

Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf - The Tiredness of Rosabel by Katherine Mansfield

Private thoughts of female characters

In this Final paper I would like to contrast the novel Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf with the short story The Tiredness of Rosabel by Katherine Mansfield. Namely I would like to compare the theme of different kinds of private thinking which in the heroines (Clarissa and Rosabel) provoke the people around them, their surroundings or their financial situation.

Many thoughts of the heroines are provoked by the city of London. But in Mrs Dalloway London as a public space is of greater significance than in The Tiredness of Rosabel. I believe in Virginia Woolf's work London is kind of a character for itself, whereas Katherine Mansfield does not attach such a lot of importance to this city. Only during Rosabel's way home London wields its influence on her. When she comes home, she leaves the whole outside world behind her door. On the other hand, in Mrs Dalloway is the city part of Clarissa's herself; even at home her thoughts repeatedly turn to the sound of the bells of Big Ben or to an elderly woman standing in the window of a house across the street.

The heroines also perceive London differently (their impressions are obviously affected by the weather and their financial situation). For Rosabel are the streets misty and dreary, people in the bus alienated and advertisements "inane". Yet Clarissa perceives the city as full of life and bustling; she enjoys the hurly-burly of the sun-drenched streets.

Rosabel could be described as a new type of heroine – she is a girl completely independent on others, unmarried, with a flat and money of her own, which is in contrast to Clarissa's position of a homemaker. But Rosabel does not seem to see London as a place of opportunities for a new female identity as I think Clarissa's daughter Elizabeth, dreaming of becoming a doctor or a farmer, does.

Both Rosabel and Clarissa often draw their attention away from the present. But whereas Clarissa returns back to the past, Rosabel keeps dreaming about a better life in the upper class. This contrast is caused not only by their different financial position, but also by their different age, I believe. Clarissa does not escape from the reality as Rosabel does; her impressions of her surroundings, thoughts about her own character, her own life and people in it change to reminiscences about her happy years in Bourton as a young girl; Clarissa's thoughts flow. Rosabel is not a realist at all and she is living in a dream world. Instead of jewellers' shops she sees palaces and instead of walking down a wet street she sits in a gondola on the Grand Canal in Venice. She imagines herself living someone else's life, life of a beautiful rich girl she met in the shop. I believe she does not really care about the present except when she suffers from some unpleasant physical states, such as hunger or cold. Rosabel does also not have any spare time as Clarissa does to muse about some "philosophical" problems.

We can also notice the difference between the lonely, isolated life of Rosabel and social life of Clarissa who is surrounded by her family and friends. Rosabel does not take any interest in the thoughts of other people; I think she is too "tired" to think about other people's problems. On the contrary, Clarissa is interested in the lives of even completely unknown people, as for example when she hears of the suicide of Septimus Smith. She likes to be surrounded by people, which is why she organizes the party, and she cares about the opinions on her personality.

Although the works by Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf portray only one single day in the life of two women at the beginning of the 20th century, there are many differences in the private thoughts between Clarissa and Rosabel. The contrast is obviously caused by their different financial position and home situation. I believe the characters have something in common, though. In their thoughts they are both in fact lonely; neither Clarissa

(although she is surrounded by her family and friends) nor Rosabel shares her feelings with anybody or show her emotions to others.