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World Literature in Spanish

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Generation of 1914 in Spain

This group of Spanish writers wrote in the period between modernism and the Generation of 1898 and the 1920s avant-garde tendencies. It has also been called *novecentismo* (in Catalan *noucentisme*) to refer to these authors' different, innovative understanding of literature and art. "1914" was chosen to label this generation because it marked the outbreak of World War I and because José *Ortega y Gasset, the movement's main figure, delivered a talk that year on old and new politics.

These writers, generally university-educated members of the bourgeoisie, proposed to examine reality from a rational, intellectual, and objective point of view. Thus, they rejected 19th-century *romanticism and the emphasis on feelings and subscribed to an aesthetic based on Greek and Roman classicism. In some works a preoccupation for Spain arises, but unlike their

*Generation of 1898 predecessors, they sustain a more positive attitude, relying on Europeanism and cosmopolitanism as solutions to national problems. These writers searched for “pure art,” that is, a dehumanized art intended to produce aesthetic pleasure. At the same time, they paid special attention to form and literary style in writings. Consequently, their works addressed cultured readers, not the popular audience, believing that a select intellectual minority should lead the nation’s masses.

The essay, the Generation of 1914’s preferred genre, was cultivated by Ortega y Gasset, Eugenio d’Ors, Américo Castro Quesada, Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, Gregorio Marañón, and Manuel Azaña, president of Spanish Second Republic. The primary journals and newspapers used to propagate their ideas include *España* (1915–1924), *El Sol* (1917–1936) and *Revista de Occidente* (1923–present).

Foremost novelists of this generation were Gabriel Miró, known for detailed descriptions and lyrical prose, and Ramón Pérez de Ayala, whose characters tend to embody ideas or attitudes. Wenceslao Fernández Flórez wrote mainly humoristic novels; Ramón Gómez de la Serna displayed a critical, sarcastic stance in his prose; while Benjamín Jarnés focused more on philosophical and psychological issues. All these authors renovated the novel as a genre, overcoming realism through intellectualism, lyricism, irony, and humor. Jacinto Grau also included formal innovations in his plays. In poetry, Juan Ramón Jiménez searched for transcendence through simplification of the form. In conclusion, the Generation of

1914 writers showed in their works an interest both in rational concepts and in cultivation of the language.

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Rebollo Sánchez, Félix. “El periodismo literario de los ensayistas y narradores novecentistas.” *Especulo: Revista de Estudios Literarios* 18 (2001). <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero18/rebollo.html>.