

In the Name of the Compassionate



Islamic Azad University – Central Tehran Branch
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Intertextuality and Dialogue:

A Case Study of *The Hours* and *Mrs. Dalloway*

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to present a critical reading of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* in terms of an intertextual approach, concentrating on dialogic imagination, negativity, transposition and allusion. This study attempts to evaluate Cunningham's perception of Woolf's life and work by adopting Kristeva's conception of intertextuality and her consideration of *The Hours* as a revolutionary text. The present research tries to illustrate the intertextuality in these two works by analyzing the textual discourses and discursive explanation. *The Hours* an adaptation of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), is a well-written work that employs many of Woolf's images and themes including identity, postmodernism and patriarchy in avant-garde atmosphere of mimicking Woolf's writing style as well as echoing her voice. By using intertextuality as a tool, the thesis tries to demonstrate how each adaptation focuses on the interplay and interrelation of the texts. The present project attempts to explore the intertextual relationship between *The Hours* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. *The Hours* provokes interesting questions about the similarities between the two novels, and like many adaptations, it highlights specific themes in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and represents them in contemporary contexts. In the analyzing process, the researcher aims to indicate how Cunningham, as a writer and a reader of Woolf, interprets her life and work. The importance of the intertextuality in *The Hours* is that, Cunningham by imitating *Mrs. Dalloway* and other intertexts, heightens and elaborates Woolf's usefulness.

Key Words: Allusion, avant-garde, carnivalesque, identity, intertextuality, postmodernism.

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To

To my mother and father, the true beings in my life.

I am very proud to be their daughter.

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Chapter One

The Problem, Argument, and Framework: An Introduction

1.1 General Background

Virginia Woolf was born Adeline Virginia Stephen on 25 January in 1882 in a suburb of London to Sir Leslie and Julia Stephen. The Stephen family was part of London's intellectual society. Virginia endured several traumatic experiences in her youth, that is, the death of her mother and beloved half – sister, to whom she was very close. However, she was also exposed to sexual abuse by her half brother. This abusive relationship with him was another blow to her mental health which may have contributed to the recurring mental breakdowns and severe depression throughout her life. After the death of her father in September of 1904, Virginia and her sibling escaped the trauma of 22 Hyde Park gate and moved to 46 Gordon Square in Bloomsburg neighborhood of London. Virginia and her sister Vanessa Bell, with a number of young intellectuals, writers and artists, helped to found the Bloomsburg Group, an influential group that opposed the narrow post-Victorian restrictions in both arts and morality

and had a major impact on British and European culture in the two decades after the first world war.

Four years after Vanessa's marriage to Clive Bell, on 10 August 1912, Virginia married Leonard Woolf, one of her many suitors, a writer a member of the Bloomsbury Group, and the couple founded the Hogarth Press which published all of Virginia's novels and other major modernist texts written by notable authors. Virginia suffered mental disorder and depression her entire life, and experienced a number of breakdowns and suicide attempts. "Despite Virginia's cheerful attitude, by the beginning of 1941 as England entered the Second World War, the stress of her declining mental stability, the war and the increasing frustrations with her inability to write began to overwhelm her and she was entering another mental breakdown then she drowned herself in the River Ouse" (Bell, 1972:35).

In her fourth novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, published in 1925, Woolf focuses on the memories, hopes, fears and inner thoughts of a number of characters as they flow one idea to another over a single June day in post World War I London. The novel tracks the parallel lives of two very different Londoners, Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, a veteran of the war who is suffering from delayed shell-shock and is mentally unbalanced. Woolf records one day in Clarissa Dalloway's life, a feminine quest to buy flowers and give a party in a social wasteland, Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway thinks about life, death, and her existence in the vast world. Woolf described her writing of *Mrs. Dalloway* "as a devil of a struggle" (Bell, 1972: 110). She wished to create a work that would portray the "true reality" of "life and death, sanity and insanity", as well as other modernists "criticize the social system, and...show it art work, at its most intense" (Bell, 1972: 90). Moreover, Woolf had the great novelistic gift for character and scene that remain fresh in reader's mind.

Michael Cunningham, the writer of *The Hours*, is a contemporary American writer born in California in 1952. He studied English Literature in Stratford University, and then received

his masters of fine arts from the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop. Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is the inspiration for Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*, the award winning novel and Oscar-nominated film which appeared in 1998. In fact, *The Hours* was a working title for the novel Virginia Woolf finally titled, *Mrs. Dalloway* and that is why Cunningham took *The Hours* as the title of his own novel. "Interestingly, due to the attention paid to Michael Cunningham's Pulitzer Prize-winning book and its Oscar-winning film adoption, *Mrs. Dalloway* is being read and praised by more readers than at any time since it was published 84 years ago" (Seaman, 2002:20).

Michael Cunningham's novel, *The Hours*, follows three women on one day in their lives. Each of these women, however, is living in a different time period and place. The novel shifts between narratives as the women wake for the day, prepare for a visit or a party, and grapple with depression. The reader is then introduced to each of the woman in their own time and place, and the narrative with flash forwards and flashbacks, intertwining the women's stories. Each section in the novel is labeled by the name of the female character at the top of each page- Mrs. Woolf, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Dalloway – to distinguish whose story is being told. Mrs. Woolf, a fictionalization of Virginia Woolf, in 1923 has an idea for a new novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, while living in Richmond, a suburb of London. She begins the day writing in her room and then decides to take a walk through the country to think about her character, Mrs. Dalloway. "In *The Hours*, Cunningham weaves together the lives of three respective women of three different periods of time to illuminate the threads that link solicitudes, despair, and failure" (Sun, 2002: 115) .

The Hours provokes interesting questions about the similarities between the two novels, and like many adaptations, this novel highlights specific themes in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Like other adaptations of Woolf's work, *The Hours* provides further evidence of the enduring nature of Woolf's work and the relevance of Woolf's ideas to contemporary society.

However, Cunningham's decision to place Woolf as a character in his novel makes *The Hours* different from other adaptations of Woolf's texts. "*The Hours* becomes more than an adaptation of Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. *The Hours* becomes an adaptation of Woolf herself. In both its text and film versions, *The Hours* has inevitable and lasting effects on Woolf's identity as an author" (Sun, 2002: 104). In an interview of Cunningham in *Publishers Weekly* in 1998, Cunningham claims "*The Hours*, named after one of Woolf's early working titles for *Mrs. Dalloway*, tells three stories each deceptively small in scale, concerns a single day" (Coffey,1998:57) .

"In *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* the reader is invited not only to enter the different parties prepared by Clarissa Dalloway, Clarissa Vaughan, Virginia Woolf and Laura Brown, but also to share with these women the preparations for their party. These people enter the hearts and minds of various characters on a marvelous June day" (Sun, 2002: 125) . Without doubt, the openings of *Mrs. Dalloway* and the "Mrs. Dalloway" chapter of *The Hours* are considered as crucial passages in both novels. As the protagonists step into the street for buying flowers, the story begins and the reader is introduced to the course of Clarissa Dalloway and Clarissa Vaughan's thoughts. In the process of work step by step other characters enter the story world and during the course of this June day their life stories are disclosed to the reader.

However, *The Hours* consists of three stories, woven together in a very clever fashion, and each, like story of *Mrs. Dalloway*, takes place on a single day in June. This novel is considered as a meditative personality study of three women including of "Mrs. Dalloway" , "Mrs. Woolf" and "Mrs. Brown" chapters. In fact, Cunningham took up the same themes, but tried to expand the web of relationship between human beings and view the issue of human interconnection from a late twentieth century perspective. Woolf and Cunningham invoke time present and time past, for the present happenings in both novels remind the characters of their past. The readers of both novels follow the characters throughout the day until they

reach a kind of awakening due to the occurrences that happen to them and other characters. Not only does Woolf's novel serve as the inspiration for *The Hours*, but also she turns up as a major character in this novel. Cunningham's recreation of the year 1923 in the "Mrs. Woolf" chapter is based on the historical data he had collected to show Virginia's life. Indeed, he could never have written his book without a thorough knowledge of *Mrs. Dalloway* and Virginia Woolf's life, and that is no reason he draws heavily on both Woolf's diaries and autobiographical writings.

Tuzyline Allen, a Woolf scholar, in his famous work *Womanist and Feminist Aesthetics: A Comparative Review* asserts "life, as Virginia Woolf knew it, was at once ecstatic and painful. From her early years in the upper-middle-class confines of the Stephen's home at Hyde Park Gate to the intellectual magic kingdom of Bloomsbury, Woolf straddled the extreme emotions of joy and grief, excitement and anguish." (Allan, 1995: 110) Although Virginia Woolf had episodes of severe depression, these were paralleled and, in fact, dominated by her fantastic sense of humor and passion for the life. The moments Woolf created in her novel shimmer like the old fashioned artificial icicles that used to hang on indoor Christmas trees: from one angle they sparkled and shone; from another angle, they were leaden. (Allan, 1995: 98) In rendering a single day in the seemingly un-heroic life of an upper class woman who was preparing to host a party, Woolf focused on a character whose actions could at one moment appear admirable and, the next, trivial. It was this flux of experience, seen from different points of view that Woolf captured. It was also the fleeting moments of connection with others that she celebrated, and the ambiguous role women played in occasioning moments of connection that she puzzled over. Woolf, presaging her own death, dared to present the notion that one has the right to choose "not to live" when the connections are no longer possible (Van der Laan, 2002,18).

The present thesis follows a line of two works, which is the original novel, and the appropriated book. Regarding the facts that are revealed above about *The Hours* and *Mrs. Dalloway* as extraordinary works, the researcher is curious to analyze these works based on Kristeva's conception of intertextuality; therefore, this research aims to explore the intertextual relationship between *The Hours* and the other text, particularly, *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf. Adopting Kristeva's conception of intertextuality and treating *The Hours* as a revolutionary text, the researcher will see how Cunningham creates a dialogue with Woolf.

1.2 The Argument

Using the theory of intertextuality and its manifestations in the *The Hours* and its original *Mrs. Dalloway*, this thesis attempts to explore the intertextual relationship between *The Hours* and other texts, particularly *Mrs Dalloway*. Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, the basis of all these works, focuses on the internal life and emotions of one woman that is indirectly connected to Septimus's fate. Cunningham's novel re-interprets *Mrs. Dalloway* from a postmodern point of view and puts forward a prologue, which shows the suicide of *Mrs. Dalloway's* author, Virginia woolf is an important figure in *The Hours*. Cunningham is affected so deeply by Woolf that his *The Hours* has an interrelation with Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. According to him, *Mrs. Dalloway* is the first novel he reads with attention and concentration. Seaman in *Review of Michael Cunningham's The Hours* mentions that Woolf is his "goddess and muse" who influences his writing style. Therefore, *The Hours* is shadowed by *Mrs. Dalloway*. Both novels have similar plots and character. By intermingling the storyline and names of characters, Cunningham's *The Hours* interrelates with *Mrs. Dalloway* (Seaman, 2002:10).

By using intertextuality as a tool, the present research tries to show how each novel focuses on the interplay and interrelation of texts. As asserted by Allen in *Intertextuality* reading is also “a process of moving between texts” and the text becomes the ‘intertext’ (Allen, 2000: 1). Consequently, the reader helps the text to have its significance; without the reader, the text is meaningless. In Allen’s opinion literary texts possess meaning because of the reader’s participation and interpretation. Cunningham, intertextualizing *Mrs. Dalloway*, is at the same time the reader as well as the writer. Kristeva, in "An Interview with Julia Kristeva" by Waller, mentions that the writer is the creator “who produces a text by placing himself or herself at intersection of this plurality of texts on their very different levels” (Waller, 1989: 281). This thesis also explores the writer practices in intertextuality of his/her own writing.

The present thesis aims at applying Kristeva’s tripartite model to these works. By means of exploring these areas, this thesis tries to answer the following questions:

1. What features reinforce the significance of the intertextuality in *The Hours*?
2. How does Cunningham bring out life from death throughout the novel process?
3. What features of Virginia Woolf’s imagery has been reinforced in *The Hours*?
4. What does Kristeva’s treatise of intertextuality reveal in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*?
5. How does Cunningham break the bondage of time to expand Woolf’s life?
6. How could Cunningham make a contemporary Virginia Woolf?
7. Does the reader hear the voice of Virginia Woolf in *The Hours*?

The main goal of the present research is to find the answers to these questions hopefully. Try to help the readers have a better understanding of Woolf and Cunningham’s art as an excellent novelists. This research will try to make the readers recognize the value of the art of intertextual thinkers. As mentioned earlier, critics usually have lamented what has been lost in the transition from a novel to another one, ignoring what has been gained. Despite these

suspicions, it has been proved that the tracing of the intertextual adaptation is functional enough to show the manifold ways in which texts create other texts and the present research try to achieve that end.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This thesis focuses on a line of two novels. Such an analysis has rarely been done before. Consequently, it highlights the importance and significance of working on this project. Woolf's impersonality in writing leaves the text open and fluid allowing her writing to be readily retranslated and adapted. Each individual reader, therefore, may find some different resonances within the narrative. Although there are a number of adaptations and representations of Woolf's different works, *Mrs. Dalloway* has always been of great significance to the writers and directors. Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours* (1998) is the winner of Pulitzer Prize, and Steven Daldry's 2002 film adaptation of Cunningham's novel also entitled *The Hours* is an Academy Award-winning film has received nine Academy Award nominations. These awards show that these works are not only popular but also highly regarded by meticulous critics. The present research schemes to acquire an intertextual method to scrutinize the correlations between Woolf's and Cunningham's fictions. The research is going to show that there are textual correspondences between Cunningham's *The Hours* and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Drawing on Bakhtin's views on dialogue and ambivalence, Kristeva maintains in her essay "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", that each text maybe taken as the absorption and transformation of another. The intertextual approach is one applicable procedure for indicating the connection of *The Hours* to the previous imaginary or non-imaginary works and occurrences.

1.4 Limitation and Delimitation

The present thesis is going to focus on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and its adaptation *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham. Of course, there are some other representations of *Mrs. Dalloway*, but the present researcher makes an attempt to examine these works in the light of Kristeva's theories and views on intertextuality to illustrate the way the texts relate to each other. The most important issues which have been prohibited extremely by the regulations of the societies that are in a way related to the issues of sexuality. Cunningham has also based most of his novels on such prohibited matters, in *The Hours* he has based his theme on the socially tabooed homosexuality. The researcher tries not to apply the reading strategies of narrative theory or other structuralist recognized techniques to delimit the thesis to the notions that are more directly related to intertextuality and to avoid the discussions that overlap other researcher's thesis.

1.5 Methodology and Approach

The present thesis is going to focus on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and its cinematic adaptation, *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham. Of course, there certainly exist some other representations of *Mrs. Dalloway*, but the researcher will only focus on *The Hours*. Kristeva's views on intertextuality form the theoretical of the present thesis. Of the five constituent chapters of the thesis, three exclusively deal with the concept under discussion and try to apply intertextual elements to them in order to find the ways in which they differ.

The library and electronic sources have been used for the study of novels in the light of Kristeva's theory of intertextuality. Allen believes that Kristeva is in "a move from structuralism to postmodernism" (Allen, 2000: 3) in which she not only learns from Bakhtin but also has her new vision of the text. Besides, in "An Interview with Julia Kristeva", Kristeva herself says that "the conception of intertextuality is perhaps even more important.

In certain ways, because it assumes an interplay of contents and not of forms alone” (Waller, 1989: 282) . In other words, Kristeva demonstrates the key point of intertextuality: it is a postmodern concept that involves “ an interplay of contents”. Since intertextuality is a postmodern term, it is impossible to “speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object, be it a painting or a novel” (Allen, 2002: 5). Thus, intertextuality treats literary works as texts relating to other texts; a text is never original and independent of other texts.

Intertextuality involves the interrelation and the interchanging process of texts. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva treats ‘intertextuality’ as a process working in the unconsciousness; it is “the passage from one sign system to another” (Kristeva, 1984: 59). Kristeva thinks that the components of a text move on various textual systems. From the theory of Bakhtin, she concludes that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations: any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read at least double” (Kristeva, 1980 : 66). A text always relates to another text; it is never alone. Kristeva examines and interprets Bakhtin’s “dialogism” as intertextuality. She is affected by Bakhtin’s theory and revises Bakhtin’s idea of dialogism in order to develop her own concept of intertextuality (Allen, 2000: 3). Kristeva expands dialogism, which concerns about utterances and voices. He believes that it considers “the results of the intersection of a number of voices” (waller,1989: 281). To Kristeva, dialogism deals not only with sounds and voices but also with the narrative sentences and discourses in a text. Therefore, dialogism does not merely refer to the direct and literal dialogues. It emphasizes various intersections and results when different discourses collide each other. Kristeva agrees with Barthes, the text can be treated as “a tissue, a woven fabric” (Allen, 2000: 5). Any text is related to its former texts and is “constructed out of already existent discourses” (Allen, 2000, 35). That is to say, the text is never original. Moreover, the text is not complete, either: “For both Barthes and Kristeva, intertextuality posits the notion

of a text which is a 'mosaic' or 'tissue' of quotations without quotation marks, without a preexistent author exercising agency in the construction of that text" (Friedman, 1991: 149). To Kristeva, the text includes elements from previous texts. As a consequence, the text lacks its independent meaning in that it is destined to have relationships with other texts. It is also what intertextuality means: Text.... Lacking in any kind of independent meaningAre what theorists now call "Intertextual" (Allen, 2000: 1).

'Negativity' is one essential characteristic of intertextuality; it represents a power to destroy the former text and create a new one. For Kristeva, the negation refers to the process of denying the former text and creating the new text. When writers put the already existent texts into their texts, they are in the process to negate the former text. Kristeva treats it as an important feature of intertextuality because "nonalternating negation is the law of narrative" (Kristeva, 1980:48). It is a destructive process and can be defined as "a dynamics of negativity" (Rajan, 1991: 65). In other words, the negation is a flowing process. Meanwhile, negativity represents a power to destroy the old position and to form a new one (Allen, 2000: 53). It destroys in order to create. In other words, negativity is a kind of subversive and revolutionary power since it is a power to revolt against former texts. Only when the previous text is destroyed can the following text be assured of its own existence. Consequently, the text is in a revolutionary process. It is also a repression and remembrance of the past (O'Donnell, 1989: xiv) in that it always includes elements from previous texts.

In Kristeva's idea of intertextuality, the role of the reader is more important than the writer's role. She treats the writer as the "writing subject" (Kristeva, 1984: 7) and asserts that the importance of the writer vanishes in intertextuality. Virginia Woolf, in the contemporary age, is not only an image but also an 'idea'. She has become "a model for thought and action beyond the frontiers of art" (Friedman, 1980:6). From different meaning of her person and life, Woolf becomes an image people want to pursue and understand. Writing *The Hours*,

Cunningham confirms Woolf's ending significance in literature. In this account, he tries to create a dialogue between himself and Woolf. The dialogue also exists in the interrelation between *The Hours* and *Mrs. Dalloway* and between the English society and American society. Furthermore, from his interpretation and imagination of Woolf and her work, he transforms and even subverts the intertexts in order to make a revolution (Seaman, 2002, 98).

1.6 Review of Literature

This thesis refers to a number of articles and books some of which are going to be introduced here. The basic theoretical framework of this thesis lies in the notion of intertextuality introduced by Kristeva. Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) contains valuable data about Kristeva's theory of intertextuality in details, classified in separate chapters. Kristeva treats 'intertextuality' as a process working in the unconscious, and she thinks that the components of a text move between various textual systems. Kristeva kept working with John Barthes, the postmodernist master, and developed her own idea of intertextuality from reading the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian formalist (Allen, 2000, 4). Waller's book introduces Kristeva's theory and talks about its application of intertextuality and contemporary American fiction which assumes intertextuality as interplay of contents and not of forms alone. Kristeva's *The Bounded Text* (1980) is a semiotic approach to literature and art, and her "*Word, Dialogue and Novel*" and the related essays have the same semiotic approach to literature and art. Allen's book discusses Kristeva's ideas, Barthes and other significant thinkers of intertextuality. The books that are the main areas of researcher exploration are *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*. Latham's book is a collection of essays about Woolf's novels and contains many essays on *Mrs. Dalloway*, discusses the characterization, images, concept of time and symbolism in the novel. Hirschkop's book, *Introduction: Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (1989) is an introductory work on Bakhtin's ideas and cultural

theory. Freedman's book is a collection of essays around Woolf's revolutionary way of writing novels. O'Donnell's book, *Introduction: Intertext and Contemporary American Fiction* (1989), talked about intertext and contemporary American Fiction. Rajan's book, *Intertextuality and the Subject of Reading/ Writing* (1991) discuss influence of intertextuality in literary history from both side of reading and writing. Bell's book: *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* gives us an introductory vision of Woolf's life. Finally Patteson's handout, is a review of *The Hours* which is about time. "A Virginia Woolf of One's Own: Consequences of Adaptation in Micheal Cunningham's *The Hours*" (2007) is a thesis submitted to the faculty of Brigham Young University by Brooke Leora Grant in December 2007. The researcher believes that, with a rising interest in visual media in academia, studies have overlapped at literary and film scholars' interest in adaptation. This interest has mainly focused on the examination of issues regarding adaptation of novel to novel or novel to film. This thesis discusses Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours*, which is an adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and the 2002 film adaptation of Cunningham's novel. The researcher, however, also will hopefully investigate a different kind of adaptation: the adaptation of a literary and historical figure. By including in *The Hours* a fictionalization of Virginia Woolf, Cunningham entrenches his adaptation with Virginia Woolf's life and identity. This thesis compares the two adaptations of Virginia Woolf's identity in the novel *The Hours* and the film *The Hours* and investigates the ways in which these adaptations funnel Woolf's identity through the perception of three men—Michael Cunningham, the novelist; David Hare, the screenwriter; Steven Daldry, the director.

The researcher's reaction to the fictionalization of Virginia Woolf in *The Hours* mirrors Brenda Silver's sentiment in the introduction to her book *Virginia Woolf: Icon*: "My distrust of those who would fix [Virginia Woolf] into any single position, either to praise her or to blame her, remains my strongest motivation" (Silver, 2004: 64). The researcher's motivation