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# **Novel to Novel to Film: From Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* to Michael Cunningham's and Daldry-Hare's *The Hours***

Senior Paper

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All the famous novels of the world, with their well known characters, and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films. What could be easier and simpler? The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to this moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. But the results are disastrous to both. The alliance is unnatural. Eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples. (Woolf, “The Movies and Reality”)

Although adaptation’s detractors argue that “all the directorial Scheherazades of the world cannot add up to one Dostoevsky, it does seem to be more or less acceptable to adapt *Romeo and Juliet* into a respected high art form, like an opera or a ballet, but not to make it into a movie. If an adaptation is perceived as ‘lowering’ a story (according to some imagined hierarchy of medium or genre), response is likely to be negative...An adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary. (Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*)

Adaptation is a fundamental part of storytelling. We constantly re-boot, re-make, and re-create stories from before and we take in these re-fashionings ravenously—just look at the commercial success of *Jurassic World* or the *Harry Potter* series. Yet oftentimes adaptations of pre-existing works are devalued precisely for their presumed unoriginality; if a work borrows material from a pre-existing one, it is assumed to be automatically less valuable or worse than the original. The prevailing attitude towards adaptations seems incapable of viewing them as artistic creations unto their own, often judging based on faithfulness to content rather than artistic quality. As the epigraphs above suggest, this negative attitude is especially a problem for filmic adaptations of literary works.

Audiences seem to have the ceaseless expectation that a film adaptation should “live up to the book.” But what of the fact that by its very nature—it is a film, not a novel—it is inherently incapable of “living up to the book?” It is certainly true that a film can’t do everything that a novel can, and therefore will not be able to live up to what that writer does in their work. However, the relationship can be inverted to the same effect: there are many things films can do that novels can’t. Any filmmaker adapting a work of literature deals with these concerns. Filmic conventions exist just as much as novelistic ones; filmmakers use them, bend them, and break them just as much as novelists do, but the specific conventions and formal elements are distinct.

What good film adaptations of novels do is attempt to find analogous techniques to re-present the thematic and formal content of the original work. However, the devices are rarely parallel or analogous; there are few simplistic one-to-one parallels between filmic and novelistic conventions. New devices must be sought to remain faithful to the thematic content and formal conventions or innovations of the original work.

An interesting case of adaptation to study is that of Stephen Daldry and David Hare's film adaptation of Michael Cunningham's novel, *The Hours*. Published in 1998, Cunningham's novel is an adaptation of sorts, a re-writing of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. In it he updates the 1920s London setting of *Mrs. Dalloway* into 1990s New York City, with a protagonist named Clarissa "Mrs. Dalloway" Vaughan. She lives a single day which runs roughly parallel to the one which Clarissa Dalloway lives in Woolf's 1925 novel. Not constrained to being solely a strict re-writing of *Mrs. Dalloway*, however, Cunningham's novel is split into three separate narratives. The first is Clarissa's 1990s New York (re-enacting *Mrs. Dalloway*), the second Laura Brown's late-1940s suburban Los Angeles (reading *Mrs. Dalloway*) and the third Virginia Woolf's 1920s suburban London (writing *Mrs. Dalloway*) all of which take place in the course of a single day within their narrative timelines. Daldry-Hare's film adaptation came just four years after the novel, in 2002, with a heavyweight cast: Meryl Streep as Clarissa Vaughan, Julianne Moore as Laura Brown, and a prosthetic nose-wielding Nicole Kidman as Virginia Woolf.

Numerous articles discuss both film and novel in their effort to analyze Cunningham's *The Hours* in relation to *Mrs. Dalloway*. Yet many do not address Daldry-Hare's *The Hours* as a conversation with *Mrs. Dalloway* in its own right—conversation here is used to denote an understanding of adaptation as dealing with concerns of faithfulness to artistic "spirit" or intention rather than content. The film is typically addressed as primarily an adaptation of Cunningham's novel. The assumption seems to be that if it echoes *Mrs. Dalloway* it is only

because its source material does so. However, I would posit that contrary to all claims against film as a flawed adaptive medium for literature, Daldry-Hare's *The Hours* proves more faithful to Woolf's text in terms of its treatment of, and interaction with, certain formal aspects of Woolf's modernist project of accurately representing concepts of time, space, and the human lived experience. To this effect, I will analyze both the novel and the film in relation to *Mrs. Dalloway* and show that the film version of *The Hours* converses and interacts better with Woolf's text than Cunningham's novelistic version does.

### **A Postmodern Re-Writing of a Modernist Novel**

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. His "Mrs. Dalloway" narrative sections, protagonized by Clarissa Vaughan, can be seen as a relatively simplistic transferal of most of the scenes, themes, and thoughts present in the original narrative. As such more interesting to study are the images and themes which are shared between the three narratives and which resonate with *Mrs. Dalloway*. One of the most important moments in Woolf's novel is the suicide of Septimus Warren Smith, the shell-shocked World War I veteran. His portrayal is as a sort of poetic, tortured visionary. Cunningham brings this concept into *The Hours*, but makes that poetic tortured visionary into Virginia Woolf, whose suicide he depicts in the prologue to the novel. The other important suicide in *The Hours* is Richard Brown's—the figure meant to represent Septimus Warren Smith, among others.<sup>1</sup> In *Mrs. Dalloway* Septimus' suicide is thematically linked to Clarissa Dalloway by the opening "what a lark, what a plunge" which introduces her, and characterizes Septimus' plunge to his death hours later. Though Cunningham repeats this plunge imagery with Clarissa Vaughan, and Richard Brown, too, falls to his death,

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<sup>1</sup> As a victim of AIDS, Richard's suffering is meant to parallel Septimus' suffering from his postwar trauma. Richard can also be seen to occupy the role that Peter Walsh and Sally Seton occupied in relation to Clarissa Dalloway.

the link is meant to exist between Richard and Woolf as well, with her water-imagery infused suicide.<sup>2</sup> He furthers the connection through more than just the suicide, as in such moments when Clarissa thinks “she can hear Richard speaking in the other room...she makes out the word ‘hurl,’” followed in the next chapter, Woolf’s, by: “sometimes, faintly, she [Woolf] can distinguish a word. ‘Hurl,’ once” (Cunningham 55, 71). In Woolf’s text she shows that these two seemingly unrelated characters, Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, can be linked within their shared space of London. Cunningham does much the same, however Richard and Woolf occupy neither the same time nor place, yet they seem to be interacting with each other.

Where Woolf sought to represent a unified human experience common to the disparate peoples populating London in the 1920s, Cunningham sought to represent much the same, but common across different countries and generations. In his work, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into Cultural Change*, David Harvey analyses some of the conditions which took the world from modernity to postmodernity. He notes about Ford’s assembly line that “Time could then be accelerated (sped-up)” and “in that very same year...the first radio signal was beamed around the world...emphasizing the capacity to collapse space” (266). This compression of space and time became expressed in narratives like James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, with their focus on writing whole novels compressed into the boundaries of a single day in their respective urban locations. Harvey continues to trace this line of thought in his discussion of the progression of the modern world into postmodernism: “Mass television ownership coupled with satellite communications makes it possible to experience a rush of images from different spaces almost simultaneously, collapsing the world’s spaces” (293). The further compression results, in postmodernism, in a radical expansion of narrative time and space. For example, in Cunningham’s novel, three completely distinct spaces, times,

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<sup>2</sup> Woolf walked into the river near her Sussex home with a stone in her pocket and drowned herself in 1941.

and narratives are treated within the bounds of one novel compared with *Mrs. Dalloway's* singular setting in June, 1923 London, England. A modernist writer, Woolf sought to elaborate a web of connections within a geographical location of various seemingly unrelated people on any given day. A postmodern writer, Cunningham sought to unify various, seemingly unrelated people on any given day in their lives even though those days occur thousands of miles and decades apart from each other.

In the vein of unification of spatiotemporally distant stories, all three narratives share a central set of motifs. Among these is a most important image, flowers. Cunningham's use of flowers as a central image is a clear hearkening back to *Mrs. Dalloway*, with its opening line: "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself" (Woolf 3). This line is echoed in Cunningham's three narratives in various ways: "There are still the flowers to buy" (Clarissa); "Mrs. Dalloway said something (what?), and got the flowers herself" (Woolf); "*Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself*" (Laura Brown) (Cunningham 9, 29, 37). With these three opening lines of each characters' narrative Cunningham establishes the interconnected, intertextual nature of *The Hours*. By titling Clarissa's sections "Mrs. Dalloway,"<sup>3</sup> he shows that all three of these narratives are related to each other, if only by their relation to *Mrs. Dalloway*.

This playing with notions of time marks another thematic connection Cunningham draws between probably the most omnipresent, important theme in *Mrs. Dalloway*: time itself. To be clearer, Woolf's preoccupation was with time in multiple forms. She portrayed the passing of linear time in the novel through the striking of Big Ben on the hour throughout the day ("There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air") to mark the passage of time, contrasted with the novel's focus on interiority, on the interior life of its characters (Woolf 4). She contrasts linear clock time, with mental time and

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<sup>3</sup> The connection to Woolf's novel may otherwise be unclear to readers unfamiliar with her work.

reader's time by calling attention to the duration that has passed in the narrative during the various happenings and mental wanderings of the novel. Cunningham does not re-present this kind temporal tension in his novel, although, as scholar Maria Lindgren Leavenworth notes, "The idea of a woman's life in a whole day...is initially established as an imitated pattern" in all three narratives (508). What Cunningham is interested in, then, is a representation of three distinct stories which all occur at different times, presented simultaneously within the same novel.

Related to and accompanying time, memory is an important theme in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Many of the major characters progress through the day remembering their past, especially Peter Walsh and Clarissa Dalloway, who reminisce upon the youth they both spent at Bourton. Mark Currie discusses the concept of temporal regressions into memory in an otherwise linearly-progressing novel:

*Mrs. Dalloway*, however, is not anachronous in this way. It adheres to a strict linearity in its narration of Clarissa's thoughts and those of other characters, and therefore demonstrates one of the problems outlined in the previous chapter: that when analepsis functions in the mode of memory, it needn't be viewed as an anachrony at all, since the memory itself is an event in the fictional present. (77)

It can be understood based on this reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*—with analepsis, or the literary device of "flashback," in this case being not general narrative temporal regression, but temporal regression only within that person's mind—that the narrative space dedicated to memory is both complicit in the production of tension between inner-time and outer-, clock-time as well as taking place within that system of time's linear progression. It is not the temporal break it might be understood as, is but rather just as much a part of a stream-of-consciousness rendering of the human mind as the rest of Woolf's narrative. She states in her essay, "Modern Fiction," that she

is interested in “recording the atoms as they fall, in the order that they fall,” that she seeks to portray human consciousness as it perceives, remembers, and acts simultaneously (*The Common Reader*). That is not quite the case in Cunningham’s *The Hours*. Memory is largely relegated to a minor role in his novel, and when it comes up it is mostly a mimicry of the memories Clarissa Dalloway has in the updated Clarissa Vaughan narrative; neither Woolf’s nor Brown’s narrative contains much in the way of remembering and memories are not presented as the spontaneous (re)actions (to outside phenomena) that they are in *Mrs. Dalloway* as part of her stream-of-consciousness portrait of the human mind.

The difference between the two novels in their presentation (or lack thereof) of memory and time in general has a great deal to do with form. Woolf’s style in *Mrs. Dalloway*—a uniformly third-person narration predominated mostly by stream-of-consciousness free-indirect-discourse—is conducive to this digressive, “atoms as they fall” portrayal of the human mind. At any given moment a consciousness remembers, perceives, and commands the body without stopping to draw distinctions between the changes in which specific mental activity is happening. As Cara Lewis notes about Woolf’s form in relation to traditional views in narratology,<sup>4</sup> “happening and describing are incommensurate activities... [*Mrs. Dalloway*] challenges this theorization, for within its pages, description does not interrupt narrative” (435). This form lends *Mrs. Dalloway*’s narrative a sense that these characters are thinking, remembering, perceiving, and acting simultaneously as their physical bodies move throughout London, their minds musing upon other people, their past, their life, their politics—everything.

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis refers to her narrative form in *To the Lighthouse*, but as they have very similar styles, both relying on that stream-of-consciousness, free-indirect-discourse, her discussion of *To the Lighthouse*’s narrative form can be applied equally to *Mrs. Dalloway*

Cunningham's narrative is not impressionistic in this way, opting instead for diversity and complexity of narrative forms and perspectives.<sup>5</sup> As Jesse Matz notes in "Pseudo-Impressionism?," what "had been stylistic and psychological [in *Mrs. Dalloway*] becomes structural and textual [in *The Hours*] (126). What Matz gestures at is that Woolf had an impressionistic style concerned with portraying interior lives, whereas Cunningham for the most part foregoes a renewal of this impressionism, at least on the same scale as it appeared in *Mrs. Dalloway*. *The Hours*' re-telling of *Mrs. Dalloway* through Clarissa Vaughan is not as concerned with an impressionistic portrait of New York City and its inhabitants. When it "does" interiority it is almost always focalized through Clarissa, and if not, is focalized through another person so as to present their thoughts about her, gesturing at, but falling short of the breadth of Woolf's impressionistic portraits. Diverse complexity in *The Hours* comes not from portrayals of interiority, but rather through narrative modes of telling. Within the space of two pages, narrative perspective changes multiple times:

She [Clarissa] loves the vendor's cart piled with broccoli and peaches and mangoes...It's the city's crush and heave that move you; it's intricacy; it's endless life...You know the story about Manhattan...Clarissa walks over the bodies of the dead as men offer whispers of drugs ...Still, she loves the world for being rude and indestructible, and she knows other people must love it too, poor as well as rich...Why else do we struggle to go on living...Even if we're further gone than Richard. (14-15)

Within this passage, the narrative shifts from third-person free-indirect discourse, to second-person, to third-person, to third-person free-indirect discourse, to first-person plural narration.

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<sup>5</sup> This is not meant to suggest that *Mrs. Dalloway*'s form lacks complexity, rather that it's narrative form is static, unchanging.

And yet, ostensibly, whether referring to “she,” or “you,” or “we,” the narrative seems always to be focalizing through or referring to Clarissa’s thoughts.

Cunningham’s diversity of styles is not relegated to Clarissa’s narrative, nor is it without its purpose. Matz notes that with the introduction of the 1923 Woolf narrative, “we discover that Cunningham is...capable of rendering authentically Woolfian impressions” (125). Read this way, Cunningham draws upon Woolf’s writing style in order to interpret a possible understanding of her inner-life, and presents it, like her, through use of stream-of-consciousness tinged free-indirect-discourse narrations: “She has dreamed of a park and she has dreamed of a line for her new book—what was it? Flowers; something to do with flowers. Or something to do with a park? Was someone singing?” (30). The varying perspectives of Clarissa Vaughan’s narrative represent the vast diversity of New York City life and, presumably, her experience of it; rather than try to render an interiority-based impressionistic New York, Cunningham uses narrative style to evoke diversity, rather than the specific language used to describe it. Laura Brown’s “But this is the new world, the rescued world—there’s not much room for idleness. So much has been risked and lost; so many have died...She does not dislike her child, does not dislike her husband, she will rise and be cheerful” hints at the homogeneous, assimilation-demanding society she lives in, which prescribes that she think and feel a certain way about her family and denies any possibility of contrary thought (39, 41). This moment of free-indirect narration gives a sense of the societal expectations Laura Brown feels every day in relation to her womanhood, and gives a small window into the cause of her trapped feeling. The variety of narrative styles along with Cunningham’s display of his intimate awareness of Woolf’s style (which he mimics at times, breaks at others) exists in order to further a sense of dialogue and intertextuality between her novel and his. In both borrowing and diverging from her style (giving each narrative a distinct style) he enters into conversation with her ideas and applies his own interpretation of how *Mrs.*

*Dalloway* would be narrated at the turn of the 20th century, now taking place in New York City, all the way across the sea.

In fact, Cunningham establishes this awareness of and discourse with Woolf's text from the outset with the title of his novel, which he signals by his use of an epigraphic quotation from Woolf's diary. In the entry, written when she was drafting *Mrs. Dalloway*, but under a different working title, Woolf writes that:

I have no time to describe my plans. I should say a good deal about *The Hours*, and my discovery; how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect, and each comes to daylight at the present moment. (Woolf qtd. in Cunningham)

More than just drawing immediate references to her conception of *Mrs. Dalloway* by the titling of his novel as *The Hours*, Cunningham seems to heed the other aspects of this entry as well. Woolf's "present moment" is interpreted by Cunningham as an opportunity to write each of his three narratives in the present-tense. This use of the present-tense in all three lends them a sense of occurring simultaneously. Readers discover things about one narrative from reading the events of another, as in the case of Laura Brown's reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*, as well as Virginia Woolf's conception of the novel and of her character, Clarissa Dalloway, both of which are used to texture readers' understandings of Clarissa Vaughan's narrative. The implied simultaneity of these narratives is a device which girds Cunningham's thematic connection of the three women's seemingly separate narratives in what becomes his method of "tunneling;" his caves are not dug within the fabric of London's physical space, but rather within the fabric of space-time, spanning multiple generations and thousands of miles.

His tunnels dig, too, into the real world, with subtler references that may only be picked up by readers familiar with Woolf's other works. The fact that Laura Brown is named as such is quite significant. In an article he wrote for *The Guardian*, Cunningham explains that he modeled her on his own mother and "renamed [her] Laura Brown (after an essay of Woolf's entitled "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown")." Cunningham cannot have been unaware, in naming Laura Brown after it, that it was an essay Woolf wrote in reference to how she believed characters should be written in fiction. Mrs. Brown was for her symbolic of character and of character writing in general, a woman unknown to her and therefore an ambiguous text to be read and interpreted. In much the same way, Laura Brown is truly the only ambiguous character in this novel.<sup>6</sup> Her fate, unlike Woolf's (as shown in the prologue) or Clarissa's (as implied by her name, "Mrs. Dalloway," suggesting she will follow a similar path as her predecessor), is uncertain for the reader. In fact, the last moment presented of her narrative ends ambiguously, only being resolved when she, all of a sudden, appears, over forty years later, in Clarissa's narrative after Richard's suicide. The information divulged from her sudden appearance is that she left her family, moved to Canada and essentially established a "room of her own,"<sup>7</sup> but further details, besides her job as a librarian, are not provided about her life after she left Los Angeles. Entering into conversation not just with *Mrs. Dalloway* but creating connections with Woolf's other works as well, Cunningham's Laura Brown enters the present-day narrative and establishes a gap of time in which readers do not know what her life was like; consequently she remains an ambiguous text to be interpreted. Cunningham resolves the first ambiguity: her place in the narrative is given a concrete purpose with the revelation that she is Richard's mother. Her life in between is left to

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<sup>6</sup> Cunningham even stated in an article that she "veered dangerously close to stereotype" and that it took longest for him to truly bring her character together (*New York Times*)

<sup>7</sup> Though this phrase is not explicitly used in reference to Laura Brown's history, the idea that she left to establish her own life on her own terms resonates very deeply with Woolf's ideas in her novelistic essay, *A Room of One's Own*.

the reader to determine in much the same way that she was free to determine it once free from her bonds.

. If Laura Brown is a reference to Woolf's thoughts about character in fiction, then what significance does an inclusion of Virginia Woolf herself in Cunningham's novel bear? An entirely unambiguous character due to her being a deceased historical figure and due to Cunningham's presentation of her suicide (even reproducing the real contents of her suicide letter to Leonard Woolf) at the beginning of his novel, she represents a pre-written text whose life has already been lived. Aside from a completion of the narrative triangle of reader, writer, and re-enactor, this representation of Woolf as a biographical figure is fascinating partly because she had such strong opinions about the nature of biography. She believed that biographies should tend towards creative artistry rather than craft,<sup>8</sup> and that where fact ended invention should enter, though she recognized that "fact and fiction [refuse] to mix" in a genre (biography) which imposes that all must be fact, like a science (*Selected Essays*). Though she would likely not have been elated to become the (partial) subject of a book as well as a character in it, nonetheless, Cunningham seems to hold true to her idea of what biography should be like.

Cunningham surrounds his portrayal of Woolf with biographical details—an epigraphic diary entry, a suicide letter, a novel, a house, a husband, a sister, nieces and nephews—but dedicates more time to inventing an interpretation of her inner life. This very inclusion of her, being a real historical figure, is what gives *The Hours* an increasingly postmodern flavor. She may be an unambiguous text as far as certain details are concerned, but Cunningham necessarily takes a bit of artistic license in representing Woolf's inner life—this is what she believed, in fact, was necessary to a good biography: a little bit of invention. The scholar Linda Hutcheon coined the term "historiographic metafiction" to refer to "those well-known and popular novels which

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<sup>8</sup> See Woolf's "The Art of Biography."

are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages,” which she sees as characteristic of the postmodern style (5). What Hutcheon is referring to is the fact that these metafictional, self-reflexive elements are generally used as a device to signal the inherent subjectivity of any story; when historical facts or figures are brought into such a text it lends an otherwise subjective work an element of supposedly objective truth and creates a paradoxical relationship between fact and fiction. *The Hours* easily fits this description, being so self-reflexive as to include whole passages of the novel from which it takes its inspiration, as well as presenting the writing process of that novel through its portrayal of Virginia Woolf, the author of *Mrs. Dalloway*. It combines the self-reflexivity inherent in a portrayal of an originating author figure, with the fact that said originating author figure is a real historical figure as well, one whose biography has been written multiple times by multiple people. Cunningham’s inclusion of Woolf into his novel is an inclusion of a figure whose fingerprints are all over his work, and who, by being made into a character (whose suicide precedes the narrative-proper) becomes a ghost both literal and figurative in the way she seems present in all aspects of *The Hours*. This is only fitting for a novel which was begun as and remains still as, above all else, a homage to Woolf and to *Mrs. Dalloway*, the novel which “transformed [Cunningham], by slow degrees, into a reader...showed [him], at a relatively early age, what it was possible to do with ink and paper” (*The Guardian*).

### **A Film Adaptation of a Postmodern Re-Writing of a Modernist Novel**

Though Cunningham’s novel demonstrates well the capabilities of ink and paper, a great deal is possible, too, with camera and film. It did not take long for filmmakers to pick up *The Hours* and adapt it into a movie. In 2002, just four years after the novel’s publication, *The Hours* was released as a film directed by Stephen Daldry, written by dramatist David Hare, scored by contemporary composer Philip Glass, and starring, among others, Meryl Streep (Clarissa

Vaughan), Julianne Moore (Laura Brown), Nicole Kidman (Virginia Woolf<sup>9</sup>), and Ed Harris (Richard Brown). The film was nominated for nine Academy Awards, gaining Nicole Kidman the award for Best Actress. In his *New York Times* review of the film, Stephen Holden referred to it as an “amazingly faithful screen adaptation.” This statement is, to all appearances, true on multiple levels. If faithfulness is judged based on faithfulness to content, the film largely does remain true to its source: the overall structure and content of the novel are kept, with some re-ordering and removal of scenes or events. Nevertheless, in many cases pieces of dialogue which do not exist in the novel are added as moments of major character development, often giving the film a more dramatic, existential turn than the novel. If it is clearly “unfaithful” at times in terms of content, then what makes it an “amazingly faithful screen adaptation?” It is the fact that, on the one hand, the filmmakers did a good job of finding analogues for certain literary devices or formal aspects of Cunningham’s novel, and, on the other, like his novel, the film is clearly in conversation with the formal, thematic elements of *Mrs. Dalloway* while also interacting with those of its explicit source material, *The Hours*. In many instances, 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.

Like Cunningham’s novel, Daldry-Hare’s film establishes central images common to all three narratives, sometimes adding to those found in the novel or strengthening those already present. Margaret Gosden lists as an example of addition the motif of eggs:

The egg theme is particularly intriguing as performed in Nelly's kitchen (Virginia Woolf's cook). Each story has its performance with eggs, a metaphor symbolizing fertility, the absence of fertility, whatever one wants to bring to it. Mrs. Dalloway

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<sup>9</sup> With an infamous prosthetic nose used to increase the likeness between her and the real-historical Virginia Woolf.

in her Greenwich Village apartment appears to be massaging them in a bowl; Mrs. Brown's handling of ingredients, including the eggs, shows us her insecurity as she demonstrates a careful procedure toward making a perfect cake. (9)

Interestingly this triple use of the egg motif in the film adds a sense of fertility as a larger theme in *The Hours*, as it was present in *Mrs. Dalloway* with Clarissa's implied infertility or sexual aloofness towards her husband. Gosden's use of the word "performance" is illustrative here of what the film gains, or compensates for, with its ability to add these "performances" as moments of character development or insight at the same time as it introduces thematic connections. Laura's lack of confidence in the kitchen is made explicit for the viewer with her son, Richie's (Richard Brown), comments (not present in the novel) that "it's not hard, Mommy" and in a more subtle way by Julianne Moore's conveyance of physical uncertainty in her movements.

The subtlety involved in Moore's performance of Laura Brown hints at a larger point regarding adaptation. In her work, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon addresses certain clichés regarding visual adaptations of literary works,<sup>10</sup> and references the attacks made on adaptation by various figures ranging from film critic Pauline Kael, to Bertolt Brecht, and to Virginia Woolf herself. All these people believed film was incapable of rendering interiority. Hutcheon states, however, that "film can and does find cinematic equivalents. Certain scenes, for example, can be made to take on emblematic value, making what is going on inside a character comprehensible to the spectator...External appearances are made to mirror inner truths" (58). Viewed through this lens, Moore's portrayal of Laura Brown in regards to her physical movements, and, beyond Hutcheon's conception of the solely visual, through her affectation of a faltering, barely-held-together voice, conveys the uncertainty of Brown's character which

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<sup>10</sup> In this book Hutcheon addresses broader concepts than just literature to film adaptations, but in general addresses telling (written) versus showing (performed) mediums; as such, her discussion of these clichés is very heavily based on discussion of literature to film adaptations.

Cunningham evokes through his portrayal of her thought processes. One is explicitly external (film) the other is explicitly internal (novel) and yet both give a strong sense of who the character is on the inside. Cunningham himself is aware of film's capabilities, stating in a *New York Times* article that:

I understood that what you lose in turning fiction into film—the ability to enter your characters' minds, and to scan their pasts for keys to their futures—can be compensated for by actors. You lose interiority. You gain Ms. Streep's ability to separate an egg with a furious precision that communicates more about Clarissa's history and present state of mind than several pages of prose might do. You gain Ms. Moore's face when she looks at her son with an agonizing mix of adoration and terror, knowing she will harm him no matter what she does. Actors, too, if they're this good, can introduce details you can't convey on paper, if only because by writing them down you'd render them too obvious.

As both Hutcheon and Cunningham understand, when one adapts a work from one medium into another, there are absolutely things which are lost, but this does not mean they cannot be regained through other means. Despite Cunningham's assertion that interiority is lost in a film adaptation, through the use of exteriority, or visual and aural aspects, interiority can, as these actresses demonstrate, be invoked without an outright presentation of a character's mind.

The fact that Daldry-Hare avoid the use of voiceover in their film adaptation of a highly interior work is a key point. The only exception to their avoidance comes at the beginning and ending of the film when a voiceover of Kidman reading Woolf's suicide letter to Leonard is overlaid with the depiction of her suicide. In this case, voiceover is used to represent a real written text, rather than to convey a sense of interiority. As Gosden notes, in the Marleen Gorris film adaptation of *Mrs. Dalloway* voiceovers were used constantly to present interiority and

critics felt it was untrue to the narrative (9). If they were dissatisfied it is due to the fact that in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the interiority Gorriss sought to represent by voiceover was inaccurate because interiority was never presented through the use of that character's actual voice in the novel; through free-indirect-discourse Woolf presented their consciousness but retained the objectivity of a third-person narrative. Daldry-Hare's adaptation does not pretend to enter into its characters' minds by a verbal presentation of their thoughts—by being verbalized they are no longer thoughts—and instead seeks an analogue which retains the objectivity of a third-person narration but maintains a rendering of interior states. Thus, there is a focus on the performative aspects (physical sonority and minute movements) of these actresses' portrayals.

Films are not just capable of re-rendering thematic content through imagery, but also certain formal elements of the adapted novels. As previously discussed, in *The Hours*, Cunningham uses three different narrative styles as markers to and references of the differences in place, time, and culture between all three narratives; the narrative styles reflect their protagonist's external world in the same way Woolf's characters' interiors reflect their experience of theirs. Hutcheon's distinguishing between telling modes and showing modes illustrates the difficulty of adapting this type of difference: written narrative can shift perspective or mode of telling more dynamically than a film can without being awkward or clumsy; a shift from first- to second- to third-person would be jarring whereas it is not in the novel. Aware of this deficiency, Daldry-Hare's film opts for a change in presentation. Lindgren Leavenworth notes that "The England of 1941 and 1923 is sepia tinted, the Los Angeles of 1951 is represented in bright colors, whereas twenty-first century New York is depicted in plain, realistic hues" (504). Just as Laura Brown's narrative reflects a tendency towards society's demand for assimilation and homogeneity, the film presents that setting as bright, sunny, and friendly, much the way society was presented during that time. In conjunction with the opening shot introducing

Brown's narrative, which is a panned out image of a series of identical houses with neat lawns on a clean, quiet street, the filmmakers establish the same sense of cultural status quo that Cunningham does through his descriptions of that world and its members.

The fact that the film can make use of minor, subtle devices to evoke place demonstrates a realm where film can surpass the written word: the power of the visual image. Woolf's novel was heavily invested with a sense of its setting in London. Cunningham's novel does not treat spatial concerns with quite the same weight as *Mrs. Dalloway*, however, with only occasional references to street names and surroundings. Interestingly though, because of its nature as a visual storytelling mode, every single scene, every single shot of the film, is necessarily invested with a sense of place; because we can see in front of us Clarissa's New York City. The sense of place becomes implicit and needs no emphasis because spectators are immediately struck by a departure from set-designed, artificial apartment spaces and onto the real-life city streets of contemporary New York.

It is not just spatial concerns in which the power of the filmic mode of storytelling is evoked, but also in temporal concerns. If Woolf was interested in the idea of the "present moment" in her novels, and Cunningham reproduces this through his use of present-tense narrative, then so too does the film. Hutcheon states that: "the camera...is said to be all presence and immediacy," by which she means that, because of the eye-like nature of a camera, when spectators are presented with moving film, it replicates on the screen the process of sight, of witnessing, and therefore evokes a sense that what is being witnessed is occurring in the present (Hutcheon 63). As such, and because the film does not resort to any kind of flashbacking or flashforwarding technique (unlike Gorris' film), it maintains this sense of presentness. Hutcheon argues that it is a cliché claim that film is solely capable of representing the present-tense, nevertheless Daldry-Hare use the camera's implied evocation of presentness in all three

narratives in order to evoke that same unification which both Woolf and Cunningham, following Woolf, sought to represent.

More than just being successful with respect to spatial and temporal concerns, respectively, Daldry-Hare use one of film's most basic devices—the montage—in order to join those concepts into a singular sense of *spatiotemporality* as a combined, unified entity. In Cunningham's novel, the three narrative strands are introduced and developed one-by-one within forty pages. In the film, however, these three sections are condensed into a single ten-minute sequence in which there are numerous transitions between each of the three narrative strands. As critic Cornelia Klecker notes in her essay: "Time- and Space-Montage in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*:"

While Cunningham himself did not use the kind of stream-of-consciousness technique that Woolf so famously employed in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the film repeatedly draws on special devices frequently utilized in modernist novels. These devices are used to create a certain montage of time and space, which often manifests itself in a so-called spatialization of time. (210)

What Klecker suggests in this passage is that Cunningham opted not to carry on Woolf's specifically modernist artistic project<sup>11</sup> in an effort to postmodernize it, whereas the filmic version of *The Hours* appears to engage heavily with the time, space, and stream-of-consciousness projects of modernist literature.

Klecker goes on to cite Sergei Eisenstein's theory of 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 thought as non-linear and non-chronological. That ten-minute long sequence in the film uses the montage technique to interrelate all three narrative strands in

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<sup>11</sup> See page 25.

much the same way that Woolf interrelated present and past through depictions of memory and action. Klecker provides a great deal of charted page-by-page and scene-by-scene dissections of certain sequences in the novels and films.<sup>12</sup> When closely analyzing the Daldry-Hare version of *The Hours* in its exposition of all three narrative strands, Klecker's points become clearer. Each transition from one story to the next is done in such a way that it is closely associated with an image or object common to all three protagonists, such as the primary images of all three women in bed when their alarm clocks go off. The use of montage is Daldry-Hare's way of suggesting the spatiotemporal unification of all three women's lives. Despite the vast differences in time and space (signaled for the viewer at the first presentation of each narrative, except for the prologue, by a title card stating the location and year) these quick-cut shifts from one narrative into another by use of repeated themes and images interrelates all three narratives (in conjunction with the "present-tense" nature of film), creating that sense of simultaneous occurrence which Cunningham evoked in *The Hours*. Daldry-Hare emphasize the thematic linking of the three protagonists by presenting the linkage earlier on more rapidly and explicitly so that, as they continue to use quick-cuts or voiceovers which bleed from one narrative into the other throughout the film, the interconnections between the narratives continue to strengthen.

The auditory aspects of the film strengthen these narrative connections as well. Composer Philip Glass scores it in such a way that the same motif is used for all three protagonists. In this sense, then, the use of different camera tones to evoke different times and places is offset by a use of the same set of music to evoke a feeling of their unity. The juxtaposition of a thematically unifying score and a spatiotemporally distinguishing visual signature creates a significant blending of the two elements of the film. On the concrete level of visuals the distinctions between them are presented by differences in camera tone as well as manners of dress and

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<sup>12</sup> See her previously cited article for detailed examination of these charts.

surroundings—whether house or outside environment—of all three women’s places and times. On the other hand, more abstract, links are provided by the use of symbolic imagery in unison with a musical motif common to all three women.

The use of contrasting techniques creates a tension that is present throughout the whole film, reminiscent of the tension between the facts presented to the reader through the narrator’s discourse and the actual interactions between characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Peter Walsh and Clarissa Dalloway’s inner discourses are much more meaningful than the spoken ones they have; Richard Dalloway cannot find himself capable of expressing the love he feels for her; ironically, Septimus, the only character who, despite his mental illness, could be said to speak his mind, is ignored by those around him and it results in his suicide. His world has been shattered, fragmented by his experience in the war. Clarissa Dalloway is living in that same fragmented, postwar world and trying to piece it back together and give it order by giving parties. The party, for Clarissa Dalloway, is a matter of existential importance, one which either validates or invalidates her existence based on its success. It is for this reason that her narrative is linked thematically with Septimus’: they both experience on this day an existential crisis which leads one to suicide and the other, who “loves life too much” to go on living (*New York Times*).

This sense of existential crisis is present in Cunningham’s novel, but seems rather left implied by the fact of Woolf’s and Richard’s suicides. The film increases this sense of crisis by adding to Laura Brown’s storyline a moment in the hotel where she contemplates suicide and, with a very visually powerful metaphor, she is shown from above, lying on the bed with water rising around her, reflecting a connection with Virginia Woolf’s river suicide in 1941. In adding suicidal themes to Laura Brown’s narrative, the film strengthens the continuity between the three narratives in that rather than being present only in the other two and existing in Brown’s through *Mrs. Dalloway*, Laura Brown is given an existential crisis of her own; it culminates in her

statement in Clarissa's narrative that "it was death. I chose life." In yet another filmic addition, Peter Brooker notes that in the scene where Woolf is waiting for the train to London, she makes a similar, but opposite argument: "If it is a choice between Richmond and death, I choose death" (Cartmell and Whelehan 117). Brooker argues that this as well as other moments are indications of "an emphasis on women's self-determination," and this is certainly true, but the aspect of existential crisis is also an important emphasis in all three women's narratives, extending also to Clarissa Vaughan's.

Daldry-Hare's film has Clarissa and Louis' (Richard's former lover) conversation in her apartment take a much more dramatic turn. Beginning with Clarissa's booming classical music, the two attempt to have a conversation over all the noise. The effect of the loud music contrasted against the greater importance of the dialogue jars spectators—it creates a jagged tension whereby viewers just want the music to stop in order for the dialogue to take over, a tension which mirrors Clarissa's frailty in that moment and foreshadows her subsequent breakdown. Cunningham notes of this scene that when Clarissa says:

"But I never see you," the line has a sing-song quality. It rises steadily to the word "see," then drops to the "you." It is offhand and girlish, venomous, haggard. And when she finally begins to lose her desperate composure there's a moment—a half-moment, you miss it if you blink—when she literally loses her balance, tips over to the left, and immediately rights herself. (*New York Times*)

Paralleling the beginning of the scene with the tension between loud music and soft dialogue, Meryl Streep evokes tension through a use of her voice (like Moore does in portraying Laura Brown) as well as minute physical movements, and her subsequent loss of composure signals a crisis much like the other two women undergo. Clarissa's breakdown, too, seems to foreshadow Richard's imminent suicide—she appears to be aware that something bad is going to happen: "I

don't know what's happening, I'm sorry. I seem to be in some strange sort of mood...I seem to be unraveling...like having a presentiment, you know what I'm saying...Jesus. Oh God. Oh god.” Like Clarissa Dalloway, for whom news of the tortured, poetic figure's suicide (Septimus') causes her to leave her party for a moment and contemplate her life, Clarissa Vaughan's host-mask comes off with the subconscious awareness of Richard's impending death. The film in general strengthens the dramatic tension involved in some of the character relationships and the theme of existential crisis, with an addition of other moments such as an intense musical score over the scene in which Laura leaves Richie with Mrs. Latch. Unlike in the novel, Richie begins to violently scream “MOMMY” over and over again as Laura drives away, thus painting a fuller emotional portrait of the Richard that is portrayed in the present-day narrative.

Returning to the question of the film being a faithful adaptation: what is it that makes it so? On a simple level of text to film, from what is presented in Cunningham's work to that presented in the movie, it succeeds by using visual analogues for certain devices apparent in Cunningham's *The Hours*. It casts three of the best actresses in Hollywood to play the roles of these three protagonists, roles which must be performed with real emotional depth, and they are. It brings in a score from Philip Glass which adds under- and over-currents of drama and tension in the narrative. But these things leave out the question of what Cunningham's intention was in writing *The Hours*. If it was, in large part, an homage to Woolf, to *Mrs. Dalloway*, then the film must live up to this as well; it must call to mind not just Cunningham's novel, but this sense of homage to Woolf's work and life too. It does so in such ways as casting Eileen Atkins, a lauded and famous performer of Woolf-related roles, and of Woolf herself, in the minor role of the flower shop lady Clarissa Vaughan visits early on in the narrative. This casting gestures at a sort of intertextuality between visual performances—an analogue to the text-based intertextuality of Cunningham's novel. The film too, like the novel, has its portrayal of Woolf. Where the novel

has her inner monologue and her writings portrayed heavily throughout the text, the film has the strength of a visual image of Woolf herself. She is portrayed by an almost unrecognizable Nicole Kidman who attempts to recreate some of Woolf's mannerisms and habits<sup>13</sup> so that viewers get a sense of her as physical human being recreated on the screen. As in many other cases, where the film loses a certain important aspect present in the text, it makes up for it in other ways, including such minor-seeming aspects as creating a prosthetic nose for Kidman to give her a stronger Woolfian appearance in addition to the actual performative aspects of her portrayal. In this way, among others, it shows itself to be a strong adaptation of *The Hours*.

### **How do They Compare?**

Though neither the filmic or novelistic versions of *The Hours* can be treated as strict adaptations of *Mrs. Dalloway* (though the Clarissa Vaughan narrative of Cunningham's novel taken alone can be) they will be discussed in similar terms as those used to discuss adaptations. On this point, the criterion of faithfulness to content is of least importance in this respect, and what will be stressed, instead, is faithfulness to the "spirit" of *Mrs. Dalloway*. What is meant by "spirit" here is that with any work of art there is an underlying sense of what the artist was "getting at" with their work, a certain set of themes or ideas which they were exploring and for which purpose they employed a certain form of artistic representation.

In discussing both versions of *The Hours* in this context, as two works which converse with *Mrs. Dalloway*, it will be necessary to consider what Woolf's purpose was in writing the novel, what she sought to explore. Andrew Shail, in his book, *The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism*, explores modernist literature as developing with, and being influenced by the rise of cinema. He states that "by narrating a day rather than arranging temporality according

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<sup>13</sup> Cunningham discusses Kidman's attempts to get into her character by picking up the habit of hand-rolling cigarettes, among other things, as Woolf did. (*New York Times*).

to narrative requirements, *Ulysses*, as with *Mrs. Dalloway*, sought to adequate cinema's 'pure record of time'" (Shail 122). Based on Shail's thinking, the common description of *Mrs. Dalloway* as a "cinematic" text stems from Woolf's desire to represent the world in the way that she saw cinema as capable of presenting it. This is evident when looking at the style and form of *Mrs. Dalloway* with its constantly progressing plot and an emphasis (despite past-tense narration) on a continuous "present-moment" in the narrative. Shail goes on to note that there are only two instances in which this temporal logic is broken and a narrative regression is experienced, one of which is the loud motor car scene in *Mrs. Dalloway* where the focalization shifts a great deal and readers are introduced to Septimus—all with the intent of representing multiple perspectives with regard to the experience and perception of the event. He states that "an event experienced by multiple characters is used via which to transfer focalization from one consciousness to another" (Shail 124). Woolf uses the shared experience and space to present multiple characters who occupy that zone at the same time. This unification of unrelated characters is vastly important when considering *Mrs. Dalloway* in relation to both versions of *The Hours*.

The concept of Cunningham's and Daldry-Hare's use of connective imagery and themes between all three narratives has already been discussed. In returning to this point, I would like to compare how both use this connection of images and themes to unify all three disparate narrative strands. Clearly both gesture at that same idea of unification suggested by *Mrs. Dalloway*; as Bonnie Kime Scott suggests in her introduction to the novel (furthering Shail's argument), "transitions between characters often occur via an experience of the present moment that they share...as called for in the 'tunneling process'" (Woolf XLIX). The filmic version appears to portray this emphasis on transitions better. When the loud car noise happens in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the focalization shifts occur very rapidly (as well as in the other instance Shail details, in which

several characters watch a plane in the sky writing out letters); this rapid switching is clearly mirrored in the film version with the many scene (or time and place) changes present in the single ten-minute sequence, as well as the continuation of quick-cutting into and out of narratives throughout the rest of the film. The quick-cutting is almost always associated with a specific image or action which the characters appear to do or perceive at the same time, much in the same way that shared experiences are used as transitions in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The difference is that in Daldry-Hare's *The Hours* these experiences are shared across space-time boundaries. This is a benefit that film has, the ability, once the separate times and places have been established, to use montage techniques of rapid cutting of one space-time into another, and then back again, to provide depth and texture to the thematic connection between all three women. It also can use, as discussed in Laura Brown's hotel scene, a juxtaposition of the verbal and the visual, whereby Laura Brown's narrative is presented visually while Virginia Woolf's dialogue is played on top of the visual narrative, blurring the lines of space-time. The same cannot be said about the novel.

In Cunningham's *The Hours* these connections are clearly made, and many of them are carried out in ways which are clearly intended as connective moments, such as Richard and Virginia's shared "hurl," not included in the movie because the same effect is accomplished without having to enter into Woolf's inner monologue like Cunningham does. Though technically possible in a novel, exemplified by Woolf's style in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Cunningham does not achieve the same sense of simultaneous unification that the film version of his book does. Where he gestures at that kind of unity is in his Clarissa Vaughan narrative, but it is more of a shallow replication of Woolf's presentation of the same concept in *Mrs. Dalloway*. What the film does, with respect to this connectivity, is make use of its ability to represent three distinct space-times in rapid succession, occasionally with quick back-and-forth movements between the various storylines.

This quick-cutting capability of film is bolstered by the implied “presentness” and objectivity of a camera. When a camera is placed in front of something, it dispassionately records what is in front of it. It makes a record of each singular, present moment as it is presented. In *Cinema and Modernism*, David Trotter states that Woolf’s essay, “The Cinema” (a revised version of this essay is quoted in the epigraph), “represents literary modernism’s most profound acknowledgement of film’s neutrality as a medium” (169). Woolf’s unknown, unnamed narrator in *Mrs. Dalloway* follows this type of understanding of narration. The narrator enters, exits, and re-enters various characters’ consciousnesses, providing neither commentary, nor very much narration based outside of a given character’s perception. The importance of a “present-moment” is key in this regard, for there must be a sense of revelation for the “tunneling” method to work; there must be a certain sense that these thoughts and perceptions the narrator is recording are being formed spontaneously by the characters themselves. The thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and plot unfold as the narrator progresses throughout the day, seemingly not aware of anything that the characters are not aware of. This linear progression mirrors the way that a camera simply records what is front of it, neither predicting nor knowing the future, not concerned with the past-tense of what it just recorded.<sup>14</sup> In this way the film better mirrors Woolf’s narrative aim in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Though it may use three different camera filters to represent the three distinct places and times (as well as a gesture at Cunningham’s varying narrative styles), it does not fundamentally change the way the information is presented. The objectivity, neutrality, and presentness of the camera are maintained just as Woolf’s narrator does not morph or change throughout the narrative, but simply maintains its role as a relater of information—a sort of mediating figure between what is presented and who it is presented to.

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Shail remarks that characters or narrators in high-modernist texts, such as *Mrs. Dalloway*, often do not have a self-referential sense of past, in the sense that characters do not recall events from earlier within the narrative, but only events which have occurred within the distant past (118-119).

Cunningham's novel, however, being more postmodern than modern (as Kime suggests, the "concept of unity...was precious to modernists") breaks this static sense of narrative and opts for a more dynamic, shifting narrative style (LXIV). This has the effect of bringing his novel into the postmodern era, but as a result it loses that objective unity which Woolf sought in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

What is interesting about studying both versions of *The Hours* in relation to *Mrs. Dalloway* is that the film is explicitly an adaptation of Cunningham's novel, yet, by virtue of being a film and using the qualities of the medium to full effect, it actually reinforces the formal and thematic interests of Woolf's novel more so than Cunningham's. Despite her detraction of the medium at the beginning of the epigraphically quoted essay, by its conclusion Woolf displays an awareness of film's potential:

The most fantastic contrasts could be flashed before us with a speed which the writer can only toil after in vain...The past could be unrolled, distances annihilated, and the gulfs which dislocate novels...could, by the sameness of the background, by the repetition of some scene, be smoothed away. (*New Republic*)

Her statement in the next paragraph that "How all this is to be attempted, much less achieved, no one at the moment can tell us" seems to be answered by Daldry-Hare's adaptation of, ironically, not her novel, but Cunningham's postmodern re-writing of her novel. The previous quotation seems in fact, a very apt summary of how Daldry-Hare present the three intertwining narratives of Cunningham's novel. It is almost too coincidental that Woolf intuited film's capabilities and wrote about them as such, only to have those very intuitions made reality by a film shot nearly eighty years after, and only (technically) indirectly related to *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Ultimately, it took a process of a postmodern re-writing of a modernist novel and a subsequent film adaptation of said postmodern novel to achieve what Woolf desired to achieve

with her novel. Rather than attempting to directly adapt *Mrs. Dalloway*, like Marlene Gorris did—and she ultimately did not “live up to” much of *Mrs. Dalloway*’s artistic quality by remaining too faithful to its content (flashbacks and interior monologue)—Stephen Daldry and David Hare channeled those themes through the lens of Cunningham’s postmodern novel (content-wise) and achieved a unity with the text which Cunningham sought to pay homage to. By a return to the first scene of the film again in the final scene (Woolf narrating as she walks into the river), Daldry and Hare create a narrative loop, a return to Woolf as the center of it all. But she is only the center insofar as she is central to the story—the very idea of a single center is negated by the very existence of *The Hours*, novel and film, for they show that life and art do not exist in a vacuum but rather occupy a continuum. In much the same way that we might study Woolf’s literary predecessors like Jane Austen in order to understand her work, so too can we study her successors. Reading, watching, or experiencing *both* versions of *The Hours* reveals connections with *Mrs. Dalloway* that change the experience of reading Woolf’s novel; it is altered by each subsequent work to take back up its themes and ideas. Adaptations are fundamental because they show us new ways to understand texts which have already been written, they show us that what seem like static works of art from a bygone era are actually dynamic entities which morph and evolve as they are updated, re-fashioned, or re-made.

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