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The Concept of Liberation in the Film Adaptation of *The Hours*

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V Olomouci dne

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1 Introduction

"But can a single day in the life of an ordinary woman be made into enough of a novel?"

Michael Cunningham - *The Hours*

In general, Virginia Woolf's novels highlighted mainly feelings, emotions and inner lives of the protagonists. The literary style that she has introduced has shifted the traditional focus of the authors away from the plot. The most famous novel that she has created is *Mrs. Dalloway*. Since its publication in 1925, it has been ceaselessly an immense source of inspiration for many authors and there have been various adaptations of this novel appearing throughout the following century. Writers have adapted it into new novels and there has also been a film adaptation.

One of the novels reflecting *Mrs. Dalloway* is the novel *The Hours*, written by Michael Cunningham in 1998, and this is also its most commonly known adaptation. This novel, treating and reviving a part of Virginia Woolf herself, as well as the characters from *Mrs. Dalloway*, has triggered a further development of adapting Virginia Woolf's work. The novel has had a profound impact upon the film industry as in 2002, a film called *The Hours* was released. It is a drama directed by Stephen Daldry, with the screenplay written by David Hare. In this thesis, the main goal is to analyse the adaptation of the film *The Hours* by Daldry.

First of all, it is necessary to say that one can't separate *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* (both the novel and the film), as there is an invisible bond among these three works. Furthermore, to fully comprehend the scope of the plot and the characters, one needs to know the three of them.

The first aim of this thesis is to give an account of these works, state their mutual influence upon one another and speak about their interconnection.

Secondly, to approach the film made by Daldry more in detail in terms of the main characters is the target of this thesis. The primary objective is to unveil the layers of the story, its profoundness and ease the comprehension of the characters appearing in

the film. The aim is to speak separately about each character while still connecting one to the other.

Last, but not least, the biggest interest of this bachelor thesis is to analyse the unhappiness of the characters, their failures, and what kind of liberation from their problems they chose and why they chose it. But before starting the analyse itself, it is necessary to give some general background for the arguments mentioned.

1.1 The concept of adaptation and its background

First of all, it is essential to mention that it was the appearance of cinema that has made the process of adapting literary works more common, and that nowadays we can come across a vast quantity of novels, short stories, poems and even theatre plays that have been made into films.

In general, an adaption can be described as "the process of making a work of art upon the basis of elements provided by an earlier work in a different [...] medium [...]" (Baldick 361). As for the types of adaptations, there are two major types. We can distinguish "the 'faithful' adaptations in which the distinctive elements (characters, settings, plot events, dialogue) of the original work are preserved as far as the new medium allows, and 'free' adaptations, sometimes called 'versions' or 'interpretations', in which significant elements of the original work are omitted or replaced by wholly new material" (Baldick 361).

When speaking about *The Hours* it is suitable to talk about it as of an adaptation which has been made on the basis of *Mrs. Dalloway*. It is not the same piece of work, therefore, one might say that it is not a faithful adaptation but more an interpretation or a version.

Thomas Leitch tries to analyse the concept of adaptation in his essay called "Adaptation, the genre". He contemplates whether adaptation is or is not a separate genre. In favour of the adaptation being itself a genre, he gives a definition of what features an adaptation should have. "Watching or reading an adaptation as an adaptation invites audience members to test their assumptions, not only about familiar texts but about the ideas of themselves, others, and the world those texts project against the new ideas fostered by the adaptation and the new reading strategies it encourages" (Leitch

116). This idea connects perfectly with what *The Hours* provides its spectators with. There are the new ideas as well as the old concepts and elements taken from the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, and in the end, the mixture of both of these seems to present a completely new sphere of art.

2 *Literary context of the film*

The publication of *Mrs. Dalloway* opened up a completely new sphere of art. The novel is the first part of a chain that is still growing, getting bigger and evolving. The second part of the chain is the film made by Marleen Gorris in 1997 called *Mrs. Dalloway*, which closely follows the story of the novel and therefore, it is the faithful adaptation of the novel by means of the visual media.

Then, there is Cunningham's *The Hours* from 1998, as another part of the evolving chain. Shortly after the publication of Cunningham's novel, there was the novel of *Mrs. Dalloway* by Robin Lippincott, published in 1999. Finally, there is another literary adaptation of Woolf's fourth novel and it is called *Mr. Philips*, which was published in 2000 by John Lanchester. The last released adaptation of *Mrs. Dalloway* is the film *The Hours* released in 2002 and directed by Stephen Daldry. Out of Cunningham, Lippincott, Lanchester and Daldry, it is Cunningham and Daldry who achieved the biggest success with their adaptations – they are well-known and their adaptations have highly influenced the view of common people upon the historical person of Virginia Woolf.

Therefore, one can see that Virginia Woolf is still a living writer, because the adaptations make her live and develop further in terms of people's conception of her work. Her biographer Hermione Lee says in the biography called *Virginia Woolf* that "Virginia Woolf's story is reformulated by each generation [...] depending who is reading her, and when, and in what context" (Lee 758). In the 1990s, Woolf has been labeled by many as "a lesbian" thanks mainly to the conception of Woolf that Cunningham has introduced.

In terms of better understanding the adaptations of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, it is also important to understand the lives and the works of the two authors concerned. Thus, the next part of this thesis will be concentrated upon their lives and their work.

2.1 *The biography of Virginia Woolf*

Virginia Woolf was born to her parents Sir Leslie Stephen and Julia Stephen on 25 January 1882 in Great Britain. Her father was a Victorian intellectual whose main achievement was the publication of the sixty-three volume *Dictionary of National Biography*. He was its editor and also contributed to the publication itself by supplying it with his numerous articles. His main interest was in history, biography and philosophy.

The family of Virginia's father was an upper-middle-class one living in London. They had strong connections with artists, writers, judges, politicians and many others. Virginia, like most girls of those times, didn't receive any formal education, along with her sister Vanessa. Her sister was exceptionally close with Virginia all of her life. They also shared their literary ideas and Vanessa was often a source of inspiration for Virginia's work.

In spite of the fact that Virginia didn't receive any formal education, her father encouraged her to read extensively and thus, she would make her first step towards her close bond with literature. "She was a close and observant analyst of the world she lived in. And she was one of the century's most insatiable readers" (Lee 17) says her biographer Hermione Lee. Her exhaustive reading and her observation of the world helped her to pursue the career of a writer.

Virginia's life was quite a difficult one even from the time of her youth. When thirteen she lost her well-loved mother. Some years after this terrible event, Virginia lost her father too. He died of a long and difficult illness during which Virginia nursed him. Furthermore, two years after the death of Leslie Stephen, her brother Thoby also passed away. He died of typhoid fever. These events played a major role in forming her mental health, and the loss of her loved ones haunted her all of her life. On the online literary database Literature Online, Waudby in her biography of Woolf said that, "throughout her life Woolf experienced debilitating periods of illness, which she herself labelled 'madness'." In 1895, her first mental breakdown appeared, "She suffered hallucinations and attempted to kill herself by throwing herself from a window" (Mepham 6). These were her reactions to the events of her childhood, as well as proofs of her mental instability.

She went through periods of severe depressions and also had to spend some time in a private rest home. She based many characteristics of the character Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway* on her own experiences with insanity and particularly on the treatment that she was provided by the doctors.

After the death of her father, she moved with her siblings to a less fashionable area called Bloomsbury which was afterwards renowned as an intellectual place. The new house became a meeting point for the friends of her brothers and thanks to regular meetings, "the Bloomsbury Group" was created. Levenson in his analyse of Woolf's life says that this intellectual group was "a wholesome reaction against the boredom of fashionable life, and the expression of a real need for intellectual freedom" (Levenson 7). The group rejected the traditional Victorian taboos concerning moral and sexual life. It became known for its liberty of expression and for its cultural and intellectual innovations. Hermione Lee characterized Bloomsbury as follows:

No one was elected (as the Apostles were); there was no manifesto (as for the Vorticists or the Imagists); there was no subscription (as for the Labour Party). Identifications of the 'membership' of the circle have varied considerably, depending on who draws up the lists, and when. Leonard Woolf, in the 1960s, listed 'Old Bloomsbury' as Vanessa and Clive Bell, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Adrian and Karin Stephen, Lytton Strachey, Maynard Keynes, Duncan Grant, Morgan Foster, Saxon Sydney-Turner, Roger Fry, Desmond and Molly MacCarthy, with Julian, Quentin and Angelica Bell, and David Garnett as later additions.
(Lee 263)

The most prominent members of this group were an art critic and painter Roger Fry, John Maynard Keynes or Leonard Woolf, the future husband of Virginia, whom she married in 1912. In 1917, Leonard and Virginia founded the Hogarth Press together, which then became an influential publishing house. Leonard was a loving and caring husband to Virginia. He provided her with care and support for her writing. He was always the first reader of her manuscripts and Virginia highly valued his opinion.

They settled down in London and then, due to the bad condition of Virginia's mental health they moved to the country. Virginia led a very active social life. She was organizing parties just as Mrs. Dalloway had. In terms of children, Virginia was advised by the doctors not to have them because of her bad mental condition. "George Savage [Woolf's doctor] wrote in the 1880s that 'an insane patient may have an insane, idiotic, wicked, epileptic or somnambulistic child' " (Lee 188). The prevailing opinion of mental health treatment in Woolf's times preferred such a solution.

With the onset of the second world war, Woolf's condition began to deteriorate quickly. She was no longer able to concentrate on her work. She found herself unable to write. Moreover, she began to hear voices. She was depressed and persuaded that the madness was coming once again to join her, and she desperately wanted to avoid it. As a result of this poor condition and her inability to cope with it, she drowned herself in the river near her home in 1941 by putting stones into the pockets of her coat.

2.2 *Woolf's literary contribution*

In terms of Woolf's literary contribution, she has planted many changes upon literature. On Literature Online, Waudby enhances that "today her writing is recognised as being of central importance to literary modernism's experimentation with novelistic form.". She is a modernist author known mainly for her obsession with the moment and capturing of the inner lives of her characters. When using an example of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Levenson says about Woolf's work that she is "[...] exploring the minds of her characters in all their flow and flux and yoking together two seemingly unrelated characters in a kind of extended metaphysical conceit, to produce not only one of the first psychological novels but also one of the first symbolist – metaphysical novels" (Levenson 8).

She expressed herself in terms of her technique in her diary by saying, "I should say a good deal about *The Hours* [working title for *Mrs. Dalloway*] and my discovery: how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters. I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth" (Woolf, *Diary* 59). Obviously, she had been highly interested in sculpting and shaping her characters.

In the context of her work, it is also important to see her conception of life itself as she mentioned it in her *Common Reader*. She says that "life is not a series of gig lamps, symmetrically arranged: life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope that surrounds us from the beginning to the end" (Woolf, *The Common Reader* 212). This further illustrates her concept of writing, wherein she tries to capture life in its simplicity, just as it is. Furthermore, due to her ability to comment upon the world and her vast reading experience throughout her life, she gained a great capacity to describe the mental states of her characters.

Her novels do not have a complicated plot. On the contrary, it seems to be quite simple and of minor importance. What is strengthened and described are the simple acts of everyday life. This helps the writer to detect the purity of life itself. In terms of the formal points of her work, Woolf used the stream of consciousness technique in her writings and the type of storytelling she used the most was free indirect discourse which further enhances the possibility to get into the thoughts of the characters. Her first published novel was *The Voyage Out* from 1915 which had not yet been written in her typical modernist narrative style. She did not find her own style until her third novel called *Jacob's Room* which was published in 1922. Right after the publication of this novel, there came the wave of novels that made her famous. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931) and *Between the Acts* (1941) were published. Not only did she publish novels, she also wrote many essays. These were mainly concentrated upon the conditions of women. In 1929, she published *The Room of One's Own* and in 1938 *Three Guineas*.

There are also compilations of literary essays and reviews. Among the most commonly known is *The Common Reader* (1925) and *The Second Common Reader* (1932). She had also been a prolific writer of letters. She kept a vast correspondence with her friends, mainly female ones. These were published some time after her death. There are also her autobiographical sketches that have been gathered in the collection named *Moments of Being* (1976). Finally, there is also a diary that she has kept and that was published in five volumes.

2.3 *The biography of Michael Cunningham*

The second author whom it is necessary to present is Michael Cunningham, the author of the critically acclaimed bestseller *The Hours*. He is a contemporary American writer born on 6 November 1952 in Ohio. He had spent his childhood in California. When he was 15, he discovered *Mrs. Dalloway*.

He undertook the studies of English literature. He received a Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Iowa. During his studies, he had already published some of his short stories, and after finishing his studies, he began to teach at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Currently, he is teaching creative writing at Yale University and also at Brooklyn College.

Cunningham is openly gay and has been in a 24 year long partnership with a psychoanalyst Ken Corbett. His work is very much marked by his homosexuality as a number of his characters are gay, or their sexuality is ambiguous. We can notice this in *The Hours* as well. Contrary to the general idea, his concept of sexuality is that sexuality is not necessary point in understanding and evaluating a person. Moreover, he rejects being labelled as a gay author. He expressed himself in the article called "Man of *The Hours*: Michael Cunningham's Unlikely Runaway Smash" written by Will Doig in 2003 for Metro Weekly, by saying that "one of the things I've learned as a gay man is how idiosyncratic our sexualities are. The longer I live, the more I feel that straight, gay, and bisexual are so general as to be almost useless in telling you anything significant about the person you're about to meet."

2.4 *Cunningham's literary contribution*

Cunningham's prose is well-known for "his luminous prose style and sensitive characterisations" as Literature Online says. Cunningham's first novel was published in 1984 and is called *Golden States*, then in 1990 *A Home At the End of the World* was released, in 1995 it was *Flesh and Blood* and in 1998 *The Hours*, which is his most appreciated novel. After the publication of *The Hours*, the author worked on the film *The Hours* which he helped to put on the screen. Therefore, there has been a pause in

publishing new novels. The next one came in 2005 and it is called *Specimen Days*. The most recent one is called *By Nightfall* and was published in 2010.

Cunningham is also a scriptwriter who has made scripts for two films, the first one being *A Home at the End of the World* from 2004 and the second one *Evening* from 2007. The author has received numerous awards for his work. They were the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1993, the Whiting Writers' Award in 1995, and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1998, among others. He was also awarded with a Pulitzer Price in 1999 for *The Hours*.

2.5 *Brief biography of Stephen Daldry and David Hare*

Stephen Daldry is a British theatre and film director and also a producer born in 1960. The films that he has worked on as a director are *Billy Elliot* (2000), *The Hours* (2002), *The Reader* (2008) and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2010). All of these films were nominated for Best Director or Best Picture at the Academy Awards.

Last but not least, David Hare is a British film and theatre director and a playwright who is responsible for *The Hours* in terms of its script. His notable works are plays such as *Plenty* (1978), *Pravda* (1985) or *The Absence of War* (1993) and his well-known scripts are *Strapless* (1988), *Damage* (1992) and *The Hours* (2002). He was awarded a knighthood in 1988 by Queen Elizabeth II.

2.6 *Mrs. Dalloway and its contents*

The first out of the three works that this thesis would like to introduce is obviously *Mrs. Dalloway* as it is the oldest out of these and as it is the source of inspiration for the later following works. *Mrs. Dalloway* is the fourth novel written by Woolf. Levenson provides a precise definition of what *Mrs. Dalloway* is like. "In *Mrs. Dalloway* there is little plot to speak of. *Mrs. Dalloway*'s focus [...] is upon the world as it is reflected through the minds of characters who from their background of the novel – their extremely subjective impressions of one another and of the events in which they take part" (Levenson 32). There, we can see the application of above mentioned Woolf's literary style concentrated on inner worlds of her protagonists.

The main character is the eponymous Clarissa Dalloway, a middle-aged, upper-class woman who is spending a June day in London, in 1923. The plot of the novel takes place in precisely one day. The heroine is preparing a party that she will host in the evening. Her day begins by going flower shopping for the party. She walks around London and contemplates her age, ageing and death. In her internal monologue she ponders, "did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely, all this must go on without her, did she resent it, or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely?" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 9). By making the protagonist think about death, Woolf introduces one of the most prominent topics presented in the novel.

When Clarissa returns back home, she receives a visit from a friend – Peter Walsh, whom she wanted to marry at one point in her past. They talk about Clarissa's party and Peter's journey to India. When Elizabeth, the daughter of Clarissa, enters the room, Peter leaves and goes for a walk and shortly after Elizabeth leaves as well. She goes shopping with her tutor, Doris Kilman, whom her mother dislikes. Clarissa's husband, Richard, goes for a lunch meeting with Hugh Whitbread and Lady Bruton. When returning home, he decides to buy flowers for his wife and thinks seriously about telling her that he loves her. However, when he arrives home, he cannot formulate it and therefore, the simple sentence stays untold.

Apart from Clarissa's story, there is also the story of a shell-shocked war veteran Septimus Smith, who is unable to re-enter society after coming back from the front. It is his wife Lucrezia, who attempts to help him with reintegration and improving of his mental health. She arranges a meeting for him with a doctor, Sir William Bradshaw. Bradshaw thinks that the best thing for Smith would be to retire from society to go into a home for shell-shocked soldiers. Septimus does not want to make use of this possibility, but it seems that it has already been decided for him. He and his wife return home and they spend a peaceful time together, his wife making hats and he by reading. They wait for the men who should escort Septimus to the asylum. When the men finally come, Rezia goes to answer the door and meanwhile Septimus, fearing his insanity, jumps out of the window and consequently dies.

Clarissa's party is the point in the novel, when the two stories mingle. In view of the fact that Sir Bradshaw is a guest at the party, Clarissa hears about the suicide of

Septimus. It makes her leave the party for a while and contemplate. She realizes that the suicide Septimus committed was an act of preserving the moment, preserving life itself. At the end, Clarissa gets to talk to Peter Walsh and she also meets Sally Seton, a woman that she has had the most exquisite moment of happiness with. They have kissed once in a park when they were young, and this moment was for Clarissa a moment of real happiness. She often thinks about it and remembers it vividly. As the party comes to its end, the novel ends as well.

In terms of the formal structure of the novel, there is no separation into chapters, there are just pauses between the paragraphs. The separation of certain parts comes with the striking of Big Ben, which seems to be presented as a turning point in the novel. This enables the reader to distinguish what time it is during the only day the story takes place, and it also further enhances the important role of the time in the novel. In addition, Woolf originally wanted to call her novel *The Hours*.

3 *The Hours*

3.1 *Cunningham's The Hours and its contents*

The novel has taken its name from Woolf's working title of *Mrs. Dalloway* which already illustrates the close connection between the two works. The novel follows a single day in the lives of three women. It follows their waking up, their preparation for a visit or a party, and also their struggle with depression. They each live in a different period and in a different place. What connects them are similar moments of revelation that they each live through the day. They are not connected by acquaintance but by a psychological aspect; indeed, their connection is spiritual.

The author enhances the interconnection of their separate stories by shifting the narratives among them, and also by treating the same mood as all of them struggle with a more or less severe kind of depression. They all face some life-defining crises, and all of them question their mortality. The main linking bond is literature and mainly the book of *Mrs. Dalloway*. The main characters are, the writer of the novel Mrs. Woolf, the reader of the novel Mrs. Brown, and a person who was given the name of the character of the novel itself, Mrs. Dalloway. Literature serves as a source of inspiration, as an accelerator of the moments of epiphany, and as a possibility of artistic expression.

At the beginning of the novel, the reader faces the suicide of Virginia Woolf. The author even makes use of the real letter written by Virginia to Leonard, before she walked into the river Ouse in 1941 and drowned herself. Cunningham uses it in the prologue.

Then, the reader is introduced to each of the three women separately, to their times and places. To connect their stories, the narrative contains numerous flashbacks as well as flash-forwards. In comparison with *Mrs. Dalloway*, there are separate chapters in *The Hours*. Each section has a label that contains the name of the female character whose story it contains, such as Mrs. Woolf, Mrs. Brown or Mrs. Dalloway.

Mrs. Woolf, who might be said to be a fictionalized version of Virginia Woolf, is living in the suburbs of London called Richmond in 1923. She has an idea for the beginning of her new novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*. She writes in her room and then she decides to stroll around Richmond. During the walk she thinks about the character of Mrs. Dalloway. Later in the afternoon, Virginia receives a visit from her sister Vanessa

and her children. There is a dead bird found by the children in the garden. Mrs. Woolf together with the children try to make a resting place for it.

When Vanessa leaves, Mrs. Woolf gets into a more severe state of depression and tries to escape to London. She goes to the train station and waits there for a train. Mr. Woolf finds her and persuades her to come back home, on the terms that they will soon move back to London. In the evening, Mrs. Woolf ends her day in contemplation over the main character and decides that Clarissa Dalloway will not kill herself, but someone else will do it instead.

The next character is Mrs. Brown, a pregnant housewife living in Los Angeles in 1949, and reading *Mrs. Dalloway*. She finds it difficult to get up after a long night reading. It is the birthday of her husband. When she finally has the strength to get up, she sees her husband Dan go off to work. Thus, she stays at home alone with her little son Richie and plans to begin the preparations for Dan's birthday celebration.

Together with her son, they bake a cake, but the result does not seem perfect to Laura. When she finishes the baking, she receives a visit from her neighbour Kitty, who comes to ask Laura to feed her dog as she is going to the hospital. When Kitty leaves, Laura decides to throw the cake away and bakes a new one, which seems to be better. She decides to drop Richie off at her neighbour's house, and to go to a hotel to read *Mrs. Dalloway*. Whilst at the hotel, she contemplates suicide, but finally decides to go back home. Her day finishes with the celebration of her husband's birthday.

Mrs. Dalloway, a lesbian living in New York in the late twentieth century, organizes a party for her friend Richard who received a literary award for his work. First of all, she goes flower shopping. Then, she visits Richard who is dying of AIDS. When Clarissa returns home, her partner Sally has lunch with Walter Hardy and Oliver St. Ives.

Louis Walters, an old friend of Clarissa and Richard's former partner, visits Clarissa and they talk about the past until Clarissa's daughter Julia enters. Louis then leaves, and so does Julia, not long after him. She goes shopping with Mary Krull, whom Clarissa dislikes. Clarissa goes back to Richard's apartment to pick him up for the party. They speak about the past. Richard sits near a window and suddenly, jumps out of it. Clarissa then goes home to help Sally and Julia clean up after the party that never took place.

At the end, there is an intermingling of the stories that is a quite surprising one. While cleaning up their apartment, there is the aged Mrs. Brown ringing at the door. Then comes the revelation that Clarissa's friend Richard and Richie are one and the same person – he is the son of Mrs. Brown.

To sum up the ideas of Cunningham's novel, a quotation from the novel itself gives an interesting insight into Cunningham's intentions. It also opens up the universe that Cunningham shared with Woolf – the importance of the moment.

We live our lives, do whatever we do, and then we sleep – it's as simple and ordinary as that. A few jump out of the windows or drown themselves or take pills, more die by accident, and most of us, the vast majority, are slowly devoured by some disease or, if we're very fortunate, by time itself. There's just this for consolation: an hour here or there when our lives seem, against all odds and expectations, to burst open and give us everything we've imagined, though everyone but children (and perhaps even they) knows these hours will inevitably be followed by others, far darker and more difficult. Still, we cherish the city, the morning, we hope, more than anything, for more. (Cunningham 225)

3.2 *Daldry's The Hours and its contents*

Finally, there is the last adaptation of *Mrs. Dalloway* and the most important one for this research as well; the film *The Hours* that was released in 2002. This "rewrite" of a modernist text goes further in highlighting certain traits in the characters found in the novel. Rand Richards Cooper says that "the film is [...] an adaptation of a novel's meditation on another novel's rumination on suicide" (Cooper 20). This description illustrates the close relationship among the three works of art mentioned.

Mary Joe Hughes goes on in developing this idea by saying that "a work is not self-contained, nor is the artist a sole creator. Both participate in an ongoing process. If such a work generates another interaction, as is the case with the film version of *The Hours*, this re-presentation only carries the process further" (Hughes 360). Hughes

opens up the topic of the connection among the three works of art and mentions a potential continuation of the cycle.

3.3 General information about the film

The film was released on 25 December 2002 in the USA and on 14 February 2003 in the UK. This work of art that was produced by Robert Fox and Scott Rudin may be perceived as a homage to Virginia Woolf and to her work. Furthermore, the fact that the film captures the effects of *Mrs. Dalloway* in the lives of other women, makes the real Virginia Woolf much more alive in today's world. Owing to the film many people re-discovered Woolf and her novels.

The film stars various famous actors and actresses in the main roles. Mrs. Woolf is played by Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore plays Mrs. Brown and Meryl Streep was chosen to play Mrs. Dalloway. It also stars Ed Harris, Jeff Daniels, John C. Riley and Toni Collette, who play important characters in the film. In terms of merit, the film received nine Academy Award nominations including the category of Best Picture and Nicole Kidman received an Academy Award for Best Actress in a leading role.

In terms of music, which is an important aspect of this film, it has been Philip Glass provided the soundtrack. The pensive music score accompanying the stories has been nominated for awards such as the Grammy Award for Best Score Soundtrack Album for a Motion Picture, Television or Other Visual Media, the Academy Award for Best Original Score and the Golden Globe Award for Best Original Score.

3.4 The contents of the film

The plot of the film stays faithful to the plot of the source novel, and there are only some minor adjustments done by Hare and Daldry. Mostly, the changes concern the feelings of the characters and their demonstration. There are some scenes and characters (Mary Krull) that have been omitted from the film and on the other hand, there are scenes that have been changed in some way for the film adaptation.

As an example of these changes, let me mention the scene in which it is Clarissa Dalloway who goes through her complete breakdown, whereas in the book it is Louis

Waters who breaks down. There are two other major changes made for the film. First of all, in the novel, the reader understands that Laura is Richard's mother at the end, whereas in the film, the spectator is faced with this information much earlier. Secondly, in the novel, Laura goes to the hotel to read *Mrs. Dalloway* and then, she contemplates the possibility of ending her life. On the other hand, in the film, she goes to the hotel already with the intention of ending her life. All of these changes have been introduced to the film because they seem to encourage the effects on the spectator. Furthermore, the scenes have become more dramatic.

3.5 *The analysis of the film in terms of its topics*

First of all, the film presents a story about making choices, the difficulty of making them, and their eventual outcome. In each of the stories we come across some decision that has been made or that is being made. The topic of making choices and seeing the effects of one's decisions is omnipresent. What connects all of the women is the ongoing contemplation of their current life and the very close connection between life and death. In all three stories, there is the omnipresent idea of suicide and of leaving the world.

The next topic interweaving the stories is sexuality. Based on Cunningham's model, the characters represent some kind of sexually ambiguous personalities or personalities that are questioning their sexual awareness. In each story, there is a kiss or a physical attachment going on that seems to represent a very important moment, some kind of revelation or epiphany. Almost all of these moments are same-sex attachments.

Another subject that the film tries to capture is the inability of happiness. In connection to this, Leavenworth says that "the distrust in happiness and thoughts about the essentially solitary nature of human existence also surfaces in all three plotlines" (Leavenworth 510). We could connect this to existential despair and the sense of alienation of the characters.

The following theme is the role of literature in people's lives and its possible influence upon the reader. It is both reading and writing that are being discussed. And when speaking more generally, it is necessary to note that it is not just pure literature that is treated in the film but also the relationship between life and art is shown. In

addition, there is a connection between art and the secret second lives of the main characters. All of them escape in some way by creating and being creative. Art helps them to construct their own universes in which they could be happy. Last but not least, the film adaptation tries to capture "the moment" as vividly as the novels do.

3.6 *Interconnectedness of the characters and the visual effects*

Many critics have said that the film was a daring act in terms of film industry, as films do not usually capture feelings or are not able to catch them. The source novel of this film is full of scenes capturing the inner lives of the characters. Many feared that the film would not be successful in presenting them. "Carol Iannone has noted that the modernist fiction of Virginia Woolf has never seemed especially suitable for translation into film" (50). The interior monologues, the flashbacks, and personal reflections present challenges to any director" (Leavenworth 504).

On the other hand, the editing effects of the film help to show the interconnection among the characters in a better way than the novel is capable of. This fact is highlighted in "From Page to Celluloid: Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*" – an analysis written by AbdelRahman. This article mentions many visual effects used in the film to connect the stories of the three women.

[...] flowers are used as visual clues to attain the organic unity between the three story lines. In the same vein, the link between Laura and Virginia Woolf is indicated through the similar flowery outfits they wear, as is the link between Clarissa and Woolf stressed through similar earrings. The fact that young Richie Brown is the grown-up Richard is visually foreshadowed by the similarity between the former's bedspread (with rockets and astronauts), and the latter's dressing gown. More visual links are indicated through repetition and montage, beginning one activity, such as washing a face or combing hair or looking into a mirror, starting in one of the parts of the triptych, moving through another, then ending with the third. The effect of this interwoven narrative is

further enhanced through the Philip Glass's accompanying music, which does not show any kind of variation in relation to the distinct story lines. (AbdelRahman 156)

A connection that the article does not mention is the fact that at the beginning of the film, the partners of all the heroines – Dan, Leonard and Sally, are all coming home in the morning. The scenes present the heroines lying in their beds and, their partners are presented afterwards when they come home. Dan arrives in his car, Leonard walks back home and Sally rushes home possibly from some night infidelity. Then, it is also the sound of the alarm clock that connects the ladies. In all of the stories, we hear the ringing of it and follow all the women waking up.

One of the most prominent connections among the women that has been added to the film might be the flowers that are present in all of the stories, both in the outfits and in the vases. It is evident with Virginia who is wearing a dress with a floral pattern, Laura who has her housewear, also with flowers, and Clarissa wearing her pyjamas with almost invisible flowers on them. In all of the three stories, there are vases with flowers present as well. The meaning of the flowers in the film appears to be much more complex and complicated than just being a simple decoration on the set. What also connects the women is the fact that they do not have any intimate moments with their partners. All of them share their intimate moments with someone else, except for Clarissa sharing an intimate moment with her partner at the end of the film.

To conclude in terms of the interconnection, it is possible to say that the three women represent three parts of one single story. They create a universe presenting one soul, a soul that is composed of three pieces.

While there is a necessity to connect the stories, there is also the necessity to distinguish the stories. This is illustrated by the usage of different colours in the film in the three sections that represent each of the women. Their episodes are shown with a difference in colour tonality. "The film visually illustrates that we are following the destinies of three women. The England of 1941 and 1923 is sepia tinted, the Los Angeles of 1951 is represented in bright colors, whereas twenty-first-century New York is depicted in plain, realistic hues" (Leavenworth 504). This distinction among the stories does not only enhance that the stories take place in a different period, but also

distinguishes the nuances among them in terms of the atmosphere and mood. The choice of the different colours is going to be further explained in the following chapters.

4 Mrs. Woolf

4.1 Presentation of the character in the context of the three works

The story about Mrs. Woolf (played by Nicole Kidman) is set in Richmond. Even though the film tries to follow one single day in the lives of the women, in this case, the story takes place on the day that Virginia starts writing her new novel in 1923 and then, on the day of her suicide in 1941.

The character is based upon the real existing personality of Virginia Woolf. Nonetheless, there have been personality features that have been introduced into the film as more important than the others. On the other hand, some aspects of her personality have been completely omitted. Therefore, a fictionalized personality of Virginia Woolf has been born. Many claim that the Woolf Daldry presents is a fairly different one from the real author.

Woolf's family was afraid of the public perception as they feared that the majority of people would take Daldry's concept as a description of the real Virginia. However, Daldry himself said, "we never wanted to impersonate or imitate Virginia Woolf but find our own Virginia Woolf that was right for us and right for Nicole [Nicole Kidman]" (Daldry *Three Women in The Hours* DVD). The main concern of Woolf's family was that people would perceive Woolf as an unhappy, depressed and mentally unstable person as she is presented in the film. There, her positive side is abandoned. Nevertheless, Lee says in Woolf's biography that the author was amusing and people loved her presence because she was a sociable person that everyone laughed with.

Moreover, the film presents her as an artist who is very detached from ordinary life. She is almost angry when being disturbed in her work by everyday activities like choosing lunch or even eating. Lorraine Sim further confirms this by saying:

In *The Hours* Virginia Woolf is presented as being disengaged from mundane routines and her everyday surroundings, and resentful of her domestic responsibilities as mistress of the house. In several scenes, the everyday acts of eating and making arrangements for dinner are portrayed as interruptions to her creative endeavours and

this implies a fundamental opposition between the everyday and creativity. (Sim 62)

Also, the film makes her into a person who spends most of her time alone, and a person who goes through terrible mental health problems all of the time. According to Lee, this is not true about the real Woolf whose mental condition was not good but still, she was enjoying happy periods as well.

Besides, the film enhances the depressive aspects of her personality by setting Woolf's part in a dark, oppressive sepia-coloured tone. More precisely, her part is set into the darkest colours of all the stories. This might introduce the fact that this story is taking place in the most distant past, as well as an attempt to represent the greatest despair out of the three main characters. It might also represent her real struggle between life and death and her balancing on the edge of these two. At the end, Mrs. Woolf kills herself. Therefore, there might be a connection between the imminent presence of death and the darker colouring.

4.2 Unhappiness and dissatisfaction

Mrs. Woolf is an insane person being treated by doctors and also by her husband who tries to provide her with the best possible care. She is an artist completely immersed in the writing of her new novel. It appears to her that she has found the first sentence of the novel. The whole morning, she tries to pursue the writing in her room.

Already, at the very beginning of the film, Leonard asks Virginia if she has had any breakfast, and says that they should have lunch together. He seems to communicate with her more like a doctor than as a husband. There is a certain detachment between the two of them; they do not touch, and the physical closeness is missing in their relationship. To be provided with a consoling touch, she turns to her sister Vanessa. LeBlanc says in his article that "there is no physical intimacy represented in the marriage of Virginia and Leonard. The first words out of Leonard's mouth towards Virginia are not the ones of love, but instead words that show to be monitoring her as he questions her about her sleep, her headaches, and whether she has eaten" (LeBlanc128).

Many times throughout the film, there are scenes that indicate that she is deeply unhappy with the life that she is currently leading. She thinks that she is a prisoner of her life and that Richmond is a kind of prison into which she has been placed. Mrs. Woolf's despair and unhappiness arise from the fact that she is living in the suburbs of London, where she cannot live a busy life and where she is separated from her friends and the parties that are taking place in London. Her biggest desire is to go back there and to have the people and the busy city life around her.

The unhappiness Virginia lives is demonstrated mainly in two scenes; the first one being the kiss that she shares with her sister, Vanessa, and the second one being the railroad scene where an argument with Leonard takes place.

4.2.1 The kiss

The kiss happens when Vanessa and her children are about to leave Virginia's house. Virginia is desperate, because she wants Nessa to stay. Furthermore, she desires to have Vanessa's London life full of parties and cultural activities. This is what connects the real Virginia with the fictionalized one. Lee speaks about this desire in Woolf's biography as well. "I often wake up in the night and cry aloud Nessa! Nessa! Virginia wanted her, but she also wanted her life. Her depressions always fed on this as their main food" (Lee 458). Not only did she want to be in London, moreover, she wanted to have the life her sister was leading.

The kiss is presented in a different way in the novel than it is in the film. Cunningham's demonstration of the kiss is the following, "Nelly turns away and, although it is not at all their custom, Virginia leans forward and kisses Vanessa on the mouth. It is an innocent kiss, innocent enough, but just now, in this kitchen, behind Nelly's back, it feels like the most delicious and forbidden of pleasures. Vanessa returns the kiss" (Cunningham 154). The kiss in the novel seems to be more of a riot-like kiss which both of the ladies enjoy. The servant Nelly is there, near them. On the other hand, the kiss in the film is enjoyed only by Virginia. This kiss seems like a desperate call for help, whereas in the novel, it is represented as a delicious moment between the two sisters. Right before the kiss in the film, Vanessa tells Virginia that she is going to a dinner in the evening, and Virginia says with a sad look on her face that she envies her

for it. Vanessa comes closer to her, smiles and kisses her on the cheeks. This is the moment when Virginia begins to seem desperate. Unexpectedly, she approaches her sister with an almost animal-like desire which seems to indicate how desperate she is in reality.

When watching the scene, one might see that Virginia almost tries to suck Vanessa in. It is a hungry and unexpected kiss that has been called cannibalism, or a vampire's kiss, by Daldry. She tries to suck Vanessa's life in, she wants to live her life and to leave her own one, at least for a while. This is also enhanced by the sentence Virginia says when Vanessa, repulsed, withdraws herself from Virginia. She asks "You think I may one day escape?" (*The Hours* 2002) and her eyes are full of despair, hopelessness and tears. In the next few moments, Vanessa tries to escape the situation in the fastest possible pace as she is obviously not comfortable with it.

There is one other aspect that needs to be taken into consideration and that is the presence of little Anglica, the daughter of Vanessa during the kiss. She sees it and when Vanessa leaves, she stays a bit longer and keeps eye-contact with Virginia. She looks as if she understood the situation completely and there is compassion in her eyes as well.

Even though many cinema-goers have understood this kiss as a clear expression of Virginia's homosexuality, and also a demonstration of an incestuous relationship with her sister, there is no sexuality in the kiss at all. While the real Virginia Woolf has been described by many as a repressed lesbian, and her relationships with women indicate that there might have been certain ones among them that were not just pure friendships, she did not like categorizations. "She [Woolf] did not define herself as a Sapphist. She could not bear to categorise herself as belonging to a group defined by its sexual behaviour (just as she didn't want to think of herself as an ordinary 'wife', or as a writer of 'novels'). She wanted to avoid all categories" (Lee 490).

What Kate Haffey says in "Exquisite Moments and the Temporality of the Kiss in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*" about the kiss is:

The kiss between Virginia and Vanessa is ultimately a moment that can't be explained, that doesn't fit neatly into narrative. Its meaning can never become clear but is instead a "manifestation of the central mystery itself, the elusive brightness that shines from the edges of certain dreams." It is full of desire, "of something not

unlike what Virginia wants from London, from life." And it is full of a love that resists description: "neither this nor that." Furthermore, this passage is full of those terms that have become associated with "the moment" in this text: "London", "life," (two words often followed in *The Hours* and *Mrs. Dalloway* by "this moment") and "anything might happen, anything at all. (Haffey 157)

To conclude upon the topic of the kiss, it is difficult to classify it into some category, but what is certain is that the moment does not indicate Virginia's lesbianism but it can be described as a moment in which the unhappiness and despair of the character are demonstrated.

4.2.2 *The railroad scene*

First of all, the scene is different from the one shown in the novel. The filmmakers decided to change it for their purposes, they had to externalize the formerly inner conflict of Virginia. AbdelRahman says:

What happens in the novel is that Leonard meets Woolf outside the station and she never tells him about her fears or her intentions of escaping to London. The conflict takes place inside her mind, and her request to move back to London comes as a mere suggestion that does not acquire the confrontational nature it has in the film. The difficulty this scene poses is a general feature of this mostly internal novel. These inner conflicts are indices proper that present the most serious challenge to the process of adaptation for the screen. [...] Hence, seeking to externalize the conflict in this particular scene – by making it occur between the two characters rather than inside one of them – becomes inevitable. (AbdelRahman 154)

In the film, Virginia escapes from her house, unnoticed by Leonard, and goes to the railroad station with the intention of fleeing to London. When Leonard discovers that Virginia is not at home, he rushes to the station as if he knew that she would be there. And then, one of the most dramatic scenes of the whole film comes. Leonard and Virginia go through a serious argument. Leonard behaves like Virginia's doctor, tells Virginia what she should do, and wants her to come back home. He says "Virginia, you have an obligation to your own sanity" (*The Hours* 2002).

Then, Virginia explodes and all the anger of living the way she does not want to live comes to the surface. She expresses her unhappiness by saying, "my life has been stolen from me. I'm living in a town I have no wish to live in. I'm living a life I have no wish to live" (*The Hours* 2002). She highlights the fact that her life is completely in the hands of her doctors who cannot know about her own condition, as she is the only possible judge of it.

In addition, there seems to have been the same problem in the life of the real Virginia Woolf as Hermione Lee says, "she was very angry and distressed by her treatment. Savage's orders to keep her out of London in 1904 met with furious objections" (Lee 184).

As the argument continues Leonard reproaches Virginia that she is ungrateful as their moving to Richmond has been done for the improvement of her poor mental condition. At that moment, one can find a connection to the real Virginia Woolf, of whose condition and treatment at one time in her life, Hermione Lee says:

She was kept in bed and had to have 'absolute rest of the intellect' and 'total inactivity'. Meanwhile she was 'overfed' with a milk diet of four or five pints daily ('taking half a pint at a time every two hours'). After seven or eight days of the milk diet she took a light lunch of a cutlet, and then, progressively, three complete meals with three or four pints of milk a day and with the additions of liquid malt-extract, cod liver oil, and beef tea. (Lee 183)

In the film, Virginia is relatively free, she can write when she wants to, she can do almost anything that she wants, but still, she is living in the country which she hates and

therefore, she is unhappy. She says to Leonard "it is time for us to move back to London" (*The Hours* 2002).

At the end of the railroad scene, Leonard agrees that they will move back to London, because Virginia insists upon this, and says that if she has a choice between living in Richmond and death, she chooses death. In Cunningham's version, this is expressed in the following way "better to die raving mad in London than evaporate in Richmond" (Cunningham 71). Leonard says, "Very well, London, then. We go back to London" (*The Hours* 2002). But then he realizes the whole impact of going back to London and has a little personal breakdown. He knows that going back to London is going to bring Virginia low once again.

4.3 *The moment of happiness*

There is no happiness as such in the story of Mrs. Woolf. As was already mentioned, the tonality of her story and the oppressive colours illustrate that this story is the one with the highest rate of despair. But still, it is possible to mention some scenes in which Virginia seemed to be living quite a pleasant moment. The first scene is when she comes to her room and begins to write. Writing as a creative activity, helps her overcome her bad moods and gets her into another world of thoughts. There she might find shelter, and therefore, might enjoy the moment.

The second moment which even brings a smile to her face is the moment when Vanessa and her children arrive. There, she seems to be the happiest. She hugs Vanessa, is energetic and even makes a joke.

At the end of the day, there comes the last moment of relative tranquility. Mrs. Woolf finds herself seated with Leonard near the fireplace. They talk about her work on *Mrs. Dalloway* and right at that moment, it looks as if they were resolved, as if they were fine. When we compare this scene to the one taking place at the railroad station, the couple seems to be contented in the first mentioned scene.

Finally, when Virginia drowns herself, the letter she has left to Leonard says, "I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been" (*The Hours* 2002). Therefore, a moment of happiness might be the revelation that her husband has been the

best husband that she could ever have had, and that they have lived periods of happiness together.

Moreover, Virginia's happiness is located in London in the past; it is her memories that allow her be happy in her thoughts. When she forces her servant Nelly to go for ginger to London and Nelly does not seem happy about going there as she is in the process of completing her lunch, Virginia says to her, "I can't think of anything more exhilarating than a trip to London" (*The Hours* 2002).

To sum up, Virginia does not have one distinct moment of real happiness, but she has a few moments when she seems contented and when she is able to escape her mental illness at least for a while.

4.4 *Failure*

At the end of the film Virginia commits suicide because she is no longer able to continue living. Thus, it can be said that she has failed in terms of sanity, in terms of her mental health. As she mentions at the railroad station, there is the constant threat of self-extinction that she has to face. Finally, she finds it impossible to fight the constant battles with her health and decides to finish her suffering, and also Leonard's suffering as she thinks that she annoys him with her problems.

Hare uses the letter that Woolf left for Leonard before she killed herself as a magnificent voiceover for the beginning of the film. It is the prologue when Virginia kills herself. In this real letter that Woolf has written to say goodbye to her husband, she says that she hears voices and thinks that she is going mad again, and that this time she is not going to be able to escape. In addition, Virginia's minor failure that is stressed in the film might be the inability to communicate with the servants, as she seems afraid of them and they make fun of her.

4.5 *Liberation*

First of all, it is possible to say that Virginia finds three kinds of liberation. The first one is the kiss that has already been mentioned. This kiss makes her escape from her own unhappy universe. For a moment, she finds herself in the life of her sister. The

second kind of liberation or escape is writing. She flees to the lives of her characters and there leads her secret life. The last type of liberation that she chooses for herself is the suicide that she commits at the end of the film. For sure, death represents mainly a release from the illness. Maureen Sheehan says that "...it seems that Virginia's suicide is an escape from intolerable pain" (Sheehan 417).

Levenson finds an interesting connection among the three works of art when he says, "despite her productivity, the persistent elegance and merriment of her style – Mrs. Woolf still felt – as Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith had felt – an urge towards death" (Levenson 12). This argument seems logical because it was Septimus whose story was inspired by Woolf's life and Clarissa from *Mrs. Dalloway* thinks about death as well.

In the film, we see her contemplation of death for the first time when she stays with Angelica in the garden and they look together at the dead bird. This makes her think about the escape which death represents. She feels for the bird, and the ultimate solution of the suicide comes across her mind. Angelica asks her aunt, "what happens when we die?" (*The Hours* 2002). This is the moment when Virginia begins to think seriously about death. After Angelica leaves, Virginia cries at the sight of the bird and stays alone with it for a moment to contemplate all of the experiences that she has gained throughout these last moments.

5 *Mrs. Brown*

5.1 *Presentation of the character in the context of the three works*

Mrs. Brown (played by Julianne Moore) is the only new character brought by Cunningham into his novel. But still, there is the connection between Woolf and Cunningham in terms of Mrs. Brown. In 1923, Woolf wrote an essay called "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" in which she presents a character called Mrs. Brown.

Cunningham said in the above mentioned article for Metro Weekly, "I feel like some of the closeness between my mother and me resembled the closeness that exists between prisoners in a jail cell. [...]' Years later, his observations of his mother's predicament would significantly influence his characterisation of housewife Laura Brown in *The Hours*". Thus, it was Cunningham's mother who inspired the birth of Laura Brown for *The Hours*.

In the film, his new character is presented once again on two days; the first one being the day when she decides to change her life and then, the second one being the evening many years later when her son dies.

Laura Brown is a pregnant housewife living in Los Angeles in 1951 with her husband Dan and her son Richie. At first sight, her story might seem disconnected from the other two stories. Nevertheless, her story is highly connected with them. The first connection being her reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* which connects her with Mrs. Woolf. The second connection is that she is the mother of little Richie who is later revealed as the adult Richard with whom Clarissa Dalloway shares an important moment in her life.

In terms of the colour usage, Mrs. Brown's story is presented in bright colours which might lead one to think that the heroine is a happy and satisfied person, which Laura is not.

In the first scene of Mrs. Brown's story, when Dan arrives back home, there is also a sense of a mass produced look as we can observe a district of conventional housing. This enhances the critique of the society by visual means. Daldry wants to enhance the criticism of the society in terms of the conformity; not just conformity in terms of behaviour, but also conformity in terms of fashion, living and mode of life in general. The usage of the bright colours might be a sort of irony expressed by Daldry; some kind of mockery of the society. Also, there seems to be an irony in the fact that Laura Brown is the only one out of the heroines that does not enjoy real happiness with

her partner and still, it is the only story that is presented in bright colours. On the other hand, it is true that Laura's story is the only one in which life wins over death and therefore, the usage of bright colours might be a logical choice.

5.2 *Unhappiness and dissatisfaction*

Kate Haffey provides in her article called "Exquisite Moments and the Temporality of the Kiss in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*" a suitable definition of Laura. According to her, "Laura is almost a caricature of a depressed American housewife" (Haffey 150). She has a beautiful house, a loving husband, a sweet little boy and is pregnant with another baby. All this should be leading to a representation of a happy woman. Her life seems to be a happy one on the surface, but Laura is not satisfied and suffers a lot on the inside. All the time, she tries to pretend that she is fine.

However, she is very much unhappy. Kristen Holm says, "Laura is struggling with severe feelings of depression and worthlessness" (Holm 80). That is exactly the problem, Laura seems to be depressive and thinks of herself as useless. Also, she seems to be a victim of the patriarchal society. She has accepted all the conventions of the society, but is now deeply unhappy in the life that she is living. She perceives her life as trivial and possibly hates it. One can say that as Richmond is a prison to Mrs. Woolf, the beautiful house and the family in Los Angeles is a prison to Laura.

She is imprisoned by society itself and by its conventions. "Becoming a mother was a decision made for her by the conventions of the time in which she lived, a world dominated by men in general [...]" (Brody 25). In her times, the conventions were no longer so strong and demanding, as in the case of Virginia Woolf, but we can still see that she could not have made the choice of the life that she wanted to live. She was obliged to choose the life that was "ordinary, conventional, normal" and above all prescribed by society itself.

The acceptance of the conventions brings her to the point where she should have accepted the obligations that she had towards her family as well. Even though, she is obviously suffocating in her life, she tries to represent the image of a good wife, to present obedience. An example of her complete obedience is when Dan leaves to go to work and she waves to him from the window. She pretends to be fine and to enjoy her

life. But then there is a moment, which Dan cannot notice, but a viewer is able to comprehend its meaning. Dan is already concentrating on his driving when Laura changes her expression and obviously, this is not the look of a happy housewife. The expression shows a kind of wrath and mostly sorrow. There is also unfulfilment in the expression.

The next example of her obedience to the rules and to the game of society is the moment when she and Richie are preparing a party for Dan. She says, "I'm gonna make a cake, that's what I'm going to do" (*The Hours* 2002). Although, Richie is present in the kitchen, it does not seem that she wants to convey the information to him. It is more of an attempt to persuade herself that baking a cake is the best thing to do and a thing that she should do as well.

Moreover, an example of her falling apart and at the same time of an attempt to keep herself together, is the moment when she goes to the hotel and leaves Richie at Mrs. Latch's. She says goodbye to the little boy, smiles at him and then goes to the car. During the way to the car, she falls apart completely. This is one of the most important moments of Laura's story. It shows exactly how she is feeling. She wants to quit her life in which she is unhappy, but on the other hand, it is not an easy thing to do because of many aspects.

Most importantly, the moment which is the most significant in terms of Mrs. Brown's destiny is the moment at the end of the day. She is in the bathroom, sitting in the toilet, and her husband is talking to her from the bed. She cries, falls apart and decides to leave the family. Meanwhile, she is still able to communicate with Dan in a voice that does not construct any doubts about her not being fine. Furthermore, there is not only a sharp contrast in the moods and thoughts of the two characters, but there is also an atmosphere that enhances despair. "Dan is in bed waiting for Laura, while she is in the bathroom sitting, "in an attitude of abject despair" (112), on the closed toilet seat, crying and unable to move. The contrast between the dark bathroom and the relatively lit bedroom helps to establish the mood and deepens the effect of disparity" (AbdelRahman 160). The contrast between Dan and Laura, the contrast between her obedience, and at the same time her falling apart play a major role in showing Laura's desperation.

A possible explanation of Laura's unhappiness is also the fact that she might be a closeted lesbian. Although, her sexuality is quite shrouded with mystery, one might

understand from some scenes that this might be a possible answer to why she is unhappy. Many critics and spectators have immediately declared that Laura is presented as a lesbian. However, as in the case of Virginia Woolf this is not hinted at by the film. The moment of the kiss does not say that she is necessarily a lesbian.

The kiss that she shared with Kitty could be classified more as an attempt to console Kitty, who falls apart because of the surgery that she is going to undergo. Kate Haffey says the following about the kiss, "they are both afflicted and blessed, full of shared secrets, striving every moment. They are each impersonating someone. They are weary and beleaguered; they have taken on such enormous work. Kitty lifts her face, and their lips touch. They both know what they are doing" (Haffey 151). Both of them desire a caring touch, Kitty seems to be desperate and Laura wants to console her, so she provides her with a thoughtful and caring kiss. She says to Kitty, "just forget about Ray [Kitty's husband]" (*The Hours* 2002). When the kiss is over, there comes a difficult moment for Laura. Kitty stands up and prepares herself to leave. The connection that the two women formed a moment ago is therefore completely denied by Kitty in a single second.

The scene when Kitty is at Laura's house also provides us with one more moment that further illustrates the desperate situation of Laura. Kitty asks her about the book that she is reading; and about its contents. Laura says that the book is about a woman who wants to give a party and who seems to be fine on the surface, but on the other hand, she is not fine at all. Thus comes the moment when Laura projects herself into Mrs. Dalloway. She connects herself with her, and she feels the same way. She seems to be fine on the surface, but on the inside, she is completely broken.

And right after this scene Laura breaks down and decides to change things. She cries when Kitty leaves. Richie is a witness to the whole situation with the kiss and he may understand the situation as well as Angelica did in the story of Mrs. Woolf. He watches Laura with a look that promises compassion and love. Nevertheless, she shouts at him and goes to the kitchen to throw the cake out. Then, she bakes a new one, prepares herself to go to the hotel with a bag full of pills and leaves the house in a completely perfect state. Again, we can see her desperate need to show the surface perfection.

5.3 The moment of happiness

In the case of Laura, it is not possible to speak about a moment of happiness as there is no moment of real happiness in her story. Laura does not connect with her husband and does not live a moment in which she would smile or even laugh. Although the colours in her section are bright and optimistic, she is an unhappy and depressed person.

However, a sort of a happy moment that Laura goes through is when Richie sifts the flour for the cake when they decide to prepare the cake together. They both watch the flour fall into the bowl and they seem to connect; to be contented and happy at least for a moment.

5.4 Failure

Laura thinks herself a failed housewife and a mother. To illustrate her failure in terms of a housewife, there is the example of the disappointment with the cake. She tried to bake a cake for Dan and she failed. The cake did not come out the way she wanted it to come out. The feeling of having failed is further enhanced by the fact that Kitty arrives and laughs at how horrible the cake looks.

In this scene, we can also see the dramatic difference between Kitty and Laura. Kitty is wearing prominent make-up, and her dress is colourful. On the other hand, Laura is dressed in her nightgown, she does not wear make-up, and therefore seems very pale. This might be a metaphor for having lost her life, her energy, and her motivation to live. She also failed in terms of persuading to hold herself together in order to represent the happy mother. She feels that she can no longer continue like that even though she has tried very hard and that she still wants to try, in a way. Therefore, she decides to go to the hotel and to change something.

5.5 Liberation

Laura escapes from her own life into the one of Clarissa Dalloway, the heroine of the book that she is reading. This sort of behaviour might be called "bovarysm" which

can be defined as fleeing one's life by reading stories of other people. Laura's reading might also be called her second life, in which she can be creative, and in which she can pursue her dreams and be herself. Her reading is also a sort of breaking free from the conventions. It helps her to get somewhere else, to live the life of someone else, and to connect with the character as well. She enjoys reading the novel, and therefore, it is possible to say that the moments she spends by reading are the ones that she finds pleasant, and that liberate her from the burden of her own life.

However, her biggest and eventual liberation is contemplating her own life and death. First of all, Laura grabs her pills and decides to kill herself. She drops Richie off at Mrs. Latch's. Richie screams when his mother leaves as if he knew what she wanted to do; it is a sort of presentiment. When Laura arrives at the hotel room, she seats herself upon the bed, and there is a moment of complete silence. This is the only moment of the whole film where even the music stops and there is a mere silence. This might be taken as an enhancement of the purity and graveness of that moment.

In the hotel, Mrs. Brown reads *Mrs. Dalloway*, more precisely, she reads the part in which Clarissa questions death, "Did it matter, then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably, cease completely, all this must go on without her..." (*The Hours* 2002). This connects her to the story of Virginia Woolf, as the two women are at the edge of thinking about death. Then, the spectator sees Virginia decide that Clarissa is not going to die in the novel, and at the same time it is also Laura who decides not to kill herself. Moreover, she finds herself unable to do so. There is a strong moment of connection between the two of them. Laura lies in the hotel bed and there is water coming from the floor. She begins to be covered completely with it. This might represent a metaphor of Virginia's death by drowning. Then, the scene shifts to Virginia deciding not to kill Clarissa and Laura sits on the bed crying, and strokes her belly.

Afterwards, she contemplates a range of choices that one's life presents and realizes that it depends only upon her as to which one she is going to choose. The following part of the novel describes this scene very well:

Still, she is glad to know (for somehow, suddenly she knows) that it is possible to stop living. There is comfort in facing the full range of options, in considering all your choices, fearlessly and without guilt.

She imagines V.W., virginal, unbalanced, defeated by the impossible demands of life and art, she imagines her stepping into a river with a stone in her pocket. Laura keeps stroking her belly. It would be as simple, she thinks, as checking into a hotel. It would be as simple as that. (Cunningham 152)

Then, Laura leaves the hotel and comes back for Richie who is happy to see her again but is still shocked and says, "Mommy, I love you" (*The Hours* 2002).

In the evening, after the party for Dan, Laura is already decided that she is going to leave her family after her second child is born. The scene that has already been mentioned comes, and that is the scene when Laura is in the bathroom and Dan in their bedroom. Hence, the choice Laura makes is the choice to stay alive. She decides not to kill herself. On the other hand, she chooses to live and to live the life that she wants. Therefore, she leaves her family and moves to Canada where she works in a library. At the end of the film, when Clarissa and Laura confront each other, she says to Clarissa that staying with her family would equal death and that she wanted to live. She escapes from her family to maintain her sanity. A paradox of the story is that she was the one in her family who initially wanted to kill herself. In the end, she is the only one who survived; all of the other members are dead. The fact that she outlived her whole family seems to represent a contrast.

6 *Mrs. Dalloway*

6.1 *Presentation of the character in the context of the three works*

Clarissa Vaughan, (played by Meryl Streep) nicknamed Mrs. Dalloway, is the heroine of the story taking place in 2001. Clarissa was called Mrs. Dalloway by her friend and love of her life Richard Brown. The connection of the character to the other two works is quite obvious as originally Clarissa Dalloway is the heroine of the eponymous novel written by Woolf. However, the Clarissa Dalloway that Cunningham presents in his novel and Daldry in his film, is a different person. The aspect that she shares with the original character is the fact that both of them prepare a party.

Clarissa is a middle-aged lesbian living in New York with her partner Sally, and having a daughter called Julia. Maureen Sheehan says that "Clarissa is presented to us as the most well balanced of the three principal female characters" (Sheehan 418). She is the only one who seems to be living the life she wants to live.

In addition, Clarissa is living in a period when expressing one's sexuality is no longer a big issue and when people no longer want to categorize themselves that much which gives her the freedom that Virginia and Laura could not have. Susan L. Brody says:

All of the people in her (Clarissa) life appear able to express themselves as individuals based on their personal natures and personalities, rather than on gender concepts which society imposes upon them. In this regard, Clarissa V. appears to be living in an almost "genderless" world, one recognizing that gender roles are societal, not biological, and that humans have vast personal potential, irrespective of their sex. (Brody 33)

Contrary to the other stories, Clarissa's story is taking place on just one single day, there are no other days but the day of the party that she is preparing for Richard.

In terms of the colours, her story is presented in plain, almost grey-like colours. The shaded and desaturated colours and the cold light might represent the fact that there is death present in her story and moreover, this might also represent the imminent presence of the past; of the memories that are gone forever and that cannot be revived.

6.2 *Unhappiness and dissatisfaction*

Clarissa's life is, along with the life of Laura, another one that should be appreciated and enjoyed by the heroine, but it is not. Underneath the surface, there lie some layers of her life that prevent her from living a completely happy life. But still, "she is the only character in *The Hours* with a career – unavailable to, but envisioned by Virginia; dreamed about and questioned by Laura. In this regard, Clarissa V. is truly independent and able to express her individuality" (Brody 23). She can live in a lesbian relationship which the two other women would certainly not. She could have had her child born without knowing her father.

James Shiff says, "although Cunningham's Clarissa Vaughan is free to live openly as a lesbian, her interior life is nevertheless plagued by similar regrets and uncertainties about decisions she has made" (Shiff 368). And that is one of the problems that Clarissa is facing. She has to face the fact that the decisions that she has made were probably not the right ones.

Her main problem is the fact that she inhabits her past and does not value her current life enough. She inhabits the past that she shared with Richard; the one and only summer experience she had with him. The argument that Clarissa is not living and appreciating the present moment, and that she is more located in the past and trying to sustain her memories, might be supported by Michael LeBlanc's comparison with the presence of the flowers in all of the three stories, and mostly in Clarissa's. He says the following about the flower usage in his article that appeared in *Camera Obscura* and is called "Melancholic Arrangements: Music, Queer Melodrama, and the Seeds of Transformation in *The Hours*":

The flower bouquet is an apt metaphor for melancholia (especially Clarissa's particular fixation) because the flowers are in their full bloom, the peak of their glory and beauty, but they are already cut from their roots, consigned to a premature separation from the plant body that provides sustenance, regeneration, and reproductive purpose. A cut flower embodies its own end through the incorporation of loss, carried in the void at the end of the stem.

Perhaps this is why cut flowers are a fitting accompaniment for funerals and gravestones. (LeBlanc 117)

Clarissa's unhappiness arises from the feeling that her moment of happiness has already passed and is never going to come back. When she reflects on her happiness with her daughter Julia, she explicitly mentions that her happiness was exactly in the moment that was spent with Richard, and that in precisely that moment she saw the sense of possibility. Moreover, she adds that only with Richard does she still feel alive.

LeBlanc takes a moment from the film when Clarissa watches herself in the mirror as a reflection of all this and leads us to an interesting conclusion; that not only did Clarissa live in the past, moreover, she was unable to understand that she should move on and that her youth is never coming back. "There is something in her reflection with which Clarissa is not satisfied, a distance between what she wants to see in the mirror and what is actually there. At this moment, we get our first clue into Clarissa's melancholia: she has not yet come to terms with the loss of her youth" (LeBlanc 115). At the present moment, she thinks that everything is wrong. Her life seems trivial to her. She feels more like a mediocre middle-aged lady who questions her present life and its value. Moreover, she takes care of Richard who is in the state of living with AIDS, and this does not help her to move on. Nevertheless, a parallel with the story of Virginia appears; she takes care of Richard as Leonard did with Virginia.

It is also Richard himself who enhances in Mrs. Dalloway the feeling of triviality when he says that according to him, Clarissa is only escaping her own life by taking care of him, and not of herself and her own life. He asks her about her present life, also about Sally, and her triviality is mostly strengthened by him when he says, "oh, Mrs. Dalloway – always giving parties to cover the silence" (*The Hours* 2002). By saying it, Richard triggers the first moment of stress and unhappiness in Clarissa's mind. Until this moment, Clarissa is held perfectly together. Then, when Clarissa comes home, she contemplates her life and the issues she has been discussing with Richard. After some time, Sally comes home and they talk. During the conversation, they are both located in different rooms, therefore, they shout at one another and moreover, there is no touch between them at all. They seem as well as Virginia and Leonard do, disconnected.

Then, the connection with *Mrs. Dalloway* and Clarissa is shown. There is a scene when Mr. Dalloway comes back home with a bunch of flowers and wants to tell his wife that he loves her. In the case of Sally in *The Hours*, there is a similar idea. Sally comes home with a bunch of flowers and wants to give them to Clarissa but she fails to do so. This might be perceived as a demonstration of a broken communication. As with the other women, it is also Clarissa who does not share intimate moments with her partner but with someone else. In Clarissa's case, it is with Richard that she shares her intimate moments. However, contrary to the other stories, in the end, she gets to share her private moments with her partner.

The last scene that expresses how much Clarissa is desperate is the one when Louis, an ex-boyfriend of Richard, who flies from San Francisco to participate in the party, goes to visit Clarissa during the preparations for the event. The two of them talk about the past, and about the summer they spent together in a threeway relationship with Richard. Louis says to Clarissa that he has been back to Wellfleet, the house where they spent that summer. She says to Louis, "you're courageous to dare, to visit, what I mean is to face the fact that we have lost those feelings forever" (*The Hours* 2002). She loses her balance and breaks down at the thought that the feelings they had are lost forever.

6.3 *The moment of happiness*

In the case of Clarissa, it is necessary to mention the beginning of her day. There, one can see the three women and their facial expressions. They look into a mirror, and they are thinking about what they will wear. There is a moment when Clarissa is standing next to the window in her pyjamas and looks out. She opens the curtains and sees the potential of the new day. She seems happy and confident. This also continues in the scene when she goes flower shopping. At the florist's, she exclaims, "oh, flowers! What a beautiful morning!" (*The Hours* 2002). Then, there is a clear moment of happiness that she contemplates often and that is mentioned more than once by herself throughout the film, and by the other characters as well. As was already mentioned, Virginia and Laura did not have a distinct moment of happiness; there were some moments that they enjoyed but certainly these cannot be classified as real happiness.

On the other hand, Clarissa carries in her mind a moment from her past when she felt real happiness flowing in her veins. Cunningham describes this moment in *The Hours* as follows:

What lives undimmed in Clarissa's mind more than three decades later is a kiss at dusk on a patch of dead grass, and a walk around a pond as mosquitoes droned in the darkening air. There is still that singular perfection, and it's perfect in part because it seemed, at the time, so clearly to promise more. Now she knows: that was the moment, right then. There has been no other. (Cunningham 98)

Clarissa loves that moment because it seemed to open all the possibilities in one's life and to promise happiness and much more of it. For Clarissa, it is a moment when she felt life at its core. She talks about this moment with Richard himself, with Julia and with Louis as well. The fact that she mentions the kiss quite often might indicate how important this moment is for Clarissa.

In addition, her happiness might also lie in the fact that she is able to make decisions, to make choices, and to decide for herself without the obligation to confide her decision to someone else. Brody says, "Clarissa V. alone is at the helm of her life's journey. She has been able to make choices about the intellectual, professional, personal, and emotional aspects of her life, and as a result she is stronger and mentally healthier than either Virginia and Laura" (Brody 35). Moreover, Virginia and Laura both struggle with not belonging properly into the heteronormative society, where it is true that to have a different sexual orientation and to speak about it openly in their times would be almost impossible or very difficult to do. "Unlike Virginia and Laura, Clarissa is openly in a committed, long-term lesbian relationship with Sally. Unlike Virginia and Laura, she does not need to steal private moments with other women; her moments are public." (Brody 14) says Susan L. Brody. Therefore, this might be conceived as an attempt to show evolution in terms of sexuality that happened during these periods.

6.4 Failure

Clarissa can sense failure in her life as well as the other heroines do. She begins to realize her failure thanks to Richard. She failed to have the life that she wanted, and she desired to stay with Richard and to try to fight for him and for his love. Finally, she gave it up and found herself unable to fight for it anymore. So, she stayed with Richard in her own way; she got stuck in her youth, in the moment with Richard and in her memories. Therefore, she is unable to move on with her life. LeBlanc says, "Clarissa also has concealed sources of grief: her stated reason for melancholia is because she is stuck in a moment of youth and happiness with Richard" (LeBlanc 123). She realizes that she was happy with Richard and that she is unable to value her current life because she stayed in her past. The relationship she had with him has characteristics of the relationship that Clarissa had with Peter Walsh in *Mrs. Dalloway*. It was also a relationship that both wanted but that could not have been pursued because it was reason that played a major role in their decisions.

One parallel might be made between the stories of Clarissa and Laura. Clarissa throws out the crab thing after Richard is dead and after everything is changed. Laura throws out her cake that did not come out nicely in the same way. In both cases, it seems to be a realization of what happens in their lives and as a symbolism for new beginnings as well. For Clarissa, it is the moment of parting with Richard and with the life she could have had with him and coming to terms with her own life.

6.5 Liberation

Clarissa's first escape is into daydreaming; she contemplates the kiss with Richard and thinks about it quite often during the day. Hence, it is the memories that provide her with liberation from the burden of what she is living right now.

The eventual liberation that Clarissa goes through and that helps her to move on with her life seems to be triggered and connected to the destiny of someone else. This other person is Richard, and the trigger is his death. When he dies, Clarissa seems liberated, however cruel this might sound. Once again, it opens up the connection with Mrs. Woolf's story. It connects to the scene when Virginia speaks with her husband and he asks her why someone has to die in her novel. Her answer is that the presence of death is necessary for the other people to understand the real value of life. That is

exactly what happens in Clarissa's story. The suicide of Richard is essential for Clarissa to see that a part of her life is closed and it helps her enormously to continue and to come to terms with her life. LeBlanc says:

In order for Clarissa to move on from her fixation on the heterosexual romance of her youth manifested in Richard, the film implies that Richard must be sacrificed. This is suggested in part by the fact that it is only after Richard dies that Clarissa is finally able to show affection to her lesbian partner, Sally. In a passionate kiss that mirrors the queer gestures of Virginia and Laura, those transgressive kisses are resignified in the present moment (fittingly, in the city, rather than the suburbs) as finally having that desired effect of mourning heterosexual losses through homosexual erotics. (LeBlanc 133)

Clarissa's destiny is resolved. Richard's mother Laura Brown comes to Clarissa's apartment and they talk about Richard and about Laura's life. In that scene, Laura does the majority of talking. On the contrary, Clarissa just listens to Laura. This seems to be contradictory to the larger part of the film, because Laura is mostly presented as a shy person who even makes mistakes when she speaks. On the other hand, Clarissa is mostly presented as an open person. This fact might lead us to think that Laura has moved on from her despair in her life and is now fine. The two of them discuss motherhood and the difference in their conceptions of it. Laura had children, but abandoned them, whereas Clarissa wanted her child so much that she underwent an artificial insemination.

When comparing the other two stories with the story of Clarissa, we can see that the ending of this one is different from the previous two; Clarissa's story ends happily. She finally settles in her current life, and in the end, shares a private moment with her partner Sally.

7 Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to introduce and analyse the concept of liberation that is presented in the film *The Hours*. The exploration of the main characters in terms of their problems, their unhappiness and failure was therefore a necessary means to understand the kind of liberation that each of the characters has chosen.

First of all, it is important to say that the three women characters presented have to face important life decisions. They all have to decide how to continue. Life presents them with situations in which they have to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and assess their possibilities. The fact that all of them live in different society and different era implies that their problems and their solutions are going to be distinct. The film shows that society has an immense impact on everyone's life. It highly affects the choices that the women made. Virginia as the character located in the most distant past is the one who is suffocated by society the most, as the conventions and rules are the most strict in her times. She lives in the society where women did not play an important role in deciding about their lives. However, Laura lives in the period where women have already gained a certain independence, but still, she has to obey the rules of the society that proved to be bonding for a woman. On the other hand, Clarissa lives in the society that acknowledges a woman as a person almost wholly equal to men. Clarissa's times are the ones where liberty has become a very important issue and something taken for granted.

The choice that the three heroines are presented with, is life or death. Two characters decide to pursue the decision of staying alive. They decide to change something in their unsatisfying lives and move on. In the case of Laura Brown, the spectator is faced with her leaving her family. She starts a completely new life somewhere else as she can no longer endure the prison of her conventional life. The trigger of Clarissa Vaughan's liberation is Richard Brown's suicide. He is the love of Clarissa's life and she feels unable to separate herself from him. His suicide commences the process of understanding that the part of her life spent with him is over and that she should finally focus on her own life, on the life that she is currently leading. When Richard is dead, she understands that she can live her own life. The last character, Virginia Woolf, decides for a different kind of liberation and that is death. She finds out

that the only liberation that can help her overcome her fears and her illness is suicide. She abandons her life completely. Even though, the heroines deal with their problems in a different way, the result is the same. All of them achieve liberation of their tormented souls and finally, they are able to resolve their problems.

Death is an omnipresent topic in all of the stories and has an important impact on the lives of all of the characters. Virginia decides to liberate herself by dying, Laura Brown contemplates death as a possible solution for her problems as well, but then quits this idea and continues living. Moreover, she has to face the suicide of her son Richard Brown and death of all the other family members. Last, but not least, Clarissa Vaughan meets death when Richard kills himself.

To sum up, the three characters represent the different attitudes towards life that people might have and the differences in the choices that people make. The lives of the heroines and their choices of liberation are different, but still, they seem to form a functioning system; to create one structure that greatly resonates. *The Hours* presents all of the shades of people's feelings, and their uncertainties. The three stories give a precise image of human nature, of how people have to deal with themselves, with their feelings, presentiments and sensations. The film enhances the differences in human nature, and how varied it is.

8 Summary

Cílem této bakalářské práce bylo představit koncept vysvobození, který je jedním z hlavních témat filmu *Hodiny*. Cílem bylo analyzovat hlavní postavy filmu, a to s důrazem na otázku, jak se staví k problémům, nespokojenosti a neúspěchu. Zejména jsem se pak věnovala vysvobození, které si každá z postav vybrala.

V úvodní části práce jsme vysvětlili naše cíle a podali teoretické zasazení do kontextu filmu. Věnovali jsme se zejména definici adaptace a jejímu kontextu.

V druhé kapitole jsme se zaměřili na literární kontext filmu. Představili jsme Virginii Woolfovou a Michaela Cuhninghama; autory románů spojených s filmem. Věnovali jsme se jejich životům a zároveň i jejich literárnímu přínosu. Také jsme zmínili režiséra Stephena Daldryho a scenáristu Davida Harea, jelikož oba hráli ve vývoji filmové adaptace velmi důležitou roli. V neposlední řadě jsme též představili romány samotné; *Paní Dallowayovou* a *Hodiny*. Ve stručnosti jsme zmínili jejich děj a také se zaměřili na jejich spojitosti.

Cílem následující kapitoly bylo představit film jako takový. Zmínili jsme základní informace o filmu, seznámili jsme s tématy, která film rozvádí. Poté jsme se také zabývali rozdíly mezi románem a filmem *Hodiny*. A poslední téma, které jsme v této sekci naší bakalářské práce představili, je propojení příběhů tří hlavních hrdinek. Pokusili jsme se odhalit jejich vzájemný vztah a zároveň filmové prostředky, pomocí kterých dosáhli filmaři toho, že spojitost mezi jednotlivými příběhy ještě vzrostla oproti románové podobě *Hodin*.

Nicméně, hlavní částí této práce je část zabývající se hlavními postavami filmové adaptace a jejich hloubkovou analýzou. Naším cílem bylo analyzovat životy paní Woolfové, paní Brownové a paní Dallowayové. V každém oddíle týkajícím se jednotlivých žen jsme podali krátký popis postavy samotné, umístili jsme postavu do kontextu dvou románů a filmu a poté jsme analyzovali problémy, kterým musela každá hrdinka čelit. Nakonec jsme se věnovali průzkumu, jaké z možných řešení jednotlivé hrdinky vybraly pro vysvobození z neuspokojujících životů.

První postavou, které jsme se věnovali, byla paní Woolfová žijící ve 20. letech 20. století; Cunninghamem poupravená verze spisovatelky Virginie Woolfové. Paní Woolfová je nešťastná, jelikož žije v Richmondu, což byl víceméně venkov. Cítí se zde být odpojená od zbytku světa, chybí jí velkoměstský život – Londýn.

Paní Woolfová také trpí problémy se svým duševním zdravím, a to ji v určitém bodě jejího života vede k uvědomění si svého selhání po stránce psychického zdraví. Doktoři ji diktují, co by měla a naopak neměla dělat, což ji velice svazuje. Navíc dochází k závěru, že již není dále schopna se soustředit na svou práci, že cítí úzkost a že již dále nesnese břímě své duševní choroby. Tudíž se rozhodne skoncovat se životem a utopit se v řece poblíž jejich domu. Z dvou variant, které tedy má - život a smrt, vybírá smrt.

Co se týče momentu štěstí v případě paní Woolfové, je nemožné v jejím příběhu nějaký takový najít. Jsou zde momenty, kdy se směje nebo se cítí být relativně spokojená, ale nenajdeme v něm jeden jediný opravdový moment štěstí. Její osud není z těch šťastnějších, se kterými se můžeme ve filmu setkat. Jsou to dokonce i barvy – sépiová a užití tmavších odstínů, které byly na její části filmu použity, jež tohle potvrzují. Použití právě těchto barev může zvyšovat pocit, že její příběh je o smutku a nespokojenosti se životem.

Druhou postavou, kterou v naší bakalářské práci analyzujeme, je Laura Brownová. Je to nešťastná žena v domácnosti a zároveň matka žijící v Los Angeles padesátých let minulého století. Její život má veškeré elementy, které se pokládaly za ty, jež měly ženu tehdejší doby dělat šťastnou. Měla funkční rodinu; milujícího manžela, malého syna a další děťátko na cestě.

Nicméně, tenhle konvenční model rodiny není pro Lauru tím, co by ji zajistilo radost ze života. Má pocit, že zklamala a že nedokázala žít život, který žít chtěla. A zároveň uvnitř bojuje s tím, že nedokázala přijmout konvence společnosti své doby. Snaží se reprezentovat šťastnou hospodyňku a matku, nicméně uvnitř ví, že chce od života něco naprosto jiného.

První možností, jak se osvobodit je pro ni smrt. Odchází do hotelu a bere si s sebou nějaké prášky. Ovšem jakmile dorazí na místo, změní názor a rozhodne se, že to neudělá. Zjistí, že toho není schopná. Večer již ví, že opustí rodinu, jakmile se narodí její druhé dítě. Tím pádem si vybírá život.

Co se týče momentu štěstí v případě Laury, její situace je velice podobná situaci Virginie; ani jedna z nich nezažije moment opravdového štěstí. Mimo moment, kdy Laura vypadá docela spokojená, když Richie přesívá mouku, když pečou koláč, zdá se, že v jejím příběhu není žádný moment štěstí. Její život jí připravil mnoho výzev. Už jen odvaha, kterou musela sebrat při rozhodování o tom, jak dál se svým životem, se jeví

jako velké břímě, které musela skousnout. Smrt a stejně tak odchod od rodiny se obojí jeví jako velmi statečné skutky. Navíc je nutné zvážit, že se jedná o život ženy 50. let minulého století, jejíž život byl velmi svázán dobovými konvencemi.

O osudech prvních dvou hrdinek můžeme říct, že jsou to osudy obětí společnosti a jejich konvencí. Nemají ani jedna svobodu a možnost žít život tak, jak by ho žít chtěly. Nicméně, Laura dosáhne svého a nakonec se dokáže osvobodit z vězení svého současného života tím, že z něj jednoduše odejde. Virginia, aby se osvobodila, musí odhodit svůj nenaplňující život úplně, vybere si smrt a život tak zatratí.

Poslední analyzovanou postavou je Clarissa Vaughanová. V úvodní části o této postavě jsme zmínili pouto, které existuje mezi Paní Dallowayovou a Clarissou Vaughanovou. Clarissa žije v New Yorku roku 2001 a na rozdíl od zbylých dvou hrdinek dostala svobodu žít život, který chce. Nesvazují ji konvence tak, jako svazují Virginii a Lauru, což by z ní mělo dělat šťastnou osobu. Svůj život sdílí s partnerkou Sally, se kterou vychovala dceru Julii.

Nicméně, propojení životů těchto žen se objeví poměrně záhy, Clarissa je stejně jako ony se svým životem nespokojená. Důvodem její nespokojenosti je fakt, že udržuje své vzpomínky na jeden jediný moment štěstí natolik živoucí, že ji nedovoluje se pohnout dál ve svém současném životě. Tím momentem štěstí je pro ni polibek. Moment, který sdílela s Richardem. Navíc sní o tom, jaké by to bylo, kdyby byla s ním, a kdyby o tento život víc bojovala. Nedokáže svůj současný život v plné míře ocenit.

Narozdíl od ostatních příběhů Clarissa o svém osvobození nerozhoduje sama. To je spuštěno Richardovým rozhodnutím zabít se. Díky tomuto jeho činu je Clarissa nakonec osvobozena od svých vzpomínek a dokáže ocenit svůj současný život.

Co se týče momentu štěstí, prožije Clarissa moment opravdového štěstí, a to s Richardem. Je to ten moment, kdy se políbí. Nicméně, tento okamžik se dá považovat také za moment ne úplně šťastný, neboť Clarissu udržuje v minulosti a ona se tak nedokáže oddělit od svého mládí. Tudíž je význam tohoto polibku ve filmu rozporuplný.

V této bakalářské práci jsme se pokusili analyzovat hlavní postavy filmu *Hodiny* a poukázat na jejich odlišné postoje, jejich různorodá životní rozhodnutí. Také jsme se zmínili o prostředí, ze kterého vzešly, a jak ovlivnilo jejich životy. Zdá se, že je to společnost, co má na jejich životy velký vliv. Fakt, že každý z příběhů se odehrává v jiné době, je také nesmírně důležitý pro pochopení jednotlivých rozhodnutí.

Všudypřítomné téma smrti se prolíná všemi příběhy a má dopad na životy všech hrdinek. Ačkoli jsou jejich životy a rozhodnutí jiné, hrdinky tvoří fungující systém, jednu strukturu, která souzní. Film *Hodiny* ukazuje všechny odstíny citů, pocitů a nejistot. Příběhy hlavních hrdinek poskytují přesný obraz lidské přirozenosti. Obraz neustálé nutnosti člověka vycházet sám se sebou, se svými city, předtuchami a pocity. Film se věnuje lidské povaze. Klade důraz na to, jaká ve své podstatě je a nakolik se u každého z nás liší.

9 Abstract

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na film *Hodiny* a jeho zasazení do literárního kontextu - román *Paní Dallowayová* od Virginie Woolfové a román *Hodiny* Michaela Cunninghama. V první části se práce zabývá představením těchto tří děl a seznámením s jejich vzájemným tematickým propojením. V hlavní části práce jde však zejména o analýzu ženských postav filmu, a to především po stránce jejich nespokojenosti se životem. Všechny hlavní postavy filmu čelí rozhodnutí, jak naložit se svým dalším životem, a právě toto je tématem bádání mé práce - snaha zjistit, co konkrétní postavy vedlo k jejich životním rozhodnutím a jaké jejich rozhodnutí bylo. Cílem práce také byl neustálý průnik všech tří zmiňovaných děl.

This thesis is focused on the film *The Hours* and its literary context - the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* written by Virginia Woolf and the novel *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham. In its first section, the thesis presents the three art works and introduces their thematic connections. In the main part of the thesis, the major importance is given to the analysis of the main characters of the film, mainly in terms of their unhappiness and dissatisfaction with their lives. All of the main characters face the decisions of how to go on with their lives. The aim was to find out what led the characters to their life decisions and what the decisions were like. The goal of this work was also to sustain the connection of the three works of art all of the time.

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