

WOOLF'S MAPS¹

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RESUMEN

A lo largo de los años 20 Virginia Woolf llevó a cabo una investigación perceptual del espacio. Durante este periodo su enfoque cambió dependiendo de la interacción que ella tuvo, al principio de la década con la filosofía, y al final de esta con la ciencia. Durante el primer periodo a través de múltiples puntos de vista, la simultaneidad y una descripción detallada de las áreas geográficas en donde las acciones se realizan, generó una nueva manera de entender los eventos que suceden en sus novelas; ella produjo imágenes mucho más detalladas de las acciones de sus personajes. A la par de este desarrollo Woolf tuvo un contacto cercano con la teoría del conocimiento de Bertrand Russell. En el segundo periodo la perspectiva que la escritora desarrolló visualizaba los acontecimientos desde distancias muy lejanas; al mismo tiempo Woolf se interesó por los automóviles y por las imágenes que un telescopio ofrece. El siguiente artículo enfatiza los cambios en la narrativa de la escritora, sin embargo también resalta que su interés por representar el espacio nunca dejó de existir.

PALABRAS CLAVE: múltiples puntos de vista, simultaneidad, mapa, Russell, y aparatos tecnológicos.

ABSTRACT

Throughout the 1920s Virginia Woolf conducted a perceptual research of the space. During this period her focus changed depending on the interaction that she had, by the beginning of the decade with philosophy, and by the end of it with science. During the first period through multiple points of views, simultaneity and a precise description of the geographical areas where the actions are performed, she generated a new way of understanding the events that happen in her novels; she produced more detailed images of the actions of her characters. Parallel to this development, Woolf was in close contact with Russell's theory of knowledge. In the second period the perspective that the writer developed visualized events from far away distances; at the same time Woolf became interested in motorcars and in the images that a telescope can offer. This article emphasizes the changes in the narrative of the writer, although it also highlights that her interest in representing the space never ceased to exist.

KEY WORDS: multiple points of view, simultaneity, map, Russell, technological devices.

By the beginning of 1920 Woolf stated how she had “[...] arrived at some idea of a new form for a new novel” (Bell 1978: 13) that could “enclose everything” (13). During the following years she endeavoured to achieve this, and to do so she



included simultaneity, multiple points of view, and maps in her novels of the period from 1922 until 1931. Throughout the decade, Woolf gained confidence in their use and gradually understood that if the three of them were employed together, the reader could obtain a more complete understanding of the evolution of the actions. Parallel to the development of this new way to narrate events, Woolf established a dialogue with Russell's theory of knowledge. This interaction provided her with the necessary elements to shape a perception of space within her prose.

When the decade was ending, she stopped describing the space based on these notions. However, with the help of ideas coming from new technologies (such as motorcars) and astronomical discoveries, she continued exploring other ways to represent the perception of space; the result of this interaction allowed her to take into account a vision from an outside perspective.

1. THE BEGINNING OF THE 1920s OR THE SPATIOTEMPORAL MAP

Joining multiple points of view, simultaneity, and mapping in her novels from the 1920s Woolf constructed a map that describes more aspects of the space where the actions take place than just the geographical location; the space that Woolf describes becomes a "spatiotemporal map" able to embrace more precisely the events that occur.

1.1 MULTIPLE POINTS OF VIEW

By the end of the 1910s Woolf was already reflecting an interest in the concept of multiple points of view in short stories such as "The Mark on the Wall" (1917), "Kew Gardens"² (1919), and "An Unwritten Novel" (1920). However, it is not until her next piece of work where she fully develops the idea. In *Jacob's Room* (1922) there is what Woolf called a "new form for a new novel." One characteristic of this "new form" to narrate events is the relevance that the character's impressions acquire for the description of space. In *Jacob's Room* each character acts as a possible perceiver of the situation, and each of them contributes to construct an entire perception of the space. This constantly repeats throughout the book.

Woolf also used multiple points of view in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). In this work once again the description of the actions that more than one character deve-

¹ This article results from the doctoral thesis with the title Recognizing Cultural Concepts: Joyce, Woolf, Mann and Musil.

² Woolf's early inquiring about the perception of space has been detected by Frank Stevenson. In his article the author emphasises the techniques that Woolf had to employ to present the complexity of the different perspectives "[...] from the near to the far and the large to the small" (Stevenson 2008: 3). To Stevenson, Woolf achieves this through different kind of "noises" that she introduces "[...] in the form of relativistic juxtapositions, discontinuous spatio-temporal-linguistic leaps [...]" (6).



lops are fundamental to map the spatial locations. The different scenes that take place in Regent's Park are good examples of how Woolf used the multiple points of view to create a common spatial perception. By describing the thoughts and actions of Septimus, Lucrezia and Peter Walsh, and by changing the narration from what one character thinks and does to another one and then again to another one, the narrator offers a more accurate and precise account of the events.³ Differently from *Jacob's Room*, in *Mrs. Dalloway* Woolf used external objects or sounds to describe each character's perception of space. The clearest manifestation of this occurs when the mentioned characters run into each other. The three of them watch and hear a woman who is outside the park, and Woolf uses her voice as a reference sound. The words of the song mix with the actions followed by Walsh and Lucrezia. First, some lines of the song mix in with Peter's thoughts and actions, and then with the ones of Lucrezia. The action is the same and the sound of the woman's voice serves as a departing point to appreciate the several perspectives.

The final occasion where Woolf presents multiple perspectives to describe the space occurs in Clarissa's party; here emerges a collective consciousness. Each of the characters' contributions provides elements to understand how the party develops. The "party consciousness" or "frock consciousness" was engaging Woolf in the period when she wrote *Mrs. Dalloway*. One month before its publication she stated "[...] people secrete an envelope which connects them [...] like myself, who am outside the envelope, foreign bodies" (Bell 1980: 12-13).

In Clarissa's party Woolf "opens the envelope" and describes the actions taking place among the several characters, plus their inner thoughts and feelings. A clear example of the technique that Woolf employs to narrate the events finds itself in the paragraph that starts with "Every time she [Clarissa] gave a party[...]" (163) and till "[...] which Richard had given her" (163). Here Woolf continuously changes the perspective from which the events are described, mixing Clarissa's thoughts, feelings, and words with the narrator's voice. The narration continues in the same way, although including the perception of other characters from different locations within the house. Through this constant changing the reader learns about the characteristics of the different rooms within the house. Woolf presents an understanding of the

³ Often it is assumed that Modernism has fundamental differences with Classic Realism in terms of the final purposes and intentions. To some extent, these perspectives reinforce the recent idea that modernist writers did not abandon realism, at least not entirely. As Chris Baldick explains, modernism searches to give a realist vision of the world through employing new narrative techniques, which contribute to depict the actions in a more precise manner. Baldick reminds us that what we today call modernist writers, back then considered themselves as part of a very broad enterprise: "the modern movement". In fact, the first books' list considered as belonging to the modern movement from 1900 to 1932, included the work of "realists" such as H.G. Wells or Arnold Bennett. (Baldick 2005: 4). As he concludes in one of the final chapters: "Much of what we call modernism was indeed realism in a new manner, modulated by symbolist or expressionist devices, inflected by new psychological emphases, but still dedicated to puncturing false idealism and to telling the truth about the world as it is. Modernism did not abolish or supersede realism; it extends its possibilities" (401).



events of the party through a multiplicity of perceptions coming from characters situated in different spatial points of view.

Once again in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) Woolf uses multiple points of view to narrate some scenes. One good example happens when some characters have dinner together. In this scene each of the personages contributes with thoughts and actions to the reader's understanding. Woolf repeats once again the phenomenon of the party consciousness, and describes more than what the characters say among them. From the very first lines of the paragraph that starts with "That the fishing season was [...]" (77) Woolf relies on multiple perspectives to narrate the scene, which is told from four different points of view that constantly change from the narrator to Bankes to the narrator, to Mrs Ramsay, to Bankes, to Mrs Tansley, and finally to Bankes again. Differently from *Mrs Dalloway* in one scene multiple characters contribute to telling the story. Furthermore, this is the first time that Woolf makes explicit reference to her interest in the perception of a scene from multiple points of view: Lily Briscoe asks for: "[...] fifty pairs of eyes to see with [...]" (161).

The Waves (1931) is the last work where Woolf captures scenes from multiple points of view. The book's plot, composed of the monologues of six main characters, follows their experiences from childhood to adulthood. In this book an omniscient narrator does not exist, and the story captures the conversations between themselves and the intersection of their thoughts while they speak. Even though in this book Woolf did not use multiple points of view to describe the spatial locations as much as in her past novels, there are still some scenes where she presents multiple perceptions of the spatial locations. For instance, a good example takes place when three of the characters climb the stairs, and each of them focuses the attention on different objects that are part of the common spatial surrounding (29-32).

1.2 SIMULTANEITY

In the 1920s Woolf wrote three novels where she reflects simultaneity. *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* are all concerned with representing the simultaneity of time. How did she represent simultaneity if a book allows telling events only in a linear fashion? To achieve this, Woolf used co-presence and co-occurrence.

To establish co-presence (actions happening in the same scene) in *Mrs Dalloway* the writer uses aural or visual events as references to narrate at the same moment the actions and the characters' thoughts. The clearest scene of the book that represents co-presence happens at the entrance of Regent's park. Peter Walsh is leaving the place when he hears an old woman singing: "ee um fah um so foo swee too eem oo" (77). This part of the song is written again few lines later and then the narration continues by describing how, when Walsh is about to take a taxi, the woman sings: "[...] and if some one should see, what matter they?" (78). In the next lines one can read the same "ee um fah um so foo swee too eem oo-". This time the narration focuses on Lucrezia's thoughts exactly when Walsh started to hear the voice. This becomes clear because once again in the next lines one can read "And if



someone should see, what matter they?" (79). The woman's voice acts as a central focal-point to the actions followed by the characters at the same time.

In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf also works with co-presence. The clearest scene is, as already pointed out, when the characters are sitting at the table. Here Woolf presents a similar co-present interaction of characters' thoughts and words to the ones she developed in *Mrs Dalloway*. The main difference is that in this scene she includes the thoughts and actions of more characters, and she did not support the images with external aural or visual events.

In *The Waves* Woolf also includes co-presence. From page 29 to page 32, Susan, Jinny and Rhoda are part of a scene where their thoughts and actions will be simultaneously revealed; this occurs the three of them are running up the stairs. The precise moment when the simultaneous thoughts are exposed happens when Jinny, located in the second landing after surpassing Susan and Rhoda, starts dancing and moving his body (29-30). Susan, who is behind him and in the first landing, sees how Jinny moves his body (29). Rhoda is walking next to Susan because she does not like to see her face reflected in the small looking glass, and from that position Susan's shoulder covers her (30-31).

In the mentioned scenes Woolf expands the space and provokes a limitless description since each character can potentially contribute with his or her own impressions. Woolf shows each character's awareness, which differs from the others mainly because the thoughts and the descriptions focus on different objects and events. Through these impressions, each of them establishes a description of the place, thereby leading to a spatial complementation.

In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf generates co-occurrence (events happening at the same time but in different places) by including in different scenes, spatially apart from each other, objects that can be perceived from different points of the city. The first time this occurs is in section two, when a limousine parks in front of Buckingham Palace. In that precise moment an airplane passes overhead and Clarissa sees it from not so far away, whilst Lucrezia and Septimus see it from a park one kilometer away. Another way in which Woolf generates co-occurrence is by leaning on the measurement of time. Every time she wants to emphasize the simultaneity of events, she points out the hour of the day. Big Ben assigns a temporal location to the characters because its sound pervades or punctuates constantly the atmosphere where the actions occur. This punctuation gives a certain structure; it organizes how the activities of the characters develop⁴. Plus, the sound of Big Ben connects spatially the characters' activities, it allows to contrast their actions and learn their exact locations at precise moments. For instance, let's focus on Clarissa, Peter and Lucrezia after the former goes back to her place. Her arriving home, meeting with Peter, Peter's walk to the

⁴ To Randall Stevenson Woolf is concerned with emphasizing the fragmentation of time that Big Ben and other clocks generate in the streets of London. From Stevenson's point of view, due to these sounds the characters are unable to avoid the constant intromission of the passage of time. With the sound of the clocks, they become aware of the time's flux. (Stevenson 1992: 134).



park, and his short nap, occur in 45 minutes. In the meantime Lucrezia tries to calm down her husband at the park. Further on, while Clarissa lays her dress on the bed, Big Ben announces noon. Septimus and Lucrezia hear the clock while walking to the doctor's office and when they come out after one hour and a half, Clarissa is writing at her room table. Big Ben sounds again at 3:30 in the afternoon, when Clarissa is at home with her daughter Elizabeth and Miss Kilman. Here they split and the narration follows Clarissa's thoughts. At the same time, although in a different place, Septimus commits suicide. Finally, while Peter Walsh walks to his hotel to get ready for Clarissa's party, he hears the sound of the ambulance that takes Septimus to the hospital. Even though the sound of Big Ben does not participate in this action, the sound of the ambulance performs exactly the same aural punctuation.

In the last part of *To the Lighthouse* the main characters also develop co-occurrent activities. This occurs when the Ramsays go to the lighthouse, and Lily Briscoe stays at home. To narrate both stories Woolf divides the last section of the book into short subsections. The simultaneous narration begins at the time of the Ramsays' departure; the first two subsections narrate it. From the third subsection and until the end of the book each subsection tells, with brief glimpses, what happens in either of the two different places.⁵ Woolf makes these subsections very short to stress the co-occurrence of the events. Michael Whitworth has highlighted the following:

The simultaneity of *The Waves* is heterotopic...it brings two or more diverse places together in one. The simultaneity of *Mrs. Dalloway*...is heterochronic: it brings together two or more diverse times as if they were simultaneous (Whitworth 2001: 185-186).

The quality of heterotopic that Whitworth assigns to simultaneity in *The Waves*, is also present in *Mrs. Dalloway* and in *To the Lighthouse*. In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf uses external objects to achieve this; the airplane and Big Ben link situations that co-occur at two different spatial places. Instead, in *To the Lighthouse* she supports co-occurrence events through short subsections.

1.3 MAPS

The article "Literary Geography" (1905) marks the beginning of Woolf's engagement with geography and maps. In this short article Woolf points out the accuracy that narration can achieve to describe a particular city. To Woolf, Thackeray's depiction

⁵ The technique that Woolf employed in this part of the novel is similar to what Cornelia Klecker has emphasised in her article (Klecker: 2011). She has recognized how time-montage and space-montage work within *Mrs Dalloway*, and has compared them with the film "The Hours", which uses a similar technique to tell the story of three different women that have lived in different times. Even though Klecker does not pay attention to *To the Lighthouse*, in this novel Woolf also created a space-montage that occurs at the same time. Here, the brief glimpses allow to understand that shifts in space take place.



of London streets is imprecise because he “[...] left many of his localities vague” (81), whereas Dickens’ case is completely the opposite: “No one probably has ever known his London so intimately as Dickens did...”. In the concluding lines Woolf states that the city generated by the author’s imagination cannot be compared with any real city because: “[...] we run the risk of disillusionment if we try to turn such phantom cities into tangible brick and mortar”. By that time Woolf was less inclined to describe the places where her imaginary characters move. However, in the subsequent years Woolf’s thoughts will radically change.

In the 1920s Woolf reflected a strong engagement with the characterization of geography in her novels. Throughout *Jacob’s Room* one can detect Woolf’s interest of mapping a city by naming the streets and places in detail and with accuracy (150-151). In the book there is no precise sequence of actions related by just one character instead, one finds a portrayal of the space, of the city and the places within the city. Woolf describes not only the spatial places, but she provides a more realistic image of the situation by describing the sounds and the smells of the atmosphere.

If in *Jacob’s Room* Woolf denotes a concern to map London supported by a written tradition, in *Mrs. Dalloway* there is scrupulously accurate mapping of the city center. Through the movement of the characters Woolf describes places such as Victoria Street, Piccadilly Street, Arlington Street, etc. Clarissa and Peter Walsh generate most of the descriptions,⁶ however they are not the only ones. David Dowling has pointed out that if one takes into account the movement of these two characters through the streets of Westminster, plus the ones of Septimus, Elizabeth and Richard, Woolf described more than 80% of the borough (Dowling 53-55). As Andrew Thacker reminds us, Woolf around 1922 started supporting her descriptions with the help of maps (Thacker 2003: 154).

Woolf’s interest in the depiction of space continued. Apart from offering an accurate description of geographical places,⁷ a precise image of the streets’ disposition, Woolf intensified her descriptions of the sounds and smells at a specific time of the day “[...] Bond Street early in the morning [...]” (10). These descriptions emphasize how different is to watch a place at different hours of the day.

In her next novel the author leaves aside the recreation of geographical places although she comes back to it in *The Waves*, where she sets out her ideas in relation to maps, fiction and description. In this period Woolf was concerned to fill the atmosphere as far as possible: “[...] what I want now to do is to saturate every atom [...] to give the moment whole [...]” (Bell 1980: 209). Throughout *The Waves* there is constantly recurring mention of maps in the description of specific scenes. She also returns to the descriptions of modern London (the places and the

⁶ One clear example of this occurs early on in the book, when Clarissa’s impressions picture the path to reach the flower shop.

⁷ Regarding the definition of place and space I rely on the one provided by Mieke Bal. For Bal a place is related to the precise location of the characters from where they perceive. She defines space as the result of the relationship established between place and perception (Bal 2007: 133). For the presentation of a space Bal assigns a fundamental role to three of the human senses: sight, hearing, and touch (133).



streets will once again be central), and more than any other feature she increases the description of an atmosphere full of sounds: “All separate sounds – wheels, bells, the cries of drunkards, of merry-makers – are churned into one sound [...]” (212).

To develop the “party consciousness” in the mentioned novels Woolf had to use multiple points of view and simultaneity. If one includes the mapping (in the sense of a portrayal of a scene) that each character can provide for the description of a certain situation, then a specific event can be represented by a “multiple consciousness map.” This map encompasses with greater precision the situation and the actions of the characters in different spatial positions. The “multiple consciousness map” portrays events not only from one individual perspective, as usually happened before modernist literature, where omniscient narrators describe the spatial surroundings from their own particular point of view without leaving room for any other contribution. In Woolf’s novels each character through their thoughts, their actions and their simultaneous interactions contributes to map a situation, to define it better, to achieve a clearer and more descriptive view of the events.⁸ In *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves*, the scenes where Woolf used the “multiple consciousness map” are exactly the ones where she achieves a richer picture of the events.

If now multiple characters perform actions at the same time but in different spatial locations, another mapping arises. The narration of the characters’ actions provide spatial information of the places where they are located such as the colors, sounds, and smells of the streets, plus the precise moments when these events happen. If many characters provide the same kind of spatial information from other points of the city simultaneously in time, then what this narration achieves, what the characters tend to produce is a map of London. If these different visions could be expanded ad infinitum then not only 80% of a borough, but the entire city of London in a particular moment of the day could be reproduced by a written tradition. Through these multiple spatial descriptions Woolf creates a “map of maps”, which is generated by putting together simultaneously many “multiple consciousness maps”.

Before Woolf the scope of these three notions had never been fully exploited. In *Ulysses* James Joyce put them together, however Woolf expanded their use; she was very precise on the times and paths followed by the characters and on the reproduction of the cities, plus she offered a realistic description of the events. She achieved an approach to what actually one feels in daily life while participating in the complexity of the time and space continuum, where sounds, smells, images,

⁸ In essays such as “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” (1923) and “Modern Fiction” (1925) Woolf expresses that the realist position of writers was not enough to depict accurately how a human being experiences reality. In the former one, she does not agree that the life order reflected by realist writers was accurate (386-387). And in “Modern Fiction” she complains about the incapacity of the “materialist” style to depict “life”, to show the “myriad of impressions” that are constantly being generated in an ordinary day. However, in the article “Woolf and Realism” Pam Morris addresses Woolf’s realist aesthetic and claims that she never abandoned realism; in fact in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Waves*, through the characters’ positions, Woolf constantly establishes a tension between realism and idealism. The accurate description view of events pointed out in this article reaffirms the realist aesthetic that Morris has detected.

thoughts and actions mix. Furthermore, through the eyes of many characters she created a multiplicity of spatial contexts within a city.

1.4 WOOLF, RUSSELL, AND FRY

To understand how Virginia Woolf generated this perception one needs to consider her interaction with 1) the ideas of Bertrand Russell, who was a philosophical figure for her and for her intellectual circle, and 2) the support she received from her friend and artist Roger Fry.

In *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy* Bertrand Russell stated that there is no way to answer the question of whether human beings are capable of “knowing” the external world. Russell’s theory questions the capacity of the human being to obtain knowledge from the external world beyond direct experience. This is Russell’s objection to knowledge, and is one of the dilemmas he analysed in his book.

Due to the mind’s ability to “create” objects from elements which are observable in the world, but that actually do not exist in it, it is possible to claim that knowledge is not equal to perception. In the absence of an observer, knowledge (or better its possibility of existence), should not be disclaimed. According to Banfield this specific component of Russell’s theory reflects in *To the Lighthouse*, “The ‘kitchen table when you’re not there,’ ... (TL, 232), identifies Mr. Ramsay’s philosophical object with the unobserved” (Banfield: 49).

Russell was deeply interested in the physical phenomenon that occurs when one observes a certain object from different points of view. His premise was that if an object is being observed by two different observers, the perceptions of both concerning the “selfsame” object changes. If an observer arrives at a place and takes up a position, then this observer has taken up a possible place from which a “sensibilia” can be recorded. The other viewpoints remain as possibilities of recording “sensibilia”, until another observer arrives and takes up another position. Due to the infinite number of viewpoints from which an object can be seen, the sum of all the “sensibilia” is equal to the continuum space. Russell expanded his idea and concluded that each atom could generate a perspective.

Woolf’s interaction with Russell’s theory is reflected in the system of awareness that she created. This divides into two: the omnipresent narrator and the characters. In *Mrs Dalloway* and in *To the Lighthouse* the narrator has no participation in the plot and perceives all the actions as images that cannot be modified. On the other hand the characters are part of the story and assume a viewpoint while participating in the actions, but are isolated entities unable to understand more than what their thoughts provide them. In *The Waves*, differently from her past novels, the narration departs from the characters’ viewpoint and an omniscient narrator does not exist. Here the minds of the characters reveal a certain image of the world, just like the one Russell sets out, contributing to perceive an event from multiple points of view. Furthermore, the idea of a “map of maps” taken to its ultimate consequences would be equal to the idea



proposed by Russell, where only by multiple observers it is possible to describe a place with certain accuracy. To map an entire city Russell would consider the different perspectives that every available atom within the city provides; Woolf expanded this map by introducing simultaneity.

Prior to 1917 but after 1914 Woolf was attempting to develop a “modern fiction” where the minds of the characters could be exposed to the reader; this required a new grounding hypothesis regarding its visual content. But Woolf never went to university, and blamed the fact of being a woman for her lack of education in fields such as science, mathematics and philosophy. She recurrently mentioned it in her work, in *A Room of One's Own* she says: “Now if she had gone into business [...] the subject of our talk might have been [...] physics, the nature of the atom, mathematics, astronomy, relativity, geography” (27). So how did she abstract Russell's ideas and then introduced them in her work?

The lack of education made of her approach to philosophy indirect because she never read Russell's books. She could have obtained them from debates originating in her own social circle; Russell was part of the social networks and the events that Woolf frequented in the 1910s.⁹ However, Woolf preferred to avoid these lectures and seminars: “They were going to hear Bertie Lecture; I preferred the songsters of Trafalgar Square” (Bell 1977: 270).

One of the most important links between Russell and Woolf was the artist Roger Fry. His art provided a means to understand and to connect Russell's theory with her “modern fiction”. Fry was so helpful to Woolf because he was able to interpret what the Cambridge philosophers were saying and transpose it into his art. More specifically, Post-Impressionism was a link between Woolf's fiction and Russell's theory. When the movement was born artists thought of their work as logical knowledge, such as science, able to understand the world and physical phenomena.¹⁰ One of the most important aspects of post-impressionism is the perspective relationship between the canvas and the image being painted, the perspective from where the image was seen. Woolf wanted to include in her work Cézanne's characteristics of composition, where geometry played a major role due to its capacity to provide the sense of multiple points of view. Her fiction, with its interest in post-impressionist painting and her interest in developing the concept of multiple points of view, was in tune with Russell's theory of knowledge.

⁹ The first time that Woolf makes reference to Russell is in August 1908, in a letter to Vanessa Bell (Nicolson 1976: 351). It is undeniable that Woolf attended several of his lectures, “[...] She sat 2 seats from L. at the [Bertrand Russell] lecture [...]” (Nicolson 1976: 76).

¹⁰ Paul Cézanne was one of the main exponents of this movement. He believed in the capacity of artists to understand the world in an abstract way. He thought that this ability would allow to find a logical conformation of the world, a sort of order within it. Cézanne even arrived at the notion that there could be certain equivalences between arts and physics because both areas inquire into natural phenomena.

2. THE END OF THE 1920s OR THE OUTSIDE VISION

Woolf's interest in the discourse of mapping started early in the century, and along the 1920s she used it as a tool for the description of the events. However, as the decade drew to a close, she stopped using simultaneity and considered the description of space from a different perspective. Two representative short stories that reflect this new approach are: "Flying over London" (1928) and "The Searchlight" (1929).

In both stories the telescope has a relevant role.¹¹ In "Flying over London" the description of London is a mixture of close-ups and long shots. The images of this short story reflect her latest concerns, even though she never had the chance to watch the earth from the sky. The narrator first presents a long shot of the city of London, describing how a horse seems like a small dot due to the distance in between. This horse gallops, maybe doing it in a fast way, but from that position it looks as if it was moving very slowly. From that distance human beings look like small insects, however, after looking through the "Zeiss glasses," everything seems different: "Through a pair of Zeiss glasses one could indeed now see the tops of the heads of separate men [...]" (210).

The "Zeiss glasses" provide an amplification of the city, and the use of them help to compare two different images of the same place. To Woolf, the telescope had a determinant effect on the aesthetic of any person who was confronted with the images it provoked. The close ups and long shots in "Flying over London", and Lily Briscoe's desire to have 50 pairs of eyes, point towards the same objective. In the case of "Flying over London", however, the close ups and long shots map the same space although from two different scales; one of them generated through a telescope.

The following year Woolf published "The Searchlight", again a story where two of the main devices are a telescope and maps. In the story the great-grandfather of Mrs Ivimey explained to her how, when he was a boy, his father let him look every night into the telescope and study the maps of the universe (264). One day he decided to look towards the earth. With the image generated through the lens of the telescope he achieves the mapping of miles and miles of distance, and when he focuses more in detail on smaller and smaller objects "[...] each tree separate... and the birds...and a steam of smoke...And then...there was a house...among the trees...a farm house...flowers in them blue, pink, hydrangeas perhaps [...]" (266). In this short story Woolf compares the map of the earth with the map of the universe, the latter being recently re-defined.¹²

Certain advances in cartography and mapping such as those of the interwar years, when orthographic maps¹³ underwent considerable development, were useful

¹¹ At that time Woolf was deeply involved in the vision that this technological device could provide. Holly has noticed that in April 1929 Woolf saw the "craters of the moon" (Holly: 57).

¹² The same year Hubble was announcing the expansion of the confines of the universe.

¹³ An orthographic map allows a visualization of the earth from an infinite distance. In this projection the earth is seen from one of its hemispheres from outer space.



for the new interpretations of the earth in particular and the universe in general. One of the practical consequences was that the popular science public reached a better understanding of the earth's form and its size in relation to the universe. The short story "The Searchlight" is a contribution to the understanding of these modern maps and the technology meant to create awareness of the universe's immensity and the shape of the earth within it. It shows a link between globes and maps for the re-scaling of humanity and the universe.¹⁴

2.1 MOTORCARS, AIRPLANES, AND ASTRONOMY

By the end of the 1920s Woolf considered other perspectives from where the space could be perceived based on two happenings: the inclusion of the motor car in the social sphere, and the awareness that the confines of space were much further away than previously believed—this was due to the latest astronomical discoveries. Through these, Woolf continued her investigation on the perception of space.

By the beginning of the 1910s, for the Woolfs it was very exciting to live in London. Being there meant the possibility to experience the technological and scientific changes of the epoch. In 1911, Leonard Woolf wrote of his feelings on the revolution in transport. He was particularly interested in the changes that means of communication, such as the motor car and the airplane, had brought to daily life. Years later¹⁵ the Woolfs acquired a motor car and over the next few months Woolf spent most of her time driving and learning about the road maps. One week after buying the car she wrote: "You won't mind talking for 24 hours on end, I hope? It will be mostly about motor cars. I can think of nothing else" (Nicolson 1977: 400).

For Virginia Woolf this car meant the possibility to understand distances and to perceive visual space in a different manner, according to Minow-Pinkney it opened "[...] an exciting new dimension of life" (Minow-Pinkney: 160). Although the train was already a quick way to reach other places, the motor car offered a sense of freedom in the direction of movement.¹⁶ Even for an average person, the "map of the world" (as she called it) had been altered. Suddenly the world's confines became part of the everyday conversations and thoughts in Woolf's life. She now had contact with a device that hitherto had not been part of her world. This new experience gave Woolf the opportunity to reconsider the concept of

¹⁴ The astronomical discoveries of the 1920s led to a sense of anxiety in many readers of popular science. The implications of an awareness that the extent of the universe was much greater than had previously been believed were not easy to grasp because the earth thus became such a tiny part of the universe, and human beings apparently so much less significant.

¹⁵ In the summer of 1927.

¹⁶ By the end of the 1920s the roads were being mapped and advertised by young women who in the publicity of the time, assumed the position of intrepid pilots eager to drive forward, towards the discovery of new places. The motor car extended the horizons and contributed to change the way in which society conceived the possibilities of mobility and their independence.

distance; the dimensions of London changed with the arrival of the motor car because going from one end of the city to another on foot was not the same thing as driving a motor car across it.

In this period “She was fascinated by maps and associated them with motoring and with striking out into the unknown” (Henry: 85). The motor car led her to consider the idea of mapping not only from a geographical point of view, but as a technological expansion device that could contribute to the aesthetic of her work. A few days before buying the car, Woolf was already thinking about the potential offered by this new technology: “One may...expand...the map of the world in ones mind” (Bell 1980: 147). She was so excited with the idea of maps that ten days after buying the car she wrote to T.S. Eliot telling him of how she and her husband spent their lives “[...] measuring miles on maps, planning expeditions, going on expeditions...?” (Nicolson 1977: 413). This means that Woolf often analysed the distances and proportions of the road maps between towns and cities. She was clearly interested in the abstraction of the earth, in the mental reproduction that she could generate through these maps. The discourse of maps came so close to her life that even in her personal conversations and when she was feeling the need to contact her friends, she referred to the map as a usual concept in her thoughts, “I will use these last pages to sum up our circumstances. A map of the world” (Bell 1980: 315).

Woolf also approached significantly to the popular astronomy of the 1920s, allowing her to include ideas from cosmology, relativity and the new physics in her prose. The ideas could have reached her through the readings on James Jeans and Arthur Eddington's books of the epoch, or via their BBC radio programs.¹⁷ As Gillian Beer reminds us, people like Eddington, Jeans, Woolf and Russell might have listen to each other in the airwaves (Beer 1996). Another figure essential to Virginia Woolf's channels of information was Ottoline Morrell, who she often met at the Garsington salon in London. There, she discussed with science popularisers trending topics in fields such as modern physics, astronomy and cosmology. In those reunions she also interacted with intellectuals such as Russell, Whitehead, Eddington and Huxley (Holly 2000: 142). Woolf had the chance to speak and perhaps even put forward her own opinions regarding the new scientific discoveries.

In the end of the 1910s and in the 1920s cosmological achievements were very widely publicized. Three main astronomical events made their mark in popular culture. In 1919 the British Eclipse Expedition confirmed the relativity theory and the astronomer Edwin Hubble stated that space extended beyond our own galaxy. During the 1920s Hubble confirmed his hypothesis: the universe was in expansion.

The expansion space atmosphere created by the work of scientists and popular science writers pervaded the entire country, journals and newspapers often circulating ideas on the shape of the universe. Some of the most representative articles from 1920 to 1930 in *The Times* [London] referring to astronomy (apart from the monthly section *Stars of the Month*) are: “Religion and Science: The

¹⁷ November 14 1922 was the first BBC broadcast program that she probably was familiar with.



Lesson of Modern Astronomy”, August 28, 1924, “Modern Astronomy”, July 15, 1925, and “The New Planet: Implications for Astronomy; Effect on Halley’s Comet”, March 15, 1930. On September 13, 1929, the section “Books of the Week” was advertising James Jeans’ *The Universe Around Us*. Furthermore, by 1930 in its section “Broadcasting: The Programmes”, on November 18 and December 2 the newspaper advertised the series of talks “The Stars in their Courses” given by James Jeans. These courses “[...] provide a general survey of astronomy for listeners who have no astronomical or scientific knowledge and specially to acquaint them with its most recent developments”.¹⁸ For the Illustrated London News articles, which were fully illustrated with images of space, the most important of the period were: “Have Telescopes Reach Their Limit? Astronomy’s Problem”, January 7, 1922, “Is There Life on the Planets?—The Answer of Astronomy”, April 15, 1922, “A Star of 10 000 Years Ago: A New Wonder of Astronomy”, April 21, 1923, “Astronomy Explains Wet Weather: Sun Dust as Rain-Collector”, August 22, 1925, “Why Not a Planetarium for London? Astronomy for All”, January 1, 1927.

One thing that drew Woolf to astronomy was the new images from space, especially the one of the earth seen from outer space. After reading James Jeans and Arthur Eddington she wrote, “I read about Stars, and try to imagine what is meant by space bending back” (Nicolson 1978: 266). These readings showed her a new spatial perspective that she developed in her prose. In *The Waves* and *The Years* (1937) Woolf included passages where the interaction with Jeans’ book¹⁹ is quite clear.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In the 1920s Woolf started a perceptual investigation of space. She wanted to portray places that at the same time could contribute to generate a more accurate map of London. To do so, in her descriptions she considered multiple points of view and simultaneity. Going from one point of view to another while passing from sentence to sentence, Woolf achieved the reconstruction of a common space. Through this reconstruction, the reader obtains visions not from what each character sees, but from a common experience in a continuum space. Supported by these techniques she established a reconceptualization of space using more than one source of explanation. The result was a spatiotemporal map that taken to its extreme provides a “map of maps” able to describe in detail spatial contexts—such as a whole city.

She accomplished this supported by Russell’s “sensibilia”, which link the possibilities of perception from corresponding perspectives with the physical world. The way in which Woolf creates the space where the characters develop the actions is

¹⁸ The Times: Digital Archive 1785-1985.

¹⁹ In September 1929 James Jean’s non-technical book *The Universe Around Us* was published.



consistent with Russell's theory of knowledge, being art the nearest human expression that allowed her to understand the multiple points of view idea.

The 1920s were almost over and Woolf's research on the perception of space continued. However, in this time she stopped relying on the ideas of Russell and on Fry's art, and turned her attention to technological devices such as the motor car and the telescope. Through never ending trips and the study of the roads to get to different places, she built an imaginary map of the world. But the curiosity did not stop after having a better idea on how the earth is perceived from a car in movement. The next step was to describe how the earth looks from the outer space. Two of the short stories that she wrote by the end of the decade, are clearly a continuation of her interest in mapping that she developed years before. In this second stage, first she imagined the earth watched from an airplane and mapped it from far away perspectives. Afterwards she used the telescope as a tool to map the world from above; she described different scales of the same spatial context. Her sources of information came from popular scientists such as James Jeans and Arthur Eddington, plus the daily newspapers and the weekly literary reviews, which showed a deep interest in the astronomical discoveries.

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