, either male or female.

We can see this perfectly when she rejects the offer of help from her cousin. Her decision, although it could seem triggered by pride, exemplifies her self-reliance and independence. Later on in the story, when she rejects the doctor, she does not do it because he is already married, but because she is not looking for that kind of relationship and, therefore, in her own words: “I am loath to avail myself of assistance proffered by a gentleman to whom I can make no adequate return” (“Letters” 47). Sibyl is a strong woman capable of rejecting a tempting offer because she is loyal to her principles.

This short story shows perfectly the influence of Modernism in Kay Boyle and the style she developed as a result of the manifesto. Written following an epistolary style, there is a similar situation to that of the previous short story: there is an open ending. Kay Boyle allows the reader to make his/her own interpretation of what is going to happen next and her story encourages readers to actively participate in the reading, rather than passively consume it. (cfr. “Revolution” #2).

Owing to the use of the epistolary style, we only get to know the characters through the eyes and words of the protagonist, Sibyl. The relationship between the two characters, Sibyl and the doctor, which we follow throughout the letters, not only figures through the content, but also by reading the greetings. At the beginning, her greetings to the doctor are very formal, using just a “Dear Sir” (“Letters” 43) since they do not know each other and she is actually asking a favor. Later on, she changes from “Dear Sir Basil” to “My Dear, Dear Friend” (“Letters” 44-47) because he has already visited her house and they seem to have a closer relationship. At the end of the story, following the deterioration of their friendship, she resumes the “Dear Sir Basil” (“Letters” 48-50), which maintains the formality between two people who no longer have the former familiarity. The reader is aware of the evolution of the friendship through the letters themselves and this fact provides more depth to the characters.

In addition to this, Kay Boyle introduces in her text some examples of social criticism about well-known *clichés* concerning nationalities, manners, and behaviors. As we have previously seen, a clear example of this element is the assertion made by Sibyl about English men and Spanish women (“Letters” 44-45). Later on in the story, we can see the same idea again, explaining the customs and manners of a proper Englishman when talking about morality and marriage. Sibyl states that “an Englishman is lost if he has not a tradition to direct his actions” (“Letters” 48), when she refers to morality as a tradition that should be embraced by any Englishman if he claims to be one. She also explains that a proper Englishman spends most of his life trying to avoid saying what he really wants to say (“Letters” 49).

The prevailing tone of the short story is ambiguous, a Modernist tool that is connected to principle #12 of the manifesto, which says “The plain reader be damned”. Kay Boyle’s texts are not intended to be understood by a common or a plain reader, but by an audience who is capable of understanding a text without further explanation and who is willing to get involved in that reading. In this sense, imagination is a key element for the reader to enjoy fully what he/she is reading and not to become just a passive figure who takes for granted every word that the author produces (cfr. “Revolution” #12). It is obvious that, throughout the story, Sibyl is implying more than what her words really express. The best example of this situation is after Sibyl becomes aware that the doctor has already a family: “It was indeed good of you to send me the photographs of your wife and two children. [...] ...and with my deepest gratitude to you for permitting me this brief but enlightening glimpse into your existence.” (“Letters”

49-50). The tone that Sibyl uses is clearly sarcastic, sometimes even ironic. In this sense, Boyle gives more importance to building reliable and complex characters than to what actually happens throughout the plot. Hence, Boyle is being loyal to another tenet of the manifesto: her main aim is not to communicate facts or information, but to express and make the reader participate in an active way of what she is narrating, rather than imposing a close perception from her authorial point of view (cfr. “Revolution” #11).

4.3. “The Meeting of the Stones”

This short story deals with an event in the life of a character named Coppelia and her father, and how their relationship is shaped by past and present incidents. At the beginning of the story, we receive the information that Coppelia’s father was an architect, who, because of an accident, is now trapped inside a paralyzed body. The story is told from Coppelia’s point of view, she is the central consciousness of the narrative.

It becomes clear since the very beginning that the relationship that father and daughter used to have has changed after the accident. The man, who was forty at the time, has been seven years trapped inside his own mind: “He could say no word, but in his blood there was a ceaseless strong movement weaving” (“Meeting” 70). Despite his condition, Coppelia knows that her father is eager to supervise her work and control as much as he can around him. “He wanted Coppelia’s drawing board help up before him, and talk from her mouth of what she intended to get on with, for Coppelia was now the architect” (“Meeting” 70). After this introduction of the background and the general situation, the reader gets to know the central piece of the new event in the lives of these two characters: they have been appointed to design the decorations for the garden of Mr. Dooley, a new client, who is described as an attractive and vain man anxious to see his garden decorated.

Under the supervision of Coppelia’s father – even from his awkward position – she sketches some details for the drawing of the temple, following the classical Greek style. Mr. Dooley praises Coppelia’s ability and seems to flirt with her, but she quickly argues that the credit should go to her father, trying to calm down the fury she sees behind his eyes. Then, Mr. Dooley asks for some urgent changes – “Do you think it might be nice with a male figure or two interspersed, as it were, amongst these others?” (“Meeting” 72)–, but Coppelia

explains that the design follows the structure of the Maiden's Well, a place meant for young girls to gather water. She looks for the silent support of her father, "Isn't it, father?" ("Meeting" 73), but the client insists and flatters her: "You, yourself, you're so Greek, you know, so Grecian. Slim as a vase. [...] With that splendid boyish head set on your neck and shoulders. A sculptor would go mad at the sight of you" ("Meeting" 73). In spite of the silent pressure coming from her father's eyes, she agrees to change the sketch.

At this point of the story, Coppelia starts to think about the prospects her future might bring. She realizes that all her life has been built around the figure of her father, "She had never dwelt on herself as separate from her father's flesh" ("Meeting" 74), not only because of the fact that he is paralyzed and she has to take care of him, but also because she has been ruled by his opinions and plans for her and the business: "but now: someday I may get married, she thought, and father will have to accustom himself to it" ("Meeting" 74), she thinks.

Subsequently, she changes the drawing to adapt it to Mr. Dooley's preferences, ignoring her father's impotent tears. He is and will be stuck into that body, unable even to communicate, so she feels empowered for the first time in her life. Coppelia thinks about Mr. Dooley's kind words and daydreams about what could happen between both of them in this new world that she has suddenly discovered. While she is reflecting about these matters, she sees through the window that Mr. Dooley arrives. Her first reaction is immediate: "The blood ran upon her face, and she waited, breathless and shaken" ("Meeting" 78). However, he is not alone. Coppelia sees a young man walking at his side, very close, and hears very clearly how Mr. Dooley repeats once again all the kind words he had told her but, this time, addressed to the young man: "Did any one ever tell you how really Greek, how truly Grecian you are? [...] A sculptor would go mad at the sight of you. [...] That splendid head, [...] set like that on your neck and shoulders" ("Meeting" 79). It is clear now, for Coppelia, that Mr. Dooley feels more attracted towards the young man than to herself and that every compliment that he ever dedicated to her was probably false. The story ends when Coppelia destroys the new sketch she had made for Mr. Dooley and apologizes to her father: "Then let me return to you, father, [...] Let me come back to you, submissive to your ends" ("Meeting" 80).

This short story exemplifies Kay Boyle's style in the treatment of time, the characterization and the usual open ending of her early texts. First of all, the depiction of the

passing of time in the story is vague. The reader does not get to know exact dates, except for the age of the father when he had the accident, and how many years he has been in this situation, seven. The only elements that can induce the reader to establish a time sequence is the succession of daylight and nighttime. Apart from this, the introduction of memories into the story avoids the establishment of a chronological order in the story, which is another element of Kay Boyle's style and of Modernism in general (cfr. "Revolution" #10).

A further important element is the relationship between both characters, Coppelia and her father, and the evolution of Coppelia specifically. At the beginning of the story, Coppelia is subjected to her father. In spite of the fact that he is paralyzed, he seems to keep the power he had over the young Coppelia, although now she is an adult woman and the one managing the firm. She is subdued not to the man trapped inside the paralyzed body, but to the man he was before the accident. From the beginning, it is clear that Coppelia tends to bring old memories back whenever she talks about him because they are the only good things she keeps of him: "Father had been an architect" ("Meeting" 69) and "Father at twenty must have made the heart leap high" ("Meeting" 71). However, as the story develops, she realizes that she has now more power than him and it might seem that she does not consider him an authority anymore. She is well aware of the fact that, for her father, he is still both, an architect and her father, but now she feels encouraged by the supposed interest of Mr. Dooley, who gives her hopes for a change.

Connected to this point in the story is the quote that the reader can find at the beginning of the text: "...for they sacrificed newborns babes at the sowing-time, older children when the grain had sprouted, and when it was fully ripe they sacrificed old men..." ("Meeting" 69). This quote belongs to *The Golden Bough*, by Sir James George Frazer, first published in 1890, in which he explored and compared mythology and religion. In the short story, Coppelia grounds her reasons on this idea, that it is time for her to take control over her own life and leave the old generation aside. Nevertheless, Coppelia realizes that her future plans and expectations were too idealistic and comes back to her father. Without saying it aloud, she seems to be the submissive daughter again. Once more, the reader finds an open ending, because no clear resolution is achieved and the one that I have suggested is only one among many possibilities. The narrator does not make clear what will become of Coppelia's life, as far as her going back to her father might be just temporary and the appearance of a new prospect in her life could very well change the course of events, just in the same way as the

appearance of Mr. Dooley did (cfr. “Revolution” # 11 and #12). In this sense, we could expect from Coppelgia a more mature attitude, since Boyle’s characters tend to overcome many difficulties. We can say, as in the previous stories, that the plot is character-driven and the events are not crucial for the development of the story. What is important for Kay Boyle and the Modernists is not to communicate, but to express (cfr. “Revolution” #11).

4.4. “On the Run”

This short story deals with a couple that arrives by train to a hotel in a place called “Saint-André-les-Alpes”. It is a hot June and they book a room for a few days. They seem to be running away from something or someone, and they keep a secret.

When the man tries to ask for pigs’ feet to eat, the maiden of the hotel explains that it is not the proper time of the year to eat pig. The man is probably a foreigner and is trying to communicate with the girl in English, but it seems that the girl does not really understand what he is asking for. Suddenly, the man starts to cough and asks the maiden to leave: “Get her out of here he said I am going to cough Christ is this where the death will get me take the cigaret and when I cough walk around the room and sign or something so they won’t hear me” (“Run” 258). It is obvious that the man is sick, that is the secret they are trying to keep, but it is too late and the maiden notices this from the start.

Later on, the same maiden comes back to the room and announces that the laundry woman is too busy to wash their clothes. The first reaction of the man is to get angry and curse the place: “My God,” [...] we’ll clear out of here. Saint-André-les-Alpes what a hole. I’ll come back and haunt you. I’ll eat your heart out Saint-André-les-Alpes I’ll curse and rot you” (“Run” 259). He clearly seems to have lost all hope of recovery, although it can also be his own way to cope with the idea that he is going to die, something like the use of his anger as a defensive system. After the laundry woman, the shoemaker refuses also to touch their shoes and, finally, the maiden comes back to announce that the proprietor of the hotel wants to speak with the woman in private: “your husband cannot die here, [...] we are not prepared for death.” (“Run” 259). This excuse upsets the woman. At the same time, she sees an ominous sign in the fact that the owner of the hotel is in mourning and is wearing black, but, ironically, she will not allow the sick man to die in her hotel. Obviously, this is an exaggerated fear,

since the man is not there to die, but just to rest for some days. Still, sickness and death seem to be inappropriate. The sick man gets angrier but then realizes that he is afraid, not only of his approaching death, but of having to keep running away. He prays to “Saint André” and, in the meantime, she packs again to leave one more place behind: they will leave to find another place where they could start once again. However, the last sentence of the story leaves a bitter trace: “Keep on keep on keep on he said maybe I’m going to bleed” (“Run” 260).

This short story is, by far, the most experimental text of Boyle’s early period. Additionally, critics have highlighted the autobiographical elements that make it more unique. It is possible to link both characters, the sick man and his wife, to Ernest Walsh and Kay Boyle themselves. Walsh suffered from tuberculosis for a very long time, and he travelled with Boyle throughout France, trying to hide the sickness.

As we have seen, there is no division between the different spheres in the life of Kay Boyle and this short story is a clear reflection of this characteristic. She offers reality, not a mere anecdote, which is an expression of her Modernist and experimental style (cfr. “Revolution” #4). Precisely, the fact that the story has a biographical base affects greatly the structure. It is a short story that lacks punctuation and that chains different ideas all together apparently without coherence. The following example coincides with one of the most tense scenes of the story, the moment in which they have to leave the hotel: “You you afraid listen here packing the bags again the hairy-legged brushes pointed ampoules as beautiful as earrings bottles of ergotine and striped pajamas” (“Run” 259). This pattern or style corresponds with the technique of the stream of consciousness, based on the idea that consciousness is not a succession of moments, but a current of memories. For example, the ending of the story mixes present and past because the man remembers the good times, when they were safe and sound, but, at the same time, he hopes for a better future: “we’re going on somewhere else and have pigs’ feet grilled and champagne and peaches with flames running on them [...] do you remember Menton last February [...] may the Gods speak softly of us in days hereafter” (“Run” 259-260).

This is also connected with the autonomy of time, discussed in chapter 3, and the idea developed in the manifesto that time should be abolished (cfr. “Revolution” #10). In this short story, Boyle does not establish fixed units of time. On the contrary, she is expressing her own inner thoughts and memories to build a meaningful text.

In addition to this, as we have seen in other stories, the characters constitute the core of the story and the narrator describes in an elusive way how they respond to the man's sickness, each of them in a different manner. In the case of the man, he knows that he is sick and there is nothing he can expect or plan. His anger provokes sympathy on the reader, and his anxiety is unequivocal, especially in the dialogues.

The role of the woman is silent, although her presence is evident, but she barely intervenes directly. However, her inner thoughts are perceived by the reader thanks to the stream of consciousness technique. The man wanted to rest and eat well during some days, but he is rejected by everybody at the hotel and faces it with anger. In the case of the woman, she seems to be more serene, a loyal and understanding companion, but at the same time, the strong one in the couple: without her, the man would probably have given up long time ago. She tries to bring some calm to the situation and help him as much as she can. In this respect, a key element in the story is the interview between the woman and the proprietor of the hotel. In the next excerpt, Boyle suggests a bit of irony in the use of mourning by the woman, wishing to highlight the woman's hypocrisy and lack of compassion for other fellow beings in spite of the fact that death seems to surround already that place:

The bonne came back to say that the proprietor the woman luxuriously in mourning for her entire family [...] would speak with Madame [...] The sweet sorrow of the crucifix faced them the rosary hanging like false-teeth on the bed-stead the sacred smile the Christ bled [...] in the arms of the Virgin. "Madame," she said without hesitation, "your husband cannot die here," she said, "we are not prepared for death." ("Run" 259).

It may seem that the hotel and the proprietor herself are very well prepared for the situation. However, we could say that the presence of religious symbols (the crucifix, the rosary, and so forth) combined with the lack of sympathy of the woman and her luxurious attire are not precisely compatible. Rather than that, it may seem that her mourning is just an *attrezzo* for the eyes of society.

Kay Boyle offers a truthful and real perspective of this couple's plight giving the reader little glimpses of their experience, but not a detailed and fully explained depiction, as that was not her intention. Once again, the purpose is to suggest, to express, to evoke, but not to communicate or represent in the realistic guise. Boyle's style implies curiosity, imagination,

and autonomy, and her texts encourage the reader to take on an active stance and participate with his/her own interpretation.

5. Conclusion

Kay Boyle's style was heavily influenced by her friendship with many of the American expatriate writers in Paris during the first half of the twentieth century. With her adherence to "The Revolution of the Word" manifesto, Kay Boyle clearly adapted her style to the new modernist and experimental tendencies, but she always tried to keep her own ideas. Overall, Boyle's main aim was to express what she felt the way she needed to express it and she conceived the relationship between the text and reader as an active experience whereby the text suggests things that the reader may or may not adopt as his/her own. In this respect, her early texts give the reader freedom to account for them, and the author is not present as a powerful figure that dictates over the reader's response. Creativity and imagination are the only elements demanded by Boyle from the reader.

The analysis of these four stories shows how Kay Boyle developed her modernist style. The manifesto of the "Revolution of the Word" influenced greatly the development of her writing. As we have seen, the innovation in language is connected to the new treatment of time. Boyle uses the stream of consciousness to express thoughts without the boundaries of traditional grammar and syntax. This is clearly exemplified in the last story, "On the Run," where the lack of punctuation emphasizes the urgency the characters' thoughts and dialogues. Added to this is the fact that time is tyrannical for modernists and Boyle, as well, avoids artificial units to measure time and prefers to offer the reader the chance to decipher it.

Apart from this, Modernism is also evident in "Letters of a Lady". The letters allow the reader to know a filtered and subjective version of the story, while the rest remains outside the eye, as far as there is not a third person omniscient narrator who guarantees the reader that what Sybil Castano says is the truth. At the same time, the influence of several female figures in her early life inclined her heavily towards a critical awareness. Though her writing style we can see that she shows her concern with gender issues, especially with the inclusion of strong female characters that have to overcome negative aspects in their lives, especially related to male individuals. We have seen several examples of Boyle's special consideration towards complex characters. In the first story, "Astronomer's Wife", we witnessed the evolution of Mrs. Ames, from an acquiescent woman, who faced the indifference of her husband and the unhappiness of her life, to a hopeful woman capable of imagining a different future. Another example of Boyle's style is the main character of "Meeting of the Stones," Coppelia, who

awakens to a position of self-reliance and rejects her father's authority. Her evolution is uncertain and the reader has the last word, but the criticism of the traditional hierarchy and male power is evident.

These brief stories exemplify Kay Boyle's style of writing but they do not represent all her work. However, I hope to have provided an insight into the fiction of her early period particularly in the articulation of a unique and very personal style, if certainly enough the Modernist influence is evident.

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