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TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

Art that inspires Art: From Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) to Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* (1998) and Stephen Daldry's *The Hours* (2002), a Comparative Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

This Bachelor Thesis undertakes a study of comparative literature, genre, and adaptation studies by taking as the point of reference Virginia Woolf's modernist novel *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) together with two of its later adaptations: Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours* (1998) and Stephen Daldry's film *The Hours* (2002). For that purpose, different technical aspects, such as plot, style, and structure have been analysed; as well as other subject matters like the equivalence of characters, the parallel of scenes, and the borrowing of themes and symbolism in order to show the results of the process of adaptation. Above all, this paper focuses on both the similarities and differences between the works, as its nature relies on the essence of the inalienable relationship between modernism and postmodernism, emphasizing that each of the works treated should be judged as independent pieces of art on their own merits.

**Keywords:** Virginia Woolf, Michael Cunningham, Stephen Daldry, *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Hours*, modernism/postmodernism, adaptation.

## RESUMEN

En este proyecto de fin de carrera se realiza un estudio de literatura comparada, género, y estudios de adaptación tomando como punto de referencia la novela modernista de Virginia Woolf, *La Señora Dalloway* (1925), junto a dos de sus adaptaciones posteriores: la novela *Las Horas* (1998) escrita por Michael Cunningham y la película *Las Horas* (2002) dirigida por Stephen Daldry. Para ello se han analizado diferentes aspectos técnicos, como la trama, el estilo y la estructura; así como otros puntos como la equivalencia de los personajes, el paralelismo de las escenas, y el préstamo de temas y simbolismo para así mostrar los resultados de tal proceso de adaptación. Ante todo, este trabajo se centra tanto en las similitudes como en las diferencias entre las obras, ya que su naturaleza se basa en la esencia de la relación inalienable existente entre el modernismo y el postmodernismo, enfatizando que cada una de las obras tratadas debe ser juzgada como obra de arte independientes, por méritos propios.

**Palabras clave:** Virginia Woolf, Michael Cunningham, Stephen Daldry, *La Señora Dalloway*, *Las Horas*, modernismo/postmodernismo, adaptación.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

The present dissertation revolves around one of the most important British modernist writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Virginia Woolf, and her novel *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). As stated by the title, this paper does not study Woolf's classic alone; two other contemporary works with evident connections to *Mrs Dalloway* will be examined: the novel *The Hours* (1998) by Michael Cunningham and its later film adaptation, *The Hours*, by Stephen Daldry (2002). The aim of this composition is to analyse the connection between Woolf's novel and *The Hours*, novel and film, through a study of genre, comparative literature, and adaptation studies. Hence, this thesis explore the very essence of modernism and postmodernism as well as the uniqueness and individuality of each piece of art. Thus, *Mrs Dalloway* will be acknowledged as the work of reference, but akin relevance will be given to the three works.

To facilitate its comprehension and assure a progressive and logical evolution of the analysis, the present dissertation will be divided into three main sections. The first section, 'Theoretical Background', will consist of different fundamental subjects that are the basis of the study purpose: an introduction to modernism and postmodernism, a presentation of the authors, a discussion on adaptations, and a preliminary analysis of *Mrs Dalloway*. The second, 'From Modernist Novel to Postmodernist Novel: *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Hours*', will examine the connection between both novels, focusing on how Michael Cunningham tried to maintain the message and structure of Woolf's novel, though with personal twists and new fictional introductions. Furthermore, how characters are retold in *The Hours* as well as the acquisition of Woolf's theme duality will be debated. The third, '*The Hours* from Novel to Film: The adaptation of Cunningham's novel by Stephen Daldry', studies how the novel *The Hours* was adjusted to the big screen; focusing on how its form, plot, and symbolism were transferred. What is more, in this section the indirect connection between *Mrs Dalloway* and the film *The Hours* will be also considered. To sum up, then, the present paper will perform a study of the connection between one modernist novel, *Mrs Dalloway*, and two postmodernist works: *The Hours*, novel and film.





## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Modernism and Postmodernism

Modernism was a cultural, philosophical, and artistic movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century born with the imperative of making everything new. In relation to literature, modernism rejected traditional artistic conventions because they were considered invalid for the representation of reality in an authentic manner. This led to extreme experimentation as modernist writers sought to find new modes of representing life and experience that had not been used before. The plot was not that important any longer because what really mattered was the way in which the story was told; this fact “did encourage a varied and complex use of imagery and symbolism” (Birch 18). However, to define modernism is an arduous task because “the spirit of Modernism did not have a single dominant mode of expression or style, manifesting itself in manifold, sometimes in even contradictory ways” (Da Silva 22).

On the other hand, also in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, postmodernism emerged. The literature theorist Brian McHale assures that postmodernism “signifies a poetics which is the successor of, or possible reaction against, the poetics of early twentieth-century modernism, and not some hypothetical writing of the future” (5). In essence, what this means is that to depict postmodernism as a fully independent movement that followed after modernism would be a total error because there never was a total break. The complexity of this relationship relies upon the presence of both shared characteristics as well as discordances. For instance, the main difference between both movements is that the dominant of modernism is epistemological, while postmodernism’s dominant is ontological (McHale 9-10).

Foremost, why *Mrs Dalloway* is a modernist novel needs to be discussed. With *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf broke with the traditional discourse because she accomplished an acute sense of perspectivism by exploring different minds through the use of stream of consciousness<sup>1</sup>. This way Woolf explored in *Mrs Dalloway* what Da Silva sets as the central modernist preoccupation in literature: “the complexity of man’s inner world”

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<sup>1</sup> Stream of consciousness is a modernist technique used to show the feelings and thoughts of the characters allowing the readers the possibility to know the character’s inner reality.

(29). Moreover, as Woolf played with memory and moment, *Mrs Dalloway* lacks a chronological structure because “the events she notes are not always the immediate cause or consequence of other events in the book” (Bennett 43). This is a fundamental modernist technique as modernist literature rejected conventional plots and sequential developments; instead, it presented drastically fragmented narratives. Another modernist feature of *Mrs Dalloway* is that there is no conclusion to the story, leaving the readers with an open ending to confront.

Conversely, considering that postmodernism was related to the recycling, reinterpretation, and retelling of earlier works, *The Hours*, both novel and film, could be taken as examples of postmodern art. Focusing on Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours* (1998), it can be depicted as a postmodernist interpretation of Woolf’s novel as it is a clear re-writing of the story because, following AbdelRahman’s argument, Cunningham’s creation is “one of the most typical postmodern novels with its reliance on intertextuality and fragmentation, its crossing the boundaries between fact and fiction, its preoccupation with time, and its intricate interwoven narrative” (151). As follows, being Stephen Daldry’s *The Hours* (2002) an audio-visual adaptation of Cunningham’s work, it is also a postmodernist work. In this case, in two different senses: it is a direct adaptation of Cunningham’s work to the screen, while also an indirect interpretation of *Mrs Dalloway*.

The last question would then be why Virginia Woolf is so important for the postmodernists. In Caughie’s view, “her writings, like much postmodern fiction, call attention to their narrative strategies and social contexts, they self-consciously reveal the way narrative conventions both respond to and engender certain kinds of social practices” (xii). Woolf inspired writers of her time as well as writers of future times with her fictional and non-fictional writings thanks to the themes she treated, by being the voice of material feminism and by making clear the unmentionable. With Woolf what matters is not what she did, but how she did it. All in all, this explains why *The Hours*, in both cases, simulate both her matters and her formal features.

## **2.2. The Importance of Adaptations**

In *Mapping Adaptation Studies* it is pointed out that “the term ‘adaptation’ is flexible, meaning different things in different contexts; to some scholars, it might be equated with ‘translation’, while to others it might be something completely different” (Welsh and Lev 233). In the article *The Art of Adaptation* it is affirmed that “to adapt means to transpose from one medium to another. It is the ability to make fit or suitable by changing or adjusting. Modifying something to create a change in structure, function, and form, which produces a better adjustment” (Dercksen). Then, adaptations can be direct if they directly point their referent, or indirect if the source work was a mere inspiration. In any case, intertextuality is always present. In this sense, Walker’s opinion is that adaptations can take numerous forms:

Adaptations of specific works of literature on film (and vice versa), of particular histories (both individual and cultural), of genres, of psychological studies and philosophical principles, of approaches to music, and of theoretical approaches to film, narrative, and poetry. (242)

Nonetheless, there is a wider range of adaptations. For instance, we may find adaptations that play with real-life events, combining fact and fiction; non-fiction adaptations, parodies, or even TV-productions, if considering the medium. Yet, the most common type of adaptation is from text to film as literature is considered “cinema’s natural progenitor” (Leitch 64). The text-to-film adaptation, which is the type of adaptation that will be studied in the third section of this paper with the film *The Hours*, is still an issue in the area of Adaptation Studies. As Johnson explains “the film is likely to generate further meditations on the state of adaptations - and what it means to adapt not only the narrative but the image itself” (171). Nevertheless, film adaptations, as most target products, have been continuously criticized in comparison to their source text because, following the fidelity-based criterion, it was long thought that “excellence depends on the similarity of the movie to the novel from which it is adapted” (Phillips 326). It is undeniable that, if they are direct adaptations, they should in a way uphold the essence of the original; yet, it cannot be forgotten that, as adaptations, they are independent artistic expressions with their own nature, medium, and strategies, because, Phillips states, “adaptation means rewriting, redrafting, and reforming the story with fresh insights” (327).

Both the novel and the film titled *The Hours* can be considered adaptations of *Mrs Dalloway*. Both are representatives of the artistic life circle of renewal and pastiche, what is directly connected to the nature of postmodernism. In the case of the novel *The Hours*, Cunningham affirms that his novel “plays with both the art of *Mrs Dalloway*, and the tragedy of a great writer’s suicide” (Spring 77), and that he tried to develop his own story “having been deeply immersed by Virginia Woolf” (Spring 80). The case of Daldry’s film is different, as, in essence, it is the adaptation of an adaptation. The difference between them is the medium: Cunningham’s adaptation is another novel, while Daldry’s is a film. With all that being said, this paper will study *The Hours*, novel and film, as adaptations – not copies – of Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*.

### **2.3. About the Artists: Woolf, Cunningham, and Daldry**

Adeline Virginia Stephen, better known as Virginia Woolf, was born in 1882 in London within a favoured literary environment. Yet, her life was everything but rosy: Woolf grew up marked by trauma. She was sexually assaulted in her childhood by her half-brothers. Her mental state was delicate, probably as a result of the sexual abuses plus the deaths of her mother, sister, and father. Woolf suffered her first collapse when her mother passed away in 1895, which was followed by many other nervous breakdowns until her death. Her life was a constant agony haunted by the ghost of depression. Carey offers a brief explanation of how those breakdowns were like:

Meals [...] would often take an hour, sometimes two. Occasionally Virginia could be induced to feed herself but often Leonard had to spoonfeed her. At times Virginia was violent, even with the nurses; at other times, she was depressed and suicidal; once she lapsed into a bed for two days. (7)

As stated in the previous quote, Woolf’s death urges exacerbated during her collapses. She jumped out of a window in 1904 after her father’s death. Later on, in 1913, she overdosed with venoral<sup>2</sup> (Lehmann 43). She finally managed to commit self-murder in 1941, by drowning herself in the River Ouse.

As a writer, she was very prolific and succeeded to set herself as a leading modernist writer of her time. In 1917 she founded the Hogarth Press with Leonard

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<sup>2</sup> Venoral is the commercial name for barbitone, a sedative used as sleeping aid.

Woolf, her husband, where they worked together as editors. Leonard thought the press should work as a therapy for his wife as it would “occupy Virginia’s mind with something manual” (Carey 8). On the contrary, her writings did benefit from her cyclothymias as she was more creative during those periods and she managed to apply her experiences in her works (Lehmann 46). Overall, with her writings, Virginia gave voice to those who did not have one, just like in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929). Focusing on her private life, although she loved her husband, it is known that she had a homosexual orientation. Woolf first fell in love with Madge Vaughan, her cousin; after that, she apparently grew feelings towards one friend, Violet Dickinson (Lehmann 22-23), and for Katherine Mansfield (Lehmann 86). Yet, it is Vita Sackville-West, who inspired *Orlando* (1928), her best-known affair.

The American novelist Michael Cunningham was born in 1952 in Ohio in the nucleus of a conventional family. Thrilled by letters from an early age, he graduated from Stanford University with a B.A in English Literature and got his M.F.A from the University of Iowa. At present, he works as a lecturer in the English Department at Yale University ("Michael Cunningham: Pulitzer Prize-Winning Novelist"). He published his first novel, *Golden States*, in 1984; followed by *A Home at the End of the World* (1990) and by *Flesh and Blood* (1995). After a writing process of three years, *The Hours* came in 1998, crowning him with diverse prizes, like a Pulitzer Prize, a PEN/Faulkner Award, and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Book Award; all of them in 1999. The recycling of Woolf’s novel he accomplished with *The Hours* was not at random. During his interview with Justin Spring for the *BOMB* Magazine in 1999, Cunningham confessed being a devotee of Woolf and a fanatic of her art since he read *Mrs Dalloway* in high school: “I identified not so much with Mrs Dalloway or any of the other characters as with Woolf herself. What came up off the paper, her incredible gift. It was a level of art that felt prescient to me” (77). Feeling genuine admiration towards her, Virginia Woolf is no less than a hero to him.

Last but not least, Stephen Daldry, born in 1960 in Dorset, is an English film and theatre director, graduated from Sheffield University in 1982 with a B.A. in English

Literature. Daldry was CBE<sup>3</sup> in 2004 for his services to drama by Queen Elizabeth II. Since his childhood, he was attracted by theatre and literature. In the interview he shared with the theatre critic Michael Billington for *The Guardian* in 2003, Daldry confessed, the same as Cunningham, that literature changed his life, stressing *The Lord of the Rings* (Billington). In 2000 Daldry debuted as a film director with the film adaptation *Billy Eliot*. Later on, he directed and produced *The Hours* (2002), a screen adaptation of Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours*, which was nominated for nine Oscars. Along with his career, Daldry has been nominated three times for Best Director by the Academy Awards, one of them for *The Hours*. In the last decade he has directed the film *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2012) and the Netflix series *The Crown* (2016), with which he won an Emmy Award in 2018.

#### **2.4. The Landmark: *Mrs Dalloway***

*Mrs Dalloway*, which began to be written in 1922 and was eventually published in 1925, is a novel in which not much happens: everything takes place in a day of June of 1923. Clarissa Dalloway is giving a party for her husband and decides to buy the flowers herself. Along this specific day, she walks around London, meets different people, and reflects on different aspects: life, death, her marriage to Richard, love... In the course of that day, we get an insight into Clarissa's life. *Mrs Dalloway* is a day in her life, or rather her life in a day.

*Mrs Dalloway* is a great example of how Woolf stayed faithful to the modernist concern with the internal sphere rather than the external one, moving away from traditional Victorian conventions. This fact shaped straight away her lavish use of stream of consciousness. Through the use of such innovative technique, with which narration and personal thoughts are blended in, she was adept at defragmenting the mind of her characters, positioning the focus of interest in their psyches. In this way, but also thanks to the variety of minds explored, Woolf did no less than scrutinizing human behavior. For this reason, Bennett states that "what Virginia Woolf most clearly perceives, is what the experience of living feels like to the people she creates. Inevitably

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<sup>3</sup> CBE stands for Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

that will depend upon their circumstances, upon the time, the place, the position and social structure in which they find themselves” (9-10).

Besides, *Mrs Dalloway* enjoys many other modernist characteristics. One of them is its rejection of the traditional chronological evolution of the plot, thanks to its combination of three storylines: Clarissa’s, a woman struggling with her existence and marriage and whose life is limited to futile activities, like organizing a party; Septimus<sup>4</sup>, an ex-soldier afflicted with shell-shock who finally commits suicide as it is the only possible end for his suffering; and Peter’s, a man who proposed to Clarissa but whose proposal was declined as Clarissa thought Richard was her best match: “For in a marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him [...]. But with Peter everything has to be shared, everything gone into” (*Mrs Dalloway* 7). Woolf jumps from one character to the next, exploring their minds offering different impressions of the moment but also memories of the past with subtle blurred distinction. According to Birch, “on the whole, there is neither analysis nor judgment of their actions and activities: the narrator leaves us, as readers, to analyse and judge for ourselves” (22).

As characters, the main figure is Clarissa, Mrs Dalloway, but there are also other characters whose minds are exhibited: Septimus Warren Smith, Peter Walsh, Lucrezia, and Richard Dalloway. However, they are not directly connected. On the one hand, we find Clarissa with Peter Walsh, an old suitor, and Richard, her husband. On the other hand, we encounter Septimus and Lucrezia, his Italian wife. This is because Woolf simply connected Clarissa and Septimus by the city they live in, London. Nonetheless, Septimus and Clarissa are more alike than anticipated. Although Clarissa enjoys the life of a wealthy Londoner, Septimus represents how dark and obscure life can turn for oneself: “The War had taught him. It was sublime. He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and was bound to survive. He was right here” (*Mrs Dalloway* 73). In his case, he deals with the trauma caused by the Great War, known as ‘shell-shock’, that “has led him to a state of mind in which he cannot respond at all to the reality of the existence of other people,

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<sup>4</sup> Septimus Warren Smith is in *Mrs Dalloway* the other main protagonist after Clarissa Dalloway.

is driven mad by his meaningless isolation of the self, and his madness is exacerbated into suicide” (Daiches 210). Though differently, Clarissa feels the same way. Living in a society where she lacks a name of her own<sup>5</sup>, she lacks identity:

She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs Richard Dalloway. (*Mrs Dalloway* 9)

The moment at which the link between Clarissa and Septimus outstands is at the end when Clarissa knows about Septimus’ suicide. She starts considering the idea of suicide, even though she does not commit it: “She had escaped. But that young man had killed himself. Somehow it was her disaster – her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forces to stand here in her evening dress” (*Mrs Dalloway* 157). Therefore, death, most notably suicide, is used by Woolf as the main nexus between the two characters. The fact that Woolf decided to tell the story of both, a woman and a man, demonstrates that she wanted to represent the struggle of the individual within society, regardless of gender:

The novel shows Virginia Woolf’s struggle to reconcile the difficult antinomies of life: the one (solitude) and the many (society); the moment that is now, and the stream of time that sweeps away the present; sanity and insanity (that make Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus two sides of one persona); the human impulse to create and the human desire to destroy; life and death. (Gelfant 243)

Other recurrent topics are homosexuality, motherhood, and war, among others. In the case of homosexuality, it is an introduction to lesbianism, as it is Clarissa who undergoes a process of introspection and realizes her true love has always been Sally Seton. Besides, the flux of time, which is represented with the striking of the Big Ben can be said to be one of the most noticeable themes. Woolf also included strong vivid images in the novel, like the waves or flowers, which are central symbols to the story.

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<sup>5</sup> The lack of personal identity is already reflected in the title of the novel, *Mrs Dalloway*, which is Clarissa’s name after her husband’s.



### III. FROM MODERNIST NOVEL TO POSTMODERNIST NOVEL: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *MRS DALLOWAY* AND MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM'S *THE HOURS*

#### 3.1. *The Hours*: Plot, Structure, and Style

“The American novel *The Hours* is a tribute to his literary predecessor while at the same time a carefully crafted literary venture in its own right” (Erickson 715) due to the fact that Cunningham took Woolf’s novel as the point of departure for his own novel. Cunningham maintained *Mrs Dalloway*’s story by updating it into an intensely fragmented contemporary version. *The Hours* is the outcome of the coexistence of three different narratives that are presented as independent stories starring three different women, though the liaison between them is clarified at the end of the novel. What *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Hours* have in common is that both novels compress the narratives of their characters in a single day, being Cunningham’s novel a follower of Woolf’s set up. Nevertheless, “in Cunningham’s novel, three completely distinct spaces, times and narratives are treated within the bounds of one novel compared with *Mrs. Dalloway*’s singular setting in June 1923, London, England” (Rogers 6). Yet, the three stories are narrated in the present tense, giving the impression that they are taking place simultaneously.

The principal character is Clarissa Vaughan, a professional editor. She lives in New York City in the late twentieth century with her daughter, Julia, and her female partner, Sally. Paralleling Clarissa Dalloway’s storyline, Clarissa Vaughan decides to buy flowers for the party she is throwing for her friend, Richard, who has won a Carrouthers Price for his novel: “She will give Richard the best party she can manage. She will try to create something temporal, even trial, but perfect in a way. [...]. It is her tribute, her gift. What more can she offer?” (*The Hours* 123). Clarissa looks after Richard not only because he is afflicted with AIDS and schizophrenia, but also, it seems, because she is in love with him. Prior to the party, she goes to Richard’s place to help him get dressed,

but he commits suicide<sup>6</sup> in her presence. While the party is the culmination in *Mrs Dalloway*, there is no party in *The Hours*.

There is a fictional Virginia Woolf in the day she starts writing *Mrs Dalloway*, in 1923. Leonard, her husband, takes care of her as the phantoms of madness threaten Virginia with a new nervous breakdown. Yet, she is focused on her writing. This day she receives the visit of her sister, Vanessa, and her children, with whom she shares an intimate time. After they leave — and having passionately kissed her sister — Virginia runs to the train station with the purpose of going back to London: “She knows how suddenly the headache can return but she discounts it in Leonard’s presence, acts more firmly healthy than she sometimes feel. She will return to London. Better to die raving mad in London than evaporate in Richmond” (*The Hours* 70). Leonard notices her absence and goes to find her. Finally, both agree to move to London together.

The third narrative is Laura Brown’s, who lives in Los Angeles in 1949. Laura is a pregnant Californian housewife married to a World War II ex-soldier, Dan, and mother of a toddler, Richie. The day presented is Dan’s birthday, and Laura struggles to bake the perfect cake for him or to cope with her little boy, demonstrating her weariness. She feels caged in her role in the family as wife and mother. Overwhelmed, she goes to a hotel. There she reads *Mrs Dalloway* and considers death: “She could decide to die. It is an abstract, shimmering option, not particularly morbid. Hotel rooms are where people do things like that, aren’t they? It’s possible – perhaps even likely – that someone has ended his or her life right here, in this room, on this bed” (*The Hours* 151). On the day of Richard’s funeral, we discover that Laura is his mother and that she abandoned her family when her second child was born. On another note, it is known that Laura’s character was based on Cunningham’s mother on the early drafts (Spring 80).

In contrast to the absence of chapters and the lack of indications on the switch of the point of view in *Mrs Dalloway*, the structure of *The Hours* is simpler in the sense that the reader is not required to figure out which character is talking. Cunningham specified at the beginning of each chapter who that chapter was about, by indicating

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Brown is bound to commit suicide as he is Septimus Smith’s direct equivalent. Richard throws himself out of a window paralleling Septimus Smith’s suicide in *Mrs Dalloway*.

‘Mrs. Woolf’, ‘Mrs Vaughan’, or ‘Mrs. Brown’ respectively. The novel begins with a prologue in which the suicide of Virginia Woolf is described, working as a preface to the character of Woolf and also setting the mood of the novel. Therefore, it is fundamental for the rest of the novel as it “introduces transgression and aesthetic experience as well as writing and death as dominant themes of the novel” (Olk 206). The novel is split into alternate chapters, each of which is dedicated to one of the protagonists. The first chapter is dedicated to Clarissa Vaughan as it “is very important to the palimpsest nature of the text and its being an updating of Virginia Woolf’s novel *Mrs Dalloway*” (AbdelRahman 157). In the last chapter, Clarissa Vaughan and Laura Brown meet and share protagonism. It is in this chapter that we find out that Richard is Richie, who is the direct connection between these two women. This puts to an end the way in which Cunningham played with the lack of linearity of time and the juxtaposition of narratives.

Moving to the type of narration, we can find third-person narration and stream of consciousness (free indirect style) to a great extent: “She thinks of Leonard. She thinks of his hand and his face, the deep lines around his mouth. She thinks of Vanessa, of the children, of Vita and Ethel: So many. They all have failed, haven’t they?” (*The Hours* 5). The use of stream of consciousness is one of the main features of the novel because, being an adaptation of the earlier, *The Hours* could not exist without its use. In Cunningham’s case, most of those stream of consciousness passages can be identified with a final question at the end, as in the previous quotation, putting to an end the thoughts of the characters. Another feature of *The Hours* is that its intertextuality is substantial through the several quotations of *Mrs Dalloway*,<sup>7</sup> just as Woolf quoted Shakespeare. For example, the first chapter dedicated to Mrs Woolf ends up with the first line of *Mrs Dalloway*<sup>8</sup>; next, the following chapter quotes the very first paragraph of Woolf’s novel, portraying Woolf’s novel as the principal connection between the three women. What is more, Cunningham’s usage of Woolf’s style goes a step beyond by including his own version of one of *Mrs Dalloway*’s sentences, emphasizing the echoing of style and the intertextuality of the novel. When Clarissa Dalloway thinks

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<sup>7</sup> Those excerpts from *Mrs Dalloway*’s that are quoted in *The Hours* appear in italics.

<sup>8</sup> This chapter ends with the following lines: “She (Virginia) picks up her pen./ Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself” (*The Hours* 35). The first part is an addition of Cunningham by which he highlights the importance of authorship. The second part is the first sentence in *Mrs Dalloway*.

“What a lark! What a plunge!” (*Mrs Dalloway* 3), Clarissa Vaughan thinks “What a thrill, what a shock” (*The Hours* 10); both appearing at the beginning of the novels. Besides, Cunningham maintains the noun ‘plunge’ and displays it next to other water-related words revealing the importance of the symbolism water in Woolf’s novel: “As if standing at the edge of the pool she delays for a moment the plunge, the quick membrane of chill, the plain shock of immersion” (*The Hours* 9).

### 3.2. The Mirroring of Characters

Aside from the storyline, in *The Hours*, Michael Cunningham tailored the cast of characters by mirroring *Mrs Dalloway*’s. This deserves utmost attention since “their names, roles or situations are altered” (Oosterik 40). First of all, Cunningham maintained the order brought into existence by Woolf: she created three central figures, and so did he. Regarding the transference of names, apart from maintaining ‘Clarissa’ as the name of one of his protagonists, in *The Hours*, Clarissa Vaughan is nicknamed as ‘Mrs. Dalloway’ by Richard:

She shouldn’t, he’d said, be named after a great figure in literature, and while she’d argued for Isabel Archer or Ana Karenina, Richard had insisted that Mrs. Dalloway was the singular and obvious choice. There was the matter of her existing first name, a sign too obvious to ignore, and, more important, the larger question of fate. (10-11)

More names are recycled in the postmodern novel. For instance, there is no Richard, in the sense of a husband for Clarissa, but this name is given to Vaughan’s AIDS-stricken friend. In the same vein, in *The Hours*, Clarissa is married to a woman, Sally Lester. As explained in the section dedicated to *Mrs Dalloway*, Sally Seton was the real old love of Clarissa Dalloway. The name ‘Sally’ is used by Cunningham to name Vaughan’s partner and not her true love. To fill in such gap, Richard Brown is established as Vaughan’s genuine love, meaning that he takes up Sally’s role in *Mrs Dalloway*.

Considering absences and the mirroring of roles, *The Hours* lacks an independent version of the persona of Rezia. This is because the role of Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway* is impersonated in *The Hours* by Richard Brown. Being Clarissa Vaughan the one caring for him, she takes up the role of the devoted wife performed by Rezia in Woolf’s novel. In this manner, the distant connection between Clarissa and Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway*

is clarified in *The Hours* by approaching both characters. Basically, Cunningham played with the disposal of his characters: Richard is not Clarissa's husband, but the new embodiment of Septimus Warren-Smith and of Sally Seton, all at once. On the contrary, Sally Lester is the one more closely representing Woolf's Richard Dalloway. Moving to the character of Peter Walsh, what Michael Cunningham did was to embody him with a creation of his own: Louis Waters. In *The Hours* Louis is not presented as Clarissa's but as Richard's old love. This is because in Cunningham's story Richard had two former lovers in the past: Clarissa and Louis. Moreover, *Mrs Dalloway*'s characters equivalents can also be identified in Laura's storyline in *The Hours*. First of all, Laura Brown is depressed and alienated and would work for a counterpart for Mrs Woolf and for Clarissa Dalloway. As well as the other two women, she has also shared a kiss with another woman<sup>9</sup>, but in her adulthood. Focusing on her marriage, her husband is a surviving World War veteran, just like Septimus Warren-Smith<sup>10</sup>.

To finish with the transference of characters, it must be taken into consideration that not all of *Mrs Dalloway*'s characters enjoy similar importance in *The Hours*, though adapted. The most noticeable case is Peter Walsh's adaptation as Louis Waters. In the interview he shared with Justin Spring, Cunningham explained his personal adaptation of Peter Walsh:

I've reduced him, really, to a walk-on. I think that's a big part of what's comic about Louis. And that is tragic about him, too. It's one of the oldest human dilemmas. In this version of the drama, you're central and irreplaceable. In that version, you're a sad little peripheral character complaining about the lack of love in the world. (Spring 78)

It could be argued that this also happens to the adaptation of Woolf's Septimus. While in *Mrs Dalloway* he is the second main character having a story on his own, Cunningham reduced Richard, who is Septimus' equivalent in *The Hours*, to a peripheral character in Clarissa Vaughan's narrative, because his story is also hers.

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<sup>9</sup> The object of the kiss is Kitty. The same as Rezia, Kitty has no children (due to a tumour in her uterus) and is married to a war veteran. In *The Hours* Kitty would also work as Laura's personal 'Sally'.

<sup>10</sup> Even if both Septimus and Dan are war veterans, Septimus fought in World War I and Dan in World War II.

Likewise, Cunningham also included in his novel parallel situations between the narratives of Virginia and Clarissa. One of the clearest connections is that Clarissa Vaughan and Richard Brown parallel the marriage formed by Virginia and Leonard. For instance, at the beginning of the novel, Leonard tries to persuade his wife to eat: “He hesitates, then nods grudgingly. [...] Still. Virginia refusing to eat is not a good sign.” (*The Hours* 33). Later on, this same scene is repeated with Clarissa and Richard at his apartment: ““Food matters a great deal, Richard”” (*The Hours* 62). We see how Clarissa Vaughan would be reproducing how Leonard took care of Virginia, while it is Richard Brown the one mirroring Virginia’s insanity. Furthermore, Cunningham makes Virginia and Richard undergo similar experiences, apart from being the only two characters that commit suicide in the novel, both are mentally ill and are tormented by the hearing of voices. Based on a real-life experience, Cunningham fictionally recapitulates the event in which Woolf, during one of her nervous collapses, thought some birds were speaking in Greek in her window: “A flock of sparrows outside her window once sang, unmistakably, in Greek” (*The Hours* 71). Some chapters before that episode, Richard confesses to Clarissa that he has had a similar experience: ““They were singing, just now, in a foreign language. I believe it may have been Greek. Archaic Greek.”” (*The Hours* 59). Therefore, from these examples, it is clear that Richard Brown parallels both Woolf’s Septimus Smith and Cunningham’s secondary recreation of Virginia.

Then, it can be concluded is that Michael Cunningham drafted with precision an equivalent, either direct or indirect, for every one of Woolf’s main characters in his novel. In order to identify such equivalences, a reading of the earlier novel is required, even though Cunningham’s novel is an independent artifice and modern readers can enjoy it without reading it’s antecedent. Some readers may actually be inspired to read Woolf’s novel after reading Cunningham’s.

### **3.3. Essence shared: Themes**

“In his re-writing of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Michael Cunningham takes up many of the images and themes present in Woolf’s novel and re-fashions them” (Rogers 4). Following Rogers’ claim, the themes present in the earlier novel and in *The Hours* will be discussed. As themes the flux of time, marriage, homosexuality, insanity, and suicide

are predominant. There is a substantial interrelation between the different themes, which appear intertwined. For instance, suicide is represented in both novels as the end to inner conflicts, pointing out directly to insanity, which at the same time is the result of something else: despair, unhappiness, war, and AIDS. Likewise, marriage is directly linked to the themes of homosexuality and the kiss.

Starting with the flux of time, it is of no less importance that Cunningham's novel is entitled '*The Hours*'<sup>11</sup>. In *Mrs Dalloway* time is marked by the strikes of the Big Ben and of other smaller clocks. Instead, in *The Hours*, time is rather present in the combination of the three narratives. Yet, time is still something that concerns Cunningham's characters — "Laura glances at the clock on the nightstand. It's well past seven. Why did she buy this clock, this hideous thing" (*The Hours* 37) —, especially the running out of time as expressed by Richard: "I seem to have fallen out of time" (*The Hours* 62). Likewise, Clarissa and Richard have a conversation in which Richard plays with the notion of time: "'And, of course, there is time. And place. [...] We are middle-aged and we're young lovers standing beside a pond. We're everything, all at once. Isn't it for remarkable?'" (*The Hours* 66-67).

Besides, marriage and homosexuality go hand in hand in both novels. In *Mrs Dalloway*, this theme is treated through the marriages formed by Clarissa and Richard, and Rezia and Septimus. Clarissa's introspection is present all through the novel as she wonders if her marriage was the right decision; contrary to Lucrezia's view on her marriage. Clarissa is not necessarily dependant on Richard, but Rezia is presented as a devoted wife: "Nothing could make her happy without him! Nothing!" (*Mrs Dalloway* 20). Also, while Clarissa is already a mother, Rezia not only struggles with her husband's instability but with her necessity for motherhood: "Love between a man and a woman was repulsive to Shakespeare. The business of copulation was filth to him before the end. But, Rezia said, she must have children. They have been married for five years" (*Mrs Dalloway* 75).

Marital introspection is adjunct to homosexuality, as already introduced by the previous quotation. This is seen through Clarissa Dalloway and her kiss with Sally

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<sup>11</sup> 'The Hours' was Woolf's first option to title her novel though she finally chose 'Mrs Dalloway' instead.

Seton: “But his question of love [...], this falling in love with women. Take Sally Seton; her relation in the old days with Sally Seton. Had not that, after all, been love?” (*Mrs Dalloway* 28). In the case of *The Hours*, Clarissa Dalloway’s doubts are reflected upon Laura Brown and Clarissa Vaughan. Laura Brown also deliberates on her marriage to Dan, showing that she is trapped in a marriage that suffocates her:

Why did she marry him? She married him out of love. She married him out of guilt; out of fear of being alone; out of patriotism. He was simply too good, too kind, too earnest, too sweet-smelling not to marry. He has suffered so much. He wanted her. (*The Hours* 106)

Clarissa Vaughan’s case is different. Her relationship with Sally was her choice and yet she is not content<sup>12</sup>. Related to this, Cunningham offers two versions of Dalloway’s kiss, representing how sexually castrated women were at those times. First, there is Laura’s kiss with Kitty, with whom she feels protected: “Kitty lifts her face, and their lips touch. They both know what they are doing. They rest their mouths, each on the other. They touch their lips together but do not quite kiss” (*The Hours* 110). Later, there is Virginia’s kiss with her sister, Vanessa. Not only this kiss is rather shocking due to Virginia’s feelings, but also because of its reciprocity: “Virginia leans forward and kisses Vanessa on the mouth. It is an innocent kiss, innocent enough, but just now, in this kitchen, behind Nelly’s back, it feels like the most delicious and forbidden of pleasures. Vanessa returns the kiss” (*The Hours* 154).

Ultimately, insanity and suicide are connected in both novels. In *Mrs Dalloway*, insanity is projected over Clarissa and Septimus, but differently. Clarissa’s mental state is caused by despair and her struggle with the meaning of her own existence, while Septimus mental state is pathological as his insanity has been caused by the trauma of war. In contrast, in *The Hours*, insanity is projected over Woolf, Clarissa, Richard, and Laura. Woolf’s and Richard’s case are close to Septimus’, and Laura’s and Vaughan’s to Dalloway’s. Also, war is present in *The Hours* by the same token as it appears in Woolf’s narrative, as something that has afflicted her mental state: “The voices murmur behind her; bombers drone in the sky, though she looks for the planes and can’t see them” (*The Hours* 3). In the case of Richard Brown, his insanity works as a metaphor

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<sup>12</sup> Clarissa’s Brown true love is Richard Brown. Richard also loved her in his youth, but in the love triangle formed by Clarissa, Richard, and Louis, he chose Louis over Clarissa.



for a personal war: “I got a prize for having AIDS and going nuts and being brave about it, it had nothing to do with my work” (*The Hours* 63).

Finally, suicide is represented as the slip door from insanity. While in *Mrs Dalloway* self-murder is limited to just one character<sup>13</sup>, in *The Hours* suicide is present in each of the three storylines. The fictional Virginia Woolf commits suicide<sup>14</sup> but also asserts suicide as something fictional that her characters will undergo: “Someone else will die. It should be a greater mind than Clarissa’s; it should be someone with sorrow and genius enough to turn away from the seduction of the world, its cups and its coats” (*The Hours* 154). In Clarissa Vaughan’s narrative, it is Richard who commits suicide. Prior to jumping out of the window, Richard repeats the last sentence from Virginia’s letter<sup>15</sup>, creating a link between them: “Richard smiles. He shakes his head. He says, “I don’t think two people could have been happier than we’ve been”. He inches forward, slides gently off the sill, and falls” (*The Hours* 200). Lastly, Laura considers suicide as a way of liberation and even imagines Woolf in the moment of committing suicide: “She imagines Virginia Woolf, virginal, unbalanced, defeated by the impossible demands of life and arts; she images her stepping into a river with a stone in her pocket” (*The Hours* 152). By and large, in both novels suicide guarantees relief from pain and alienation.

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<sup>13</sup> Although in *Mrs Dalloway* Septimus Smith is the only character who ends up committing suicide, the idea of suicide, as an option in mind, is also projected over Clarissa Dalloway.

<sup>14</sup> In *The Hours* the fictional Virginia Woolf reproduces Woolf’s suicide in real life. As mentioned at the beginning, Virginia Woolf drowned herself in 1941.

<sup>15</sup> Prior to committing suicide, Woolf left two notes. One was for Leonard and the other for Vanessa, her sister. In Cunningham’s *The Hours* this fact is maintained but there is just one blue envelope addressed to Leonard.



#### **IV. THE HOURS FROM NOVEL TO FILM: THE ADAPTATION OF MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM'S NOVEL BY STEPHEN DALDRY**

Stephen Daldry's *The Hours* is the movie adaptation of the postmodernist novel *The Hours* efficiently achieved through the script authored by the screenwriter David Hare. Starred by Nicole Kidman as Virginia Woolf, Meryl Streep as Clarissa Vaughan, and Julianne Moore as Laura Brown; Daldry's *The Hours* holds a double nature: it is a direct adjustment of Cunningham's novel to the screen, and, as such, an indirect rendering of *Mrs Dalloway*. Besides, Daldry's *The Hours* "propelled the novel to the top ten US fiction best-sellers chart, along with Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* on which it is based" (AbdelRahman 151) because, like Cunningham's novel, it maintains a constant look to its predecessors.

##### **4.1. From Ink to Screen**

Through a rewriting and reorganization of Cunningham's novel, Stephen Daldry's film managed to retain the plot, world, and characters created by the American author in his screen adaptation, reinforcing the diegetic fidelity of the film. It is substantially the same: the life in a day of three different women, from different times and places, which are bounded by their existential void and their desire of having meaningful lives. Notwithstanding, the movie distances from the novel in the period of time of two of the narratives. While in Cunningham's novel Laura's story takes place in 1949, in Daldry's film it takes place in 1951. This modification of time also affects Clarissa Vaughan's narrative. In the novel, it is just stated that her story develops at the end of the twentieth century. Instead, in the film, Clarissa's story is concretely set in 2001. Yet, just like in the novel, none of the stories is placed over the rest; the three of them are positioned at par. The names of the characters are respected as well as the role of each of the characters: Virginia Woolf is, still fictional, a mentally unstable novelist writing *Mrs Dalloway*; Laura Brown is Woolf's reader, the woman entrapped in the household as mother and wife shattered with guilt; and, Clarissa Vaughan remains as the contemporary embodiment of Clarissa Dalloway, with all that this implies. Yet, some other characters have lost or gained relevance in the film, like Julia or Richard. This

way, it is Richard whose role is empowered, mainly as a connector of the stories, but also as an observer of his depressed mother, stressing her despair and her inability to act. For instance, when his father, Dan, leaves to work and Laura looks out of the window, little Richard watches his mother assertively (*The Hours* 00:13:06-00:13:34). The same intense gaze happens when he witnesses his mother's kiss with Kitty (*The Hours* 00:41:59-00:42:53). In contrast, Vaughan's daughter, Julia, is reduced to a peripheral character and only appears in the last scenes. Concerning this matter, David Hare declared in the interview of *Script Magazine* (2015) that the minimization of this character was encouraged by the effectiveness of the film:

“In the book, she's being besieged by a gay woman teacher at her university who is desperately in love with her and who makes Clarissa feel very bourgeois. So there's an argument there about whether sexual politics is or isn't radical politics. I simply didn't see how I could incorporate that in a way which illuminated all three stories.” (Cohen)

On another note, intertextuality is clearly noticeable but, in contrast to the novel, the film does not directly cite *Mrs Dalloway*, omitting those fragments of the novel. However, the English novel is still present in those scenes in which we see Virginia writing it or when Laura reads the book, or when both read it out loud. In this sense, Maseda argues that films that are based on novels provoke an effect of *mise-en-abîme*<sup>16</sup> (362). Regarding themes, in the film, they remain steady. Homosexuality is predominant, giving heterosexuality little room; insanity is persistent in the three narratives and in diverse characters simultaneously; death's inevitability is reflected upon; suicide remains captured as the end to inner suffering of the mind and body, and marriage is represented as social confinement. Yet, the theme of war, which is fundamental in *Mrs Dalloway* and which lost representation in the Cunningham's *The Hours*, is even less noticeable in the film. It is mainly Dan, the war veteran, who introduces war; and, due to his lack of limelight, it seems to be left behind. Even so, it could be argued that, as in the novel, Richard's condition, as an AIDS positive, could be taken as a metaphorical sort of 'war'. In contrast to the novel, the visualization of his physical deterioration highlights this idea. Moreover, being the flux of time of great

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<sup>16</sup> *Mise-en-abîme* in Literary Theory is defined as: “self-reflection within the structure of a literary work; a work employing self-reflection” (Oxford Dictionaries).

importance in both novels it is exceptionally represented in the film in the scenes in which the alarm clocks ring (*The Hours* 00:06:50-00:07:07).

Focusing on technical aspects, there is discordance both in structure and form with the novel for obvious reasons: literature and cinema do not share identical natures. Therefore, how this cinematographic adaption was achieved is of great importance. The main characteristics noticed are the use of montage, lack of voiceover, shots, and music. Starting with the montage, that is considered the most crucial cinematographic technique of the film by Maseda (386), the three stories are combined and intertwined through its constant display in the movie. Without respecting the order of scenes in the novel<sup>17</sup>, Daldry managed to merge the three narratives successfully, all the while establishing presentness in each of them through the objective position of the cameras. There is no indicator in the switch neither of the narrative nor of their space-time; even then, the film does accomplish to transmit the spectator they are all happening as the spectator is watching in spite of the non-chronological order of the film, emphasizing the idea of timelessness through the continuous digressions in time. In this sense, Daldry's film can be depicted as postmodern as, according to Rebeca Maseda, a postmodern film is a set of continuous digressions (384). Following this, Rogers points out that the montage "with its capacity to present images in a non-chronological fashion, [it] mirrors the stream-of-consciousness technique for its more accurate depiction of human thoughts as non-linear and non-chronological" (20).

All in all, in Daldry's *The Hours*, internal cohesion is achieved through the binding of the narratives, and achieved, in the same way, through scene juxtaposition. Also, in relation to the expression of thoughts, the technique of voiceover is not used to substitute the stream of consciousness of the novel. Yet, voiceover is used to read Virginia's suicide letter. Cohen points out the complexity of finding a substitution for such modernist device and affirms that "for a while, it looked like a voiceover narration would be inevitable, but he (Hare) was determined to avoid it. The alternative was to invent new scenes and to expose the characters' thoughts" (Cohen). In Maseda's view, these additions include the scenes in which we see Clarissa on her way to buy the flowers talking on the phone or when Clarissa talks with the salesperson at the flower

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<sup>17</sup> The beginning of the novel is maintained and the film starts with the suicide of Virginia, which enhances the power of the scene.

shop: “such conversation does not take place in the novel, but here is necessary to explain something about her, about Richard, that in the novel takes part in the thoughts of the protagonist” (369). Therefore, lacking such device, the exposure of the protagonist’s inner realities is achieved through the use of shots that focus on the three women’s facial expression and the movements of their bodies in the *mise-en-scène*<sup>18</sup>.

Music is of no lesser importance. Apart from dramatizing the tone and rhythm of the scenes, it also works as a connector of the narratives. This is because in many transitions a tune begins in one scene and continues to be heard in the following — though from different narratives —, just like it happens at the beginning of the film. In this matter, Hutcheon and O’Flynn defend that music “reinforces emotion or provokes reactions in the audience and directs our interpretation of different characters” (81). In the case of *The Hours*, featuring Philip Glass’ music, even Stephen Daldry signaled in the interview for *The Guardian* the importance of the soundtrack: “what’s great about his score is that it works as another character in the film. I know some people don’t like it, but I love it and there’s a great counterpoint between image and picture” (Billington). Then, music in *The Hours* is another structural element that complements the *mise-en-scène* of the characters, their evolution, and interpretation. Ultimately, it might be argued that “the changes made to content in the film adaptation can be seen as moves to strengthen the connections to either or both novels; however, the use of formal and stylistic film techniques tends to gesture at Woolf’s work more than Cunningham’s” (Rogers 15), clarifying the direct Woolf-Daldry connection mentioned at the beginning of this section.

#### **4.2. Essence Shared: Symbolism**

Being Cunningham’s *The Hours* an interpretative rewriting of *Mrs Dalloway*, and being Daldry’s *The Hours* a film adaptation of Cunningham’s novel, the novel’s vivid presence of symbolism remains imperishable in the film. There are three themes which, inherited from its two antecedents, are found in the film; these are books, flowers, and water. All of them are either constantly present in the film and novels or substantial in the moments of their appearance.

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<sup>18</sup> *Mise-en-scène* is a term of Literary Theory defined as: “The arrangement of the scenery, props, etc. on the stage of a theatrical production or on the set of a film” (Oxford Dictionaries).

Books are obviously linked to literature, the creative process of writing that takes place in Cunningham's *The Hours* through Virginia, and a reference to Woolf's classic and Cunningham's novel in real life. In the manner of Virginia, who "will write and write - She will finish this book, then write another" (*The Hours* 209), Cunningham's Richard is also a poet who plays with characters. While Cunningham converts Virginia Woolf into a fictional character of his own, Richard does the same thing by converting people of his reality into fictional characters in his book. Clarissa Vaughan apart from being the counterpart for Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway in *The Hours* is also the protagonist of Richard's book. Likewise, Laura is as well converted into a fictional character by Richard: "Here she is, then, Clarissa thinks; here is the woman from Richard's poetry. Here is the lost mother, the thwarted suicide; here is the woman who walked away" (*The Hours* 221). As Clarissa Vaughan states in Daldry's film, Richard takes things that happened and "he makes them his own" (*The Hours* 00:16:58). Furthermore, the relation of the three women to literature<sup>19</sup> does not simply connect them but strengthen the power of literature in the story. Needless to say, this was transferred into the movie. In the film, rather showing than telling, the presence of books, as a wink towards literature, is overwhelming in its scenery. In regards to Virginia's scenes, there are books all over her writing room (*The Hours* 00:17:15) and in the room where Leonard works correcting pieces. In the case of Clarissa Vaughan, there are books all over her house. For instance, there are books at the entrance of her house (*The Hours* 00:33:10), and in Julia's bedroom displayed on the bed, on a shelf, and on the floor (*The Hours* 00:33:33). In these two narratives, there is a clear sense of disorganization, symbolizing through the display of books the mental conflict of the characters. This contrasts highly with Leonard's books, which are well-ordered (*The Hours* 00:09:33). Lastly, in the case of Laura, we see that she is just focused on one book, *Mrs Dalloway*. There are two scenes where we see her reading. The first is at the beginning of the film when she wakes up (*The Hours* 00:10:59), the second in the hotel room (*The Hours* 01:06:33-01:06:58). In both scenes, she reads in bed, alone, attempting to recreate a room of her own<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> One is the writer (Virginia), other the reader (Laura), and the other an editor and protagonist (Clarissa).

<sup>20</sup> These two scenes touch upon Woolf's *A Room Of One's Own*. Besides, the film begins with the three protagonists lying on their beds in their bedrooms, or working alone in other rooms. On account of this,

Flowers are also central to the plot. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa buys flowers, Rezia buys (dying) flowers from a man from the street, and Richard buys Clarissa flowers as a present. But there are different representations of flowers in the novel; they can be either physical – “there were flowers: delphiniums, sweet peas, bunched of lilac, and carnations, masses of carnations. There were roses; there were irises” (*Mrs Dalloway* 11) – or metaphorical – “so splendid a flower to grow on the crest of human life” (*Mrs Dalloway* 135). Yet, they are also used to emphasize virtues – “Sally’s power was amazing, her gift, her personality. There was her way with flowers, for instance” (*Mrs Dalloway* 29) – and insanity – “red flowers grew through his flesh; their stiff leaves rusted by his head” (*Mrs Dalloway* 58). Continuing Woolf’s manner, Cunningham also plagued his novel with actual flowers and maintained their appearance as a present for the beloved: Clarissa buys flowers for the party; Sally buys flowers for Clarissa, and Dan for Laura. Apart, he reproduced their verbal presence in the narrative: “It’s the usual array, carnation, and mums, a scattering of gaunt lilies, freesia, daisies, bunches of hothouse tulips in white, yellow, and red, their petals going leathery at the tips. Zombie flowers, she thinks.” (*The Hours* 183). Withal, Cunningham reflected on their meaning through Clarissa: “Not flowers; if flowers are subtly wrong for the deceased they’re disastrous for the ill” (*The Hours* 21). Focusing on the film, flowers are used as a structural connector of the three narratives at the beginning of the film. From minute 00:08:47 up to 00:09:06 we see how the flowers merge together the three narratives. First, there is Clarissa moving the flowers around; then, there is Dan putting them in the kitchen worktop; and, finally, Nelly, Virginia’s servant retouches the flowers on Leonard’s desk. In addition, in general terms, the display of flowers in the background adds the note of colour and contrasts the greyness of the characters.

Last but not least, the symbolism of water is the one most subtle in the film, but most powerful in its appearance. In *Mrs Dalloway* there are constant references to the sea: “admired her shelves of running water, her geraniums” (16), “a diver before plunging while the sea darkens and brightens beneath him, and the waves which threaten to break” (26); “the wave breaking” (34); “murmur in his ear like sirens lolloping away on the green sea waver” (49); “where the sea flows now” (70), among many other

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the film presents a strong cohesion between the stories already from the beginning that is maintained over the course of the film.



examples. On the other hand, in Cunningham's *The Hours* water is the protagonist in Virginia's suicide, but also the surname of Peter Walsh's equivalent: Louis Waters. Also, the author maintained the use of the sea in other accounts: "she is taken by a wave of feeling, a sea-swell, that rises from under her breasts and buoys her, floats her gently as if she were under a sea creature [...]" (*The Hours* 40).

The same as Woolf did with the flowers, Cunningham also used water metaphorically: "Virginia [...] watching Vanessa's children as if they were a pool of water into which she might or not dive" (*The Hours* 118). In the film, the symbol of water gains protagonism from the very beginning. The first scene is a close-up of flowing blue waters with a strong splashing sound. Water is sonorous in the film, something not possible to transmit in the novel, increasing the spectator's attention on its importance. For instance, more subtly, we again perceive the sound of water when Virginia washes her hands in her room (*The Hours* 00:07:45). Yet, the moment in which water is most dramatic is in Laura's scene in the hotel, when, looking at the pill bottles, closes her eyes and imagines herself drowning in the flooded room (*The Hours* 01:08:38-01:08:57). This way she is connected to Virginia's suicide<sup>21</sup> as both are suffocated by water. Furthermore, just as flowers, water connects Laura's and Virginia's narratives. For instance, we see Virginia confessing her little niece, Angelica that she was thinking about her novel: "I was going to kill her heroine, but I have changed my mind" (*The Hours* 01:09:04-01:09:10). The next scene is Laura, waking up and saying: "I...I can't" (*The Hours* 01:09:13). Overall, what can be said is that water functions in the three works as the basis of life, but also as a cause of death, like Virginia's or Laura's<sup>22</sup>.

To conclude, an attempt has been made to study these three symbols on their own, it cannot be forgotten that they work together on several occasions, empowering their presence. This, for example, can be seen in the next quote from *Mrs Dalloway*, in which flowers and water are connected: "she looked pale, mysterious, like a lily, drowned under water, he thought" (75). Overall, in the film, we see flowers and books constantly appearing in most of the scenes, while water appears in specific moments. Nonetheless,

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<sup>21</sup> Virginia enters the river at 00:02:48, and her body floats away at 00:03:34.

<sup>22</sup> Laura's death is symbolic. It is represented as a dream she has in the hotel room, invisioned also by Virginia. In fact, she is the only survivor of her family.

it must be taken into account that these three are not the totality of the symbols, but a personal selection.

## V. CONCLUSION

Following McHale's statements that affirms that "postmodernism follows *from* modernism, in some sense, more than it follows *after* modernism" (5), the present dissertation has carried out an analysis of the nature of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism through a particular case study: the family composed by two novels, Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Cunningham's *The Hours*, and a film, Daldry's *The Hours*. Apart from having developed a study of comparative literature, a study of adaptation has also been undertaken but from two different perspectives. The first is the adaptation from literature to literature. Michael Cunningham echoed the essence of *Mrs Dalloway* and renewed the story by making something new out of it but remaining deeply immersed in its reference work. In doing so, Cunningham's *The Hours* possesses a self-reflexive postmodernist nature as the novel's metafiction merges together both fiction and reality, emphasizing its intertextuality with Woolf's novel and Woolf's personal life but without accomplishing a parody. The second is the adaptation from literature into cinema. In this case, Stephen Daldry's film may be considered a prolongation of Cunningham's novel in an alternative artistic medium. In spite of deserving to be considered a valuable artistic work on its own, it is a faithful screen adaptation of Cunningham's novel. Also, Daldry's *The Hours* is a fine cinematographic adaptation of the essence of *Mrs Dalloway* achieved through a convenient selection of filming techniques, like the use of montage in the combination of scenes or the close-up shots of faces that allow the spectator to see the character's feelings without the need of a voiceover to emulate Woolf's or Cunningham's stream of consciousness.

By taking Virginia Woolf and her novel as the point of departure, I have attempted to address why both her figure and her work are still significant and influential at present in spite of the passage of time. Woolf accomplished to set herself not only as a woman writer and as a feminist, but as a life philosopher who portrayed human existence and experience in her works, in particular in *Mrs Dalloway*. Soaking her work with her own experience of distress and hardship, Woolf achieved to create a novel with which readers of any time could identify due to the fact that *Mrs Dalloway* presents

matters that are still of interest nowadays, like homosexuality, social pressure, and mental illness, among others.

Above all, it is commonly said that reality overcomes fiction; however, this dissertation has attempted to illustrate through the study of the three works how life is also a mirror of fiction, and not exclusively the other way around. Fiction may be inspired by experience, based on true-events, even influenced and saturated with the author's personal life. In Cunningham's and Daldry's *The Hours*, respectively, Laura Brown's and Clarissa Vaughan's narratives show how life can echo fiction, consciously or unconsciously. Because of all the above mentioned, Cunningham's and Daldry's *The Hours* explore how life and art constantly undergo cycles of recycling and recovery. That is to say, though *The Hours* both novel and film are adaptations of their predecessor, it has been shown via the particular examination of each that the three works are unique and independent pieces of art that should be valued on their own merits. All in all, the allure of the bonding of these three works is that they are the result in the convergence of experience and fiction, of what has occurred and what is a figment, a combination that is both breathing and picturesque in aesthetic terms.

## VI. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Table: Character's (In)Direct Equivalences

The following table shows the equivalents of *Mrs Dalloway's* characters, in terms of the principal role they are assigned, in *The Hours*, both in Clarissa's Vaughan's narrative and in Laura Brown's narrative. Thanks to this display, highlighted in bold, the recycling of names can also be identified with ease.

<u><i>Mrs Dalloway's</i></u> <u>Characters</u>	<u>(In)Direct equivalents in</u> <u>Clarissa Vaughan's</u> <u>narrative in <i>The Hours</i></u>	<u>(In)Direct equivalents in</u> <u>Laura Brown's narrative</u> <u>in <i>The Hours</i></u>
Clarissa Dalloway	<b>Clarissa</b> Vaughan	Laura Brown
Septimus Warren Smith	<b>Richard</b> Brown	-
Peter Walsh	Louis Waters	-
<b>Richard</b> Dalloway	<b>Sally</b> Lester	Dan Brown
<b>Sally</b> Seton	<b>Richard</b> Brown	Kitty
Elizabeth Dalloway	Julia Vaughan	<b>Richard</b> Brown, 'Richie'
Miss Kilman	<b>Mary</b> Kurl	-

### Appendix 2. Table: The Mirroring of Characters

The following table shows the recurrence of roles and topics related to the different characters in each of the narrative lines both in *Mrs Dalloway* and in *The Hours*.

MAIN ROLES	THE MIRRORING OF CHARACTERS				
	<i>Mrs Dalloway</i>		<i>The Hours</i>		
	Narratives		Narratives		
	Dalloway's	Warren Smith's	Vaughan's	Woolf's	Brown's
<b>Marriage</b>	Clarissa and Richard Dalloway	Septimus and Lucrezia Smith	Clarissa Vaughan and Sally Lester	Virginia and Leonard Woolf	Laura and Dan Brown
<b>Offsprings</b>	Elizabeth Dalloway	None	Julia (Clarissa's)	None	Richard Brown
<b>Caregivers</b>	-	Lucrezia Smith	Clarissa Vaughan	Leonard Woolf	-
<b>The Sick</b> (mentally and physically)	-	Septimus Warren Smith	Richard Brown	Virginia Woolf	Laura Brown
<b>Afflicted with Existential Despair</b>	Clarissa Dalloway	-	Clarissa Vaughan	-	Laura Brown
<b>War Figures</b> (veterans, shell-shocked, metaphorical, scarred)	-	Septimus Warren Smith (WWI)	Richard Brown (AIDS)	Virginia Woolf (WWI)	Dan Brown (WWII)
<b>The Old Love</b>	Peter Walsh (Clarissa's)	-	Richard Brown (Clarissa's) & Louis Waters (Richard's)	-	-
<b>The Impossible Love</b>	Sally Seton (Clarissa's)	-	Richard Brown (Clarissa's)	-	-
<b>Protagonists of the Kiss</b>	Clarissa Dalloway and Sally Seton	-	Clarissa Vaughan and Richard Brown	Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell (sisters)	Laura Brown and Kitty
<b>Suicidal Characters</b>	Clarissa Dalloway (suicidal thoughts)	Septimus Warren Smith (self-murder)	Richard Brown (self-murder)	Virginia Woolf (self-murder)	Laura Brown (suicidal thoughts)

### Appendix 3. Images from Stephen Daldry's film *The Hours*: Symbolism

The present section includes different scenes from the film *The Hours*. The selection consists of some of those scenes directly mentioned and cited in the section 'Essence Shared: Symbolism', and also other relevant scenes that complement what was explained in the mentioned section.

#### Appendix 3.1. Books



Image 1: Leonard Woolf proofreading scripts in his working desk. (00:09:36)



Image 2: Clarissa sitting in Julia's room before starting preparations for the party. (00:33:33)

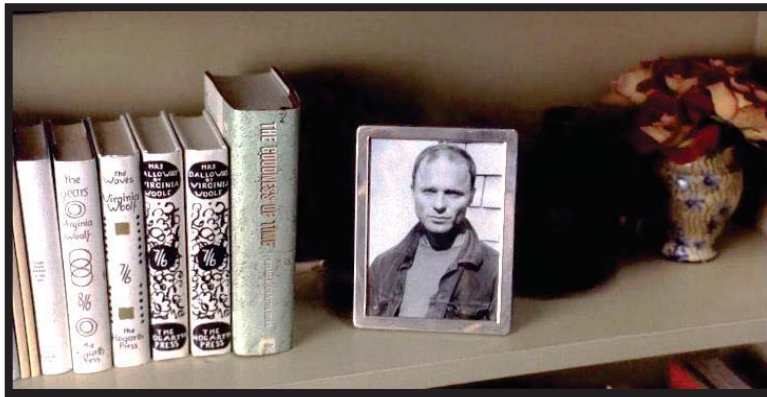


Image 3: In a shelf, Clarissa has Woolf's novels (*The Waves*, *The Waves*, and two copies of *Mrs Dalloway*) together with Richard's: *The Goodness of Time*. (00:53:02)



Image 4: Laura reading *Mrs Dalloway* in the hotel room. (01:06:43)



Image 5: Virginia's chaotic writing room is a brilliant example of her state of mind. (01:13:13)



### Appendix 3.2. Flowers



Image 7: Clarissa has flowers all around the house. (00:07:18)



Image 6: The flower shop Clarissa goes to buy flowers for Richard's party. There is a clear contrast between darkness and the vivid colours of the flowers. (00:15:12)



Image 8: Dan brings Laura yellow roses on his birthday. (00:11:52)



Image 9: Virginia offers Angelica yellow roses for the bird's funeral. (00:47:00)

### Appendix 3.3. Water



Image 10: Virginia entering the river to commit suicide. (00:03:14)



Image 11: Virginia pouring water in a porcelain washbasin in her room. (00:07:41)



Image 12: Louis Waters drinking a glass of water in Clarissa's kitchen. (00:54:20)



Image 13: The kitchen tap splashes Clarissa moments before her breakdown. (00:55:51)



Image 14: Laura Brown allegorically drowning in the hotel room. (01:08:53)



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