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The Simulacrum of Love and *The Hours*

Simulaker ljubezni in *Ure*

Magistrsko delo

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Abstract

This thesis explores the concept of love in the postmodern era from the perspective of Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and simulation. The theoretical part of the thesis begins with a definition of Baudrillard's simulacra and how they can be applied to postmodern love, continuing with a look into the role of fairy tales and early pop culture in the conceptualisation of romantic love. The focus of the analytical part is Michael Cunningham's 1998 novel *The Hours* and its 2002 film adaptation by Stephen Daldry. This work is of particular interest to the discussion of love in terms of simulacra as the different romantic relationships depicted in it are all affected by various degrees of love-related simulacra, often leading to a comprehension, questioning and even dismantling of said simulacra. *The Hours* does an excellent job at pinpointing some of the complex issues in postmodern romantic relationships, demystifying them and providing viable alternatives to the socially constructed notions of what love and romance should look like.

KEYWORDS: simulacrum, hyperreality, love, the one, happy ever after, fairy tales, film, postmodern

Povzetek

Magistrsko delo raziskuje koncept ljubezni v postmoderne dobi s stališča teorije simulakrov in simulacije filozofa Jeana Baudrillarda. Teoretični del se začne z definicijo Baudrillardovega koncepta simulakrov in ga aplicira na postmoderno ljubezen, nadaljuje pa z vpogledom v vlogo pravljic in zgodnje pop kulture v konceptualizaciji romantične ljubezni. Analitični del se osredotoči na roman *Ure* Michaela Cunninghama iz leta 1998 in filmsko adaptacijo Stephena Daldryja iz leta 2002. To delo je še posebej zanimivo za razpravo o ljubezni z vidika simulakrov, saj na vse različne romantične odnose v tem delu do neke mere vplivajo z ljubeznijo povezani simulakri, kar pogosto privede do spoznanja teh simulakrov in dvoma vanje ter celo do njihovega uničenja. V *Urah* so na mojstrski način izpostavljene nekatere kompleksne problematike postmodernih romantičnih odnosov, ki jih različne zgodbe demistificirajo ter obenem ponudijo možne alternative socialno zgrajenim predstavam o ljubezni in romantiki.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: simulaker, hiperrealnost, ljubezen, tisti/tista (pravi/prava), srečno do konca svojih dni, pravljice, film, postmoderno

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1. Introduction

The initial idea for this thesis came from contemplating the role of contemporary media and pop culture – in particular cinema, music and literature – in constructing the perception of love for a postmodern subject. So many works of fiction depict love as the idealised end goal one should strive towards (no wonder it has been such a prominent theme in art for millennia), but few of them have gone beyond these romanticised conceptualisations and explored the underlying problems of such a perspective. This is precisely why Cunningham's *The Hours* piqued my interest – it was one of the rare fictional works discovered at the time which delved into similar contemplations to the ones I was having. The fact that I discovered Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra and hyperreality at approximately the same time as *The Hours* was no doubt an important factor as well, and the combination of the two prompted me to research the topic further and try to get to the bottom of the transformations of love and its simulacra in the fast-evolving postmodernity.

Upon applying the concepts from Baudrillard's theory to the postmodern conceptualisation of love, issued from fairy tales and reinforced by media and pop culture, I made the hypothesis that postmodern love is a simulacrum, something with grounds not in reality but in fiction. The characters in *The Hours*, initially especially the character of Laura Brown, but later increasingly also the characters of Clarissa Vaughan and Richard Brown, were the perfect subjects for the analysis of love as simulacrum. Not only does the work show how life-changing or even damaging adherence to this simulacrum can be, it also shows expressions of love and relationships that go beyond the conservative, idealised and heterosexual norm.

The first part of this thesis will therefore provide the theoretical background for the analysis of simulacra in *The Hours* in the analytical part. The theoretical part is divided

into two sections. I begin by defining Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra and simulation in order to try to determine the stages and orders of love or different structures within and around love as simulacra. The second theoretical chapter takes a look at the role fairy tales and romance literature played in the late modern conceptualisations of love, and how the two most important concepts of these stories, '*the one*' and '*happy ever after*' were adopted as essential tropes in the Western film industry.

In the second part, I will analyse the three different but parallel stories in *The Hours*, exploring how their respective characters take on different aspects of love as simulacrum. There are different simulacra and forms of hyperreality that appear in the work, and it will be interesting to observe how the characters either embody or reject them, as well as how the historical period of each story factors into this. In a sense, the central theme of *The Hours* is the exploration of different forms of romantic simulacra and how the contemporary social conventions condition the ability to break free of these simulacra.

Hence, the theme of *The Hours* aligns perfectly with the aim of this thesis: to show how evolutions in society have also necessitated evolutions in the way we love and interact with one another, with love's socially constructed nature serving as a basis for a great deal of misery and disillusionment. The main focus will be on the transformations within the postmodern era, as this is the period of the fastest pace of progress, and thus also the period in which simulacra and hyperreality are truly becoming the prominent elements of society.

2. The Simulacrum of Love

In order to proceed with the analysis of postmodern love as a simulacrum and of the construction of the said simulacrum, as well as the simulacra that issue from it, I must first establish the order and stage of love as a simulacrum, based on the definitions of the respective concepts provided by Baudrillard in his 1981 treatise *Simulacra and Simulation*.

2.1 Postmodernity

In order to provide a clearer context for this thesis, we shall first briefly define the concept of postmodernity before proceeding with the definition of the orders and stages of simulacra of postmodern love. Not to be confused with postmodernism,¹ postmodernity is defined as the historical period directly following modernity in the early to mid-20th century. For the purposes of our discussion, we shall speak of early postmodernity as the period beginning after WWII and the rise in popularity of the television, and later postmodernity as the period beginning in the 1990s with the commercialisation of the internet and the subsequent omnipresence of digital technology.

Alongside these significant technological advancements, there were certain socio-cultural factors in postmodernity that have played a major role in the evolutions of postmodern interpersonal relationships. One of the first was the “postmodern erotic revolution” (Bauman 26) of the 1960s, facilitated by the diminishing of the dominance of Christianity and later reaching extreme proportions in the digital era. The role of

¹ Which is an artistic and philosophical movement that developed within the postmodern period. Metaphysically, however, postmodernism is still fundamentally governed by the Modern Age Cartesian paradigm.

advertising and the propagation of consumerism should likewise not be ignored as key in shaping people's expectations and conceptualisation of themselves and others, consequently making them apply the same consumerist notions to sexuality and relationships.

The loss of power of the Catholic Church in postmodernity also meant the loosening of the heteronormative views on love, which brought about the gradual destigmatisation of homosexuality in the late 20th century. In the most recent years, the LGBTQ+² community has largely been accepted into the Western society, which has allowed for much broader and more nuanced expressions of love and subjectivity. This is also reflected in the film industry and other forms of pop culture, which, despite still often featuring love and sexuality as central themes, have now taken a more progressive stance.

The postmodern era also gave birth to several important philosophical movements, e.g. structuralism, post-structuralism, Marxism, feminism, and postmodernism as a philosophical movement, all of which are particularly relevant for our discussion. The feminist view on fairy tales (see section 3.1.1) will help in pinpointing some of the crucial concepts of this thesis, while the works of Jean Baudrillard,³ most notably *Simulacra and Simulation*, will provide the theoretical basis and help frame the entire discussion.

² Stands for "Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and others".

³ Baudrillard's philosophy is typically characterised as post-structuralist and postmodernist, with important points based on (post-)Marxism.

2.2 Orders of Simulacra

In his groundbreaking 1981 treatise, Baudrillard proposed a completely new, postmodern way of perceiving and interacting with the world around us. He argued that humanity has entered an era of simulation, ruled by signs and surfaces rather than anything of substance: “the age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials-worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs ... [i]t is [] a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself” (*Simulations* 7).

There are three different “orders of appearance, [which are] parallel to the mutations of the law of value” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 65) and correspond to the historical period out of which they arose. They are described by Baudrillard in the second of the two essays comprising *Simulacra and Simulation*, “The Orders of Simulacra”, as:

- *Counterfeit* is the dominant scheme of the “classical” period, from the Renaissance to the industrial revolution;
- *Production* is the dominant scheme of the industrial era;
- *Simulation* is the reigning scheme of the current phase that is controlled by the code. (65)

2.2.1 First Order – Counterfeit

The least likely case is that postmodern love would belong to the first order of appearance, that of the classical period, as it is both temporally disconnected from postmodernity as well as dominated by the Catholic Church, which condemned certain expressions of love (e.g. homosexuality, extramarital intercourse, etc.) that are now completely valid and accepted in postmodernity.

It must be noted, however, that some of the ideas crucial to the conceptualisation of the early postmodern image of love do have their origins in this particular historical period – namely, in fairy tales, which, while popularised through their later adaptations, actually date back to the 17th century as an appropriation of even older folk tales.

2.2.2 Second Order – Production

Owing to the proliferation of the romantic image of love in media and pop culture – and, even more importantly, its commodification – an assumption could be made that postmodern love should fall into the second order of appearance, that of *production*. After all, the mass availability of physical goods as commodities (literature included) became possible only with the invention of print.

The word '*proliferation*' is even a near-synonym of '*(re)production*'. This mass production was able to serve as the basis of establishing social hierarchy through mass propagation and consumption of values; as Lane succinctly recaps Baudrillard's notion, "the process of consumption is an institution that registers and reinforces social hierarchy" (Lane 54). The third order, simulation, is only a logical extension of this; the main difference between the two is that in the second order, there is no clear distinction between the original and its copies, whereas in the third order, there is no longer any

original; the copies are constructed from models – “[i]t is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 4).

2.2.3 Third Order – Simulation

The most logical assumption, however, would be that postmodern love belongs to the third of these orders of appearance, that of *simulation*, since this is the one encompassing the current historical period when the notions of simulacra and simulation have become prominent factors in culture and society. In the early stages of postmodernity, the idealised concept of love, which will be one of the focal points of this discussion, became widespread through its proliferation in mass media and pop culture. One of the most significant factors here was the Hollywood film industry, most notably Disney, whose romanticised tropes were adopted from fairy tales and in a way transferred from fantasy and fiction into reality, in the process almost transforming them into a norm of human relationships (see chapter 3).

Along with simulation, Baudrillard introduces the concept of *hyperreality*, “a world without a real origin” (Lane 86), which is vital to the construction of postmodern subjectivity and, by consequence, to our understanding of postmodern human relationships and interactions. This concept will be explained more thoroughly when talking about the different stages of simulacra, and analysed together with the role of media and internet in the third theoretical chapter of this thesis. Since only true, that is, third-order simulacra operate in this sphere of hyperreality, postmodern love would almost by necessity have to belong to this particular order of appearance for it to also be viewed as a true simulacrum.

2.2.4 Order of Love as Simulacrum

Taking all of this into account, it is not an easy task to accurately determine into which order of appearance postmodern love should be placed. Since the orders of appearance themselves relate to specific historical periods and their corresponding shifts in society and the human experience, postmodern love as a simulacrum falls almost by default into this third order, since it exists as a social construct in the current historical period. However, not wanting to discount the importance of production and commercialisation in the proliferation of this image of love, it can be argued that this simulacrum is being constructed and played out in the postmodern period of simulation, while also having properties very similar (and, in some cases, parallel) to those of industrial production. As such, the hypothesis is that postmodern love should be characterised as belonging to the third order of simulation, with important roots in the second order of production, of which it has still retained some key aspects.

2.3 Stages of Simulacra

More important, however, for the theoretical placement of love into Jean Baudrillard's framework of simulacra and simulation are not so much the orders as the stages of simulacra. According to Baudrillard, there are different possible stages of simulation, different levels of immersion into it, as it were. The definitions of these are found in the first of the two essays that make up *Simulations*, "The Precession of Simulacra":

These would be the successive phases of the image:

1 It is the reflection of a basic reality.

2 It masks and perverts a basic reality.

3 It masks the absence of a basic reality.

4 It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

In the first case, the image is a good appearance: the representation is of the order of sacrament. In the second, it is an evil appearance: of the order of malefice. In the third, it plays at being an appearance: it is of the order of sorcery. In the fourth, it is no longer in the order of appearance at all, but of simulation.
(12-13)

These definitions are vital to conceptualising love as simulacrum. However, it needs to be defined what kind of love this part of the thesis is interested in. Postmodernity, while only lasting since the middle of the 20th century, has in itself known several different stages (understandably so, with the rapid progression of society due to technology), which has also been reflected in all fields of human experience, from grander ones, such as culture and politics, to the very nuclei of our existence, such as our interpersonal relationships.

The timeframe that is pertinent to this chapter is the early postmodern era, immediately after the calamity of the Second World War, where the rise of the television (and Hollywood, for that matter) completely changed first the American, then the global way of life: "Postmodern America produces non-territorial weapons; that is to say, weapons which physically rain down on an enemy, but electronically bombard the entire world

through television” (Baudrillard qtd. in Lane, 119). This coupled with the subconscious, almost hivemind-like urge of regenerating society led to the proliferation of a romantic, idealised perception of love that in fact dated back to previous centuries’ romance novels and fairy tales but was reinforced through this need of rebuilding society⁴ and the new, viral types of media.⁵

With the Vietnam war and the subsequent revolution of the late 1960s, things shifted completely. Thanks to the changes in the public perception of sexuality and eroticism, love started to enter a new order of simulacrum, in a sense moving away from the rigid, conservative yet idealised version, the goal of which was to instill and propagate social order, but in another sense already starting to transition into what Baudrillard understands as “hyperreality”. Bauman, in “On Postmodern Uses of Sex”, proposes that eroticism has first been cut off from its reproductive function (that of maintaining humanity) and tied instead to love, then altogether disconnected from the two, acquiring a life of its own (20). This is also reflected in the shift in the conceptualisation of love from the early postmodern period to this later one which started putting greater and greater focus on eroticism rather than on love.

Nevertheless, what this chapter will first focus on is this early postmodern idealised image of love, borrowed on the one hand from fairy tales, romance literature and film, and propagated on the other by the social situation of the post-war era and the need to reestablish order and stability.

⁴ This resulted in a lot of relationships out of comfort and/or duty – yet, as Farley points out, “[a] duty to love, whether generated by authoritative command or by ineluctable logic, may sustain a preoccupation with loving but not a real nurturance of love” (10).

⁵ The Hollywood film industry is a big culprit here – more on that in section 3.3.

2.3.1 First Stage

As with the orders of simulation, the expressions of postmodern love that will be analysed in the thesis are least likely to belong to the first phase of the image. The fantastical and romanticised notions received from fairy tales and media are not a “reflection of a basic reality” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 12); as further chapters will elaborate, there have been many factors that played into the construction of postmodern love and its permutations.

2.3.2 Second Stage

Even today, well into the postmodern era, the ideological version of love is ubiquitous in various cultural fields. Granted, film and literature have adopted a slightly more progressive view, but the classical romantic trope is still widespread: “the adventurous model of love at first sight” (Illouz 173), reminiscent of the like found in fairy tales and their Hollywood appropriations. It is often portrayed as the ideal goal, the realisation of which produces an illusory state of being, a *happy ever after*, which is in itself a simulacrum. Even if the variables have been slightly altered (e.g. homosexual relationships have majorly ceased being a taboo and have entered the equation as perfectly valid realizations of love), usually all portrayals of such relationships in cinema rely on this concept of a *happy ever after*, where the start of the relationship is simultaneously its culmination and also its termination.

While this kind of ideological, romantic notion is omnipresent in art and culture, it is much more difficult to find and realise in real-life situations. The three stories that were discussed by respondents to Illouz’s interviews, and in particular their juxtaposition, are a great exemplification of this. Story number one concerns two strangers meeting on a train, falling in love and marrying within a week; story two is a kind of modern-day

arranged relationship which does end up in love and eventually marriage. Story three is an example of an even more thought-out relationship, where the two partners also take their professional goals into consideration when planning the marriage (Illouz 164-165). Each story features a relationship that is progressively less romantic and adventurous, and more down to earth and realistic.

The first story works only in terms of momentum and physical attraction, or infatuation, and operates in the realm of fantasy; as such, it excludes a significant portion of a loving relationship that stories two and three, which operate in the sphere of everyday life, then cover. Illouz juxtaposes the two distinct narrative models as:

The first model is perceived as unreal because it occurs outside the experience of everyday life. In contrast, the second exemplifies the attributes of 'realism' in being described as 'practical', 'down-to-earth', 'real', 'commonsensical'. (Illouz 167-168)

So, the notion of 'realist love' is based on the actual compatibility of the two people and the work put into the relationship. One of the respondents in Illouz's study said: "[L]ove is not enough [of a reason] to get married. ... You need to be able to get along with each other. You need to be compatible" (168), with another emphasising that "[y]ou put energy into [the relationship], you put effort into it, you give something to the other person, and they give something to you. It is always work" (169). This reinforces an already obvious observation: that love is not purely perfect, effortless and ideological. What truly comprises love are the hardships and the effort put into the construction of a loving relationship, the collective effort of both participants in this relationship – essentially, everything *after* the *happy ever after*.

Moreover, if we were to disregard the (very recent) progressive depictions of love in pop culture, we would quickly be able to surmise that the notion of idealised love has largely

been portrayed as strictly heterosexual, completely excluding other forms of sexuality and thus again “mask[ing] and pervert[ing] a basic reality” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 12) by concealing the fact that heterosexuality is losing its status as the go-to norm when it comes to love.

The stated could lead to the supposition that the notion of romantic, fairy-tale love belongs to the second stage of simulacra. Still, not wanting to discount other possibilities, the following sections will discuss concepts associated with love in terms of third and fourth stage simulacra.

2.3.3 Third Stage

If we consider marriage as a modern and early postmodern confirmation and culmination of love, Baudrillard’s third stage of simulacra also becomes of relevance. According to Illouz, love has undergone important transformations since the 19th century (thus, roughly speaking, coinciding with the time of the industrial revolution, as well as the revolutions of 1848), even acting as the main motivation for marriage. As she points out, due to these transformations, which represent a “sharp contrast to chivalric or Romantic or even Victorian love”, late modern love was then “progressively disentangled from aristocratic and heroic forms of self-affirmation to be incorporated in the domain of everyday life via the bourgeois sanctification of family and the everyday” (Taylor qtd. in Illouz 169).

Illouz’s study concerning the stories of three different romantic relationships is of particular interest here. Respondents to the study even compare story number two to “a modern version of ‘arranged marriage’” or a “‘fix-up’” (Illouz 165), since it is the parents who initiate everything. While the relationship does presumably end in love, a kind of

“mature marriage of love” (165), the concept of ‘arranged’ or ‘forced’ marriage is an especially interesting one for dealing with love in terms of the third stage simulacra.

With traditional arranged marriage, emotions played no part in the decision of a spouse; it was organised by the parents for the benefit of everyone but the married couple, to unite families and obtain money or land. Despite the later connections between marriage and love, here it is obvious that there is no love involved; the third stage simulacrum is at play, “mask[ing] the absence of a basic reality” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 12), that of a pristine connection and genuine care for the other person – instead, its sole purpose is to obtain material, financial or political gain (“Why Marriage is a Scam – Honest Ads”, a YouTube video by Cracked).

Furthermore, recalling the topic of homosexuality touched upon in the previous subchapter, it must be pointed out that marriage has traditionally been a right exclusively reserved to heterosexual couples – another political (and religious) ploy to instill the desired norm into the public and mark any deviation from it as marginalised and even unnatural. Despite the image of love positively evolving beyond the heterosexual norm and gay relationships losing their taboo status in media and culture, gay marriage is still illegal in the majority of the countries around the world, with gay couples often having to settle for a civil union. Admittedly, even this is apparently greatly improving – as of October 2019, gay marriage is legal in 30 countries, according to a Pew Research Center article (“Same-Sex Marriage Around the World”).

Considering the above, we might propose that marriage has historically operated somewhere in between the second and third stage simulacra, often falling into the second stage by “mask[ing] and pervert[ing] a basic reality” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 12) and reinforcing the desired social norm, while also exhibiting signs of a more complete immersion into the third stage simulacrum, which in the form of arranged marriages “masks the absence of a basic reality” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 12).

2.3.4 Fourth Stage

Finally, the possibility of love being a stage four simulacrum should also be explored, especially since the fourth stage simulacra are the ones that truly operate in the hyperreal, a concept crucial to Baudrillard's work pointed out previously. Here, the discussion will have to be divided into two parts: one exploring the connection between the postmodern conception of love and fairy tales, and the other taking a look at the current perception of love in the 21st century.

2.3.4.1 The Simulacrum of Love and Fairy Tales

Fairy tales are a concept and a literary form much older than Baudrillard's notion of simulacra and simulation, dating as far back as the invention of print⁶ and especially to the 17th century:

The French writers of the late seventeenth century called these tales *contes de fées* (fairy tales) to distinguish them from other kinds of *contes populaires* (popular tales), and what really distinguished a *conte de fée*, based on the oral *Zaubermärchen*, was its transformation into a literary tale that addressed the concerns, tastes and functions of court society. (Zipes 334)

Although the early fairy tales were not intended for children, since "social behavior could not be totally dictated, prescribed, and controlled through the fairy tale, and there were subversive features in language and theme" (Zipes 336), the later versions of fairy tales were in fact directed at children. What is pertinent to this current discussion is that "the fairy tales for children were optimistic and were constructed with the closure of the

⁶ In this respect, Zipes claims that "[w]ith the rise of literacy and the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, the oral tradition of storytelling underwent an immense revolution" (334).

happy end” (338). The notion of the happy ending, or *happy ever after* as its latter appropriations would dub it, is a crucial concept in fairy tales as well as the various literature and film variations that drew upon this theme. Together with the quest for *the one*, “*le grand amour*”, as Illouz would put it, which is admittedly more prevalent in film and literature, but also present in fairy tales in the form of a beautiful princess or heroic prince, it forms the strongest foundation for the hyperreality of early postmodern love.

The fourth stage simulacrum, existing in and perpetuating the domain of the hyperreal, “bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 12). The romantic, ideological notion of love exists not in reality, but in fiction, with fairy tales and in particular their Americanisation (or, in particular, disneyfication), as well as the entire Hollywood film industry that issued from it. This image was adopted into reality from something unreal, something artificial born out of certain narrative and normative codes. As such, it can rightly be called a *hyperreal*, where the “[s]imulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 5).

The hyperreal is thus generated through models or *codes*, and, to quote Illouz, “the system-theorist Niklas Luhmann affirms that romantic love is less a sentiment than a ‘symbolic code’” (162). She also draws an interesting parallel in relation to one of her interviewees: “Despite [one] respondent’s earlier vehement dismissal of Story One, his most memorable love story contains the main elements and visual imagery of *the narrative model of love at first sight as codified in popular cinema*” (172, emphasis added). This coincides perfectly with one of the main claims of this thesis, that of the idealised simulacrum of love originating in the codes of cinema and pop culture.

It seems that this is exactly what is at play with fairy tales, and even more so their Americanisation and its subsequent evolution. They gave rise to the two models, the

two concepts crucial to the simulacrum – the already mentioned concepts of *the one* and *happy ever after*.

2.3.4.2 The Simulacrum of Love and the 21st Century

The state of love and, in fact, our interpersonal relationships in general in the 21st century are unlike anything we could have ever imagined. The explosion of technology coupled with the increasingly fast pace of living have introduced completely new ways of experiencing and interacting with the world. People's sense of identity has changed; identity is now a construct, a fractal entity composed of information and objects of consumption, with even '*the other*' transforming into a mere object of consumption.⁷ Add to that the hyperconnectivity achieved through social media and other new digital means of communication, and a completely different image than the romantic idealised one emerges – this one even more immersed in the hyperreal, as the digital is based on *code*, just like third order simulation (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 65), where hyperreality truly comes to life.

Here, it is not merely a question of “mask[ing] and pervert[ing] a basic reality” or even concealing the absence of a basic reality (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 12); rather, it is a question of producing a new hyperreality, similar to the simulation in the film *The Matrix*. As said, this new hyperreality is something completely unprecedented; the late postmodern concept of romantic or rather erotic relationships has changed completely since the former romantic one; recalling Bauman (21), eroticism has acquired a life of its own and become the driving force behind romantic encounters. This is facilitated by mobile applications such as Tinder, which thrive on the exact premise of sexual relations as something fleeting and ethereal.

⁷ Since the postmodern subject is comprised of objects, the distinction between the two is lost and they essentially become the same entity – “the perfect subject, the subject without other” (Baudrillard, *Impossible Exchange* 64), which is simultaneously also indistinguishable from other subjects constructed in the same way and thus loses its individuality (Baudrillard, *Impossible Exchange* 30).

The affair is essentially the consumerist form of a relationship, transforming it into a mere object of consumption – short-lived, disposable, existing only to excite, repeatable yet unique – the perfect solution for a postmodern fractal subjectivity. Another example is pornography, which literally commodifies sexuality – and, even more dangerously, instills unrealistic expectations into the viewers’ minds; except that these are focused on eroticism rather than romanticism. Baudrillard even suggests that the fascination with the hyperreality of pornography is “more metaphysical than sexual” (*Simulations* 42). This leads back to the claim that, thanks to the hyperconnectivity of the digital age, interpersonal relationships have transitioned into simulacra which operate in the hyperreal, bearing no relation to any reality humanity has known before.

2.3.5 Stage of Love as Simulacrum

Finally, the discussion returns to the second essential question of this chapter – and, by consequence, this thesis: if postmodern love is a simulacrum, what stage of simulacrum is it? The previous subchapters have presented almost all of the possibilities given by Baudrillard:

- Stage two simulacrum, seen in the romantic, Hollywood narrative of love exemplified by story one in Illouz’s study, as well as in the institution of marriage as a means of exerting social and political influence.
- Stage three simulacrum, or “playing love”, as will be seen in the Browns’ marriage in *The Hours* as well as possibly in the “modern version of ‘arranged marriage’” (Illouz 165) in the second story from Illouz’s study.
- And stage four simulacrum, where the simulacra of *the one* and *happy ever after* gave way to the hyperreality of disposable romantic relations.

It is difficult to draw a conclusion from this that is not a complicated one. It would appear that, while the romantic notion of love belongs to stage two simulacra, its two vital driving concepts are in fact stage four simulacra, based in fantasy rather than actual reality. While marriage can fall into the third stage, as will be seen with Laura and Dan's relationship in *The Hours*, it still typically falls into the second stage as a classical theme of the romantic film's happy ending. The current 21st century situation then falls strictly into hyperreality, "controlled by the code" (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 65) – but, interestingly, apparently without the two former fourth stage simulacra that used to be crucial to the construction of love in terms of simulacra: the current postmodern version of love allows for different partners at different stages in life, while taking into account the effort needed for the relationship to flourish, in this way negating both *the one* and *happy ever after*.

2.4 Love as Simulacrum

Even though the simulacrum of love began forming with the advent of print and then fairy tales, in the era of *production*, it soon transitioned, with the help of media and pop culture, into third order simulation, real simulation, "controlled by the code" (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 65), with code here referring first to the code of popular cinema (Illouz 172) and then, more recently, to the latest technologies enabling all sorts of new ways of romantic interaction, literally based on software code.

Likewise, the stages of love as simulacra have also reflected the societal shifts of postmodernity; the late modern romantic notion, belonging to stage two simulacra, briefly passed through the realm of stage three simulacra in early postmodernity, then began its entry into the fourth stage simulacra with the revolutions of the sixties and the explosion of the digital at the beginning of the millennium. The current hyperconnected,

hypersexual, hyperreal fourth stage simulacrum of love thus exists perfectly inside the codified third order simulation (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 65).

3. Fairy Tales, Romance Literature and Film

One of the earliest examples of romantic love in literature is de Cervantes' early 17th century work *Don Quixote*: "If one is to choose an 'inaugural date', [it] marks the first attempt in our cultural history to question the problematic relationship between reading, (chivalric) romance and reality" (Illouz 161). Then, in the late 17th century, came fairy tales, initially written by French authors such as Madame D'Aulnoy and Charles Perrault, then popularised by, most notably, the brothers Grimm and Danish author Hans Christian Andersen in later centuries.

3.1 Fairy Tales

As stated earlier, the original fairy tales were not meant for children, due to "subversive features in language and theme" (Zipes 336). Additionally, they "addressed the concerns, tastes and functions of court society" (334), whereas the earlier folk tales with their oral tradition were meant for lower social classes: "[t]he oral tales were taken over by a different social class, and the form, themes, production, and reception of the tales were transformed" (334).

In fact, the early fairy tales, intended for the entertainment of the upper class, contained themes very similar to those found in romantic novels (the "subversive features" (336), in Zipes' words). With the more modern appropriation of fairy tales, these themes were then replaced to suit a younger generation of readers, putting greater focus on magical or fantastical elements and the adventurous narrative – but nevertheless still preserving the important notions regarding the male-female relationship found in the original tales. This is a subject comprehensively discussed by Zipes as well as other feminist writers.

3.1.1 Feminist Perspective

According to the feminist perspective, fairy tales and folk tales, for both children and adults, had a much more malicious agenda. Their original function was the establishment of rigid gender roles and the propagation of patriarchy: “Although the plots varied and the themes and characters were altered, the classical fairy tale for children and adults reinforced the patriarchal symbolic order based on rigid notions of sexuality and gender” (Zipes 338). Moreover, they also played a significant role in “shap[ing] our romantic expectations”, as Karen Rowe (209) points out, acting as “powerful transmitters of romantic myths” (211). And this was especially true for young girls and women – Lieberman states that these tales “serve to acculturate women to traditional social roles” (Lieberman 383) as, in a sense, “training manuals for girls” (Lieberman 395).

Granted, because it was predominantly only the upper social classes that were literate and had regular access to books, it also “introduced notions of elitism and separatism through a select canon of tales geared to children who knew how to read” (Zipes 337). But this was even worse, in fact – not only did the tales contain patriarchal values, but also those of the aristocracy; once literacy became pretty much standard and books were mass-produced, children from lower social strata started investing themselves in the stories, thus acquiring aspirations and expectations even higher and more unreachable than those of aristocratic children.

3.1.1.1 Gender Roles

Besides containing fantastical, enticing story-telling elements and characters, such as witches, kings and princesses, fairy tales also subliminally educate children on their duties, roles and aspirations with regard to their gender. Lieberman points out that through these tales children “also learn behavioral and associational patterns[, and] value systems” (384). She also mentions the concept of the ‘happy ending’, which could lead to the claim that this happy ending has different realisations for males and females – and, more importantly, different paths to take, or roles to play, to reach that happy destination.

It is interesting to observe how this clear division of gender roles has been so vital to the functioning of society – or, rather, it should be said, to the functioning of the desired political regime(s): as Rowe states, “[female] conformity is the cornerstone for all higher social unities” (221). Essentially, as long as women submit to these assigned roles, “then the harmonious continuity of civilization will be assured” (221). This is seen in a significant portion of modern history: from being encoded in fairy tales, on through the 19th century when the industrial revolution demanded healthy, capable workers (Bauman 23) and suitably obedient wives, and into the 20th century picture of the perfect housewife tending to her veteran husband in “this revived world” (Cunningham 106). According to Baudrillard, this last iteration was already in a sense a simulacrum: “This family was in any case already somewhat hyperreal by its very selection: a typical, California-housed, 3-garage, 5-children, well-to-do professional upper middle class ideal American family with an ornamental housewife” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 42).

The sexual roles inscribed in fairy tales may seem negligible or even non-existent to the generations that grew up with them. But an impressionable young mind will subconsciously consume and adopt these roles if they are wrapped up in an attractive story. And while the later fairy tales may not contain as explicit sexual references as the

early iterations (Lurie 6, qtd. in Lieberman 383), they instead focus more on instilling certain socially-favoured norms into the reader. Thus the trope of the (heteronormative) fairy tale includes on the one hand the active, brave male hero who is destined to save the day with either his bravery, his superior rationality or his luck; and, on the other hand, the passive female heroine, if she can even be called that, who needs only to be beautiful and obedient, and wait for things to happen to her because of her beauty and/or obedience.

As Lieberman states, this is especially impactful to the mind of the young female reader; not only is she expected to be passive and perfect, but is also clearly presented with what will befall her if she dares use reason or look any less than her perfect physical self. The beauty myth in particular has had a profound negative effect on generations of girls and women.

3.1.1.2 Beauty Myth

In fact, Lieberman points out that beauty is directly tied to obedience: “the beautiful single daughter is nearly always noted for her docility, gentleness and good temper” (385), highlighting “the focus on beauty as a girl’s most valuable asset, perhaps her only valuable asset” (385). She continues with an important thought with regard to shaping expectations, which has previously been addressed in this chapter: “Good-temper and meekness are so regularly associated with beauty, and ill-temper with ugliness, that this in itself must influence children’s expectations” (385).

This quest to look beautiful, to physically fit into the mould of the respective sexual role, perfectly just like Cinderella’s slipper, then found a new, powerful ally in capitalism with its mass production (Baudrillard, “The Finest Consumer Object: The Body”, *The Consumer Society*). A whole gigantic industry then sprung up due to this; hundreds of

millions of dollars are spent each year on women's fashion and cosmetics.⁸ It is questionable if the philosophy of capitalism is even to blame here; it was basically just a matter of capitalising on the desires and norms instilled by fairy tales and later popular cinema – indeed, the entire pop culture.

On top of that, the unrealistic depiction of sex, including only physically attractive women, transmits a distorted image of reality, a kind of stage two simulacrum, and consequently instills expectations even more unrealistic than the ones adopted from fairy tales and romance literature. It makes perfect sense to then assume that this would lead and has led to a lot of sexual frustration for both genders, male and female, not to mention those who identify as both or neither. One can only imagine what the newly emergent technologies will bring; time will tell if they help appease these frustrations, or if they instead only further propagate them.

3.1.1.3 Marriage

Marriage is arguably the focal point and the principal romantic achievement in fairy tales and the issuing romance fiction. Yet, it too is deeply tied to gender roles and the propagation of patriarchal values; women readers “transfer from fairy tales into real life those fantasies which exalt acquiescence to male power and make marriage not simply one ideal, but the only ideal toward which women should aspire” (Rowe 211). The female's path to a happy ending is realised through her submittance to the male.

For the male, the reward is the female's beauty and his dominance over her. But there is a prerequisite, of course; the male, too, has to contribute his part – wealth. As the active one in the relationship, he must bring bread to the table and provide for his wife and children. According to Lieberman, this financial security is the main motivation

⁸ According to the most recent data from Statista, the revenue of the beauty industry amounts to about \$500M in 2020.

behind marriage for women, which stresses the need for the prince to be wealthy: “Marriage is associated with getting rich ... Good, poor, and pretty girls always win rich and handsome princes, never merely handsome, good, but poor men” (Lieberman 386).

Thus marriage has a dual function for females: its promise acts as a motivation for their passivity, while its fulfillment serves to perpetuate this passivity, since they are subsequently decreed to a life of a wife and mother, leaving them again with no agency of their own. Furthermore, marriage is also highly dependent upon beauty, even more so than upon the more socially-oriented gender roles, e.g. obedience – “[s]ince girls are chosen for their beauty, it is easy for a child to infer that beauty leads to wealth, that being chosen means getting rich” (Liebermann 386).

Marriage’s intrinsic connection to motherhood is also of note here. Biologically speaking, the main drive for love is the preservation and continuation of the human species; marriage, the culturally produced emblem of love, then assigns the role and responsibilities of motherhood to the female, reducing her to the reproductive function of child bearing and child rearing.

In the present day, the need for marriage to epitomise love is not nearly as ubiquitous as it used to be. A major reason for this is the larger availability of potential romantic partners. As Illouz points out, “[d]uring the Victorian era, people chose from a very narrow pool of available partners and often felt compelled to marry their first suitor” (Illouz 176), but today, the options are much more numerous, allowing for the “consumerist approach to the choice of a mate” (Illouz 176), which is further facilitated and empowered by recent technologies.

Lastly, and what is actually the most pertinent to the topic of simulacra, there is the fantastical function of marriage in fairy tales pointed out by Karen Rowe. These tales “transmit to young women an alarming prophecy that marriage is an *enchantment* which

will shield her against harsh realities outside the domestic realm and guarantee everlasting happiness” (Rowe 220). There is again reference to the concept of *happy ever after* as the product of marriage: the goal is “everlasting happiness”, ironically realised as the perpetuation of the very female traits which led to her marrying. It implies a continuation of the earlier passivity and conformity, acting as the end of the story, yet concealing the fact that it is also the beginning of a new story. In fact, while marriage is a central theme in fairy tales, the subsequent marital life is practically non-existent judging from these tales.

This falls in line with a claim made early on in chapter two – the fairy tale portrayal of marriage “masks and perverts a basic reality” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 12), focusing just on the event and excluding all the subsequent work put into the relationship. Thus, “[a]lthough marriage is a constant event in the stories, and is central to their reward system, few marriages are indeed shown in fairy tales” (Lieberman 394).

This portrayal of marriage as the beginning of eternal happiness nested inside the *happy ever after* is what is majorly responsible for the unrealistic romantic expectations exemplified by story one⁹ in Illouz’s study. And, since it is *eternal*, this assumes that the spouse becomes a partner for life (“Till death do us part”), which would then explain the other concept pointed out in this thesis, *the one*, showing how it also has its roots in marriage. This became the central trope of later romance fiction and resulted in a global enchantment owing to the proliferation of this trope by the film industry.

⁹ This is the story representing the romantic, adventurous model of love where the couple marry after just having met on a train.

3.2 Romance Literature

As fairy tales became geared towards children, they lost most of the charm they held for the adult readers. This meant that the properly acculturated women who had time galore to read thanks to their confinement to domesticity needed a new literary form to consume – one which would transmit the same norms as the earlier stories and perpetuate the acculturation.

However, in modern popular literature ('pulp fiction'), the sexual themes omitted in children's fairy tales now return: "In contrast [with fairy tales], pulp romances strip the fantastic machinery and social sanctions to expose, then graphically exploit the implicit sexuality" (Rowe 209). This has an interesting implication: that the exploitation of sexuality is apparently not only meant to serve men but women as well.

Granted, there were also the "chaster" adaptations of fairy tales, in the form of 'ladies fictions'. These stories, unlike pulp literature, did not include sexual imagery and instead preserved the moral codes of fairy tales:

These 'domestic fictions' reduce fairy tales to sentimental clichés, while they continue to glamorize a heroine's traditional yearning for romantic love which culminates in marriage. (Rowe 210)

This long exposure to romantic fiction has had a significant impact on generations of females. "Even in the 'liberated' twentieth century, many women internalize romantic patterns from ancient tales" (Rowe 222); the late 20th century genre 'chick lit' was only a continuation of the trend set forth by fairy tales with important and massively popular

works, such as, recently, the *Twilight* and *Fifty Shades of Gray* series¹⁰, which also were not shy about including sexuality.

3.3 Film Industry

The invention of television represented a major milestone in humanity's way of life, laying the foundation for one of the most profitable industries in history. Cinema has now thoroughly replaced literature as the most popular form of entertainment; yet, for a long time, the films preserved the traditional literary themes and tropes. Among the first ones who seized the opportunity and built a gigantic business on the appropriation of these themes was the American entrepreneur Walt Disney. In fact, The Disney Company is the biggest player in the film industry today. Due to cinema's popularity, Disney's Americanised adaptations of fairy tales had an even greater reach than the original stories and as such require their own discussion.

3.3.1 Disney

Today, the name Walt Disney is arguably the first association upon hearing the phrase 'fairy tales'. He was the one who popularised them and made them available to a mass global audience. In fact, as Lieberman argues, "[o]nly the best-known stories, those that everyone has read or heard, indeed, those that Disney has popularized, have affected masses of children in our culture" (Lieberman 383-384). Jack Zipes calls this endeavor "the Disney spell": "the repetition of Disney's infantile quest – the core of American mythology" (345), the word '*spell*' implying simulacra and simulation, as it belongs to the "order of sorcery" (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 13).

¹⁰ Both of these received cinema adaptations, making \$3.3B and \$1.3B (according to their respective reports on The Numbers).

3.3.1.1 Disneyfication and Americanisation

Disney films are majorly responsible for the commodification of fairy tales into the modern version known to people today. Everybody is familiar with Disney's depiction of fairy tales; even if the stories they remember are from books, the mental images accompanying the stories are most likely derived from the films. According to Zipes, Disney managed to achieve such an enormous impact by capitalising on both the fairy tale's fantastical elements as well as on the hopes and dreams of 20th century America.

The first Disney fairy tale adaptation, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, appeared right on the cusp of World War II, coming out in 1937. Then, in the fifties, practically right after the war, came Disneyland, as well as other film adaptations, e.g. *Cinderella* (1950) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). It is no wonder that, in the wake of not one but two world wars, the American people were easily swayed by the fantastical tales Disney brought to life through his animations. Indeed, "it would not be an exaggeration to assert that Disney was a radical filmmaker who changed our way of viewing fairy tales, and that his revolutionary technical means capitalized on American innocence and utopianism to reinforce the social and political status quo" (Zipes 333). Zipes makes an excellent point: in a way, the mass fascination with Disney's depiction of fairy tales helped greatly to reinforce the desired social regime and the urge to rebuild the world in the wake of WWII.

Today, a huge portion of the Western economy is driven by American culture; it seems to have spread to all but the most rigidly run countries, and capitalism has slyly and smoothly become the global standard. The majority of physical goods, digital services and elements of pop culture, including, notably, the pop music and Hollywood film industries, originate in America. With Disney being "the precursor, the grand initiator of the imaginary as virtual reality" (Baudrillard, *Disneyworld Company*) due to the power of

fairy tales and cinema, the argument can well be made that he had a truly significant part to play in the emergence of the Hollywood industry and the instillation of unrealistic expectations in the minds of millions of people all over the world; so, effectively enchanting the world with his “Disney spell” (Zipes).

3.3.2 Hollywood

While Hollywood is a neighbourhood in Los Angeles, California, the word has been commonly associated with the cinema of the United States of America. This has mainly been the case with classical American cinema, which developed in the first half of the 20th century, but the term has largely been extended to denote all of American cinematic production, which has to this day preserved the status of the most prolific national cinema. In fact, due to its massive popularity, American ‘Hollywood’ cinema, its pop elements in particular, may as well just be dubbed ‘cinema’.

The Hollywood film industry made its debut early in the 20th century with the 1910 film *In Old California* shot in Hollywood and Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Squaw Man* in 1914. According to Benjamin Hale, it did not need much time to catch on, as, “[b]y 1919, “Hollywood” had transformed into the face of American cinema and all the glamour it would come to embody.” Then, in the following decade, the real explosion of the industry began:

The 1920’s were when the movie industry began to truly flourish, along with the birth of the “movie star”. With hundreds of movies being made each year, Hollywood was the rise of an American force. Hollywood alone was considered a cultural icon set apart from the rest of Los Angeles, emphasizing leisure, luxury, and a growing “party scene”. (Hale)

Following the “golden age of Hollywood” in the 1930s and the war in the 1940s, the rise of television in the post-war 1950s “created new societal trends, advances in music, and the rise of pop culture”, with approximately 10 million homes owning a television set by 1950 (Hale). Later, the target audience of Hollywood films shifted more to the youth, so the techniques, plotlines and characters evolved accordingly, with a lot of action and sci-fi films seeing major success, such as *Star Wars* and *Terminator*. These films also started capitalising heavily on special effects, an approach which has been preserved and honed to near perfection in the first decades of the 21st century. Today, American cinema still produces action-heavy stories, packed with special effects, physically attractive characters and romantic and/or sexualised scenes.

4. The Hours

With the social construction of the simulacrum of love and its different realisations now thoroughly analysed, the second part of the thesis will investigate the three romantic relationships featured in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*. Some special attention will also be given to its cinematic adaptation directed by Stephen Daldry, as the film version contains some important character nuances which are not present in the novel while also particularly highlighting some of the key points of discussion in this thesis. Namely, the focus will be on the simulacra that appear in the three respective stories and to what extent – or in what way – they are realised or not. What will also be interesting to observe is how the different historical periods of the three stories reflect the perception of love prevalent during that period. Finally, the unconventional resolutions of each relationship will also be examined and analysed in terms of their effectiveness in breaking free of the simulacrum.

In order to facilitate as clear a discussion as possible, each of the stories will be analysed in its own chapter, beginning with (chronologically speaking) the first one, Virginia Woolf's story, as it is the least salient one in terms of simulacra pervasion. Interestingly, though, it is also the one with the most extreme resolution of all three, which is highlighted by its being the only one based on historical facts. Before proceeding with the analysis of the stories, however, some context about them as well as the novel's author must first be given.

The Hours is a 1998 novel by American author Michael Cunningham, for which he won both the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the PEN/Faulkner award in 1999. The novel is essentially a postmodern rendition of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, which features the eponymous Clarissa Dalloway, a middle-aged high-society woman in 1920 England. Some of the novel's most prominent themes are love, death (or, more specifically,

suicide) and mental illness, all of which are also dominant in Cunningham's work. In each novel, these themes reflect its historical context, with mental illness, for example, being tied to post-war "shell-shock" in *Mrs Dalloway*, and to AIDS and its side effects in *The Hours*. There are also important connections between the characters in the stories of Clarissa Dalloway and Clarissa Vaughan, and it will be interesting to analyse how their roles are sometimes reflected and at other times reversed, as well as how the three stories in *The Hours* are themselves interrelated. *The Hours* follows the stories of three women in different historical periods, which is also reflected in the romantic relationships in the respective stories – ultimately, though, it all metaphysically and intertextually revolves around Mrs Dalloway:

- 1) The story of Virginia Woolf *writing* the novel in the 1920s, creating the character and the novel which would go on to become the basis for the very story as depicted by Cunningham;
- 2) The story of Laura Brown *reading* the novel in the 1950s, reliving the character, identifying with her, and through the process managing to find her own liberation;
- 3) The story of Clarissa Vaughan *living one of the possible lives* of Mrs Dalloway at the break of the millennium, giving further potential to the character conceptualised by Woolf and reimagining her in a more current context.

The theme of love and romance is a frequent one in Cunningham's works – love in terms of relationships rather than just the romantic, adventurous aspect (precisely why his work is particularly interesting for a discussion of postmodern love in terms of simulacra). This also includes biographical aspects of love and cohabitation; as Cunningham himself is gay and has lived with his partner for 26 years, homosexual love is another central theme of his novels. This becomes especially relevant once the timeframe of the work is considered – in the 1990s, the general public view of gay relationships was much less favorable than it is today, and hence this was a much less frequent theme in fiction. With this in mind, Cunningham's novel is even more

progressive and groundbreaking than when viewed from today's standpoint; it could even be argued that Cunningham and similar writers were majorly responsible for the detabooization of homosexuality in popular fiction. However, it must be noted that Cunningham has stated in an interview that he does not wish to be characterised as a gay author ("Michael Cunningham – Wikipedia"), despite the importance of his work for the LGBTQ+ community – he merely writes about life and relationships, whichever form they may take.

In this respect, each of the three stories in *The Hours* contains at least one homosexual element, even if the principal relationship of the story is hetero-based. As stated, the first one that will be analyzed is the story of Virginia Woolf and her relationship with her husband Leonard. With Woolf being herself an extremely progressive writer for her own time, with important views on the societal role of women, it will also be very interesting to observe how Cunningham managed to weave this into his own work and masterfully intertwine the three stories.

4.1 Virginia and Leonard Woolf

In terms of simulacra, the relationship between Virginia and Leonard Woolf is the least interesting of the three stories in the novel. Yet this is also exactly why it might in a way be the most interesting: Virginia and Leonard's relationship, as depicted by Cunningham, is unlike any type of love discussed in this thesis so far. It seems at once bland and pure, at times not loving at all, while at others like a truly profound love between the two. A prime example of the latter appears already in the opening chapter with Virginia's suicide letter stating "I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been" (*The Hours* 7). Here, she also acknowledges the tumultuous nature of their relationship, which will become visible in later chapters; namely, how patient and

caring Leonard has been with her while she was suffering in Richmond – something she would probably have had a hard time admitting at the time.

And, indeed, Cunningham does an excellent job portraying this. From Virginia's perspective, Leonard's urges most often feel as *demands*, despite her being simultaneously able to grasp the undertones of his deep care for her and worry about her health. So, while she sees his demand that she eat as an obstacle to her writing, they are able to arrive at a compromise: "I will have lunch,' she says, impatiently but without true anger" (33). It appears that a lot of their relationship is based on these compromises – and not in the negative sense of sacrifice, but rather in the sense which Illouz's study conveys with "love [as] work" (169), with both sides of the relationship slightly giving in to the other not because of necessity or blind love, but because they both prioritise the mutual relationship and are aware it takes both of them to make it work.

This is even more evident in the chapter with Virginia's spontaneous near escape to London after her sister's visit, where her rebellious act leads to Leonard finally understanding how trapped she feels in Richmond and coming to terms with their inevitable return to London (172) – there has to be careful balance in her physical and mental health, and the two are often at odds. While it pains him to have to risk her mental well-being, he finally catches on to the paradox which has been plaguing Virginia all that time: a vital factor to her mental health are the very things that pose it the most risk – a full life in London, amidst people and inspiration, rather than withering away in Richmond.

Still, as is known from history and depicted by Cunningham in the prologue, Virginia finally does succumb to her mental illness and commits suicide in 1941, no doubt leaving her widowed husband Leonard ravaged by guilt. So, following Illouz's understanding, Virginia and Leonard's relationship is an excellent depiction of "love as

work”, despite it at first not appearing loving or caring in any way. This explains more accurately the introductory sentences of this subchapter: on the spectrum of simulacra, their relationship is the least prominent and the most realistic and down-to-earth, being based on genuine care for the other person, rather than on infatuation or blind duty as will be seen more prominently in the other two stories.

Another interesting point to observe in this particular story is the insight Cunningham gives the reader into the writing process of Virginia Woolf, which also includes her thoughts on love, in particular the role of the female, which was a fundamental topic of her work. When devising the character of Clarissa Dalloway, she makes references to the role of marriage in the domestication and passivisation of the female: “Clarissa will believe that a rich, riotous future is opening before her, but eventually ... she will come to her senses, as young women do, and marry a suitable man. Yes, she will come to her senses, and marry” (*The Hours* 81-82).

The wording implies that marriage is the *sensible* outcome for women, and that the sacrifice of their dreams and aspirations is something logical and unavoidable. Woolf also touches upon this duality in a 1931 speech “Professions for Women”, where she speaks about having to overcome “the Angel in the House” in order to succeed as a writer. Interestingly, while she did marry, it seems that she was able to retain a lot of her freedom – both creative and sexual, if the autobiographical nature of her novel *Orlando* is taken into account – and achieve a kind of symbiosis between the two, being a wife without becoming the eponymous “angel in the house” (as opposed to Laura Brown, for example, who will be discussed in the next subchapter). This was quite likely a very unusual marriage at the time, and no doubt one of the most progressive ones for that historical period, more akin, in fact, to relationships of the late 20th century.

One final point that needs to be discussed before proceeding with the analysis of Laura Brown’s story are the homosexual elements in this one. The first one pertains to

Virginia's mental process of structuring the character of Mrs Dalloway: "Clarissa will have had a love: a woman. Or a girl, rather; yes, a girl she knew during her own girlhood; one of those passions that flare up when one is young—when love and ideas seem truly to be one's personal discovery" (81). This is no doubt a biographical element, which Cunningham also reinforces with his later depiction of the kiss between Virginia and Vanessa – the kiss which plays a pivotal role in the inspiration for Mrs. Dalloway and at the same time also provides an insight into Virginia's passions and aspirations. These seemingly innocent kisses in fact represent important turning points for all the three heroines in their respective stories.

While the kiss between Virginia and her sister is "innocent enough ... it feels like the most delicious and forbidden of pleasures" (Cunningham 154) and represents another reference to the free-spirited nature of Woolf in terms of sexuality – she was known for having lesbian relationships, the most famous being with writer Vita Sackville-West, on whom the already mentioned novel *Orlando* is based. In this way, the real-life Virginia Woolf and the character depicted by Cunningham both transcend the heterosexual romantic norms of the historical period. Adding to that the nature of her marriage to Leonard, Virginia's story represents a much more positive (post)modern relationship, one that is not constrained by literary influences or those of the Catholic Church.

Moreover, the kiss with Vanessa also represents all that which Virginia misses and longs for in Richmond – it is "full of something not unlike what Virginia wants from London, from life; it [is] full of a love complex and ravenous, ancient, neither this nor that" (Cunningham 210). In fact, to Virginia, Vanessa herself represents London, while also possessing many of the qualities which she – Virginia – lacks, such as Vanessa's ease of handling her servants (87). This is likely another reason for Virginia's longing for her sister, with the kiss representing a kind of double defiance of Leonard, i.e., a romantic one as well as an existential one, prophesying her later near escape to London.

As depicted by Cunningham, Virginia then manages to weave this duality into the story she is writing, the story of Clarissa Dalloway. Interestingly, this is where the simulacrum of love as analysed in this thesis comes back into play, with Clarissa's youthful, adventurous, fairy tale infatuation becoming the guiding principle of her entire life:

Clarissa Dalloway will have loved a woman, yes; another woman, when she was young. She and the woman will have had a kiss, one kiss, like the singular enchanted kisses in fairy tales, and Clarissa will carry the memory of that kiss, the soaring hope of it, all her life. She will never find a love like that which the lone kiss seemed to offer. (207)

Thus, while the principal relationship in the first story analysed is the least interesting in terms of simulacra, the story itself still contains important references to them, both the main narrative of Virginia and the substory of Clarissa. This is another indication that, while humans are on the one hand perfectly capable of the "realist model" of love, they can, on the other, never truly escape the urges and appeal of the adventurous, fairy tale model – which points back to the paradox uncovered by Illouz in her study concerning this dual perception of love. The following subchapter will take a look at how damaging blind adherence to another love-related simulacrum, the "duty to love" (Farley 10), can be, as depicted by the character of Laura Brown.

4.2 Laura and Dan Brown

The second story to be analysed, the story of Laura Brown and her husband Dan, is a focal one to this thesis. In contrast with the relationship between Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Laura and Dan's relationship is largely focused around a clear-cut division of gender roles, which is in line with the time period in which this story takes place – the mid-20th century, right after the War, when the perfect housewife played a crucial role in “the rescued world” (Cunningham 39), which the always patriotic husband had helped rescue.

It is exactly this aspect of social responsibility of marriage in “[t]his revived world” (Cunningham 106) that is at the root of the problem for Laura Brown, this need for marriage to be the means for social stabilisation in the fledgling postmodern world. While Laura does state that she married her husband “out of love” (106), she then admits that it had also been “out of guilt; ... out of patriotism” (106), perhaps even out of a kind of pity – “[h]e had suffered so much. He wanted her” (106). Thus, in Laura's eyes, it was the *duty* (recalling Farley's concept of “the duty to love”) of the women in post-war USA to marry the men who had just returned from the war – as she says to her friend Kitty in the cinematic rendition of *The Hours* by Stephen Daldry, “They deserved it, didn't they? After what they'd been through” (36:18 – 36:21).

Thus, while Laura *does* in a way love her husband, this is not a passionate kind of love, but more the caring, dutiful kind. This might at first glance appear as a sign of the realist model of love analysed in Illouz's study – if it were not for how Laura feels completely out of place as both wife and mother, that is. To the reader, it feels more as if she *wants* to love and care for her husband and son than as if she actually does – “a preoccupation with loving but not a real nurturance of love”, as Farley (10) states. Of course, Laura's own desires and ambitions also stand in the way of a committed

“preoccupation with loving” – she is constantly torn between being the perfect wife and mother and returning to the world which her marriage to Dan has ripped her from back to being a quiet introverted woman who enjoys most of all a good book.

Cunningham excellently sums up this split between her own individuality and the social duties ascribed to her as a woman – Laura is “the brilliant spirit, the woman of sorrows, the woman of transcendent joys, who would rather be elsewhere, who has consented to perform simple and essentially foolish tasks ... because it is her art and her duty” (Cunningham 42). Again, the notion of “duty” comes into play, but this time as the duty of wifehood – something strictly feminine. She has to make (and keep making, as it seems) a conscious decision to “remain devoted to her son, her husband, her home and duties” rather than “mourn her lost possibilities, her unexplored talents” (79) – because it is “her art and her duty” to be the perfect housewife, the perfect mother.

And yet, as is seen several times in the book, and not just in this story, Laura often fails to live up to par to these assigned roles. She has a vague understanding of how to be a good mother and wife, and often excels at playing both roles, but also often feels a certain alienation from, or even a repulsion to, her husband Dan and her son Richie. Her preoccupation with Dan’s birthday cake is a perfect example of both her missing the point with what her husband needs to feel loved and how to act with Richie and involve him in her daily life. She makes it seem as if the cake is something essential to Dan’s happiness – in the film, she says to Richie that “[they’re] making a cake to show him that [they] love him”, to which Richie replies “Otherwise he won’t know we love him?” (31:47 – 31:52), completely disarming her with his not yet indoctrinated view of love and making her question the illusion in which she lives. In fact, the film portrays her as even more incompetent both in baking the cake and handling Richie: her four-year-old son essentially has to tell her what to do and assure her that “it isn’t that difficult” (31:36 – 31:38), as she is so disconnected from performing in her role of wife and mother.

This culminates in her throwing the cake in the trash, baking a new one without Richie's help, then trying to escape the entire overwhelming situation by leaving her son with a babysitter and driving to a hotel to read *Mrs Dalloway*. This act most strongly portrays her failings with regards to her son Richie (at least in this particular story) – when reading in her hotel room, Laura contemplates suicide and again has to force herself not to do it, to instead pick up her son from the babysitter's, finish with the preparations for Dan's birthday party and return to her role of the perfect housewife. Richie, however, senses that something is not right with her; he senses that he had almost lost her (1:23:37 – 1:24:57) in an emotionally-packed scene which is coincidentally also the first hint of the connection between this and Clarissa's story.

Laura manages to appease Richie and reestablish the illusion; however, as is later revealed, this illusion ends up not lasting after all. The reader finds out that Richie is actually Richard from Clarissa's story, whose mother left her family to live a quiet life as a librarian in Canada, something so damaging to Richard that he portrayed her as committing suicide in his novel (perhaps also a recall to his childhood instinct when driving with her after the aforementioned incident) – that mother, of course, being Laura Brown. While this is arguably something cruel and irresponsible (she herself even mentions to Clarissa: "They say it's the worst thing a mother can do" (*The Hours* 1:39:18 – 1:39:20)), it is a very interesting thing to observe in the context of this discussion.

It is evident that Laura's marriage and motherhood were simulacra, ones that even she had a hard time believing in – she was thrust into her "happy ever after" but started to realise that it does not quite fit her. For quite some time, she was perplexed between perpetuating the third order simulacra of her being a caring wife and mother, and her feeling of total inadequacy in both of these roles. She had to make the very difficult decision between continuing to sacrifice herself or hurting other people – whom she *did* love in her own way, as stated – and finally ended up choosing herself and escaping the

simulacrum, despite the huge price she had to pay. This is an incredibly interesting portrayal by Cunningham of how devastating blind adherence to these simulacra can be: in the end, no matter what Laura ended up choosing, someone suffered, and that someone never really excluded herself.

While Laura is the most salient character in this particular relationship, and female gender roles are a much more prominent theme in the novel than male gender roles, some attention must be given to the character of Dan Brown. As already stated, marriage was a duty for women and a reward for men returning from the war, “men who have seen horrors beyond imagining, who have acted bravely and well, [and who] come home to lighted windows, to perfume, to plates and napkins” (42). Dan is entirely devoted to his roles of being a husband and breadwinner, especially the former. His happiness “depends only on the fact of [his wife Laura], here in the house, living her life, thinking of him” (100). He is essentially blind with love; when Laura complains to Kitty about her failed cake in the film, her friend replies that “Dan loves [her] so much he won’t even notice – whatever [she does], he’s gonna say: ‘it’s wonderful!’” (35:36 – 35:40).

In the film adaptation by Daldry, his devotion to Laura is even portrayed in connection with him being a soldier – “it was the thought of the happiness... the thought of this woman, the thought of this life, that’s what kept [him] going” (1:31:44 – 1:31:53) during the war, in a way reinforcing both his gender role and the simulacrum of his love for Laura. Indeed, the way he phrases it is actually very important for the conceptualisation of love as simulacrum: he “had an idea of [their] happiness” (1:31:55 – 1:31:57). If his happiness is something that depends solely on the love of his wife, the idea that he had of their happiness can then be equated with merely the idea of their love.

This means that his happiness depends solely on his wife, or rather, the thoughts he had of her during the war – when he did not yet, in fact, know her. He does not love

Laura for the person that she is but rather for the positive thoughts of and longings for her during his harsh experience in the war; he has no desire to learn more about her when they are married and is perfectly content with her just being his wife and giving him superficial love. Their entire relationship is thus based on both of them performing their respective gender roles, without ever forming that pristine connection and moving beyond the construct of love they are living in.

Finally, before moving on with the third and final story, the homosexual element in this one needs to be addressed – namely, Laura’s kiss with her friend and neighbour Kitty. Their kiss, while at first glance again seeming perfectly innocent, actually plays a similar role to the one between Virginia Woolf and her sister Vanessa, as it represents a pivotal moment for Laura and leads to her contemplating her sexual desires, giving the reader an insight into how she is torn not just romantically but also physically. She desires both Kitty and Dan, each in their own ways – “[s]he 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” (143).

While not playing as prominent a role in this story as in Virginia’s, the insight that the reader is given into Laura’s “wilder” side with her desire for Kitty’s “force, her brisk and cheerful disappointment, the shifting pink-gold lights of her secret self and the crisp, shampooed depths of her hair” (143) reveals that her awkwardness as a wife does not necessarily imply an aversion to sexuality altogether. The question that she poses herself, “is it that she desires his desire?” (143), is even more interesting, as it again points to a certain sense of duty while excluding her own individual drives. Additionally, it even touches slightly upon Bauman’s notion of the postmodern version of eroticism: “desire does not desire satisfaction. Desire desires desire” (Taylor and Saarinen (1994), qtd. in Bauman 21).

This subchapter has attempted to show how both Laura and Dan were living in a simulacrum, a construction of their marriage reinforced by their strong adherence to their societal roles. It is Laura who manages to break free of this simulacrum and the roles associated with it, although not without consequences to all the parties involved in the simulacrum, which shows how damaging it can be to blindly submit oneself to a simulacrum as life-changing as marriage, especially when it is such an essential factor of the mid-20th century social order, and as such a simulacrum which was difficult to avoid in the 1950s when the story takes place.

4.3 Clarissa Vaughan

The story of Clarissa Vaughan may be the most interesting one for the discussion of simulacra in the context of love. As opposed to Virginia's and Laura's stories, this one is focused not just on a single romantic relationship, but on at least two, one following the fairy tale model and the other the realist model of love (cf. Illouz). The relation between the two is portrayed in a very interesting way by both Cunningham and Daldry, and the analysis of the importance of this relation in Clarissa's life will be the focus of this final subchapter, supported by and contrasted with the original *Mrs Dalloway*, in which the situation is similar but reversed.

As stated in the introduction to the analytical part, the story of Clarissa Vaughan in *The Hours* is a hypothetical future version of Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway, portrayed by Cunningham. Taking place in 1999, it is a more progressive – and from Cunningham's side autobiographical – rendition of Woolf's early 20th century housewife. Whereas Clarissa Dalloway ends up marrying her husband Richard, favouring social convention and stability over her pristine intense connection with Sally, Clarissa Vaughan actually achieves this stability *with Sally*, in a gay relationship still largely unconventional at the time.

This is the above mentioned autobiographical element; with Cunningham having lived and created during the time when homosexuality was beginning to lose its social stigma, the contemporary story in *The Hours* is the one which most prominently features homosexual relationships. Where homosexuality was only a small (although, admittedly, pivotal) element for the heroines of the previous two stories, in the forms of ‘innocent’ kisses, here it is Clarissa’s relationship with Sally that becomes the focus, while it is her kiss with *Richard* which is portrayed as the highest romantic moment in her life. In this way, Cunningham excellently subverts the heterosexual trope and makes the reader question their preconceived notions of romantic norms.

As stated earlier, the heteronormative conceptualisation of love belongs to the second stage simulacra by concealing homosexuality and excluding it as a valid expression of love and sexuality. It is this second stage simulacrum that Cunningham completely shatters by showing a stable, long-lasting homosexual relationship, based on each partner’s respective needs, yet in itself just one among many such relationships (e.g., Walter and Evan, Clarissa’s daughter Julia and her girlfriend Mary, Louis and his many sympathies, etc.). In juxtaposing homosexuality alongside the conventional heterosexuality, the latter loses its exclusionary status and opens the doors to other ways of romantic expression, no longer a simulacrum. However, in Daldry’s cinematic adaptation, Clarissa actually refers to Sally as “my friend Sally” when Mrs. Brown comes to visit (1:36:46 – 1:36:49). This likely signifies that the social perception of homosexuality, though admittedly improved, was still slanted towards the negative and more or less frowned upon at the turn of the century, which is why Daldry may have decided to specifically include the phrase “my friend” in the film.

Interestingly, though, even Clarissa and Sally’s relationship retains some of the socially assigned gender roles – even though they are not technically married and share the same gender. Clarissa, and Richard especially, view her as a “good suburban wife”

(16), a “society wife” (20), in Richard’s words; and even she herself says that “[s]he herself is trapped here forever, posing as a wife” (202). Admittedly, with Richard, this is probably also a result of a certain jealousy, or an overattachment to Clarissa, with him in a way protesting her having chosen Sally over him. He has “decided early on that Clarissa stands not only for herself but for the gifts and frailties of her entire sex” (19), and hence he simultaneously resents and is completely devoted to her – a reflection of his relationship with his mother, whom he put on a pedestal only to then topple it in his novel and, symbolically, in his mind.

Clarissa and Richard’s relationship may be the most interesting one out of all those analysed here. It plays with the precipice between the romantic and the realist, intertwining the could-haves with the actual turnouts of events, showing how these differing realities actually exist side by side; one is “happening in that present” and the other “in this present” (66), as Richard would put it. As stated, with Clarissa and Richard, Cunningham subverts the trope of a heterosexual relationship as the norm, showing their romantic encounter as the “fling” (in contrast with the original Mrs. Dalloway), while both of them eventually “settled” for stable relationships with partners of the same sex.

The word “settled” is used intentionally here. Clarissa’s longings for that summer with Richard are still a regular part of her life, and she looks at the seemingly insignificant fight in which they broke up as “the moment at which one possible future ended and a new one began” (52). In her conversation with her daughter Julia in the film, she says that everything but her time spent with Richard belongs to “all the rest of it” – even “‘Sally?’ – [t]he rest of it” (1:12:09 – 1:12:19). She regrets choosing her freedom on that fateful day (52) and imagines, “even now, that they might have had a life together[.] They might have been husband and wife, soul mates, with lovers on the side. There are ways of managing” (67-68).

The final sentence in the above quote is particularly interesting, as it is an implication of the postmodern affair which was mentioned in the context of Illouz's study. In fact, this relatively short quote features a full transition of the simulacra most prominently discussed in this thesis: from marriage (second/third stage), to the romantic, story-like notion of "the one" (second/fourth stage), and finally to the postmodern fourth stage where romantic relationships are seen as something disposable, or at least not exclusively tied to a single partner. This would make the character of Clarissa the most interesting in the context of simulacra out of all the three stories in *The Hours* and calls for a further analysis of these different simulacra.

Indeed, Clarissa is the character that is romantically the most developed; her life is presented as a kind of culmination of the differing portrayals of love throughout modern history and leading up to postmodernity, encompassing both the real and the fictional, the realist and the romantic. The intertextual elements of it being a possible postmodern version of Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway are perfectly intertwined with Cunningham's frequent depictions of Clarissa (Vaughan)'s thinking of that potential future with Richard and not being able to let it go:

It is impossible not to imagine that other future, that rejected future ... as being full of infidelities and great battles; as a vast and enduring romance laid over friendship so searing and profound it would accompany them to the grave and possibly even beyond. She could, she thinks, have entered another world. She could have had a life as potent and dangerous as literature itself. (97)

This is very obviously a daydream of Clarissa's, showing a very story-like relationship founded upon the concept of *the one* previously established and discussed in this thesis – "a vast and enduring romance ... [which] would accompany them to the grave and possibly even beyond" (Cunningham 97). The last sentence even self-references this fictional element, admitting it is a life "as potent and dangerous as literature itself" (97).

Recalling Illouz's study of the three stories with three different conceptualisations of love (interestingly almost paralleled with the stories in *The Hours*), the big paradox of love is the fact that people tend to remember these more adventurous, fleeting romantic encounters as taking centre stage in their great romantic narratives, despite being aware of the obvious benefits of a stable, mutually respectful and realist relationship.

It is the same with Clarissa; for the majority of the story, she fails to see what she and Sally have for the great thing that it is, already rarer in the time the story is taking place and even more so today, instead prioritising her platonic, quasi-romantic relationship with Richard. And yet, she comes to an important realisation, at once starting to comprehend the dangers of falling victim to the simulacrum and getting a glimpse into how love truly operates within a person's psychological development:

Venture too far for love, she tells herself, and you renounce citizenship in the country you've made for yourself. You end up just sailing from port to port. Still, there is this sense of missed opportunity. Maybe there is nothing, ever, that can equal the recollection of having been young together. Maybe it's as simple as that. Richard was the person Clarissa loved at her most optimistic moment. (97)

The first part is already very interesting, with the metaphor of "sailing from port to port" implying the start of the 1960s sexual revolution and the emergence of the affair as socially acceptable. "It was 1965; love spent might simply engender more of the same. ... Why not have sex with everybody, as long as you wanted them and they wanted you?" (98) The "sense of missed opportunity" has a dual and adverse meaning; it can refer to either the missed opportunity of a life-long relationship with one's "*grand amour*" (Illouz 175), or, in contrast, to missing out on sexual encounters with everyone but one's partner due to devotion and loyalty to that partner. In the latter, the consumerist mentality comes into play again with the 'shop and choose' approach, where the

consumer has been socially conditioned to never be truly satisfied, to never achieve real happiness unless they try everything and endlessly perpetuate the cycle.

Happiness is the key concept here. Not only is the need for its attainment crucial to both the hyperreality of consumerism and the appeal of marriage as the end-goal of love, it is also the notion upon which rest the two primary simulacra in this discussion: *the one* and *happy ever after*. For Clarissa, Richard is still clearly her '*the one*' throughout the story, even though she is not unhappy in her relationship with Sally – but also not particularly *happy*, either. In fact, that first kiss with Richard still represents the epitome of happiness for her, that perfect moment that implied that there would be so much more of it: “[i]t had seemed like the beginning of happiness, and Clarissa is still sometimes shocked, more than thirty years later, to realize that it *was* happiness” (98).

This is exactly what is behind the concept of *happy ever after*: the false promise that happiness has now been reached and will never dim, will even continue to accumulate, where in fact it is only the beginning of a possible real relationship – a relationship that will not be without its hardships and challenges. Clarissa actually uncovers an important finding regarding this particular simulacrum; in a quote cited earlier, she says that “Richard was [simply] the person Clarissa loved at her most optimistic moment” (97), when they were young together. This is actually incredibly important to this entire thesis, as it implies that the romantic, idealist perception of love is predominantly reserved for one’s youth.

And logically so, since a younger mind is more impressionable and more perceptive to art (including literature and film, of course), as well as less experienced and still learning about the world and social interactions. There is this great sense of possibility, of the future being open, and as of that time unencumbered by strictly adult issues such as politics or the economy. So it was also for Clarissa; “[t]hat summer when she was eighteen, it seemed anything could happen, anything at all” (95). It is through

experiencing different relationships with different people in different stages of personal development that one then realises that the reality is not necessarily as perfect as fiction would portray it. Still, the memory of that first young unspoiled love remains as an unattainable goal, as something to cling on to in order to assuage the disillusion with the harsh imperfection of reality. Hence comes the paradox of the contradicting perceptions of love displayed by the participants in Illouz's study: even though people rationally opt for a realist model of love, this is typically not what they perceive as the ultimate realisation of love, their most memorable experience with love remaining a youthful, adventurous, Hollywood one.

It seems that all of these realities exist simultaneously in Clarissa. Just as Woolf portrays the entire development of *her* Clarissa's life in a single day, so does Cunningham achieve with *his* Clarissa. The most pivotal moment in the story, which at first seems to cause incredible pain to Clarissa, actually ends up serving as a kind of redemption for her. This is something which is implied quite early on in the film, with Richard telling her "I think I'm only staying alive to satisfy you" (24:11 – 24:14), then asking "What about your life? What about Sally?", ending with the ominous "Just wait 'till I die ... then you'll have to think of yourself" (24:58 – 25:07).

And indeed she does; despite the negative connotations of Richard's statement at the time, it is only the death of Clarissa's *the one* which allows her to break her own illusion and set herself free from the simulacra. The "other future" (97), that lost reality, is finally no more, and with it are gone the shackles that prevent her from finally reclaiming herself. She is at last able to be herself, and "not Mrs. Dalloway anymore; there is no one now to call her that" (221), symbolically freeing herself from the fictional life of Clarissa Dalloway and being allowed to live out a real relationship with her partner Sally as Clarissa *Vaughan*. Thus, even though the final line of the book is meant for Laura Brown, its true addressee is actually Clarissa herself: "Everything's ready" (221).

6. Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to map the important evolutions of love as a predominantly social construct to different stages of Jean Baudrillard's simulacra in the context of hyperreality. Interestingly, while the initial hypotheses were focused more around the early postmodern conceptualisation of love, issued from late modernity and reinforced with WWII, some of the more intriguing findings uncovered during the research are actually related to the most recent form of love and romanticism. These latest simulacra are only hinted at in *The Hours* but, due to the incredibly fast pace of digital progress, are becoming more and more prominent by the day, painting a kind of dual picture of love.

One of the key findings of the thesis is that the early postmodern love is in fact not itself a simulacrum. Rather, it is based on two concepts which are the real simulacra, originating from fairy tales, romance literature and the film industry – *the one* and *happy ever after*. Both are the central point of romance stories, signifying the ultimate attainment of love, with marriage to a person's *the one* representing a symbol of everlasting love and concealing all the real aspects of a strong relationship.

Even more importantly, where marriage used to be seen as exclusively a heterosexual establishment, and by necessity *the one* as a heterosexual partner, the past decade has seen a major rise in the legalisation of gay marriage. While heterosexuality, as seen in *The Hours*, was already losing its normative status in the final years of the 20th century, marriage was still an institution so deeply entrenched in Christian values that it was hard to imagine it ever encompassing and embracing homosexuality as a valid expression of love. The recent shift in the public perception of homosexuality and the LGBTQ+ community as a whole may indicate that love is breaking free of its socially-constructed

boundaries, with the concept of *the one* also expanding and accepting all manner of possible partners.

An extremely interesting observation in analysing the story of Clarissa in *The Hours* is that a person's *the one* need not necessarily be the same throughout their life – several *the one*-s are actually possible, and in fact increasingly desired. With Clarissa, her first (heterosexual) *the one*, Richard, only loses this status after his death, conceding it to Sally, who thus becomes Clarissa's new, this time gay, *the one* – despite the two of them actually having had a relationship for years before that.

However, the concept of simulacra cannot be discussed without also including the concept of hyperreality which it is intrinsically tied to; according to Baudrillard, the fourth and final stage of simulacra is the one that truly generates a hyperreality. The relationship of Laura and Dan Brown is a perfect example of hyperreality, the hyperreality of a happy, functioning marriage. Laura even constructs her own identity in a hyperreal way, akin to the concept of fractal subject – besides being a wife and mother, both of which she actually barely identifies with, she is pretty much empty, only presented to society through the roles which she plays. Her constructed identity alone borders on fourth stage simulacrum, which is then only reinforced through Dan's blind and clueless adherence to both his own and her version of her as a fractal subject, which perpetuates the hyperreality.

The situation with Clarissa and Richard is not that dissimilar; they, too, live in a kind of hyperreality which is only shattered with Richard's suicide. In fact, recalling Richard's ramblings about the different realities (different "presents"), it becomes extremely evident that they are both living in the hyperreality of their past – albeit, again, each in their own version. While Clarissa is trapped in the allure of past perfection, the hyperreality of that perfect summer when she was eighteen, Richard projects on to her several realities: that of the fictional Clarissa Dalloway, of whom she is only free after

his death, and that of his condemned but idolised mother who abandoned him despite loving him. To Richard, she is a kind of idealised, platonic entity that exists outside the real world and is unchanging in his own hyperreality, at once fictional and painfully personal.

This means that, while the thesis has done a good job of showing how the love-related simulacra were born and perpetuated into postmodernity, its original hypothesis of postmodern love as simulacrum actually holds less ground than it used to in the middle of the 20th century. Then, the two driving forces of the simulacrum were the concepts of *the one* and *happy ever after*, but now these are much less prominent due to the significant changes they have undergone.

The actual, real romantic relationships have become less romanticised and more in line with the realist model of love. Admittedly, the concepts of *the one* and *happy ever after* still exist, but, as already mentioned, they have moved beyond their former adventurous and deterministic nature, adopting an outlook that is more grounded in reality rather than notions adopted from fiction and pop culture. The most notable change is that now the majority of people seem to want both, the realist and the adventurous model, understanding the importance of both: in their youth, they want to keep their options open and experiment with sexuality, in whatever forms the contemporary technology enables, but eventually they do want to 'settle', so to speak, with a partner to whom the affection is not based solely on momentary sexual attraction.

Thus, the concept of *the one* can exist alongside one's realist relationship, as is seen in the excellent example of Clarissa Vaughan having a perfectly functioning relationship with Sally, but one which is only allowed to flourish once Clarissa's *the one* moves on. In this sense, there is also a kind of implication of several possible *the one*-s, as already mentioned, the notion that different people are the most appropriate romantic partners at different stages of one's personal development.

In this case, the concept of *happy ever after* also acquires a new meaning: it now incorporates all the hardships and effort that need to be put into it to actually make it 'happy', and, with divorce losing the stigma traditionally associated with it and enabling an easy way out (if a marriage did in fact take place at all), the 'ever after' part also becomes distilled and loses its fatalistic status. Even Laura Brown, whose story occurs in the 1950s, is able to at some level perceive and dismantle the particular simulacrum, with Clarissa Vaughan in her own turn freeing herself of the other simulacrum, that of *the one* (and Virginia Woolf, interestingly, not really following any of the two simulacra to begin with, which is exactly why her story is both the least and perhaps the most interesting to the discussion of simulacra, as pointed out in subchapter 4.1).

Hence, the two simulacra are stripped off of all of their power as simulacra – exposed exactly for what they are, they do not specifically lose their status as simulacra; rather, they are just able to exist as something fictional alongside the real which can quickly become dull and monotonous. As Illouz has also uncovered in her study, and as Cunningham illustrates in *The Hours*, people in fact crave both, the realist and the fictional, the everyday and the theatrical, the real and the hyperreal – all the while understanding the nature of each and the distinction between them. The adventurous, romantic approach to love and sexuality serves as a distraction, a prelude, even, to everyday life, which although inevitable is nevertheless the desired outcome: the '*happy ever after*' with all the positives, the negatives and the inbetweens that comprise it, yet one which never presupposes eternal devotion to a single '*the one*' or actually guarantees eternal happiness.

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