

# **Nick Hornby's *State of the Union*: The Book and the TV Series**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat vývoj vztahu manželského páru v literárním díle Nicka Hornbyho *Zpráva o stavu manželství* (2019) a stejnojmenném televizním seriálu (2019), který byl námětem literárního díla. První kapitola popisuje stručný životopis Nicka Hornbyho, jeho díla a propojenost k dílu *Zpráva o stavu manželství*. Druhá kapitola se zaměřuje na provázanost literárního díla s televizním seriálem. Nick Hornby zmiňuje důvody k napsání těchto dvou děl. Třetí kapitola nastiňuje děj a zabývá se podrobnou analýzou dialogu manželského vztahu, který se rozvíjí každý následující týden. Jsou zde uvedeny klíčové momenty a zlomové okamžiky páru, který bojuje za udržení manželství. Čtvrtá kapitola zmiňuje hlavní důvody, proč spolu dvojice zůstala. Hlavní myšlenkou je popsat rozdíl jejich postoje na začátku a na konci jejich sezení.

Klíčová slova: *Zpráva o stavu manželství*, Nick Hornby, kniha, televizní seriál, manželství, poradenství

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyse the development of the relationship of a married couple in Nick Hornby's literary work *State of the Union* (2019) and the television series of the same name (2019), which was the model for the literary work. The first chapter describes a brief biography of Nick Hornby, his works, and puts *State of the Union* into this context. The second chapter focuses on the interconnectedness of the literary work with the television series. Nick Hornby mentions the reasons for writing these two works. The third chapter outlines the plot and deals with a detailed analysis of the dialogue of the marital relationship that develops week by week. There are the key moments and turning points of the couple struggling to maintain a marriage. The fourth chapter mentions the main reasons why the couple stayed together. The main idea is to describe the difference in their state of mind at the beginning and the end of their sessions.

Keywords: *State of the Union*, Nick Hornby, book, TV series, marriage, counselling

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to analyse the development of a marital relationship in the original book *State of the Union* and the TV series of the same name. The TV series premiered on 6 May 2019 on Sundance TV and the book was published one day after. These two works have the same writer and scriptwriter, Nick Hornby, coming from the United Kingdom. The two works cover the same subject. Nick Hornby used his TV script and turned it into a novel. Even though it is one of the latest of Hornby's works, the TV series has already been accompanied by a wave of positive reviews and won the Outstanding Short Form Comedy Or Drama Series Award in 2019.<sup>1</sup>

*State of the Union* may be deceptive in its name because it is a president's annual speech before a congressional meeting in the United States. However, this book and the TV series are about the communication of a married couple attending marital therapy. In addition to Tom and Louise's marital status, this title is a metaphor for the split in their country, whether to vote for Brexit or not. The Brexit situation is similar to Tom and Louise's relationship as they discuss the future of their marriage.

Nick Hornby has become a favourite name on the writer's scene. He is an author of bestselling novels and an Oscar-nominated screenwriter. Hornby writes about everyday topics that can happen to people in real life. He offers readers topics which make them engaging because he also involves himself in his writing. The first chapter introduces his life and his writings. I mention a list of books and films produced by Nick Hornby. I find similarities in his written books with *State of the Union*.

In the second chapter, I focus on the TV series and the book. Firstly, I mention the director, actors, and the place of the filming of the series. Nick Hornby is a screenwriter and a writer of the same work and it is essential for this thesis to understand the connection between the book and the TV series. Although many literary works focus on the adaptation from a book to a film, in this case the book was written after the TV series. Nick Hornby provides the answers to my questions about the book and the TV series.

*State of the Union* refers to the marriage of a couple considering divorce. In the third chapter, I focus on the dialogue and analyse how it changes in the course of the weeks. I describe how Tom and Louise's relationship develops from stage to stage. There are the

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<sup>1</sup> "State of the Union," Television Academy, accessed December 12, 2021, <https://www.emmys.com/shows/state-union-0>.

key points and turning points which decide about their marriage. I only give excerpts from the book because the dialogue is identical in both works.

At the beginning, Tom and Louise are facing an unpleasant situation, at the end, they have come together again. In the fourth chapter, I describe what made them change their minds and decide to stay together. I mention marriage counselling and how it differs from their meetings in the pub. Their progress in the dialogue and the phases of recovery from an affair are essential to mention. I summarise the main findings from the ten weeks.

## 1 NICK HORNBY

Nick Hornby is a successful British author, screenwriter, song writer, music and film critic. He was born on April 17, 1957, in Redhill, Surrey. During his childhood, his parents divorced when he was eleven years old. Nick Hornby grew up with his mother and his younger sister who later became a writer as well.<sup>2</sup> He is a faithful supporter of Arsenal which is reflected in most of his books. The male characters are usually football fans and especially his autobiographical *Fever Pitch* (1992) tells his lifelong obsession with Arsenal.

While studying at the University of Cambridge, Nick Hornby received a degree in English literature. After graduating, Hornby started to work as a teacher of English in Cambridge and later in London.<sup>3</sup> In this interview with Simon Hattenstone (2015), Hornby answered why he became a writer:

I think part of the reason I became a writer I became is because of teaching in a school, and you're always looking for this stuff that is really intelligent but really simple and everyone can understand it. I always thought *Of Mice And Men* was such a perfect book because there's nothing not to understand, but it's still really clever and moving and complicated, but everybody understands the complication. It doesn't leave anybody out. I think that's what books should be like.<sup>4</sup>

The *Guardian* describes Hornby's style as "fluent, informal, no fancy stuff".<sup>5</sup> His style of writing is not difficult to read, but it is difficult to understand the idea, the hidden plot, and why he wrote such a book. He likes to write dialogues – which can be seen in *State of the Union* where the dialogue form prevails. Hornby uses metaphors and funny and sarcastic notes which are also presented in *State of the Union*, for example in chapter headings. His career began as a writer of articles in *Time Out Magazines*, *Esquire* and *Gentlemen's Quarterly*.<sup>6</sup> As I already mentioned, he wrote his first autobiographical story called *Fever Pitch* which was later adapted to two films in 1997 and 2005. Hornby wrote the screenplay for the movie in 1997. Moreover, the book became part of Arsenal's package for the "Final

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<sup>2</sup> Nick Hornby, *Fever Pitch* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1992), chap. Home Debút.

<sup>3</sup> Melissa Albert, "Nick Hornby," Britannica, last modified April 13, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nick-Hornby>.

<sup>4</sup> Simon Hattenstone, "Laughing All the Way to the Cemetery," *The Guardian*, last modified April 23, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/apr/23/fiction.shopping>.

<sup>5</sup> Hattenstone, "Laughing All the Way to the Cemetery."

<sup>6</sup> Albert, "Nick Hornby."

Salute” to Highbury in 2005-2006.<sup>7</sup> The book is divided into chapters named after a particular Arsenal match. He describes the specific football game and his steps in life in each chapter. It all starts as his father invites small Nick to Highbury for the first time. According to Anushree Nande (2013), it is not just about the history of Arsenal’s football journey but the timeline of the author’s life, his loves, his depression, and his love of home.<sup>8</sup> Nick Hornby describes his lifelong passion for Arsenal as it is stated in *Fever Pitch*: “I fell in love with football as I was later to fall in love with women: suddenly, inexplicably, uncritically, giving no thought to the pain or disruption it would bring with it.”<sup>9</sup> Hornby struggles with depression which affects his writings. According to Simon Hattenstone (2005), “Nick Hornby has built a career on depression and the things that help him survive – football, music, books.”<sup>10</sup> All three of these aspects are almost always reflected in each of his books. In the case of *State of the Union*, Tom is a football fan and unemployed music critic.

## 1.1 His Writings

Hornby’s writing is influenced by what he has been through in his life. As a result, he often writes in a way that is unconscious.<sup>11</sup> His life, as mentioned above, is similar to the male characters in his books. In *State of the Union*, he writes the story of a couple discussing the state of their relationship and inserts a reference to the state of the United Kingdom.<sup>12</sup>

In 1995, Hornby shared a passion for music in his novel *High Fidelity*. The main character Rob, whom Laura left for someone else, does not give up and tries to get Laura back. The story is about failed relationships, commitment phobia, or fear of death. On the other hand, Arsenal and music are major passions of Rob’s life. In relation to *State of the Union*, both men, Rob and Tom, are music obsessives, and they pass through romantic failures.<sup>13</sup> In the end, Rob and Laura decide to reunite their relationship similarly to Tom and Louise in *State of the Union*.

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<sup>7</sup> Anushree Nande, “Book Review: Fever Pitch – Nick Hornby,” review of *Fever Pitch*, by Nick Hornby, *Football Paradise*, July 11, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Nande, “Book Review: Fever Pitch – Nick Hornby.”

<sup>9</sup> Hornby, *Fever pitch*, chap. Home Debüt.

<sup>10</sup> Hattenstone, “Laughing All the Way to the Cemetery.”

<sup>11</sup> Michael Ryan and Melissa Lenos, *An Introduction to Film Analysis: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ryan and Lenos, *An Introduction to Film Analysis: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film*, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Bary Faulk, “Love, Lists, and Class in Nick Hornby’s High Fidelity,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 66 (2007): 153–176.

The novel *About a Boy* (1998) is about the process of survival. The main character Marcus, a twelve years old boy, lives just with his mother. Nick Hornby puts again part of himself in this novel. Marcus's parents are divorced and his mother tries to commit suicide. In an interview with James Naughtie (2001), Nick Hornby revealed that *About a Boy* is a reference to the song "About a Girl" by Nirvana.<sup>14</sup> *About a Boy* and *High Fidelity* are considered the most successful and best-selling of Hornby's books. Both of them were adapted into movies and television series. Moreover, *High Fidelity* is a Broadway musical that premiered in 2006. Another Hornby novel is *How to Be Good* (2001), which presents a story of disappointment in love, self-discovery, and the answer to the question of how to be good.<sup>15</sup>

One of Hornby's most depressing novels is *A Long Way Down*, published in 2005.<sup>16</sup> There are four depressed narrators thinking about suicide. Eventually, they find hope for the future. Hornby's books feature male characters who fail to establish a successful relationship or life. The male cast is obsessed with music and football in particular. Even though the books seem depressing, they always have a hopeful ending. Hornby's writing can influence many similar cases in real life. He encourages readers to draw meaning from the story and feel satisfied that there is something worth living for in this world. Eventually, Hornby's attitude to writing changed and he began to write novels about female characters, such as *Juliet, Naked* (2009), and *Funny Girl* (2014). A female protagonist also appears in Hornby's screenplays for *Wild* (2014), the Oscar-nominated *An Education* (2009), and *Brooklyn* (2015).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Nick Hornby, "Bookclub," interview by James Naughtie, *Bookclub*, BBC, December 2, 2001, audio, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p00fpwmq>.

<sup>15</sup> Albert, "Nick Hornby."

<sup>16</sup> Hattenstone, "Laughing All the Way to the Cemetery."

<sup>17</sup> Albert, "Nick Hornby."

## 2 BOOK AND TV SERIES

The dialogue is identical in the book and the TV series. As stated above, the TV series premiered on SunDance TV and is directed by Stephen Frears. *State of the Union* is a short-form romantic dramedy starring Chris O'Dowd as Tom and Rosamund Pike as Louise. Each ten-minute episode takes place in a pub in Hammersmith, London.<sup>18</sup> The series is revealed by the camera and the observer can see the setting of the pub, Tom and Louise's expressions and behaviour, the street environment, and the counsellor's house from the outside. On the other hand, Nick Hornby only makes essential comments in the book to get the reader into the plot, for example, at the beginning of each chapter Hornby outlines what is happening.

I contacted Nick Hornby via Instagram and asked him two questions. On November 15, 2021, my first question was: "Why did you make two versions of *State of the Union*?" Nick Hornby answered as follows: "It was a TV series before it was a book. I wrote the series and then my publisher said that, as the series needed very little visual explanation, it would work well as a little novel in dialogue form."<sup>19</sup> The TV series was turned into the book, as an adaptation of the screenplay. Taking the screenplay and rewriting it in the form of the book, Hornby did it as easily as he could. Many things remained the same as it is in the TV series. "The content of a movie is a novel or a play or opera," states Marshall McLuhan.<sup>20</sup> *State of the Union* confirms that the content of the TV series has already been created for the book. On the other hand, Marie Mravcová, in her book *Od Oidipa k Francouzově milence* (2001), highlights the adaptation differences between the book and the movie. She states that the movie usually focuses on a different type of addressee.<sup>21</sup> Linda Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) also argues that there are many adaptations and just few of them involve the idea of fidelity.<sup>22</sup> In the case of *State of the Union*, it is one of the examples of a faithful adaptation.

On November 18, 2021, I asked him my second question: "If you wrote the TV series and the book, would you think about writing a theatre play? Or have you already thought about it?" Nick Hornby answered: "Do you mean a play of the series? I thought about it and I think someone wants to do it. But I think you need to see the faces up close when

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<sup>18</sup> Stephen Frears, *The State of the Union* (United Kingdom: Sundance TV, 2019), TV series.

<sup>19</sup> Nick Hornby to Denisa Bergerová, November 15, 2021. Instagram message.

<sup>20</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), chap. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Marie Mravcová, *Od Oidipa k Francouzově milence* (Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2001), úvod.

<sup>22</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), preface.

there are just two people talking. Reactions are important. Is that as good in the theatre? I'm not sure."<sup>23</sup> At first glance, a theatrical film and a stage play seem most comparable. However, observers see a stage play as they want to. On the other hand, film observers see the story only as the filmmaker wants them to see it. A theatre play, unlike a film, is a live performance on stage in front of an audience.<sup>24</sup> *State of the Union* is about two people, and in the case of the theatre, it could lose its effectiveness. In addition, in the TV series, the camera is placed in certain positions and most often focuses on Tom and Louise's faces. As Nick Hornby mentioned in the second answer, the actions must be expressive. Every word and gesture is important in the TV series and the book. Tom and Louise are able to show their thoughts and feelings, in contrast to a theatre where it would be challenging.

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<sup>23</sup> Nick Hornby to Denisa Bergerová, November 15, 2021. Instagram message.

<sup>24</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media, and Multimedia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 48-49.

### 3 PUB TALKS

The story is divided into ten “weeks”. Every chapter and episode title reflects the dialogue. Hornby’s striking use of metaphors is visible in most of the headlines, for example “Dolphins” signifying sexual experiences in unusual places. Tom and Louise either compare these metaphors to themselves, or they talk about them in the pub. Every week, at the same time, at the same place, just the two of them meet for a quick talk before they leave for marital therapy. Their weekly routine starts by ordering a white wine for her and a pint of London Pride for him. Every week ends by them ringing the doorbell on the counsellor’s house. The weeks are always connected to each other. In the pub, they talk about the agenda for the upcoming session, what has happened or changed since the previous week, and they also react to their pub and private sessions. Tom and Louise talk about their future as well. The interior of the counsellor’s house is never described or even shown in the series. The conversation with the counsellor is hidden and later Tom and Louise debate about these official meetings in the pub. Initially, couples therapy seems to save their marriage. As the weeks go by, Tom and Louise begin to speculate if they truly love each other.

#### 3.1 Marathon

The first week of their session starts. Tom is usually first in the pub and waits for Louise. Their salutation sounds nervous and Louise thanks Tom for coming. The conversation starts by making jokes to lighten the situation. At the beginning, Tom digresses to talk about important topics which help to progress in their issue. As a cultured boy from the “*High Fidelity*” school, he talks about Western philosophy or Kant.<sup>25</sup> Or he cares about their children. They have two sons, Dylan and Otis. Besides this week, there is no mention of their children. Tom tries to come up with different topics, especially not to talk about why they are in the pub. Even though she cheated on Tom, Louise is assertive and wants to save their marriage. Louise admits her fault. If she had not done that, they would not have sat in the pub. The critical point is that Tom agrees with her, and he does not hesitate that it could be a bit his mistake, too. It is typical of Hornby’s male characters not to know how to behave rightly. Louise is also of the opinion that if Tom had not stopped sleeping with her, they would not have waited for marital therapy. Tom was the one who stopped having sex with his wife. On the other hand, Louise did not go that far. When they start talking about

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<sup>25</sup> Troy Patterson, “The Agreeable Staginess of “State of the Union”,” last modified May 9, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/on-television/the-agreeable-staginess-of-state-of-the-union>.



Louise's infidelity, the calm atmosphere changes and they start arguing. The tone of voice rises slightly, but they do not shout. Louise defends herself by saying that it was one mistake repeated three times. She does not speak straight. The conversation leads to their first comparison. They compare themselves to "marathon". Louise says: "There is no comparison. It's like comparing a twenty-five-yard dash with a marathon."<sup>26</sup> It means that they have been married for 15 years and had sex on a regular basis while Louise's affair lasted two weeks. "At the moment, says Tom, "we're Usain Bolt with an injury. A groin strain, if you like." (8) Even though Tom is hurt, he does not talk without sarcasm. Tom does not show that he is angry, but compensates with ironic and sarcastic remarks. He also likes to compare their relationship or the current situation to others.

Tom and Louise have to set an agenda because they have not moved anywhere or discussed anything useful. At that moment, a new couple is on the scene. They are leaving the house across the street where marital counselling takes place. Tom and Louise are talking about them and trying to figure out what has happened to them. They enjoy talking about others rather than about themselves. Tom doubts about the session and does not want to be like the other couple. Consequently, they reflect on what they have in common: "kids, crosswords and *Game of Thrones*." (9) They are not sure about other similarities. Nothing else comes to their minds. Tom would prefer not to poke around in their marriage. On the contrary, Louise believes that marriage counselling will help them find ways to improve their marriage and avoid the obstacles that stand in their way. As a gerontologist, Louise compares their marriage to cancer: "I think what I'm saying, medically speaking, is that either we leave it and it kills us or we get it looked at." (10) Even though Tom is split inside, he participates in marital therapy. They talk to each other and want to make a joint effort to put things right. Tom and Louise always stay in the pub for ten minutes. Tom is not sure about the female counsellor. They leave the pub and cross the street feeling stressed. Tom suddenly turns around and starts running away.

### 3.2 Antique Globes

The first week ended in such a way that Tom did not have the courage to participate in the therapy. Eventually, he showed up at the meeting fifteen minutes from the end. In this situation, Louise compares Tom's 'balls' to "antique globes" because it takes courage to turn up at the start of marital counselling this week. The second week starts in the pub as

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<sup>26</sup> Nick Hornby, *State of the Union: A Marriage in Ten Parts* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2019), 8. Hereafter cited in text.

usual, but Louise is waiting for Tom at this time. The previous week Tom and Louise discussed another couple and it is no different in this session. They like to talk about them and imagine their relationship. Louise sympathises with the woman, Tom with the man. When they talk about someone else, they feel relaxed and complement each other.

Last week Tom was not satisfied with the main topic discussed with the counsellor. They talk about Louise's friend, Lucy, and her birthday party where Louise met Matthew. Louise cheated on Tom with Matthew. Unlike last week, Tom is interested in setting an agenda for the session. Nothing much has changed since the last time. They still talk sarcastically, joke about each other, or discuss another couple. Additionally, Tom speculates whether Kenyon Long is the counsellor's real name. Louise tries to come up with the agenda, but Tom refuses to talk about Matthew. He prefers to deal with trivial matters. Suddenly, they have no topic to talk about. Tom is usually reluctant when they have to agree on a topic that could take their relationship to the next level. They find a common theme in insignificant things. The topic is suddenly about the couple whose counselling precedes their own. Louise is nervous that their "pub talk" is over and they had not discussed anything useful up to that point. When leaving the pub, they compare their marriage to Brexit. "[...] When you think about it, it's like Brexit. There are going to be two years of talks before we even agree on what the issues are." (24) According to Louise, "Brexit is about divorce, though." (24) Louise voted against Brexit. On the other hand, Tom speaks of positive change and maybe that change could bring better opportunities. They compare their marriage to a marital Brexit and try to find out why it might be a new opportunity. Louise notices that he defends Brexit, and Louise's voice rises. Tom is calm. They are married for years but they are not able to communicate with each other. Communication is one of the most important roles in marriage. If it is lacking, it usually leads to marital therapies or divorce.<sup>27</sup> The lack of communication could have been one of the reasons why Louise had an affair. Before Louise's affair, they did not discuss important things together. The first two chapters describe Tom as the kind of person who speaks sarcastically, likes to make jokes, and talks about others rather than focusing on himself and his marriage. All he needs is music and crosswords. As a partner, he forgets his priorities. Louise's stand is different from Tom's. She wants to overhaul their entire marriage.

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<sup>27</sup> Brant R. Burlinson and Wayne H. Denton, "The Relationship between Communication Skill and Marital Satisfaction: Some Moderating Effects." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 59, no. 4 (November 1997): 884-902.

### 3.3 Syria

The third week starts. Tom is already in the pub where there is no one apart from one man. The man attends therapy before them. He is sad and this time he is not present at the therapy. The only thing known about this couple is that they attend therapy before Tom and Louise. Hornby outlines the story of the woman who slapped her man across the face. The answers to the questions of what happened to them, why they go to therapy, why the woman hit the man are not only the assumptions of Tom and Louise but also those of readers and viewers. Tom and Louise imagine different stories from another couple's problems and enjoy it. When Louise is already in the pub, Tom and Louise discuss the crying man. By talking about the depressed man, they moved on to another topic which was their disagreement about Brexit. Louise cried about Brexit in front of Kenyon. Tom says: "Remember what Kenyon said. And I still think we're better off than those two." (34) They should not talk about it because Kenyon ordered them to do so. Regarding the problems of the "fighting couple", Tom still believes that they have worse problems than him and Louise. Louise is upset that Tom focuses on another couple and keeps comparing their relationship to theirs. "You are absolutely not someone who jumps out of bed in the morning full of the joys of not living in Syria. You're miserable as hell. You have never once thought that you're better off than anyone," says Louise. (34) Tom's daily routine is getting up in the morning, walking around the house in a bathrobe, and listening to music. Tom ignores Louise because the woman has already left Kenyon's house, and the man leaves the pub. Tom and Louise stare at them. Suddenly, the man kisses the woman. Louise says: "There goes Syria." (35) Tom asks one important but painful question without thinking: "Well, if they feel passionate about each other, what are they doing in counselling?" (36) Louise is disappointed. She hates lies, but sometimes Tom's expressions are more hurtful. When he realized the consequences of what he said, it was already too late. They wonder if there is still passion between them. Tom considers passion as "something you can lose", but it depends on whether it is a pen or keys. As Tom explains it metaphorically, Louise hopes it is the key. The pen is not as necessary as the keys. Tom compares keys to passion by saying that they have to look harder and one day they will find them.

The rest of the conversation only leads to arguing. They find that the other couple seems to have solved their problem and Louise envies them. Tom thinks they got along 'amicably' until Louise met Matthew. They speculate about the point of marriage. Louise

took it out on Tom about Brexit, sex, work, and friends. Tom is unemployed because of today's Internet technology, but he is to be blamed for the rest. Tom is frustrated. He does not have strong self-belief therefore it is hard to achieve something. Louise provokes him to fight for his life. She wants her husband to show that he can face up to this whole situation. In these emotions, she pushes him and he falls on the ground.

### 3.4 Plaster Cast

Tom is sitting at their usual table and almost everything seems to be the same. They meet in the pub again, with a beer for him and a glass of wine for her. Except Tom has one arm in a plaster cast. Louise cannot believe her own eyes that Tom pretends to have a broken arm. Last week they cancelled marital therapy because of Tom's arm. Even though it turned out that the arm was bruised, Tom ordered the plaster cast to not look stupid in front of Kenyon. Louise would like to see a change, but they are getting nowhere with these situations. Tom ran away before therapy in the first week, fell in the third week and now wants to pretend his arm is broken. Moreover, Tom does not want to discuss all their concerns with Kenyon because he thinks that she does not help them. However, they begin to pay more attention to each other during this fourth week. The important role plays Tom's plaster cast leading to speculation if Louise is with Tom or against Tom. Louise wants Tom to take the cast off and tell the truth to the counsellor. Tom stands up for himself and asks Louise: "Are we a couple? Two against the world? Or aren't we?" (46) After a long debate and comparison to not being Romeo and Juliet, she gives him her support. Additionally, she says hesitantly: "I...Well, I love you." (47) It is the first time these words are expressed but both of them know that she hesitated. Tom is confused and starts discussing it. This topic is hurtful but at the same time, he does not tell her that he loves her too. The other thing is that Louise confirmed to him that she is on his team, but Tom only took from it the way she hesitated.

Tom and Louise talk about themselves, they have the topic, and it is not about another couple. They talk about online dating, an open marriage, or how they would feel if they met someone else. Tom and Louise come across the fact that what if they lived separately. While talking about different types of marriages, they lost track of time. Suddenly, a new couple enters the pub. They are Giles and Anna, neighbours of Tom and Louise. Tom and Louise stay for a while. Giles and Anna are curious and ask many questions. Tom and Louise are trying to suppress why they are in a hurry. In the end, Tom reveals they attend therapies because of Louise's infidelity. For the second time, Louise cannot believe her

eyes that Tom embarrassed her in such a way. And then he realized what he said. Louise is furious, and her last words before therapy are: “And throw that stupid bloody cast away.” (53) Tom puts the cast in the bin. He is on Louise’s team as well. For the first time in four weeks, they talked about themselves.

### 3.5 Normal Slope

The fifth week does not start well. Tom and Louise are silent after what happened last week. It is the midpoint of the book, the series, and the turning point is coming. Tom decided to move out after the last therapy. It has been a tough week for them. Tom felt betrayed. He made a gesture of throwing the plaster cast away, and Louise and Kenyon laughed at him. According to Tom, another his gesture was saying “spot of infidelity” to Giles and Anna. Louise was mad even though he minimalized it. Tom needs time to think. Louise respects his decision, but she does not feel it is the right step. She even lies to their children that their dad listens to music or is in the pub – Tom never goes to the pub. “It’s a slippery slope, moving out,” Louise says, “and it can be hard to climb back up it.” (60) On the contrary, Tom suggests, “It’s a normal slope, I can wander up and down it at will. No slippage. No exertion.” (61) The conversation is only about them. There is not even a little talk about another couple or a comparison to someone else. Moreover, no other couple is showing up this week. Tom and Louise do not have the need to say everything to each other. Tom does not tell her when Louise wonders where her husband currently lives. When Louise wants to know what he needs to think about, his response is: “Well. Everything, really.” (62) They do not speak straight to each other. They are not afraid to express their feelings, but they do not say many things directly as in previous weeks. Tom and Louise were not used to talking to each other, and now it is difficult for them to learn how to communicate. Louise had a secret sexual relationship with someone else. As a result, they took a conscious approach to change. Tom and Louise set time aside to practice their communication skills in the pub and with the counsellor.

Tom is interested in Matthew for the first time in weeks. He searched for him, amazed that Matthew could be Louise’s type. It is Tom’s natural response of jealousy. Although he does not directly admit his jealousy, he shows feelings of competition and comparison.<sup>28</sup> Tom becomes more talkative and asks Louise questions, mainly about Matthew. She does not speak clearly. Tom finds a difference between them and puts the

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<sup>28</sup> Esther Perel, *The State of Affairs: Rethinking Infidelity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017), chap. 6.

blame on her job. He describes it as depressing. Tom never asks her what she does all day, and she never reads Tom's stuff about pop music. Louise takes over the conversation. She is sorry that her husband does not sleep with her, "sex is the thing that separates you from everyone else in my life." (66) Tom listens to her. However, he cannot resist a sarcastic remark on Louise's expression: "Nearly everyone, anyway." (66) The mood has dropped. In the end, they apologize to each other. After their "pub dialogue", Louise says someone should try harder. She means Tom.

### 3.6 Nigel and Naomi

Tom took Louise's request to heart. He comes to the pub in a good mood but a little nervous. He is nicely dressed and shaved. He is a good-looking man. He smiles and asks Louise how her day was. Moreover, he wrote her a message that he was looking forward to seeing her. She knows he does not behave in such a way, and neither did she believe he was being genuine. He is trying, as she indicated to him last week. But she wanted him to try in a different way.

Tom and Louise are sitting next to each other. In the previous weeks, they have been sitting opposite. They still live separately but they have a positive attitude towards each other. They imagine their lives separately and begin a conversation about their future lives and future partners. Louise assigns Tom a new partner Naomi, Jenny, or Jackie. Tom gives her options such as Russel Crowe, Colin Firth, or Nigel de Jong. In connection to Nick Hornby, Russel Crowe was considered to play in *About a Boy*, Colin Firth is a star in *Fever Pitch*, and Nigel de Jong is a Dutch football player. Tom assigns Louise to the Dutch player who has been excluded from the World Cup Final. When it is Louise's turn, she does not say anything interesting about Naomi. When it comes to Jenny, Louise finally describes her as old. Neither Tom nor Louise gave their partner a figure that would be perfect. They deviated from their problems and let themselves get carried away by the topic, "it seems to me that the further we drift, the happier we get." (76) Louise wonders what it is like to live on one's own. It is easier for her to think about the future or another life than about the life she is living now.

Tom notices a new couple coming out of Kenyon's house. Compared to the previous couple, they are older. As Tom and Louise live apart and see an elderly couple attending therapy, Louise suggests a "death pact". Louise is slowly coming to terms with the possibility that she and Tom may not get back together. At least they can agree not to die alone. Louise's view of their marriage has changed. At the beginning of their sessions,

Louise did not want to admit that they might be apart. In the sixth week, she realizes that everything takes time, and it may not turn out as she initially thought. “How are new starts possible?” Louise says. “When you’ve been together for a long time, and you have kids, and you’ve spent years and years being irritated by the other person? But if they stop being irritating, they’re not them any more.” (80) They may have their concerns but they still go to therapies for themselves. Tom admits: “My text was me not being me.” (80) While they are leaving the pub, they return to their fictional partners. Louise says something nice about Tom’s Jenny and Tom about Nigel. They are satisfied with their new partners. Nick Hornby ends this chapter as “the moment of harmony”.

### 3.7 Call the Midwife

Tom is no longer trying this session as he did in the previous week. He is doing his favourite crossword and does not even say “hello” to Louise. He does not ask Louise about her day how she was expecting. This week it is him, the previous week he was someone else. Tom is unpleasant because he has a crossword printed on A4 paper. He complains that Louise has their newspaper and he did not want to spend money on another one. They argue again. Louise tries to start this session again. When she leaves and comes back, Tom barely notices her and curses at the wet paper. Louise is disappointed: “We start talking, somebody says the wrong thing, and then we spend the rest of the time talking about the wrong thing someone has said.” (87) They mention that this style of conversation happens in counselling every single time. Louise and Tom think they are not making progress. On the other hand, week by week they are strengthening bonds with each other.<sup>29</sup> Last week in the private meeting, they talked about *Call the Midwife*. Louise enjoys watching the series *Call the Midwife*, unlike Tom who loves black-and-white films. They had an argument because each of them likes a different type of movie.

Tom compares marriage to a computer. “[...] You can take it apart to see what’s in there, but then you’re left with a million pieces.” (89) Tom would like to give Kenyon up because he is of the opinion that their marriage is getting worse. Before Louise started to sleep with someone else, they did not focus on problems and priorities in marriage. Louise does not want to argue and analyse nonsense. She solves the crossword with Tom – something they have in common. Meanwhile Louise thinks about the agenda for the coming session. She uses Tom’s idea about the computer to determine which big pieces

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<sup>29</sup> Alicia Muñoz, *No More Fighting: The Relationship Book for Couples: 20 Minutes a Week to a Stronger Relationship* (Emeryville: Zephyros Press, 2018), chap. 24.

they want to put back into the computer. Now they discuss their differences and whether they are able to build a better tomorrow with each other. They go back to the past and remember what brought them together and what divided them over time. This also applies to Tom's unemployment, Louise feels embarrassed and Tom compares himself to an unemployed blacksmith. Tom has a degree in English that is another projection of the author himself into the character.

The key moment of this week is that the older couple gives the younger couple some advice from their own experience. Jordan A. Madison, who is a marriage therapist, mentions that "relationships take consistency, communication, and compassion to work."<sup>30</sup> The older couple attend therapies in different stages of life and the patience is important. Now it is time to speak openly and frankly.

### 3.8 Dolphins

Louise is already sitting on the sofa in the pub. Their table is occupied by another couple. She is waiting for Tom with the drinks. Tom comes in after Louise and orders drinks as well. Louise looks different. She wants to take Tom notice that she is beautiful. He is pleasantly surprised. She is trying because in counselling Tom told her she was not sexy. He does not even remember it, but she mentions that she records the sessions and listens carefully to them afterwards, sometimes more than once. It helps her to think about their marriage in depth. At the beginning of the sessions, Louise was the one who convinced Tom to attend therapies and fight for their marriage. Nevertheless, she comes to understand what patience is. Tom and Louise talk calmly together, ask questions to each other, and there is no jumping into speech. Louise has a different point of view on the situation.

As in the previous weeks, she imagines a different life. She thinks of children with someone else but Tom does not like it. He skips this passage and turns the topic of their conversation to their beginnings. The answer to why they got together was sex. They agree that it is one of the reasons why people become partners. They think of other reasons such as money, love at first sight, friends for ages, or arranged marriages. Louise compares the long-term relationship to a job: "[...] One day follows another, and twenty years later you're still there. But you can't know on your first day." (102) They do not remember their first date nor their first sex. They just point out that both of them were disappointed, but important is that they gave each other a second chance. They are honest and open-minded,

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<sup>30</sup> Jordan A. Madison, "Couples Therapy," *Therapy is my J.A.M.*, accessed February 2, 2022, <https://www.therapyismyjam.com/services-basic>.



and neither of them is offended. Suddenly, Tom mentions: “Perhaps that’s the whole trajectory of married sex. Out round the rocks to look at the seals, and home.” (103) This chapter, as well as episode, is called “Dolphins” which brings Tom to the previous expression that “dolphin years” are over. This means sex in various unusual places such as garden, kitchen or shower. Over time, the sex disappeared in their marriage. When they talk about it, Tom admits that Louise must have been bored. Unlike Tom: “I was never bored. But I did feel humiliated.” (105) She does not know that Tom felt that way, and again it confirms they did not share their thoughts and feelings with each other. Now they say what they feel and they are not afraid to express it. Louise comes to the idea that they thought of marriage as a “perpetual-motion machine”. Louise’s eyes fill with tears and Tom holds her hand. It is the moment they touch each other in the pub. Suddenly, Louise notices that many other problems are worse than being bored. She regrets her behaviour. Tom also adds that his depression and unemployment play important roles in their marriage. He realizes that it was not just Louise’s fault. He wants to do her a favour and also sets the agenda for next sessions – the future. He does not hesitate to talk as he did in the previous weeks. In the end, the old couple leaves Kenyon’s house. When Tom and Louise see them, they start to discuss their trouble. Before ringing the bell, Louise mentions: “Making it through is the goal of every marriage, isn’t it? I’m not sure there’s anything else.” (108)

### **3.9 Prison Sex**

Last week Tom and Louise got off to a good start and it continues to this pub meeting. Tom is doing his favourite crossword without the slightest hesitation. He is filling it in with energy and enthusiasm. Louise walks into the pub cheerfully and both of them feel as if there is something new to their interaction. Their behaviour clearly shows that a change has occurred in the last few hours. They do not even say anything, and the viewer or the reader notices that the chemistry between them is different. Tom asks Louise about the day, and her answer sounds positive without sarcasm. “[...] The night perked up the day no end,” Louise says. (111) She is the one who waited for this moment for a long time. However, both of them admit that last night’s sex was different. It is an unexpected turn but it is a real step forward in their marriage. In consideration of their troubles involved, they regard it as “post-prison sex”, more than marital sex. After long time, they are both out of “prison”. In the case of Louise, she was not released from a sexual prison until the last night with Tom. As for Tom, he is highly pleased and as a storytelling lover, he is

interested in what he was in prison for. Tom and Louise take a break in their dialogue and they sip their drinks. “[...] For the first time during their pre-counselling ritual, they have nothing to say to each other,” is Nick Hornby’s comment.<sup>31</sup> Louise’s infidelity, which was caused by sexless marriage, was the starting point for discussion with Kenyon. They had sex. Now they are talking about their feelings and emotions openly. It is the reason to pause for the moment. After some time has passed, Louise begins to hesitate about sex. Last night was different and Louise felt as if Tom perceived her as someone else. It was good sex but with the prison effect as Tom repeats many times. Tom goes back in time and remembers how she thought she was fat and unattractive. Whereas she feels uncertain about herself, he calms the situation down by saying that she has always been attractive. Louise is a beautiful woman and pokes around it unnecessarily. They discuss sex. Moreover, Louise confirms that in an ‘ideal world’, she would like to have sex only with Tom. Unfortunately, this is not the ‘ideal world’.

As time is getting closer to the end of their meeting, Tom sees the elderly woman walking alone from Kenyon’s house. Tom and Louise are shocked and try to come up with stories. Louise thinks they split up and Tom thinks she had an affair. Tom mentions as a reminder that he does not approve Louise’s infidelity. He does not care about others very much. They realize not only the value of life, but also that they are still alive and together, regardless of their troubles. Consequently, Louise offers Tom to move back home.

### 3.10 Another Drink

Tom and Louise walk into the pub at the same time and they order their usual drinks. The tenth “pub talk” starts and Tom is certain that this is their last session – he has moved back home and they have sex regularly. He thinks the problem is solved and he is not even angry about Louise’s affair because they sleep together again. In contrast to Tom, Louise realizes it is not just about sex, but there are other reasons for failure in their relationship. In the last few weeks, they have been going through a difficult situation. Tom suggests a peace process as in Northern Ireland but instead of one grievance, they have many issues. On the other hand, Louise adds: “We’re married. Everything else is an offshoot. [...]” (125) If they were friends, they would not be having arguments about trivial matters. Louise refers to a friendship and as a consequence, they remember how they met at the party and ended up together in bed. Their relationship started with sex, therefore Louise

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<sup>31</sup> Hornby, *State of the Union*, 116.

wonders if Tom would be interested in her without sex. Although Louise thinks about different stories to get Tom to say they could have been friends, Tom sticks to his opinion anyway. He does not have friends like Louise so he would follow up because of sex. Notwithstanding their different jobs, they attract each other. They became partners as a consequence of sex and found things which connect them. Similar to the first week, they come up with crosswords and kids. Additionally, Tom says he likes her way of thinking. She has an ironic smile and knows it is not true. Sarcasm and irony are not lacking in the tenth week either.

They are family and they have built mutual relationships. Being friends is different. They do not know how to call that and Tom mentions that Kenyon always knows what to say. As a married couple, they do not say 'I love you'. They think it means nothing special. They love each other but without feelings. Tom is engaged in their future, and he suggests they will practice saying 'I love you' and both of them will know the meaning. There has been improvement in having the same opinion and agreeing with the other. Their marriage is not without flaws, and Louise knows it will take some time. The old couple is on the scene. They are still together and are an inspiring example to Tom and Louise. Now they know it will be a long process but it is worth not to give it up. Louise offers Tom to order another drink. She cancels the meeting and he is beside himself with joy. Finally, Tom expresses his emotions and tells Louise that he loves her. They both know that he does not mean it and she does not mind.

## 4 UNDOING THE BREXIT

The separation process of the United Kingdom from the European Union has plenty of risks including the future, as well as failed marriages. It has divided society into two parts. People on lower incomes usually voted for Brexit and wealthier people voted against.<sup>32</sup> In the case of Tom and Louise, their opinions about Brexit diverge. On the one hand, Tom is unemployed and believes that Brexit may lead to a better tomorrow. On the other hand, Louise is satisfied with her job. Moreover, she works with many European colleagues. Their different positions lead to an argument over the Brexit which also metaphorically explains their relationship.

### 4.1 Marital Counselling

According to Esther Perel (2017), “one person chooses to have an affair, but in most cases, both people are responsible for the relational context in which it occurs.”<sup>33</sup> Louise had an extramarital affair and Tom was fired from his job and became depressed. Tom and Louise begin marriage counselling in the hope of identifying their expectations of the union.<sup>34</sup> By seeking professional help and agreeing to counselling, a couple has rebuilt trust in a marriage, and they have made real progress. If partners had been aware that their marriage had no future, they would not have sought marriage counselling, but a divorce lawyer.<sup>35</sup> In the case of Tom and Louise, they seek out professional help and in addition, they meet for a quick drink before counselling. Whereas they usually have one drink per pub session, Tom drinks his beer very quickly in the first week. Even if Louise is not present, he does not wait for her to come. Alcohol reduces negative emotions and stressful conditions. Depression, fear, or humiliation can all contribute to his increased drinking as well.<sup>36</sup>

The counsellor provides Louise and Tom with qualified assistance for their relationship problems. It follows that the counsellor offers information and advice on the development of their marriage.<sup>37</sup> However, Tom feels that counselling is not helping them,

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<sup>32</sup> Matthew Goodwin and Oliver Heath, “Brexit vote explained: poverty, low skills and lack of opportunities,” Joseph Rowntree Foundation, last modified August 31, 2016, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/brexit-vote-explained-poverty-low-skills-and-lack-opportunities>.

<sup>33</sup> Perel, *The State of Affairs: Rethinking Infidelity*, chap. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Fienberg, “‘State of the Union’: TV Review | Sundance 2019,” last modified January 28, 2019, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-reviews/state-union-review-1179526/>.

<sup>35</sup> Tomáš Novák, *Manželské a rodinné poradenství* (Praha: Grada Publishing, 2006), 94.

<sup>36</sup> M. Lynne Cooper, Marcia Russell, and Michael R. Frone, “Work Stress and Alcohol Effects: A Test of Stress-Induced Drinking,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 31, no. 3 (September 1990): 260–276.

<sup>37</sup> Stanislav Kratochvíl, *Manželská a párová terapie* (Praha: Portál, 2009), 11.

but rather hurting them. He runs away the first time but subsequently, he visits counselling every week because Louise thinks Kenyon can help them solve their problems.

Since there are parallels between their sessions and the sessions with the counsellor, their official meetings and their private meetings in the pub are different. Tom and Louise meet together in the pub. They have space to talk about anything they want and spend time with each other. They discuss their past, present, and even their future. Tom and Louise always want to set an agenda for the upcoming counselling. However, it is usually difficult to agree on a topic. By coming together and learning to communicate, they strengthen their relationship. They help each other. Compared to the meetings with Kenyon, they are not as open-minded as in the pub. Tom even wants to keep their problems quiet on several occasions and he is more likely to talk about it only with Louise. Even in the fourth week, Tom wants to lie to Kenyon about having a broken arm so he does not look stupid. Louise, on the other hand, is of the opinion that they should discuss their issues with Kenyon. But Louise's opinion changes over the weeks and she sees that their progress is not going as fast as she thought. Everything takes time. In the tenth week, they even skip the counselling and stay together.

## 4.2 Progress in the Dialogue

One of the most common reasons given for attending counselling is a breakdown in communications between the two sides.<sup>38</sup> The stereotype of blaming each other is one of the most common and difficult to eradicate modes of communication in fighting couples. One of the married life's myths is that whenever something goes wrong, one spouse must be at fault, and that spouse is usually the other.<sup>39</sup> This statement clearly describes Tom in their first pub session. He does not admit to being involved in Louise's affair, but additionally, he blames it on her. The mood of their conversation changes in the course of ten weeks. In the beginning, the atmosphere in the session is tense. Louise is the one who drives their marriage and even the conversation. In the first few weeks, they often communicate their thoughts in a roundabout way. Either they do not want to hurt the other by saying their opinions or feelings directly, or they use metaphors and equate them with their relationship. Moreover, they use sarcasm or make fun of each other.

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<sup>38</sup> Novák, *Manželské a rodinné poradenství*, 47.

<sup>39</sup> Kratochvíl, *Manželská a párová terapie*, 64.

Generally clear, open and fluent communication is essential.<sup>40</sup> When Tom moves out and they do not live together, Louise realises that everything may not work out as planned, and Tom no longer blames Louise. Especially in the seventh week, they set a new rule. Talking to each other straight is their new relationship goal. To begin with, Tom refuses to discuss their marriage. Besides, he does not want to talk about Matthew. Over the weeks, Tom becomes more engaged in the conversation. Infidelity does not have to mean the definitive end of a relationship.<sup>41</sup> As far as Louise is concerned, she has made a mistake and is trying to make amends. She tells Tom the truth, which is a brave move and gets Tom to attend therapies to get the problem resolved. Tom is the one who is entitled to act dramatically because disclosure of an affair causes emotional pain. While talking and rebuilding the mutual relationship, the “bad” situation is overcome and the chances of re-establishing trust among partners are high.<sup>42</sup> In week eight, Louise takes the blame. Tom reaches her hand and wants to talk about the future. Consequently, they are closer to each other and next week the sexual spark is back in their relationship. Sex undoubtedly plays a significant role in marriage. There are some relationships that survive at least for a while because of sex, and conversely, the end of a marriage can be caused by a sexual mismatch.<sup>43</sup> As for Louise and Tom, they have always been attracted to each other as mentioned in week nine. Even when Tom moves out during the fifth week, Louise and Tom never mention that they are getting a divorce. On the other hand, Louise acknowledges the fact that they might not get back together. In addition, the phrase “I love you” is missing in their relationship. In the tenth week, they know that they love each other without feelings – it is love “for life” meaning mutual acceptance of two people maintaining their identity. Caring and knowing support are on the same level as an erotic attraction in a relationship.<sup>44</sup> Despite Louise wanting Tom to make an effort, and initially wanting to overhaul their entire marriage, by week eight she realises the point of marriage is that there are worse things than being bored. Week by week, their relationship evolves. They meet on a regular basis, which plays a significant role in self-discovery, listening actively, and understanding emotions.

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<sup>40</sup> Kratochvíl, *Manželská a párová terapie*, 62.

<sup>41</sup> Novák, *Manželské a rodinné poradenství*, 70.

<sup>42</sup> Novák, *Manželské a rodinné poradenství*, 70.

<sup>43</sup> Novák, *Manželské a rodinné poradenství*, 54.

<sup>44</sup> Novák, *Manželské a rodinné poradenství*, 39.

### 4.3 The Reunion of Marriage

Tammy Nelson in her book *The New Monogamy* (2012) identifies three phases of affair recovery: the crisis phase, the insight phase, and the vision phase. Couples in the crisis phase are attempting to recover from the shock of an affair. In the insight phase, couples work together to figure out how and why the affair happened. During the vision phase, partners begin to grow and evolve as a result of their affair. At this stage, a couple may either split up or build a stronger marriage.<sup>45</sup> As for Tom and Louise, the crisis phase lasts the first five weeks. Louise comes directly with the truth and both agree to visit marital therapy. In addition to seeking professional help, they opt for their “pub talks”. Louise is honest from the beginning, although it is not always easy for her to speak straight. She is trying to outline her affair to Tom, even though Tom would rather not talk about it. Their conversation initially goes nowhere because they are not used to sitting down together and talking to each other.

By week five, it is the insight phase, Tom and Louise are no longer living as a family. Tom decides to move out after the fourth week because he feels betrayed by Louise. Although they are not living together, they keep meeting in the pub. Louise and Tom talk about themselves and Matthew. Tom begins to become more involved in the debate about their relationship. However, the sarcasm and comparisons with another couple still persist. Their personalities are different when it comes to films, music, work, or the Brexit situation. The sixth week leads them to think about new fictional partners and they realise they still love each other. They do not talk about divorce, but the idea of living apart in the future is within reach.

During the vision phase, Tom and Louise become closer again after the affair which strengthens them. The infidelity has brought out a new strength in them to rebuild an even stronger relationship. They sit down together, talk, and find common ground.<sup>46</sup> When their seventh meeting in the pub draws to a close, the older woman attracts their attention. From this point on, Tom and Louise do not waste time in hidden meanings in the conversation. In the eighth and ninth week, they talk openly about sex and Louise wants Tom to come home. They not only remember their past, such as dolphin years, but also what began to divide them, such as Tom’s unemployment or Louise’s feeling of boredom. The key moment is that Tom touches Louise’s hand and wants to talk about their future with

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<sup>45</sup> Tammy Nelson, *The New Monogamy: Redefining your relationship after infidelity* (Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2012), chap. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Nelson, *The New Monogamy*, chap. 1.

Kenyon. Tom and Louise have simply helped themselves. Even though they attend counselling, most of the time they use one's efforts. In week ten, Tom and Louise skip the session and order another drink. They stay together in the pub to talk more. The most significant aspect is the conversation that leads them to work together as husband and wife.



## CONCLUSION

The aim of my thesis was to analyse the development of marriage in Nick Hornby's literary work and TV series *State of the Union*. First of all, it was necessary to introduce the author of the book and the TV series. The first chapter focused on Hornby's life which influenced his writing style. The purpose of his writing is to convey a piece of himself to the readers. Hornby is known for his obsession with the London based football club, Arsenal, and he is also a lover of music, like Tom in *State of the Union*. In *State of the Union*, Nick Hornby passed on a piece of himself to his readers.

The series premiered three years ago same as the book was published. There are not many works that address how the series came to be and the reasons for the story in both serial and book form. So I contacted Hornby and as he stated, *State of the Union* is one example of a faithful adaptation. The series was filmed entirely in the pub and did not need much visual explanation. The story is based on a dialogue between two characters. The dialogue is identical in both works and the emphasis should be placed on the speech of Tom and Louise, which is important for understanding the situation. The way they spoke evolved slowly but effectively because it helped them clarify their most important priorities.

The detailed analysis of every "week" was described in the third chapter. I focused on "pub talks" in the course of weeks. Tom and Louise have been married for 15 years and there has been a breakdown in the communication between the pair. Moreover, Louise had an affair and as a consequence of her actions, Tom and Louise attended meetings in the pub and counselling. In my opinion, Tom and Louise should have started the therapy earlier because they would not have to face up to the big issue, such as cheating. On the other hand, Tom and Louise became closer after the affair and it made them stronger. The infidelity brought out a new strength in their relationship to renew an even stronger connection. They dared to rebuild their relationship. They began to meet, ask questions, and over the course of weeks, it was no longer challenging to answer them. It was the contrast between the first and last week. In the first week, they were both nervous, Tom blamed Louise, and Louise tried to lighten the situation. On the other hand, in the last week, they talked without hiding any facts, and stayed together in the pub for another drink. Tom and Louise understood and enriched each other. They were paying attention to each other. Even when challenging moments came, like Tom's moving out, they did not lose their shared motivation to keep going. They thought about what had happened to

them. They reminisced about sexual experiences and indicated that they enjoyed their life together.

Nick Hornby wrote the script during the Brexit vote. Hornby has once again confirmed that he writes about everyday issues that can happen in the real world. Tom and Louise tackled Brexit together where they pointed out the division in society. Tom was unemployed and would not even buy a newspaper because it was expensive. On the other hand, Louise was thriving in her job and the emotions around Brexit turned to tears. Similarly, their marriage was at a breaking point. In the fourth chapter, I described the process of their marriage. Personally, I believe that their pub meetings helped them to stop and think about themselves for a while. They did not lose hope. Tom and Louise carried on and did not give up, despite their problems. Tom did not want to go counselling, but he never mentioned that he wanted to stop seeing each other altogether. Even when Louise, in week six, was thinking about what it would be like to live a different life or in week eight about the point of marriage, she did not want to give up the fight for their marriage either. They did not have as many things in common, but they loved each other. Tom and Louise realized it when they assigned new fictional partners in the seventh week. In week nine, Tom and Louise had sex and wanted to talk about the future together. At the beginning of the story, I did not give their relationship a chance. Their conversation was sarcastic or meaningless. I felt sorry for Tom and understood his behaviour. But as the weeks went by, I found myself leaning towards Louise. She admitted everything to Tom and regretted having the affair. The reader or viewer usually sides with one character and roots for that character, but in this story it was different. In the last weeks, I was rooting for both of them to make it together. They did it. Tom and Louise rebuild their marriage thanks to their “pub talks”.

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