

## Linguo-stylistic realization of the symbol “TIME” in the novel “The Hours” by Michael Cunningham

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**Abstract.** The article investigates the symbolism “TIME” on the material of the novel “The Hours” written by Michael Cunningham. The article shows the most important linguo-stylistic features which are used for the realization of the symbol “TIME” in the novel “The Hours”. The way the stylistic means under our investigation are used in the text have been illustrated by numerous examples taken from the novel.

**Keywords:** time, symbolism, linguo-stylistic means, metaphor, concept.

Every writer has his own style, which makes their works recognizable and sometimes popular. Michael Cunningham's writing style is simple and easy to read, though it is necessary to mention, that sometimes his writing contains too much information the reader should think about in order to understand the deeper thoughts of the author. The style is called stream of consciousness. It is a literary style in which the author follows visual, auditory, tactile, associative, and subliminal impressions and expresses them using “interior monologue” of characters either as a writing technique or as a writing style that mingles thoughts and impressions in an illogical order, and violates grammar norms.

In “*The Hours*”, Michael Cunningham, widely praised as one of the most gifted writers of his generation, draws inventively on the life and work of Virginia Woolf to tell the story of a group of contemporary characters struggling with the conflicting claims of love and inheritance, hope and despair. The narrative of Woolf's last days before her suicide early in World War II counterpoints the fictional stories of Samuel, a famous poet whose life has been shadowed by his talented and troubled mother, and his lifelong friend Clarissa, who strives to forge a balanced and rewarding life in spite of the demands of friends, lovers, and family.

The stylistic peculiarities of a literary text were researched by J. Williams, K. Wales, L. Jeffries and many others. It is worth being mentioned that the peculiarities of the style of M. Cunningham especially in the novel “*The Hours*” have never been an object of the research, which makes the topic of the article especially essential. Time, as suggested by the novel's title “*The Hours*”, is indeed the central issue within the narrative, and it is a motif that not only inflects the content of the novel, but also its structure. The aim of the article is to explain the stylistic peculiarities used for the realization the symbol “*time*” in the novel.

The three main characters of the text all share a similar story and face similar struggles, however, the nature of this struggle changes according to the social conventions of the time in which they manifest. Woolf, who is trying to cope with mental illness, depression, and suicidal tendencies in the 1920's, mirrors the character of Laura Brown, who feels trapped by the pressures and expectations of most 50's housewives. Both characters express a desire to escape from their world, but are unable to do so because of the people who surround them. Cunningham's depiction of Laura Brown was particularly captivating, mostly because he effectively illustrates her failure to achieve the perfection that others expect from her, and that she expects for herself. For instance, her inability to bake and decorate a flawless and pristine cake for her husband's birthday clearly denotes her

inability to comply with the unrealistic expectations that she sets for herself as a wife and a mother.

Time also plays a role in terms of how the characters cope with their sexual urges and romantic desires. Both Virginia Woolf and Laura Brown express some degree of desire for the same sex through a kiss: Woolf through a kiss she gave to her sister and Laura through a kiss to her neighbour who ostensibly is showing signs of imminent illness. These kisses haunt the characters, mostly because they represent a desire that could not possibly be expressed without the expected social consequences. Whereas Woolf has writing as an outlet for this desire, Laura Brown has no way of expressing it, thus fueling her desire to escape from her current condition.

The third main character, Clarissa, has created a home with her partner, Sally, but she is shown to oscillate between happiness towards her current condition and the anguish caused by the certainties and uncertainties of life. What makes Clarissa so appealing as a character is her paradoxical and indecisive nature. One moment, she seems to lament the follies of materiality, the fabricated nature of her home, the investment of money in superficial and useless items. Nonetheless, she invests a lot of time and money in a party to show how much she cares about her friend Richard, who is dying of AIDS. She embraces and rejects the comforts of materiality. She struggles with her need to please others while sacrificing her own pleasures and needs. She worries about the extent to which others enjoy the gifts she gives without thinking about her own appreciation to the gifts she is given. This sense of hesitation, which involves the struggle of the self with the demands of the outside world, is something that Clarissa shares with both Woolf and Laura.

The most haunting paragraph in this novel provides the comforting yet strangely bleak idea of enjoying the hours that provide us with comfort, happiness, and glory, simply because these hours are always followed by darker ones:

*We throw our parties; we abandon our families to live alone in Canada; we struggle to write books that do not change the world, despite our gifts and our unstinting efforts, our most extravagant hopes. We live our lives, do whatever we do, and then we sleep. It's as simple and ordinary as that. A few jump out windows, or drown themselves, or take pills; more die by accident; and most of us are slowly devoured by some disease, or, if we're very fortunate, by time itself. There's just this for consolation: an hour here or there when our lives seem, against all odds and expectations, to burst open and give us everything we've ever imagined, though everyone but children (and perhaps even they) know these hours will inevitably be followed by others, far darker and more difficult. Still, we cherish the city, the morning; we*

hope, more than anything, for more. Heaven only knows why we love it so. [2, p. 225-226].

Life is presented in the text of the novel as a series of cycles and repetitions. The cyclic nature of time and history is best represented with the suicides that occur within the novel in that both Woolf and Richard depart the world by affirming virtually the exact same statement to their loved-ones before killing themselves: "I don't think two people could have been happier than we've been" [2, p. 200]. Whether or not Richard was familiar with this exact statement made by Woolf in her suicide note is unclear, but the repetition of this phrase by two different people in two different time periods is indeed an eerie thought. Some people are better at coping with cycles. Others desperately try to change the direction of these cycles, or halt them altogether. Others willingly or unwillingly embrace them fully.

In "The Hours" intertextuality is one of the ways of representing the literary concept TIME, as well as intertext, paratext, quotation, allusion and reminiscence. There are the whole passages from the novel, perception of which occurs on the associative level. These are the passages which Laura Brown, the protagonist in "The Hours", reads. They appear as elements of an objective level of the literary concept TIME. They are some kind of elements of the game with the reader. For example, the first chapter under the title Mrs. Brown begins with the introductory paragraph of the novel "Mrs. Dalloway". Furthermore, the author includes exactly the same passage which he imitates in the first chapter about Clarissa Vaughan, describing her June morning in New York. And it is this similarity that makes clear imitative character of the description of Clarissa Vaughan's morning, even for those readers who have not read "Mrs. Dalloway" by Virginia Woolf. This morning represents time as being cyclical and causes the referent association. Less obvious manifestation of alien inclusion is allusion.

Paratextual relations of the title and epigraph of the text to the text itself play one of the most important roles in the representation of the literary concept TIME. By choosing "The Hours" as the title for his 1998 novel, Michael Cunningham verbalizes the literary concept TIME, emphasizing the importance and priority of this concept in the novel and points out that the novel provides intertextual reading, as "The Hours" was the working title of "Mrs. Dalloway".

Allusions arise from transforming the original text, some plot repetitions, or composition analogies [2, p. 123]. In "The Hours" allusions represent the literary concept TIME on the associative level. In each case, the temporal relations of the elements of the donor-text and text-recipient are superimposed. For example, in "Mrs. Dalloway" Clarissa describes how she "plunged" into the June morning at Bourton. She continues by describing that particular morning as being "like the flap of the wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp" [2, p. 9]. Cunningham uses a similar metaphor in the opening scene to the first chapter under the title "Mrs. Dalloway". His Clarissa experiences the morning as if she were standing "at the edge of a pool, watching the turquoise water lapping at the tiles, the liquid nets of the sun wavering in the blue depths" [2, p. 9]. So, the description of Clarissa Vaughan's feeling is an allusion to Clarissa Dalloway's feelings in the June morning. Both authors use water imagery to convey their heroes' feeling of time, of that moment in June.

Another type of alien inclusions is reminiscences. Cunningham's "The Hours" refers not only to "Mrs. Dalloway",

but also to its author's biography. Particular attention should be paid to Michael Cunningham's appealing to Virginia Woolf's diaries. The writer accurately indicates the sources that he used for the reproduction of one day of Woolf's life. "I have tried to render as accurately as possible the outward particulars of their lives as they would have been on a day I've invented for them in 1923" [2, p. 229]. It becomes clear that Cunningham does not really reproduce a real day of Virginia's life, but gathers various events, thoughts, feelings that Woolf had at different moments of her life and fills with them a short span – one day, in which the literary concept TIME is represented. This day is a fiction, but with numerous reminiscences because the events described in the chapters under the title "Mrs. Dalloway" really happened in Virginia Woolf's life. Thus all the chapters entitled "Mrs. Woolf" are "biographical citations" or reminiscences, which bring us to the events and experiences of another author, Virginia Woolf. Thus different types of alien inclusions superimpose on the system of temporal relations in "The Hours" in the space-time scopes of the described situation, advantageously representing the concept TIME in the novel. Alien inclusions also represent the concept as elements of its associative level.

It is also necessary to mention that on the textual level the word "time" is used 98 times as for example:

*She will allow herself just a little more time* [2, p. 44].

*He is still, at times, astonished by her* [2, p. 38].

The word *time* is also used in different words combinations and phrases, such as:

*She could probably return in time to destroy the notes* [2, p. 11], which means to be punctual as also in the following example. *How can she help resenting Evan and all the others who got the new drugs in time* [2, p. 59].

*He waves one last time, jauntily, from behind the wheel,* which means, that the action won't be repeated.

*Isn't it time, she thinks, to dispense with the old nickname?* [2, p. 59], which means an appropriate moment to begin doing something.

*I think of them as coalescences of black fire, I mean they're dark and bright at the same time* [2, p. 63], which means that the actions were made simultaneously.

*At those times the headache moves out of her skull and into the world* [2, p. 74], which underlines the fact, that it is a memory.

*I seem to have fallen out of time* [2, p. 66] is a metaphorical expression, which means that something goes not according to the plans.

*It is the first time he's been entrusted with a job like this* [2, p. 81], which means the novelty of the action.

The word *time* is also used as a part of a compound word as in the following examples:

*Their wartime training stands them in good stead* [2, p. 49].

There is also a number of stylistic means in the text of the novel «the Hours», which include the word *time*, as for example, the following:

Anaphora, which is the repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences, or lines. Though in this case we can also state the use of a parallel construction:

*This time, she will prevent crumbs from getting caught in the icing. This time, she will trace the letters with a toothpick, so they'll be centered, and she'll leave the roses for last* [2, p. 114].

Frame repetition, which is the repetition of the word at the beginning of a sentence and at the end of the sentence:

"These times," Walter says. "God, these times." [2, p. 179]

Using different words, that mean time, the author also creates the effect of growing suspense, as in the following sentence, the author begins with the word *minute* and finishes with the word *time*:

*She will permit herself another minute here, in bed, before entering the day. She will allow herself just a little more time* [2, p. 44].

As far as the lexical stylistic means is concerned, there are several hyperboles with the word *time*:

*It's only my sister, she thinks, but still, after all this time, after everything that's happened, she wants to inspire in Vanessa a certain surprised admiration* [2, p. 116].

*"I love you too, baby," she replies, and although she's said the words thousands of times, she can hear the flanneled nervousness lodged now in her throat, the effort she must make to sound natural* [2, p. 191].

In both cases the hyperbole is used in order to underline to women's feature ability to exaggerate the number of the events and the amount of time, although in the first sentence it in an inner thought, whereas the second sentence is direct speech.

In order to make the language of the novel brighter and more vivid, the author uses also several epithets with the word *time*:

*The strange numbing deathlike fear of standing there, alone, for a considerable time* [2, p. 58].

*We've been having a fine time* [2, p. 188].

*I had a hard time getting up here, I don't mind telling you* [2, p. 191].

*I feel we can't go through another of these terrible times* [2, p. 12].

As it can be seen, some of them are positive and some of them are negative, but in general the variability of the lexical means used in the text of the novel, it is easy to read and helps the reader to create bright images.

It is also important to analyse the use of the word *hour* in the text of the novel, as it is the title of it, which gives the general idea to the reader. Having analysed the text, we can state that the word *hours/hour* is used 85 times, which means that there is a textual repetition of the same notion for the reader to get the feeling of the importance of the time in his or her life as in the following example:

*Almost two hours have passed* [2, p. 73].

In most of the cases we can state that the word *hour* is used in phrases and word-combinations, as in the following examples:

*She would like to write all day, to fill thirty pages instead of three, but after the first hours something within her falters* [2, p. 74] which means at the beginning.

*and yet this state when protracted also begins to enshroud her, hour by hour, like a chrysalis* [2, p. 75] which means the frequency of the action.

*Eventually, when enough hours have passed, she emerges bloodied, trembling, but full of vision and ready, once she's rested, to work again* [2, p. 75] which means the quantity of the time.

*He fails to think of him for hours at a time* [2, p. 135] which means the continuity of the action.

*She intends to tell the desk clerk that her husband has been unavoidably delayed, and will arrive with their luggage in an hour or so* [2, p. 147] which means an approximate time spent.

*There is this hour, now, in the kitchen* [2, p. 153] which means the exact time for something.

There are also several epithets with the word *hours*:

*At the same time, she hates spending any of her cogent hours doing anything but writing* [2, p. 74].

*He watches her constantly, spends almost every waking hour in her presence* [2, p. 191].

These epithets demonstrate the ability of the author to express his thoughts brightly in order to make the reader understand his main idea.

As far as the stylistic devices and means are concerned, M. Cunningham's «The Hours» is an incredibly rich in different stylistic notions. Its themes, motifs, and symbols are many and effective. Time, which is depicted even in the title of the novel, is indeed the central issue within the narrative, and it is a motif that not only inflects the content of the novel, but also its structure. The three main characters of the text all share a similar story and face similar struggles, however, the nature of this struggle changes according to the social conventions of the time in which they manifest. Besides the word "TIME" is met in different word-combinations, metaphors, epithets, hyperboles and even repetitions and parallel constructions in order to underline the importance of the time in human's life and the value of every minute.

In general, it can be stated that the main idea of the time, which is an important notion in everybody's life, is professionally depicted in the text of the novel «The Hours» by M. Cunningham, via different stylistic devices such as epithets, hyperboles, textual metaphors and separate metaphors, allusions, reminiscences and others, which all in general help the reader understand the idea of the author.

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#### Лингвостилистическая реализация символа "Время" в романе Майкла Каннингема "Часы"

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**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена исследованию символа «ВРЕМЯ» на материале романа Майкла Каннингема «Часы». В статье описаны основные лингвостилистические особенности, которые используются для реализации символа «время» в романе. Исследованные стилистические средства проиллюстрированы многочисленными примерами использования в тексте.

**Ключевые слова:** время, символизм, лингвостилистические средства, метафора, концепт.