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The Representation of Suicide in *The Hours*: A Comparative Analysis of *The Hours* by Cunningham (1998) and its Movie Adaptation by Daldry (2002)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the different factors contributing to the characters' decision to commit suicide in the novel *The Hours* by Cunningham (1998) and its subsequent cinematic adaptation by Daldry (2002). It argues that while the novel depicts personal as well as social and political factors at work driving the characters to this tragic decision, the film adaptation fails to fully portray the social and political aspects of this decision and instead, highlights the personal side. It concludes by stating that the three characters who are the main focus of this study (Virginia Woolf, Laura Brown, and Richard Brown) are simplified in the film restricted only to their physical and mental health issues, while the various political and social factors that have a key role in forming these problems are eliminated. Although the film causes the audience to deeply identify with the characters and engage with them emotionally by focusing on personal and emotional aspects of their lives and using certain cinematic techniques, it misses the opportunity of critique and commentary on the political and social structures that influence people's well-being and their possible subsequent tragic actions.

Keywords: Suicide, Adaptation, *The Hours*

Introduction

Suicide is a complex phenomenon that can be influenced by a variety of factors including



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psychological, philosophical, existential, social, political, cultural and economic ones (O'Connor & Pirkis, 2016; Bennett, 2017; Velasco, 2021). It is an act that often stems from deep-seated internal struggles where individuals grapple with feelings of hopelessness, despair, and a perception that life's challenges are insurmountable. These internal struggles may be influenced by various personal factors, such as mental health conditions, emotional distress, or a sense of disconnection from oneself or others. However, it is crucial to recognize that suicide is not solely an individual's internal battle. External circumstances and social pressures also play a significant role in the decision to end one's life. Social factors, for instance, can contribute to feelings of isolation, alienation, and a lack of support networks. For instance, according to Velasco (2021), the objectification of women in society and lack of understanding and respect towards women's genius, creativity, and appearance are the most important reasons why women commit suicide. Furthermore, political factors can intersect with personal and social elements, creating additional challenges that may contribute to suicidal drives. As Velasco suggests, political instability, economic hardships, limited life opportunities, or marginalization can all place a lot of pressures on individuals, increasing their vulnerabilities and exacerbating their lack of control over their lives.

Literature is one of numerous domains, including psychiatry, sociology, philosophy, and anthropology, where suicide is discussed and debated, since it is a prevalent theme in both literary and cinematic works. In fact, according to Bennett (2017), among other fields, literature is the one that examines the phenomenon of suicide most thoroughly and coherently by focusing on the lived experiences associated with it, and suggests that the representation of this phenomenon is part of the cultural aspect of suicide ideation. Therefore, examining the theme of suicide in literary and cinematic works is important to provide a thorough knowledge of this phenomenon, which can be of great help in actual lives of people. One work that explores this profound concept is *The Hours*¹, a novel written by Michael Cunningham which won the Pulitzer Prize for literature, and later adapted into a movie² directed by Stephen Daldry featuring an Oscar-winning performance by Nicole Kidman as Virginia Woolf. Both works interweave the stories of three women in different eras—Clarissa Vaughan, Laura Brown, and Virginia Woolf herself—all connected through their relationship to *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925); one of them is the writer of the book, one is reading it, and the other plays the role of the protagonist in a different setting.

By examining the representation of suicide in both the novel and the movie adaptation of *The Hours*, this research seeks to clarify the role of personal, social, and political factors in the characters' decision to end their lives. To this end, the study focuses on the three characters of Virginia Woolf, Laura Brown, and Richard Brown. The research question that guides this study

¹ All the references to this novel concern the 1998 version.

² The movie was directed by Stephen Daldry and released in 2002.



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is: What factors lead characters to commit suicide in the novel *The Hours*, and how are these ¹ factors represented in its movie adaptation? In exploring this question, this study aims to uncover the subtleties and variations in the portrayal of suicide, and to discern any discrepancies between the novel and film adaptation in their depiction of the factors driving these tragic decisions. By examining the personal, social, and political dimensions of suicide in both forms of *The Hours*, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding this sensitive topic, and also enhances our awareness of the ways in which suicide is represented in different artistic media.

Review of Literature

On the Representation of Suicide

The representation of suicide in literary and cinematic domains is a complicated and controversial issue. While some critics have argued that representation of suicide can be harmful and responsible in driving susceptible groups towards this act (Arendt, et al., 2017; Ramachandran, 2019), many others argue against this hypothesis and claim that the representation of suicide can be of help in preventing individuals from performing this action.

Andrew Bennett in his book, *Suicide Century: Literature and Suicide from James Joyce to David Foster Wallace* (2017) examines the topic of suicide as a recurrent motif in modern and twentieth-century literature. According to Bennett, literature responds to suicide as an increasingly normalized but perplexing phenomenon as a result of attention and significance it gained during the twentieth century. He challenges the idea that discussions around suicide can lead to the act among people and instead argues that contemplating and accepting suicide as an open choice (which can be achieved by its representation in literature) can be empowering and life-saving.

Likewise, Scalvini and Rigamonti (2017) defend the representation of suicide in literature and cinema in their article, and suggest that it reduces the sense of despair and alienation among individuals since they recognize the universality of the issue. While arguing that censorship and eliminating this phenomenon is far more dangerous than depicting it, they call attention to confronting one's own existential difficulties through these depictions.

Following the same thread, Josefa Ros Velasco in the book, *Suicide in Modern Literature: Social Causes, Existential Reasons, and Prevention Strategies* (2021), highlights the role of literature in promoting understanding of suicide and its potential to prevent this act through representation of this phenomenon, which fosters self-reflection on the part of readers. This book takes a socio-political approach, emphasizing the social, cultural, political, existential, and philosophical factors contributing to the suicide drive among people which can be, and are, explored in fiction to provide a more thorough understanding of this phenomenon.



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Furthermore, Ackerman (2023), in a paper, emphasizes the critical role of various media in influencing people's understanding of suicide and the importance of responsible and multi-dimensional storytelling concerning this issue. He argues that by portraying the complexities around the concept of suicide, media can portray this phenomenon in a way that it raises awareness and encourages hope among the audience.

On The Hours and its Cinematic Adaptation

A great number of research has been done on *The Hours* and its movie adaptation most of which has focused on the process of adaptation itself (Skurdal, 2004; Buriánková (2007); Grant, 2007; Michlin, 2013; Tashchenko, 2022). Through critical analysis of Michael Cunningham's novel and its cinematic adaptation, scholars have explored themes of identity, existentialism, and the human experience as well as character development and narrative features.

In her 2004 master's thesis, Skurdal (2004) focuses on the intertextuality present in the novel and the movie, tracing connections across a diverse array of texts from different literary periods. Also, Grant (2007), in a paper, discusses the adaptation of Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) into Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours* and the subsequent film adaptation. The author explores how these adaptations portray Woolf's identity and the potential consequences of simplifying her complex character. Similarly, Buriánková (2007) examined, in a Master's thesis, interconnected narratives by analyzing the concept of liberation as presented in the novel and film *The Hours*. Furthermore, Michlin (2013) explores how the film expands on the themes and narratives of Cunningham's novel and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) while analyzing the visual, musical, and narrative choices made in the film. Finally, Tashchenko (2022) examines the challenges faced by filmmakers in translating a written work into the visual medium of cinema, and how they balance fidelity to the original text with commercial success.

These studies have also analyzed the concept of suicide, only they have given it the same amount of attention as the other themes of the story. However, a number of articles have analyzed the concept of suicide in *The Hours* exclusively. For instance, Moraes et al. (2006) takes a psychological approach to the phenomenon of suicide that centers on the exploration of depression as related to suicidal behaviors depicted through the characters in the film *The Hours*. Moreover, Battisti (2015) highlights how various societal institutions and prevailing beliefs shape the interpretation of suicide, emphasizing its significance not just for the individuals contemplating it but also for those left behind. It explores the political and social dimensions of suicide in that it presents a dichotomy where one perspective emphasizes the right of the individual to end their own life, while another underscores the obligation to fulfill responsibilities to family, society, or a higher power (God or government) and sees suicide as a violation of social norms. Although informing and interesting, these studies fail to point out the various dimensions that contribute to the decision of individuals to commit suicide which



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is the focus of this study. Also, the comparative approach this study adopts in analyzing the novel and the film, reveals a new layer of understanding concerning this issue and its social and cultural significance.

Discussion

In both the novel and movie adaptation of *The Hours*, the characters' decision to commit suicide is influenced by a range of deeply personal factors. These individual struggles are woven into the narrative creating a parallel between characters. However, personal issues are not the sole reasons why characters commit, or decide to commit, suicide. A range of social, cultural and political factors are also in play which influence the decisions and actions of the three characters that are the focus of this study.

Contributing Factors to Virginia Woolf's Suicide

As stated earlier, many factors can contribute to the decision of suicide. Considering personal factors, feelings of despair, loneliness, struggling with mental illness and a sense of hopelessness are mentioned in *The Hours* in both media. For instance, In the prologue of the novel, Virginia Woolf's suicide scene is depicted with her last letter addressed to her husband as she is writing it. In that letter she mentions that she is "going mad again" and she is hearing "voices" and can't imagine to recover from that "terrible" experience (p. 6). In the movie adaptation, her voiceover recites the letter as the scene unfolds, using the audio appeal of her voice and music to emphasize the depth of personal struggle she is dealing with. The quality of her voice which is featured by exhaustion, occasional pauses, and sudden deep breaths confirms the psychological struggles which are explicitly mentioned by the voice. Woolf's inner turmoil is further emphasized by the close-up shots of her hand sometimes pausing and sometimes trembling as she is writing the letter, which suggests a loss of control, both physically and mentally. All these techniques draw the viewers closer to the character's desperation which result to their empathy. In this way the novel and its movie adaptation highlight the personal motivation that drove Virginia Woolf to her tragic decision to take her own life.

However, in this very scene, Cunningham makes several references to the second world war which might have been influential in Woolf's decision to commit suicide. The novel portrays the war as intertwined with Woolf's delusions and reflecting its impact on her mental state: "The voices murmur behind her; bombers drone in the sky, though she looks for the planes and can't see them" (p. 3). Elsewhere in the same prologue the excerpt "The headache is approaching and it seems (is she or is she not conjuring them herself?) that the bombers have appeared again in the sky" (p. 4), draws a parallel between the presence of bombers in the sky and the approaching headache, which can suggest the connection between external events and Woolf's internal experiences. Historical accounts support the notion that Woolf and her husband, being on Hitler's blacklist due to their Jewish heritage and intellectual background, lived with the fear of a potential German invasion to the extent that they even made a suicide pact in case of such an invasion (Forrester, 2015). Additionally, Woolf's involvement in anti-



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fascist activities further emphasizes the significance of the war and German invasion in worsening her mental state and affecting her decision to take her own life (Wood, 2013). Considering these, it is worth mentioning that the exclusion of this political dimension from the movie adaptation of *The Hours* may simplify Woolf's character and his decision, and overlook the context surrounding her life and works, including her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), (of which the movie is an adaptation by extension) which contains strong social and political commentaries.

Another possible factor which contributed to Woolf's dissatisfaction with life and her sense of hopelessness and hence affecting her final decision was the social structure that gives doctors full authority over the lives of their patients, no matter how discontent they are. This aspect is depicted in Cunningham's *The Hours* when Woolf contemplates the fate of Septimus Warren Smith, describing him as "someone with a touch of genius, of poetry, ground under by the wheels of the world, by war and government, by doctors" (p. 211) who must inevitably die. This sentence can be extended to Woolf herself, who is an intelligent woman of letters having experienced both war and interaction with doctors, and who feels overwhelmed by these issues and sees death as the only escape. Upon the advice of her psychiatrist and her husband's insistence, Woolf is confined to a suburb of London named Richmond, which she hates. Her discontent with rural life is further expressed through phrases such as "gently dying on a bed of roses" (p. 169), and "Better to die raving mad in London than evaporate in Richmond" (p. 71). In Daldry's version of *The Hours*, Woolf's dissatisfaction with this kind of life, which is imposed by the ideology that takes the agency of the patients away, is expressed directly. Virginia's disregard for doctors is explicitly mentioned when she refers to them as "a bunch of contemptible Victorians" (00:45:18), and through phrases such as: "I am attended by doctors, everywhere. I am attended by doctors who inform me of my own interests!" (1:20:03), as well as "only I can understand my own condition" (01:23:02). Also, the conversation between Virginia and Leonard at the train station scene (01:18:56) represents her explicit desire to die rather than remain in Richmond. She expresses her love for London but is prohibited from going there by her doctor and also by her husband, who warn that her mental illness would worsen. She expresses her frustration by saying "My life has been stolen from me" (01:21:27) and "I'm dying in this town!" (01:22:29), as well as referring to her life as a "custody" and "imprisonment". It is worth mentioning that this scene is rendered more intensely in the movie version of *The Hours* which emphasizes Woolf's recurrent thoughts about her dissatisfaction with this kind of life in the novel. Moreover, the combination of Nicole Kidman's facial expressions and her body language suggests a mixture of feelings including anger, frustration, sadness, and intolerance dominating Virginia Woolf. The constant moving of her head, shoulders, and hands while talking, her heavy breathing, her deep frown, and the touch of tear in her eyes all confirm what she says and convey these complicated feelings in the best possible way. All this along with several close-up shots (figure 1), draw the audience closer to this character resulting in their identification.



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Woolf's frustration with patriarchal society can be seen as another factor that contributes to her decision to take her own life. In her reflections on her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), as represented by Cunningham, Woolf criticizes male writers who focus on topics such as war and religion by which they exert their oppressive power on society, while overlooking the significance of seemingly mundane aspects of life:

Men may congratulate themselves for writing truly and passionately about the movements of nations; they may consider war and the search for God to be great literature's only subjects; but if men's standing in the world could be toppled by an ill- advised choice of hat, English literature would be dramatically changed. (pp. 83-84)

In another scene of the novel, when Woolf observes her nephew, Quentin, holding a dead bird and laughing at Angelica, she interprets it as a symbolic representation of men holding power over life and death and laughing at women's experiences: "Even now, in this late age, the males still hold death in their capable hands and laugh affectionately at the females" (p.119). This may suggest that in a society dominated by men, their aggressive and repressive behavior reinforces patriarchal norms, leading women to feelings of madness and, in extreme cases, suicide. This perspective aligns with the insights shared by Gilbert and Gubar (1979/2020) in their book *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. They argue that in a patriarchal society governed by male-oriented norms, madness becomes a label used to silence women who dare to challenge these norms, often leading to their confinement in institutions controlled by men such as asylums. In the novel, there is also an analogy between Woolf's horrible headaches and the patriarchal oppression which "colonize her" and occupy her whole existence. She refers to her headaches as "undeniably masculine" (p. 71), explicitly showing the extent to which she blames her mental state to the existing patriarchal dominance. Moreover, elsewhere she uses male subject pronoun as she refers to her headaches as a devil: "the devil is many things but he is not petty, not sentimental" (p. 167). Her dissatisfaction with patriarchal values can also be traced back to her domestic life since she refers to her husband as "a constable or proctor, a figure of remonstrance" (p. 170) given that it is Leonard Woolf who holds Virginia where she resents, making her feel imprisoned.

The movie points to this patriarchal dominance predominantly through conversations between Virginia and Leonard showing his bossiness through scenes where he checks on what Virginia eats and where she goes, particularly the scene where Virginia asks for his permission to go for a walk to which Leonard preponderantly consents, however with a sarcastic remark (00:30:39). Also, the general suffocation of the environment is shown through visual choices in the movie. The Woolfs' house is primarily decorated with dark brown furniture, the color which can also be found in natural spaces surrounding her house as well as her husband's clothing (Figure 1), which according to Buriánková (2007), emphasizes a heavy and dark atmosphere. This, accompanied by the dimly lit indoor spaces, suggests suffocation and confinement. The movie adaptation has tried to address this aspect of Woolf's discontent, but it has shown it merely through the relationship between Virginia and Leonard which can be interpreted as a personal

and familial issue rather than a social and cultural one.

Figure 1

Woolf's Feelings Shown Through Close-up



Note. From *The Hours* by Stephen Daldry, 2002.

Contributing Factors to Laura Brown's Decided Suicide

Bennett (2017) claims that suicide can be avoided in real life if it is contemplated, imagined, and planned; in other words, the option of suicide should be open so that it can be avoided and that is accomplished through fiction. This is confirmed in *The Hours* novel and movie by depicting Laura Brown, a depressed housewife, as she planned to commit suicide in a hotel room but reading *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), she sees the possibility of such an action and decides against it: "It is possible to die. Laura thinks, suddenly, of how she—how anyone—can make a choice like that" (Cunningham, 1998, p. 151). Although Laura eventually decides against taking her own life, she does make the difficult choice of leaving her family, which call attention to the depth of her despair arising from various reasons. Laura Brown is depicted, in both novel and the movie, as a depressed and lonely woman who takes lots of pleasures in reading. Her depression and struggle to establish a good relationship with her husband and son is vividly depicted in both novel and movie as she starts her day, goes to a hotel room to take her own life, and eventually comes back home deciding to leave her family as soon as her second child was born.

Although it is her depression and discontent that drives her towards the decision of committing suicide, Cunningham portrays different dimensions to her struggles including the social demands that put a lot of pressure on women in their roles as wives and mothers. For instance, for a woman who takes immense pleasure in reading and thinks she has "a touch of brilliance" (p. 42) but has to do the repeated household chores which she refers to as "those ordinary things" (p. 188), life becomes unbearable. She is a woman trapped in social roles "who would rather be elsewhere, who has consented to perform simple and essentially foolish tasks, to examine tomatoes, to sit under a hair dryer, because it is her art and her duty" (p. 42). Despite her husband being kind and loving, Laura is shown in the novel to be dissatisfied with her marriage as she thinks she is "trapped here forever, posing as a wife" and "she must please; she must continue" (p. 205), since by this institution "Laura Zielski, the solitary girl, the incessant

reader, is gone, and here in her place is Laura Brown” (p. 40), which shows her individuality, and even her religion (as stated elsewhere in the novel) is taken away from her. Laura also experiences discrimination due to her race as she thinks she is “the odd one, the foreigner, the one who can’t be trusted” (p. 110). It is unfortunate that none of these points are mentioned in Daldry’s version of *The Hours*; it even changes Laura’s surname (Zielski) which highlights its foreignness.

In the scene where Laura finds herself in a hotel room, contemplating suicide, she draws a compelling parallel between her own struggles and those of Virginia Woolf. Laura sees Woolf as a figure who has been “defeated by the impossible demands of life and art” (p. 152), making a connection to Woolf’s own tragic end. This parallel emphasizes the social nature of the challenges faced by these women, and depicts the immense pressure they experience due to these social expectations placed upon them. However, Daldry’s adaptation tends to overlook the social aspect of their discontent and emphasizes the personal nature of their dissatisfaction. For instance, the mentioned parallel between Laura Brown and Virginia Woolf in the movie is shown through the close-up shot of Virginia Woolf’s feet just when she is about to enter the river to drown herself and Laura Brown’s feet when she climbs up on the bed where she has planned to take her own life (Figure 2). Another parallel that Daldry is making in the same scene between these two characters is the use of special effects to summon Woolf’s context of suicide in relation to Laura. As she is lying on the bed in the hotel and contemplating suicide, a torrent of water comes from under her bed and drowns her, which reminds the audience of Woolf’s suicide scene (Figure 3). In this way, Daldry has been successful to display the shared experiences of the characters by drawing these interesting parallels; however, he fails to address the social aspect of both characters and the pressure social expectations and demands put on individuals, especially women.

Figure 2

Parallel Between Virginia & Laura's Feet



Note. From The Hours by Stephen Daldry, 2002.

Figure 3

Parallel Between Laura & Virginia's Suicide



Note. From The Hours by Stephen Daldry, 2002.

Contributing Factors to Richard Brown's Suicide

Richard Brown is another character in *The Hours* who deals with many disturbing issues such as physical and mental health problems. He has AIDS and because of the consequences of this illness he has to deal with other kinds of health problems. Alongside with his physical struggles, Richard also fights with mental health issues such as hallucinations and hearing voices. He is shown to have possessed an extraordinary talent in literary realm winning him a prestigious prize named "Carrouthers", which according to Clarissa Vaughan "It's a prize for poets. It's a very big deal" (p. 125). Tragically, Richard's story takes a devastating turn as he chooses to end his own life by throwing himself out of his apartment window.

Richard's physical and mental health issues undoubtedly had a significant influence on his decision to end his life. Towards the end of the novel, it is revealed that Richard is Laura Brown's son whom she left in his early childhood. This revelation discloses the deep-rooted trauma Richard has carried with him throughout his life. In the novel, this is revealed in the last chapter after Richard's death when the old Laura comes to New York at the news of his son's suicide. However, in the movie it is revealed just before his suicide when he has his mother's picture in hand. This scene in the movie encompasses all the personal aspects of his dissatisfaction with life including his physical and mental issues as well as this trauma. In a close-up shot of Laura's old picture which gradually encompasses Richard's hand and pills (Figure 4), the audience come to understand that Richard is in fact Laura's son. This scene is accompanied by a flashback to Richard's childhood when his mother left him at a neighbor's while he was screaming and calling for her, which suggests that he is still preoccupied with that experience. In the next shot there is an extreme close-up of Richard's face with a single tear coming down from his eye which shows his despair (Figure 5). By placing this scene right before Richard's suicide scene, Daldry puts more emphasis on this trauma as one of the core motives of his suicide along with his illness.



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While his physical and mental health challenges undoubtedly played a significant role, there may have been additional contributing factors that led to his tragic choice. These can include social stigma and discrimination faced by individuals living with AIDS. As it goes in the novel: Richard was once avid and tall, sinewy, bright and pale as milk. He once strode through New York in an old military coat, talking excitedly, with the dark tangle of his hair tied impatiently away from his face by a length of blue ribbon he'd found. (p. 68)

This shows that Richard's prosperous life has come to an end and now he must deal with the consequences of his illness, which are loneliness and suffering. In the scene where Clarissa wants to enter Richard's apartment building, she is reminded "as she always does, of the word "squalid" (p. 53). This word can be extended to Richard himself who is abandoned and neglected in his old and filthy apartment. This is also proved by Clarissa's description of this building as it goes:

The faded yellow-beige walls, more or less the color of an arrowroot biscuit; here is the fluorescent panel on the ceiling emitting its sputtering, watery glare. It is worse—much worse—that the cramped little lobby was cheaply and half-heartedly renovated a decade ago. The lobby is far more discouraging with its soiled white brick-patterned linoleum and its artificial ficus tree than it could possibly have been in its original decrepitude. Only the ancient marble wainscoting indicates that this was once a building of some consequence; that hopes were nurtured here. (p. 53)

As can be seen, the apartment building can be a metaphor for the condition of Richard himself who was once prosperous but now he is abandoned and neglected even by his more recent friends who "have come to imagine he's already died" (p. 65). This is also stated in the movie when Clarissa says his friends will be in the party and Richard responds: "I thought I lost all my friends" (00:21:49).

Even the party Clarissa intends to throw for him is not entirely for Richard's sake but others as Richard believes "I'm not really needed there, am I? The party can go on just with the idea of me. The party has already happened, really, with or without me" (p. 65). This is shown in the movie by Richard asking Clarissa "who is this party for?" (00:25:03), and a little later he says "I think I'm only staying alive to satisfy you" (00:25:17), which shows that even Clarissa who visits him often and cares for him is doing all these things to satisfy her conscience. As they talk in Richard's apartment, Clarissa, intentionally or unintentionally, ignores his worries and that adds up to his sense of alienation. For instance, when Richard says: "I keep dreaming that I'm sitting in a room" Clarissa replies ignorantly and more concerned about her own party: "The party's at five, do you remember? The party's at five, and the ceremony comes after, at eight, uptown. You remember all that, don't you?" (p. 61). This ignorance has been translated to the visual media by depicting Richard describing the hallucinations he had to which Clarissa responds by reminding him of the party. Even in the critical moment when Richard is prepared to throw himself out of the window, Clarissa is more concerned about herself rather than

Richard as she says: “‘You’re terrifying me,’ Clarissa says. ‘I want you to stop this and come inside. Now.’” (p. 196), or when asking him to come down she says: “‘Will you do that for me?’” (p. 196), which are absent in the movie. All these have contributed to his feeling of “failure” which he states in many instances throughout the story including his suicide scene.

The movie adaptation of *The Hours* does not explicitly portray the social discrimination, lack of support, isolation, and alienation faced by individuals living with AIDS as vividly as the novel. However, it makes use of visual appeal to implicitly suggest these ideas and arouse audience’s empathy. In the movie, the urban setting with its chaos and noise, contrasts with the isolation Richard feels inside his apartment. The cold, often gray and bleak New York City scenes in winter, in contrast to the beautiful and sunny June day in the novel, visually convey Richard’s emotional state. Moreover, the depression he feels is also emphasized by the gloomy and dark atmosphere of his apartment and the abundant use of blue in both setting and his costumes (Figure 6). While the movie adaptation of *The Hours* takes a more implicit approach towards depicting social dimensions at play in influencing Richard’s suicide, it seems to have achieved almost the same effect as the novel through cinematic techniques like mis-en scene and cinematography.

Figure 4

Laura's Old Photo Revealing that She Is Richard's Mom



Note. From The Hours by Stephen Daldry, 2002.

Figure 5

Close-up Signifying Richard's Despair



Note. From The Hours by Stephen Daldry, 2002.

Figure 6

The Cold and Dim Color Palette of Richard's Apartment Mainly in Blue and Brown



Note. From The Hours by Stephen Daldry, 2002.

Conclusion

Analysis of novels and films holds significant importance, particularly due to their ability to reach a wide audience and form cultural conversations. They have the power to influence perceptions, challenge social norms, and create discussions on various topics, including critical issues like suicide. By digging deeper into different dimensions surrounding the issue of suicide, the novel portrays it as a meaningful action which can be, in Battisti's (2015) words, "interpreted as an expression of personal autonomy and a dissident critique of society" (p. 158). However, when examining the movie adaptation of *The Hours*, it becomes evident that the movie has missed the opportunity to fully capture the social commentary present in the original novel and hence, the characters and their decisions have been simplified. While it is



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understandable that films often face limitations in terms of time and storytelling, it is crucial to acknowledge the significance of comprehensive portrayals of suicide, since they can directly affect the audience's attitudes towards this issue. As such, it can be argued that while the movie adaptation of *The Hours* beautifully renders the personal struggles of individuals and effectively invites the viewer to identify and empathize with them, it fails to fully form the social and political commentary present in the novel around this topic.

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