

**Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*:
Clarissa Dalloway and The Spatial Reading of Literature**

Trabajo de Fin de Grado en Estudios Ingleses
presentado por

D^a Georgina Cecilia Sack Domancich

Tutor: Tomás Monterrey
Línea Temática: Literatura Inglesa Moderna y Contemporánea
La Laguna, septiembre 2015

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Tomás Monterrey, for his patience and understanding, and for granting me the space I needed to accomplish my goals.

FOR MY MOTHER AND FATHER,
who have made all this possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0.	ABSTRACT	4
1.	INTRODUCTION	6
2.	VIRGINIA WOOLF	8
3.	AN APPROACH TO SPACE	10
	3.1. Space in Modern Terms.....	10
	3.2. Space in Modernism.....	15
	3.3. Space in Modernist Fiction.....	16
4.	WOOLFIAN SPACE AND <i>MRS. DALLOWAY</i>	19
5.	CLARISSA DALLOWAY AND THE WOOLFIAN SPACE	21
6.	CONCLUSION	33
7.	WORKS CITED	35

0. ABSTRACT

Modernism arose in the late 19th century and flourished until the middle of the 20th century as a radical response to the traditional ways of perceiving and interacting with the world. As the Marxist philosopher Marshall Berman explains in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (1982), it evolved in the form of a myriad of visions and beliefs which aimed to make women and men both the subjects and the objects of modernisation. Characterised by a “mode of vital experience” of space, time, the self, and others, modernism allowed individuals to find themselves in an environment that promised “adventures, power, joy, growth, and change”; and at the same time, that threatened to destroy their identities. Oxymoronic in its very nature, it defined individuals and their environment as fragmented unities floating over a stream of ambiguity, of wholeness and disintegration, of community and individualisation: to live in the modern world signified to dwell in a space where, as Marx said, all that was “solid” seemed to “melt into air” (Berman 15).

The fragmentation of subjective experience of space, time and human relationships in modern times was also subject to the analysis of literature, particularly in fiction. Virginia Woolf has been recognised as a key figure in Modernist fiction and one of the most brilliant twentieth-century novelists. Her fiction is characterised by a series of experiments which reflect the shifts in the perception of modernist life, in her search for a new way to represent the relationship between individual lives and space under the pressure of society, particularly concerned with the experience of women.

The following undergraduate project examines Woolf’s tunnelled masterpiece *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). Drawing on the notions of perception and space as explored by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Henri Lefebvre, and pointing at the modernist representation of prismatic subjective experience in fiction, this paper reconsiders Harvena Richter’s examination on the different aspects of personality in Woolf’s novels and claims that a spatial method encompassing Richter’s theory is fundamental to understand Clarissa’s multiform unit in its entirety. By giving way to a spatial reading of the heroine in *Mrs. Dalloway*, it analyses how the interaction between her private and social spaces ultimately defines her multi-dimensionality and serves a purpose: to create a space of her own which brings together the social and the private, and—therefore—her multiple selves. It is because of the inevitable

maelstrom of changes that perception and space endured in modern times that a spatial reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* remains fundamental today to understand entirely how identity and space have been woven in the novel.

Key words: identity, multi-dimensionality, private, social, space

1. INTRODUCTION

Modernism, seen as a whole, explored the dialectic of place versus space, of present versus past, in a variety of ways. While celebrating universality and the collapse of spatial barriers, it also explored new meanings for space and place in ways that tacitly reinforced local identity.

—David Harvey (273)

In the British Isles, Modernism emerged as a way of addressing in arts and literature the rapid and tremendous changes, particularly concerning the individual and the social experience of modern life, space and time in the years that followed World War I. The modernist *Zeitgeist* involved a set of cultural moods which particularly affected all arts in the Western world, as well as other disciplines including politics, philosophy and social structure. Transformations affecting urbanisation and industrialisation, scientific and technological advances, Marxism and socialism, theological skepticism, social mobility, psychoanalysis and feminism led to the radical questioning of tradition which characterises this movement, which came to an end around 1940.

By the same token, modernist literature in Britain came to light as a response to social and intellectual developments at that time. Fiction within the modernist period, particularly the British novel, challenged the Victorian moral and aesthetic set of values, and became known as a complex and difficult genre having enough mastery over the narrative technique to astonish and challenge its readers. As Richter puts it in her Preface to *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage*, Marcel Proust's search for lost time in *Remembrance of Things Past* and James Joyce's excursion into a young man's consciousness in *A Portrait of the Artist* became landmarks which would mingle in Virginia Woolf's creative imagination to see the psychological novel thrive (vii). The general tendencies and techniques explored by modernist British novelists sought to reflect the changes in the perception of time, space, and reality by expressing the alienation of individuals in the face of such developments and criticising both the social and political mainstream of society.

Strongly influenced by the minds of T.S. Eliot and Joyce, Virginia Woolf has been recognised as a major twentieth-century author and a key figure in Modernism, whose own environment made her susceptible to the individual and social experiences of urban space.

Woolf's fiction reveals the sense of rapid change as it is characterised by series of shrewd experiments, in her search for a new way to present the relationship between individual lives under the pressure of society and history, particularly concerning women's experience. Considered as one of Woolf's most accomplished novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* focuses on the lives of the characters and their psychological exploration, her purpose being to excavate into the human condition. Woolf's deep concern with the form of the novel shows particular interest in language as such, as that is why physical experience and mental reflection are reproduced as they stream from the main character in the novel: Clarissa Dalloway. Being interested in simultaneity and juxtaposition for her aesthetic purposes, Woolf is able to create a sense of parallelism and coincidence that makes spaces and places run together throughout the whole narrative in *Mrs. Dalloway*: by fragmenting the characters and the spaces in which they dwell, Woolf represents consciousness as a flow to give the impression that, under conditions of modernity, even the human self is seen to disperse into space.

Woolf's presentation of human consciousness in *Mrs. Dalloway* is marked by a stress on the miscellaneous everyday experiences, and Clarissa's identity in this novel is, undoubtedly, the result of the interaction between her own consciousness and her spatial experience. After establishing (in chapter 3) a framework of spatiality theory to delimit the scope of this work and to make clear how the new notions of perception and space changed as a response to the new modernist perspectives, this thesis will attempt to illustrate Woolf's representation of spaces in *Mrs. Dalloway*. To this purpose, in chapter 4, the discussion will focus on the main character as key to understand the complex personality of the heroine in the novel; whereas, in chapter 5, the spaces that define Clarissa Dalloway will be analysed in relation to past and present, to the private and the social, and to the relationships that are defined by the former. Clarissa's party, the central event in the novel, will be described in spatial terms as both the initial and end points to understand the multi-dimensionality of her character, which ultimately comes to represent Woolf's efforts to criticise the spaces that defined women in the early 20th century.

2. VIRGINIA WOOLF

By the same token Jane Goldman explains in *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*, the acclaimed ‘high modernist writer’ that will be hereby examined “has not always been discussed in terms of context” (25): for the most part, her writing has been analysed concerning “a purely formalist” understanding of it. Yet, as Goldman affirms in her introduction to *Contexts*, what is so important about Woolf is that her intellectual milieu in the social group she belonged to—i.e. Bloomsbury Group—was itself the theoretical birthplace of formalist modernism. Yet the aesthetics cultivated within this modernist social space were, by far, the source for Woolf’s aesthetic development, ultimately spread to her physical context (25). Woolf’s own private and social frameworks are, undoubtedly, key to understand the spaces that she created in her fiction.

Virginia Woolf has a fair claim as the most radical English novelist of the twentieth century. Born on 25 January 1882 in London into a highly privileged, upper-middle-class literary family, she was the daughter of the distinguished Victorian author and critic, Sir Leslie Stephen. Although Woolf was raised with her siblings in the Stephens’ household in the City of London, the family moved to the coastal scenery of Cornwall every summer during the first years of her girlhood. In Woolf’s claim, these childhood summers “‘permeated’ her life ‘how much so I could never explain’” (qtd. in Goldman 3-4). Woolf’s own personality was essentially defined by spaces since her early memories, transferring from the city space to the seaside space, on which she would draw much for the writing of her fiction. Unlike her brothers who were schooled, Virginia was educated at home with her sister Vanessa, being their father the instructor. During her teaching sessions, Virginia would be encouraged by her father to move freely through his spacious library before taking his reading, writing and translation lessons. Her domestic tuition was often preceded by a morning walk through London with her father, of which she gave detailed account in her biographical writings (Goldman 5). Not only would the shift be from city to seaside which would determine Woolf’s perception of reality, but also her moving from within the private sphere—her own roaming while reading at home—towards the outer public and social sphere of London city. In the collection of posthumously-published autobiographical essays, Woolf

described her childhood as a ‘Cathedral space’ always crowded with people and filled with ‘the common life of the family,’ her mother occupying the central space of it (qtd. in Goldman 5, from Woolf *Moments*).

Later in her life, after her father’s death, the moving of the Stephens’ domestic establishment to Bloomsbury would bring both to her sister Vanessa Bell and to Woolf a sense of personal and intellectual freedom, creating a new domestic interior which replaced the privacy of the former household and which suited their modern practices of painting and writing, respectively. It was during this period that the sisters entered the well-known Bloomsbury Group, a society created to meet with other contemporary intellectuals and debate their work. Woolf’s aesthetics and understanding of the modern world were considerably shaped by the current of thought shared and discussed within this social space (Goldman 7-8). The intellectual-sexual liberal atmosphere created in the Bloomsbury Group facilitated the blooming of Woolf’s writing, by developing both her private and public contexts. As she marked out later in her life, 1910 was a year of radical social, cultural and political change quite significant; not only for her public profile in Bloomsbury but also for her personal development (Goldman 11). And this, indeed, was reflected later on the aesthetics of her writings.

After her marriage in 1912 to the political journalist and publisher Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf moved to Sussex with her husband, where they launched the Hogarth Press in 1917 (Goldman 15). From that moment onwards until her death, Woolf found herself split between two spaces: London—which she loved above everything, and the countryside—Leonard’s passion. It was after this retreat from the city life that her mental illness became unbearable for her, leading her to suicide in 1941. It is a fact that Woolf’s life, from birth to death, was defined by a negotiation between the private and public, individual and social, mental and physical spaces she dwelled in. Nevertheless, as Goldman remarked, the “knowledge of Woolf’s personal biography, of the locations she lived in and visited certainly enriches our reading, but her writing should not be entirely pinned down by it either” (40).

3. AN APPROACH TO SPACE

3.1. Space in Modern Terms

The fact is that around 1910 a certain space was shattered. It was the space of common sense, of knowledge, of social practice, of political power, a space thitherto enshrined in everyday discourse, just as in abstract thought, as the environment of and channel for communications [...] Euclidean and perspectivist space have disappeared as systems of reference, along with other former 'commonplaces' such as town, history, paternity, the tonal system in music, traditional morality, and so forth. This was a truly crucial moment. (Lefebvre 25)

As it has been stated in the Introduction to this paper, Modernism as a cultural movement emerged during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, many great minds cultivated in the course of the modern era declared that it was not until after the first decade of the new century that the evolution of the modernist current of thought began. With Virginia Woolf, one finds a great English high modernist novelist whose novels reveal this sense of rapid change which Lefebvre points out, and whose own family background and social position seem to predispose her to be sensitive to the issues of space and the perception of modern reality. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), the novel which shall be discussed here, throws the reader not only into Clarissa's action in space, but also into the movement of her consciousness, and her interplay between private and public within individual and social spaces.

Disciple of the current of thought established by Edmund Husserl, the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty aimed at the creation of an alternative to the Cartesian rationale of space and the human *cognisance* by developing concepts related to consciousness and the body, the eminence of perception, language, art, and science; in other words, related to *phenomenology*. The concept of 'phenomenology' is described in the preface to his colossal work *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962, published *Phénoménologie de la Perception* 1945) as a study of "essences" that offers a description of the world, space, and time as we 'live' them and seeks to give "a direct description of our experience as it is", standing outside of its "psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide" (vii). His phenomenological theory is undoubtedly primal to the understanding of the significance of space for the individual, for society and for the world inhabited by them, and that is why Merleau-Ponty sees the phenomenological world

as the space where our manifold experiences meet, and also where our own and other people's meet, engaging each other like gears (xxii).

In order to interpret Merleau-Ponty's approach to *space* for the purposes of this work, some key notions in his hypothesis should be addressed first. One of the fundamental assumptions posited by the French phenomenologist is that the world is the natural setting and field for our explicit perceptions (x,xii), existing prior to any possible analysis of ours: "The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible" (xix). Taking for granted that the phenomenological world is the space in which we experience through our senses, it follows that all our knowledge of it is gained from our own particular point of view (ix). In other words, our perception of the world is personal and subjective. Yet one's own point of view not only does include an essentially physical position in the world; it does furthermore take for granted the subject's own analysis of the experienced in order to be understood as his or her reality:

The world is there before any possible analysis of mine [...] When I begin to reflect my reflection [...] appears to itself in the light of a truly creative act [...] and yet it has to recognize [...] the world which is given to the subject [...] The real has to be described, not constructed or formed. Which means that I cannot put perception into the same category as the syntheses represented by judgments, acts or predications. My field of perception is constantly filled with [...] fleeting tactile sensations which I cannot relate precisely to the context of my clearly perceived world, yet which I nevertheless immediately 'place' in the world, without ever confusing them with my daydreams. Equally constantly I weave dreams round things. I imagine people and things whose presence is not incompatible with the context, yet who are not in fact involved in it: they are ahead of reality, in the realm of the imaginary. If the reality of my perception were based solely on the intrinsic coherence of 'representations', it ought to be for ever hesitant and, being wrapped up in my conjectures on probabilities. (x-xi, my italics).

Our perception of the real world—namely the physical world—only involves the description we make of the world given to us. According to Merleau-Ponty, this exclusively *tangible experience* cannot be paralleled to that of the *transitory sensations* which invade the subject when perceiving the real world; subjects are able to distinguish these transitory sensations from their tangible experience and categorise them as belonging to another place, that of the imagination or consciousness. The structure of reality then comprises two main processes: one the one hand, *perceiving and describing* our physical world as it is, and, on the other hand, *reflecting upon this perception*, an analytical process during which the subject constructs reality through a series of syntheses which link first, sensations; and second, different perspectives of the objects within the real field of perception. Reality as we

understand it includes a prior reality that is fathomed and reorganised by the interaction that occurs between our sensorial perception of prior reality and our consciousness.

Then, how is it possible that one can conceive a space in the mind that parallels the physical space occupied by the actual perception of reality? If human experience in space were solely that of the physical context in which the body moves and things occur, then one would be overlooking the individual and collective relationships that humans are supposed to fabricate, represent and maintain. Though, on the contrary, if our experience in space moves from the concrete to the abstract without changing the body's situation, one should be able to understand space (first) as a setting for things and (second) as the place where my and others' relationships coexist. It is the reflective nature of our consciousness what enables our complete understanding of physical, individual and social space:

Therefore, either I do not reflect, but live among things and vaguely regard space at one moment as the setting for things [...] —or else I do reflect: I [...] think of the relationships which underlie this word, realizing then that they live only through the medium of a subject who traces out and sustains them; and pass from spatialized to spatializing space [...] (283-84)

Merleau-Ponty observes that, when we do not reflect, we are concerned with *physical space* and its various regions, and our body and things and their concrete relationships expressed in directional terms appear to us in an “irreducibly manifold variety”; whilst when we do reflect, we are concerned with a *geometrical space* that has transferable dimensions, and we discover in ourselves an ability to “trace out” space. This way, only by making use of our cogitating capacities are we able to think of a “pure change” of place which leaves the body unaltered (283-84). Reflection makes possible the construction of a societal structure inasmuch as it is only by means of the subjective meditation upon reality that one can shift from a strictly organic perception of space to the spatial social form it assumes. Considering therefore that our reality is a whole made of the physical context we inhabit and the abstract relationships that invade tangible perception, it would be necessary to know the manner in which we grasp and synthesise knowledge. Knowledge appears to us as a system of exchanges in which one impression announces others without ever justifying the announcement, and the mental result of perceiving is just an assemblage of images which appear without reason (17). As Merleau-Ponty explains, in the original attitude all that the subject has is a “flow of experiences” which insinuate and account for each other both “simultaneously and successively”; which subsequently the individual gives significance through the attitude adopted towards them (327-28). This perspective that one takes up is—inherently—defined by the previous

experiences of one's own, hence what we conceive of reality is not only the sum of present experiences but also a recollection of past data triggered by that present moment. It is by means of *associations of ideas* and *projections of memories* that we are able to recall our past experiences and link them to our actual reality (15-29). *Association* acts looking towards the significance that an experience has acquired in the context of a former experience, and it is productive exclusively if the subject recognises it and understands it in the light of the past (21). It is after one has given meaning to a present experience that s/he can link it to a past experience, recall the memories and *project* them. Former experience is thus presented to our consciousness as a "horizon" which it can either reopen by recollecting or which it can—to the same degree—leave "on the fringe of experience" (25).

Consequently, the distribution of space of the different places we occupy in our daily life evokes other comparable distributions that we have both conceived and given a place to in our mental repository, which we can either recall and project into the present atmosphere or leave behind—yet our experience of reality is largely based on associations and projections of memories. From this analysis, it is important to highlight the difference existing between perceiving and remembering when it comes to represent reality: to *perceive* is "to see, to stand standing forth from a cluster of data, an immanent significance without which no appeal to memory is possible"; on the other hand, to *remember* is "to thrust deeply into the horizon of the past and take apart step by step the interlocked perspectives until the experiences which it epitomizes are as if relived in their temporal [and spatial] setting." (26, my emphasis). Telling the process which covers the passing (first) from perception to knowledge, and (second) to reflection and remembrance has been key to understand the way in which subjects understand their position in space.

In the examination above discussed, Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that real space and mental space are related by means of the perception of the body. Analogously, the idea that the body is related to spaces by means of the relationship between perception, reflection and experience was also the subject of study of Lefebvre. His seminal book on the theory of space *The Production of Space* (1991, originally published in 1974 *La production de l'espace*), examines the relationship between mental space, and the space of the physical and social spheres in which we live. In his introduction to the work, he claims that the concept of 'space' radically evolved during the second decade of the twentieth century, leaving behind the old fashioned "strictly geometrical" meaning—the idea of an "empty area" (1). But the traditional concept of space conceived by the Greek tradition was not replaced by a modern idea of it,

neither immediately nor out of the blue. Mathematicians had made of space and time their science, and the considerations of the meaning of space were purely philosophical. The philosophy of Descartes during the seventeenth century was considered to be the determining point in the formulation of the notion of space and the necessary basis to its evolution (Lefebvre 1), laying the foundations for the philosophical study of the following era.

Yet, for Lefebvre, the relationship that existed between logic and reality, between theory and practice, remained unclear for the centuries that followed: the need to transcend from the human mental space—i.e. from logic—to nature, to practice and, from this, to a theory of social space was urgent (2-3). In other words, the rationale to understand space in modern terms required to encompass a hypothetical coherence between the three realms a priori understood as separate: first, the “*physical*”; second, the “*mental*”; and third, the “*social*” (11). Accordingly, this (in principle) homogeneous system of perception should embrace the *logic-epistemological* space, the space of *social practice* and the space occupied by *sensory phenomena* (11-2). In order to substantiate this conceptualisation of space, the interrelationship existing between the physical, mental and social was fundamental for Lefebvre to make his theory clear.

Under these considerations, Lefebvre recognised that space is the basis for our lived experience of daily life. According to the classification he notes in the *Plan* to his work (1-67), our participation in the world is comprised of three connected aspects of space: *representations of space* (conceived space), *spatial practice* (perceived space), and *representational space* (lived space). The first aspect, *representations of space*, is a “conceptualised space” created out from abstract representations, signs and codes. *Spatial practice*, the second aspect, involves “production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation” (33-9). Bringing to completion this threefold model, the last aspect embraces *representational space*: space “as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” (39, original emphasis). Space is, thus, understood as a “triad” of the *conceived*, the *perceived*, and the *lived*: the *conceived* is the “dominant space in any society”; the *perceived* occurring as the “dialectical interaction” between the two other aspects to guarantee the “continuity” and “cohesion” needed in the social space; and the *lived* is the “dominated space” that the imagination seeks to own and change (38-9). But how can this perfect conceptual triad of space be conceived without considering the position which the subject occupies?:

In seeking to understand the three moments of social space, it may help to consider the *body* [...] All the more so inasmuch as the relationship to space of a 'subject' who is a member of a group or society and vice versa. Considered overall, social practice presupposes the use of the body: the use of the hands, members and sensory organs, and the gestures of work as of activity unrelated to work. This is the realm of the *perceived* (the practical basis of the perception of the outside world). As for the *representations of the body* [the *conceived*], they derive from accumulated scientific knowledge, disseminated with an admixture of ideology [...] Bodily *lived* experience, for its part, maybe both highly complex and quite peculiar, because 'culture' intervenes here [...] (40).

It is clear then that, in order to understand space, one needs to keep in mind the subject, both as individual and as belonging to a society: "the behaviour of their space [the space of subjects] is at once vital and mortal: within it they develop, give expression to themselves, and encounter prohibitions; then they perish, and that same space contains their graves" (34, my emphasis).

3.2. Space in Modernism

It is now obvious that all our experiences are organised in terms of past and present, because this is the natural course which our life follows. When debating past and present, *time* is the first concept brought to mind since temporality is what allows the experience of immediate reality in relation to its antecedents. Nevertheless, the idea that our experiences are defined by only time is not absolutely accurate: *space*—along with time—has always been determining to fully know one's place in the world and to understand reality. Reality has always been delimited by this time-space binomial, and as it was mentioned at the outset of this work, modern life was radically transformed by the maelstrom of changes which boldly challenged the traditional experience of space and time. As David Harvey points out in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990), the critical climate of 1847-8 in Britain created a crisis of representation which derived from a radical transformation in the perception of time and space in economical, political, and cultural life. Physical and social time began to take different paths, and it was in this moment that the artist was able to explore time in modern terms. By the same token, the established belief of absolute space led to the uncertainty of a changing relative space: events happening in one place now could have immediate and multiple effects in several other places. All the changes that were taking place in Europe concerning politics and the financial system generated a crisis of representation, and—indeed—neither literature nor art could escape from the questions arisen from "internationalism" and "simultaneity" (260-62). There was, therefore, an international appetite for the searching of new cultural forms that involved all intellectual disciplines. The

massive investment in technological advances—the expansion of the railway network, the beginnings of the telegraph, radio transmission, bicycle and automobile, etc.—eventually provoked the modernist conquest of space: new ways of viewing space and motion began to be considered and put into practice in the production of the “social space” (264).

In his very influential work *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (1982), the Marxist philosopher Marshall Berman equates modernity with a specific practice of space and time (15-36). As observed earlier in this paper, it was not until around 1910 that the artistic modernist revolution was set in motion, and most of the aesthetic reactions were to follow and trace their own way. In Harvey’s words, “it was in the midst of this rapid phase of time-space compression that the second great wave of modernist innovation in the aesthetic realm began” (265). The sociologist Daniel Bell asserts that the different changes which brought modernism to its apogee had to determine a new logic in the conception of space and motion (qtd. in Harvey 201). Einstein’s special and general theories of relativity and Ford’s speeding up of his assembly-line production fundamentally marked the second decade of the twentieth century. Public and private spheres were also affected by the new concepts of space and time; as a matter of fact, public time and space starting interfering in daily private life inasmuch as private time and space were now understood in public terms (Harvey 266-67). The organisation of space, quoting Bell again, became “the primary aesthetic problem of mid-twentieth century culture as the problem of time was the primary aesthetic problem of the first decades of this century” (qtd. in Harvey 201):

In modern society, many different senses of time get pinned together [...] The time horizon implicated in a decision materially affects the kind of decision we make [...] Space likewise gets treated as a fact of nature, ‘naturalized through the assignment of common-sense everyday meanings. In some ways more complex than time — it has a direction, area, shape, pattern and volume as key attributes, as well as distance — we typically treat of it as an objective attribute of things which can be measured and thus pinned down. We do recognize, of course, that our subjective experience can take us into the realms of perception, imagination, fiction and fantasy, which produce mental spaces and maps as so many mirages of the supposedly ‘real’ thing. We also discover that different societies or sub-groups possess different conceptions [...] I think it important to challenge the idea of a single and objective sense of time or space, against which we can measure the diversity of human conceptions and perceptions [...] not [...] a total dissolution of the objective—subjective distinction. but [...] recognize the multiplicity of the objective qualities which space and time can express, and the role of human practices in their construction. (Harvey 202-03)

3.3. **Space in Modernist Fiction**

Among the variety of forms of prose fiction that exist, the novel has largely been considered as the main genre exploited by modernists, having as its central purpose the

representation of subjective experience. It was under the conditions of organised external space that the inner spatial aesthetics of Modernist fiction were able to flourish. Considering Harvey's terms, the writer's space of the psyche had been kept almost intact, repressed for a long time due to the restraints imposed by traditional thought (270-71). Yet under the modernist approach to time and space, the new psychological and philosophical findings on relativism and perspectivism had made compulsory the search of modern cultural aesthetic forms that broke with tradition.

In his three-part essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945), Joseph Frank explains that modernist aesthetic form was no longer a constraint for the artist's ideas since form now flowed out spontaneously from the organisation of the piece of work as perceived: time and space now defined the limits of literature in its relation to "sensuous perception" (225-30). Under the modernist individual understanding of reality, conventional ideas of time and space were broken apart, fragmented and diffused into different spaces. Writing in a way in which no connections across the narrative seemed possible, modernist writers tried to portray time and space exactly as perceived by subjects, and this is the reason why they made use of techniques such as *simultaneity* and *juxtaposition*, placing a new stress on *parallelism* and *coincidence*. The modernist novel was written in a way that the reader needed to apprehend it "spatially" and "in a moment of time" (239, my emphasis), in fragments rather than as a continuum; but at the same time being able to organise mentally the scattered pieces that had been spread by the writer whilst s/he goes on reading. Under the conditions of modernity—and as Berman's seminal book vindicates on Marx, even the human self is seen, "melt into air" (Berman 15). As opposed to the 'omniscient' narration associated with nineteenth century fictions (such as those of George Eliot), in modernist fiction one encounters writers such as James Joyce, William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf, who make use of multiple viewpoints in their narratives to represent a porous human consciousness in a subject that is fragmented, creating a multi-dimensional effect in their characters.

As Thibaudet stated on Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, their intention was that "Everything should sound simultaneously; one should hear [...] all at the same time" (1857, qtd. in Frank 230-1). But how was it that modernists were able to compress time and space for their aesthetic purposes? By analysing Thibaudet's examination on *Madame Bovary*, Frank's *Spatial Form in Modern Literature* gives an explanation to the method used by modern novelists; the crux both to understand space as treated by Virginia Woolf and to put an end to the theoretical part of this work. As the scene is set, Frank points out, various related actions

occur simultaneously at different levels, and the physical position of each level is “a fair index to its spiritual significance” (230). But—he follows later—since language “proceeds in time”, one needs to break up the temporal sequence so as to approach the simultaneity of perception. What the writer does, then, is to “dissolve” the sequence by cutting back and forth between the various levels of action gradually until, at the “climax” of the scene, actions are overlapped and perceived simultaneously. It is by means of this technique that the writer is able to achieve the “spatialization of form” in the novel (231):

For the duration of the scene, at least, the time-flow of the narrative is halted: attention is fixed on the interplay of relationships within the limited time-area- These relationships are juxtaposed independently of the progress of the narrative; and the full significance of the scene is given only by the reflexive relations among the units of meaning.

It is thus only by breaking the narrative sequence—by means of this spatialising practice—that the reader is capable to picture a unit, an organised image of the narrative encountered; and it is under this conditions that both modern form and content can be wholly grasped as they originally were meant to. This is why not only time is crucial for the modern aesthetic purposes, but also the different forms of space that the writer discerns in the mind and makes use of in the novel. It is the time-space unit what defines the singularity of the modernist perspective; yet—essentially—it is always space what constricts it.

4. WOOLFIAN SPACE AND *MRS. DALLOWAY*

In her fictional works, Virginia Woolf made use of the modern concepts of time and space much in the light of what has just been analysed. It has already been hinted in Woolf's biographical account—see chapter 2 in this work—that her modernity was sustained by personal and public contexts. Like most of modernist fiction writers, Woolf was fascinated with the disjunction between internal and external time, which was inherently tied to the disjunction between internal and external space. This means that, being a modern artist, Woolf occupied her life experimenting with the concepts of time and space as her contemporaries did, but in many reflections and methodologies she diverged from them. As Michael Whitworth points out in his essay “Virginia Woolf and Modernism” (2000), Woolf described her formal innovations “in her own particular language” (154).

Although one could trace out many interconnections between Woolf's treatment of space in her different novels, each one was created under different spatial referents. Inasmuch as this work concerns, Woolf's refusal of conventional plot—which, like her, most modernist writers rejected—delimited the spatial dimensions of the novel as a text, and the spatial and temporal dimensions in which the novel is developed. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) takes place in only one day, and what the reader grasps is a set of incidents that happen throughout that day, often simultaneously. The way in which Woolf manages to give such importance to the main character in the novel—Clarissa Dalloway—and the spaces she dwells in is by no other means than by her narrative technique. Woolf's fascination about ordinary things in everyday life—like walking in the city—introduced her artistic struggle to portray those things and experiences as suffused with a significance that was not immediately evident, and also to portray them via the subjective consciousness of her characters. Woolf's fluid language reflects the ease with which mental and physic borders can be crossed: she made of language her means to convey the true subjective nature of reality (Whitworth 148). There is no doubt that *Mrs. Dalloway* maps Clarissa's development as it parallels it to her physic and psychic movements in London, at the same time recalling her spatial experiences during her adolescence in the country. In such way, Woolf's novel thrusts the reader not only into her action but also into the movement of her mind, and it does this by the use of ‘*free indirect discourse*’ and ‘*stream of consciousness*’. Free indirect discourse is the technique whereby the

narrative voice inhabits and ventriloquises the mind, feelings, and words of the character in hand, whereas stream-of-consciousness depicts the myriad thoughts and feelings passing through the mind. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, these techniques render all the knowledge produced in the novel as subjective, since readers mostly get assessments of one character as seen or thought through the mind of another. This subjective knowledge Woolf presents in the novel is mostly impressionistic and fragmentary, and this is the reason why both time and space are mixed up in the character's consciousness—as mentioned above, Clarissa's impressions of the London streets are intermixed with memories of when she was young at Bourton.

As it has been the subject of discussion in our previous analysis, for David Harvey—inheritor of Lefebvre—modernity is characterised by what he labelled as 'time-space compression.' Harvey noted three main changes with modernity: first, a focus on *simultaneity* and a *collapse in linear narrative*; second, a concentration on *interiority*—hence the Woolfian 'free indirect discourse'; and third, a concentration on *locality*—for that reason, Woolf's concentration on London. Woolf was fascinated by geography—by the idea of the 'city of the mind', by forms of transport. Taxis, buses, trains and by the contrast created between the life in the city and the quietness in the countryside and the seaside: public transport symbolised freedom, democracy and sociality; whilst private vehicles rather seemed to reflect social atomisation and fragmentation. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf uses geographical terms to explain characters. Clarissa experiences the city as a wave of ecstasy and excitement—in Clarissa's own terms, as "waves of that divine vitality" (Woolf *Dalloway*, 5).¹ Woolf's sense of the city is not only physical, but also psychic: hence the way that specific elements and places—such as the chimes of the Big Ben or the car backfiring on Oxford Street—link the spaces inhabited by people.

The multiplicity of the self that Woolf creates in her characters when she sets out the transparent spatial interplay in *Mrs. Dalloway* will specifically be discussed in the following section (chapter 5), giving way to a spatial approach to the novel by focusing on how the connections between private and social, mental and physical spaces which the main character sketches define her. In Woolf, there is a complex and rich overlapping of spatial urban experience and spatial psychic form that make her stand as one of the most brilliant twentieth-century novelists.

¹ Further quotations from *Mrs. Dalloway* will be parenthetically referred as *MD*.

5. CLARISSA DALLOWAY AND THE WOOLFIAN SPACE

*We witness every minute the miracle of related experience,
and yet nobody knows better than we do how this miracle is worked,
for we are ourselves this network of relationships.*
—Maurice Merleau-Ponty (xxiii)

As it has been one the main subject of discussion in the previous section, individual experience of modern reality was—to a great extent—defined by the new concept of space. Virginia Woolf’s modernist experiments in fiction on the subjectivity of perception sought to reflect in unison the ways in which her characters see, feel, think, and experience space, time, and change, and she succeeded doing so by representing her characters as formed by multiple units.

Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) focuses upon the modern life of one June day in London and its inhabitants, bringing to one’s notice the spaces that define upper-class public society and private life for women and men around 1923. On the surface, the novel presents Mrs. Dalloway (Clarissa Dalloway), a high-society woman walking in the city of London as she prepares herself to host a party in the evening. But beyond the surface, Clarissa’s thought processes are also explored as her momentary experiences with social life in London evoke an emotional reflection on her past acquaintances in Bourton. Clarissa, thereby, instinctively mediates two main spatial constructions in *Mrs. Dalloway*: on the one hand, her physical experiences in London define her social and public space (outer); and, on the other hand all the relations of her past in Bourton delimitate her private space (inner), upon which she reflects as she dwells at home and walks the London streets. Woolf’s complex portrayal of Clarissa has been the study of some scholars like Harvena Richter, who has elucidated Clarissa’s personality as multiple. In “A Multiplicity of Self” (113-28), Richter analyses the three subjective modes—which address time and memory, and the creation of complementing and mythic doubles—Woolf uses to give multiplicity to her characters. Yet, whilst Richter agrees that the view of personality achieved in *Mrs. Dalloway* is that of “the self as a bundle of divided and disparate parts” (114), the spaces that involve Clarissa seem to have vanished completely from her aims. How is it, then, that Woolf managed to represent two spaces that interact in which Clarissa’s social and private selves could intersect?

Since the purpose of this project is to show how the interaction between Clarissa's outer (physical-public/social) and inner (mental/personal) spaces is what climactically clarifies the multi-dimensionality of her self, Richter's account will be concisely explained regarding Mrs. Dalloway to give way to a spatial analysis that shows that, by organising a party, Clarissa longs to create a space of her own which brings together the social and the private at the very end of the novel, and, therefore, her multiple selves. In order to do so, Richter's account will be concisely explained regarding Mrs. Dalloway to give way to a spatial analysis that shows that, by organising a party, Clarissa longs to create a space of her own which brings together the social and the private at the very end of the novel, and, therefore her multiple selves. Merleau-Ponty's view of the phenomenological world as the space where one's own and other people's experiences meet is crucial to understand Clarissa's related experience to the spaces that define her, which ultimately outline the "network of relationships" she has woven both in the spaces of past and present (xxii-iii). Assuming then that real space and mental space are related by means of the perception of the body, all that Clarissa has in an original attitude is a flow of experiences which account for each other simultaneously and successively, to which subsequently she gives significance through the specific attitude she adopts towards life (Merleau-Ponty 327-28). Clarissa's perspective in London is essentially defined by her previous experiences in Bourton, hence her reality is not only the sum of her actual experience of the city but also a recollection of past data triggered by her interaction with the spaces at hand, which she manages to link by associating stimuli and projecting her memories from adolescence (Merleau Ponty 15-29). On even terms, Lefebvre's triadic model of space recognises space as the basis for Clarissa's lived experience of daily life. Encompassing a coherence between the realms of the conceived, the perceived, and the lived, his theory remains imperative to understand the dialectical interaction that occurs between Clarissa's body and her mental, physical and social spaces (Lefebvre 38-9).

Before describing Richter's methods on the different aspects of personality, it might be useful to explain in a more general way why Clarissa is seen as a complex unity comprising different selves. In the preface to her work, Richter argues that in Woolf's novels, the characters' point of view dissolves in participation since personality is in a constant change of state. Yet how is it that Clarissa can be disintegrated in *Mrs. Dalloway* and still be understood as a unit? And what is her relationship to the scenario she inhabits? The modernist use of simultaneity in fiction solved Woolf's struggle to create a "sort of prism-sightedness"

(Durrell, qtd. in Richter 113) in her characters, and that is why the representation of Clarissa is one of the self as a cluster of fragmented parts. Nevertheless, when describing what defines this multiform unit of the self, Richter points at the objects which the character encounters, overlooking any kind of relationship to the spatial setting that ultimately conforms the scenario of subjective experience:

Whatever quality *the subjective and momentary self* assumes [inferring there are separate selves of the moment, each with its own identity forming a whole] it *is defined by*, or at least related to, *the objects which it encounters*. The state of consciousness is never a vacuum, and each state's particular quality or identity as a "self" is comprised of emotion toward a particular object whether that object exists *outwardly in space or inwardly as a memory*. This *connection between self (the subject) and object* can be said to constitute *the momentary "reality" of the self*. The quality of that reality consists of the quality of the 'connection' at that particular moment. When Virginia Woolf speaks of the self as attaching itself by threads to particular objects, she is establishing that 'connection' and defining the quality of that moment's self. (115, my emphasis)

The intention of the following analysis is to bring to completion the methods by which Woolf was able to dissect humanity and to convey this multiplicity of self. It is because of the ineluctable transformations that the perception of space endured in modern times that a spatial reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* remains fundamental today to understand the idea of multiplicity in Clarissa's personality in its entirety.

The first method Richter explains is that of the *time/memory selves* (115-17). With this mode, Woolf tries to show the idea of discontinuity of the personality as interrupted by time, creating separate identities. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa's consciousness takes her back and forth in time, enabling the reader to see two different identities of her: her present—Clarissa as a married woman in her early fifties, and her past self—Clarissa as a teenager. In the very first line of the novel, Clarissa is referred to as a married woman, but, some lines below, the reader is told her memories of adolescence: "Mrs. Dalloway said she would but the flowers herself [...] (for a girl of eighteen as she then was)" (*MD* 1). Evidently, while Clarissa's stream of consciousness travels in time while experiencing reality, it also does in space (she recalls her adolescence in Bourton being an adult in London). This is what has been referred to before as the time-space binomial of reality, the reason why a spatial method is particularly relevant to understand the way in which Clarissa's time/memory selves work.

The second mode Richter comments on is that of personifying the separate aspects of the self as individual characters by using *complementing personalities or doubles* (117-23). When Woolf wrote her introduction to the Modern Library edition published in 1928, she acknowledged the fact that Septimus Smith had been conceived as Clarissa's double; the truth

being that it was Clarissa who was initially intended to kill herself, yet later she had decided that it was Septimus who would die in Clarissa's place (qtd. in Pawlowski 2003). Although they never happen to meet each other in the novel, Clarissa gets to know about Septimus' death in the last pages of the novel: "Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought. [...] He had killed himself — but how? [...] He had thrown himself from a window [...] So she saw it [...] She had escaped. But that young man had killed himself. Somehow it was her disaster — her disgrace" (MD 172-73). Indeed, Clarissa walking to the window immediately after knowing about Sir William Bradshaw's patient whilst thinking that "she had never been so happy" (MD 173-74) might give the false impression that she is up to commit suicide in the same way Septimus did. Yet, what Woolf does instead is that she takes the reader back to the first lines of the novel in which Clarissa exclaims "What a lark! What a plunge!" as she recalls a memory of Bourton when she has her windows "burst open" (MD 1). Throughout the novel, Septimus represents insanity and the lack of "divine proportion" (MD 92) whilst Clarissa seems to remain rational: in Richter's words, Septimus represents what Clarissa is not (120).

The third and last method Richter notes as Woolf's last mode of showing the multiplicity of self is that of the *mythic double*, a mythic counterpart of the self "whose shadow stands just behind that of the character", providing it with an emotional quality (123-27). Though Richter does not make any comment on *Mrs. Dalloway* regarding this method, several references to Shakespeare are scattered into the novel. As Clarissa is walking in the streets of Piccadilly, she stops to stare at the window of Harchards' bookstore, where she can read in the book spread open two lines of the funeral song in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*: "Fear no more the heat o' the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages" (MD 7). Both Clarissa and her double Septimus are fond of Shakespeare, and that specific allusion to a play in which a dead girl (disguised as a boy) comes back to life reflects and emphasises the idea of the double mentioned in the second method above. This is why the phrases from *Cymbeline* weigh on their minds and are recalled several times throughout the novel. Whilst Clarissa thinks of Shakespeare when she feels threatened by what she fears—feared "time itself, [...] how year by year her share was sliced" (MD 26)—Septimus seems to have a conversation with Shakespeare himself, who convinces him to stop fearing human cruelty—i.e. the outcomes of the war and the incompetent Dr. Holmes—and accept his death: "He was not afraid [...] The fallen, he said, they tear to pieces" (MD 130-31).

As it has been evidenced, Richter's threefold model remains decisive to understand the complexity of Clarissa as a character. However, the connection of what Merleau-Ponty calls the "body-subject" with the Clarissa's realms of the physical, mental, and social convey a fourth method, the *spatial* mode, which is essential to understand Woolf's multiform representation of the heroine in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Immediately in the very outset of the novel, Woolf throws the reader into Clarissa's mind as she prepares herself to go out to "buy the flowers herself" (*MD* 1). From the very moment when we are told that the doors of her house are going to be "taken off their hinges," Clarissa breaks the boundaries that exist between her inner and outer spaces, as she herself seems to cross this frontier when she starts thinking of Bourton. The interaction between spaces suddenly begins:

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning [...] (for a girl of eighteen as she was) [...] looking at the flowers [...] standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, 'Musing among the vegetables?' (*MD* 1)

Hearing the shrill sound of the door hinges triggers a spatial interplay which leads Clarissa to move from her experience of reality to a reflection on her adolescence in Bourton, drawing a clear parallel between the spaces of her house in London and living in the countryside. The flowers that Clarissa is planning to buy in the City are also represented in the scene in Bourton, where Clarissa finds herself as a young girl contemplating a flowery scenery, and her friend Peter Walsh—Clarissa's old friend and first love—is introduced. But suddenly she goes back to reality and thinks of him as an adult belonging to other space now: "Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July" (*MD* 1). The way Woolf introduces Peter in the novel will trace a pattern for Clarissa's both intimates and acquaintances. In her walk through London she will find "her old friend Hugh — the admirable Hugh," who will also inspire their past in Bourton, which she associates with the private, the space that she completely dominates (*MD* 3). We know that to this space belong Peter Walsh, Hugh Whitbread, her beloved friend Sally Setton, and, to a certain extent, her husband Richard Dalloway. Clarissa makes a clear spatial distinction between her relationships (except for some of the relatives she mentions in the novel), the rest of the characters belong to the social space which she does not seem to control; indeed, it is her husband Richard the one that dominates the sphere of the social and the public, and the one that acts as mediator between her private and the social. Although both Clarissa and Richard

Dalloway are in their fifties and belong to the English upper-class, their occupations are quite different: being a Member of Parliament in the Conservative government, he is devoted to social life and politics, whereas Clarissa's occupation is to love life, to devote herself to "all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightfully rock" (*MD* 10):

[...] For in marriage a little licence, a little *independence* there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard have her, and she him. (Where was he this morning, for instance? Some committee, she never asked what.) How she had got through life on the few twigs of knowledge [...] she could not think. *She knew nothing*; no language, no history; she scarcely read a book now, except memoirs in bed; and yet to her it was absolutely absorbing; all this [...] and she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that. (*MD* 5-6, my emphasis)

By means of this distinction between Clarissa's and Richard's professions, Woolf seeks to reflect how the spaces of the English social system worked at that time (shortly after the First World War): Clarissa's sphere, defined by her getting through "on the few twigs of knowledge" someone gave her once—representing women's—seems to confine her at home, whilst Richard's, a British MP, belongs to that of the public and "proper" social—committees involving British politics—where Clarissa does not seem to be engaged. Yet, as Clarissa herself says, there is an "independence" that has been agreed upon the relationship between the two characters and the spaces that define them; and this is why in the same way Richard left that morning to do some affairs she "never asked" about, Clarissa leaves her house to do the things that were "absolutely absorbing" to her.

Just in the 'simple' process of leaving her house in Westminster to buy the flowers—"[she perches] waiting to cross [both the street and the boundaries between spaces]" (*MD* 2)—the reader gets to know the manner in which spaces are intertwined in *Mrs. Dalloway*. But why is it that such an emphasis is put from the beginning to simply go out and purchase fresh flowers? What is all that preparation and ornament for? Soon after starting her delightful experience in the streets of London—seeing herself disintegrate in the geography of the city, with the Big Ben "leaden circles dissolved in the air"—just when she is "entering the Park," we are told the purpose of her little journey through the streets of London: she is "going that very night [...] to give her party" (*MD* 2-3). It is since the inception of the novel that the idea of Clarissa's party—unconsciously and consciously—invades the reader and occupies a central position: while linking Clarissa's reflections on the private with her walk through London, the planning of the party also shows how everything in her house is taking new

positions in space to adapt to the event that both her intimates and the people she has been indirectly associated with (i.e. Richard's acquaintances) will attend, and that she alone has conceived and is going to supervise.

We get to know the reasons for Clarissa to host a party in an ordinary June evening when she is at Harchards' bookstore: "It was silly to have other reasons for doing things [...] Richard [...] did things for themselves" (*MD* 7-8). Clarissa does not have a conventional or 'properly formal' reason to celebrate her party, it is not her birthday, neither Richard's nor Elizabeth's; neither is she celebrating any kind of special accomplishment in the eyes of society or hosting an institutional ceremony: she is simply throwing her party because she seeks to create a bond between the private space occupied by her intimates from Bourton (her past) and the social relationships she has been "forced" to establish in London (her present). The party is her pretence as a high-society woman to make of her house a room essentially of her own that defines her, that ties together the relationships that throughout her life have been determined by the boundaries of private and social spaces, which now she wishes to reunite. In the same way Lefebvre defines space as not being "a thing but rather a set of relations between things" that "subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity" (83), Clarissa's party conforms her creation of a new space in which all of her parts which are spread among—and defined by—her relationships can converge at it, and finally give her a unified identity. We know that it is only Clarissa's own space since even her husband Richard does not seem to recognise this part of their house when, back home after having lunch with Hugh Whitbread and Lady Bruton, he thinks about how:

[...] it all looked so empty. All the chairs were against the wall. What had they been doing? Oh, it was for the party; no, he had not forgotten the party [...] There she was, mending her dress . . . it was a very odd thing how much Clarissa minded about her parties, he [Richard] thought. [...] But Richard had no notion of the look of a room [...] (*MD* 109, 11)

Richard having "no notion of the look of a room" (*MD* 111) conveys two messages: one the one hand, that—as a man—he had not any taste for interior decoration, and, on the other hand, it means that—as a man—he would never be able to understand Clarissa's need for throwing her parties, for having a space of her own. Herrmann agrees on even terms: "[a woman] must conserve some space for herself, a sort of no man's land, which constitutes precisely what men fail to understand of her and often attribute to stupidity because she cannot express its substances in her inevitable alienated language" (qtd. in Garvey 61).

Nevertheless, Richard and Clarissa understand each other deeply, and both seem to give each other the space they need as long as they respect each other's, which Clarissa defines as "dignity" and "solitude," as a "gulf" that one "must respect [...] for one would not part with it oneself or take it, against his will, from one's husband, without losing one's independence, one's self respect — something, after all, priceless" (*MD* 111). The fact that her party epitomises a space of her own which she needs is reinforced when Clarissa is told that Richard and Hugh are attending a lunch party at Lady Bruton's—of course, on matters of the State. The idea of another party being held without her makes Clarissa feel jealous from Lady Bruton—for "Power was hers, position, income" (*MD* 100)—and, simultaneously, empty, "shrivelled, aged, breastless", as if her identity as a woman was being stolen: "There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room. Women must put off their rich apparel. At mid-day they must be disrobe. [...] She knew what she lacked" (*MD* 27-8).

As it has been suggested above, Clarissa's walk in London is the vehicle through which the reader gets to know that she is preparing a party for the evening, and, at the same time, the preparation of her party is the reason why she leaves home, as if she was up to start an expedition. Her movement in the city creates a communion between the spatial form of her consciousness and her physical experience. As Richter points out, Woolf makes of London a reflecting surface both for the specific emotions of Clarissa and for the emotional atmosphere of the scene, and that is why the places she crosses—which encompass people, and the objects in the city—act as mirrors which reflect the many aspects of herself (99). When she tells us that she has lived in Westminster for over twenty years, we immediately know that the geography of the city is a physical space she dominates, since she is able to map London life in her mental space and reconstruct in a different manner every time she dwells in the city:

For Heaven only knows when loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating every moment afresh [...] In the people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June [...] 'I love walking in London,' said Mrs. Dalloway. 'Really, it's better than walking in the country.'" (*MD* 2)

Nevertheless, the experience of the city that the reader gets through Clarissa differs much from the one s/he may get from Septimus Warren Smith or from his wife Lucrezia, and to a greater extent, from Peter. Although they all move through London, the areas they experience are not the same, and that is why they identify themselves with or despise different things in the city. Clarissa's personality is defined by that "wave of divine vitality which [she] loved"

(MD 5). Her interests seem much more personal and intimate than those of the mainstream: she adored “To dance, to ride” (MD 5) in the city, to experience the feeling of life itself and not the matters of the State. It is because she feels her identity fulfilled and dissolved when she experiences the city as she does—as an individual experience rather than communal—that she reflects upon her past and the countryside as she walks in London, being able to “remember scene after scene at Bourton,” (MD 4) and remember Peter. Even when Clarissa imagines herself as being in Peter’s company at that moment in the city, their experiences differ much one from the other: “[...] however beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, and the little girl in pink — Peter never saw a thing of all that [...] if she told him to; he would look. It was the state of the world that interested him [...] and the defects of her own soul” (MD 5). The different ways in which the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* perceive spaces explain that the nature of the dialectical relationship between Clarissa and spaces is such because of their strict reciprocity: Clarissa is defined by the spaces she moves to the same degree that the spaces in which she moves are constructed by Clarissa’s subjective perception and individual experience of them. Her interests are focused on the particular, the abstract, the personal rather than on the social and commonly known, and that is why when she experiences spaces, her identity is atomised and thus she can transcend the physical.

It is because Clarissa’s personal interest is placed upon the trespassing of the physical surface of things to penetrate the private sphere—which actually represents and individualises the subjectivity of humanity—that her concerns overlook all the allusions to the traditional forms of aristocratic prestige, power and influence. All connections to the nationalist and imperial side of society—“the majesty of England”, the “symbol of the state” (MD 13), and the “immortal presence” (MD 15)—which most of Londoners seem to care about—as they try to decipher what is happening with the motor car backfiring and the aeroplane drawing messages in the sky—are unconsciously rejected by Clarissa, and that is why her perception of spaces, society and human relationships differs completely from others’ and remains unique. The reader can discern so when she gets back home from her walk, and she asks the maid who opens the door ““What are they looking at?”” (MD 25). The scene in which we see Clarissa back home shows how the warm vitality that her unconventional experience of the city bestows seems to vanish as she crosses the threshold:

The hall of the house was *cool as a vault*. Mrs. Dalloway raised her hand to her eyes, and, as the maid shut the door to, and she heard the swish of Lucy’s skirts, she felt *like a nun who has left the world and feels fold around her the familiar veils and the response to old devotions*. The cook whistled in the kitchen. She heard the click of the typewriter. It was

her life, and, *bending her head over the hall table*, she bowed beneath the influence, felt blessed and purified, saying to herself [...] how moments like this are buds on the tree of life [...] she thought; [...] but all more, she thought [...] must one repay in daily life to servants, yes, to dogs and canaries, above all to Richard her husband, who was the foundation of it — of the gay sounds, of the green lights [...] *one must pay back* from this secret deposit of exquisite moments, she thought [...] (*MD* 25-6, my emphasis)

One can assume that Clarissa's reason to celebrate her party is, in some measure, because, by creating a space of communion where the individual and the social from past and present meet, she feels that somehow she is to compensate life for her myriad experiences before she dies—for her heart suffers from influenza—she “must pay back from this secret deposit of exquisite moments” (*MD* 26). Her will to reconcile her spaces of past and present at the party are again reinforced by the multi-dimensionality Peter suggests when she thinks of her as he hears the strokes of the hour: “her voice [...] is reluctant to inflict its individuality. Some grief for the past holds it back, some concern for the present [...] something alive which wants to confide itself, to disperse itself, to be, with a tremor of delight, at rest — like Clarissa herself” (*MD* 45). In the same manner, he again describes Clarissa's myriad nature: “It is Clarissa herself [...] with a deep emotion, and an extraordinary clear, yet puzzling, recollection of her” (*MD* 45).

It is because of Clarissa's love for the unintelligible spaces of life that her party is the perfect medium to harmonise her inner and outer spaces. Unlike her husband, whose devotion is found on the aristocratic part of life— “the House of Commons [...] his Armenians, his Albanians,” Clarissa's interests are placed upon fleeting moments of pleasure—this is the reason why she cared “much more for her roses than for the Armenians” (*MD* 111). Clarissa's individual purpose in life is to enjoy the infinite regions that defined modern individual life, and that is why no one but her seems to understand the sense of her parties, what she clearly manages to explain:

What she liked was simply life. ‘That's what I do it for,’ she said, speaking aloud, to life.” [...] But to go deeper, beneath what people said [...] in her own mind now, what did it mean to her, this thing she called life? Oh, it was very queer. Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater; and somebody else, say, in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be brought together, so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom? An offering for the sake of offering, perhaps. Anyhow, it was her gift. (*MD* 113-14)

Clarissa's reason to host her party is simply her love for life: for her, it entails all the relationships she has woven during her life, ultimately defining who she is. Since it has

always been her “gift” to feel identified not only with spaces but with what they contain, her private relationships from her past in Bourton and the present social acquaintances from London designate to her a reasonable enough purpose to create a new space in which they can be combined. Although the event per se only takes the last pages of the novel, Woolf’s spatial interplay manages to throw the reader into Clarissa’s cause since the very opening of *Mrs. Dalloway*. It is only by this interaction between spaces from the beginning that we are able to follow the characters, the spaces and objects that when we arrive at the very last scenes at the novel we are able to discern the significance of spaces for Clarissa, as we understand how she interacts with people in this space she has created: “‘How delightful to see you!’ said Clarissa. She said it to every one [...] She did think it mattered, her party” (*MD* 156-7).

Clarissa’s party receives a large multitude of characters: related to Clarissa’s private space one now finds Peter Walsh and Sally Seton—who arrived by surprise “without an invitation” (*MD* 160); the rest—including her husband Richard and high, and her daughter Elizabeth—are embodied by the Prime Minister himself, who epitomises English society, “this symbol of what they all stood for” (*MD* 161). It is at this very moment, when the party is at its zenith and guests are found interacting between each other, that Clarissa’s spaces are at last reunited, when she finally understands that her party was not in vain: “So it wasn’t a failure after all! it was all going to be all right now—her party. It had begun. It had started. But it was still touch and go. She must stand there for the present. People seemed to come in a rush” (*MD* 159). Although Clarissa obviously meant to spend some time with her intimates, it seems that the public, social space of the party weighed upon her consciousness much more than the private, and that is why at last she seems to not be able to feel herself when she is surrounded by the people of the State: “Clarissa stopped beside them. ‘But I can’t stay,’ she said. ‘I shall come later. Wait.’ she said, looking at Peter and Sally. They must wait, she meant, until all these people had gone. ‘I shall come back,’ she said, looking at her old friends” (*MD* 169). Clarissa thus is represented as a prisoner of the social space since she “had wanted success” (*MD* 173); she needs to fulfil the social behaviour that is expected from her being a hostess of the upper-class.

Clarissa’s party, therefore, was originally conceived as a space of her own in which the private and the social could converge. Nevertheless, it is not until the very end of the novel when the reader notices that a candid communion between the private and the public, between the spaces that define Clarissa, is impossible for the social and individual purposes of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Although all spaces run together throughout the whole narrative and come to

interact at the party, Clarissa's private and social spaces could never be able to fuse and become one, because the physical world she lives in—society, politics and power—and life as Clarissa perceives it—transcendentally, could never become a uniform whole. That is the very nature of her identity: a multiform unit made up by the spaces and people within them, conforming the identity of a high-society woman at that time:

She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She lived like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on. She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone [...] But every one remembered, what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her [...] But that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, there, she survived [...] she being part [...] of the trees at home; of the house there, [...] part of the people she had never met; being laid out with like a mist between the people she knew best [...] (*MD* 6-7)

It was unsatisfactory [...] how little one knew people. But she said [...] she felt herself everywhere; not 'here, here, here' [...] but everywhere [...] She was all that. So that to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places [...] the unseen must survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places, after death . . . (*MD* 143)

6. CONCLUSION

Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* criticises the attitude of modern civilisation towards the individual, focusing on how the imperialist politics, power and the delusions of grandeur of aristocracy accentuated the spatial barriers between the private and the social, and emphasising the position of women in 1923 post-World War I London. The spatial theories by Merleau-Ponty and Lefebvre analysed in section 3.1 have been fundamental to understand the representation of perception and space both in modern terms and in the modern British novel, remaining key to understand the spatial reading of the main character in *Mrs. Dalloway*. On the one hand, Merleau-Ponty seeks to give a description of human experience as perceived and reflected upon, and this is why his thoughts remain primal to grasp the significance of space for Clarissa, for her society and for the world they inhabit. On the other hand, the classification Lefebvre points out stands pivotal to interpret the relationship between the realms of the physical, the mental and the social, ultimately the spatial triad that defines Clarissa's multiplicity of self.

In view of Merleau-Ponty's and Lefebvre's concepts, Frank's idea of *spatial form* in modernist fiction accounts for the Woolfian space in the novel in chapter 4, which explains Woolf's technique to conceive *Mrs. Dalloway* as a cluster of fragments spread over the narrative continuum that only at the end of the novel the reader is able to apprehend as a whole. In her essay "Modern Fiction," Woolf makes clear how the new idea of space was determining for the form of the modernist British novel: "We do not come to write better; all that we can be said to do is to keep moving, now a little in this direction, now in that, but with a circular tendency should the whole course of the track be viewed from a sufficiently lofty pinnacle" (157). Indeed, modernist fiction tried to explore the communication between spaces and places, as well as between present and past, to represent the circular movement in space and time which actual subjective experience performs. In this light, the reader comes to understand how *Mrs. Dalloway* reproduces the form which modern space had been taking since the last decades of the nineteenth century. Virginia Woolf's experiments with the narrative form in *Mrs. Dalloway* aimed at reflecting her meaningful content: how the revolutionary transformations in the city and social structure utterly transformed the lives of the individuals and their relation to contexts:

Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? (Woolf, "Modern Fiction" 160-61)

Accordingly, the relationship that Woolf establishes between space and Clarissa in chapter 5 mirrors the spatial aesthetics form of the novel in the previous chapter. By giving way to a space for Clarissa, Woolf attempts to create a common cause in which the relationships that are included in the private and social spaces that define her could maintain a dialectical communion: her party. Clarissa's party is conceived as the space that she dominates because she has created it herself. Nevertheless, when the reader reaches the last pages of the novel, the idea that the spaces which define her multiform unit can be consolidated fails completely since she is not able to solidify the interaction between her intimates and élite guests. That is why her personality remains multidimensional, scattered throughout the whole narrative, waiting for the readers to make of her different fragments their own multicoloured picture of Clarissa.

This essay tried to show Woolf's social critique of space by strengthening Richter's methodology. It is quite clear that Clarissa's multiform identity is defined, first, by her past in Bourton and her present in London; second, by the complementing personality of Septimus Warren Smith; and third, by the mythical allusions to Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* that she recalls when she feels her position threatened. Nevertheless, a spatial reading of her is necessary to provide the reader with a context in which s/he can be able to grasp how the transparency of her personality transcends the private and invades the social, and how these interact in the space she has conceived for her own. As Richter explains, Woolf's use of the various aspects of self makes possible for the reader not only the illusion of participating in the constantly shifting perceptual and emotional stimuli of the character, but also the sense of living inside a personality whose very essence is that of variation, motion and internal change (127-8).

Mrs. Dalloway's identity is ultimately defined by the spaces and places she inhabits, obviously conformed by the relationships she has established within them. Since the very nature of her personality is fragmented and transparent, she is able to transcend the physical to attach herself to the people, spaces and places that complete her, and that were Woolf's concerns when she conceived the penetrable life of her heroine in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

7. WORKS CITED

- Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982. Print.
- Frank, Joseph. "Spatial Form in Modern Literature: An Essay in Two Parts. Part I" *The Sewanee Review* 53.2 (1945): 221-40. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Web. 2 June 2015.
- . "Spatial Form in Modern Literature: An Essay in Three Parts. Part II" *The Sewanee Review* 53.3 (1945): 433-56. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Web. 2 June 2015.
- . "Spatial Form in Modern Literature: An Essay in Three Parts. Part III" *The Sewanee Review* 53.4 (1945): 643-53. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Web. 2 June 2015.
- Garvey, Johanna X. K. "Difference and Continuity: The Voices of Mrs. Dalloway." *College English* 53.1 (1991): 59-76. Farfield Digital Commons. Web. 11 July 2015.
- Goldman, Jane. *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.
- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990. Print
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991. Print.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Pawlowski, Merry M. Introduction. *Mrs. Dalloway*. By Virginia Woolf. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2003. v-xxiv. Print.
- Philipson, Morris. "Mrs. Dalloway, 'What's the Sense of Your Parties?'" *Critical Inquiry* 1.1 (1974): 123-48. The University of Chicago Press. Web. 25 July 2015.
- Richter, Harvena. *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970. Print.

- Thacker, Andrew. "5. Virginia Woolf: Literary Geography and the Kaleidoscope of Travel." *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003. 152-91. Print.
- Thibaudet, Albert. "Madame Bovary." *Gustave Flaubert*. Paris: Gallimard, 1932. 92-122. Print.
- Whitworth, Michael. "Virginia Woolf and Modernism." *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Sue Roe and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 146-63. Print.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. London: Harper Collins Press, 2003 [1925]. Print
- . "Modern Fiction." Ed. Andrew McNeillie. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: 1925-1928*. Vol. 4. London: Hogarth, 1986. 157-65. Print.
- . *Moments of Being*. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind. 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1985. Print