

# **A Criticism on “THE HOURS”**

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## INTRODUCTION

### AN EXPLANATION TO SOME KEYWORDS:

**The Unconscious:** "The modern concept of the unconscious derives from the theory and practice of PSYCHOANALYSIS, as defined by FREUD and his followers. The content of the unconscious consists of elements which are unacceptable to the conscious mind, and which have been censored or repressed. The unconscious also contains survivals of the infantile residues of early stages of development; Freud argues that is in part a phylogenetic inheritance which contains elements of humanity's earliest experiences" (Payne, 545).

**The Imaginary, the Symbolic:** "Kristeva theorises the conditions of meaning production in terms of a theoretical distinction between "the semiotic" and "the symbolic. "The semiotic and the symbolic are two modalities of the signifying process that are never experienced as separate, but are theoretically separable as two tendencies within signification" (McAfee, 51).

**Abjection:** "Among the earlier meanings of abjection are 'wretchedness' and extreme debasement. This term would not, in all probability, have become popular in art and psychoanalytic circles, were it not for the publication of Powers of Horror by Julia Kristeva in 1982. In that work, Kristeva outlines a psychoanalytic theory of the subject where there is a pre-symbolic phase characterised by strong feelings of horror and revulsion in relation to certain objects, people and situations. What is abject is decidedly not desired; it thus has a strongly negative status attached to it. It is what an identity rejects because it instills horror. And yet this rejection of the abject thing is, Kristeva suggests, formative of the ego, if we accept with her that abjection characterises the elementary ego struggling for autonomy. For abjection is also the means through which the child separates from the mother, as it is also the first intimation of the interdiction against incest" (McAfee, 34).

**Melancholia:** “Melancholia is a noncommunicable grief; the melancholic is wrapped up in his/her sadness; it is his/hers alone, something she can not share in the social and symbolic realm. Kristeva uses the term melancholia to refer to narcissistic depression. The depressed narcissist feels this real, this thing, bearing down upon her. To the extent that she has repudiated the realm of signs, the melancholic also repudiates the signs she wears around her neck, her affect of sadness. No sign has any meaning for her and so she has little defense against the death drive” (McAfee, 65).

**Intertextuality:** “Term coined originally by Julia Kristeva, it refers to the ways in which all utterances (whether written or spoken) necessarily refer to other utterances, since words and structures pre-exist the individual speaker and the individual speech. Intertextuality can take place consciously, as when a writer sets out to quote from or allude to the works of another” (McAfee, 59).

### **An Outline of the book:**

This thesis is divided into five major chapters. In addition, the writer explains the background of psychoanalytic and feminist as the two main approaches of this thesis. In this chapter, statement of the problem, significance of the study, book questions, material and methodology, review of literature and finally key terms are explained.

Chapter two represents psychoanalysis approach and feminist criticism in brief and then the writer mentions the theories of Freud, Lacan and Kristeva. The purpose of this chapter is to cover key points in Kristeva's theory of language, including her notions of the semiotic, the symbolic, melancholia and intertextuality and to give a brief outline of feminist and psychoanalytic theory. The postmodern term “intertextuality” which focuses on the interplay and interrelation of texts was first defined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s. Feminist criticism is not a uniquely twentieth-century phenomenon “Julia Kristeva drawing heavily on the ideas of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, feminists such as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Helen Cixous” participated in advancing a notion of “l'écriture feminine”, a

feminine writing that would issue from the unconscious, the body, from a “radically reconceived subjectivity to circumvent what they held to be phallogentric discourse” (Habib 669).

Chapter three and four including Michael Cunningham’s novel *The Hours* and its analysis based on Freud’s, Lacan’s and Kristeva’s theories. This chapter of the thesis analyzes interpretations of Virginia Woolf: Michael Cunningham’s novel *The Hours*. *The Hours* is a beautifully written novel which employs many of Woolf’s images and themes, often mimicking Woolf’s writing style and echoing her voice. *The Hours* provokes interesting questions about the similarities between the two novels, and like many adaptations, it highlights specific themes in Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* and represents them in contemporary contexts. The final chapter deals with a short summary of the whole occurrence in this research, conclusion of the thesis, and finally some suggestions for further study.