

**Tribhuvan University**

**Reinforcement of Woolf's Canon in Michel Cunningham's *The Hours*: An  
Intertextual Reading**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U.  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in English**

**By**

**Rita Paudel**

**Roll No.: 68**

**T. U. Regd. No.: 6 - 2- 361 - 67 - 2009**

**Central Department of English**

**Kirtipur, Kathmandu**

**August 2016**

Tribhuvan University  
Central Department of English  
Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Letter of Recommendation

Rita Paudel has completed her thesis entitled “Reinforcement of Woolf’s Canon in Michel Cunningham’s *The Hours: An Intertextual Reading*” under my supervision. She carried out her research from May 2016 to August 2016. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for viva.

.....

Khem Raj Khanal

Supervisor

Date: .....

Tribhuvan University  
Central Department of English

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Reinforcement of Woolf’s Canon in Michel  
Cunningham’s *The Hours: An Intertextual Reading*” submitted to the Central  
Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Rita Paudel, has been approved by  
the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Internal Supervisor  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
External Examiner  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Head  
Central Department of English  
  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Acknowledgement

The present study would not have been completed without the continuous encouragement and scholarly supervision of Mr. Khem Raj Khanal, lecturer of Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University. Apart from giving suggestions he guided me well through the beginning till the end, frequently checking the contents and structures of the study and correcting mistakes. I express my sincere gratitude to him.

I am very much grateful to Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi, Head of the Central Department of English, for the approval of this research work. I owe my sincere gratitude to all respected lecturers of the Department and who provided me with a number of valuable insights during the preparation of this thesis. I am very much grateful to all staff of the Department for their readiness to help.

I am also thankful to my family members who provided me remarkable affection and inspiration in my works. I am grateful to my colleagues who motivated me to seek more interesting ideas and reviewed my paper minutely. Lastly, I'm grateful to writers, critics, intellect and thinkers of all the resource materials whom I have cited.

August 2016

Rita Paudel

## Abstract

This research focuses on Michal Cunningham's *The Hours*, where the author employs excessive intertextual apparatuses deriving from Virginia Woolf's life and her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* to relocate Woolf's canonical place. The aim of this paper is to examine the various "transtextual" techniques adopted by Cunningham by drawing from Genette's theories of intertextuality. There is explicit intertextual reference to Virginia Woolf's work in Cunningham's novel; even the reader unfamiliar to Woolf's writing clearly notice it. Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* seems to be the original text in which Cunningham improvises. Drawing from theories of intertextuality developed by Gerard Genette, the paper outlines various levels of intertextual experiments. The post-modern practice of pastiche, palimpsest, ekphrasis, parody, allusion and quotation are the key areas of investigation in this research with special focus on various levels of transtextual practices. By illustrating the problematic experiment with intertextual techniques, this paper argues that Cunningham reinforces Woolf's canonical status as well as her dominant themes.

Key Words: Intertextuality, Transtextuality, Paratextuality, Metatextuality,

Archtextuality, Hypertextuality, Pastiche, Palimpsest, Ekphrasis, Parody,

Allusion, Quotation.

Reinforcement of Woolf's Canon in Michel Cunningham's *The Hours*: An  
Intertextual Reading

*The Hours* is full of intertextual references and twists, referring to actual life of Virginia Woolf as her biographies, essays, diaries, letters, and suicide note or her fictional plots. Even the title of the book is the initial name given by Woolf for her novel *Mrs Dalloway* (Latham 358). The intertextual devices like allusion, ekphrasis, quotation, parody, palimpsest, and pastiche all are present in Cunningham's text. Thus, the intertextual analysis of the text becomes more problematic and requires meticulous study. Cunningham's experimentation with intertextual reference projects his novel as a rewriting of Woolf's novel and complicates the interpretation of his literary attempt in relation to Virginia Woolf's text. This paper outlines various intertextual techniques employed by Cunningham and explores how he relies on Woolf's life and works and takes it to the different literary realm.

In *The Hours*, all the five categories of "transtextuality" are simultaneously employed. It deliberately alludes to the layers of texts written by Woolf over its own, which makes the text a palimpsest (Genette Qtd in Allen 101). Cunningham uses quotation from Virginia Woolf's suicide note which is the one found by her husband and collected among her writing, in the Prologue. "Dearest, . . . I feel we can't go through another of these terrible times" before her body is totally drowned at the bottom of the river (Cunningham 6). There are some lines from *Mrs Dalloway* which are repeated deliberately. Mrs Brown keeps on remembering a line from *Mrs Dalloway*, "Life, London, this moment of June" (Cunningham 41 75). Furthermore, Cunningham's novel repeats some other lines without direct reference "We thought her sorrows were ordinary sorrows, we had no idea" (Cunningham 205). This explicit reference from the older text, which Genette defines as "intertextuality", deconstructs

the meaning of the later text by reinforcing Woolf's themes in Cunningham's novel (Allen 97). The reference of Woolf's writing drawing from her suicide note can be seen as a form of "paratextuality" (Allen 103). The reference of things outside the page functions to create an overall mood of the text.

The use of ekphrasis is also explicit when Cunningham's new character comments on Woolf's writing while reading, "How, Laura wonders, could someone who was able to write a sentence like that - who was able to feel everything contained in a sentence like that" (Cunningham 41). This technique of commenting and responding to other text is what Genette calls "metatextuality" (Allen 106). Along with the intertextual techniques, as a reader of her book, Cunningham gives tribute to Virginia Woolf by playing "improvisations on an existing piece of great music from the past" like a musician and tries "to make other art out of an existing work of art" (Schiff 113). Though Cunningham's statement sounds concise, his brilliance dependence on Woolf's life and novel hints at Cunningham's initiation to recreate something like her.

*The Hours* has similar setting, issues and themes as *Mrs Dalloway* does. Both the novels concentrate on the life of some women, their concept about the past and their relationship with males. Both the texts incorporate death, suicide, vulnerability of life in city and role of memory in shaping one's present. The texts with identical genre and themes are categorized as "architextuality" by Genette (Allen 107). *The Hours* follows *Mrs Dalloway* as a model. This type of transtextuality helps to create identical mood, voice and fictional world in *The Hours*.

*The Hours* is a kind of pastiche in which readers get amusing taste of Woolf's writing style. The narrator gives emphasis on cinematographic description and his character's interior monologue has similar preoccupation like that of Woolf. But

sometimes his story keeps on making parody on Woolf's style too. Cunningham imitates Woolf's style and preoccupation which not only valorises her works but sometime also does parody to them. For Genette, these types of intertextual practice are "hypertextuality" (Allen108). It includes pastiche, parody, palimpsest and travesty. These all kinds of indirect reference are easily found in the text.

Cunningham's excessive use of textual references from Woolf's life and novel has made this text unique and experimental. He has used numerous intertextual techniques which are difficult to pinpoint in a cursory reading. Basically, how he employs levels of intertextual material in his novel and how he depends on, and transforms Woolf's life and works are the two questions the researcher asked deliberately during initial readings of the book. The intertextual properties employed in the text need meticulous analysis and suggest various intertextual techniques and strategies like allusion, quotation, palimpsest, pastiche, ekphrasis and parody. The main problem is however on analyzing a text that has been written after long time since the theories of intertextuality had been written. Cunningham's excessive reliance on Woolf's text and life from the beginning to the end of the novel proves the novel to be exceptional and does not allow the readers to follow any particular theoretical insight. Multiple techniques as it employs, so the reader must question the text with fresh and multiple approaches.

The politics of *The Hours*' intertextuality demands revision and relocation of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, along with other cross references. Cunningham's excessive use of textual references from Woolf's life and novel has made *The Hours* an exceptionally experimental fiction and has complicated his position in literary canon in relation to Woolf's text. The paper mainly hypothesizes that Cunningham's experiments with intertextual or hypertextual devices in *The Hours* reinforces Woolf's



canonical significance and intensifies her preoccupied themes of family, relationship, war, trauma, death and popular culture.

Michal Cunningham is a prolific American writer born in 1952. He has authored dozen of novels, a collection of poetry, several critical essays and translations. Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (2010) is Cunningham's most popular translation from German to English language. His famous novels include *By Nightfall* (2010), *The Snow Queen* (2014), *Golden States* (1984), *A Home at the End of World* (1990), *Flesh and Blood* (1995), *Specimen Days* (2005). He has also a screen playwright and movie producer. *The Hours* is probably the most acclaimed of his works; he won the Pulitzer Prize for it.

In *The Hours* Cunningham takes Virginia Woolf as a role model. His experience of reading *Mrs. Dalloway* was the most significant event which triggered the production of this novel. Woolf's writing style and her exploration of female identity as an important literary topic seem to have inspired Cunningham most. His novel appears as an imaginary recontextualization of Woolf's work at the end of the twentieth century. In both of the books, there are some readers which illustrates how both of the writers were interested in the act of reading. *The Hours* contains similar cast of characters where Cunningham brings Woolf into his story. He shares Woolf's literary device of the stream of consciousness technique. Cunningham illustrates, in *The Hours*, Virginia Woolf's complex personality, "a woman of such brilliance, such strangeness, such immeasurable sorrow; a woman who had genius but still filled her pocket with a stone and waded out into a river" (Cunningham 10). *The Hours* has come out of Cunningham's excessive creativity and Woolf's inspiration.

The novel has three strands of consecutive narratives brought together or associated thematically with the devices of intertextuality. The novel begins with the

prologue, informs of the suicide of Woolf, drowning in the river. The novel follows three women through one day in their life. The first strand of narrative forms the identical beginning from *Mrs Dalloway*, in which Clarissa goes for an errand to buy flowers for evening party. The second strand is the account of Virginia Woolf who sets to write *Mrs Dalloway* in 1923. The third strand of narrative is the last line of the second strand in which the fictional character, Mrs. Brown, reads that “Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself” (37). At times, exact lines are juxtaposed with fictional accounts. The narrative brings together the real and fictional characters who are otherwise separated by vast span of time and distance of space. The characters alternate with rough regularity between these three main characters. Clarissa Vaughan leaves her New York apartment to buy flowers. The story moves towards Virginia Woolf as a morning nearly twenty years before she commits suicide. She walks up thinking about how to begin her new novel which will detail a day in the life of a woman named Clarissa Dalloway. The story follows up to Laura Brown, a mother living in Los Angeles after World War II as she lies in bed reading.

The last group of chapters presents the women as they prepare for bed. Virginia Woolf has convinced Leonard to move back to London. She thinks of the kiss she shared with Vanessa. Laura Brown gazes into the mirror as she brushes her teeth and older Laura comes to stay at Clarissa’s apartment in the wake of her son Richard’s death. After they speak Clarissa reflects on the meaning of the passage of time. Virginia Woolf resides in 1923 London, Clarissa is set in 1990s New York, and Mrs Brown lives in 1949 Los Angeles.

There are numerous critics who have investigated the intertextual employment in *The Hours*. In “Serving after two Masters: Virginia Woolf’s Afterlives in Contemporary Biofictions,” Monica Latham observes Cunningham’s appropriation of

Woolf's writing style in his novel. For her, Cunningham's novel retells "again and again, the same story" (361). Latham argues that Cunningham uses "pastiche" in order to parody the "idiosyncratic modernist style" (362). On the contrary to Latham's claim that Cunningham's novel is a kind of pastiche and parody of modernist style, this paper identifies Cunningham's overwhelming admiration of Woolf's novel, her style and her life as a whole. There are many claims and evidence to show that Cunningham's own novel succinctly follows the same path.

The practice of writing another layer of text over old text is another intertextual practice of Cunningham. In "Vision, Intermediality, and Spectatorship in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*," Claudia Olk notes on Cunningham's palimpsestic writing of *The Hours*, and claims "self-reflexivity and the constant presence of a meta-fictional perspective in the text which affect the novel's approaches to visual perception, emphasize its role for an intermedial discourse and prefigure its own filmic visualization" (204). However, it is not only the visual perception Cunningham experiments with. The sensation of touch, smell and sound also has dominant effect in narrative progression.

The issue of generic flexibility of art is discussed by Fadwa Abdel Rahmanin "From Page to Celluloid: Micheal Cunningham's *The Hours*," where he argues; "whereas the written word opens for the reader unbounded worlds of fictional pleasure, of insight into spaces of the world and of the human mind, film optically reveals new structural formations of the adapted subject" (163). Cunningham's cinematographic writing is evident in the text but there is also heavy use of the character's interior monologue and lighting on the caves of mind.

Cunningham's *The Hours* however successful it may be, some critics are still unsatisfied with his initiation. In "Homage to Woolf" Patricia Laurence examines the

writing strategy employed by Cunningham comparing it with Woolf's writing. For Laurence, "Cunningham can be Clever", "imaginative", "slick", and "a writer of ambition" (376). She appreciates Cunningham's creation of three different plots and tribute to Woolf's style of one day in a life story. But as for Cunningham's initiation to adopt himself with Woolf's "poetic" style, Laurence argues that the readers who love Woolf simplicity they don't get the same "rhythm" (376). Laurence's argument though meticulous it seem, lacks the proper textual evidences. In fact, when we precisely study Cunningham narrating Woolf's suicide scene, it is not surprising to find Cunningham making many improvisation in his precursor's presentation, style, self-consciousness and aesthetic possibility.

The boundary of fiction writing has recently begun to blur due to the postmodern experimental texts converging it to different directions like journalistic fiction to biofiction. Marcel Cornis-Pope recapitulates Savu's emphasis on the contemporary novel's ability to complement itself through rewrites and fictionalized biographies in his review "Reinventing a Past: Historical Author Figures in Recent Postmodern Fiction". For Suva, in such rewriting, "the past blends with the present, history with imagination, biography with fiction" (314). But the cross section between fiction and biography has offer for the debates about authorship of such texts. Consequently, some of the Woolf's critics have complained about Cunningham's "important cultural connections unexplored" (315). Here, Suva insists on establishing the author figure. The representativeness of the historical author figure is her genuine issue but it is already debated issue and their readers are always in the position to make meaning themselves.

Similarly, when we enter into the political implications of the intertextual experimentation in *The Hours*, we find numerous opinions and arguments from

various critics raising distinct issues from agency to publicity. Bert Cardullo has observed in “Art and Matter” how a later writer can employ the earlier artifact for one’s own particular purpose. For him, *The Hours* makes an “insistent lament for the closeted homosexual” orientation while valorizing gay awareness (Cardullo 670). Nevertheless, this paper questions those critics whose conviction allows them to be judgmental about Cunningham's representation of gay consciousness in the text. The postmodern thinking from Loytard to Huchtson has deliberately inspired writers from the marginal arena to claim their agency through remaking of the canonical texts.

The intertextual analysis of *The Hours* cannot refuse the discussion of issues related to subversion of gender and introduction of cinema world. In “Exquisite Moments and the Temporality of the Kiss in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*,” Kate Haffey spots that the kiss scene is the “central trope for the moment” for both the writers (159). Haffey contends the instant of the kiss is the, “moment, in which a relationship takes a sexual turn” (159). It is a beginning of something that is yet unknown. Haffey draws from both presumptions, i.e., heterosexual and queer framework and concludes that the former regards kiss as “courtship, marriage, reproduction, etc”. But for the later “it is the opening to a future that is not yet decided” (159). Though the gender issue and intermediality are significant issues addressed in the novel, this paper focuses on intertextual devices.

Similarly, Erika Spohrer in “Seeing Stars: Commodity Stardom in Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours* and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*” discusses how the focus of “inter-and extra-textuality”. *The Hours* revolves around the “fame” (114). She makes meticulous analysis of both Woolf and Cunningham’s inclination to celebrity culture. Spohrer assimilates that when Cunningham recreates the London scene, he substitutes Woolf’s “semi-political or royal characters—the person in the

car driving through London, Lady Bruton” into movie stars (122). The affinity between the two works is established which is the politics of employing intertextual devices.

Simona Lovovschi in “Michael Cunningham’s Modern Microcosm of Virginia Woolf’s Work” reveals that Virginia Woolf’s works are backbone of Cunningham’s novel. For Lovovschi Cunningham’s “intuition of organizing principle” gave him a tremendous success (956). Lovovschi’s argument acknowledges that Cunningham “highlighted the strong connection between Woolf, her characters and her readers, each of them living the same life” (958). Lovovschi strongly argues that “Cunningham, willingly or not, succeeded in writing about Woolf in Woolf’s uniquely feminine and sensitive style” (965). Lovovschi’s feminist focalization convinced her to argue about Cunningham’s reluctance on intensifying her feminist virtue but this paper give more focus on experimentation with intertextual techniques in the novel.

In “Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours* and Postmodern Artistic Representation” Mary Joe Hughes explores how the later novel conceives its relation to its predecessor. Hughes focuses on the image of plunge in both the novels. Hughes illustrates that in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarrisa’s plunge in to her life and Septimus’ plunge in to death are “paradoxically” identified (350). Similarly, in *The Hours*, the same image of plunge is repeated. Cunningham also expands the “permeable boundaries between life and death” by projecting Mrs. Brown’s plunge into life and Richard and Woolf’s plunging into the death with the help of moving water image. Hughes’ observation sounds convincing but this paper’s aim is to explore the transtextual experimentations in *The Hours*.

This paper follows an interdisciplinary theoretical approach. The research

explores levels of intertextual tradition initiated by Cunningham drawing from post-structural theorists Gerard Genette. The paper consults Allen Graham's *Intertextuality* (2000). This paper elucidates on the intertextual techniques like allusion, quotation, ekphrasis, pastiche, palimpsest and parody bringing insights from Genette's theories of intertextuality. Genette prefers to use the term transtextuality to cover the entire "field of intertextuality" and present five sub categories of transtextuality phenomena they are Intertextuality, Paratextuality, Metatextuality, Archtextuality and Hypertextuality (Allen 101).

Intertextuality according to Genette is "a relationship of co - presence between two text or among several texts" and as the actual presence of one text within another (Qtd in Allen 101). It is an effective present one text into another in the form of plagiarism, quotation or allusion. Genette refers quotation as borrowing from other text marked by the use of brackets quotation marks or italics. Plagiarism, according to him, refers to the unaccredited form of quoting another text. Allusion refers to the type of utterance that must be observed by the reader in order for it to be understood as a reference to another text. This paper examines in *The Hours* directly quoted lines, lines mentioned without reference and lines which allude to Woolf's writing for the examination of intertextuality.

Paratextuality is another sub category of intertextuality. It refers the relation between the body of a text and its title, subtitle, epigraphs, illustration, notes. It also includes an epitext consisting of elements such as interview, publicity announcement, reviews by and addresses to critics, private letters and other authorial and address. For Genette, paratext performs various functions which guide the text's reader and can be understood pragmatically in term of various simple questions, all concerned with the manner of the text's existence. For Genette, "A major peritextual field involves

dedications, inscriptions, epigraphs and prefaces; a field which, as Genette demonstrates, can have major effects upon the interpretation of a text” (105). That can be originally epitextual feature such as private letter, journal entries and news which clearly signify a text’s status and its worth to study. Genette in fact assert that the single most important aspect of paratextuality is “to ensure for the text a destiny consistent with the author’s purpose” (Allen 107). This paper examines the Paratextual devices by investigating the dedication, interview and prologue of *The Hours*.

Metatextuality, refers to commentary which links one text with another that comments on it without quoting it or even without mentioning it, “it units a given text to another of which it speaks without necessary citing it (without summing) or sometime without naming it” (Allen 102). It is a critical relation with the text that is when a text takes up a relation of commentary to other text. The paper discusses Genette’s ideas on metatextuality in order to investigate the indirect references in *The Hours* from Woolf’s writing.

Architextuality is the generic imitation, “the architextual nature of text, as we have seen, includes generic, modal, thematic and figurative expectation about text” (103). Architextuality often connects two texts in terms of genre like tragedy, comedy, poetry and novel. It also offers a framework to analyze how two texts are united thematically. Cunningham’s preoccupation with Woolf’s recurrent themes can be analyzed by reading Genette’s notion of architextuality.

Hypertextuality is the relation between the hypertext and hypotext. Hypertext is every text drive from a previous one by means of direct or indirect transformation, but not through commentary. This phenomenon according to Genette, “involve: any relationship uniting a text B (hypertext) to an earlier text A (hypotext), upon which it



is grafted in a manner that is not of commentary” (Allen 107 - 8). Hypertextual particularly is the form of literature which is intentionally intertextual. It is a self-conscious and intended. Intertextual practices like palimpsests, pastiche, parody and travesty can all be studied under the broad category of hypertextuality. Genette has illustrated in detail about palimpsest and pastiche. For him it suggests layers of writing or “indicate literature in the ‘second degree’ its non- original rewriting of what has already been written” (Allen 108). For Genette pastiche is done as a mockery of a previous text. Common pastiche is the practice that combines mockery with appreciative reading of the text. While making the use of the pastiche one imitates someone’s style of writing.

This paper studies all the five categories of intertextual practices. But all these five categories formulated by Genette overlap when it comes to practices. Instead of trying to categorize any particular intertextual practice among these categories, this paper explores the unique experimentation done by Cunningham and speculates their effect and intention behind employing such techniques.

In *The Hours*, the practice of intertextuality is very explicit. Intertextuality is a broad term as described by Genette. Intertextual devices like: plagiarism, quotation and allusion are the dominant aspect of the novel. They create the presence of two texts inside a single text. One of the predominant features of intertextuality is the direct quotation. In *The Hours* there are numerous direct quotations from *Mrs. Dalloway* which are indicated through italics. *The Hours* follows three women through a day in their lives. The first chapter of the story presents the character Laura Brown, who is an American house wife which opens with the following extract from Mrs. Dalloway; “*Mrs. Dalloway she said she would buy the flower herself. For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The door would have to be taken off their hinges;*

*Rumpelmayer's man wear coming. And then though Clarissa Dalloway what a morning – fresh as if issued to children on a beach*” (Cunningham 37). This quotation assumes certain relationship between the novel and *Mrs. Dalloway*. This presents how the creative imagination on both of texts is identical. Cunningham tries to visualize Virginia Woolf spending an ordinary day, during which she imagines the ordinary day of her character. The reader who has already acquaintance with Woolf's novel would get a sense of connectivity between two novels.

Another quotation among several quotations from the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* is, “She picks up her pen *Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flower herself*” (Cunningham 35). The quotation is used as the means of transition and work as a linking between two stories which are different. As we can see the last sentences of the quotation is the same one that begins the first chapters of *Mrs. Brown*. It is used to surprise the reader who is already familiar with *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the story of *Mrs. Brown* the quotation from *Mrs. Dalloway* are also presented but reverse way. First the emotion and thought of Woolf are presented and only quotation are presented,

Writing in that state is the most profound satisfaction she knows, but her access comes and goes without warning. She may pick up her pen and follow it with her hand as it moves across the paper; she may pick up her pen and find that she's merely herself, a woman in a housecoat holding a pen, afraid and uncertain, only mildly competent, she picks up her pen. (Cunningham 35)

This presents the emotional state or the actual state of the mind of the characters. It is also utilized to connect the character between the text that is Virginia Woolf and *Mrs. Brown* and with *Clarissa Dalloway*. At the beginning of the story of *Mrs. Brown*, a well-known citation is presented, “*What a lark, what a plunge!*” (Cunningham 38).

This also presents the mood of Mrs. Brown, how she feels when she picks up the book and starts reading. The story of both novels moves on a similar path. In *Mrs.*

*Dalloway* Clarissa is going to give a party and in *The Hours* Laura has a party to give to her husband in his birthday. The connection becomes clearer when Cunningham project Woolf's the writing process of *Mrs. Dalloway*. It is shown by getting Woolf to reflect about whether she should kill her character or not. At the end she decides that it is not Clarissa who should die but Septimus, the war veteran. The similar pattern goes on *The Hours*. As *The Hours* come to the end, the stories of Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Brown become intertwined as it is revealed that Richard is the same Richard that is presented as Laura's son in Mrs. Brown. In *The Hours*, Laura's story end with the decision to kill her and in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Richard commits suicide by jumping out of an open window. By creating same pattern of the narrative Cunningham has intentionally made an illusion to *Mrs. Dalloway* through the writing process of Woolf novel. The prologue presented in *The Hours* resembles the Woolf's own mind of Septimus in her novel. Mental illness and war seem to be the cause of trauma in both of the novel. The gloom Woolf feels as Cunningham's character is also connected with imagery of war which one can see in the following extract, "The headache is approaching and it seems (is she or is she not conjuring herself) that the bombers have appeared again in the sky" (Cunningham 4). There is allusion to imagining things, which is presented as manifestation of Septimu's mental instability in *Mrs. Dalloway*. This way of both the story reflects similar kind of pattern in both stories.

The direct and indirect intertextual connections in *The Hours* stimulate the readers to revisit an imaginative world identical to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. The stories presented in *The Hours* move beyond Woolf's imagination. For Genette, intertextual analysis is rather complicated because its "full meaning presupposes the

perception of a relationship between it and another text, to which it necessarily refers by some inflections that would otherwise remain unintelligible” (Qtd. in Allen 95). In Cunningham’s case, the intertextual reference allows him to construct a better fictional world by reinforcing Woolf’s fictional world.

Metatextuality generally refers to the comment about another text. This is a prominent feature of intertextuality which maintains the critical relation with another text. Metatextuality According to Genette, plagiarism is a form of metatextuality. As Richard is sitting on the window sill of his apartment right before he ends his life the following dialogue is presented:

“...There. End of the story. Now come inside”.

“Fresh as if issued to children on a beach,” Richard says.

“You could say that.” (Cunningham 199)

The line “Fresh as if issued to children on a beach” has been directly taken from *Mrs. Dalloway* (3). The novel not only has the direct quotation but also have the similar characters. Richard is the character who is present in both the novels. In *Mrs. Dalloway* Richard is Clarissa’s husband and in *The Hours* Richard is Clarissa’s friend. In *The Hours*, Richard commits suicide by jumping out of an open window. However this is one of the few instances in which Cunningham has quoted Woolf’s novel without actually acknowledging it, and it is a form of plagiarism. The fact that Richard calls Clarissa Mrs. Dalloway has not changed even in *The Hours*. Cunningham’s experimentation with the fictionality of *Mrs. Dalloway* is perhaps best explained by Schiff, for him, Richard is a mixture of four characters from *Mrs. Dalloway* namely, Septimus Smith, Richard Dalloway, Sally Seton and Peter Walsh (367).

Another metatextual connection between the novels is clarified when the

reader think about Sally in different context. In *The Hours* Clarissa and Sally are living together and have a romantic relationship, she still feels insecure about her choices in life. In *Mrs. Dalloway* Septimus Smith is suffering shell shock ends up by jumping out of an open window. In *The Hours*, Richard in addition to his AIDS is suffering from a mental disorder that has similar symptoms as Septimus' mental illness. At the end of the novel Richard also commits suicide by doing the same. Cunningham's novel consists similar characters but they are imaginatively transformed which can fit it with the world of his novel. He has also taken characteristic from other figures of *Mrs. Dalloway*. The transformation of the story also reflect the change in the society, in the Clarissa Dalloway story she has been limited in her choice by a strict set of social conventions and the rule of society by contrast, Clarissa Vaghan has similar feelings but in her case the uncertainty has blocked the freedom of choice. The character which provoke the same characteristic and are the similar character in *The Hours* are the actual character that have been 'borrowed' from *Mrs. Dalloway* and also some of the events of novel are inserted into the storyline of *The Hours*. Cunningham through his work allow himself to express his kinship with Woolf, who is the inspiration him from her personal and artistic development.

Cunningham does not only comment and transform Woolf's stories but his character Laura Brown directly comments on *Mrs. Dalloway*. After reading few lines from the novel, she wonders, "How, Laura wonders, could someone who was able to write a sentence like that- who was able to feel everything contained in a sentence like that" (Cunningham 41). As a character, Laura Brown's comments about Woolf's writing projects Cunningham's own experience of reading the text some years ago. For Landow, "the reader's ability to break the linear flow of a text by activating links,

and, in some systems, to add commentaries and other *lexias* to the text being read, confirm the reader's active role in the production of textual meaning" (Allen 202). Cunningham's creative act of flourishing the fictional world once discovered by Woolf by making transformations confirms his initiation as a reader.

Paratextuality contains the element such as title chapter, preface, notes, interview and publicity announcement; review etc. Paratextuality is divided into two sub categories "Peritexts" and "Epitexts" (Allen 99). Peritext consist of book's sub heading and other. Epitexts are texts such as editorial letters, the interview, public announcement etc. At the very beginning of *The Hours* Cunningham presents a 'Prologue' which reflects over the last moments of Woolf's life. The prologue is the suicide note of Virginia Woolf:

Dearest,

I feel certain that I am going

mad again: I feel we can't go

through another of these terrible times.

And I shan't recover this time. I begin

To hear voices, and can't concentrate.

So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. (Cunningham 6)

This is of the obvious paratextuality in the novel *The Hours*. Cunningham turns the factual autobiography into narration to present the fictitious process of composing *Mrs. Dalloway*. Cunningham follows the subjective interplay of the mind and it also affects the reader to draw enter-connectedness between two novels. In Marcel's words, "This prologue locates the intertextual exchange between the precursor and postmodern author within board social cultural context" (310). It is easy to notice the interconnections between the texts for those readers who have already read Woolf's

novel.

Another most obvious paratextual feature referring *Mrs. Dalloway* is Cunningham in his novel puts the word Mrs. Dalloway as a sub heading of the story of Clarissa Vaughan. It is the intention of the author, that he has chosen the story of Clarissa Vaughan as a re-edition of *Mrs. Dalloway*, even making some changes in the story, the characters and their relationship. At the end of the edition publish in 1998 there is a letter from the author in which he comments on the sources that he has used in his novel. This refers the idea that Cunningham is making the paratext from the previous text as a reference point. Another paratex employed in the novel is the title of the Cunningham's novel. *The Hours* is also the working title of Woolf novel (Latham 358) and it has even been published under the same title. Both the novel presents the subjective experience of the concept of time. The experience of the characters try to show how the mind of a particular character works and it is also related to the title of the novel. The plot of the story revolves round the subjective experience, within the concept of time and life. The one day on the lives of the character. The book cover can also be called element of paratex as pointed out by Genette. Moreover the prologue presented in the beginning part of the novel also serve as the element of paratextuality, it is also the real note written by Woolf before her suicide. It is the real incident depicted by Cunningham from Woolf's life.

The above discussion does not only show the influence of the novel but also shows the influence from Virginia Woolf's personal life of. As James Schiff states Cunningham has been trying to acquire with *The Hour*, "What I wanted to do was more akin to music, to jazz where a musician will pay improvisation on an existing piece of great music from the past – not to reinvent it not to lay any kind of direct claim to it, but to both honor of art" (Schiff 2004:367). This shows that Cunningham

tries to give his new way, he tries to emerge his new style by considering a piece of writing which already has acquired the important.

Architextuality is the kinds of intertextual strategy which unites two or more than two texts generically or thematically. The Architextuality of a text refers to the identical nature of texts in regards to genre and themes. The thematic relationship between two novels reinforces the feature of intertextuality. The similarity in the context is the war in both of the novels. Cunningham is a writer whose life has not probably been affected as directly as Woolf's. Virginia Woolf was directly affected by the First World War and also this would affect the way she writes about the war. There is a character in which the closeness of the war has come out, that is Septimus Smith. The character reflects that what a war can do to an individual, who is dramatically disturbed, his inner world and eventually leading to the demise.

Another thematic similarity is the sexual confusion; in *Mrs. Dalloway* the sexuality is mostly examined through Clarissa who has strong emotions towards Sally Seton. In *The Hours* all the title characters of the three stories experience lesbian emotions in one way or another. Clarissa Vaughan is living on an openly lesbian relation with Sally. Moreover, Virginia kisses her sister and as it is expressed, the kiss does not feel entirely innocent. And finally the story of Laura Brown, she kisses her friend Kitty, seeming to comfort her, but there is an undertone of sexual confusion present as well:

She kissed kitty in the kitchen and love her husband too. She can anticipate the queasy pleasure of her husband's lips and figure (is it that she desires his desire?) and still dream of kissing kitty someday, in a kitchen or at the beach as children shriek in the surf, in a hallway with their arms full of folded towels, laughing softly, aroused,



hopelessness, in love with their own recklessness if not each other,  
saying *Shhhh*, parting quickly, going on. (Cunningham 143)

Laura is trying to justify the kiss that it doesn't mean anything serious. She is more confused about her feeling towards her husband. Clarissa Dalloway has same feeling in *Mrs. Dalloway* as she kisses Sally Seton in her youth. Consequently, Laura Brown reflects Clarissa Dalloway's thoughts on homoerotic feelings towards another female. Moreover it is left for the individual reader to decide how important this notion actually is in terms of transtextual features used by Cunningham.

Hypertextuality refers to the transformation within literature which is intentionally intertextual. The same case is applied in *The Hour*. In the first part of Mrs. Dalloway section it is made clear to the reader that Clarissa Vaghan is the contemporary version of a character Clarissa Dalloway created by Virginia Woolf when she wrote *Mrs. Dalloway*. Both of the characters are buying flowers and giving party on the same day, at the end of June. In *The Hours* "there are still the flower to buy Clarissa feigns exasperation (though she loves doing errands like this), leaves sally cleaning the bedroom, and runs out, promising to be back in an hour" (Cunningham 13). These types of transformations make the story independent. Cunningham invests a different space and time setting, "It is New York City. It is the end of twenty century. The vestibule door opens onto June morning so fine and scrubbed Clarissa pauses at the threshold as she would at the edge of the pool" (Cunningham 9).

When we compare the passages, we find that Cunningham intentionally has written the passage that makes the reader think of *Mrs. Dalloway*. The flashback technique are used in same fashion. In *The Hours*, "the past blend with the present, history with imagination, biography with fiction" (Marcel 314). This presents the idea

that Cunningham's narrative is more condensed than that of Woolf's. Cunningham has taken the best point from the Woolf's novel and developed his own way of telling the story. This way of writing does not only connect the text intertextually but also socio-culturally. The role of the life and death also plays the major part in both of the novels. In both of the novels the characters struggle between life and death. In *The Hours* the character Laura Brown struggles between living and dying, but eventually chooses life over death. In the story of Virginia Woolf, the presence of death is even stronger. The novel *The Hours* opens with the suicide note. Schiff argues that Woolf's suicide "hovers ghostlike over the ensuing narrative" (Schiff 367). There is direct representation of the death but in the case of *Mrs. Dalloway* the reference of the death are not as direct as that of *The Hours*.

The genres of parody and pastiche are closely connected to hypertextuality. As Genette states that parody "is a genre that approaches its subject satirically, the satirical approach to a hypertext usually aim to mock or otherwise defame a piece of writing" (Allen 103). But pastiches in general approach "writing in a non-satirical mode" (Allen 104). Pastiche is usually an attempt to adopt the earlier writer's style. There are many literary styles that are developed by Woolf and most of them are adopted by Cunningham. In this intertextual feature, Cunningham is reinforcing the stream of conscious technique. William James in his *Principles of psychology* (1890) describes this technique as "the unbroken flow of perception memory, thoughts and feeling in the waking mind" (Abram 307). This technique is different from conventional traditional storytelling and the way of presenting of the character. Cunningham has named his novel after the working title of Woolf's novel, paying homage to stream of consciousness technique. The depiction mental process in the following passage is identical to Woolf's writing:

He'd have wanted to talk about how the bag (say it had contained potato chips and overripe banana; say it had been thoughtlessly discarded by a harassed, indigent mother as she left a store amid her gaggle of quarrelling children) will blow into the Hudson and float all the way to the ocean where eventually a sea turtle, a creature that could live a hundred years, will mistake it for a jellyfish, eat the bag and die. (Cunningham 20)

This complexity of the extract presents the actual state of mind. This shows mind of particular character, how it works. This is how the stream of conscious technique works through both of the novels. Cunningham is also inspired by the same style of writing and we can see the same style applies to Cunningham's writing about Woolf, "His heart rises. She is older but – on point in denying it – she still has that rigorous glamour: that slightly butch, aristocratic sexiness" (Cunningham 127 - 128). This excerpt begins with what seems to be external description of the man's reaction but the second sentence shift into the inner monologue of Louis. The inner monologue refers to the internal state of mind which presents the stream of conscious technique. This also creates an allusion of narrator's absence although it is in fact the narrator who is telling the reader what the character is thinking. In *The Hours*, "Both seemed queer, Maisie Johnson thought" (Woolf 28). And "I'm so prim, Clarissa thinks . . ." (Cunningham 15). The narrator is still telling the reader what the characters are thinking.

Another similar feature identical in both the novels is that both the novels are narrated from a third person perspective and when the narration moves towards the thought of the character, the narration also shift towards the first person perspective. This is the technique applied in both of the novels. The similar pattern of the shift in

the narration can be observed in the novel: “*For* so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French window and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in early morning ...” (Woolf 3). Subsequently the similar pattern can be noticed in *The Hours*, “Virginia awakens. This might be another way to begin, certainly; with Clarisse going on an errand on a day in June, in state of soldiers marching off to lay the wreath in Whitehall. But it is the right beginning? It is a little too ordinary? Virginia lies quietly in her bed ...” (Cunningham 29). The analysis of both of the extracts provides evidence to observe how the shift in describing the emotions of a character is subtly presented and it is not immediately clear to whom the voice belongs to. There is no any first person perspective in the stream of conscious when the thoughts of the characters are presented. Woolf’s style of writing is very cinematic use as dives like montage, close – up, flash back, taking shorts. The film as a new medium had just arrived in Europe and Virginia Woolf was clearly impressed by this new art. “All in bubble bubble, swarm and chaos. We are peering over the edge of a cauldron in which fragments seem to simmer, and now and again some vast shape have and seems about to haul itself up out of chaos and the savage in us starts forward in delight” (Woolf 172). *The Hours* also consists of cinematic devices. In a scene, in which Clarissa is startled by a sudden noise coming from the outside of a florist’s boutique which is presented in both of the novel. The cinematic scene in *The Hours*:

She imagines Barbara still in cool dimness of the far side of the door. Continue to live in what Clarissa can’t help thinking of now as the past (it has to do, somehow with Barbara sorrow, and the racks of sorrow, and the racks of ribbons on the back wall) while she herself walk into

the present, all this: Chinese boys careening by on a bicycle: the number 281 written in dark glass; the scattering of pigeons with feet the color of pencil erasers . . . (Cunningham 49)

This excerpt contains the flashback, Clarissa thinking of her past and a montage-like description of what is happening around Clarissa and also what is happening around the city. As one reads, one can almost see a film camera capturing the scenes of New York and London that the passage is depicting.

Another identical feature in Cunningham's style in *The Hours* is repetition. This style can be found in the novel when Louis meets Clarissa after a long time, his mind is filled with a single thought, which is depicted by repetition "she looks older, Louis thinks as he follows Clarissa into the apartment (eight steps, turn, then another three steps). She looks older, Louis thinks in astonishment" (Cunningham 125). Virginia Woolf seems to prefer similar means to illustrate a character's thought. The same reference can be noticed in the novel, the first page of *Mrs. Dalloway* in which Clarissa is trying to remember a thing, "standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, 'Musing among the vegetables?' – was that it? – 'I prefer man to cauliflower: was that it?'" (Woolf 3). This shows that Cunningham is completely inspired by Virginia Woolf's styles. He seems to be reinforcing the style. This is all about what happens when a single thought revolves around the mind. Both the writers are concerned on the writing that can access the thoughts in the heads of the characters.

Both the novels have the similar manner of presenting character's thoughts. The similar manner used by both of the writers might arise from the feeling that Cunningham's writing is dominative and unoriginal. Even as a reader we can say that he has used Woolf's style as a background to create his own style of writing. As James Schiff states, "What becomes apparent in *The Hours* is that almost every

technique, trope, motif and theme derives from Woolf ... However, Cunningham employs these Woolfian element to create something slightly different, something that is his own” (Schiff: 2004: 370). Cunningham while writing the novel has intentionally created the same style that Woolf has used. He tries to give more than that of Woolf by adapting completely an experimental writing. We can say it is a kind of response to Woolf’s writing by Cunningham as a reader.

Cunningham’s novel also adds two additional layers in the interpretation of *Mrs. Dalloway* by giving glimpse into Virginia Woolf’s life at the time of writing her novel. Schiff notes in his article, that “*The Hours* is essentially a novel about reading and writing” (367). In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf is presenting the imaginary states of mind and in *The Hours* Cunningham has depicted the moment in which Woolf is pondering whether she should kill her protagonist or not, this force presents the actual state of mind and thought. So we can say that reading *The Hours* impose some expectations of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Cunningham as a writer rewrites the Woolf’s novel where he includes the event and the incident from Woolf’s novel and life too. There is no doubt that Cunningham is reinforcing Woolf’s work but the more thing he wants to do is that he wants to do something more than pastiche. The intertextual practices like travesty and palimpsest can also be investigated in *The Hours*. The relationship created between the hypotext and the hypertext by these modes of writing has an imitative relation to the hypertext. Further, an author’s reading of a text which he is making a pastiche also affects the actual writing. As Claudia Oik says, “rather than claiming the status of an original when naming his novel after Woolf’s first full – length draft for what was later to be called *Mrs. Dalloway*, Cunningham not only invokes the poststructuralist image of the textual palimpsest” (204). Further, Cunningham’s work consists of similar attitude and vantage point like that of Woolf’s

which can be called travesty.

Cunningham's *The Hours* is the extensiveness of *Mrs. Dalloway*. It refers back to *Mrs. Dalloway*. It is a kind of rewriting. How *Mrs. Dalloway* is read obviously affects the reading of *The Hours*. This technique refers towards the same kind of connectivity of the both novels. In *The Hours*, the expectation of the reader is shaped by the combination of the fiction and reality and further Cunningham reinterprets Woolf's novel to fit the context of his own time and to his readers. The story on Mrs. Brown is a simulation of how a particular kind of reader might react to reading *Mrs. Dalloway*. The depiction of active imaginative forces affects the reading *The Hours*.

In a way Cunningham offers his readers the possibility to reflect on their own reaction and emotions of reading a fictional work. One example is Laura Brown's reaction to Woolf's novel. This technique is used by Cunningham many times in Mrs. Brown's part. Authors lets his reader to a certain passage of *Mrs. Dalloway* makes Laura Brown feel and what thoughts that came to her. Brown reads and feels the world that Virginia Woolf creates and this all happens inside one single novel. Reading of Cunningham's novel will probably affect the reader's response to Woolf's novel in that one realizes why *Mrs. Dalloway* has been so acclaimed ever since from its publication. It explicitly presents the idea that same status that *Mrs. Dalloway* gained is acquired or initiated by *The Hours* in the contemporary time.

Cunningham in *The Hours* employs almost all kind of transtextuality, in diverse way. Paratextual reference from *Mrs. Dalloway* limits itself almost wholly to the title of the novel and the interviews in which Cunningham talks about the influence of *Mrs. Dalloway* on his own writing. All these references of paratextual feature of transtextuality work as the inspiration force to write and become a writer

himself. This also refers to his reaction to Woolf's novel and life and also refers to Cunningham and how he sees his novels with relation to matter of originality and writing in general.

*The Hours* is an excellent example of pastiche or hypertextuality where Cunningham is trying to reinforce Woolf's styles like stream of consciousness, interior monologue and repetition. The investigation of transtextuality in his novel justifies the prestigious status Cunningham's novel has achieved. There is the clear indication that Cunningham has presented the events that are similar to *Mrs. Dalloway* but he is also successful to depict his own fictional world at the same time. The discussion on transtextual means has already provided evidences that he is trying to admire and appreciate Woolf's style or he is paying homage to Woolf's work. The story of Clarissa Vaughan represents that *The Hours* many times also follows the basic story line from Virginia Woolf's novel. The Architextual features of the novels also justifies that Cunningham has similar genre and theme like Woolf. The tragic ending, presence of two deaths (Richard and Woolf) and short temporality are the generic similarities between two texts.

To conclude, it is something that has certainly been noticed in the literary scholarship that the way Michal Cunningham constructs the world is largely based on Virginia Woolf. This thesis is able to explain that Cunningham has alluded not just to *Mrs. Dalloway*, but Woolf's writing broadly has reinforced her writing styles, themes and genre to evoke the world which is in many ways similar to Woolf's construction.



## Works Cited

- Abrams, M. H. *Glossary of Literary Terms*. United States: Thomson Wadsworth. 2005, Print.
- Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality*. London: Routledge, 2007. Print.
- Cardullo, Bert. "Art and Matter." *The Hudson Review*. 56.4 (2004): 669-676. Web.
- Cornis-Pope, Marcel. "Reinventing a Past: Historical Author Figures in Recent Postmodern Fiction." *symploke*, 18.1-2 (2010): 309-315. Web. Wed, 30 Dec 2015.
- Cunningham, Michal. *The Hours*. New York: Picador, 1998. Print
- Haffey, Kate. "Exquisite Moments and the Temporality of the Kiss in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*". *Narrative*, 18.2 (2010): 137-162. Web. Wed, 30 Dec 2015.
- Hughes, Mary Joe. "Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* and Postmodern Artistic Representation". *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*. 45 (2004), 349 – 61. Web. Wed, 30 Dec 2015.
- Latham, Monica. "Serving after two Masters: Virginia Woolf's Afterlives in Contemporary Biofictions". *Auto/Biography Studies*. 27.2 (2012): 354-373. Web. Wed, 30 Dec 2015.
- Laurence, Patricia. "Homage to Woolf." *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*. 43.3 (2000): 370-376. Web. Wed, 30 Dec 2015.
- Lovovschi, Simona. "Michal Cunningham's Modern Microcosm of Virginia Woolf's Work", *Identities in Metamorphosis: Literature, Discourse and multicultural Dialogue*. Tirgu Mures: Arhipelag XXI Press. 2014. 956 – 60. Web. Wed, 30 Dec 2015.
- Olk, Claudia. "Vision, Intermediality, and Spectatorship in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*." *American Studies*, 49.2(2004):191-21. Web. Wed, 30 Dec 2015.

Rahman, Fadwa Abdel. "From Page to Celluloid: Micheal Cunninghma's *The Hours*." *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 28 (2008): 150-164. Web. Wed, 30 Dec 2015.

Schiff, James: "Rewriting Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway Homage, Sexual Identity, and the Single Day Novel by Cunningham Lippinott and Lanctester". *Critique: Studies In contemporary Fiction*. 45, 2004. 363 – 382. Web. Wed, 30 Dec 2015.

Spohrer, Erika. "Seeing Stars: Commodity Stardom in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*". *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, 61.2 (2005):114-1. Web, 30 Dec 2015.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. St. Ives: Penguin book, 1992. Print