

**CLOTHING AND COLOUR IN *MRS DALLOWAY*:
STRATEGIES FOR FEMALE
CHARACTERIZATION**

**VESTUARIO Y COLOR EN *LA SEÑORA DALLOWAY*:
ESTRATEGIAS DE CARACTERIZACIÓN DE LOS
PERSONAJES FEMENINOS**



TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

**ANA MARÍA FORTES BARRAL
GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES
TUTORA: MARÍA LOSADA FRIEND
FECHA DE ENTREGA: 18 DE MAYO 2017
CONVOCATORIA: JUNIO 2017**

Abstract

The aim of this project is to analyse Virginia Woolf's use of Modernist and Impressionist techniques through the clothing and colours used for female characters in a complex process of characterization in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). The female characters selected from the novel—Clarissa Dalloway, Doris Kilman, Elizabeth Dalloway, Sally Seaton and Lucrezia Smith— wear clothes that define their personalities and enhance their relationships. Moreover, the colours selected for their clothes— mainly pink, white, and green—help to formulate the characters' feelings and their attitude towards life. The study of these strategies for characterization show that Woolf's experimental style adopts Impressionist and Modernism features to connect female characters positively and negatively in a creative, experimental and personal way.

Keywords: Impressionism, Modernism, clothing, characterization, Virginia Woolf and *Mrs Dalloway*.

El objetivo de este proyecto es analizar el uso de técnicas impresionistas y modernistas usadas por Virginia Woolf a través del vestuario y los colores en un complejo proceso de caracterización de los personajes femeninos en *La Señora Dalloway* (1925). Los personajes femeninos seleccionados—Clarissa Dalloway, Doris Kilman, Elizabeth Dalloway, Sally Seaton y Lucrezia Smith— llevan un vestuario que define sus personalidades y realza sus relaciones. Además, los colores seleccionados para el vestuario— principalmente el rosa, el blanco y el verde— ayudan a desarrollar los sentimientos de los personajes y sus actitudes en la vida. El estudio de las estrategias de caracterización muestra que el estilo experimental de Woolf adopta técnicas impresionistas y modernistas para relacionar a las mujeres positivamente y negativamente de forma creativa, experimental y personal.

Palabras clave: impresionismo, modernismo, vestuario, caracterización, Virginia Woolf y *La Señora Dalloway*.

INDEX

1	Introduction, Objectives and Methodology.....	1
2	Theoretical Framework and State of the question	
2.1	Modernism and Virginia Woolf.....	2
2.2	Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in Woolf's work.....	3
2.3	Clothing and characterization in <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	6
3	Female's attire in <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	
3.1	Clarissa Dalloway: Elegance and sensibility.....	9
3.2	Miss Kilman and her mackintosh: Social awareness.....	10
3.3	Lucrezia Smith: The role of the happy past.....	11
3.4	Elizabeth Dalloway: Youth and freedom.....	12
3.5	Sally Seaton: The mature transformation of a rebellious spirit.....	13
4	Colour and character in <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	
4.1	Pink: Friendship and love.....	14
4.2	White: Confidence.....	15
4.3	Green: Safety.....	15
5	Conclusions.....	17
6	Works cited.....	19

1. Introduction, Objectives, and Methodology

Modernism was a movement that aesthetically influenced literary works along the twentieth century. Its great innovations transformed literature utterly. A clear example of a Modernist work is *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), one of the most important and famous novels by Virginia Woolf. Considered a prominent figure of the Modernist movement, Woolf outstands as a relevant author for her use of innovative techniques, such as the stream of consciousness, interior monologues and the combination of multiple points of view to describe life.

Modernism gave way to a great number of sub-movements, such as Imagism, Symbolism, Expressionism, Surrealism, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. Woolf is well-known for practices related to Symbolism, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism and consequently her complex presentation of characters becomes one of the most fascinating areas to analyse in her works. This essay proves Woolf's use of female characters' clothing in *Mrs Dalloway* to define their personality. I have selected *Mrs Dalloway* among the rest of her production because when I read the novel in the course *English Literature I* it fascinated me due to its peculiarities and I became very interested in Woolf and her work. Clothing is the topic of my essay for different reasons. First of all, *Mrs Dalloway* has been studied from many points of view, stressing its stream of consciousness technique, its peculiar concept of time, its traces of WWI, and its use of symbols, but it has not been studied considering the clothing as an element to define characters. The clothing of the characters is important in the novel and becomes a mark of Woolf's Modernism. In addition, the systematic choice of colours when describing clothes proves her homage to Impressionism. Moreover, Woolf was influenced in her childhood and adolescence by habits and conditions of the Victorian era, a period where clothing was an important social indicator of the status of any individual, as it becomes obvious in the novel.

For the selection of the corpus I have also considered that Woolf was a feminist writer involved in the fight for women's rights. She chooses a woman as the main protagonist in *Mrs Dalloway*, a novel where female characters outnumber the male ones and where the portrayal of women's characters is careful. I have narrowed the analysis to a few of them: Clarissa Dalloway, Miss Kilman, Elizabeth Dalloway, Sally Seaton and Lucrezia Smith. Their clothing is characterized mainly around three colours: pink, white and green. Consequently, the goal of my study is to identify and describe Woolf's

systematic fixation on specific clothes and colours for these female characters, proving her modernist and impressionistic techniques as strategies in her creative process of characterization.

The structure and methodology of this work are planned as follows: First of all, the theoretical framework covers a general view of Modernism describing the relevance of this movement and its different sequels as important influence on Virginia Woolf's works. Secondly, characterization in Woolf's novels is revised, based on various studies by some relevant scholars, especially those who study *Mrs Dalloway*. Thirdly, Modernist and Impressionist techniques are analysed in the selected corpus, tracing clothes and colours that complement the description of characters. The analysis follows two steps. First of all, characters and their attires are carefully described and compared. Secondly, close examination is provided taking into account colours, which mark and complement the characters' features. Woolf's careful selection of clothes and colours indicates Modernist and Impressionistic techniques as basic strategies of her narrative and aesthetic style.

2. Theoretical Framework and State of the question

2.1 Modernism and Virginia Woolf

The twentieth century was marked by the presence of the Modernist movement. It is very difficult to fix an exact date for the beginning of Modernism, owing to the presence of many Modernist writers in the last decade of the nineteenth century, such as Joseph Conrad or Alfred Jarry. The movement was considered a break with Western traditions, with an innovative, radical and experimental turn. Bradbury and McFarlane attempt to define it in *Modernism 1890-1930*: "The movement towards sophistication and mannerism, towards introversion, technical display, internal self-scepticism, has often been taken as a common base for a *definition* of Modernism" (1991: 26). It affected all artistic fields, like music and painting. In literature, writers acquired freedom in the production of texts.

Modernism was influenced by an important historical event, the First World War. It was a tragedy that transformed England in many ways. It caused great trauma for the English society but it also made people stronger and provoked change of minds and new ways of expression. Modernism provided the change of perspectives to represent and see life. As we can read in Gillies and Denise's *Modernist Literature: An Introduction* (2007) the main techniques used in Modernism were: the access to characters' mind, the protection of the individual, the idea that all things are relative, the disconnection with

history or institutions, the experience of loss, alienation and despair, the notion that life is unordered and the celebration of the inner strength. (2)

Woolf's novels capture all those aspects. They are famous for innovative techniques, as she introduced new forms of structure. The thoughts of her characters are more important than actions, they are filled with flashbacks and reflections which let the reader know their feelings, obsessions and fears. *Mrs Dalloway*, a clear example of modernist writing, takes place in a day, full of flash backs into the past, flash forwards into the future and symbolic moments as the novel develops. But as much as *Mrs Dalloway* can be explained by means of Modernism, the novel would not be well explained without another important theoretical and aesthetic element: Impressionism.

2.2 Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in Woolf's work

Modernism gave rise to many other movements that caused great impact in the artistic world of the twentieth century, among them, two parallel movements: Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. The first of these movements took place in the late nineteenth century in all fields of art with particular incidence in painting. Edouard Manet was one of the first Impressionist painters using contemporary subjects in *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863). This brought him much criticism from the French Academy of Art, but at the same time the work became a model for younger painters who were interested in his new and radical techniques.

The term 'Impressionism' was created by Luis Leroy, who included it in the magazine *Charivari* after having seen Monet's *Impression: Sunrise* (1872). Impressionism was characterized by the break with tradition painters experimented with light and colour to depict the world. As Patrick Query explains in his article "Literary Impressionism" (2014), literary texts were influenced by Impressionism with techniques that involved the use of light effects, the combination of colours and the use of shapes to create images" (47). Authors used forms, colours and light to simulate the impressions of characters or make the readers feel these impressions.

Impressionist techniques were used by Virginia Woolf in many of her novels, she played with light effects and colours to introduce the reader into her fictional world. Colour becomes a representative element in her novels, as Sim Lorraine has stated in *The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (2016): "One of the consequences of the close scrutiny of things in much of Woolf's writing is a careful attention to colour. [...] Woolf's fiction often demands that her readers attend to her presentations of it [...] Woolf debates

in her essays and novels the adequacy of everyday speech to represent the sensations of colour” (59).

The influence of Impressionism in Woolf's works has been studied by Nicole Blair in her well-known study "Virginia Woolf and Literary Impressionism" (2010). She states that *To The Lighthouse* (1927) is an example of an Impressionist work. Woolf not only uses light and colour, she also centres the novel on the passing of time and the landscape, features of literary Impressionism. *The Waves* (1931) is another example of the obsession with the passing of time, and a play with light and colour, as Blair notes: “Woolf experiments with colour, light, shadow and vibration more completely in *The Waves* than in any of her other novels [...] *The Waves* is a 'mosaic' of light and shadow, of thousands of colours” (24-25). In addition, Woolf presents Impressionist techniques in her short fictions. In "Kew Gardens" (1919), the reader's position is that of the flowers from a garden, being spectator of the characters that pass by. "The Mark on The Wall" (1917) represents the death as a space of dark and light. Similarly, as this work proves, *Mrs Dalloway* includes the Impressionist touch in a peculiar structure of time where all characters are connected and the important role of colours in combination with light and dark is used to describe characters. Woolf approaches colour as Impressionist painters did in their paintings, and the changing effects of colours in Woolf's work place her not only in the Impressionist realm, but also the Post-Impressionistic one.

Impressionism gave way to an extension known as Post-Impressionism. The term 'Post-Impressionism' was introduced in 1906 by the critic Roger Fry in an exhibition catalogue (R. Brettell, 1999: 21). As much as Impressionism, Post-Impressionism was influential in painting. Painters had used Impressionist techniques to create a more customized art, and their desire had been the representation of perception. Post-Impressionism aimed further. It looked for radical methods of expression without limits, using exotic colours as aesthetic carriers of meaning but independent from forms which were unnatural and distorted. Post-Impressionism had two phases, each one featured by an important exhibition. The first one marked the beginning and development of the movement and the second one established a revolutionary change as colour was substituted by form.

The first successful exhibition in London in 1910 was already an indicator of the popularity of the movement. Painters received harsh criticism but they had many followers who adopted their rebellious methods of painting. This exhibition was commented by many authors. One of them was Virginia Woolf, who attended the

exhibition with the critic Roger Fry. In her book, *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940), she noted that the exhibition had caused a shock to the public, that the upper class has reacted in a negative way and that much criticism was against this new art. Roger Fry was impressed by the great innovations in the exhibition and he was very angry with these critical voices. In fact, Fry himself was transformed after this exhibition. Post-Impressionism lead the artist to be himself, he could paint with freedom, and the colours he used were shocking, bright and imprudent.

In 1912, the second Post-Impressionist exhibition was celebrated in London and the result was equally shocking to the public. Nevertheless, later in the same year Post-Impressionism turned a fashionable trend. As we can read in *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940) and in *The Letters of Virginia Woolf* (1975), Woolf lived closely the development of this new movement and she became impressed by its creative and unrestrained techniques. This influenced her later novels, where she included more experimental aspects, as can be seen in *The Waves* (1931).

Literary Post-Impressionism, as literary Impressionism, followed features used in paintings. The approach to objects was different and forms had to be expressed differently. In literature, expressing emotions was enhanced by the use of alluring and vivid colours and with changes from light to darkness, aspects that where registered with interior monologues.

Woolf's work improved two main elements of Post-Impressionism, colour and form. Laura Harris (2013) traces Post-Impressionist features in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) in an article where she finds Roger Fry, Clive Bell and Cezanne as relevant models for Woolf. In contrast to Nicole Blair, Harris considers this novel a clear Post-Impressionist narrative, as it aims to represent life as eternal, continuous, and infinite. She points out that in the novel, Lily Briscoe is seriously concerned with forms and colours in her painting and expresses emotions through art. Moreover, the chapter "Time Passes" establishes balance in the novel and marks a culmination point when Lily finishes her painting.

As for Nicole Blair, she studies *Mrs Dalloway* considering that a number of elements from the Impressionist tradition can be traced. The author states that the characters in the novel are affected by their environment, represented with contrast between light and darkness and with vivid colours. Colours are also used to represent objects and characters. Clothing and its colours define the characters wearing them. As an impressionist painter, Woolf applies her brush with spots of colour to develop on her

characters thoughts and feelings.

2.3 Clothing and characterization in *Mrs Dalloway*

Having placed Woolf as a Modernist writer influenced by Impressionist and Post-impressionist techniques, our next step is to trace those in *Mrs Dalloway*. Woolf's novels outstand for her characters and their uniqueness and Mrs. Dalloway is not an exception. Annalee Edmondson has a relevant study of Woolf's procedures for characterization in *Narrativizing Characters in Mrs. Dalloway* (2012). In the novel, thoughts of characters prevail over action and are unveiled through the stream of consciousness technique, with incessant jumps from one character's mind to another's. Clarissa sets out to buy flowers and her thoughts are crossed with those of her neighbour. The reader has an easy access to the characters' feelings and thoughts even getting information of what they felt and thought in the past.

Due to the importance given to the thoughts of characters, action acquires a secondary place. Common, daily activities are closely registered. Liesl Olson states: "To represent ordinary experience becomes the means by which characters are best revealed [...] we might understand Woolf's focus on ordinary events as showing how her characters normalize these changes" (2003: 47-49). Clarissa completes a number of daily tasks: buying flowers, mending a dress, or giving a party. Everyday actions reveal the character's behaviour and attitude towards life and their feelings.

Similarly, characters' clothes and their colours become an essential strategy for characterization in *Mrs Dalloway*, particularly in view of the fact that clothes were quite important in Woolf's life. It is important to note that she and her husband, Leonard Woolf, wrote about her attitude towards the fashion of clothes of the period.

Virginia Woolf was believed to care very little for her own appearance, as stated by her contemporary, Margot Asquith, the Countess of Oxford: "no woman cared less for her appearance than the beautiful Virginia" (Stape, 1995: 176). Similarly, Woolf's husband recorded in *Beginning Again* (1964):

She had, I think, a flair for beautiful, if individual dresses. Yet to people in the street there was something in her appearance which struck them as strange and laughable. This laughter of the street distressed her, she had an almost morbid horror of being looked at (28-30).

Woolf is described as a woman who did not want to follow the fashion trends, who wanted to be comfortable with her clothes and passed unnoticed. Dorothy Todd, the

editor of *Vogue* magazine, decided to help Woolf to improve her way of dressing. Woolf wrote in her diary about this:

I am involved in dress buying with Todd; I tremble & shiver all over at the appalling magnitude of the task I have undertaken—to go to a dressmaker recommended by Todd, even, she suggested, but here my blood ran cold, with Todd. (1984: 78).

Woolf allowed Todd to help her to choose and combine clothes and colours, but she was not interested in being fashionable or popular, only to be comfortable. The connection between Woolf and her clothing has been studied by two scholars. On the one hand, Claire Nicholson, in *Virginia Woolf and Her "Clothes Complex"* (2011) considers that clothes caused conflicting feelings in Woolf's life. The author left descriptions about her mother's dress and she felt very uncomfortable when she was the centre of attention because of clothing. Nicholson points at the relevance of these hurting feelings, which made the author realized the power of clothes, which consequently become a tool for characterizing in her novels.

On the other hand, Maggie Humm, in *Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts* (2010), has analysed Woolf's contradictions towards the fashionable world in her diary and memoirs. Humm states “her diaries and letters are replete with references to the pleasures of getting dressed” (2010: 195). Woolf criticised the fashion trends but she used to visit dressmakers and department stores to learn to cope with clothes. She admitted loving clothes in her diary “My love of clothes interests me profoundly, only it is not love; & what it is I must discover” (1984: 21) and in *Moments of Being* (1972) the descriptions of her mother are always recorded with a description of her dress she wore. Clothes were significant for Woolf and became so when portraying her characters.

Finally, Randi Koppen, in *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity* (2009) has studied Woolf's use of clothes in her novels as a way of fighting for women's rights. Koppen explains that, living in a world that was rapidly transforming, a period of rebellion for women who fought for their rights, and she describes Woolf involved in this battle. She became part of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society which aimed to achieve women's suffrage through peaceful and legal means and her novels show her contribution to this campaign. Koppen states:

Clothing represents more than style and aesthetic statements. Among other things, it is and immediately available way of proclaiming different corporeality, different

ways of being a body in the world, and different interpersonal relations, whether of gender or class. (2009: 11)

Koppen lists Woolf's novels that are examples of the fighting for women's rights involving clothes. In *The Years* (1937) Woolf uses ladies in flounced Victorian dresses and shop windows full of summer dresses —these features are considered suffragist codes that function “as a material fact in economies of class, gender and power” (2009: 29). In *Three Guineas* (1938) Woolf focuses on ceremonial dress and uniforms, which also appear in *Mrs Dalloway*.

Koppen proves that before *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf had written eight short stories settled in Clarissa's party, which were published in *Mrs Dalloway's Party* (1975). In this short story sequence Woolf “explores the party-consciousness, which is very much a consciousness of dress” (2009: 30). Women are portrayed anxious about their clothing for the party, the first sentence of the novel is “Mrs Dalloway said she would buy her gloves herself” (1975: 1). This sentence is equal to the first sentence of *Mrs Dalloway*, except for the gloves which substitutes the flowers in the original version.

Koppen considers that Woolf uses clothing to represent characters with a complex understanding of place and opportunity: “Woolf has a sophisticated understanding of clothing as a trope of the interface and the place where the contingencies and precariousness of negotiating a visual field are visually represented” (2009: 32). Clothing then becomes a Modernist strategy for characterization in which meaning is acquired through attires. Taking into account this idea, Molly Hoff studied the character of Miss Kilman in *Woolf's Mrs Dalloway*. She considers that “clothes are the place where character becomes image” (2000: 35). The character of Miss Kilman is developed through her mackintosh which reveals her personality, her past and her feelings.

In view of all the studies developed by the different scholars, *Mrs Dalloway* reveals a conscious use of strategies for characterization which will be closely studied in the following sections focusing on clothes and colours.

3. Female's attire in *Mrs Dalloway*

As stated above, *Mrs Dalloway* was published in 1925, a post-war period in which women made visible their important role in society. They fought for equality, and were rebellious and decided. One way of showing their nonconformity with established rules was the clothing. Concha Castro in her book *Historia de la vestimenta a través del*

arte (2015), proves that after WW1 garbs and skirts became very popular and as time passed women acquired a new way of dressing which received much criticism. They were criticised for dressing in a liberal way. Attire in Woolf's time was an important indicator to describe females, revealing their personality and minds. Thus, in *Mrs Dalloway* different kind of garments define the characters' personality, their feelings and thoughts as shown in the following pages.

3.1 Clarissa Dalloway: Elegance and sensibility

The main character of the novel is Clarissa Dalloway, an elegant woman who belongs to the high society of London. She belongs to a world of parties and appearances, but she is not a superficial woman and is judgmental about her own social class. Aware of her privileged position and of her public image, clothing is crucial in her life, and the narrator's voice makes remarks about it systematically. For example, when Clarissa prepares her dress for the party, we are told:

Her evening dresses hung in the cupboard. Clarissa, plunging her hand into the softness, gently detached the green dress and carried it to the window. She had torn it. Someone had trod on the skirt. [...] By artificial light the green shone, but lost its colour now in the sun (*Mrs Dalloway*, 33).

The reader perceives the character's care and sensibility in a context where the material of the cloth is enhanced as much as its colour. The narrator slows the action and description to emphasize the delicacy in Clarissa's relation to her attire. The second part of the quote elaborates also on how Clarissa is defined by her dress symbolically. The colour is bright under artificial colour, but loses it colour under the light of the sun, which along the novel represents at times the insecurity she is trying to overcome. The dress under the sun, shows her doubts and fears. She has been ill and she is afraid of death, and she keeps telling to herself Shakespeare's quote "Fear no more the heat of the sun" (*MD*, 26). Thus, her green dress, as her life, is handled with care, as a fragile object, and becomes a way to understand her fight for security and happiness.

Besides, Clarissa's thoughts about the past, her friends and lovers at Bourton or her daughter reveal her personality and her memoirs always include observation on clothes and their colours. When Clarissa recalls her past at Bourton with Sally Seaton we read:

'If it were now to die 'twere now to be most happy'. That was her feeling - Othello's feeling, and she felt it, she was convinced, as strongly as Shakespeare meant Othello to feel it, all because she was coming down to dinner in a white

frock to meet Sally Seton! (*MD*, 31).

Clarissa wears a white frock to meet Sally. A frock is a garment for wearing in the house, which shows that she feels comfortable and at ease with a close friend. She recalls this as one of the happiest moment in her life. The reader understands that Sally is a very important person for her and that she recollects that moment not forgetting her attire in white, reflecting her youth and her happiness.

In the characterization of Clarissa through her clothing Woolf mixes innovative and experimental traces including emphasis on the power and symbolism of clothes and its colours. The green dress shows Clarissa's personality, her insecurities and search for refuge. The white frock recalls her happy past at Bourton. Both dresses represent her past and present and her ways to negotiate with her fears and strength.

3.2 Miss Kilman and her mackintosh: Social awareness

Characterization in *Mrs Dalloway* works also by means of contrasting characters. Miss Kilman is a poor woman, who is not interested in wearing elegant clothes or having a good appearance. She thinks that Mrs Dalloway is a superficial woman and feels envy for Clarissa's status, for Clarissa's maternal achievements with a beautiful daughter as Elizabeth and feels inferior. Her clothing is a clear indicator of repressed feelings that have to be endured with sacrifice and pain. Thus, an impersonal mackintosh becomes the symbol of her obscure life and her burdened mind. The narrator's voice presents the attire while Miss Kilman is waiting to take Elizabeth to the Stores, including the woman's own justification for her attire: "Yes, Miss Kilman stood on the landing, and wore a mackintosh; but had her reasons. First it was cheap; second, she was over forty; and did not, after all, dress to please. She was poor, moreover; degradingly poor" (*MD*, 115)

The mackintosh becomes a symbol to reflect poverty and carelessness in Miss Kilman's character. Compared to Clarissa Dalloway, she does not pursue gentleness or sensitivity in her clothes. The mackintosh makes her an unfashionable and unattractive person, and she is not interested in being attractive, popular or in giving parties. Modernist techniques allow Woolf to access to Miss Kilman's character, who dressed in a mackintosh reveals her insecurities and fears. She hides her physical appearance under this garment, where she feels comfortable as it becomes her tool to fight against the society that Clarissa represents.

3.3 Lucrezia Smith: The role of the happy past

Lucrezia is an Italian elegant woman who has a constant worry, her husband's disease. She tries unsuccessfully to help Septimus and she feels powerless and unhappy. Rezia continuously recalls the past when both felt free and secure. She makes hats and carefully sews them and the hat becomes an element which defines her character and moods. It is the only garment known of Lucrezia's attire revealed by the narrator to the reader, and explains her relationship with her husband in different moments of the novel. For example, when both are in the park and she goes to the fountain, we read: "She put on her new hat and he never noticed; and he was happy without her. Nothing could make her happy without him! Nothing!" (*MD*, 20). Lucrezia is sad and she suffers a lot because of her husband's situation. Suffering shell-shock effects, Septimus goes through his own hell and Rezia endures the situation painfully. In this context, the hat represents the happiness of her past. Her husband liked her hats and at present he does not even notice them. She feels invisible and unable to relieve him from his suffering and her hat becomes her refuge, the only physical memory of the happy past life of the couple.

Just before Septimus' suicide, both find a magic, secure moment together. It takes place while she is sewing a hat. Their dialogue over the hat brings them together and Lucrezia feels her husband's complicity. The hat brings the happy past back and she experiences the lost happiness, as Septimus is momentarily not lost in his deep, tormented thoughts:

'It's too small for Mrs. Peters,' said Septimus. For the first time for days he was speaking as he used to do! [...] He took it out of her hands. He said it was an organ grinder's monkey's hat. How it rejoiced her, that! Not for weeks had they laughed like this together, poking fun like married people (*MD*, 133-4)

Septimus's transient and evanescent connection with his wife is reached through observations on the hat, which represents their shared feelings of love and happiness. It brings Rezia's inner strength to believe in a strong relation that existed and that will later let her understand her husband's suicide.

As Rezia, Septimus has tried to reach past memories to feel secure and fight with his dramatic present. It is very interesting to point to another female garment in those memories. That one is related to Miss Isabel Pole, a girlfriend Septimus had before the war: "He thought her beautiful, believed her impeccably wise; dreamed of her, wrote poems to her, which, ignoring the subject, she corrected in red ink; he saw her, one

summer evening, walking in a green dress in a square” (*MD*, 79). In his memories about Pole, Septimus recalls her dress, as part of a feeling of love and security that he needs when he selects positive aspects from the past.

3.4 Elizabeth Dalloway: Youth and freedom

Elizabeth is the youngest female character in the novel, an elegant girl who faces the conflict established between her mother and Miss Kilman. She appreciates both of them and feels uncomfortable with their continuous confrontations along the novel. Despite the fact that Elizabeth belongs to the high society, as her mother, her youth makes her a free character, away from the burden of class status that affect both Clarissa and Miss Kilman. She succeeds in getting away from the influence of both women.

Two distinctive pieces of clothing portray the character of Elizabeth: her gloves and her dress at the party. The gloves symbolize her way of escaping from the battle between her mother and Miss Kilman: “Elizabeth said she had forgotten her gloves. That was because Miss Kilman and her mother hated each other. She could not bear to see them together. She ran upstairs to find her gloves” (*MD*, 116). The narrator’s voice detects Elizabeth’s quick way to avoid conflict, and describe her flight with the excuse of her gloves. Survival and security is achieved by Elizabeth at different times in the novel. We will see later how she gallops away from Miss Kilman in the Stores and we understand her desire to free herself for the dominion of her mother and tutor respectively.

Elizabeth is a clever girl and learns how to survive within the constraints of a conservative society. She respects Miss Kilman and accepts to go with her to the Stores, but she also knows that she needs to go back to attend her mother’s party. She loves her mother and knows that the party is very important for her. In the party, she wears a pink dress. This garment shows the reader that she follows her mother’s norms of elegance and distinction. She consciously separates from Miss Kilman’s way of wearing clothes, and takes care of her aspect. Elizabeth’s reconciliation with her mother through her pink dress is obviously detected by Clarissa herself, as the narrator describes: “She couldn’t take her eyes off her; in her pink dress, wearing the necklace Mrs Dalloway had given her” (*MD*, 155). Following her mother’s style, wearing an elegant dress and the necklace that Clarissa had given her, Elizabeth adopts her mother’s elegance and openly shows her love for her. Elizabeth uses the dress to avoid the loss of her mother and with it she positions herself in her side, away from Miss Kilman’s influence. Nevertheless, the pink colour of her dress also establishes some distance with her own mother,

revealing the spirit of freedom and youth that keeps her away from maternal dominion.

3.5 Sally Seaton: The mature transformation of a rebellious spirit

Sally Seaton is an old friend of Clarissa Dalloway from Bourton. She is a very important person for Clarissa. In the past, they had a very close friendship which caused confusion in Clarissa's mind and is still recalled in her mind. In all her memories about Sally, Clarissa experiments feelings of bliss and delight and recalls them as real moments of happiness. Sally was then a rebel girl; her personality was opposed to Clarissa's. She was not interested in belonging to high society or in proving educated manners. She could not understand Clarissa's accommodation to the conservative world, and challenged her to be a woman who would fight for her future and her rights. Sally was a woman with liberal ideas. She smoked, she sat on the floor, and she wanted to abolish private property. She tried to convince Clarissa that they had to reform the world.

The reader understands how Clarissa felt attracted for Sally's rebellious and free spirit, as she recalls the scene in Bourton, when both girls were getting ready for dinner. Curiously, those thoughts record details of Sally's clothing: "She was wearing pink gauze - was that possible? She *seemed*, anyhow, all light, glowing, like some bird or air ball that has flown in, attached itself for a moment to a bramble" (*MD*, 31). Clarissa seemed surprised because Sally was wearing gauze, a type of fabric which, not being very elegant, looks evanescent, light and free, as Sally's spirit. Clarissa admired her and her autonomy and independence. Thus, she compares her with a bird and with the air, which symbolize freedom. Clarissa's love feelings for her friend were sincere and not biased because of norms or dress codes. She was conscious of her friend's place in society and she accepted her. The gauze represents Sally's personality in the past, a liberal and joyful woman.

As much as Sally is an important part of the past of Clarissa, she is significant in her present. She is in Clarissa's mind as the day passes and at the end of the novel Sally goes to Clarissa's party. Happy and surprised when she sees Sally, Clarissa is not only impressed by her presence but also by her clothing: "She wore ear-rings, and a silver-green mermaid's dress. Lolloping on the waves and braiding her tresses she seemed, having that gift still; to be; to exist" (*MD*, 163). The quote shows the partial transformation of Sally after all years that have passed since the two women have not seen each other. Sally's dress reflects elegance and maturity but she still, keeps a halo of

liberty and self-rule wearing a dress related to silver and related to the freedom of a mermaid, and with the touch of originality of her ear-rings. Her original attire, makes Clarissa and the reader understand that she keeps her essence, reflected in her hair and her walking.

Similar to other female characters, Sally wears clothes that reflect her personality. The reader gets to know the celebration of her inner-strength, her vitality and her success over time, keeping her liberal spirit over the years as a mature woman.

4. Colour and character in *Mrs. Dalloway*

One of the most distinctive techniques of Impressionism is the use of colours to represent the world. Colours produce sensations and impressions. In *Mrs Dalloway*, female characters systematically represent in their garments some important colours which have meaning and establish peculiar relations between them. The psychoanalyst Angelica Wright studied in her book *The Beginner's Guide To Colour Psychology* (1995) how colours influence mood and behaviour. She states that each colour has positive and negative effects. Her study along with Sandrine Gil and Bigot's analysis of the green colour ("Seeing Life through Positive-Tinted Glasses: Color-Meaning Associations" 2014) complements my work, proving that three main colours in *Mrs Dalloway* complement the process of characterization successfully.

4.1 Pink colour: Friendship and love

The colour pink appears in the dress that Elizabeth wears at Clarissa's party and in the gauze that Sally wears when Clarissa remembers her past time in Bourton. Angelica Wright has studied all feelings that traditionally have been associated with this colour, conveying physical tranquillity, nurture, warmth, femininity and love. At the same time, it can express attitudes related to inhibition, emotional claustrophobia and physical weakness.

In *Mrs Dalloway* pink is used in some of the female characters selected, establishing important links between them. On the one hand, Elizabeth's dress in pink, as stated above, reflects reconciliation and harmony between mother and daughter at the party. It re-establishes the warmth needed in his close relation. Simultaneously, Elizabeth's pink dress reflects her adherence to juvenile freedom confronting the mature and experienced nature of the grown-ups that attend the party. The pink dress points at her emotional claustrophobia and inhibition in the conflict between her mother and Miss Kilman, but at the same time, it celebrates the femininity in the young girl and the fresh

values of her personality, as a sweet and kind-hearted girl.

On the other hand, the use of pink in character of Sally projects the sincere friendship and understanding between Clarissa and herself. In spite of her independent nature, the pink halo in her light pink dress announces the calm and sustained friendship that she nurtures and provides for Clarissa along the years, not affected by disturbing emotions.

Consequently, pink is the chosen colour to depict the two female characters that are the most important women in Clarissa's life. Friendship and love bound both characters with Clarissa strongly and consolidate the characterization of their relations in the novel.

4.2 White: Confidence

White is the colour in Clarissa Dalloway's frock that is recalled in her memories at Bourton with Sally. According to Wright's study the colour white conveys images of hygiene, clarity, purity, cleanness, simplicity, sophistication and efficiency.

In Clarissa's remembrances, her frock is described in white, in a context where she is a young woman who only wants to enjoy her dinner with her friend. Purity and innocence invade the recollected scene. The reader assumes a time of purity and innocence, where Sally's ideas of freedom are admired. White implies hygiene and cleanness, and establishes a clear contrast with the relation that Clarissa will later have to face with Miss Kilman, who is described by Clarissa as an unclean woman. Eventually, at the end of the novel the colour white also proves Clarissa's efficient and practical decision to go on with her life, after reflecting upon Septimus' suicide and surmounting her fears.

4.3 Green: Safety

Green is one of the most representative and repeated colours in the novel. Green is the colour in Clarissa Dalloway's dress for her party, in Miss Kilman's mackintosh, in Sally Seaton's dress at the party and in Isabel Pole's dress. According to Angelica Wright and Sandrine Gil's studies colour green conveys images of harmony, balance, pleasantness, calmness, happiness, universal love, restoration, reassurance, equilibrium and peace. At the same time, it can articulate feelings of boredom, stagnation, blandness and enervation. Green also evokes safety and hope.

Firstly, Clarissa's plunge into her green dress lets the reader understand her sensibility and search for happiness in the context of her party. Green symbolises her

safe refuge as she deals with her fears about life and she restores her security. Similarly but with a very different garment, green becomes a safety valve for Miss Kilman. Her mackintosh means a conscious selection of a shield against past sufferings because of her sympathy with Germans before and after WWI and against conventional upper class, represented by Clarissa Dalloway. Her green mackintosh presents her as a boring and bland person, unpleasant for the rest of characters, and points at Miss Kilman's weakness and feelings of inferiority and insignificance. However, the mackintosh helps Miss Kilman to hold on, to keep calm, and to be unperceived when she feels trifling. The green mackintosh helps her, along with her unconditional religious faith, to be in peace in the turmoil of an unfriendly world and she finds ways to reassure herself, pitying Clarissa Dalloway. Colour green helps the reader to understand the opposition of two determined characters as Clarissa and Miss Kilman, and to perceive how both struggle to find ways to feel safe and free.

Thirdly, the green in Sally's dress in the party conveys safety. Clarissa feels safe and happy with Sally's appearance in her party. With her green lively dress, the reader understands Sally's transformation. She has become a mature woman. Her clumsy and her braiding of her locks point still at her free character and reminds the reader of the rebel girl she was. In a metaphoric way, the green dress can imply the enervation and stagnation of the rebel character of Sally. Colour green joins her together with Clarissa and Sally. They choose the same colour for the party dress, which is a reflection of the survival of their friendship. They were united during the past at Bourton and they remain united by the green colour.

Lastly, the green in Isabel Pole's dress provides memories of harmony for troubled-minded Septimus, who also recalls happiness and calmness in his past. Green unites Isabel Pole and Lucrezia as both women represent safety in the difficult present of Septimus.

As proved, green becomes an important colour in the novel. It appears in four garments and is related to the majority of characters in the novel. Moreover, colour green was quite important in Virginia Woolf's life. In *Moments of Being* (1972) she remembers distinctively the green dress she had during her years at Hyde Park Gate. Aware of Victorian rules she recalls distinctively that in 1900 she wore a green dress to go to an evening sociable party. Years later, she carefully selected a green dress for the main character in Mrs Dalloway for a party and plays with impressions, feelings and attitudes related to the same colour systematically associating it with the idea of safety.

5. Conclusions

As we have seen along this essay, Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* cannot be understood without an approach that does not relate with Modernist and Impressionist aesthetic ideas. The influence of Modernism and Impressionism is essential to the understanding of the novel and its techniques. Woolf's complex characters are portrayed with experimental strategies and among them the use of clothing and colours become a remarkable tool. Both act as valuable indicators to define the personality of each female character, emphasizing the development of their fears and thoughts, and establishing bonds between each other.

Firstly, Woolf selects three kinds of garments to contrast and connect the different characters. The first garment, the dress, connects the characters of Clarissa Dalloway, Sally Seaton and Elizabeth Dalloway. The second garment, the mackintosh, contrasts Miss Kilman and Clarissa. The third garment, the hat, connects Lucrezia Smith with her husband Septimus. Secondly, Woolf selects three specific colours that produce impressions and connect and contrast characters. The first colour, pink, connects Elizabeth Dalloway and Sally Seaton. This connection means that colour pinks represent the love in Clarissa's life. The second colour, white, develops the identity of Clarissa Dalloway, it shows her confidence. It also contrasts Clarissa and Miss Kilman. The third colour, green, contrasts Clarissa with Miss Kilman, connects Clarissa with Sally and connects Lucrezia with Isabel. The colour green produces the feeling of safety.

The Modernist and Impressionist techniques used with clothing and colours create in the reader the feeling of a world connected, all the female characters are related. The notion of a world connected is expressed by Andelys Wood in her article "Walking the Web in the Lost London of Mrs. Dalloway" that states: "The challenge to readers is that the reality of the novel involves London then and now, time in the mind and time on the clock, the experiences of writer, characters, and readers, all connected by the novel's web" (2003: 19). Not only the story and the time connect each character with the other, the clothing and their colours help to this connection in the same way that the author connects the characters by the stream of consciousness technique and the use of symbols as the Big Ben.

This study could be extended in the future following three different aspects. The first aspect is that the clothing of the rest of characters—the male characters and the

secondary characters—could also indicate a connection between characters and could also include some important colours. The abundance of the same techniques in different works by Woolf may suggest that the Impressionist and Modernist techniques of using the clothing and its colours to define characters can be found in others of her novels. Taking this into account, a second aspect would be that this technique can be found in *The New Dress* (1927), a novel in which Woolf tells the party of Clarissa Dalloway from the point of view of other characters that were guests. It would be interesting to look out for the colours and the garments studied and to compare the female characters in *Mrs Dalloway* with the new characters in this novel. Finally, the third aspect is the study of Woolf's description of her mother in *Moments of Being* (1972). Her mother is always described along with her clothes and the colours of the clothing. It would be fascinating to study the colours used in her mother's clothing, the kind of garments that she used and the reason why Woolf has these elements fixed in her memories.

Works Cited

- Blair, Linda Nicole. "Virginia Woolf and Literary Impressionism." *Tacoma Art Museum Series on Art* (2010): 1-26.
- Bradbury, Malcolm, and James MacFarlane. *Modernism, 1890-1930*. London: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Brettell, Richard R. *Modern Art, 1851-1929: Capitalism and Representation*. London: OUP, 1999.
- Castro Fernández, Concha. *Historia de la vestimenta a través del arte*. Huelva: Niebla, 2015.
- Edmondson, Annalee. "Narrativizing Characters in Mrs. Dalloway." *Journal of Modern Literature* 36 (2012): 17-36.
- Gil, Sandrine, and Ludovic L. Bigot. "Seeing Life through Positive-Tinted Glasses: Color-Meaning Associations: E104291." *PLoS One* 9 (2014): 1-4.
- Gillies, Mary A., and Aurelea D. Mahood. *Modernist Literature: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007.
- Harris, Laura. "To the Lighthouse as a Post-Impressionist work; The influence of Roger Fry, Clive Bell and Cezanne on Virginia Woolf." 2013: 4-20.
- Hoff, Molly. "Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*." *The Explicator* 58 (2000): 35-39.
- Humm, Maggie. *Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010.
- Koppen, Randi. *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009.
- Nicholson, Claire. "Virginia Woolf and Her 'Clothes Complex.'" *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 79 (2011): 16-18.
- Olson, Liesl M. Virginia Woolf's "Cotton Wool of Daily Life." *Journal of Modern Literature* 26 (2003): 42-65.
- Query, Patrick. "Literary Impressionism." *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies*, 45 (2014): 47-53.
- Sim, Lorraine. *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016.

- Stape, John Henry. *Virginia Woolf: Interviews and Recollections*. Iowa: U of Iowa P, 1995.
- Wood, Andelys. "Walking the Web in the Lost London of Mrs. Dalloway." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 36 (2003): 19-32.
- Woolf, Leonard. *Beginning Again*. London: Hogarth Press, 1964.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writings*. 1972. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind and Hermione Lee. London: Pimlico 2002.
- . *Mrs Dalloway's Party: A Short Story Sequence*. Harcourt: Harvest Books, 1975.
- . *Roger Fry: A Biography*. London: HBJ, 1940.
- . *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: 1936-1941*. 1941. Ed. Anne O. Bell, and Andrew McNeillie. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1984.
- . *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*. 1975. Ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. London: Hogarth Press, 1982.
- Wright, Angela. *The Beginner's Guide to Colour Psychology*. London: Colour Affects Ltd, 1995.