

Robert Murphy
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Elements of Consumerism in Sex and the City

“You're the one, Carrie.” -Mr Big (“An American Girl in Paris, Part Deux” King)

Sex and the City (SATC) is more than a traditional television sitcom; it combines edgy elements, sophisticated insights into life and love in a fast paced constantly developing city, and characters who interact in situations that are humorous, emotional, and on occasion taboo. More than a story about sex (as the title would lead one to believe) or fashion (as much attention as this has garnered), this is the story of four friends pursuing the ups and downs of life in NYC – career, romance, love, and the future. Well written and expertly cast, the characters are quite believable in their element.

Some 4.1 million people tuned in for the final episode of SATC (BBC News). Viewers organized parties in many cities and across international boundaries to watch their favorite characters - and even dress the part. SATC has a strong fan base, and enjoys high sales of both individual seasons and the complete box set. Running six seasons and 94 episodes, the show was, and continues to be, a hit.

The show features four main characters. Carrie, the lead character and narrator, is a sex-columnist for a fashionable NYC newspaper. Sensitive and free spirited, Carrie is complex and thoughtful, often portrayed as the backbone of the other three characters. Miranda, a fiery and self-confident woman, is an Ivy League litigation lawyer with a biting wit and straightforward attitude. Charlotte, the most sensitive and conservative of the group, runs an art gallery and believes strongly in love – continually searching for the perfect man to marry and have children with. Finally, Samantha, strong and confident, owns a public relations firm and prides herself on being sexually open – and sexually active as often as possible. All are smart, humorous, and sophisticated to varying degrees.

It is worth noting that New York City, as a location, is vitally important to the storyline. More than

the city that never sleeps, New York City is a haven of the “new” and a city of unlimited opportunity. From the text we see New York City as continually changing, a society of infinite possibilities and subcultures: new restaurants, bars, clothing and men. The constant flux of new opportunities reflects the changing attitudes of the characters as the story progresses. In many ways the characters themselves reflect the lifestyle represented in the culture and environment.

Several themes are carried throughout the ninety-four episodes: love, sex, relationships, happiness, satisfaction, needs, desire, fashion, extravagance, marriage, want, purchasing, and commitment, among others; the women are shown relating the details of their own manifestations of these themes to each other and through Carrie's monologue. Themes are often shown in relation to each other – love combined with relationship, sex and satisfaction, desire with happiness and so on – but not as exclusive entities. Watching SATC in its entirety brings into question the function of these themes in the greater narrative. A question may be, what is the purpose of the themes in relation to the greater culture? What consumes the values of the show? Is the desire for the individual actions of sex or the search for love and happiness the purpose of SATC, or are these systemic of a greater theme or value represented in this modern culture?

For the purposes of this paper it is not the manifestations of the themes mentioned that will be discussed, but rather viewing the themes as manifestations of a large topic of interest to modern media and American culture. It will be argued that the central focus of SATC is not the pursuit of sexual conquest or the meaning of fashionable elements and city dwelling, though these are all important to the analysis; it is the consumption of these themes by the characters that defines the character of SATC. To be able to define the characteristics, three tools of analysis will be used in determining the way in which consumption is reflected in the text. SATC is a unique story regarding a difficult question – is romantic love the fulfillment of absolute desires; or, in a culture of unlimited opportunity for consumption, is a relationship consumed as one might a product or service?

Defining Consumption and Consumer Needs in SATC

The whole of the discourse of needs is based on a naive anthropology: that of the natural propensity to happiness. Happiness, written in letters of fire behind the least little advert for bath salts or the Canary Islands, is the absolute reference to the consumer society: it is the strict equivalent of *salvation*. (Baudrillard 49)

Simply put, consumerism is simply the discovery, or hope, of happiness in the purchasing of material possessions; in this context, consumption is the act of purchase. Though seemingly simple at face value, the complexity of consumerism exists in the definition of its structure and the complex wants of individuals. Especially difficult to define are the emotional needs from the perspective of consumption.

Basic human needs, as defined by Abraham Maslow, range from physiological (breathing, food, sex, sleep, drinking, warmth, excretion), to safety (bodily security, employment, health, property), love and belonging (friendship, family, intimacy), esteem, and self-actuality (Wikipedia Maslow). Consumerism is an extension of basic needs, operating as a reoccurring continuum of dissatisfaction and need for more. For example, warmth is a *human need*, but the purchasing of many sweaters that serve the same purpose is a *consumer need*. Another example is love. Though friendship and intimacy are representative of love and belonging built through experience, love between the four main characters and romantic love are drastically different actions. One might argue the discrepancy between love - the building of relationships - and love as “soul mates” shows the influence of consumer impulses on relationships as a target of specialty: “In the modern consumer society we consume not only goods, but also human services and therefore human relationships” (Ritzer 15).

Baudrillard wrote of a shifting signifier and need system, as new needs arise in a consumer environment (76-77). This displayed in the endless shopping engaged in by Carrie. But in the end the need, for Carrie, is for a single sign, aptly named Mr. Big. However, the search for a significant other,

or absolute embodiment of satisfaction, is throughout the show a floating metaphor, moving through various candidates in continual silent shifts from one man to another. This is the function of the sign in consumerism, a shifting need from one object to the next. “A toaster is never a finite need, but rather a brief object of temporary desire that when consumed is lost” (Barthes 126). What does it mean to consume a relationship? The characters are looking for more than temporary happiness and the excitement of the new. The consumer impulse, as experienced through SATC, is for complete absolution of further desire and the search for happiness embodied in the object of their perfect man. This impulse represents the narcissistic idea that one day a person will make them complete and satisfied.

Dating as Consumption

“I blame Valentine's Day. Hundreds upon hundreds of cards decrying “you're the one”... it seems we're always looking for that one thing to make us complete. When will that one thing make us complete?” -Miranda Hobbs (“To Market, To Market” King)

“A single gal spends most of her life searching for the perfect male.” -Carrie Bradshaw (“Let There Be Light” King)

It is obvious that people can consume the signs of each other. Beauty is an objectified status; by interacting with attractiveness you are yourself, taking on attractiveness. The complex system of sign exchange is an important part of dating on SATC. Dating is more than simply picking a man to date for long term; it is an interesting system of associating value assigned to characters in the hope of finding the object of which they will fully consume.

Levi-Strauss developed the Culinary Triangle as a means of understanding the function of food as a language in culture. Based on the systems of oppositions between phonemes in linguistics (Levi-Strauss 28) and rooted in years of anthropological research, it is a systematic approach and means for deciphering meaning in the style of food preparation. Three categories make up the triangle's corners:

raw, cooked and rotted – each offered in a binary opposition to the other. Cooked is altered from raw. Rotted is the opposite of both raw and cooked. Raw may become the other, but not the opposite.

By applying this formula of binary oppositions to describe the absolute characteristics of the attraction the characters feel to the men in their lives, the language used to describe attractive or unattractive qualities of a potential suitor becomes the *language* of attraction. Attraction combines both physical qualities and personality, applying a variable to denote overall character of the individual when one character defines this for her own purposes or describes character to the other girls. The simplicity of this method within the show allows for the patterning of consumption to become apparent. How does the audience decipher the categories in which to find the binary characteristics? SATC as a text makes this very easy. Throughout the show, the women meet at some point in almost every episode. They discuss who they're dating, how the relationship is going, and what the obvious fault is present – if there is one. Through the dialog, three types of people are distinguished: raw, cooked and rotted. Explained in detail below, three values are given to the various men dated by the primary characters. Much like a culture has its own food laws, the SATC characters have their own laws for finding a potential suitor, which, for comparison purposes, is described using the Culinary Triangle.

The raw is a character of innocence, not in the sexual sense but in an untouched manner, not yet emotionally disheartened by previous relationships. As in the culinary triangle, raw is linked to nature and natural states. For example, Aidan Shaw, when first introduced was a great example of a “raw” relationship type. Not seemingly harmed from previous relationships, he exudes the characteristics of “fresh”. Perhaps it is no mistake that his character lives part of the year in a rustic mountain cabin. This raw quality prompts Carrie on several occasions to ask if he has faults or if there is indeed anything wrong with him. This is also shown in the contrast of his character. Toward the end of season three Carrie begins to sleep with Big on a regular basis, though she is still in a serious relationship with Aidan, and feeling tremendously guilty. She confesses the affair, which leads to his departure and

subsequent breakup with her; he tells her infidelity isn't something he can get over. When the audience is later reintroduced to Aidan, he seems stronger and slightly more withdrawn. It is this contrast that defines the raw state. Another example was Miranda's brief relationship with Dr. Robert Leeds, her neighbor. Attractive and smart, they are immediately attracted to one another and begin a romance. They date for a few episodes (with Miranda often remarking on how "perfect" he is) until she breaks up with him. After this point he is moody and changed as a person. This denotes the transformation from raw to cooked.

Cooked represents an individual altered from the raw, as a natural state. It is the juxtaposition from raw that gives cooked its meaning. As in the culinary triangle, cooked requires a process that alters the original state through a variety of means. Characters bearing emotional "scars", carrying baggage or displaying a harsh temperament, can be seen as this category. Viewed in this way, cooked is the combination of the ideal of a person with a factor of negative association. Despite the flaws, they may carry positive attributes with them as an experienced individual.

The remaining character, the rotten, is not recognized by many as a premier product, as it may lack a natural physical quality or personality quirk. This models the Culinary Pyramid. As Levi-Strauss said, "Indeed, the cooked is a cultural transformation of the raw, whereas the rotted is a natural transformation" (Levi-Strauss 29). However, it is the benefits of this individual that negate the negatives. Simply put, the sign for this individual in relation to the four main characters of SATC could be not what I was looking for, but what I need.. The idea of the redeeming quality is a recurring sign in SATC. The redeeming quality is the sign that separates a lack of possibility, into a person that could not be seen for their charm or greatness, except through the contrast with the ideal version of that person. For example, a Stilton cheese may be overwhelming or disgusting to someone lacking a certain palate. However, it is the special qualities that one individual might find harsh that become the charm for a connoisseur. The overwhelming characteristic is the absence of a particular quality that was

unattractive initially, but later becomes a redeeming quality. At this point “needs” becomes preference. The part that is unattractive initially is a natural quality, usually a physically unattractive characteristic.

An interesting point in viewing the overall story of SATC, as with many “chic flicks”, is the re-assimilation of a prince charming character. The physical characteristics are not initially attractive to the consumer; but as tastes refine, the benefits of this personality become attractive if not admired for the once decried individual. Rotted is potentially the most interesting of the three, for this becomes the product for two of the four principle characters. For example, initially Steve was not Miranda's ideal man. Although he was lacking in financial prowess and power, Miranda learned to appreciate Steve for other reasons; much like a stilton cheese that may lack a pleasant odor but becomes an acquired taste. Another example is that of Charlotte and Harry Goldenblatt. Charlotte found Harry unattractive to begin with (and one might say SATC made a strong case for his unattractiveness when first introduced) and even picked him as her lawyer because she felt she couldn't go to court with an attorney she would want to sleep with. Quickly Charlotte becomes overtaken with his positives attributes, which leads to finding him handsome then to dating and eventually marriage.

By using this method, the pattern of consumption becomes apparent. The characters are not consuming people in a sense, but are consuming elements that make up the whole of the person. A potential suitor is divided into the sum of his parts and evaluated on various criteria. The reason for this evaluation is, in essence, the overwhelming opportunity for consumption. As stated before, New York City is a place of unlimited potential. Where there is unlimited potential, the search for perfection becomes a need. For the consumption of a sweater a need is first actualized. The components of style, color, performance and brand are all evaluated independently. Along these lines, men competed in terms such as wealth, physical attractiveness, history, age and so on. Once the evaluation is complete, the various components are then added back into the whole and a decision is made.

Credit Cards and Commitment

Purchases for both economic and emotional transactions require internal rhetoric. First, justification for purchases is allowable through the separation between functional purchase and the sign determining the relationship between brand and design. Manolo Blahnik shoes contain this logic, as brand is obsolete without a designated and recognizable pattern. It is this pattern that is purchased; design without a recognizable name is undiscovered and therefore irrelevant to a fashion system of signs. Two signs are demonstrated; the functional, shoes, and the extravagant, Manolo Blahnik. The functional allows the consumer to purchase as a base need for mobility. At an additional level, the consumer is allowed to flirt, or to temporarily intertwine with a consumed brand as part of his/her life, in a system of interchange that allows for a consumer to take part in a brand by wearing. It is this intertwining that adds more interest to the story. The separation between the functional and brand/design is what allows for continual consumption based on modification. The association of the functional as necessity carries over into design, resulting in design as necessity. If a particular design or pair of shoes makes an individual happy, and happiness is a need; the consumption of the product is then a need to the individual. However, as new designs are a constant in fashion, the system allows for the never-ending purchase of shoes or other products as “new products” become available. Shoes are purchased, but never with a sense of finality. Carrie sees a pair that “speaks to her”, she makes a sacrifice through purchase for love, the device of self satisfaction- usually through a credit card (at most placating devices allowing for the consideration of payment to be made at another time in order for the satisfaction of momentary needs). However happy she may be there will always be room for additional pairs of Manolo Blahniks, all kept in the closet close at hand but out of site.

Second, price becomes an obstacle for most consumers, converting the brand to a luxury item. To interact with luxury is to discover “uniqueness”, and as a sign is designed to give an individual

his/her individuality. Brands such as Manolo Blahnik are functional at the price break offered, only because they are offered at an unattainable price for most purchasers. The economics of wealth and power carry the luxury item and give it value. Carrie, for example, often cites financial obstacles as occurring from purchases such as these. When faced with the need to purchase her apartment, Miranda brings to Carrie's attention that the cost of the more than one hundred pairs of Manolo Blahnik shoes adds up to the same price as the down payment on the apartment. Baudrillard discusses in "The System of Objects" the distancing between the buyer and the payer, "... and though they are in fact the same person, the system ensures, by separating them in time, that they never become aware of the fact. Credit allows one to temporarily disregard the finality of payments" (Baudrillard, 174).

Now, for these purposes, Carrie's credit history is merely an example of the use of credit. The real function of credit as a sign is mirrored through relationships in SATC, utilizing the same signs as those of purchases. Carrie, at one point, allows Aidan to move in ("Just Say Yes" Chupack), and at another Miranda allows Steve ("Let There Be Light" King) to do the same. It is the co-existing and mingling with signs that defines the meaning of cohabitation on SATC. The signs at play only play with permanence and are absolved through the artificially induced impermanence of living together. First, as with purchases, living together is both emotionally and economically charged. The rhetoric calls for an agreement between both the functional, "I spend most nights here anyway" and the correlation between "brand" or boyfriend; and "design", or an individual with particular qualities. It isn't just a boyfriend, but a particular boyfriend. It isn't just that couples want to be together, but it is easier to live together than in different places. Further, the designation as a "live in boyfriend" is a luxury brand in its "uniqueness" as well as its added responsibilities. The simplicity of options is reduced in a live-in situation. The characters begin to interact with what is deemed the traditional signs of wedded permanence: laundry, finances and living quarters are shared, as well as the bed; much like one might partake in the bread and wine signs of the Eucharist without the permanence of religious duty or

service. The interaction with permanence is the displacement and exchange of a single life. The term “coupling” could be applied as the two characters simply entertain the idea of permanence, but opt for “for now” in its place. It is this fragile ecosystem in which the idea of marriage is proposed by Aidan. Carrie is either unwilling or unsure after a positive initial reaction to decipher her stance on getting married. It isn't that Aidan is a negative option, but rather Carrie's character is both a sign and carries the sign of “impermanence”.

Living together is thus separated from marriage, not in daily living or activity, but simply in the activity of signs. It isn't marriage as a cultural and historical tradition, but its perception in the show that defines the character of the signs. Marriage is shown in direct contrast from living together on the basis of permanence and its ability to change the character of the individual. The flexibility of living together offers a midpoint between the natural and the extreme. It is this curious separation that is tied to consumerism. As Baudrillard wrote in regard to credit usage for purchases, “you consume but only a fraction of the value of purchasing cost” (Baudrillard 174). By participating in the signs of but not the sign of, “until death do us part”, the characters' relationship becomes one of fluidity.

As interpreted through SATC, marriage is the finality of freedom and the loss of a certain set of characteristics such as charisma. The parameters are created to make the payment excessive, in which living together becomes the most reasonable system of exchange. Marriage is seen as a final absolution, living together as gradual. It is this gradual action that is remarkably similar to credit as a system. A slow payment plan of integration between emotional consumers: “Payments are relegated to a dimly perceived future, and the object is thus acquired in exchange for a symbolic gesture” (Baudrillard 74). The symbolic gesture of moving in assuages the question of longevity for the system of a couple's interaction, placing interaction as the means of determining quality and permanence. Payment of permanence, like the reduction of payments through credit rather than cash, allows the transfer of emotions to be sedated.

Commodity Fetishism, Love and “The One”

“Maybe its time to be clear about who I am. I am someone who is looking for love. Real love, ridiculous, inconvenient, consuming, can't live without each other love... and I don't think that love is here in this expensive suite, in this lovely hotel in Paris.” -Carrie Bradshaw (“An American Girl in Paris, Part Deux” King)

“I looked over at Steve and realized, we belong together. But he's *so* not the guy for me!” - Miranda Hobbs (“One” King)

Love plays an active role in SATC. Not simply as an action taken; but as in much of television and movies, love takes an active role in negotiating the terms of a couples' success, for which the couple seemingly has no or very little say. Being the judge of success and the reason for failure, the absence is destructive, but the existence is difficult to judge or may be unwanted. Where as love lacks concreteness, “the one” is a phrase used to assume the position of emotional satisfaction for the characters – the culmination of previous relationships and the result of which a character is finally at rest. This is the case for each of the four characters. Following a “break through”, each realizes the love they have in a significant other is greater than the some of their parts. It is also the abstract nature and effects, as well as the removal of personal action of the random occurrence that will be further discussed.

From the first episode Carrie and Big have intertwined. They would randomly run into each other, often quite literally, at various times and in the strangest of places (for example at a bris.) For such a large city, “one” is exhibited through enough events that the frequency at which they would see each other was not random, nor was the attraction they felt. Not citing any forces at work such as the Roman Cupid or Greek Eros; the only deduction could be “love” or fate/love, which is neither defined nor explained directly. Love for SATC is more than the culmination of emotions and attraction, but rather an unfathomable, incorporeal device of which the characters are powerless to resist.

However attractive the idea of fate may be, immaterial actions by an invisible force seems

contradictory in a society riddled by the word chance. Two reasons account for an imbalance. First, the seeming departure of SATC from a traditional fairy tale to a more liberated, post-feminist account of modern America, as SATC is sometimes understood to be, is ripe with pre-feminist elements. For example, the agenda is open for sexual conquest (a traditionally masculine venture) but all characters eventually found exclusive and monogamous relationships. In addition, several episodes mention phrases and the question of women requiring rescue; white knights, Prince Charming, Mr. Right and the like (Di Mattia 23). As presented, SATC characters are sexually liberated, but continue to consume the signs of fairy tales. Second, love the actionable indicator of true satisfaction, is not and cannot be seen as a passive bystander through the text. Though not tangible or definable, love is and can be seen as a floating signifier (Love is all we need); or as both anthropomorphic and fetish, and consumed as both (“I don't think that love is here between us”).

Love, defined through the text, allows for a disassociation between lovers and operates magnetically between the *right* people. “I am someone who is looking for love, real love...” (“An American Girl in Paris, Part Deux” King) separates Carrie from love, the device or substance. He may come because of love or be her other half in love, but neither he nor she is a manifestation of physical love. The separation functions similar to addition: Carrie + Love + Big = satisfaction. Love is what engages Carrie and Big, but is not created or developed – it just exists. It is this magical quality that is intriguing about the modern fairy tale, especially SATC. Love as a concept is allowable as a metaphor; it is an action (as in making love as sexual act, not creating love), it is free acting, it changes situations and may grow or decrease, and most importantly it is consumed through its attributes. Though often a shared, acted upon expression of emotion, love is the unexplainable phenomenon that occurs in one or both people in relation to each other. Though love may be shared between two people, love as an experience is very private.

Marx's theory of commodity fetishism explains the disassociation between the price of an object

and its use-value. More importantly it explains the discrepancy between purchase value and use-value. For example, a perfect four carat diamond ring might cost more than a car, though a car has many more uses than a diamond ring.

The mystical character of commodities does not originate, therefore, in their use value. Just as little does it proceed from the nature of the determining factors of value. ... with regard to that which forms the ground-work for the quantitative determination of value, namely, the duration of that expenditure, or the quantity of labor, it is quite clear that there is a palpable difference between its quantity and quality. (Marx 41)

The attribute of a fetish when applied to a commodity, is a mysterious substance that increases its cost or labor value over its use-value. As an immaterial fetish, love is an object or substance containing supernatural powers: power to heal, to make happy, to satisfy, and to provide for these items continually. As a commodity fetish, it is the highest order of value to a person, as witnessed by all four characters. The desire for it is partly what keeps them searching for more men with the need to find the elusive substance that is love. It is in this way that love becomes a commodity, a greater expense than use-value, and is consumed as not a physical item but rather through its ability to offer that which is what they did not have before, whatever that may be.

Perhaps as a means of differentiation between love, the collapsed previous relationships and love, the permanent and complete satisfaction, was the inspiration for the term “the one” on SATC. What is interesting about this phrase is that it behaves as a qualifier. Though the characters have spent many years looking for satisfaction in another person, and finding love at moments, it is the idea that there is just one person that can completely satisfy them that is labeled *the one*.

In season six Miranda realizes that for her, Steve, with whom she has a child is *the one*. However, when approaching him about this over dinner he misinterprets her intentions before she has a chance to speak and tells her, “Its OK, I'll spend more time away from your place. You don't have to worry, I don't love you anymore. I'm seeing someone else.” (“One” King). She looks heartbroken and dumbfounded as the shot closes. What is interesting about this scene is the radical departure of the

concept of love being given between two people – it is shown to be separate from a relationship, as is the idea of *the one*.

What separates Miranda in previous relationships in which she used the word *love* and when used with Steve as love and “oneness” is an indefinable substance. What is it that surrounds a particular person, leading the characters to feel or know that this person was the person they had been searching for, even if completely different than that which was imagined or hoped for? This is the idea of the commodity fetish: an immaterial attribute involuntarily attached to an object that creates excess value. An individual will trade “loves labor lost” from previous relationships, and search for a perfect person for a device or substance tied to that person. It is more than love, which is openly traded between lovers throughout the show. Love is just love, though more than romance. A suitor’s oneness is “love plus”, or the only indicator to separate between the common love felt for many and the special unique love felt for a single person. Steve's oneness is an extension or furthering from SATC's definition of love. Throughout the show the development of this idea matures. In the early seasons *the one* was only a concept spoken of by the most hopeless romantic, Charlotte. However, by the sixth and final season, all have found and been told they are *the one*.

Further continuing this analysis, it is important to discuss the compulsion to consume a commodity because of the draw of the fetish. Objects never become satisfying in themselves, but lead to the further need for goods. It is the continual need for additional experience of the commodity that defines the exchange. The characters are not satisfied with having had love as a momentary realization, but rather need to continually have or be surrounded by the object tied to that love. As mentioned before, at moments various characters did not initially want the love they had for a particular person. The active action of wanting nothing is opposed to not wanting someone. To be in this state is not to partake in the signs of love, but rather to be powerless to a desire. In this way, the function of a commodity is that it “seems to you to have magically appeared on the shelf for your

consumption” (Hooker 1999). To quote Slavok Zizek:

Coke has the paradoxical property that, the more you drink it, the more you get thirsty, the greater the need to drink more of it - with its strange bitter-sweet taste, our thirst is never effectively quenched... in the case of caffeine-free diet Coke, (don't) we almost literally "drink nothing in the guise of something"?... Nietzsche's classic opposition between 'wanting nothing' (in the sense of "I do not want anything") and the nihilistic stance of actively wanting the Nothingness itself; following Nietzsche's path, Lacan emphasized how, in anorexia, the subject does not simply 'eat nothing' - he rather actively wants to eat the Nothingness (the void) itself that is the ultimate object-cause of desire. (Polidori)

Coke, as a commodity, has the magical qualities of love as defined through the text; a mystical attribute attached that is needed for a purpose and the effect of creating a continuous need for more. The individual consumed contains the fetish in an interaction of satisfaction exchange. The commodity becomes continually exchanged, forever contained in the mysterious element that is the fetish.

Conclusion

This essay has attempted to untangle the metaphors and meanings buried within the signs and actions of the characters on SATC; to demonstrate that more than sex, love, and companionship, the underlying signs, are those of consumerism. From boyfriends to Manolo Blahnik shoes, the meaning of the text is the search for complete satisfaction in the midst of unlimited options. People and clothing are bought with credit in an attempt to resist complete interaction – perhaps in order to cope with the options available. By viewing a lover as a complex system of parts, and evaluating personality and actions as positive or negative, characters find difficulty in choosing the perfect man. The Love, as a commodity, is separate from personal action, as one is also powerless in decisions of whether a lover is or isn't *the one*. Consumer needs are shifting and fluid. Always quickly shifting emotions to new objects, the goal of every transaction is happiness. Needs are never shown as finite, though viewed and felt as final. As preferences change and develop, needs follow.

One company began offering Sex and the City tours in 2005, stopping at many often visited locations featured in the show. People taking part in the tours consumed the signs of events that never

even happened, and realized this. This is interesting in itself, as are similar movie tours, or amusement parks featuring rides enacting scenes from exciting blockbuster movies such as Jurassic Park and The Italian Job. Where a SATC tour isn't action packed and thrilling from a high impact perspective, it is packed with the emotional energy consumed through viewing the show. Visiting restaurants, bars, and shops featured in the show, a fan consumes the surroundings and perhaps experiences the sensations produced by television first hand. Is the reason for the popularity of the show the need for people to live vicariously through the characters, or simply to be able to say, I went there? Perhaps in contrasting the elements of a Jurassic Park theme ride, the reason is simply to consume a unique experience tied to another unique experience (a film or television show). To adjust to the realism of media, possibly visiting locations makes movies or television series real, or at least more *real*. Perhaps there is an echo of something real to be had in the search for satisfaction.

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