

The hours analysis



The Hours is undoubtedly one of the thought-provoking and psychologically sophisticated literature masterpieces of the twentieth century. A sharp eye of an attentive reader can easily detect the fact that the most crying issues of the contemporary international society have been deliberately accentuated by the author. In fact, Michael Cunningham aptly contrived to convey the great variety of the profound philosophic messages in a concise novel (Hughes, 2004). One of the most well-highlighted issues of the novel is the deep exploration of the kinship concept (Hughes, 2004). Traditionally, both the classic and the contemporary philosophy confine the concept of kinship to the blood relations of the people (Philipson, 1974).

Cunningham in his turn has followed an unconventional approach, transgressing the limits of conventional kinship. While the novel is duly comprehended and its essence is adequately analyzed, it becomes evident that the gist of kinship is given differently from the viewpoints of the traditional philosophy. The novel, its main characters and situations depicted are aimed at providing a deep discourse and analysis of what is considered under the term kinship.

Overall, the objective of this paper is to substantiate the statement that the concept of kinship is in fact given outside the traditional definition in The Hours of Michael Cunningham.

Concise Background of the Novel

Generally, the novel closely reviews the three generations of the ladies who have undergone a substantial impact from a novel written by the outstanding United Kingdom writer Virginia Woolf (Cunningham, 1998).

The first storyline covers the aspects related to the Mrs. Virginia Woolf herself. In particular, her everlasting mental illness and her fruitless attempts and endeavors to remedy her incurable malady are highlighted by the author. The second storyline presents the wife of a war veteran who devours the book written by the heroine of the first storyline – a bestseller of Virginia Woolf, the notorious Mrs. Dalloway, the book which is simultaneously presented in all storylines (Cunningham 1998), . The latest storyline of the novel deals with a lesbian who is going to make festivity because of the victorious literature achievement of her ex-lover and friend who is incurably suffering from an AIDS-connected lethal ailment. The name of the lesbian acting as one of the main agents is Clarissa Vaughan, and instinctively the target reader feels the parallels with the main character of the Virginia's Clarissa Dalloway.

Generally, assuming that the three episodes which together combine the novel are construed separately, the storyline of Clarissa Vaughan is constructed. The clearest prototype of “ Virginia's” Clarissa is Mrs. Vaughan, for whom their adventures started similarly (Marshall, 1992). Both of them initiate their stories by going out with the intention to purchase flowers and both have unhappy previous relationships, although both maintain normal relations with their ex-lovers. A vast variety of other similarities can be sensed in the story, whereas obviously the parallel of Cunningham's and Woolf's Clarissas is the most striking and evident one.

The Episodes

Mrs. alloway and Her Former Friends

Having encapsulated briefly the message of this storyline, it can be inferred that although the friendship and the matrimonial relations always gradually fades away, in this vey instance their constancy is particularly accentuated. When Mrs. Dalloway passes around the city, the passerby insensibly for him serves a milestone for the reminiscences of her eventful life (Hughes, 2004). Clarissa is astonished on the morning nature and the ambience in June; she is inspired by everything that happens around her (Cunningham, 1998). Her memories are gradually tracked down to her old friendship with Richard and Lois. Another fact which is undoubtedly worth mentioning is her acquaintance with Walter, a person, who writes literature works for homosexual people and whose addiction is detested by Richard. However, entirely realizing the consequences which may ensue from this abhorrence, Mrs. Dalloway nevertheless resolves to invite her newly made acquaintance to the party, dedicated to Richard. Their relationships are defined by her as being of “ skeptical gravity” and besides she stipulates that “ they both are barely trusted to manage their own business”.

Finally, when the main character comes to the abode of her friend, Richard acclaims her arrival (Cunningham, 1998). Clarissa surrounds Richard with extra care, doing everything which is within her limits to soothe his physical and emotional pain. The way they communicate and they address each other clearly indicates that there is an insensible, hardly detectable kinship line between them. Although there is no romantic relationship between them anymore, they still each other with extra care and extra affection. Moreover, these feelings are intensified when Richard, a nominee and a winner of a prestigious literature awards neglects the attention, the care and the

preparations conducted by Clarissa to make a festivity from his achievement. He neglects, underestimates and almost refuses her care, whereas Clarissa still perseveres in her attempts to make pleasure for her friend. Different sexual orientations, different state of health and different life orientations do not seem to be impediments for her affection and care (Hughes, 2004). My firm opinion is that by means of demonstrating how the lady treats the former friend and ex-lover, although no obligations between them do exist, the author accentuates the spiritual connection which exists between them. This very spiritual connection is nothing, but a kinship between them. In other words, Mr. Cunningham by demonstrating that although the people may not be blood relatives, they may no longer maintain a romantic relationships or being intimate friends, but if at least one of them still takes care over the second one, they are kinsfolk.

Overall, the episode with Clarissa and her friend and former ex-lover Richard clearly demonstrates, on what must be considered as kinship in terms of affection and care.

Mrs. Brown and Her Surroundings

This storyline spans the kinship issue utilizing two diametrically opposite approaches.

The second storyline of the novel is dedicated to expectant mother Laura Brown, who is lying in the bed reading the published novel of Virginia Woolf's. She is reading the book and disregards the fact that the day she is reading is the birthday of her husband. Regretfully, but she realizes the fact that she is considerably more comforted when she reads the book than

helping her elder son Richie and her husband preparing the festivity. As Cunningham (1998) writes, “ he makes her think sometimes of a mouse who sing songs of amorous nature”. In other words, she does seem to live in an isolated world with no connections and no obligations which are due to the members of her family (Hughes, 2004).

However, finally the pangs of conscience make her to go upstairs and to take part in the preparations. She goes upstairs and bakes a cake for her husband helping her son Richie in the preparations. She failed in her attempts to prepare a cake, as when it was finally baked it happened to be less in size and inferior in quality as she did expect. Nevertheless, she is still cherished by her husband and her son. Therefore, although her husband may subliminally sense that she no longer has amorous feelings to him, he is satisfied that she is at home and she bears their child. In other words, traditional philosophic approach to kinship relations specify the mutual love and respect as sine qua non, while in the present situation Cunningham illustrates to the target audience that the mutual feelings are not required, it is enough for one person to have feeling and to take care, whilst the second person is asked to do nothing more than accept the care and smile in response (Marshall, 1992).

The second kinship issue of this storyline is the kiss of Laura and her neighbor Kitty. Outwardly, the ladies do not seem to have quite many issues in common to be so intimate. Moreover, there is no precise indication that they are prone to untraditional sexual orientation. However, having embraced each other and made several kisses on the each other's forehead, they ultimately kiss in the lips. Although both ladies are automatically seized

with panics and with their outwardly heinous deed, the fact that they did it instinctively purports that specific spiritual link do exist among them. Both of them do have their own problems. The one is pregnant whereas the second lady claims that she is barren and her infertility causes the misunderstandings with her husband, and as a result her romance is under serious threat. Kitty's husband do seem to be more and more indifferent to her, while Laura is becoming more and more lukewarm with her son and husband.

Overall, the third untraditional concept of kinship is given by Cunningham by means of accentuating the kiss of Laura and Kitty. The people, however different they may be and whatever mindsets and mental deviations they may have are automatically subconsciously united when they both feel estranged. When they did not get used to communicate and they do have nothing in common, but the same problem – in this very situation the sense of estrangement, they are kinsfolk (Hughes, 2004).

The Conclusions

Having encapsulated the main arguments, it can be recapitulated that together with other objectives of the study the author intended to demonstrate on how the people can become kinsfolk apart from the traditional models of matrimonial connection or blood affiliation. Proving that they can be united by the desire to take care, to retain a person and to have similar problems are enough to become kin people, the author has successfully implemented his design.