

## **Readings of Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway Considering Some Aspects of Modernity and Post Modernity**

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If we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; if we look past Milton's bogey, for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come [...]

Virginia Woolf

A Room of One's Own, 1986

The universe inside Virginia Woolf(1882-1941) in *Mrs. Dalloway* opens the gaps from which sensations, alternate perceptions of reality, asymmetry, ideological encounters, realizations and ethical revaluations filter and seem to be wrapped in a package about to tear. In the novel, the different stratum –spatial, temporal, structural, of characters, among others– that conform the text relate to reveal the discrepancy that exists among the inherited Victorian conceptions assumed in the diegetic context and the existential situations that the characters go through in a psychological level. The divergences present dualities between the “ought to be” and the “is”, the exterior and interior, the amplified instant and the controlled time, the official and the routine. All of this results in a constant tension in the characters worldview. Thus, the hard structures that holds the diegetic society contrast with the restrained, frustrated, sterile emotions in each character.

The purpose of this work is to see how, from two readings of Woolf's novel, different meanings of the text become clear. On one hand, the point of view related to the paradigm of *modernity* that suggests a dichotomic pyramidal structure and tries to signify the reality under a *rational* eye. And on the other hand, the relativity of the concept of *truth* that pluralizes depending on the subject's perspective (*postmodernity*), resulting in the rupture of the univocal, absolute and closed of the Victorian society revealed in the text<sup>1</sup>. The theoretical framework used in both suggestions will be the *world-tree* images in the first, and the *rhizome* –in the *postmodernity* case- that Deleuze and Guattari (2000) present in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In this way, the intention is to present both possibilities of analysis in a way that they permit alternative interpretations to the text of Woolf (2003).

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<sup>1</sup>The clichés in Victorianism can be defined as: sexual false modesty, severity of the spirit, sufficiency and closeness of the middle class, self-indulgence, moral conservatism, prejudice of class, Anglo-centrism, all as a part of the world view of the English society. For more information, cfr “‘Estudios Victorianos’ en *Diccionario de teoría crítica y estudios culturales*, p. 266, quoted in bibliography.

Woolf's narrative presents itself as a complaint or subversion to the system, but parts from tradition. Its stance puts in evidence the unresolved faults that the universality and totality of the patriarchal discourse promotes. With this purpose, the author discovers the silences, the disordered leaks of chronological time, the subtleness and individual astonishment, the hideaways that come out in spite of the shield that limits them. It's important to notice that the literary proposal of Woolf is considered part of the *modernity*<sup>2</sup> movement because it reveals the fragmentation of the subject, its inner perspective that is different to the reality that surrounds him and a rupture with the past that opens an unknown future. But all of this without losing the framework or reference point. In this way, *modernity* points out the difference with the classic or traditional ideas to propose (in this case) –in aesthetic expressions–new critical visions in the narrative forms. On the other hand, in the *postmodern* proposal –that derives from the *modern*–, certain tools of analysis become possible to consider and value the work from its ruptures. In other words, the narrative discourse, the lineal logic and the science paradigms are fractured to present a horizontal vision in which the connections of knowledge have an interdisciplinary, random and circumstantial behavior. Both the *binary* analysis (tree) and the *rhizome* of Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Felix Guattari (1936-1992) open different forms of critical approaches that compel Woolf's novel to alternative ways of understanding representation.

To understand the *rhizome*, it's important to go into the *tree* model, where the trunk represents the core, and from it, the branches detach from the structures or institutions.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the central and hard paradigms work as behavior patterns that unfold again and again without losing their starting point. Under this logic, taking into account *modernity* features, the novel can obtain meaning from the different social pillars such as family, religion, science, etc. (as core trunks) that bring the notion of unity to the action, of stability and confidence in the “ought to be”. The social scene assembles from a central specific fact (the trunk) that relates under the same binary logic. The organic image is build on the idea of the “conventional” in the “world-tree”, that stands with the root and from the trunk, the derivations branch out: “one turns into two”, it always multiplies by pairs, in an ordered way and with the dual logic. The multiplicity is limited by the unfolding of both relationships, between objects and subjects, even though new pairs generate, they're explained by the previous cause: “The tree systems are hierarchical systems that understand the significance and subjectivities, central automaton as organized memories”. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2000: 27).

In the resulting analysis of the linking between cause and effect, of actions and reactions, we can foresee that the second are a consequence of the first: “they always set a point, an order”. There's a main core “body” that is sustained in a one-on-one relationship that follows an ordered sequence.

Unlike the tree image, the *rhizome* is confirmed by several nucleuses (*agencement*) that constantly relate and reconfigure from influences of other nucleuses. Therefore, each one is prone to split through new centers using the so-called *lines of flight*. The result comes in a reticular structure, similar to the neuronal image in which there's not only one center, but groups that connect and disconnect according to the action. In words of the authors, this network forms a *body without organs* that moves constantly in the so-called *plane of immanence*. This is the platform in which the nucleuses and their connections stand. If we observe this structure from an objective perspective, we can see the simultaneity in the spaces, time and parallel stories that have a place in a precise moment. However, when they try to solidify themselves, these nucleuses are influenced by a new benchmark of meaning that transforms them avoiding their consolidation. The *rhizome* is a model that is visualized (in another example) as an underground stem, bulbs or tubers. Each of them works *inward*, in a kind of involution, but also and simultaneously, works from their interconnections, from their possibility of hooking up with new *agencements*. In Deleuze and Guattari's words:

One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a body without organs, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing a signifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that leave with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity. (p. 10).

<sup>2</sup>The term “modernity” (modernité) can be tracked down to Baudelaire's essay about the French artist, Constantin Guys, “The Artist of Modern Life” (1845). It was introduced to refer to “all of the poetics that a contemporary trend may contain in = history”, and in some of its definitions they refer to the “ephemeral, fugitive, contingent”, a “distilled of the eternal from the transitory”. *Diccionario de teoríacrítica y estudiosoculturales*, p. 474, in the bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> See introduction titled “Rhizome” in *A Thousand Plateau*, in bibliography.

In a way, we can do an analogy of the *rhizome* outline and the concept of *post modernity*, a vague term that dissolves in its own definition: it's everywhere and at the same time it's now here. But it seems to be immersing in every part of contemporary life. The cultural studies that try to define *post modernity* haven't been able to establish a consensus to set forth the concept. Defining it implies its own dissolution. But in the attempt to define it, we can turn to *modernism* and its opposite elements. In this sense, there are certain features that describe it, although, in a partial and fragmentary way. One of the methods that try to apprehend the idea, puts in doubt the hidden texts or narratives that impose a closed vision of the world, in other words, a regulation that can't seem to encompass the different possibilities of reality. From another point of view, we can typify *post modernity* around the dissolution of the *origin* or starting point. The decentralization implies the disappearance of identities. In the study of literary texts, for example, the same concept applies in the sense that the author loses importance. Every text is part of a chain of influences that take previous proposals to insert them in the new. Reproductions are placed in the same level as its original, which are valued according to the perspective of the observant.

The existing text, oral or written, is decontextualized to promote different meanings according to the context in which is inserted.<sup>4</sup> In this way, all texts are conformed by a network of references in which every part disconnects of its universe to create new meanings while being introduced in other texts (*intertextuality*). Words go from one place to another spreading different dimensions, like a framework conformed by cultural influences that in many cases, are hard to track down. The reader is the creator of meaning, since his interpretation turns on the machine of comprehension. The idea of codified language by social conventions, in which the meaning corresponds to its direct referral, results insufficient if you take into account the plurality that a signifier may contain. A word can cover several possibilities according to the text's context. Therefore, the distance between reality and its verbal reference only makes sense while relating with another signifier.

Woolf's literary proposal presents the first steps that give postmodern critics the concept of displacement of time, space, and univocal values of the human being, giving room to the perspective of alternation, erasing all connection with its starting point. In the postmodern concepts, fragmentation opens different variables of time and space successions or setbacks. The possibilities of perceiving reality in different rhythms and locations grow. The immediate consequence is the partial vision that leads to the rejection of established schemes causing uncertainties and angst: In what perspective is reality located? Under what criteria is each piece of the experience regulated? In the intangible postmodern concepts, reality is presented as autonomous segments that constantly transform, always being relative, modifying their meaning. The definitions contain the seed of their own destruction. This is because while reaffirming their existence, they start to dissolve: Their attempt to explain themselves implies its institutionalization and harmonization with the official culture of western society. This is an aspect that *post modernity* corrodes and criticizes. The denial and rejection trivializes and dissolves the validity of the concept, as long as the possibilities multiply.

In this way, the *postmodern* interpretation applies while observing how a mere look can be the momentary nucleus of meaning. But it is prone to transform and constantly transform itself in the network of relationships in which it's immerse. The minimum variations that a nucleus absorb, implies the differentiation, reaffirmation and signification in relation to the *other*, but just for an instant. The reactions of an individual are related to the divergence and convergence of partial *truths* that, at the same time, are prone to branch out randomly to other directions. The concept of the *univocal* tears apart and the meaning is only feasible in the possible connections that, in a partial way, accomplish a codification that projects its own disintegration in another. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Virginia Woolf develops a storyline that interconnects the life of the main characters (without relating between them in a direct manner) and several supporting characters that surround them.

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<sup>4</sup> A clear example of intertextuality regarding *Mrs. Dalloway* is Cunningham's play (2003) titled *The Hours*. There, the life of the characters is narrated, invented or derived from the novel, intermixed with others that lived in reality but turn fictional in the moment of placing them in the world of the novel. Cunningham fragments, destroys and reconstructs his story from elements of *Mrs. Dalloway*, from the biography of Virginia Woolf, from her diaries, the Victorian world, etc. All of it is articulated with another time, space, new characters (such as Laura Brown) and another structure. Therefore, Woolf's meanings change orbit to create a new sense. This book is part of the bibliography.

Lady Clarissa Dalloway, on one hand, and Septimus Warren Smith on the other, work as central axis that through the interrelation with others (Hugh Whitbread, Lady Bruton, Lucy, etc.) and their stream of consciousness, come to show different cultural patterns, ethical behaviors, feelings and frustrated desires that set different perspectives around the reality of the Victorian setting.<sup>5</sup>Therefore, the plot of the novel sets out the life of Clarissa Dalloway in any given day, in which she will offer a party in her house at night. Clarissa, a woman of the high society, comes out of her house first thing in the morning and walks through the streets of London with the purpose of getting flowers. She enjoys the freshness in the air of June. From that moment on, a series of different stories from the past trigger, narrated in a different space and time without dismissing the reality she is in. Peter Walsh is an old lover that flourishes in her memory bringing back their youthful relationship and shared years. She also visualizes the moment she makes the decision of choosing Richard Dalloway, member of the parliament as her husband instead. In the same way, the chain of memories brings out the forbidden love with Sally Seton during her adolescence.

Back home, the unexpected presence of Peter Walsh that just returned from India, awakens forgotten feelings that make her doubt and have uncertainties of her husband and her decisions made in the past. Nevertheless, her apparent attitude toward Peter is one of moral judgment about his exotic lovers and unorganized and eccentric life. This scene, however, is the starting point to keep the attention in Peter, who's still in love with Clarissa.

On the other hand, Elizabeth, Clarissa's daughter is another trigger of existential doubts in the thoughts of Mrs. Dalloway, as she cannot understand her affections and rejections. Miss Doris Kilman, teacher and academic guide of Elizabeth represents a threat, in addition to the uncontrollable ideological influence on her daughter, she represents her opposite, the counterpart of the principles that support Clarissa.

Another main character of the novel is Septimus Warren Smith, a man who returns traumatized from the war. While trying to adapt again to his everyday context, he suffers a process of social imbalance that drives him insane. His foreign wife, Lucrezia (Rezia) tries to rescue him from the abysmal world he's in, where he dialogues with ghosts (especially with Evans, his friend and guide during the war). In order to take him out of his daydreaming, Lucrezia looks for help in doctors who are recognized by society in the psychological field. Nevertheless, she realized the phoniness of science, in this case, embodied by Dr. Holmes and Sir. Bradshaw that want to put him in a mental hospital. But when the doctors go to get him, Lucrezia tries to stop them while Septimus decides to take his own life throwing himself from his bedroom window.

Septimus life occurs in a parallel way from Clarissa's with no physical contact. It's only in the end, in a suggested manner, that they converge in the conversation of the guests of the party when Sir William Bradshaw and his wife talk casually about Septimus suicide. Regarding the triviality of the commentary, Clarissa is confronted with the different perspectives of life and death. The banality in which Septimus death is mentioned makes her question her own future and the absurdity of her existence. The different levels of reality and significance complicate in multiple parallel stories that cross paths or diversify in escaping lines that lose identity, escaping from the shared representation. The truth fades in relativity because how can one perspective be more valuable than another? Therefore, the conformed network of sub nucleuses (*agencement*) proliferates, even if the same representation of reality (*plane of immanence*) is shared, suggesting links of truth that, at the end, present the disappearance of the unitary, of the absolute.

Each perspective of the *truth* is modeled from life experiences that surge from the past to the present, and from the present to the past: States of consciousness rescued from a memory that is more vivid than the tangible reality, in other words, they superimpose to the concrete actions. This partiality of reality in Mrs. Dalloway is exposed from different points of view toward one same action. Therefore, since the beginning of the novel, we hear voices that try to guess who is the hidden presence inside the car that is stuck in the city traffic, just in front of the store where Clarissa bought flowers for her party. "Was it the Prince of Wales's, the Queen's, the Prime Minister's? Whose face was it? Nobody knew" (p.162). When the car is mentioned, with no clear definition, the perspective of each subject reveals: Miss Pym felt embarrassed, as if she was guilty of the sound of the tire that exploded in the street: "Dear, those motor cars" (p.161).

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<sup>5</sup>A study that develops deeply in the Victorian social perspective can be consulted in Foucault, M. (1987) *Historia de la sexualidad*, Tomo I, S.XXI Editores, México-Madrid.

Justifying herself with Mrs. Dalloway; Edgar J. Watkiss said in a sarcastic manner: “The Prime Minister’s car” (p.162); Septimus Warren Smith, in his madness, took the guilt of the issue: “It is I who am blocking the way, he thought. Was he not being looked at and pointed at; was he not weighted there, rooted to the pavement, for a purpose? But, for what purpose?” (p.162-3); Lucrecia was incapable of taking her eyes off the symbol of power that the car represented: “Could it be the Queen – the Queen doing shopping?” (p.163). On the other hand, the people undefined and without judgment started whispering about the situation. We can perceive how each look has an ideology filled with a particular interpretation.

The car is a symbol of power, a core that rules every urban habitant. The necessity of identifying the anonymous and admired character implies the inaccessibility of common people to greatness. In the collective and individual consciousness, the differentiation of classes is perceived. The role of some is to admire their superiors in able to maintain harmony. The questioning of the established paradigms is inside the thoughts of each character that perceives the event from its physical and ideological position, depending, as well, of their circumstance.

Considering the theoretical concepts of Deleuze and Guattari (2000), the *nucleuses*-characters (*agencements*) are decentralized from themselves to take part of the other: they are incomplete beings that feed themselves with the difference, that is why they stop being unitary centers to go into other dimensions and registers. “An *agencement* is precisely that rise of dimensions in a multiplicity that necessarily changes of nature while its connections increase” (p.14). Multiplicity –not as a result of the dichotomic division of the system but as the uncertainty of the circumstance– ceases to have a starting point, the origin blurs as the different destinies create new focal points that already imply an alternative *origin*, from which other lines of connection are going to surge and scatter in a disorganized way. While considering the *rhizomatic* theory around the novel, we conceive it as an *organism in movement*, located in a viable context for transformations. In an attempt to locate its components, there exists, on one hand, a platform of inherited rules –that form another *agencement*–, in which the rules of representation are already conventionally stipulated. The dimensional location of this nucleus would imply a supplement, a fragment of the *body without organs* that tends to transform while connecting with other lines of the segmentation. It is important to keep in mind that this nucleus can be presented as an *everything* from another perspective –from *modernity*, for example–, if it’s considered in relation to its *interiority*, we can perceive a “logic” (binary or not) in its composition that, although in an ephemeral way, conforms it as a “center”.

Therefore, each observant delimits, knows and recognizes the other, he appropriates him in a momentary way; he defines it according to its connection with his life experience, with relations that go beyond the trigger. Depending on the intensity of the relation that’s established, a metamorphosis is experienced in the subject that observe, changing its nature. The sense of fragmentation of the momentary has a destabilizing effect in the subject, as the power paradigms break in the patriarchal pyramidal structure, and as a result, the social scaffolding modifies, turning out insecure and fragile. What prevails in this form of interpretation is the *rhizome* image, in which the centers diversify in several directions and unite again already transformed. Each element fragments and is prone to simultaneous interconnection with other *bulbs*: The body movements, for example, connect with gestural features, with the aromas that come across with words, these, transform the tonal meanings and rhythms of the expressions, etc. All of it conforms, in the words of the mentioned authors, an *abstract machine*: “Any point of the *rhizome* can be connected with any other, and has to be” (Deleuze and Guattari 2000:13).

There are several directives with different speeds, dimensions and effects. Peter Walsh, for example, is affected by Clarissa’s look; Clarissa, on the other hand, is diminished by the contact with Hugh: “[...] Not the right hat for the early morning, was that it? For Hugh always made her feel, as he bustled on, raising his hat rather extravagantly and assuring her that she might be a girl of [...] she always felt a little skimpy beside Hugh [...]” (Woolf:153); in the same way, Clarissa differentiates with Richard by condemning the difference, what she is not in relation with her husband: “Much rather would she have been one of those people like Richard who did things for themselves, whereas, she thought, waiting to cross, half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves, but to make people think this or that; perfect idiocy she knew [...]”(p. 157); Richard himself acts according to the others influence, he decides to buy flowers for Clarissa because Hugh wants to give his wife a jewel. The meaning of the roses splits between the alleged love that the jealousy (between Clarissa and Peter) reveals to Richard and the moment when Clarissa receives them to confirm her part as a good wife and hostess. However, Richard doesn’t participate in her interests and can’t seem to transmit his sentimental message.

On the other hand, Miss Kilman represents Clarissa's counterpart, because of that, she rejects her, she doesn't fit in her "ought to be" scheme: She is an inverted mirror, in both, from the physical and the ideological aspect: "For it was not her one hated but the idea of her, which undoubtedly had gathered into itself a great deal that was not Miss Kilman [...]"(p.159). In another scene, Lucrezia reacts against the people surrounding her. She wants to hide from herself, and at the same time wants to show them her suffering, her despair: "but they were "people" now, because Septimus had said, "I will kill myself"; an awful thing to say. Suppose they had heard him? She looked at the crowd. Help, help! She wanted to cry out to butchers' boys and women" (p.163).

To validate her position, Lucrezia emphasize what she isn't in comparison with others, that's why she feels sorry for the old beggar that sings a song with an extended hand to receive money: "-Poor woman- said Rezia Warren Smith" (p.228). At the same time, she feels observed and criticized. The look of others make her vulnerable and insecure: "was there, after all, anything to draw attention to them, anything to make a passer-by suspect here is a young man who carries in him the greatest message in the world, and is, moreover, the happiest man in the world, and the most miserable?" (p. 129).

As mentioned before, the lines come to converge sometimes in the *rhizomatic* scheme. This happens when Clarissa receives the news from Bradshaw's wife of Septimus death. The affection of Mrs. Dalloway triggers the self-reflection about the mundane and shallow attitude about such a crucial subject. They never had the chance to meet (Septimus and Clarissa) or establish any contact, and nevertheless, the influence between them is conclusive. Clarissa is transformed by the circumstantial news of Septimus death, external and from no man's land, an incident that gives another meaning to the planned party. Therefore, the nucleuses can break in any of their parts, annulling the previous binary logic but opening possibilities (chaotic multiplicity) in search for another contact point—in any direction—that manages to conform again a body or territory.

The party is the crucial space of the novel where the different *truths* and points of view that fragment the unitary universe in an evident way, reveal. Here is where the mental directives intercross in multiple stratum, where the presence of the *other* is necessary to position itself in the scaffold of power. But here, the decadence of this structure, the fragility of the dominant class is also revealed in a textual way, In the presence of death, different attitudes and sensations filled with intimate values, are perceived.

The differed news, simple and irresponsible of Mrs. Bradshaw: "just when we were leaving, my husband received a phone call, a very sad case. A young man [Sir William tells Mr. Dalloway] had kill himself" (p. 322), doesn't seem to reach Septimus problems, as its unconnected to the character himself; what it is said about him has nothing to do with the mental or material process that take him to self destruction. The words hollow out and falsify, reduce and universalize reality. Septimus ghosts, the salvation message to the world, the intimacy with Rezia, etc. dissolves in the word that, nevertheless, has hold on to Clarissa from another perspective: For her, death ruins her party: "Oh! Clarissa thought there's death in the middle of my party" (p.322).

Until now the *rhizomatic* scheme has been applying to Woolf's text to explain it from *postmodernity*. Nevertheless, now we can wonder; would the *tree* theory work to understand it in another way? When proposing a dichotomic vision of the novel, we can understand the rigid models of *modernity* that prove rational-scientific paradigms that imply an "ought to be" and that contrast with the "be". In the Victorian society the structural models that support the existence of the characters and promote values, concepts and practices are phallogocentric. These models of integration come from the occidental schemes that create an ideological field adequate to make possible and legalize the authority of some over the rest of the group. In general, the roles match an image of hierarchy in which men are on top of it. Each individual, located in the following levels, plays a part that feed the ideology of their superiors, modeling its behavior according to the transmitted priorities. The place of each subject determines and reaffirms the authority and the power that some have over *others*.

In the patriarchal societies the masculine normativity rules what is more convenient to their genre, while women assume their existence in relation to the parameters that are unconnected to the power. The ideal performance of a social group depends on the balance of the given order that does not necessarily imply genre equality. The games of power have a part in the worldview of the group, that's why; the imposed limitations of ideology are barely questioned or even made conscious. The societies, more complex with time, make their hierarchy of authority from different pillars that support it. Therefore, institutions create frameworks of official representation from which they create the beliefs and practices of the group. In this *modern* worldviews, the alternation comes about and opens the possibilities to discern the marginal social segments, but under the same models of action.

While applying these concepts to Woolf's text, we can see how Clarissa contradicts with her own self-imposed schemes, revealing the ideological incoherence of the regime installed in her. In the marriage, according to the ironic and subjacent critic that Woolf places in the text, the woman loses body, sinks slowly in the will of others: "Sweet was her smile, quick her submission" (p.245), the subject vanishes, it devaluates as it does not fulfill the pre-established ideals: the submission is part of their role as a housewife, wife and mother. Monogamy as a family foundation is part of the structure of power. Clarissa and Lady Bradshaw experience it and suffer from it. Clarissa, when she decides to marry and convince herself that it's better to marry a respectable, working, educated, honorable and recognized man like Richard, than Peter, a disorganized artist, unstable and filled with frustrated dreams, capable of feeling the feelings of *others*, discredited and socially under recognized: "And when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced; though she had borne about with her for years like an arrow sticking in her heart the grief, the anguish[...]" (p.154). In the case of Lady Bradshaw, in the overwhelming presence of her husband, she alienates, succumbs and allows the colonization of the other:

*Once, long ago, she had caught salmon freely: now, quick to minister to the craving which lit her husband's eye so oily for dominion, for power, she cramped, squeezed, pared, pruned, drew back, peeped through; so that without knowing precisely what made the evening disagreeable, and caused this pressure on the top of the head (which might well be imputed to the professional conversation, or the fatigue of a great doctor house life, Lady Bradshaw said, 'is not his own but his patients' disagreeable it was: so that guests, when the clock struck ten, breathed in the air of Harley Street even with rapture; which relief, however, was denied to his patients. (p. 246)*

Both Clarissa and Lady Bradshaw disrupt the inherited prejudices to see the hidden gaps of their being without letting go of the prevailing social paradigms of the diegetic universe. The logic loses sense, they don't fit anymore in the artificial learnt feeling that they have to assume, nor in the part of pretending to follow the example of those who have the power in the Victorian society. Clarissa keeps it in the most remote part of her being (she doesn't let go of the "ought to be"). She's incapable of communication, she's doomed to live with the limits of the stipulated and to pretend a stoicism that does not let her expose herself, reveal herself, since it makes her vulnerable. She suffers from intense moments of doubts about herself, of insecurity, weakness and existential doubts. Doing what she ought to do is not enough:

*It rasped her, though, to have stirring about in her this brutal monster! to hear twigs cracking and feel hooves planted down in the depths of that leaf-encumbered forest, the soul; never to be content quite, or quite secure, for at any moment the brute would be stirring, this hatred, which, especially since her illness, had power to make her feel scraped, hurt in her spine; gave her physical pain, and made all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful rock, quiver, and bend as if indeed there were a monster grubbing at the roots, as if the whole panoply of content were nothing but self love! This hatred! (Pp.159-160).*

Peter Walsh is the character that demonstrates the incompatibility of marriage; he exposes the masquerade, the miscommunication. As a subterfuge of his own social marginalization, he talks about Clarissa, he criticizes how she assumes her husband's manners, uses his words, and lives under his shadow, fulfilling her part of a wife. Peter is resented by Clarissa's rejection, judges her objectification, the annulment, the intentional disappearance that holds up the machinery of the social structure:

*In all this there was a great deal of Dalloway, of course; a great deal of the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit, which had grown on her, as it tends to do. With twice his wits, she had to see things through his eyes- one of the tragedies of married life. With a mind of her own, she must always be quoting Richard- as if one couldn't know to a tittle what Richard thought by reading the Morning Post of a morning! (p. 223)*

There is a certain irony perceived in the counterparts of the system, in the discourse silences; the double meaning in which the other truth is exposed that is presented in a subjacent way and turns out to be, in occasions, the one that prevails in the feeling and thinking of the main characters. In this way, Peter, demerits the position and snobbish attitudes of Richard at the same time that he puts in evidence Clarissa's dependence, that as a woman, feeds the masculine patterns of the society she lives in. Therefore, the analysis leads us to ask ourselves: How is it possible to transform the attitude of men towards women if the women live under a patriarchal worldview? Is it possible to detach from the anti-feminine prejudices when the women assume them? Both women and men feed the inherited cultural pre-conceptions that take part of their *being in the world*. The experience is modeled, on one hand, from the learnt and from the created, and on the other, from the past and the present.

Nevertheless, what is learnt works as a foundation that allows transformation. That's why it's hard to put an end to the patriarchal ideology, because the foundation itself is full with prejudice.

Clarissa's social role is clear, she plays her part and behaves according to the established behavior patterns and she is apparently happy about it. She is convinced that the meaning of her life is being a good wife, a good hostess, a good mother, able to sew, arrange and organize parties. All of this justifies her existence. Other people give meaning to her life; she is reflected in others to feel alive. As a consequence, it depends on them for her to build her world. Because of that, she tries to surround herself with familiar and unknown people in able to build her corporeal nature, to open to everyone, materialize and, at the same time, reflect her presence to everyone else. In this way, the life of others have a place in herself, they affect and control her, at the same time, they trigger behaviors and reactions that aren't planned. "...thank you, thank you, she went on saying in gratitude to her servants generally for helping her to be like this, to be what she wanted, gentle, generous-hearted. Her servants liked her" (p. 187).

Clarissa censures her desires, even though there are moments where they accidentally superimpose and get into her thoughts. These are feelings that take her out of control, that unbalance her. She knows that Peter's attitudes are the ones she would want. That is why she is affected by certain hidden messages that the words of Peter contain when he talks with irony about Clarissa's social part.

*But Peter -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. He would put on his spectacles, if she told him to; he would look. It was the state of the world that interested him; Wagner, Pope's poetry, people's characters eternally, and the defects of her own soul. How he scolded her! How they argued! She would marry a Prime Minister and stand at the top of a staircase; the perfect hostess he called her (she had cried over it in her bedroom), she had the makings of the perfect hostess, he said (p.154).*

It's interesting, however, how the spatial framework takes part in the classist conception. In the previous fragment, the scenery turns artificial: the trees, the weed, the little girl in pink, the environment civilizes under Clarissa's eyes, from the agreed "ought to be". The image becomes an ideology because it no longer exists in itself; it is unconnected to the human perception and prefabricated to have a meaning under the meaning of the authority. At the same time, they are nucleuses of power that impose an opinion. Whoever don't consider that they agree with the social agreement is disobeying the right behavior patterns.

Clarissa, in her role as a hostess, respects and assumes the male perspective as she gathers people who stand out in order to support her husband, so that he becomes a recognized man. However, there is a growing feeling in her of emptiness, loneliness and nonsense of her existence while thinking of Peter's words, who considers her (with a hint of mockery) "the perfect hostess". Richard himself, don't recognize or gives any value to her work as the one solving the problems in the party because he doesn't even question them. In his opinion, it is the *obligation of every wife* to fulfill that needs. "'Poor Ellie Henderson," said Richard—it was a very odd thing how much Clarissa minded about her parties, he thought. But Richard had no notion of the look of a room" (p.262).

Facing Clarissa's depersonalization, in relation to her role as a woman, we wonder: Where is the subject? Clarissa is one more object that fulfills her part of the family institution that is socially accepted. Who is interested in her? Where is the empathy between husband and wife, the fights, mutual and intimate codes? The roses that Dalloway gives to his wife were just a consequence of jealousy; they weren't a proof of love. That's why Richard was unable to tell her that he loved her. The lack of communication, the loneliness and the abyss of incomprehension is what try to cover all the hollow forms that deceit and try to justify the actions:

*It was a feeling, some unpleasant feeling, earlier in the day perhaps; something that Peter had said, combined with some depression of her own, in her bedroom, taking off her hat; and what Richard had said had added to it, but what had he said? There were his roses. Her parties! That was it! Her parties! Both of them criticized her very unfairly, laughed at her very unjustly, for her parties. That was it! That was it! (p. 264)*

There are alternatives of the counterpart of the family institution and they are dangerous. Peter provokes the feelings that must be condemned and hidden. Another transgression to the centralized concepts is the love of Clarissa towards Sally Seton. The homosexual prohibition is implied in the system's motto. The definition of feeling complicates since the language is not authorized to elaborate it:

*And whether it was pity, or their beauty, or that she was older, or some accident -like a faint scent or a violin next door- (so strange is the power of sounds at certain moments), she did undoubtedly then feel what men felt.*



*Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! (p.179)*

It is clear that the feelings also adjust to the masculine way of thinking: Why did she feel like a man? The perspective that Clarissa knows is limited to the patriarchal ideology because the “feminine” way is not credited as a way to see the world. Pointing out the difference in genre implies certain power for women and because of that, the acknowledging of their possibilities is censured. “Thinking as men” is the only alternative that they have in order to give meaning to themselves and fit in a place of recognition. “Lady Bruton often suspended judgment upon men in deference to the mysterious accord in which they, but no woman, stood to the laws of the universe; knew how to put things; knew what was said; so that if Richard advised her, and Hugh wrote for her, she was sure of being somehow right”(p.253).

### **Final Comments**

Breaking into the *modern* text of Woolf and putting it under the eyes of *postmodernism*, the hidden texts or narratives that express a closed vision of the world are questioned, and the possibility of visualizing it from the *rhizomatic* scheme opens, covering different positions of the fragmented and partial reality. In the analysis we can see how the origin and meaning of the term “postmodernity” dissolves in its own definition: on one hand, its unthinkable without the presence of modernism, where reactions against it arise, and on the other hand, its everywhere and nowhere but it seems to penetrate in every area of contemporary life. The difficulty of its use is evident in the cultural studies that try to define it and aren’t able to agree in establishing a concept since its making it clear implies its own dissolution.

Woolf, among other things, criticizes the Victorian ideology and the male domination. The cultural authority -as a ruling framework that holds up the actions of the individuals in a social context- faces a crisis because of its submission to the lack of trust and questioning that devaluates, confronts and finally, accepts or displaces. She worries for the actor, his functions, recognition or rejection before the “other”, the artificial dynamics of their interactions, feelings, conflicts and intimate codes. She presents characters that are lost in their own being, reason why they seem forced, shivered, even though they perceive the nonsense of their being in the world, they have to put up to the obstacles of the system that gives them an apparently viable reality. However it is an existential drill that gives them a fake stability. The characters present a world that is holding up shallowly, it is going down, it is weakening, breaking into pieces: the monolith social columns tremble.

Besides presenting time fragmentation -where past and present merge inside the stream of consciousness of the characters implying the annulment of the chronological sequence paradigm-, Virginia Woolf presents features that put in evidence her *feminist stand*. Through different intercrossed elements in the text -explicit or underlying- the balance imposed is censured by the male patterns. However, Woolf only presents the reflection guidelines to motivate the analysis. The alternatives or solutions are an effect of the text in the reader. The braveness of showing the inside look of diversity implies a revelry, an attempt to transform the conditions of social inequality. From this stand, an attempt to confront and weaken the nuclear system can be perceived, showing its malfunction in the family, politic and economic institution. However it’s not totally broken since it doesn’t separate from the paradigms of power that holds it. The question surges, could it be limited to be like this? Could it be an utopia? The presented vision shows the alternation that permits certain processes conceived by the *postmodern* critic. As any other nucleus that moves away from the center, feminism is threatened by the danger of becoming a structure of power in the moment of defining its body through consensual statute. This implies the possibility of falling in a standstill, annulling the dynamic and the movement, tending to the stability. Therefore, it’s important to search constantly for new exit formulas that imply the decentralization, the change of meaning and the dangerous multiplicity that doesn’t follow the reproduction of rigid schemes.

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