



Harrap's The Hours

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Michael Cunningham

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224 pages

Extrait

Prologue

She hurries from the house, wearing a coat too heavy for the weather. It is 1941. Another war has begun. She has left a note for Leonard, and another for Vanessa. She walks purposefully toward the river, certain of what she'll do, but even now she is almost distracted by the sight of the downs, the church, and a scattering of sheep, incandescent, tinged with a faint hint of sulfur, grazing under a darkening sky. She pauses, watching the sheep and the sky, then walks on. The voices murmur behind her; bombers drone in the sky, though she looks for the planes and can't see them. She walks past one of the farm workers (is his name John ?), a robust, small-headed man wearing a potato-colored vest, cleaning the ditch that runs through the osier bed. He looks up at her, nods, looks down again into the brown water. As she passes him on her way to the river she thinks of how successful he is, how fortunate, to be cleaning a ditch in an osier bed. She herself has failed. She is not a writer at all, really; she is merely a gifted eccentric. Patches of sky shine in puddles left over from last night's rain. Her shoes sink slightly into the soft earth. She has failed, and now the voices are back, muttering indistinctly just beyond the range of her vision, behind her, here, no, turn and they've gone somewhere else. The voices are back and the headache is approaching as surely as rain, the head-ache that will crush whatever is she and replace her with itself. The headache is approaching and it seems (is she or is she not conjuring them herself ?) that the bombers have appeared again in the sky. She reaches the embankment, climbs over and down again to the river. There's a fisherman upriver, far away, he won't notice her, will he ? She begins searching for a stone. She works quickly but methodically, as if she were following a recipe that must be obeyed scrupulously if it's to succeed at all. She selects one roughly the size and shape of a pig's skull. Even as she lifts it and forces it into one of the pockets of her coat (the fur collar tickles her neck), she can't help noticing the stone's cold chalkiness and its color, a milky brown with spots of green. She stands close to the edge of the river, which laps against the bank, filling the small irregularities in the mud with clear water that might be a different substance altogether from the yellow-brown, dappled stuff, solid-looking as a road, that extends so steadily from bank to bank. She steps forward. She does not remove her shoes. The water is cold, but not unbearably so. She pauses, standing in cold water up to her knees. She thinks of Leonard. She thinks of his hands and his face, the deep lines around his mouth.

(...) Présentation de l'éditeur

The Hours (les Heures) Trois époques, trois histoires, trois destins qui se confondent.

Dans la banlieue de Londres, au début des années vingt, Virginia Woolf lutte contre la folie qui la guette. Elle entame l'écriture de son grand roman, Mrs Dalloway. Plus de vingt ans après, à Los Angeles, Laura Brown lit cet ouvrage : une expérience si forte qu'elle songe à changer radicalement de vie. A New York, aujourd'hui, Clarissa Vaughn, version moderne de Mrs Dalloway, soutient Richard, un ami poète atteint du sida. Comment ces histoires vont-elles se rejoindre, comment ces trois femmes vont-elles former une seule et même chaîne ?

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