

# **ON BUYING FLOWERS AND OTHER (NOT SO) ORDINARY EVENTS**

An intertextual analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*

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HOW CAN WE EXPECT ANYONE TO LISTEN

IF WE'RE USING THE SAME OLD VOICE?

WE NEED NEW NOISE

NEW ART FOR THE REAL PEOPLE

*REFUSED – 'NEW NOISE'*

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## 1. Introduction

“Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.” With this sentence Virginia Woolf opens her 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. In his 1998 novel *The Hours*, Michael Cunningham fictionalises a single day in Woolf’s writing process for *Mrs. Dalloway*. The first sentence of Woolf’s novel is a well-known one in all its simplicity. The first chapter about Woolf (the second chapter in Cunningham’s novel) starts with the following sentences:

Mrs. Dalloway said something (what?), and got the flowers herself. [...] Virginia awakens.

This might be another way to begin, certainly [...] But is it the right beginning? Is it a little too ordinary? (29)

Cunningham uses the first sentence of Woolf’s novel and he uses Woolf as a character herself. But there are more ways in which he evokes the spirit of Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* in his novel: the most important similarity is the stream of consciousness narrative that encompasses exactly one day. Cunningham’s novel opens with a scene early in the morning in the life of Clarissa Vaughan, who is referred to as ‘Mrs. Dalloway’ by her friend Richard. The first sentence is: “There are still the flowers to buy” (9). Subsequently Clarissa rushes into the city to buy the flowers herself. This opening scene refers back to Woolf’s opening scene in which Mrs. Dalloway plunges into the city after she has said “she would buy the flowers herself”.

With *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf has been said to have written a typical modernist novel and in the same way Michael Cunningham’s creation *The Hours* has been referred to as a typically postmodernist novel – foundations for these statements will be provided when the novels are discussed. As alluded to above, the novels and their characters are related to each other. But what is the nature of the relationship between the novels and can something be deduced from this relationship in such a way that it says something about the nature of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism?

Before discussing the theories of modernism and postmodernism, it is important to be aware that these movements will be discussed with regard to literature. Both theology and philosophy had their modernist period, but these modernisms will not be discussed in this thesis.

Literary scholars such as Harry Levin, Malcolm Bradbury, James McFarlane, Brian McHale and Linda Hutcheon, to name a few, have either analysed modernism or postmodernism. At certain points in their analyses of one of these currents, they all refer to the other current and provide a brief introduction to it. Most of the time they indicate a relationship between the two currents and they explain how they view this relationship. However, the relationship between the two is part of an ongoing debate and cannot be explained in a few paragraphs in a book on either modernism or postmodernism. The main concern in this debate is how modernism and postmodernism relate to each other: is postmodernism a resumption of modernism or is it a reaction against modernism? In other words: is there continuity or discontinuity between the two currents?

This thesis attempts to define both modernism and postmodernism on their own terms, simultaneously positioning them in literary history and uncovering how postmodernism is related to its predecessor. The goal of this thesis is to provide an answer to the question of how to best define the relationship between modernism and postmodernism. The analysis tool I will use in this thesis is intertextuality. The novels *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* will serve as a case study; the novels are the primary literary material for this theoretic investigation.

## 2. Modernism

### 2.1. Where is modernism situated in literary history?

Eighteenth-century literature in western countries can – in general – be described as neo-classical, nineteenth-century literature can be described as mainly romantic and realist. These terms “suggest a general drift in most of the significant arts among most of the significant artists we are dealing with in those periods.” (Bradbury and McFarlane (eds.), *Modernism 1890-1930*, 1976 [1978], 23) This quote from Bradbury and McFarlane introduces four restrictions that should be taken into account when trying to give a specific name to a specific period in literary history or more generally, in art history.

First there is the ‘general drift’, which announces that not all the arts made during a certain period are prone to the same set of characteristics that has been applied to that period and if they do, they do not do so to the same extent. Secondly, Bradbury and McFarlane refer to ‘most of the significant arts’, i.e. not all the arts fit in the same time frame or follow the same time path through art history. ‘Most of the significant artists’ is the third restriction implied: not all the artists in the same time span make art according to the dominant conditions. And lastly and as a type of summary, the verb ‘suggest’ implies that the names that are assigned by art historians to certain periods lend a false sense of certainty, for all the abovementioned reasons.

With these restrictions in mind it is possible to provide names for and to date certain periods in literary history, but one must always be aware of how literary periods are constructed. First, the names and dates are imposed after the fact<sup>1</sup> and, second, these names and dates are not prescriptive. It is in retrospect that I, in analogy to Bradbury and McFarlane,

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<sup>1</sup> This posterior construction applies much less to romanticism and realism as during these periods people actually referred to themselves as romanticists and realists. During modernism however, no one called themselves a modernist. However, all literary periods are constructed in retrospect.

refer to the period between 1890 and 1930 using the term modernism. The name modernism was assigned posthumously by, among others, Harry Levin in his essay 'What was modernism?' in 1960. According to Jeff Wallace, modernism is best seen as a concept that is used to describe the diverse range of new and experimental practices in the arts which occurred in the period between 1880-1939 (Wallace, *Beginning modernism*, 2011, 1). It is important to realise that modernism is a construction that was created retrospectively and that it was never a single, consistent movement. This retrospective category interrelates "a variety of movements, artefacts, artists, thinkers and cultural practices, some of whom might have been surprised to find themselves thrown together under the banner of 'modernism'" (Wallace, 1). By acknowledging this variety in movements and artists, Wallace practices an inclusive and broad concept of modernism. This in contradistinction to Douwe Fokkema and Elrud Ibsch in *Modernist Conjectures. A mainstream in European Literature 1910-1940* (1987), who only look at modernism in literature and even demarcate a very select group of modernist writers. Their concept of modernism is exclusive and narrow.

Fokkema and Ibsch distinguish periods in literary history on the one hand and currents and movements on the other. They acknowledge that classicism, romanticism, realism and symbolism were successive stylistic periods during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however for twentieth-century literature they refer, instead, to currents or movements. Because, so they say, "[perhaps] we are still too close to the literature of the first half of the century to be able to discern periods" (1). In this thesis I will use the terms employed by Fokkema and Ibsch. Hence romanticism and realism will be seen as periods in literary history, and modernism will be described as a current. Impressionism, expressionism and surrealism, to name a few, will be described as movements within modernism.

Modernism is therefore a time span in art history that came after the romanticism and realism of the nineteenth century. It is usually located somewhere between 1890 and 1940,

depending on the point of view of the critic under discussion. As with all periods and currents in literary history, it is important to view it in relation to the periods and currents that preceded it. Modernism does not stand on its own, it is related to romanticism and realism: how modernism is derived from or might be indebted to romanticism and realism will be part of the next section's argument.

## **2.2. What is modernism according to literary scholars?**

In order to create a workable definition of modernism, a number of literary scholars and their theories about modernism will be discussed in this section. The abovementioned book *Modernism 1890-1930* was published in 1976 and was edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane. This book is, so the editors say, not a comprehensive survey nor a tidily finished account of modernism (13). Nevertheless the editors create an apt overview of modernism in America, Europe and Russia, and the literary movements it is related to. They date modernism as the period between 1890 and 1930 although - as they are aware - these dates are not compelling. In *Modernist Conjectures. A Mainstream in European Literature 1910-1940* Douwe Fokkema and Elrud Ibsch narrow their subject down to modernism in English, French, German and Dutch literature. They use 1910 as the year modernism (in retrospect) started and 1940, the start of World War II, as the end of the modernist period.

Before discussing modernism, it is important to point out that 'modernity' and 'modernism', although closely related, have entirely different meanings. Modernism refers to the cultural forms of a specific period, whereas modernity refers to the much broader historical process of transformation within which modernism occurred. The time span of modernity also refers to a lengthy historical process of becoming 'modern' (Wallace, 15-6). Now that these distinctions are clear, the origins of modernism can be discussed.



The turn of the century and the accompanying idea that no one knew what would happen next made the people feel like they were living in totally novel times. This spirit is captured by Levin when he says that the people living at the turn of the century were people that crossed temporal boundaries and had a chance to inscribe their names on history's blank pages (Levin, 'What Was Modernism' in *The Massachusetts Review*, 1960, 621). It was the here and now that was important to them; they felt as if their roots were not in the past, but that they were a logical result of the contemporary surroundings they were living in and the events that took place. Modernity is, as Bradbury and McFarlane say, "a new consciousness, a fresh condition of the human mind" (22). And modern art has "explored, felt through, sometimes reacted against" (22) these new feelings of consciousness that people had. People looked – with new eyes so to say – at the changes in their surroundings. For Peter Childs 'modernity' also describes a new way of living and experiencing life, a way that came into being due to the changes in society: industrialisation, urbanisation and secularisation (Childs, *Modernism*, 2000, 14-5).

The British poet and cultural critic Matthew Arnold gave a lecture in 1857, entitled 'On the Modern Element in Literature'. To him the modern element was "repose, confidence, tolerance, the free activity of the mind winning new ideas in conditions of material well-being" (quoted in Bradbury and McFarlane, 41). These connotations could not differ more from the connotations modernism currently has for us. The American literary critic, author and teacher Lionel Trilling wrote an essay entitled 'On the Modern Element in Modern Literature' in 1961. The modern element to him is almost the opposite of what Arnold sees: "it is nihilism, a 'bitter line of hostility to civilization', a 'disenchantment with culture itself'" (quoted in Bradbury and McFarlane, 41). The perception of the modern element in modern literature has shifted over time and it is therefore impossible to arrive at a definitive conclusion about which elements make modernist literature modernist. But it is possible to

outline what modernism entails and what the ideas on modernist literature are and I will do so in the following paragraphs.

Modernist writers and readers felt a need for innovation, for – as Fokkema and Ibsch describe it – ‘new answers to new and old questions’ (24). The First World War ended the belief in the possibility of peaceful progress which all people would participate in (Fokkema & Ibsch, 25), this might be the disenchantment that Trilling spoke of. Childs adds that the effect of the trauma of war on the modern consciousness cannot be overstated (20). He sees the war as a defining moment for both society and the individual; the fracturing of minds – currently referred to as shell shock – seemed to represent in miniature what was happening to societies and nations at large (20-1). Although Fokkema and Ibsch, and Childs stress the impact of the First World War on modern consciousness or even on modernism, this does not mean that all modernists were influenced by the war. The expressionist movement was indeed heavily influenced by it and so – in an inclusive concept of modernism – the First World War had its influence, though mainly on this movement. In an exclusive concept of modernism, the war can be said to have passed by unnoticed, for most writers were not involved in the war nor felt its impact on everyday life.

The emergence of individuality (Levin, 620) and the increasing urbanisation that started around the turn of the century are the causes of another difference between realists and modernists. Around 1900, cities became the places where ‘it’ happened, where things changed at high speed; cities held the vibe of the new and the modern as opposed to the countryside which did not. The cities were more than just places where people gathered and met each other; cities were fruitful environments, the places to be for the intellectual community. They were often novel environments, “carrying within themselves the complexity and tension of modern metropolitan life”, which in turn are so essential to modern consciousness and modern writing (Bradbury and McFarlane, 97). Wallace goes as far as saying that the

importance of metropolitan milieus for the cultures of modernism goes unquestioned (9). The new sensibilities of the modernist era, with as its most important characteristics fragmentation and rapid change (Childs, 15) are described by Childs as being caused by living in the compressed, condensed, complex literature of the city (4). Fokkema and Ibsch also state that the social structures and the cultural ambiance of Western Europe created favourable conditions for the emergence of modernism (23).

It is clear that the social circumstances alone were not solely responsible for the rise of modernism. As the Russian literary critic Tynjanov noticed, literary history is an internal affair as well. Modernism is therefore as much a response to positivism and realism as it is to social circumstances. This new current set itself against modes of writing and thinking that were prevalent during the preceding periods. And, I would argue, the changing social circumstances also influenced the perception of positivism and realism thereby enabling a reaction to these periods.

In order to provide a good starting point, Wallace uses the following provisional definition of the *meaning* of modernism: “modernism is the moment when art stopped making sense” (3). What the modernists tried to do, Wallace says, is to make the familiar unfamiliar, to disrupt or shatter accepted forms of representation and understanding (3). Arguably the rapid changes in society fed the need for modernist writers to ‘defamiliarise’ and add fragmentation. This new or different world view might be best described as epistemological uncertainty. And this epistemological uncertainty affected the syntagmatic structure of modernist texts, thereby marking the difference with realist texts.

Modernists prefer narrative prose, as did the realists, but their kind of narrative could not have been more different. The modernists interpret the world in a provisional, fragmentary way and they do not believe in definite explanations (Fokkema & Ibsch, 4). Whereas the realists attempted to describe and explain the world in fixed definitions, the modernists only

speculate and form hypotheses that are open to change and do so constantly. They emphasise the value of intellectual consideration and reconsideration (Fokkema & Ibsch, 4). The most important thing for modernists is the consciousness and not the truth, as it was for the realists. Fokkema and Ibsch say that, in comparison to realist writers, modernist writers are less self-assured and more aware of the provisional, hypothetical nature of their views and their (re)presentation of these views. Modernist writers have doubts about themselves and about their narrator, since they are both not omniscient. The narrators, in turn, feel that they can never be sure about the characters they have created (34). The objective for realists is, when they observe something, to describe what they observe. The modernists, however, describe how they observe and how they feel doing so. Ultimately, a definitive description of what they have observed does not matter to modernists: it is their consciousness and feelings doing so that are important to them. One of the differences between modernism and realism is marked by modernist writers' interest in consciousness and the doubts they have about how reliable their own or their narrator's speech is. This is what is referred to as 'epistemological uncertainty' and 'everlasting doubt about knowing': both concepts that are characteristic of modernism.

Essential to modernism is depersonalisation, which does not attempt to aim at a supra-individual general validity, but emphasises the relativity of the individual point of view: whatever is being said could be said differently (Fokkema and Ibsch, 20) by someone else or at a different point in time. The story's plot has no priority for a modernist writer or reader, the way in which the story is being told is more important (Fokkema and Ibsch, 23). The way in which modernist novels, stories, plays and poems immerse the reader in an unfamiliar world without giving an introduction or description of the situation beforehand – as did most realist writers – is one of the most characterising aspects of modernism (Childs, 4). This is why Childs says that modernist writing 'plunges' the reader into a confusing and difficult

mental landscape (4). Modernist texts make great demands on their readers and often have to be reread in order to understand their meaning (Childs, 4).

The term modernism – so Bradbury and McFarlane say in their inclusive view on modernism – is used to cover a wide variety of artistic movements that subvert the periods and movements that preceded them. Modernism encompassed various movements that were joined in their opposition to realist and romantic takes on art, and were well disposed towards abstraction. Nowadays, we call these movements impressionism, post-impressionism, expressionism, cubism and surrealism, to name but a few. All these movements differ from each other, some are even radical reactions against another movement (Bradbury and McFarlane, 23).

The above describes some of the principal characteristics of modernism that the comparison to realism makes apparent. A checklist for what makes literature modernist is undesirable, because modernism's general description was created posteriorly on the basis of these infinitely varied forms. However, it is possible to outline some of modernism's characteristics. Eugene Lunn's list of four characteristics (quoted in Wallace, 15) is a helpful tool for doing so. First of all, Lunn notes the aesthetic self-consciousness or reflexivity: the artwork draws attention towards how the artwork was created and which issues or problems were apparent in the process of its own construction. Second, the simultaneity, juxtaposition or montage is important: time is no longer a linear succession of moments or movements; different moments and perspectives can be organised simultaneously within the work of art. Third, paradox, ambiguity and uncertainty: this is most noted in literature in the multiple or unreliable narration and in the open endings in fiction. Fourth is dehumanisation: the depiction of human characters favours a dissolution of the self into congeries of conflicting and discontinuous drives.

Following the new world view that the modernists had, it is no surprise that they used other forms of writing than the realists. Because of self-reflexion and reconsideration, letters and diary entries became the preferred forms of writing for the modernists. The stream of consciousness novel became an important syntactic code for modernism, although it also occurs outside modernism. The 1887 novel *Les lauriers sont coupés* by Edouard Dujardin, for example, was one of the first stream of consciousness novels, but is not considered a modernist novel. What distinguishes modernism from realism is the modernist focus on the inner world and the human consciousness: the possibility of being indecisive about oneself. This is why the stream of consciousness is an important syntactic code of modernism: it seems the ideal vehicle for consideration and reconsideration, for conjecture and refutation without any definite conclusion (Fokkema and Ibsch, 35). Or, as Wallace puts it, the rapid changes and transformations are primarily felt in actual daily events and routines (10) and describing these events provides the best approximation of the actual spirit of living in these modern times.

The characters in modernist novels differ from the characters in realist ones. Levin notes that characterisation changed and that people were visualised through the eyes of other people (Levin, 625). Through the use of the stream of consciousness the focalisation shifts and characters alternate between their subject and object roles. The modernist novel as a whole also seems less firmly organised than a realist novel, due to the lack of confidence the modernists had in describing the world in its every aspect (Fokkema and Ibsch, 38). But modernist writers do restrict themselves in some ways; namely in places of action in a novel or in the duration of the storyline or in both (Fokkema and Ibsch, 38). In contrast to the realists and symbolists who believed that a work of art could be complete and perfect, modernists believed a work of art could always be extended, if not amended (Fokkema and Ibsch, 39-40).

### **2.3. Conclusion**

I will now briefly summarise the characteristics of modernism that are important to my analysis. Modernist writers discovered a new feeling of consciousness, that derived from the changing social circumstances, such as the increasing individuality in the industrialised cities. Modernists perceived the 'truth' as provisional and fragmentary, but they lamented this fragmentation and wanted to resolve it. In literature, the modernists opposed the realists with their rejection of linear plots and omniscient narrators. A literary work was no longer expected to tell 'the truth', on the contrary it was to pay attention to the consciousness of its characters and the provisionality of meaning. Nor was a literary work expected to be complete: it could always be amended or extended.

### **3. Postmodernism**

#### **3.1. Where is postmodernism situated in literary history?**

The term 'postmodernist fiction' first appeared, according to Tim Woods, in the 1960s (Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism* (second edition), 2009, 65) and he remarks that the origins of postmodernism appear to be completely confused and underdetermined. And, so he says, this is perhaps very suitable, since postmodernism denies the idea of knowable origins (3). At a certain point in time postmodernist writing started to prevail over modernist writing. This happened somewhere during the second half of the twentieth century, approximately from the 1960s onwards.

Postmodernism can be seen not only as a literary current, but also as a set of theoretical assumptions and as a framework for an ongoing debate concerning, among other things, the nature of language, the subject and the provisionality of meaning and truth (Bertens and Fokkema (eds) *International Postmodernism. Theory and Literary Practice*, 1997, 7). This framework served as the basis for postcolonial and feminist thinkers. Postcolonialism and feminism, as movements within postmodernism, have – in particular – explored the inevitability of power relations and the political nature of representations (Bertens and Fokkema, 7). However, these movements will not be discussed in my analysis of postmodernism, for they are too specific and deserve more space than I can give them here.

If the origins of postmodernism are confused, its end is even more so. Has postmodernism turned into postcolonialism and feminist theory or is postmodernism still the dominant current with postcolonialism and feminist theory as its movements? I would like to argue that we are still too close to this subject to discern whether it has ended or evolved. In this thesis I will therefore assume that postmodernism is still the dominant current.



### **3.2. What is postmodernism according to literary scholars?**

Any definition of postmodernism, Woods says, will depend upon the prior definition of modernism, for the relation between the two is a continuous engagement (6), which will be explored in this thesis. He hereby stresses that any literary period or current is part of literary history and cannot be seen as something separate. In line with Tynjanov, he implies that postmodernism, although different from modernism, depends on its predecessor to exist. Furthermore he implies a closer relation between modernism and postmodernism than between modernism and realism. The nature of the relationship between the two is part of this thesis' investigation and this relationship will therefore be discussed in this section, though it will only be thoroughly investigated in another chapter. What I need to point out now and what should be kept in mind is that in modernism the individual was in doubt and was fragmented: in postmodernism the world is in doubt and is fragmented. This statement will be further explained in the following analysis of postmodernism.

Before delving deeper into what literary postmodernism entails, I will take a general look at what postmodernity is as a concept that describes our socio-economic, political and cultural conditions. The Western world consists of increasingly post-industrial, service-oriented economies, where daily tasks are more and more often mediated through computer interfaces (Woods, 10). Daily interaction has changed and has in some ways become less personal, for example due to online shopping and, in some ways, social contact has increased with the emergence of social media and mobile phones.

In an essay in *International Postmodernism. Theory and literary practice*, Douwe Fokkema describes three theories of how to explain changes in literary history (18-9). The question he tries to answer is what marks the change from one period in literary history to the other. First he notes the cognitive or epistemological theory of change which implies that the social and political changes in society influence people and make them demand new literary

means of expression. Second is the aesthetic theory of change which states that at a certain point contemporary literary strategies become too familiar. In order to please the public – and ultimately themselves – writers design new strategies, that will be accepted by readers and critics. The third theory is inspired by anthropology and sociology. Fokkema cites Lewis to explain that literary devices change in order to emphasise the arbitrariness of all conventions. Enhancing one's own identity or the identity of one's group, may also be a motivation for changing current devices. Subsequently Fokkema analyses the rise of postmodernism by combining these three theories, as the cognitive, aesthetic and sociological changes influenced the shift towards postmodernism (Bertens & Fokkema, 19).

Fokkema criticises other theorists for not combining these influences in their analyses, but before discussing some of his criticism, it is best to examine how other scholars theorise the modernism's change into postmodernism and hence, what they consider to be the characteristics of postmodernism. Woods shows that the prefix 'post' in postmodernism can be seen in two different ways. It can indicate the critical engagement of postmodernism with modernism, rather than assigning the end of modernism or it can be explained as the overturning, superseding or replacing of modernism (6). According to Linda Hutcheon, the prefix post signals postmodernism's "contradictory dependence on and independence from that which temporally preceded it and which literally made it possible" (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction*, 1988 [2000], 17-8). According to Woods, postmodernism practices exactly the same aesthetic characteristics as modernism and there is not much of a historical or chronological development involved in modernism turning into postmodernism (8). To Woods, the difference between the two therefore does not lie in the characteristics, but is to be found in the way in which 'postmodernism does what modernism does'. Both feel the loss of the past, a fragmentation of existence and a collapse of selfhood: but where modernism laments these things, postmodernism embraces these characteristics as

a new form of social existence and behaviour (Woods, 8-9). Peter Barry subscribes to this viewpoint by adding that to a postmodernist, fragmentation is an exhilarating and liberating phenomenon, whereas the modernists lament it and despair about it. He sees it as symptomatic of the postmodernist escape from the claustrophobic embrace of fixed belief systems (Barry, *Beginning Theory. An introduction to literary and cultural theory* (second edition), 2000, 84).

Where Woods views the transition from modernism to postmodernism as being caused by a change of attitude, Brian McHale describes this transition as a change of dominant. The dominant is, McHale quotes Roman Jakobson, “the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines and transforms the remaining components” (6). Various dominants emerge depending upon which questions a text is asked and from which position these questions are asked. According to McHale, the change of dominant signals the change of one literary period into another (7). And so McHale suggests that the dominant of postmodernist fiction is ontological; from the epistemological problems of knowing that prevailed in modernism, the dominant has shifted to problems of modes of being (10). Postmodernist fiction deploys strategies and foregrounds post-cognitive questions: “Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?” and other typically postmodernist questions, according to McHale, have bearing either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects. Again he gives some examples of the questions posed, such as : “What happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?” (McHale, 10). Of course, McHale says, a postmodernist text can be asked epistemological questions and ontological questions can be asked about a modernist text. But the function of the dominant is to prepare which type of question should be post first concerning a text. And so, says McHale, in postmodernist texts

epistemology is backgrounded, because ontology is foregrounded: ontological questions are – in postmodernist texts – more important than epistemological ones (McHale, 11).

Both Hutcheon and Fokkema critique McHale for his theory of the ontological dominant in postmodernism. Hutcheon's critique focuses on the exclusiveness of the ontological in postmodernism. Although McHale states that epistemological questions can be asked in postmodernist texts, he says that ontology is foregrounded and the dominant mode of viewing. Hutcheon does not think that it is necessary to distinguish between epistemological and ontological questions, she says that it is not either/or, but both (50). With this she undermines McHale's theory that there has to be a dominant in a work of art. Fokkema's critique concerns the meaning of the word ontological: he thinks that the term 'ontological' is not suitable for describing postmodernism. Ontology, he says, has a connotation of explicit reflection on ways of being, but there is very little of this in postmodernism (20-1). To Fokkema postmodernist writing seems as much epistemological as ontological, and as little ontological as it is epistemological. And, he adds, a truly ontological approach is only found in existentialism, not in postmodernism (21).

As a point of departure for his analysis of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism Fokkema assumes that the new postmodernist generation has rejected the conventions of modernism and designed their own conventions instead (24). Postmodernist writing methods are opposed to modernist ones, according to Fokkema: postmodernists select their strategies and devices at random, but they feel forced to do something different to what modernists have done. They have, so he says, modernism as their negative point of departure (24). One important distinction between modernism and postmodernism is that postmodernism addresses itself to a larger, nonelitist audience and that it is a vehicle for closing the gap between elite and mass culture (Bertens & Fokkema, 24).

In discussing characteristics of postmodernism, let us start with Woods. In *Beginning Postmodernism* he explains that the term ‘postmodernist fiction’ was first used to describe fiction which sought to subvert its own structural and formal bases. For postmodernists, reality only exists in the language that describes it, with meaning inseparably linked to writing and reading practices (65-6). For postmodernists, according to Woods, there is no truth outside the text. In order to clarify this, Woods provides eight key characteristics of postmodernist fiction (81-2), of which I will only mention the four that seem most important to me. According to Woods postmodernism often shows a preoccupation with the viability of systems of representation; a decentring of the subject and an inscription of multiple fictive selves; and narrative fragmentation and narrative reflexivity. In regard to the devices for narrative structures he notices an ongoing play with formal devices and narrative artifice, whereby the narrative refers to its own artificiality. Postmodernists not only question literary realism, they also question reality ‘in the real world’, by pointing out that language mediates and constructs how we perceive the world.

In *A Poetics of Postmodernism* Hutcheon focuses on the notion of historical knowledge and what postmodernist fragmentation does to it. Postmodernism does not so much erode our sense of history and reference, Hutcheon says, as erode our old certainty of what both history and reference mean (46). In other words, postmodernism asks us to rethink and critique, not only our notions of both history and reference, but also notions that were heretofore seen as unquestionable truths. The world is, in other words, losing its meaning: for the ‘facts’ which in the past were taken to be true, are now devoid of meaning. In this context Hutcheon cites Lyotard: “those who lament the ‘loss of meaning’ in the world or in art are really mourning the fact that knowledge is no longer primarily narrative knowledge of this kind” (6). This does not mean that knowledge has disappeared, but only that knowledge has become questionable. Feminist theory for example asks ‘Whose knowledge is this?’. The so-

called 'objective point of view' where knowledge was constructed often turned out to be a hegemonic, white, male, middle class point of view.

According to Fokkema there are five literary devices that are characteristic of postmodernist texts (Bertens & Fokkema, 37-8). First he mentions assimilation: he notices a fusion of forms, leading to confusion and indeterminacy. Second, there is multiplication, permutation and enumeration: mathematical devices are used to point to the arbitrariness of things, mirrors are often used as lexemes for the arbitrary state of mind. Third, Fokkema names sensory perception: observation, intellectual reflection and in-depth analysis are prominent in postmodernist writing. Fourth, action or movement, as opposed to the deliberation and introspection prevalent in modernism. Fifth and last, Fokkema mentions mechanisation and computerisation as prominent themes and semantic connotations.

What Hutcheon wants to call postmodernism in fiction paradoxically uses and abuses the conventions of both realism and modernism. Postmodernism does so in order to challenge the transparency thereof; self-conscious of its own status as a discourse, a human construct (53). This leads to the postmodern realisation, as Hutcheon calls it, that postmodern discourses have no absolute claim to any foundation in 'truth'. The acceptance that all knowledge is provisional and historically conditioned will not stop humans thinking, on the contrary, according to Hutcheon it guarantees that we will never stop thinking and rethinking (53). The sense of uniqueness, the closure and the authority that were once demanded of theory as well as of art, have now been replaced by intertextual play and the admission of intellectual contingency (Hutcheon, 54). So, on the one hand, postmodernism seeks alternative theories and different ways of explaining the world, while, on the other, it is conscious of never being able to have a single, absolute truth. What postmodernism tries to do is interrogate the nature of language, narrative closure, representation and the context and conditions of both its production and reception (Hutcheon, 54).

### **3.3. Conclusion**

In the post-industrial and computer-mediated environment of the late twentieth century, the modernist problems with modes of knowing shifted towards problems with modes of being. Truth and meaning are still provisional to postmodernists, but in comparison with modernists they celebrate this fragmentation. Postmodernism is a human construction that is very aware of its 'constructedness'. Postmodernists recognise that language structures the world and that there is nothing beyond words. Some critics argue that postmodernism has modernism as a negative point of departure, while others argue that postmodernism and modernism share the same characteristics, but they deal with the problems these give rise to, with a different attitude.

## 4. Intertextuality

Postmodernism searches for new theories and new ways of explaining the world, but at the same time it is well aware that it can never be original. Postmodernism borrows from the past and is not afraid to show that. In this context, Graham Allen speaks of a double-codedness: it questions the available modes of representation in culture, while at the same time, it knows that it still must use these modes (Allen, *Intertextuality*, 2000, 188). And that is why modernism can never simply be opposed to postmodernism, since postmodernism has to rely on and exploit modernism's styles, codes and approaches. Just as postmodernism relies on and exploits those of other literary periods (Allen, 188-9). Allen refers to this as intertextuality and it reminds us that all texts are potentially plural, implying that they cannot be considered singular objects. Allen says that texts are reversible and open to the reader's own presuppositions and they do not have clear and defined boundaries (209). Allen's focus is on the implications for the texts, to him the term intertextuality continually refers to the impossibility of singularity and unity: therefore unquestionable authority of texts no longer exists (209). Most importantly perhaps is the fact that readers are actively involved in infusing texts with meaning, for – as Allen says – texts are always involved in the expression or repression of the dialogic 'voices' which exist within society (209).

Before explaining the various levels of intertextuality, I want to take a closer look at the definition that Paul Claes provides. He copies Michel Riffaterre's 1980s definition of intertextuality, but adds that intertextual relations perform a function for their readers. To Claes, intertextuality is the entirety of relations between texts, whereby a subject that discerns these relations ascribes a function to them (Claes, *Echo's echo's. De kunst van allusive*, 2011,



49<sup>2</sup>). Claes focuses on the implications of intertextuality for the reader: the active participation of the reader is a necessity.

There are three levels at which intertextuality can be analysed. First is syntactic examination which focuses on words and parts of sentences or whole sentences or events, and how they are reused, this can be done utilising repetition, addition, deletion and substitution. Second is semantic analysis whereby intertextuality is investigated using the connections made between the form of a denotation and its meaning. The meaning that appears thanks to the intertextual relations can either cause a constructive or a deconstructive connotation. Claes hereby distinguishes between the phenotext, the text in front of the reader and *in* which references are made, and the source text, the invisible text that is called upon by the phenotext and *to* which the references are made. The phenotext can confirm or reject the function of the source text, so it can be either a constructive or a deconstructive relationship (Claes, 56-7). The last way of analysing intertextuality is at the pragmatic level, whereby the relationship between the text and its users is central. Claes distinguishes between the first user – the author – who codes the text and the second user – the reader – who decodes the text. The goal is for the reader not to find the message hidden by the author, but to explore the web of intertextual relations. And it is in this exploring and recognising of intertextuality that the reader, according to Claes, finds his pleasure (Claes, 57-8).

There are two intertextuality techniques that are often referred to in relation to postmodernism: parody and pastiche. Parody has a deconstructive effect: it transforms the source text with the goal of bringing about a comical effect (Claes, 153). Or, as Allen cites Baldick in the glossary the former provides in his book: parody is “a mocking imitation of the style of a literary work or works, ridiculing the stylistic habits of an author or school by exaggerated mimicry” (Baldick in Allen, 216). The term pastiche comes from the art world

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<sup>2</sup> Translation is mine. Original text: “Het geheel van relaties tussen teksten waaraan door een subject dat deze onderkent een functie kan worden toegekend.”

where it was used to refer to an object of art that was made from the heterogeneous parts of its model. In literature it is now used to refer to literary texts that use stylistic elements related to a specific author or literary period (Claes, 159).

Three forms of pastiche can be discerned: serious pastiche whereby stylistic features are faithfully imitated; comical pastiche (one of the forms of parody) whereby stylistic elements are caricatured by overdoing them in order to critique the original text and subconscious pastiche: every author is the epigone of one or more authors he/she admires (Claes, 160). Subconsciously he/she remembers texts and styles that he/she has read and he/she incorporates these into his/her new text. As with all the intertextual phenomena, parody and pastiche exist merely by the grace of the reader who notices them. Pastiche that are not announced often go unnoticed (Claes, 163).

Critics sometimes accuse postmodernist authors of committing plagiarism or suffering from a lack of originality. Some critics even say that postmodernist authors and postmodernism in general lack of originality, because they view the reuse of texts as laziness. However, postmodernist writers use intertextuality on purpose and are, more often than not, well aware of the source texts they are using (Claes, 191). The negativity towards parody and pastiche can be explained by the fear of critics that the past will be destroyed and that older, canonical literary works will lose their value. Inherent to this view is the implication that original texts are better than texts that explicitly use other texts and the fear that original texts will no longer be made. This fear is unnecessary, according to Hutcheon, because parody both enshrines the past and questions it (126). She adds that if a literary work were really original, it would have no meaning to its reader. Because, so Hutcheon says, it is only as part of prior discourses that any text derives meaning and significance (126).

I have now explained the three levels on which intertextuality works and which characteristics should be distinguished in an analysis. Chapter 6 of this thesis uses

intertextuality as a tool for analysis to explore and clarify the relationship between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*.

## **5. How do modernism and postmodernism relate to one another?**

According to Linda Hutcheon there are two schools of thought on how modernism and postmodernism relate to each other. One school, she says, adheres to the radical break theory, whereas the other school argues a relationship of continuity or extension between the two (50-1). In this chapter, I will first examine the arguments for a discontinuous relationship and the features of postmodernism that seem to underscore a break between modernism and postmodernism. Then I shall consider the arguments for a continuous relationship between the two currents and provide examples thereof. I will not provide a conclusion until after the case study in chapter 6.

### **5.1. Discontinuities**

According to Hutcheon the radical break theory depends upon binary oppositions at the formal, philosophical and ideological levels. At the formal level she observes the postmodernist superficiality that is opposed to the modernist depth and the ironic and parodic tone of postmodernism that is often contrasted to the seriousness of modernism (50). Modernism is often considered to have created its own aesthetic authority, whereas postmodernism - due to the acceptance of knowing that we can never know anything for certain - is viewed as anarchic and chaotic. But, Hutcheon does not explain these differences in the same way as those who favour a radical break: on the contrary, she argues that postmodernism uses and abuses the characteristics of modernism in order to question the latter and itself (50) without the intention of replacing them.

At a philosophical level, Hutcheon points out the different views on the epistemological/ontological discussion. Where one group of thinkers sees modernism as epistemological and postmodernism as ontological, the other group views it the other way

around (Hutcheon, poetics, 50). However, both groups recognise the significant difference between modernism and postmodernism as being due to the difference between the epistemological and the ontological. Once again, Hutcheon argues that postmodernism cannot be described as either ontological or epistemological: in her opinion it is both (50). And so she refuses to differentiate between the two currents on this basis.

At the ideological level, Hutcheon cites Jameson as he accuses postmodernism of being too involved in the economic system of late capitalism and of being too institutionalised. Postmodernism does not share, according to Jameson, modernism's repudiation of the Victorian bourgeoisie (Hutcheon, 50). To Jameson, a Marxist critic, postmodernism is a late-capitalist bourgeoisie form of expression, whereby the postmodernists return to the Victorian values the modernists distanced themselves from. Hutcheon contests Jameson's view and says that postmodernists do not return to, but merely question such an easy repudiation of the bourgeoisie, because postmodernism acknowledges its own inescapable ideological implication in precisely the contemporary situation of late capitalism (50).

Hutcheon has somewhat nuanced the abovementioned arguments that presuppose a radical break between modernism and postmodernism, and she seems in favour of a continuous relationship between the two. I have nevertheless grouped together the arguments and her analyses thereof with the arguments in favour of a discontinuous relationship.

Wallace describes a change in attitude between modernism and postmodernism with regard to their attitudes towards the crisis in the understanding of meaning and truth. Modernism seeks a restoration of truth, according to Wallace, whereas postmodernism tends towards an acceptance or perhaps even an ironic celebration of texts and words that refer solely to themselves. Postmodernism accepts this crisis, whereas modernism continues to

search for ways to resolve this crisis (23). These responses are characteristic of the various attitudes towards the philosophical issues that both currents have to deal with.

The thematic difference between modernism and postmodernism is also explained by Hans Bertens: the postmodern attitude resists the modernist intellectualisation of experience and rejects modernism's supposed interest in transcendent, timeless meaning. Postmodernists favour provisional meaning, which according to Bertens, is meaning as the product of social interaction (Bertens and Fokkema, 8). In different words, but alluding to the same idea, Hutcheon says that postmodernist writers first inscribe and then undercut the autonomy of art and the referentiality of history, in such a way that a new mode of questioning/compromise comes into being. This contradictory mode is what Hutcheon calls postmodernism (56).

## **5.2. Continuities**

According to Hutcheon, David Lodge views the shared commitment of both modernists and postmodernists to innovation and a critique of tradition as a reason why the currents have a relationship of continuity. The shared values are important, even if the manifestations of these shared values are different (Hutcheon, 51). At a formal level they share self-reflexivity, fragmentation and a concern for both literary and social history (Hutcheon, 51). The intertextuality that is prevalent in postmodernist works depends on, among other things, modernist texts, otherwise the postmodernist parodic play with convention and history would be impossible.

At a more theoretical level it is possible to argue that postmodernism questions the same issues as modernism did. Hutcheon sees the investigation of the cultural assumptions that underlie our models of history, as an example of the concerns shared by modernism and postmodernism (51). At the same time, postmodernism has also expanded modernism. Hutcheon provides an example of this expansion with regard to the ironic distance that

modernism had set up between art and audience. Postmodernism intensified this attitude using ‘double-distancing’ (51). Although postmodernism has alternated between some of modernism’s techniques, these still constitute its foundations: in other words there is continuity between the two.

In the section about discontinuities I mentioned a change in attitude when it comes to dealing with the crisis. The fragmentation described by Barry might hint at the same crisis. The uncertainties that arose from the acceptance that truth does not exist somehow have to be dealt with. Modernism and postmodernism share uncertainties, but incorporate them with a different attitude. The crisis, the problem, stays the same and only the approach to it differs, as does the perception of the crisis (Barry, 83). It is difficult to decide whether to frame this as a discontinuity or a continuity. The question arises: what is more important, the content of the problem or the attitude towards it? The same problem is faced when the fragmentation and multiple selves that are apparent in both modernism and postmodernism have to be classified. The modernists want to return to the time when faith was full, whereas the postmodernists celebrate this fragmentation (Barry, 83-4). I am undecided as to whether this marks continuity or discontinuity.

As I have attempted to show, Woods views the difference between modernism and postmodernism not as a chronological difference nor as different set of aesthetic practices. He sees it as a difference in mood or attitude (9). He therefore alludes to the idea that we should not use the term ‘postmodernist novels’, which suggests a discontinuous relationship with modernism. Instead he suggests that we might want to use the term ‘novels about postmodern existence’ to classify novels from the postmodern time span (Woods, 76). This classification describes the changes in the social surroundings that have influenced the content of the novels, while refusing to say that postmodernism is a different style of writing or has a different set of aesthetic practices.

According to Bradbury and McFarlane, one of the characteristics of modernism is that it pluralises and makes things surreal. It hereby clearly distinguishes itself from realism which humanises and naturalism that scientises (Bradbury and McFarlane, 99). In my opinion, postmodernism also pluralises and surrealises (by means of all the questions it asks) and is for that matter not that different from modernism. If there is a difference, it might only be in the degree to which postmodernism pluralises and surrealises.

The intellectual consideration and reconsideration that are employed in modernism by means of letters, diary entries, essays and the stream of consciousness narrative are also employed in postmodernism. The transformations and considerations are primarily felt in daily events and routines, and these are best described by the abovementioned writing techniques (Wallace, 10). I want to argue here that these modes for telling a story mentioned are very suitable for both modernism and postmodernism, for they both want to emphasise the practice of everyday life.



## **6. Case study: *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours***

The novels *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* will be compared to each other in order to find out how they relate to one another. The fact that the novels are connected to each other is obvious and not part of this discussion. The question that needs to be answered is how this relationship can best be defined. Is it a continuous relationship and did Cunningham structure *The Hours* along the same lines as Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*? Is the relationship between the novels 'friendly', is there a dialogue? Or did Cunningham construct a discontinuous relationship in which a dialogue is impossible and did he react against Woolf?

### **6.1. *Mrs. Dalloway***

#### **6.1.1. Plot line**

The story of *Mrs. Dalloway* encompasses a single day in June 1923. On this day, Clarissa Dalloway prepares her house and herself for a party she has organised for that evening. Clarissa is in her early fifties and married to the MP Richard Dalloway. Together they have a seventeen-year old daughter, Elizabeth. That morning, whilst Clarissa walks through the city to buy the flowers for her party, Septimus Warren Smith and his wife Lucrezia are in the park waiting for their appointment with doctor Bradshaw. Septimus has threatened to kill himself, for he is haunted by memories of the war and his dying friend Evans. As Clarissa mends her dress at home, Peter Walsh visits her. Clarissa has not seen him since he moved to India, which was years ago. They were best friends when they were younger and Peter even proposed to her, but she has refused because she thought Richard would make a better match. Although Clarissa has a nice, quiet life with Richard, she cannot stop thinking about how

things would have been with Peter. Or with Sally, for the one kiss they shared when they were young, is still the happiest moment in Clarissa's life.

As the day continues the reader is led without constraint from Clarissa's stream of consciousness to Septimus' to Peter's and to those of the people they encounter during the day. Woolf provides a unique inside view of the minds of London's inhabitants. *Mrs. Dalloway* culminates with the party: it brings all the people that have appeared during the day together. Except for Septimus, since he killed himself that afternoon, when the doctor came to take him away from his Rezia. He is only 'present' at the party in Doctor Bradshaw's explanation of why he is so late. Although Clarissa would never have invited someone like Septimus to her party, now that he has 'invaded' it she is forced to think about him and she finds some catharsis in his death.

#### **6.1.2. Modernist elements in *Mrs. Dalloway***

David Lodge describes a few qualities of modernist writing and according to him Virginia Woolf is one of the few English-language novelists who exhibits nearly all these qualities. An important modernist characteristic, according to Lodge, is the experimental or innovative form of the novel (Bradbury and McFarlane, 481). Woolf has, in the writing process of *Mrs. Dalloway*, found a new technique "to burrow into characters' pasts in order to unearth their history": she calls this process 'tunnelling' (Childs, 165). Using this new technique, which is at the same time an innovative form of writing, Woolf reveals her characters to the readers as split beings who live both in the past and in the present. Their current thoughts tell the reader who they are, but their memories of the past reveal how they came to be who they are and in this way the memories explain to the reader *why* the characters are as they are (Childs, 165-6). The consciousness of a character, another must for modernist writing according to Lodge (Bradbury and McFarlane, 481), becomes visible in Woolf's writing. She shows an introspective, analytical and reflective point of view, which is also highly valued by Lodge. It

is through the tunnelling and the stream of consciousness narrative that these qualities come to the fore.

Three other techniques that stand out in modernist writing are closely related to each other: the open or ambiguous ending; the aversion of the chronological ordering of material; and the absence of a reliable, omniscient narrator (Bradbury and McFarlane, 481). The novel *Mrs. Dalloway* ends ‘undecided’ when at the end of her party, Clarissa seems to – finally – walk towards Peter and Sally. Due to the tunnelling and the stream of consciousness narrative, there is no chronology in private time – the time spent in the character’s mind (Childs, 171). In public time however – ‘real’ time (Childs, 171) – chronology does exist: from hour to hour Woolf describes Big Ben striking. The omniscient narrator has been replaced by the streams of consciousness of the characters in the novel, which are all interlinked. Although there is still a narrator, its knowledge and distinguishing voice are subordinated to those of the characters.

According to Bradbury, one of the characteristics of modernist writing is that it has a strong tendency to encapsulate urban experiences (Bradbury and McFarlane, 100). Although Clarissa, Peter and Sally’s memories go back to Bourton, which is a country estate they used to stay at when they were younger, all ‘real time’ is spent in the city. According to Wallace, Woolf, with her novel which encompasses a single day, emphasised the importance of the ability of an individual woman to move freely between the public and the private spaces of the city and the home (Wallace, 10). The option of taking a stroll through the city was relatively new in the 1920s: it was a really modern thing to do (Wallace, 156).

I wish to end this analysis of the modernist elements in *Mrs. Dalloway* by focusing on the characters of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith. Childs describes both Clarissa and Septimus as having a sexual duality in the mind, which Woolf terms androgyny: they are both in a heterosexual marriage, but both have what can be termed ‘romantic

feelings' for their own sex. Clarissa and Sally share a kiss which is described as the most exquisite moment of Clarissa's whole life (Woolf, 38). Septimus and Evans have an ambiguous relationship as best friends and perhaps even lovers. Childs sees this sexual duality as a modernist experimentation that can be viewed as just one part of Woolf's wider assault on the coherence and stability of the unitary consciousness (167).

## **6.2. *The Hours***

### **6.2.1. Plot line**

*The Hours* tells the stories of three different – but not all too different – women. First there is the story of Clarissa Vaughan, who is preparing a party for her friend Richard. He has been calling her Mrs. Dalloway since they were both eighteen. Clarissa, 52, is throwing a party for him to celebrate the literary award he is to receive later that evening. While going on errands and preparing her house, she meets friends she has not seen for a while. When she goes to Richard to help him dress for the party, he throws himself out of the window, after quoting Virginia Woolf's suicide note. He has suffered from AIDS for a long time and although his body is doing better, his mind is too damaged and he chooses to stop living.

The second storyline is that of Virginia Woolf on the day that she wakes up with the opening sentence for her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. Virginia is haunted by the fear that her headaches and madness will return. She lives in Richmond, a suburb of London, with her husband Leonard as she needs rest and quiet. On the day in question, her sister Vanessa and the latter's children come to visit her in the afternoon. Before dinner Virginia tries to escape to London by train, unsure if she will stay there or just wander around and return home later that evening. But Leonard notices she is missing and hurries to the station where Virginia is waiting for her train to arrive. On their walk home they decide to move back to London,

because Virginia needs the city as inspiration for her novels and for herself: she needs the city environment in order to feel alive.

The last story is about Laura Brown, living in Los Angeles in 1949. She is married to Dan, who fought in the Second World War. They have a son, Richie, and she is pregnant with their second child. It is Dan's birthday and he has woken up early to get some flowers. Laura decides to make the most beautiful birthday cake for him, but she thinks she has failed doing so and makes another one. Laura also flees: she drops her son off at the babysitter's and checks into a hotel room. Here she reads *Mrs. Dalloway* by her beloved writer Virginia Woolf. After a couple of hours she returns to her son and her husband and they celebrate his birthday together.

The chapters are entitled 'Mrs. Dalloway', 'Mrs. Woolf' and 'Mrs. Brown' and they alternate. In the end, when Richard has killed himself, the reader finds out that Richard was little Richie in the Mrs. Brown story and that Laura is his mother. Laura left her husband and children after the baby was born, and Richard's misery stems from this abandonment. All three stories encompass a single day, just as *Mrs. Dalloway* did. The prologue, however, is not part of the story, for it (fictively) describes Virginia Woolf's suicide in 1941, using her real suicide note left to Leonard.

### **6.2.2. Postmodernist elements in *The Hours***

Michael Cunningham has described *The Hours* as a 'riff' on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. With this musical definition, instead of 'imitation' or 'pastiche', Cunningham suggests "a known melody reverberating throughout a new score" (Young, *Michael Cunningham's The Hours*, 2011, 33). This might be the most postmodern element of *The Hours*, since postmodernism is the first current that declares its awareness that it can never be original. Fokkema argued that postmodernists feel forced to do something different to what the modernists did (Bertens and Fokkema, 24). However, *The Hours* proves this statement wrong:

Cunningham has taken *Mrs. Dalloway* as a point of departure, but not as a negative point of departure, as Fokkema suggested postmodernists would do (Bertens and Fokkema, 24). I would rather argue that Woolf's novel provided fertile soil – with some landmarks and roads already in place – leaving enough space for Cunningham to create his own landscape incorporating what was there, altering some of it and adding his own roads and statues. And this fertility of the soil, of what was there already, enabled Cunningham to succeed in enriching it; the pathways and crossroads in particular were pluralised. This is the intertextuality that is characteristic of postmodernism; section 5.3 will analyse how *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* relate to each other intertextually as far as the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic implications are concerned.

The sense of uniqueness that was once demanded from art has, in postmodernism, been replaced by intertextual play (Hutcheon, 54). The closure of a text and the authority that were demanded of it are now overshadowed by contingencies: all is possible and it is up to the reader to find meaning, the writer is no longer expected to purvey certainties. On the one hand, *The Hours* is not unique in the sense that Cunningham was not the first one to use the stream of consciousness as a narrating device nor invented the characters himself. On the other hand, it is quite unique how Cunningham used *Mrs. Dalloway* as his point of departure and created *The Hours*. But it is only through the acceptance of intertextuality that Cunningham's novel can be considered original.

What postmodernism does, according to Woods, is question the viability of systems of representation (81). Postmodernism tries to break down current notions and ideologies. In some ways Cunningham does this as well. An example is how he represents Clarissa: the reader learns more about Clarissa's appearance and character throughout the story. She reflects upon herself in front of the mirror or walking around her home. But she is also represented by the people she interacts with, when they hold the focalisation. This leads to

multiple representations and to the conclusion that there is no single, stable representation of Clarissa. The difference between who *sees* and who *is seen* becomes more apparent in postmodernism: the white, male, middle class held the focalisation for a long time, but postmodernism looks for ways to give focalisation to those who were previously kept mute.

During Clarissa's day the reader also learns that Clarissa does not have a stable self: she reflects on herself and imagines multiple fictive selves: "What would she have been like if she had made another choice the day that Richard kissed her?", for example. This multiplicity is also a characteristic of postmodernism, according to Woods (81). What stands out in this novel are the possible worlds the characters imagine themselves living in. They, although Clarissa more than Virginia and Laura, have fragmented selves and picture other lives for themselves: they wonder how their lives would have been if they had made different choices.

### **6.3. The intertextual relationship**

In *The Hours* there are countless references to *Mrs. Dalloway*, but also to other works by Virginia Woolf and even to Virginia Woolf's life. There are three levels of intertextuality in order to analyse how Cunningham has incorporated 'the legacy of Virginia Woolf' into his riff on *Mrs. Dalloway*: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. I will return to these three analyses in the conclusion in chapter 7 and will connect them to the debate about the continuity and discontinuity between modernism and postmodernism.

#### **6.3.1. Syntactic analysis**

First there is the syntactic structure of the novel: the narrative encompasses a single day and the device used to tell the story is the stream of consciousness. Claes distinguishes four ways in which the syntactic structure can be altered: repetition, addition, deletion and substitution.

An immediately striking difference with Woolf's novel is that Cunningham tells the story of three women, instead of one. This addition enhances the novel as it focuses the reader's attention on several aspects of a novel. Virginia's story is about the writing process, Laura's story about the reception of a novel and Clarissa's story is not only an update or retelling of Woolf's novel, it also focuses on the afterlife of novels, for instance literary prizes (Schiff, 'Rewriting Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*: Homage, Sexual Identity, and the Single-Day Novel by Cunningham, Lippincott, and Lanchester', in *Critique*, 2004, 367).

Cunningham has repeated multiple elements of *Mrs. Dalloway*: both Clarissa and Laura are preparing a party as is Virginia, though to a lesser extent; all three women reflect on or experience a significant kiss; and the option of suicide or an actual suicide are apparent in all three stories. And Cunningham has repeated other aspects of Woolf's life and her essays. The name of Laura Brown for example is derived from Woolf's essay 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown' (1923).

In creating three storylines instead of one, Cunningham has added characters and events that were not present in *Mrs. Dalloway*. He has 'updated' the story to Los Angeles in 1949 and to New York at the end of the twentieth century. In doing so, Cunningham also added new thoughts and new points of view that arise from these American cities compared to London, and in other eras than only the 1920s. Cunningham also deleted an important element from *Mrs. Dalloway*: the party that Clarissa had been preparing for Richard never takes place since Richard has killed himself. And so the whole scene in which the reader might have found Clarissa as the perfect hostess, just like her predecessor, has been deleted from *The Hours*.

There is plenty of intertwined substitution of characters. Clarissa Vaughan has been substituted for Clarissa Dalloway ; Richard Brown and - as I argue below - Laura Brown have been substituted for Septimus Warren Smith. Richard Dalloway can be said to be Sally, but



also Richard Brown. An example of an event that has been substituted is the moment that Clarissa Dalloway sees the Prime-Minister or a member of the royal family, whereas Clarissa Vaughan unexpectedly catches a glimpse of a movie star. I want to argue that the substitutions of characters that have been made are part of the pragmatic analysis, for it is up to the reader to recognise similarities between the two novels and their characters.

### **6.3.2. Semantic analysis**

A semantic analysis reveals that Cunningham has used the names of characters that appeared in *Mrs. Dalloway* or other novels or essays by Virginia Woolf. He has also invented new names for new characters, but some of these names are variations on the names of characters from Woolf's novel. Cunningham has loaded *The Hours* with intertextual play and it is up to the reader explore this web of intertextual relations. The connotations that such similarities or variations bring to the fore are part of the semantic analysis. The connotations can either be constructive or deconstructive of the preceding novel.

The characters in *The Hours* often are based on characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*, but their names, roles or situations are altered. First I will provide an example of how Cunningham has altered a name, but kept the role of the character the same. When Clarissa goes out into the city in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the "rather genital sounding" Scrope Purvis (Young, 37) observes Clarissa as she crosses the street and he finds her 'a charming woman' (Woolf, 4). Cunningham has replaced this character with the "resonantly phallic" Willie Bas (Young, 37), who admires Clarissa's 'certain sexiness' (Cunningham, 13). The roles of the characters are therefore the same, while Cunningham has changed their names, though not completely: he preserved the genital, phallic sounding name. This is an example of a constructive connotation: in giving Willie Bas a phallic name, Cunningham strengthens the link with Scrope Purvis in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The second example concerns Sally, who kisses Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway* and thereby gives her “the most exquisite moment of her whole life” (Woolf, 38). Clarissa always remembers this kiss and her (romantic) feelings for Sally, but she is never able to share these. Cunningham has created a new character, also named Sally: Sally is Clarissa’s partner in *The Hours*, they have a longstanding relationship. I wish to argue that Cunningham named Sally Sally in order to finally give Clarissa the partner she always longed for, but could not have at the time of *Mrs. Dalloway*. In a way the substitution of Clarissa’s male life partner for a female one is destructive, for it questions Clarissa Dalloway’s choice of marrying a man while she had feelings for a woman. At the same time it is constructive because it affirms Clarissa Dalloway’s feelings for Sally and it enables her to act upon these feelings through Clarissa Vaughan.

### **6.3.3. Pragmatic analysis**

I shall now analyse three events that all occur in *Mrs. Dalloway* and in *The Hours*: a suicide, a kiss and an unnamed illness. In doing so I will explore the pragmatic relationship between the events in both novels. My analysis of these three events is not exhaustive, neither are these three events the only events that occur in both novels. Moreover, I may be wrong, because this is my interpretation and other readers – depending on their standpoints – may have other interpretations. The main goal of these three short analyses is to expose and explore what Cunningham has drawn from Woolf’s novel and what effect it has on readers.

#### *The suicide*

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the war veteran and poet Septimus suffers from shell shock, an affliction which was unknown before this time. The best treatment for Septimus, according to Dr. Holmes, is complete rest, away from his wife and his familiar surroundings. Septimus and Rezia have, after seeing doctors in the morning, spent a happy afternoon together; they made

a hat and have been chatting and enjoying themselves for the first time in a long while. But then Holmes comes to the lodging house where Septimus and Rezia reside in order to take Septimus away. Before Holmes enters the room Septimus considers the options he has for killing himself, because he refuses to be taken away. As he is very practical he decides that the window is his only option: “the tiresome, the troublesome, and rather melodramatic business of opening the window and throwing himself out” (Woolf, 163). He is confident that Rezia will be able to understand his suicide, as he sits on the sill. At the same time, Septimus does not want to die: “Life was good. The sun hot.” (Woolf, 164). As soon as Holmes appears in the room, Septimus flings himself vigorously, violently down, crying “I’ll give it to you!” (Woolf, 164). There are people in the house and on the street that witness his suicide, and an ambulance comes as soon as possible, while Rezia is sedated.

In *The Hours*, the poet Richard suffers from AIDS, a well-known, but rather new disease. His body is being treated with medication, but his mind does not function properly anymore. In the afternoon, Clarissa returns to his house, to help him prepare for the party. Richard has opened all the curtains and the apartment is filled with light. Clarissa finds Richard with one leg over the windowsill. They have a conversation in which Richard tries to explain that he no longer wishes to live, despite the medication and Clarissa’s care. He tells her that he loves her and quotes Virginia Woolf’s suicide note: “I don’t think two people could have been happier than we’ve been”. Then he inches forward, slides gently off the sill, and falls (Cunningham 200). No one outside sees him fall. Clarissa runs downstairs and there she sits alone with him for a while, contemplating their relationship and their history together.

The clearest similarity between the two suicides is that of the poet throwing himself out of the window, no longer able to function properly in society. Both poets hear voices and the contrast between their inner worlds, the worlds they perceive and the world as others perceive it have become too marked. But for Septimus the pain life entails is the result of war

trauma, whereas for Richard it is due to psychosis indirectly brought about by having contracted AIDS. Shell shock and AIDS are two very different conditions, but both were rather new at the time the narratives are set in. There is a huge contrast between Septimus – who throws himself vigorously down and dies on the street, where other people see him, both outside and inside the building – and Richard who slides gently of the sill and who no one except Clarissa sees fall into an alley where there is also no one to see him. I would like to argue that this is an expression of a society that has become increasingly individualistic. Hence Cunningham has not simply copied Woolf's story, but he has changed elements in it so that the events suit the new era.

### *The kiss*

In *Mrs. Dalloway* Clarissa reflects upon a kiss Sally gave her one day at Bourton. This kiss is referred to as the most exquisite moment of Clarissa's whole life. She feels she has been given a present "wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it – a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which [...] she uncovered, or the radiance burned through, the revelation, the religious feeling!" (Woolf, 38-9). In *The Hours* the three women also all reflect on or receive a kiss. Virginia sits with her sister Vanessa, and when Nelly - the maid - turns away Virginia leans forward to kiss 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." (Cunningham, 154). Laura is with her neighbour, Kitty, also in the kitchen. Kitty cries and Laura tries to comfort her by holding Kitty in her arms. At a certain point, Kitty lifts her face, and their lips touch (Cunningham, 110). Laura is in a fluster after this kiss, but she does not mind so much about what the kiss implies, for love is deep, a mystery: "Laura desires Kitty. [...] Laura desires Dan, too. [...] She can kiss Kitty in the kitchen and love her husband, too. She can anticipate

the queasy pleasure of her husband's lips and fingers (is it that she desires his desire?) and still dream of kissing Kitty again someday" (Cunningham, 143). Clarissa and Richard share two kisses in the 'Mrs. Dalloway' chapters. First the supposed kiss when they were nineteen is remembered: the kiss that they argue about whether it has happened or not: "A kiss? Had Richard kissed her, or had she, Clarissa, only believed Richard was about to kiss her, and evaded it?" (Cunningham 51-2). The other kiss is when Clarissa leaves Richard to return home to prepare for the party. Richard lifts his head, but Clarissa turns her face sideways and receives the kiss on her cheek, because "a common cold would be a disaster for him" (Cunningham, 68). When Richard has died, she regrets her behaviour and wants to ask Richard forgiveness for shying away "from kissing him on the lips, and for telling herself she did so only for the sake of his health." (Cunningham, 203).

Cunningham introduces three variations on the kiss between Clarissa and Sally in *Mrs. Dalloway* and what all of them have in common is that they are not shared with life partners and that they were somehow shared out of sight of others. But the impact of these kisses make all four women rethink or evaluate their choice of life partner. Laura's and Virginia's kisses are treasured like Clarissa treasures her kiss in *Mrs. Dalloway*. But Clarissa in *The Hours* regrets her kiss, or regrets that she did not share Richard's romantic idea of the kiss and turned her cheek towards him. Whereas Clarissa Dalloway, Virginia and Laura have received a kiss they treasure for their entire lives, Clarissa Vaughan's kiss is one that she will regret for the rest of her life.

### *The problem that has no name*

In the 1920s, Septimus – and other veterans suffering from shell shock – were viewed as soldiers who lacked 'manly' courage; individuals who suffered from an unknown affliction. The War Office Committee was of the opinion that the war was not responsible for

the soldiers' breakdowns, instead they argued that there was a weakness in the men themselves. Nevertheless, they instituted the term shell shock instead of hysteria for these cases (Childs, 166). However, the affliction was still looked upon as a 'female malady': a man not being man enough. I would like to argue that Laura in *The Hours* suffers from the same problem: she is a woman who is not womanly enough. She has every reason to be happy: she has a loving husband, a son and a second child on the way, they live in a nice house, etc. But Laura expects more from life, she sees herself as a woman "who has consented to perform simple and essentially foolish tasks, to examine tomatoes, to sit under a hair dryer, because it is her art and her duty" (Cunningham, 42). At a certain point, when they celebrate Dan's birthday together, she thinks: "She herself is trapped here forever, posing as a wife. She must get through this night, and then tomorrow morning, and then another night, with nowhere else to go." (Cunningham, 205).

According to Young, Cunningham has said that Laura yearns to create the perfect home (Young, 55) and that she is a mother who seeks perfection (Young, 59). But I want to argue differently. In my opinion Laura suffers from "the problem that has no name" as Betty Friedan refers to this problem in *The Feminine Mystique*. The reader learns from the first paragraph in the first chapter that every suburban wife in 1950s America struggled with a problem that lay buried, unspoken for many years: "As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, [...] ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, [...] lay beside her husband at night – she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – 'Is this all?'" (Friedan, 15). All women were told that their role was to seek fulfilment as wives and mothers, there was no need for them to study or have their own job: "All they had to do was devote their lives from earliest girlhood to finding a husband and bearing children." (Friedan, 16). I want to argue that this is exactly what Laura suffers from: she wants to be more than Dan's wife and Richie's mother and that is why she cannot find fulfilment in baking a cake. This is why she is

so happy when she has left Richie with the babysitter and is out in her car: “She shifts over to the left-hand lane, presses the accelerator. For now, right now, she could be anyone, going anywhere.” (Cunningham, 144).

Although perhaps unintentional, Cunningham has with Mrs. Brown’s story rewritten Septimus’ illness that could not be understood. Both Septimus and Laura do not perform the roles that society imposes on men and women. And both ‘problems’ had no name yet, as they were not recognised as afflictions.

#### **6.3.4. Critics on the intertextuality in *The Hours***

Several literary critics have analysed the relationship between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* and have developed ideas about how these two relate to each other, just as I have done above. These critics have also appraised the value of *The Hours*. I will now have a critical look at some of their readings.

In ‘*Mrs. Dalloway* and Three of Its contemporary Children’ ( in *Papers on Language & Literature*, 2006), Henry Alley analyses *The Hours*, Robin Lippincott’s *Mr. Dalloway* and the film made on the basis of Cunningham’s *The Hours*. What Alley in my opinion has done, is define what characterises Woolf’s novel and try to rediscover those elements in the works inspired by it. The important elements of Woolf’s prose are, according to Alley, the presence of the narrator in the story (409), the issue of tense or narrative stance (411) and the psychological conclusions about the characters that readers can or cannot draw from the stories (414). To me it seems that Alley implies that these elements should be present in the new novels and film as they were present in Woolf’s novel. When the derivatives of *Mrs. Dalloway* lack these elements, they somehow fail in Alley’s eyes. Alley says, for example, that “Cunningham’s novel lessens the sympathetic experience of its predecessor because of the present tense he uses in *The Hours* and also the multiplex narrative framing” (402).

Furthermore, “there are important nuances of *Mrs. Dalloway*’s style which Cunningham seems to miss or ignore” (405).

In my opinion Alley does not so much analyse the intertextuality between the two novels as try to find distinct features of Woolf’s novel in Cunningham’s work. He recognises that Cunningham has created “a medley of characters who seem linked in their artistic DNA” (417), but he states that “reviewers who link *The Hours* to *Mrs. Dalloway* are missing an essential element of Woolf’s art” (406). Alley seems to value an imitation (Lippincott’s *Mr. Dalloway*) over a reinvention or reworking (*The Hours*) and by doing so he adheres to another view of literature than the other critics I will discuss below. When Alley would use intertextuality as a tool to compare both novels, he would see that *The Hours* as the phenotext refers to the source text *Mrs. Dalloway*, and only then he would discover the different links and similarities between the two texts.

Mary Joe Hughes says that the retelling or representation of an earlier work of art is rife in postmodernity and not just in fiction (‘Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours* and Postmodern Artistic Re-Presentation’, in *Critique*, 2004, 349). This postmodern representation, Hughes says, has been condemned as pastiche or ironic parody (349). The verb ‘condemned’ suggests a negative approach towards the retelling of stories, although in literary history only the modernists wanted to create brand-new art. What *The Hours* does is echo and extend the story of *Mrs. Dalloway* (350) and in contrast to Alley, Hughes is positive about the fact that Cunningham did not simply ape the structure of *Mrs. Dalloway* and transpose it to New York in the late twentieth century (350). If Alley’s and Hughes’ judgements of *The Hours* are compared, it is clear that their views on literature could not have been more different.

To Maria Lindgren Leavenworth *The Hours* is “a rewriting, a recycling, or perhaps rather an update not only of events and ideas from *Mrs. Dalloway* but of characters and



relationships as well.” (“A Life as Potent and Dangerous as Literature Itself”: Intermediated Moves from *Mrs. Dalloway* to *The Hours*’, in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 2010, 506). She might have added that Cunningham has also borrowed Woolf’s semantic narrative structure by using the stream of consciousness and the theme of a woman’s whole life compressed into a single day. The contemporary writer’s attitude towards the prefigurative text is, for the most part, neither angry nor contentious, states James Schiff in ‘Rewriting Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*: Homage, Sexual Identity, and the Single-Day Novel by Cunningham, Lippincott, and Lanchester’. Rather, Cunningham seems more eager to borrow, learn from and improvise on the work of Woolf (379). Some literary critics might argue that *The Hours* relies excessively on imitation and is an exploitation of Woolf’s literary innovations, but Schiff argues that Cunningham’s novel is neither clone like nor hollow, instead he says it is an exhilarating enhancement (371).

## 7. Conclusion

First I will draw a conclusion about the relationship between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* on the basis of my analysis of the intertextuality between both novels. I will subsequently delineate a conclusion on the relationship between modernism and postmodernism on the basis of the former.

### 7.1. *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*

Allen has said that all texts are potentially plural and that they cannot be considered singular objects. What has been clear from the start of this thesis is that *The Hours* explicitly refers to *Mrs. Dalloway*. The ways in which it does so have been investigated using intertextuality as the tool for analysis. At this point I wish to recall Claes' definition of intertextuality: the entirety of relations between texts, whereby a subject that discerns these relations ascribes a function to them. In chapter 6 I described the relationships between the texts and I now want to ascribe a function to them. But first of all I have to say that the intertextuality that I have uncovered here, is the one available to readers who have read both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*. My attention is focused on the intertextuality between these two novels, but it is more than likely that intertextual relations also exist between each of the novels and other novels.

The three storylines of Virginia, Laura and Clarissa not only make the reader aware of the way in which a novel is created, but also of its reception and afterlife: will the novel be included in the canon or will it be forgotten after a number of years? It is very modernist to focus on the creation of a novel. In doing so, Cunningham pulls the readers' attention away from the plot and redirects it towards the artefact– the book –in front of them. In particular, he asks the reader to rethink the status of *Mrs. Dalloway* as a novel from another era that – at least to him – is still of current interest. By substituting characters and reusing names or roles,

Cunningham connects characters in such a way that new interpretations of *Mrs. Dalloway* arise, often in ways that readers of *Mrs. Dalloway* and perhaps even Woolf herself may never have thought of. In doing so, he also influences the perception of *The Hours* for readers that have also read the former novel and invites readers to unravel the connections between the two.

The connections that Cunningham has established between *The Hours* and *Mrs. Dalloway* should be analysed in order to discover their connotations be they constructive or deconstructive. The relationship between Scrope Purvis and Willie Bas is a constructive one, for the phallic names of both allude to a somehow perverted male character that would rather spy on women than glance at them. In my opinion, the example I provided concerning the character of Sally also has a constructive connotation. To me it seems as if Cunningham – by substituting Clarissa Vaughan for Clarissa Dalloway – has finally given the latter the chance to live with Sally. But when I look from a slightly different angle, it is apparent that Clarissa Dalloway was not entirely happy with Richard and that the relationship between Clarissa Vaughan and Sally is not ideal either. Cunningham hereby deconstructs the idea that – when in relationship with Sally – Clarissa would have been more self-assured, while at the same time he underscores Clarissa's problematic and insecure character.

I would like to argue that *The Hours* is a pastiche of *Mrs Dalloway* in the sense that Cunningham has taken elements from Woolf's novel and reconstructed them. He has made new connections and has added new elements to the original ones. On the one hand, he has made a faithful imitation, while on the other, the pastiche is more subconscious, since he has incorporated other texts and influences into this new text. In general *The Hours* deconstructs and reconstructs, as a phenotext, the functions characters had in the source text *Mrs. Dalloway*, adding elements from other source texts as well. In doing so, *The Hours* opens up new functions for characters from and explanations of *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Each analysis of the pragmatic relationship between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* will turn out to be slightly different from the next, for all readers decode the texts differently, depending on their personal and literary backgrounds. I have focused on the suicide, which in my opinion is an example of the differences between the modern and the postmodern era. As Septimus lies dead on the street, he is surrounded by people. I want to compare this to Richard – who lives in a crowded city, probably in a crowded apartment building – but no one sees him fall. To me, this is exemplary of the individualistic times we live in. Maybe Cunningham intended this interpretation when he wrote this part, all the same this is my decoding of his text.

I want to explain the kisses that Cunningham constructs, as a shared concern with Woolf about unitary consciousness and the sexual duality of the mind. Both Cunningham – who himself is gay – and Woolf – who was notorious for, among other things, her relationship with Vita Sackville-West – know what it is like not to fit into heteronormative society. They both enable their characters to recognise their feelings and not condemn or hide them. Cunningham describes the evolution over time: from Virginia's kiss with her sister – innocent – to Laura's kiss with Kitty and Laura's acceptance of the possibility of loving both her husband and Kitty, to Clarissa who lives with a woman. The scene in which Clarissa refuses to kiss Richard is a striking one and I am undecided whether this is because he is a man and she is a lesbian or whether this is because of his illness or the regret that she feels for not having chosen to live with him as her partner. It might be possible, since I have not read other novels by Cunningham, that an explanation for Clarissa's refusal is to be found in the intertextual relationship with one of Cunningham's other novels.

The analysis that I have provided of what I call 'the problem that has no name' is probably one of the explanations for Laura's uncomfortable feelings that was unintentional on Cunningham's part. Whereas pragmatic analyses of the suicide and the kisses revealed that

Cunningham had updated elements of Woolf's novel to the here and now or that he endorses Woolf's ideas about sexuality, the pragmatic analysis of 'the problem that has no name' provides the opportunity of discovering unintentional meanings in and between texts. All these outcomes of my analyses are examples of what intertextuality allows a reader to do: to discern relationships between texts and to ascribe functions to these connections.

The question I still have to answer is whether I think there is continuity or discontinuity between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*. I would like to argue that the relationship between the two novels is continuous. Cunningham has used Woolf's novel as the basis for his: he uses the stream of consciousness narrative that encompasses a single day. He renews Woolf's novel, while at the same time he underscores her points of view and elaborates on possible situations that she could not make happen. Rather than deconstructing her work, he enhances it and thereby encouraging readers to also read *Mrs. Dalloway*. The differences between the events in both novels can be ascribed to the different eras the novels were written in and the subsequent differences in attitude the events are interpreted with. To me, it seems as if Cunningham wanted to elaborate on Woolf's novel instead of replacing it. For it is almost impossible to appreciate Cunningham's *The Hours* to the fullest extent if one has not read Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. And this is why I consider the relationship between the two to be continuous.

## **7.2. Modernism and postmodernism**

In the introduction I indicated that the main concern in the debate concerning modernism and postmodernism, is the question how modernism and postmodernism relate to each other. I now wish to provide an answer to the question whether postmodernism is a resumption of modernism or a reaction against it. I will do so on the basis of my investigation into the

relationship between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*, and on the basis of my study of modernism and postmodernism.

The environment is important to both modernists and postmodernists. Whereas the modernists experienced urbanisation, the postmodernists experience globalisation, but both have the effect of making the familiar unfamiliar by introducing new worlds and new modes of being. I would argue that both urbanisation and globalisation have had the same effect on the people experiencing these new social circumstances i.e. they question the world they live in. The modernist problems with modes of knowing shifted towards problems with modes of being: the modernist question of how to *know* has shifted to the postmodernist question how to *be* and *who* to be. In postmodernism the self is no longer the only thing that is fragmented: the world is too. For both, the concept of truth is provisional and fragmentary. Only the modernists seemed to lament this loss of meaning, whereas the postmodernists seem to embrace it as a new mode of being.

Both modernism and postmodernism oppose realism, with its focus on a novel's plot and an omniscient narrator who is actively involved in the story. Modernist literature strongly rejects the linearity and clear arrangement of the events in a novel, as does postmodernism. One of modernism's narrative devices is the stream of consciousness, with its almost absent narrator. The consciousness of the characters is brought to the fore. With emphasis on that consciousness, events become less important as does the chronology of a story. The same can be said for postmodernism.

So far, only a few differences between modernism and postmodernism have been described. This is because, due to the fact that both oppose realism, they share the same characteristics which – simultaneously – demarcate a break with realism and emphasise their similarities. The differences that arise between modernism and postmodernism are, as I want to argue, caused by different attitudes and approaches towards the same problems.

I strongly want to argue against the idea that postmodernism sets itself against modernism in such a way that it wants to be different only in order to be different. If there is one thing that my analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* reveals, it should be that postmodernism does not have modernism as its negative point of departure. In fact, their joint abhorrence of realist values provides postmodernism's positive point of departure. Both modernism and postmodernism share characteristics and ways of representing the world that are not found in the literary periods that preceded them and this is what unites them.

The modernists' epistemological uncertainty is shared and at the same time questioned by the postmodernists, as are the ontological questions that were present in modernism. I will follow Hutcheon in my argument that a distinction between modernism and postmodernism on the basis of the epistemological or the ontological is a meaningless distinction, since both currents have epistemological and ontological doubts.

The differences between the two currents that arise from the change of attitude are perhaps best described as thematic differences. Modernism was interested in transcendent timeless meaning, whereas postmodernism favours provisional meaning. This results in a difference in how modernists deal with this loss of meaning and how postmodernists celebrate the provisionality of knowledge. I would argue that these thematic differences do not make postmodernism and modernism opposites, for the underlying problem is the same. Both currents' shared characteristics have the same goal: to pluralise and surrealise, and to focus on intellectual consideration and reconsideration. Both currents aim to investigate the cultural assumptions that underlie our models of history.

I would like to conclude that postmodernism is a resumption of modernism and not a reaction against it. As my case study has shown, postmodernism elaborates on modernism and enhances it. When both currents are positioned in literary history, then their joint opposition to the preceding literary periods comes to the fore. This is why I argue that modernists and

postmodernists share concerns and ideas about literature and life, although they have different attitudes towards elaborating on these concerns and ideas. The larger context of literary history makes the continuity of modernism into postmodernism manifest.



## 8. Further research

There are many ways in which further research on this subject can be conducted. Both novels have been turned into movies, for example. It could be very interesting to make a quadruple study of the relations between the novel and the movie, between both novels and between the movies. The focus could be on the intertextuality, but also on the translatability. How does a stream of consciousness novel translate into a movie? And does it matter whether the novel itself is modernist or postmodernist? It could also be very interesting to include *Mr. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf and *Mr. Phillips* by John Lanchester in a study alongside *The Hours*.

My study focused on the literary intertextual aspects of both novels, but a study situated within feminist or queer theory could also prove to be very interesting. What I myself would like to investigate is the character of Laura Brown in relation to 'the problem that has no name'. What I would also like to explore in more depth is how this problem is expressed by Cunningham, even though he was unaware of touching upon it.

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