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**HOPE, DISAPPOINTMENT AND EMOTIONAL
DEPRIVATION IN NEO-VICTORIAN LITERATURE**

Bakalářská práce

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

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Zásady pro vypracování:

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na osudy protagonistek a jejich vztahů v neo-Viktoriánské literatuře. Rozbor žen byl prováděn ve vybraných dílech Sarah Watersové. Pozornost je věnována především románům Špičková jazyka, Zlodějka a Náklonnost. Pojtkem mezi jednotlivými příběhy je především hluboká citová deprivace, s čímž souvisí velká naděje a následné zklamání. Jednotlivé příběhy také spojuje problematické hledání identity, které se často odehrává až v nepřátelských podmínkách. Dále tato bakalářská práce zkoumá, zda se citová deprivace objevuje i v dalších dílech neo-Viktoriánské literatury. Protagonistky budou analyzovány mimo jiné z ohledu na jejich společenského postavení a také na základě jejich vztahů s muži.

The bachelor's thesis is focused on the women and their relationships in Neo-Victorian literature. The analysis of women has been done in selected works of Sarah Waters. The research primarily focuses on the novels *Tipping the velvet*, *Fingersmith* and *Affinity*. The main characters are connected mainly by deep emotional deprivation which is associated with big hopes followed by disappointment. The individual stories are interconnected with problematical identity search, which sometimes takes place in hostile conditions. The thesis is further concerned with other novels of Neo-Victorian Literature and whether the emotional deprivation is also presented there. The women characters will also be analysed in terms of their social status and their relationships with men.

Seznam doporučené literatury:

Boehm-Schnitker, Nadine and Susanne Gruss, eds., *Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture. Immersions and Revisitations*. New York and London: Routledge, 2014.
Renk, Kathleen. *Women Writing in the Neo-Victorian Novel: Erotic*. De Kslb: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
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Heilman Ann and Mark Llewellyn, eds. *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci s názvem „Hope, Disappointment and Emotional Deprivation in Neo-Victorian Literature” vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité a citované podklady a literaturu.

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Introduction

This thesis aims to analyse three neo-Victorian novels written by Sarah Waters: *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999), and *Fingersmith* (2002). These novels are interconnected by the portrayal of hope and disappointment. The wish of the protagonists to find their emotional stability and potentially a relationship seems to be very sincere and fervent. Looking for emotional stability is also connected to the problematical identity search, which usually occurs in hostile conditions. Their identity search and its progress will also be discussed in this thesis. In order to find their emotional stability and authentic self, they are capable of sacrificing their old lives and routines. The protagonists show a firm belief that they can entirely escape it. However, not all of them are successful.

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter is concerned with neo-Victorian literature in general. It provides general information about the Victorian era and literature and discusses the source of inspiration for the neo-Victorians. Furthermore, it also presents the neo-Victorian literature and the issue of defining its standards. This chapter will present the most significant neo-Victorian authors and their works, including a brief presentation of Sarah Waters as the author of the selected novels.

The second chapter examines the theme of hope in the selected novels. The chapter will study the occurrence of hope and its characteristics, which varies with different situation and protagonist. Also, the chapter analyses the emotional stability or deprivation connected to the protagonist's relationships and the theme of hope.

The third chapter studies a theme of disappointment, usually connected to unfulfilled hopes and wishes. Therefore, it examines how the protagonists react to the phenomenon and how they deal with the feeling of sadness. It focuses on the physical and psychological symptoms of sadness, disappointment and betrayal.

The last chapter is mainly interested in relationships in the novels, focusing on the characters' romantic relationships and non-romantic relationships. The chapter is also concerned with the connection between the protagonist's relationship and emotional stability or deprivation. As Victorian literature often discusses the problematic relationship between men and women, the last chapter also studies protagonists' relationships with men and their significance compared to the relationships with other women in the selected novels.

1. Neo-Victorian Literature

Neo-Victorian works have their origins in the Victorian era and society. Queen Victoria's reign lasted from 1837 until 1901. Her beliefs and convictions created what we nowadays associate with the Victorian era. As her lengthy reign covered three generations, it is appropriate to divide this era into early, mid, and late. As Victoria's beloved husband passed away in 1861, she created a 'cult of mourning' associated with the perception of Victorians as serious, prudish, and repressed.¹

The technological and scientific progression changed everyday life as well as a worldview and perception of our history. Darwin presented his theory of evolution, mass market and consumerism were established, transportation of people became faster, cheaper and more accessible. Furthermore, education became more affordable for many people, and communication changed with the invention of the telegraph. The advances were also present in the medical sphere, including the invention of painkillers, anaesthetics and antiseptics. Since pain was no longer an inevitable part of human life, Victorian people struggled with justifying suffering as part of God's will, creating a conflict between religion and science.² Because of these advances, inventions and developments, the term 'Victorian' became associated not with the queen but with the idea of 'belonging to an exciting new generation and a new world.'³

Victorian society defines the 'normal' identity with respect to gender, sexuality, nationhood, class and race.⁴ Because of the reflection of this 'normal' identity in neo-Victorian literature, it is also essential to discuss it in this chapter. Primarily this part focuses on women's identity, as they are key characters in Sarah Waters's novels. The identity of the Victorian woman was strictly defined by men, whether it was her husband, father or brother who determined her social status and represented her in the public sphere. Therefore, Victorian women had no rights on their own. Despite women's tight connection to men, there is a question of whether they could rely on their male partners and entrust them their whole life. Women could not be defined as individuals or as partners of other women. Because of the lack of political rights and the ability of self-

¹ Louisa Hadley, *Neo-Victorian Fiction and Historical Narrative: The Victorians and Us*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 30.

² Maureen Moran: *Victorian Literature and Culture*. (London: Continuum, 2006), 58.

³ Mike Paterson, *A Brief History of Life in Victorian Britain: A Social History of Queen Victoria's Reign* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2000), 2.

⁴ Moran: *Victorian Literature*, 4.

determination, denial of responsibility and manipulation of women were usual tactics during the Victorian era.

Many famous authors wrote their works during the Victorian period – Charles Dickens, the Brontës, George Meredith, Matthew Arnold, and others. The main themes varied from work to work; however, religion, love, nature, and death were the most recurring themes. The social system was an object of interest to many Victorian authors, such as Charles Dickens, who showed the life of the ‘abnormal’ in his works. Social problem plays/novels, comedy of manners, sensation fiction and the novel of public life were one of the most frequent genres written in the Victorian era. Victorian literature also developed new genres, such as crime mystery, horror novels, and science fiction.

The model of Victorian society was immersed into the 20th century, even after the end of the famous Victorian era. The significance of the Victorian era is explained by Aria and Pulham, showing that the ‘Victorian past is all around us: it exists in the municipal buildings of our major cities, it is visible in our education system; it underpins cultural tourism...’⁵ The immersion and rediscovery of Victorian literature helped to establish a new literary movement, neo-Victorianism.

Neo-Victorian literature is relatively new as an academic discipline. The term itself was established together with creating an online journal Neo-Victorian Studies in 2008. Because of the youth of the term, it is also loosely defined. The term neo-Victorian literature was created by studying Victorian novels and adding contemporary elements into them, often by empowering previously marginalised characters.⁶ Heilmann and Llewellyn explain that neo-Victorian literature is more than a historical novel set in the 19th century: ‘texts must in some respect be self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians.’⁷

Gruss and Schnitker add to this definition of neo-Victorianism the connection between today’s problems and the society of the 19th century: ‘It would hence be defined by its particular way of revisiting the nineteenth-century past in order to (co-)articulate

⁵ Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham, “Introduction,” In *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction*, ed. Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), xi.

⁶ Jacqueline Banerjee, “Neo-Victorianism: An Introduction,” The Victorian Web, last modified August 26, 2013, <https://victorianweb.org/neovictorian/introduction.html>.

⁷ Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty -First Century 1999-2009* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 4.

today's concerns.'⁸ Cox broadens the definition by creating two sub-categories of neo-Victorianism, such as 'creative works that in some way engage with Victorian literature and culture, and scholarly works that seek to explore the shifting relationship with the Victorian period since its close in 1901, often through a critical investigation of Neo-Victorian creative works.'⁹

Cora Kaplan offers another definition 'that includes the self-conscious rewriting of historical narratives to highlight the suppressed histories of gender and sexuality, race and empire, as well as challenges to the conventional understandings of the historical itself.'¹⁰ However, Kate Mitchell raises a question about whether it is possible for the neo-Victorian novels' to present the Victorian past without only 'fashioning' it for contemporary readers.¹¹ However, Llewellyn assumes that neo-Victorianism has an underlying purpose that 'Neo-Victorianism has the potential to help us think through the ways in which we teach, research and publish on the Victorian themselves.'¹²

Louisa Hadley defines neo-Victorian fiction very broadly as 'a fiction that engages with the Victorian era, at either the level of plot, structure, or both.'¹³ She adds that 'the engagement with the Victorian past is explicitly mediated through Victorian literature'¹⁴ in some neo-Victorian novels, such as Pater Carey's *Jack Maggs* or A.S.Byatt's *The Conjugal Angel*.

One of the first authors considered neo-Victorian was John Fowles, who introduced this field with his novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). However, some scholars argue that some novels offer a new look at the Victorian era preceding Fowles's. The new view is provided by Robert Graves's *The Real David Copperfield* (1933), Virginia Woolf's *Freshwater* (1935), Michael Sadleir's *Fanny by Gaslight* (1944), and Marghanita Laski's *The Victorian Chaise-Longue* (1953).

⁸ Nadine Boehm-Schnitker, *Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture: Immersions and Revisitations* (London: Routledge, 2014), 5.

⁹ Jessica Cox, "Neo-Victorianism," *Oxford Bibliographies*, last modified April 24, 2012, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199799558/obo-9780199799558-0083.xml>.

¹⁰ Cora Kaplan, *Victoriana - Histories, Fictions, Criticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 3.

¹¹ Kate Mitchell, *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.

¹² Mark Llewellyn, "What Is Neo-Victorian Studies?" *Neo-Victorian Studies* 1:1 (Autumn 2008): 165.

¹³ Hadley, *Neo-Victorian Fiction*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Even though this thesis is concerned primarily with the works of Sarah Waters, this section would be interested in the works of A. S. Byatt and Michel Faber, as their works are an integral part of neo-Victorianism.

Byatt's best neo-Victorian novel is *Possession*. Being categorised as research novel,¹⁵ it is set not only in Victorian England but also in a contemporary world, which allowed us to show the contrast and the similarities between the two eras. Two scholars, Roland Michell and Maud Bailey, try to uncover the love affair between two Victorian poets – Randolph Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte. Thomas states the letters exchanged between the lovers allowed 'the letter writer some creative control over the feelings of vulnerability often experienced in a developing romantic relationship [and] provided a way to create and present selves for and to each other before they met face to face.'¹⁶ This situation, therefore, could be comparable to the exchange of the letters between the Victorian poets Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett. Thomas then describes the approach of the fictional characters and the actual poets, showing LaMotte's dealing 'with the dual, seemingly conflicting roles of woman and artist,' which is similar to Barrett's struggle.¹⁷ The description of sex scenes is described as rather mythic, being 'suggestive but not graphic and is more in keeping with Victorian conventions about the depiction of sexual activity in the novel.'¹⁸ This tactic is usual for neo-Victorian fiction (Kaplan excludes only Faber's *Crimson Petal and the White*), showing 'nostalgia for a less sexually knowing and brazenly expressive society.'¹⁹

Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* tells a story of two women with the opposite lives in the Victorian era connected by one man – William Rackham. Faber's female characters 'must be vulnerable but exceptional, in intelligence and beauty if not entirely in her ethical trajectory.'²⁰ William's wife Agnes is considered mentally ill, knowing nothing about sexuality, menstruation, or childbirth. Despite this, she is called

¹⁵ Jana Valová, "The Portrayal of Women in Neo-Victorian Literature" (Master's Diploma thesis, Masaryk University, 2019), 15.

¹⁶ Susan Stock Thomas, "Writing the Self and Other in Byatt's 'Possession' and in the Browning/Barrett Correspondence," *Studies in Browning and His Circle* 20 (1992), part II: 88.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁸ Kathleen J. Renk, *Women Writing the Neo-Victorian Novel: Erotic "Victorians"* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 10.

¹⁹ Kaplan, *Victoriana*, 95.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

‘the icon of Victorian femininity,’²¹ depicting the ‘normality’ of Victorian women. The second woman is Sugar, a very intelligent prostitute who has an affair with William. Faber’s novel is outstanding since it introduces the contemporary reader to the ‘Victorian world of odours’ by containing ‘a number of scenes in which good and bad smells are to be sensed.’²² Armintor explains the purposes of Faber’s novel (and generally all neo-Victorian novels): ‘are to provide the content and narrative conceits of a Victorian novel, while at the same time providing a convincing historical review of Victorian times, paired with a clear-eyed critique of Victorian morals.’²³

Other significant authors writing neo-Victorian novels include Will Self (*Dorian, An Imitation*, 2002), Jean Rhys (*Wide Sargasso Sea*, 1966), and Peter Carey (*Jack Maggs*, 1997). Many neo-Victorian novels were transformed into film adaptations which confirms the popularity of neo-Victorian literature.

This chapter will also shortly offer a biography of Sarah Waters since she is the author of the selected novels. Sarah Waters was born on 21st July 1966 in Neyland, Wales. Later, she earned a PhD at the University of London, studying English literature. Currently, she lives in London with Lucy Vaughan. As she mentioned in an interview, she got inspired and influenced by the works of Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Mary Shelley, and the Brontës.²⁴

Until this day, Sarah Waters published six novels – *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999), *Fingersmith* (2002), *The Night Watch* (2006), *The Little Stranger* (2009), and *The Paying Guests* (2014). The first four novels were transformed into a film adaptation. All her novels (the only exception is *The Little Stranger*) contain lesbian characters and themes connected to the author’s sexuality.

²¹ Silvana Colella, “Olfactory Ghosts: Michel Faber’s *The Crimson Petal and the White*,” In *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction*, ed. Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 97.

²² Rosario Arias, “Traces and Vestiges of the Victorian Past in Contemporary Fiction,” In *Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture*, ed. Nadine Boehm Schnitker and Susanne Gruss (New York & London: Routledge, 2014), 119.

²³ Marshall Needleman Armintor, “‘Dear Holy Sister’: Narrating Madness, Bodily Horror and Religious Ecstasy in Michel Faber’s *The Crimson Petal and the White*,” In *Neo-Victorian Madness*, ed. Sarah E. Maier and Brenda Ayres (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 146.

²⁴ Michelle McGrane “Sarah Waters on Writing: ‘If I Waited for Inspiration to Strike, It Would Never Happen!’” interview with Sarah Waters, *LitNet*, April 10, 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20070927222531/http://www.litnet.co.za/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause_dir_news_item&news_id=3630&cause_id=1270.

Her earlier works (discussed in this thesis) are set in the Victorian era, but since she offers a new perspective on the Victorian era and society, these novels are considered neo-Victorian. In these neo-Victorian works, Sarah Waters ‘create[d] fictional characters and events as a way to explore issues that were central to Victorian culture.’²⁵ Her later novels, *The Nightwatch* (2006) and *The Little Stranger* (2009) are set in the 1940s, the latter focusing on changes in the postcolonial war. Her last published book, *The Paying Guests* (2014), is set in the 1920s, discussing the post-war changes. All her novels are prevalent, some of them being translated into more than 20 languages. Also, her work received awards, yet the most appreciated is her second novel *Affinity*.

²⁵ Hadley, *Neo-Victorian Fiction*, 4.

1. Hope in *Tipping the Velvet*, *Fingersmith*, and *Affinity*

1.1. Hope and Emotional Deprivation in *Tipping the Velvet*

In *Tipping the Velvet*, Sarah Waters utilises hope in various situations. Hope is usually connected to a new relationship when a protagonist looks forward to her new future and pictures it in the best way possible, denying any chance of ending the desired relationship. With the belief of finding a stable relationship, the protagonist also hopes to find her true self.

The novel's protagonist is Nancy, a young girl from Whitstable who works in an oyster family restaurant. At the beginning of the story, Nancy is only 18 years old. Her sister Alice is also her best friend, with whom Nancy also shares her bed and everyday thoughts and struggles. However, when Nancy enters the theatre and meets Kitty for the first time, everything in her life changes. She realises her sexual orientation with Kitty and feels the desire to escape her current life. Because of her strong belief, she purposefully looks for signals of Kitty's affection towards her: 'And she looked - *looked*, I swear it – towards the empty chair in which I usually sat.'²⁶

Even though it may be a coincidence that she looked her way, Nancy assumes it was because of her. Nancy's analysis of everything Kitty says or does is a frequent phenomenon, mainly done to read her unsaid words and unexpressed feelings. Nancy's desire to have a relationship with Kitty becomes a reality when Kitty offers Nancy to move with her to London. Since Nancy's loving parents do not stand in her way, she accepts without hesitating. When Kitty and Nancy become friends, Nancy's hope overgrows to an obsession, while Kitty considers Nancy only as her good friend. However, Nancy realises that her feelings towards Kitty are not requited, admitting it with a statement 'I knew that Kitty and I felt just the same – only, of course, about different things.'²⁷

At first, Nancy's strong affection towards Kitty seems unbearable to her. Later, Nancy becomes used to being around Kitty, which allows her to distance herself from her emotions for Kitty. Only jealousy forced Kitty to realise her growing affection towards Nancy, which helped their relationship to grow and become mutual.

²⁶ Sarah Waters, *Tipping the Velvet* (London: Virago Press, 2018), 24.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

After parting ways with Kitty, her happiness and hopes return after meeting Diana Lethaby. Nancy accepts an offer to join Diana to make some money because Nancy describes her in terms of how large the stones in her rings were. But then, they start to develop a connection. Diana helps Nancy realise who she is and encourages her to live her life without covering her true self. Nancy realises what Diana says is true and decides to move on from her 'old life' to a new one, choosing passion over ordinary life:

I had loved Kitty – I would always love Kitty. But I had lived with her a kind of queer half-life, hiding from my own true self. Since then, I had refused to love at all, had become – or so I thought – a creature beyond passion, driving other to their secret, humiliating confessions of lust; but never offering my own... After all, there are moments in our lives that change us, that discontent us with our pasts and offer us a new futures.²⁸

Despite the limitations of her new life, such as the lack of freedom, Nancy enjoys living with Diana. When Nancy is with Diana, she finally loses 'her sense of ghostliness,'²⁹ apparent when Diana is not around her. Although Nancy's relationship with Diana grows, it grows only on the sexual side. Diana lacks emotional support towards Nancy and appears to control her rather than be a supportive partner. O'Callaghan perfectly defines Nancy's relationship with Diana: 'While Diana enables Nancy to express her lesbian desires, she also 'possesses' her, keeping her enclosed in the ironically named Felicity Place and making her accompany her (like a pet) on visits.'³⁰ The more Nancy's satisfaction with Diana decreases, the more Nancy thinks about Kitty and their previous emotional connection: '*Miss Mermaid*, she had called me; and she had said it again that time in Stamford Hill, when she had heard me weeping, come, and kissed my tears...'³¹

After being abandoned from Felicity Place and then left by Zena, Nancy is again on her own. During her fight for survival, her mind dwells on all the important people in her past, looking for someone to help her. At last, she decides to find Florence, a person she knew the least. They never got a chance to become closer, as their arranged meeting never happened. Still, Nancy sets her hopes on Florence (almost a stranger to her) to help her. Nancy is eager to do anything to stay with Florence and her brother Ralph. Even though

²⁸ Waters, *Tipping the Velvet*, 249-250.

²⁹ Ibid., 265.

³⁰ Claire O'Callaghan, "' Grisley 'L' business': Re-valuing Female Masculinity and Butch Subjectivity in *Tipping the Velvet* and *The Night Watch*", In *Sarah Waters and Contemporary Feminisms*, ed. Adele Jones and Claire O'Callaghan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 200.

³¹ Waters, *Tipping the Velvet*, 276, original emphasis.

Florence was kind to her, Nancy does not feel the affection: ‘Florence, too, was pleasant enough to me, in her own tired, distracted sort of way. But though she ate the suppers I cooked; though she handed me Cyril to wash and dress and cradle... Though she did all these things, she never did them as if she really did them for *me*.’³²

During Nancy’s stay, she realises that her previous assumptions about ordinary life and passion were partly wrong. Her intention to be with Florence forced her to rethink her attitude towards life, trying to find her true self again:

I had been a regular girl once; I could be regular again – being regular, indeed, might prove a kind of holiday... My lusts had been quick, and driven me to desperate pleasures: but she, I knew, would never raise them. My too-tender heart had once grown hard and had lately grown harder – but there was no chance of it softening, I thought, at Quilter Street.³³

1.2. Hope and Emotional Deprivation in *Affinity*

In *Affinity*, Sarah Waters also uses hope as a theme. The protagonist of this book, Margaret Prior, is a woman from an upper-class family living in London. After her father’s death, she unsuccessfully committed suicide. While in recovery, she was encouraged to start visiting the women’s prison at Millbank. During her visits, she becomes a personified hope for the women prisoners. The prisoners seem happy to talk to someone outside of Millbank, usually with wishes she would come back and talk to them again. Some of the women even beg Margaret to intercede for them. However, Margaret becomes interested in one girl named Selina Dawes. Therefore, she usually only promises other women to intercede, but in reality, she does not care, proving it by saying ‘I said I would, only to pacify her; and then I left her.’³⁴

When Selina and Margaret first met, Margaret didn’t see Selina. What she recognised at first was Selina’s sigh. Her sigh is described as perfect, which shows Margaret’s immediate emotional interest in Selina: ‘It was broken by a *sigh*, a single sigh-it seemed to me, a *perfect* sigh, like a sigh in a story; and the sigh being such a complement to my own mood I found it worked upon me, in that setting, rather strangely.’³⁵

Selina’s innocence and perfection are emphasised thanks to the flower in Selina’s hands. In Margaret’s eyes, Selina resembles a saint or an angel from Crivelli’s painting

³² Waters, *Tipping the Velvet*, 380.

³³ *Ibid.*, 373.

³⁴ Sarah Waters, *Affinity* (London: Virago Press, 2008), 65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 26, original emphasis.

more than a woman in prison because of being described with words such as *stillness*, *devotional*, and *glow*. When she ends the description of the perfect picture of Selina, she realises ‘the dimness of the world that was about her’³⁶, and her description with the connection to the dimness resembles the artistic technique called *chiaroscuro*, used primarily in renaissance paintings.

After a moment of perfection, peace, and hope, given by Selina’s pose and flower in her hand, Margaret faces the truth of Millbank, realising there are no flowers – no hopes for women to find a better place. The idea of hope is suppressed at Millbank, describing the inability of prisoners to get better with the metaphor that ‘no daises, violets, or dandelion clock would grow in a Millbank soil.’³⁷ Selina’s resemblance to Crivelli’s painting remains in Margaret’s mind, resulting in Margaret putting up a Crivelli’s painting in her room, supporting the idea of Selina’s innocence and perfection. Also, the idea of Selina’s saintliness is strengthened when Selina is seen praying or reciting a biblical text.

Margaret becomes interested in Selina because Selina is a medium. Firstly, Margaret denies spiritualism. However, when Selina talks about Margaret’s deceased father, Margaret is shocked, thinking ‘she must be what she is, as she must breathe, or dream, or swallow.’³⁸ Her belief of Selina being a medium is also supported by Selina knowing about Margaret’s lost locket.

Selina can be perceived as a personified hope. Before her imprisonment, she was a medium trying to help other people, especially girls. They usually visited her intending to cure their queer illnesses, showing signs of weakness, nervousness, and aches. With Miss Silvester, a girl that was the cause of Selina’s imprisonment, Selina expressed ‘a desire to assist Miss Silvester in knowing her own clairvoyante powers.’³⁹ Some of her visitors wanted to connect with their deceased loved ones, which is the case of Mrs Brink, who offered Selina to live with her to communicate with her dead mother. Selina used the hope and feeling of satisfaction to manipulate other people to get what she wanted. For example, the connection she provided for Mrs Jelf was a crucial moment, helping her to escape from Millbank prison.

³⁶ Waters, *Affinity*, 27.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 149.

Even though several signs of Margaret's emotional connection towards Selina are visible in her diary, she never says it straightaway. As Mitchell states, Margaret's diary attempts to repress her lesbian desire rather than reveal it.⁴⁰ However, Margaret proves her emotional connection to Selina many times, for example, when Margaret starts crying in front of her. After that, Margaret says she found her closer than ever.⁴¹

Margaret later talks about her feelings and deepest desires with Selina. One day, Margaret envies that her sister has evolved, while Margaret herself feels 'more firmly unevolved than ever'⁴². Margaret also protests against traditional society when she asks for some liberty and change because 'women are bred to do more of the same'⁴³ and only girls like her 'throw the system out, makes it stagger'⁴⁴. Selina understands it, explaining that there are no sexes in the higher world, which should be transformed into the 'real' world to change society. With this message, she tries to encourage the equality of both sexes and sexual orientations. During this conversation, Selina also explains how a person knows when its soul finds another one with a strong connection: 'She will know. Does she look for air, before she breathes it? This love will be guided to her; and when it comes, she will know. And she will do anything to keep that love about her, then. Because to lose it will be like a death to her.'⁴⁵

The profound conversation in which Margaret reveals her genuine opinions and feelings brings them closer. From this moment, Margaret writes differently about her life and herself, and she also finally admits her feelings for Selina: 'Now I can see that my heart has crept across these pages, after all. I can see the crooked passage of it, it grows firmer as the paper turns. It grows so firm at last; it spells a name – *Selina*.'⁴⁶

As Margaret wrote in her diary, she feels not like herself, or maybe too much like herself, like her old self, her naked Aurora self⁴⁷, which refers to feeling love towards someone again. Aurora was Margaret's nickname when she was close to Helen, who is now happily married to Margaret's brother Stephen. The nickname 'Aurora' is not accidental, while Renk sees the connection to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epic poem

⁴⁰ Mitchell, *History and Cultural Memory*, 124.

⁴¹ Waters, *Affinity*, 209.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 208.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 241, original emphasis.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 242.

Aurora Leigh.⁴⁸ When Margaret and Selina become closer, Margaret asks Selina to call her Aurora, demonstrating a similar ‘intimate’ relationship Margaret had with Helen and now has with Selina. Renk also claims that other parts of Margaret’s life resemble the life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning – both wanted to escape their life to be with their love, in the case of Elizabeth – with Robert Browning.⁴⁹

After Selina’s attack and Margaret’s illness, Margaret is allowed to come back to Millbank. When they finally meet again, Selina starts crying and tells Margaret how much she wanted her to return. She admits their connection by saying she wouldn’t be able to bear how terrible it was if Margaret had not been there to take a little of the darkness to herself.⁵⁰ Although the attack caused pain on both sides, it brought them closer. As a result, Selina comes up with a plan to free her from prison, allowing them to start a new life together. At first, Margaret thinks of it as a very insane idea, thinking about the reality - how the escape and the situation after it would have been. Then, Selina confesses her love: ‘My spirit does not love yours, it is *entwined* with it. Our flesh does not love: our flesh is the same and longs to leap to itself. It must do that, or wither!’⁵¹

When Selina mentions she knows about Helen, Margaret realises she speaks the truth about everything and starts to weep. She may have been scared of the enormous change and risks it can bring. Therefore, she runs away from the cell and leaves Selina. Suddenly, not far away from Selina’s cell, she musters the courage to stand for her love and potentially the new life. Margaret comes back, confesses love to Selina, and they start to plan her escape.

The change in Margaret’s behaviour is remarkable. She gains more self-consciousness and shows the ability to stand up for herself in front of her mother and brother, which was unusual behaviour before this moment. This change of behaviour was probably caused by the upcoming change in her life, as Margaret describes it - she has to lose one life to gain another and slowly is separating herself from all the things and people from the old life.⁵² When she distances herself from the people and things from her old life, she gradually evolves into a different person. As we learn from *Tipping the Velvet*, hopes are usually connected to a person’s evolution and finding the true self, and this

⁴⁸ Renk, *Women Writing the Neo-Victorian*, 134.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Waters, *Affinity*, 270.

⁵¹ Ibid., 275, original emphasis.

⁵² Ibid., 286-288.

presumption also applies to *Affinity*. Margaret's highest hopes for a new life completely overshadow current her life and routines. Her only concern is what she has to prepare for their trip and their new life. As she risks everything, she realises she shall die when Selina doesn't come to her.⁵³

The night of 20th January was the night Selina was to come. All night, Margaret waited with her biggest hopes that kept her awake. She describes her wanting as fierce, which even makes her ill,⁵⁴ presenting her faith in their plan to happen. When the sun rises, Selina does not come. However, Margaret still believes there is an explanation and a chance that she will find Selina somewhere else, as she profoundly believes in the power of ghosts and spiritualism. When the matrons in Millbank tell her about Selina's escape, Margaret is in shock, but her deepest beliefs are still present. While Margaret is in prison, she reassures herself that Selina must be in her house, waiting for her to come. When Margaret sees a woman wearing the matron's cloak in front of her house, she realises that Selina must have escaped in the matron's clothes and is convinced that the woman is Selina. However, the woman was an actual matron from Millbank prison, Mrs Jelf. When Mrs Jelf explains what relationship she had with Selina, Margaret realises the bitter truth, and her hopes become destroyed. As Renk claims, Selina's fraud was prompted by her desire to gain power and freedom by showing their strong affinity for one another.⁵⁵ Even though there is a possibility of Selina having a real emotional connection with Margaret, it seems rather unlikely as Selina pretends her affection for Margaret and then steals her money, passport, and heart, leaving Margaret devastated.

1.3. Hope and Emotional Deprivation in *Fingersmith*

The last book chosen for this thesis is *Fingersmith*. The story is introduced by Susan Trinder, an orphan living with her adoptive mother Mrs Sucksby and other orphans. In the beginning, Sue agrees to help Richard Rivers (called Gentleman) to marry rich and young Maud Lilly. However, Gentleman does not intend to marry her for his love for Maud, but for her money. Gentleman and Sue eventually make a deal together, and Sue agrees only because of the profit, finding it hard to leave her life and her relatives. Therefore money is perceived as a chance for a better life. Because Gentleman described Maud as queer, dumb and unexperienced, Sue perceives her in this way. However, as

⁵³Waters, *Affinity*, 309.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁵⁵ Renk, *Women Writing the Neo-Victorian*, 136.

time progresses and Gentleman continues to court Maud, Sue feels the urge to protect her, developing an emotional connection to her: 'I should have been glad to see him do it. I was not... Now, against the dark of his jacket and hair, she seemed so neat – so slight, so pale – I thought she might break. I thought he might swallow her up, or bruise her.'⁵⁶

In the second part of the book, Maud becomes the narrator, enabling the reader to see what happened from a different point of view. Mr Rivers (called Gentleman by Sue) visits Maud and claims the desire to free Maud from her life in Briar, offering her to choose new life and re-clothe herself to suit her fancy.⁵⁷ At first, Maud is indifferent to his plan and lacks the longing for freedom. Later on, her desire for liberty is awakened, and she realises independence is what she wants the most, describing her desire for freedom 'rises like a shadow in the house or creeps like a bloom across its walls.'⁵⁸

Even though Maud states 'I could not want a lover, more than I want freedom,'⁵⁹ she develops a strong emotional connection with Sue. Maud describes the emotions towards Sue as a feeling that haunts and inhabits her, like a sickness.⁶⁰ Also, she feels that her change in feelings must be visible to others and Sue. When their emotional connection becomes physical, Maud feels changed, reborn, and opened up to life.

Sue becomes a lover and an intermediary for Maud's liberty, as she is the only person who could be admitted to the madhouse instead of Maud and free Maud from her destiny and life. Therefore Maud's relationship with Sue is very complicated because of the tough choice between love and liberty. Renk is also aware of the complexity of their relationship and therefore presents the protagonists as 'self-seeking, willing to do anything-short of murder- to achieve some semblance of individual freedom as women. They will even be willing to betray one another, despite their growing affection, desire and love for each other.'⁶¹ This argument is presented by Maud's thoughts, showing the unwillingness to give up her freedom for a desire she feels for Sue: 'I think I will swallow down my desire, as I have swallowed down grief, and rage. *Shall I be thwarted, shall I be checked – held to my past, kept from my future – by her? I think, I shan't.*⁶²

⁵⁶ Sarah Waters, *Fingersmith* (London: Virago Press, 2005), 118.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 277, original emphasis.

⁶¹ Renk, *Women Writing Neo-Victorian*, 110.

⁶² Waters, *Fingersmith*, 278, original emphasis.

Suddenly, her life is out of order, focusing only on the idea of escape and freedom. London becomes the symbol of her upcoming liberty. Maud repeatedly asks about how life in London is and thinks about it when alone, imagining her future life and home. Before admitting Sue to the madhouse, her emotional deprivation raises, and even the thought of London does not calm her nervousness. London is the symbol of freedom not only for Maud but also for Sue. When she successfully escapes the madhouse, she only thinks of London. London, therefore, becomes a personified hope for the women, giving them a chance for a new start, new life, and new opportunities.

After Maud's arrival at Mrs Sucksby's house at Lant Street, her only chance for a better life is the escape, eventually to Briar to seek help in her uncle's house or Mr Hawtrey's shop. As both Mr Hawtrey and Maud's uncle fail to live up to her expectations, Maud leaves her desire discontented. Realising she has no one to care about her, Maud eventually returns to Mrs Sucksby's house.

The last part is again narrated by Sue, beginning the narration after the arrival in the madhouse, describing the harsh conditions and her struggle to defend her real identity and staying sane. When Charles, a boy from Briar, visits Sue, her memories and hopes are brought back as she wakes up from her illusions and dreams. Even though he initially came to visit Maud instead of Sue, he agrees to help Sue with escaping the madhouse. When she was sleeping a lot, she became resistant to the cruelty in the madhouse; but when Charles woke her up, she realised how cruel the place was. However, she doesn't want to fall into dreaming again because she would lose the chance of escaping with Charles.

Eventually, her escape is successful, leaving her with the faith to reunite with Mrs Sucksby and return to her old life. Even though Sue initially thought of murdering Maud the first moment they would have met, she does not do it. Later, her feelings towards Maud are shifted to the positive side, leaving Sue hoping to meet Maud again: 'I wondered it, every day. 'Perhaps today,' I would think each morning, 'will be the day she'll come.' And then, each night: 'Perhaps tomorrow...'⁶³

When Sue learns about Mrs Sucksby's plan and her true parentage, she thinks about how Maud tried to protect her from the most significant disappointment: 'I was thinking of Maud, starting up with the knife. I was thinking of Maud, letting me hate her. I was

⁶³ Waters, *Fingersmith*, 515.

thinking of Maud, making me think she'd hurt me, to save me knowing who had hurt me most...'⁶⁴

She realises, what a connection Sue truly has for Maud. She admits that she had a wall around her heart, which kept out her love – ‘my heart was flooded, I thought I should drown...’⁶⁵ The realisation of her passion helped her get better from her illness, caused by the deep sorrow from the betrayal. She gains the courage to devote all her life to finding Maud. Her emotional attachment and desire to meet Maud helped her arrive at Briar, where she eventually finds her. At first, Maud is scared of being attacked by Sue. However, Sue confesses her strong emotions to Maud, which are required, fulfilling Sue's hopes. Finally, their mutual betrayal, done to obtain social and economic freedom, led them to find the liberty they both longed for, breaking the usual patriarchal system. Muller argues that Maud and Sue escape their false identities only after Rivers' and Mrs Sucksby's death because they created the fictional identities of Maud and Sue.⁶⁶ Miller, however, connects their achievement of freedom with their mothers' attempt to acquire power and freedom.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Waters, *Fingersmith*, 534.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 535.

⁶⁶ Nadine Muller, “Not my Mother's Daughter: Matrilinealism, Third-wave Feminism & Neo-Victorian Fiction,” *Neo-Victorian Studies* 2, no. 2, (Winter 2009/2010): 120.

⁶⁷ Kathleen A. Miller, “Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith*: Leaving Women's fingerprints on Victorian Pornography” *Nineteenth-century Studies* 4, no. 1 (spring 2008), <http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue41/miller.html> (accessed 21.04.2022).

2. Disappointment in *Tipping the Velvet*, *Fingersmith*, and *Affinity*

2.1. Disappointment and Sorrow in *Tipping the Velvet*

As discussed in the previous chapter, hope is a recurring theme in *Tipping the Velvet*. The following feeling to hope could be a disappointment because hopes do not always have to be fulfilled. This chapter is concerned with how the protagonist deals with the frustration, studying her coping mechanisms and strategies to overcome the most profound sorrow caused by it. Because hope is portrayed as a desire to find the true self, disappointment helps reshape the protagonist's beliefs and strategies used in her life, genuinely assisting the protagonist in changing her authentic self.

While Nancy wants to be public about their relationship and sexual orientation, Kitty seems scared of being a 'tom' (female homosexual) publicly, which causes tension between them.⁶⁸ As a result, Nancy desires to tell at least somebody the big secret about their relationship. She writes a letter to her beloved sister in hopes of understanding and support. However, her sister presents the opposite, telling her regrets about Nancy meeting Kitty: 'I only wish that you had never met her, not ever gone away, but only stayed in Whitstable where you belong, and with those who love you properly.'⁶⁹

However, Nancy never tells us what she felt reading this; she only wonders whether her parents would have told her the same. She probably may have felt sorrow at this moment, but the disappointment was momentary because of her firm belief that Kitty is the right person to stabilise her emotions and build a new life with. However, this conflict is opened again when Nancy comes home for a few days. Nancy starts the conversation about the letter, which signals her urge to reassure her sister that she did not mean it seriously. Shortly after Alice explains she hasn't changed her mind, Nancy reassures herself of her persistent connection.

When Nancy arrives early from visiting her family, she finds Walter's cloak hanging on the hatstand, evaluating the situation as queer because she arrived early in the morning. When she steps into the room, she finds both Kitty and Walter. Due to their queer behaviour, Nancy realises the betrayal. Nancy is furious, begging for an explanation. When Kitty admits infidelity, the intention to marry Walter, and end their theatre shows, Nancy is devastated. In this state of mind, she becomes aggressive to others, pushing

⁶⁸ Renk, *Women Writing the Neo-Victorian*, 120.

⁶⁹ Waters, *Tipping the Velvet*, 134.

Kitty to the floor, destroying her necklace, and threatening Walter to kill Kitty and herself. After that, she chooses to run away, which can be said to be a coward way of dealing with the hurtful truth. The simplicity of the action makes it a prevalent coping mechanism.

Her pride prevented her from returning to Kitty, even for her own money, clothes, and other personal things. She decides to steal their money and clothes from their dressing room in the theatre rather than meet Kitty again. She escapes reality completely by not leaving her room for weeks. While reading a newspaper, Nancy finds out about Kitty's marriage, which deepens her sorrow. Despite the pain it caused, this moment helped her move on. She realises what a fool she has been to let them hurt her, and to protest this, she finally gets out of her room, takes a bath, and tries to find a way to live without her. Nancy eventually overcomes her sadness after weeks of sleeping and reliving the moments with Kitty. This experience helps her grow when she uses the things that hurt her most into her strengths, transforming herself into a man. As Renk suggests, the process of transforming herself into a man is essential to finding her true self.⁷⁰ As a result of this, Nancy feels safer and more conscious than before. Even though Nancy finally moves on, her deep sorrow is still present: 'I was like a person who, having once been robbed of all he owns and loves, turns thief himself – not to enjoy his neighbours' chattels, but to spoil them.'⁷¹

Even though she enjoys living with Diana and the opportunity to live a rich and comfortable life, she soon realises what she lacks are freedom and emotional stability. Sexuality is one part, but liberty and emotional stability are more important. Nancy slowly loses her interest in Diana, and the process is hurried by more frequent thoughts of Kitty. When she learns about Kitty being nearby, she cannot resist her persistent emotions and goes to see her and Walter in a theatre while being out with Diana. Even after a long time without Kitty, she continues to suffer: 'Now, knowing that Kitty was so near, it was as if I was compelled to press the bruise, to twist the shrieking limb, myself.'⁷²

⁷⁰ Renk, *Women Writing the Neo-Victorian*, 120.

⁷¹ Waters, *Tipping the Velvet*, 206.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 291.

When she sees Kitty after a while, she describes her with a possessive pronoun, expressing her emotional possession of Kitty: ‘They liked seeing Kitty – my lovely, saucy, swaggering Kitty play the child, with her husband, in stocking to the knee.’⁷³ Suddenly, she probably realises Kitty does not belong to her anymore. Nancy cannot observe them singing and playing and decides to leave, emotionally deprived. She thought she would find sympathy in Diana, but Diana’s dominance and selfish orders help Nancy realise Diana’s indifference towards her feelings.

When she becomes closer to Diana’s other servant – Zena Blake, her disgust against Diana explodes during Diana’s birthday party, when Diana makes fun of Zena and wants Zena to take off her clothes in front of all her guests. Nancy stands for Zena, which is inappropriate for a servant, and both are humiliated. Their intense disgust against Diana brings them closer, resulting in Diana catching them during their lovemaking, furiously dismissing both. Nancy realises the seriousness of the situation only shortly before being left outside, begging for a second chance. However, her begging turns unsuccessful, leaving her homeless during a cold January.

After weeks of living with Florence and her brother Ralph, Nancy learns about Florence’s deceased lover Lilian and recognises why Florence is always tired and mindless. Suddenly, Nancy becomes jealous of Lilian, and she realises she didn’t make Florence happy but only made her grief less keen and her memories duller.⁷⁴ Nancy thinks about missing the meeting with Florence as a mistake and a favour she did for Florence because otherwise, Florence would never meet her lover Lilian.

However, the jealousy also affects Florence when she learns about Nancy’s past with Kitty. Even though Florence and Nancy both desire to find emotional support and stability, their tension is visible. Due to Nancy’s lack of confidence, caused probably by her previous unsuccessful relationships, she feels the inability to compare with the deceased lover Lilian. Her lack of confidence causes a constant comparison to Lilian, asking herself ‘Would that make her love me, more than Lilian?’⁷⁵

At the socialist event, Nancy’s past intertwines with her present. She meets there all her lovers – Florence, Diana, Zena, and Kitty. This event is crucial because Nancy must reflect on her past and future choices. The conversation with Kitty helps her realise with

⁷³ Waters, *Tipping the Velvet*, 295.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 398.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 468.

whom she developed the most profound connection and feels the emotional stability. Even after parting ways with Kitty, Nancy reflected on the relationship with Kitty many times. Usually, the idea of Kitty came up in her mind during the lowest parts of her life, using Kitty as a hope that everything would get better. Even after all these years Nancy left Kitty and Walter, Nancy admits her strong emotional bond towards Kitty:

For it was true, I couldn't say it. It was Kitty I had kissed first and hardest; and it was as if I had the shape or the colour or the taste of her kisses upon my lips, even after. Not the spendings and other tears of all the weeping sods in Soho, nor the wine and the damp caresses of Felicity Place, had quite washed those kisses away. I had always known it – but it never mattered with Diana, nor with Zena. Why should it matter with Florence?⁷⁶

The emotional bond, which strengthened over the years, created a strong belief that Nancy would find emotional stability with Kitty one day. However, when they meet after all these years, Nancy refuses Kitty immediately because of Kitty's aggressive judgements about Nancy's current life. This aggressive behaviour, caused by Kitty's despair, helps Nancy to distance herself from the long-lasting feelings towards her. Thanks to the argument with Kitty, Nancy finally overcomes the longing for Kitty, allowing Nancy to prove to Florence her full engagement in their relationship.

Finally, we can see Nancy's growth into an emotionally stable woman, revisiting her old relationships, learning from her mistakes, and finally finding redemption and a genuine connection with Florence. This change was only possible thanks to the disappointment and sorrow, which made her reflect on her decisions, resulting in her realising her desires and deepest hopes.

2.2. Punishment and Betrayal in *Affinity*

The protagonist of the story, Margaret Prior, is a 'Lady Visitor' at Millbank Prison. As Jenni Millbank states, Margaret also lives in something similar to prison because the surveillance Margaret experiences is identical to the surveillance experienced by the prisoners at Millbank. Jenni Millbank calls it a 'continuum of imprisonment' because everyone in the house (including the servants, family, and the doctor) control Margaret whether any signs of her illness are coming back.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Water, *Tipping the Velvet*, 431-432.

⁷⁷ Jenni Millbank, "It's about This: Lesbians, Prison, Desire," *Social & Legal Studies* 13, no. 2 (June 2004): 174.

Margaret comes to the prison as a personified hope. Thanks to her, the prisoners can come closer to the life outside – they can talk to her for a short period; Margaret also fulfils them with the feeling of hope and safety. In the beginning, Margaret gets to know many frustrated women and their life stories. Later in the book, she gives only a necessary amount of time to the other women to not be suspicious because she only cares about Selina.

Margaret is stricken by the feeling of disappointment when talking about Selina during a family dinner. She feels the urge to protect her during the conversation, even though she is unsure about Selina's guilt. However, Margaret's brother Stephen tries to persuade Margaret that Selina must be guilty; therefore, Margaret's perfect portrait of Selina is ruined: 'I thought of the Crivelli portrait that I have sometimes liked to look at. Now it was as if I had brought it shyly down and had it snatched from me, and was watching it being passed about the room and growing grubby.'⁷⁸

As hope is connected to Margaret's visits to Millbank, disappointment can be felt when she is not around. Selina feels sorrow when Margaret does not come as frequently as usual: 'When you didn't come for so long – I know it isn't long, but it seems terribly long to me, here at Millbank. And when you didn't come, I thought, perhaps you had changed your mind and meant never to visit again...'⁷⁹

When the matrons notice Margaret's strong relationship with Selina, they warn Margaret and advice her to suppress her feelings. After being told about Selina's relocation, the separation seems unbearable for Margaret. The separation is also inadmissible for Selina since she wouldn't be able to escape, resulting in Selina attacking one of the matrons to prove her wickedness and aggression. This unexpected behaviour created an intense fear and doubt in Margaret, immediately thinking about Selina's trial with Miss Silvester: 'And I thought – for a moment I thought – I remembered the girl, Miss Silvester, who was hurt—I thought: You *did* strike her! And I am shut in a cell with you!'⁸⁰

When Margaret returns home, she feels mentally and physically ill – her eyes were dark as bruises and the bones of her throat stood out like wires.⁸¹ Her illness causes an

⁷⁸ Waters, *Affinity*, 98.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 247, original emphasis.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 253.

argument with her mother who accuses her of making up her illness whenever it suits her. After Margaret has taken her medicine, she must get dressed and have fun with the guests. The medication made her honest and sensitive, speaking mainly about her suicide, feelings and Millbank, still processing what happened with Selina. The open conversation with the guests resulted in Margaret being sent to her room. The connection of fear from Selina, her medicine and emotional talk about her suicide resulted in Margaret being aggressive, causing fear on Helen's side. Her emotional lability caused by disappointment from Selina's behaviour made her ill for days. Therefore, her mother forbade her from visiting Millbank, causing even more sorrow on Margaret's mind.

After Selina breaks a promise and disappears from the prison without Margaret, Margaret continuously ruminates about what happened. Her hopes for seeing her again are burnt down with Mrs Jelf, the matron of Millbank prison. When Mrs Jelf visits her, Margaret finally realises the painful truth of how she was betrayed not only by Selina but also by her servant Ruth Vigers. She falls into disillusionment when she realises the truth about spiritualism. Heilmann describes the spiritualism in *Affinity* as 'a simulation which operates a treble deception, on the characters tricked by the lesbian couple.'⁸² All the time, Margaret believed the 'power of ghosts' until the revelation of the truth that Selina's 'magical' escape was actually done with the help of Mrs Jelf. Margaret and Mrs Jelf were both betrayed and lied to, causing Margaret's fury and aggressive behaviour. After realising that she wears the collar Selina sent her, she feels the urge to tear it, which can also signal the desire to remove Selina from her body, mind, and heart. However, as she is unsuccessful in taking the collar off and distancing from her feelings towards Selina, the collar only seems to grip her tighter.⁸³

Being desperate, she uses her dad's cigar knife to cut the collar away from her neck. This furious behaviour scared Mrs Jelf, resulting in her screaming and running away as Margaret tried to find Ruth Vigers in the house. When Margaret reaches her room, she realises Vigers and Selina stole everything Margaret had prepared for their trip – the passports, dresses, and money. This moment is crucial because Margaret falls into madness and desperation, realising Selina's never coming back. She rushes through the house to look for hints of truth. Even though Vigers left her room clean and neat, Margaret

⁸² Ann Heilmann, "Doing It With Mirrors: Neo-Victorian Metatextual Magic in *Affinity*, *The Prestige* and *the Illusionist*" *Neo-Victorian Studies* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2009/2010): 25.

⁸³ Waters, *Affinity*, 338.

turned it upside down – she ripped the sheets and broke the bowl and the jug, demonstrating the connection between aggression and Margaret’s deep disappointment. Even after the revelation of the truth, Margaret’s naiveness overshadows her thinking, still believing in Selina’s love for her. Even though Selina seems to gain the promised freedom by escaping the incarceration, she does not. As Edwards argues, Selina will never achieve the potential freedom, as she is incarcerated metaphorically by Ruth Vigers.⁸⁴

Her last entry in her diary does not start with the date as always, because she writes: ‘I cannot say what time it is. The clocks have stopped, there is no-one to wind them.’⁸⁵ The phrase ‘clocks have stopped’ symbolises the loss of her passion and hopes, leaving Margaret without any possible chance to escape her unsatisfactory life. When Selina has left, there is ‘no-one to wind them’ - she has nothing and no one to live for. Margaret doesn’t care about money, the dresses, or the passports Selina and Vigers have stolen, but only about freedom and emotional stability possibly found next to Selina. After the failure, Margaret recognises her imaginary incarceration next to her overbearing mother. However, the only chance of escaping the cycle is committing suicide. As Edwards suggests, Margaret’s death ‘may function as her ultimate punishment for refusing to submit to this system, or as her only chance for a life free from its confines.’⁸⁶ Also, the intense disappointment she felt when realising that someone has read her diary leaves her feeling vulnerable because she knows her diary was the primary source of information for Vigers and Selina. As she says, she writes the last entry for the chimney smoke.⁸⁷

Margaret wants to get rid of everything that reminds her of Selina, Vigers and Millbank. Therefore, she does not burn only her diary but also the Millbank plan and Crivelli portrait, both perceived as a symbol of Margaret’s desires and Selina’s innocence and purity, leaving Margaret in despair considering suicide.

2.3. Disappointment and Betrayal in *Fingersmith*

Even though a wedding is generally considered an event full of happiness, it is not accompanied by positive feelings in *Fingersmith*. The tension between the characters originates from Rivers’ agreements with both the girls. While both girls believe they are

⁸⁴ Mari Hughes-Edwards, “‘Better a prison ... than a madhouse!’: Incarceration and the Neo-Victorian Fictions of Sarah Waters,” In *Sarah Waters and Contemporary Feminism*, ed. Adele Jones and Claire O’Callaghan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 142-143.

⁸⁵ Waters, *Affinity*, 348.

⁸⁶ Edwards, “Better a prison,” 147.

⁸⁷ Waters, *Affinity*, 348.

the winners, finally gaining social and economic freedom, it is Sue who is betrayed and left in the madhouse. Even though both girls realise their opportunity to save each other, they are paralysed by the deal with Gentleman. Although Sue states ‘I couldn’t have kissed her, without wanting to save her,’⁸⁸ the longing for her liberty and money is stronger. Sue later admits her cowardness and unwillingness to sacrifice her life for Maud.

The nervousness from the betrayal is most visible on Maud, showing signs of sickness, stiffness, and coldness. When Sue is admitted to the madhouse, Sue’s first emotion is confusion, thinking about it as a mistake. Then, she starts to curse and fight against the doctors. When she realises Gentleman and Maud betrayed her, she stayed silent without the ability to speak or move – her intense disappointment paralysed her fully.

Because of the incredibility of Sue’s story, it supports the presumed mental illness. Sue falls into confusion, ruminating about who she is and whether her story is true or fantasy. The asylum, therefore, ‘represents the threat of the transition from ‘sane’ to ‘mad’ that haunts the women in the novel.’⁸⁹ Sue relives certain moments and conversations from the past, in which nothing was like she thought: ‘To think I lay on the night of her wedding with a pillow over my head, so I should not hear the sound of her tears. To think that, if I had listened, I might have heard – might I? might I? – the sound of her sighs.’⁹⁰

The thought that helped her survive was Mrs Sucksby and her home on Lant Street. As she was desperate from reality, she usually escaped to her dreams, gradually sleeping more hours a day than before, as ‘there was nothing to stay awake for.’⁹¹ Therefore, she talks about her dreams, which show her subconscious desires and feelings. Even though she frequently states her willingness to murder Maud and her intense hatred towards her, she admits to dreaming about Maud, usually about being Maud’s maid and loving her with her whole heart, which conflicts with her statements. As she falls into the constant dreaming, she loses the connection to reality. As she falls into the illusion created around her, she gradually loses her hope of escaping the madhouse and gaining freedom. As a result, she starts to identify as ‘Mrs Rivers’. During her stay, her desperation cumulates and creates resentment towards Gentleman and Maud. When experiencing the sorrow,

⁸⁸ Waters, *Fingersmith*, 145.

⁸⁹ Rachel M. Friars and Brenda Ayres, “We Should Go Mad”: The Madwoman and Her Nurse,” In *Neo-Victorian Madness*, ed. Sarah E. Maier and Brenda Ayres, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 65.

⁹⁰ Waters, *Fingersmith*, 402.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 446.

she cursed and cried a lot. She calls them villains, playing an ‘awful trick’⁹² on her. The great disappointment felt by Sue transformed itself into a strong detest against Maud, resulting in the desire to revenge and murder her.

Maud, however, does not feel any better. Her ideal projection of London is ruined by the reality of London’s unfinished streets, dirt and chaos, leaving her dissatisfied. Despite her disappointment, Maud still believes that London is a city full of opportunities that she is not yet able to perceive and use for her good. When the idea of a perfect and peaceful London falls apart, she focuses on the idea of a quiet house, where she would be able to rest and sleep. However, when they arrive at Mrs Sucksby’s house (where Sue used to live), Maud is confused. She finds the house small and dark, causing the feeling of betrayal because Gentleman promised her something else. Her dissatisfaction leads to her rude behaviour towards other members of the house. After losing her home in Briar and all the certainties in her life, she loses her identity when Mrs Sucksby reveals the truth about Maud’s birth mother. Maud’s thoughts seem to disappear; she cannot speak or move. The following behaviour could be weeping. However, Maud starts laughing, showing her inability to cope with the disturbing news. Maud transforms into a completely different person, describing herself as ‘a book, from which words have peeled and drifted.’⁹³

Even though the idea of being a daughter of a madwomen weights off her shoulders, leaving her in a slightly better mood, her mood drops when she learns the most painful truth about her mother – she was not a madwoman, but a murderer. This realisation leads her to hopelessness, and she finally starts to weep. This situation shows how we tie our identity and character to our biological parents.

The next day, Maud shows the physical signs of her disappointment – problems with eating, weeping, stomach sickness, excessive sleeping and hallucinations. When she finally feels better, her mind is focused only on escaping Mrs Sucksby’s house, returning to Briar to get money from her uncle, and later saving Sue from the madhouse. Even though she still thinks only about the escape, she also mentions she eventually made some friends in London, giving her the tiniest hope in this uneasy situation.

⁹² Waters, *Fingersmith*, 401.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 336.

The idea of coming back to Briar or waiting for her uncle to find her is thwarted by the letter from her uncle when he shows his indifference towards Maud's destiny. Miller claims Mr Lilly sees Maud's body as a machine, helping him in his library.⁹⁴ Therefore, he proves the lack of emotional attachment to her. The letter has upset Maud more than she presumed it would, admitting: 'my spirit has gone. The letter has taken it from me.'⁹⁵

When Sue and Charles arrive at Lant Street, living there secretly, Sue watches Gentleman, Maud and Mrs Sucksby without them knowing. When she sees Mrs Sucksby and Maud spending time together and showing signs of a close relationship, Sue is furious, thinking Maud has stolen her life and made everyone, involving Sue herself, love her. This thought fortifies Sue's idea of revenge and murder. Muller claims that as her mother was considered a murderess (before the revelation of her true biological mother), everyone involving Sue thought she must be somehow similar in this aspect, showing the capability to kill a person.⁹⁶

When Maud, Mrs Sucksby, Gentleman and Sue meet after Sue's escape from the madhouse, Gentleman is murdered in the dark. Before he dies, he suggests that Sue was not only tricked by Maud and himself but mainly by Mrs Sucksby. Both Mrs Sucksby and Maud tried to stop Gentleman, knowing the information would devastate Sue, as she often refers to Mrs Sucksby as 'her own mother', showing her deep connection to her. Even though we don't know who the murderer was, Mrs Sucksby confesses right away, trying to protect the girls: 'Lord knows, I'm sorry for it now; but I done it. And these girls here are innocent girls, and know nothing at all about it; and have harmed no-one.'⁹⁷

When Mrs Sucksby is sentenced to death, Sue is overwhelmed. When at home, her heart and mind are always with Mrs Sucksby. She lights every light in the house to simulate Mrs Sucksby's conditions in her prison cell. During her last visit to Mrs Sucksby, she realises she cannot live without her, showing the strong bond between her and Mrs Sucksby. After Mrs Sucksby's death, Sue finds out about the reality of her and Maud's parentage. What hurt her most was the betrayal of Mrs Sucksby, whom she believed to be the closest person throughout her whole life. Realising that she only kept her safe to

⁹⁴ Miller, "Sarah Waters's Fingersmith," 1.

⁹⁵ Waters, *Fingersmith*, 366.

⁹⁶ Nadine Muller, "Not my Mother's Daughter: Matrilinealism, Third-wave Feminism & Neo-Victorian Fiction," *Neo-Victorian Studies* 2, no. 2, (Winter 2009/2010): 112.

⁹⁷ Waters, *Fingersmith*, 508.

meet her daughter in the future left Sue with a high fever for days, showing her inability to deal with this challenging situation.

Even though the realisation left Sue devastated for days, the suffering led Sue to the realisation of her true feelings towards Maud. It also released her insistence on the past and shifted her focus on the present situations. This argument is also claimed by Muller, explaining that ‘recovery [from the loss of their maternal fiction] is dependent on a conscious return to the present, when Sue finally decides to find Maud because, unlike the fictions of their pasts, their presents, and hence their future relationship, can still be changed.’⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Muller, “Not my Mother’s Daughter,” 121.

3. Relationships in *Tipping the Velvet*, *Fingersmith* and *Affinity*

3.1. Nancy's Relationships with Women in *Tipping the Velvet*

Her first relationships with other women are in her homeland in Whitstable. Her closest friend Alice, who is also her sister, shares with Nancy her room and a bed. Before meeting Kitty, they are very close, talking about everything. Since meeting Kitty, Nancy changes her attitude towards her sister and keeps more things a secret because Nancy may have realised Alice would not be as supportive as Nancy would like. Their relationship cools down when Nancy writes to Alice about her love for Kitty. Alice can't get over their love and Nancy leaving Whitstable, which disrupts their strong bond created over the years. After Nancy's last visit, they never contacted each other again.

The relationship with Kitty is entirely platonic at the beginning. When Nancy first meets Kitty, she falls in love immediately. However, we cannot be very sure about Nancy's homosexuality, as Kitty was at first dressed as a guy. There is a possibility that Nancy's desire to escape her routine life was disguised as desire and love for Kitty, resulting in Nancy considering herself homosexual.

During their career in theatre, Nancy created a strong emotional bond with Kitty, thinking of her as the love of her life. Their relationship grows sexual for a short period, but the emotional bond remains stronger. When Nancy finds Kitty with Walter, she becomes emotionally deprived. Kitty becomes only a memory, which is brought back usually when Nancy feels miserable. When Kitty comes to see Nancy at the socialist event, she expresses her desire to create a relationship with Nancy. Although this situation was what Nancy dreamt about her whole life, she refused her thanks to Kitty's aggressive communication. Therefore, Kitty starts and ends Nancy's search for identity and freedom, helping her with the rediscovery of her true feelings.

Diana shows Nancy a different way of living, making her choose passion over ordinariness. Nancy is at first happy with Diana, even though she lives as a servant in Diana's house. On the other hand, Nancy lives a relatively rich life and enjoys a very passionate sexual relationship with Diana. However, soon she realises she lacks freedom as well as emotional support. The lack of freedom and emotional connection deprives Nancy, making her seek an emotional connection elsewhere in the house. This fact supports the presumption that the protagonists' desire to find a relationship connects to their emotional stability.

Nancy's bond with Zena creates a rapid change in Nancy's life, from living a rich life to becoming homeless, poor and scared of death. At this moment, Zena shows her authentic personality and leaves Nancy the next day, again showing no emotional connection with Nancy. Nancy realises she has nowhere to go and chooses to seek help in Florence's house, a woman that was a stranger to Nancy. When they meet at the socialist event, they forgive each other and move on to become friends. This behaviour suggests Nancy's maturity and ability to forgive.

The relationship with Florence was less straightforward than with other characters. Their path was full of obstacles and problems, but the emotional bond was still unquestionably strong. They had an internal problem with their previous lovers, causing jealousy, comparison and arguments. However, overcoming these problems helped their relationship grow into a solid and mature one.

3.2. Nancy's Relationships with Men in *Tipping the Velvet*

Freddy, a boy from her homeland, probably intended to marry her. However, the lack of emotional connection prevented them from marrying. On the contrary, Nancy's father plays an essential role in her life. Nancy and her father have a closer relationship than Nancy has with her mother. The emotional conversations always occur between Nancy and her father. Even when she asks for permission to leave Whitstable, she talks about it with her father: 'Your mother and I would rather see you fly from us in joy, than stay with us in sorrow – and grow, maybe, to hate us, for keeping you from your fate.'⁹⁹ After more than a year, when she visits her family, her father still shows his affection and care for her: 'It is very nice to get your parcels; it was very nice to get those gifts; but we would rather have you, than a hairbrush or a pair of boots.'¹⁰⁰

This analysis proves that Nancy didn't have a bad experience with men during her childhood. Nancy's father supports her in every situation, even when he would prefer her to do otherwise, which presents their equality. After the incident in which Nancy realised Kitty's indifference towards their relationship, proved by Kitty's intention to marry Walter, she starts to have an aversion to men because a man ruined her relationship with Kitty. Because of what pain Walter caused, her hate proliferates. When she starts to earn money from pleasuring men, her lack of interest mixed with disgust is obvious: 'When I

⁹⁹ Waters, *Tipping the Velvet*, 59.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

knelt, it was as if it were someone else who was kneeling, not myself. I thought this is how Walter tastes!’¹⁰¹

When Nancy meets Florence’s brother Ralph, he is kinder to her than Florence. He wants to help Nancy, gives her money, and is later pleased with the cleaning and cooking Nancy does in his house. Later, when Nancy becomes Florence’s lover, their relationship even grows. They act as friends, having a warm relationship.

3.3. Margaret’s Relationships with Women in *Affinity*

This part is concerned with relationships between Margaret and Selina Dawes, Ruth Vigers, the Mother of Margaret, and Helen. The most prominent relationship she had with Selina Dawes. Margaret was attracted by Selina’s sigh and her holy appearance. Every time Margaret visited Millbank, she looked forward to speaking to Selina. After every meeting, their connection grew stronger, as they shared similar values and emotions. Margaret soon became comfortable with Selina, telling her about her deepest pains and thoughts, which brought them even closer. Selina’s loyalty and affectionate behaviour created in Margaret a desire to escape her monotonous life and find her most authentic self next to someone who shows an emotional interest in her. However, her homosexuality doesn’t have to be straightforward. Even though Margaret shows signs of love, especially as she sees her for the first time (and describes her as a saint), it could have been the desire to escape the monotonous life that created in her the feeling of homosexuality. When Selina doesn’t come, and Margaret realises what happened, her hopes and life are crushed. However, even after all that happened, Margaret still believes that Selina has an emotional connection with her, showing how real Margaret’s interest in Selina was.

Margaret doesn’t have an excellent relationship with her mother, as she prefers her father over her mother. As Margaret mentions, she also resembles her father more, so Margaret and her mother probably have different opinions about things. As the plot progresses, we can see the frustration caused by her mother’s behaviour. Her mother always disagrees with Margaret’s decisions; she even disagrees with Margaret visiting Millbank. This opinion grows even stronger after Selina attacks one of the matrons. Margaret hates activities that she must do with her mother, and when Margaret starts to feel an emotional bond with Selina, she starts the revolt against her mother’s rules. In her

¹⁰¹ Waters, *Tipping the Velvet*, 199.

diary, she even writes ‘Damn you, you bitch!’¹⁰² when Mother forbids Margaret to go to Millbank. Even though her mother claims to help Margaret get better soon, Margaret does not understand it. She cannot talk openly to her mother about her feelings and sometimes pretends to sleep while she visits her in her room. When the matrons warn Margaret because of showing a great interest in Selina, Margaret has the urge to scream ‘*Mother!*’ to one of the matrons because of feeling the same feeling as when her mother forbids her to follow her heart. Even in the end, she realises she will have to spend time with her mother again, leaving her in despair and frustration.

Before Selina, Helen was the first person with whom Margaret felt affectionate. Helen married Margaret’s brother Stephen, which caused the end of their relationship. However, Margaret probably tried to persuade Helen to resist the marriage in order to preserve their relationship.¹⁰³ Therefore Helen’s attitude towards Margaret is rather cold. When Margaret says that her bed is haunted by their old kisses, Helen seems to be terrified by the memory. Helen’s statement that Stephen is the kindest man she ever knew¹⁰⁴ and her cold attitude towards Margaret confirms her emotional connection with Margaret has ended. Margaret admits her persistent emotional connection to Helen when she says she could meet kind, good and sensible men, but they will never be like Helen. Only at the end, when Margaret describes her evolution, she feels distant from Helen and her own feelings towards Helen. However, even after realising her love for Selina, Margaret still feels a small connection to her which is proven by the letter Margaret wrote not to her mother, but to Helen. Even though she doesn’t have to explain anything, she feels the urge to write her the last letter to end the previous chapter of her life and start the new one.

Margaret’s relationship with Ruth Vigers is not severely developed. As Ruth is Margaret’s servant, they do not share a close relationship. Even though Margaret repeatedly feels a familiarity when seeing representations of Peter Quick, she never realises it is her own maid who helps her dress daily.¹⁰⁵ The lack of Margaret’s interest in Ruth is proven when she ‘could not even recall the details of her face, her look, her manners.’¹⁰⁶ After realising the painful truth, Margaret sees Ruth as a villain that took

¹⁰² Waters, *Affinity*, 264.

¹⁰³ Mitchell, *History and Cultural Memory*, 128.

¹⁰⁴ Waters, *Affinity*, 204.

¹⁰⁵ Heilmann, “Doing It With Mirrors,” 10.

¹⁰⁶ Waters, *Affinity*, 340.

happiness from her because she cannot admit that Selina could be evil. Even though Ruth seems to be at the edge of the event happening, Kate Mitchell claims she is actually at the centre of it, as she has information from both the diaries (Selina's and Margaret's).¹⁰⁷

3.4. Margaret's Relationships with Men in *Affinity*

In *Affinity*, the men characters are not crucial for the plot development. Margaret had a more profound connection only with her beloved father, who unfortunately passed away before the start of the book. However, the strength of the relationship is visible even after his death because she still writes about the atrocious sorrow she felt. Her father was so significant that she even tried to commit suicide to still be with him.

The most dominant living male character is her brother Stephen. In the beginning, as the reader learns about the emotions Margaret had for Helen, we know that the marriage of Helen and Stephen hurts Margaret and she avoids spending time with them because it causes her too much pain. Margaret, therefore, does not like to spend time with Stephen.

Regardless of their rather cold relationship, Stephen does care for Margaret and helps her when she wants to obtain the money she inherited to go on the planned trip with Selina. Even though Stephen doesn't know what she will do with this money, he does not stand in her way. This act strengthens their relationship, and when Margaret writes a letter to Helen shortly before the planned trip, she briefly mentions her brother, hoping he is kind to her.¹⁰⁸ Margaret shows her maturity and emotional distance from the love felt for Helen. What she wants for them is to be happily married.

3.5. Sue's Relationships with Women in *Fingersmith*

This subchapter discusses relationships between Sue and other women characters, focusing on Mrs Sucksby and Maud Lilly, because of the significance of their connection to the protagonist.

Mrs Sucksby and Sue shared a very tight bond. Mrs Sucksby exchanged her biological daughter Maud to save Sue and help Sue's mother Marianne. Mrs Sucksby and Marianne made a contract, enabling Mrs Sucksby to inherit some money when girls get older. Therefore, Mrs Sucksby knew she had to care for Sue very well, treating her almost like her own daughter. As a result of her kind behaviour, Sue developed a close connection with Mrs Sucksby, calling her 'my own mother.' Her death left Sue devastated

¹⁰⁷ Mitchell, *History and Cultural Memory*, 125.

¹⁰⁸ Waters, *Affinity*, 316.

with the inability to cry or scream. There is a contrast between the strong bond Sue felt towards Mrs Sucksby when she was away in Briar and the intense disappointment Sue felt after realising the betrayal was not planned by Maud or Gentleman, but mainly by Mrs Sucksby. However, without Mrs Sucksby's betrayal and sacrifice, Maud and Sue wouldn't be able to find their lost connection.

Sue's connection to Maud wasn't instant. At first, Maud was perceived as queer, innocent and inexperienced. After some time, they grew closer together. Their sisterhood grew into a stronger emotional connection, which created a barrier to completing their original plan. Sue thought about what would happen to Maud after the plan was done and started to worry about it. Still, her feelings were not strong enough to oppose Gentleman and the money she was promised, which resulted in Gentleman and Maud marrying.

When Sue was admitted to the madhouse instead of Maud, her anger becomes unbearable. Her emotional bond with Maud was damaged, leaving her full of negative emotions leading to her planning Maud's murder. Her detest against Maud grew stronger when she sees how well Mrs Sucksby and Maud are getting along. After Mrs Sucksby's punishment, Sue's anger is ceased. When Sue lets go of her negative attitude towards Maud, she can feel the emotional connection they created again. When Sue discovers the truth about her parentage, Maud is the first thing on her mind, realising she always wanted to protect her. When Sue eventually finds Maud at Briar, finally overcomes the crisis and confesses her true feelings.

3.6. Sue's Relationships with Men in *Fingersmith*

This section will analyse Sue's relationship with Richard Rivers (called Gentleman) and its brief comparison to Maud's relationship with Richard Rivers.

When Sue introduces Richard Rivers, she explains his nickname Gentleman, referring to him attending the gent school. Even though he comes from a good family, he earns money through thievery and swindling. He approaches Sue with his plan to defraud miss Maud Lilly. With the promise of the funds, Sue agrees with his plan. However, when they are both in Briar, the disgust towards Gentleman rises as Sue gains an emotional connection to Maud. After the betrayal, Sue ended up in the madhouse herself instead of Maud, leaving her very frustrated. When the matrons tell her she has a male visitor, she even states that if Gentleman comes, she will kill him. Later, she is more concerned about Maud than Gentleman and therefore her relationship grows into indifference. When

Gentleman is murdered, Sue feels no sorrow or sadness, which represents her indifference towards him. At the trial, when the real identity of Gentleman is revealed, Sue recognises how little she knew about the actual Gentleman, in reality, named Frederick Bunt.

The relationship between Maud and Gentleman shares similar characteristics. At first, Gentleman gives Maud hope for a better life when she escapes from Briar and marries Gentleman in order to be able to use the money she inherited. Gentleman should only mediate the freedom Maud desires. Jones asserts that even though Gentleman attempted to direct Maud's affectionate feelings towards himself, he ended up as 'the mirror through which the women's actions and desire and reflected them.'¹⁰⁹ However, when things turn out not as Gentleman initially told Maud, she becomes upset and anxious. However, the longer she stays in Lant Street, the more she understands why she ended up there. Gentleman's death does not shock either of the girls, leaving him as a meaningless character in terms of positive feelings and emotional stability. However, without him, nothing would be possible. Muller even states the probability of Maud being Gentleman's murderess, which allows her to destroy the fictional identities created by him.¹¹⁰ Maud's act of murder would also confirm my claim about her lack of emotional connection to Gentleman and her desire to free herself from his captivity.

When introducing neo-Victorianism, the theory appeared to be very interesting and valuable. Neo-Victorianism, when looking at it from far away, seemed very viable. However, the more we dived into the analysis, the less viable it appeared. After studying the novels through the lens of Neo-Victorianism, the analysis uncovered that even though neo-Victorianism should (re)discover and (re)interpret the Victorian novels,¹¹¹ reading the novels left me questioning their plausibility and historical relevance to the Victorian era.

The plausibility is violated in several aspects – the first are the supportive parents that allow Nancy to move to London with an almost unknown girl in *Tipping the Velvet*, which seemed rather unlikely. The novels of Sarah Waters were sometimes too descriptive and honest, especially in describing sexuality.

¹⁰⁹ Adele Jones, "The Feminist Politics of Textuality: Reading the Feminism of Julia Kristeva in Fingersmith," In *Sarah Waters and Contemporary Feminisms*, ed. Adele Jones and Claire O'Callaghan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 122.

¹¹⁰ Muller, "Not My Mother's Daughter," 120.

¹¹¹ Heilmann and Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism*, 4.

When discussing sexuality, the most similar to the victorian perspective are Byatt's novels, which try to show the reserved victorian attitude towards sexuality. Even though Banerjee claims that Neo-Victorianism often empowers previously marginalised characters,¹¹² women's empowerment was sometimes out of the expected lines, creating the impression that feminism and neo-Victorianism are inseparably connected.

¹¹² Banerjee, "Neo-Victorianism: An Introduction," accessed

Conclusion

This thesis studied and analysed the themes of hope and disappointment in the selected novels of Sarah Waters, including *Tipping the Velvet*, *Affinity*, and *Fingersmith*. In chapters three and four, I discussed the themes for each book separately. However, a pattern in the occurrence of the themes was found.

The expectations were usually tied to the possible change in their life, caused by their inability to escape or change it on their own. As Edwards claims, ‘the neo-Victorian fiction of Sarah Waters suggests that all its women are in prison, either physically or psychologically.’¹¹³ I would like to agree with this claim, as my thesis shows that all protagonists in the selected novels were somehow trapped in their lives, showing the effort to escape and rebuild their life. This effort to change their life thus connects to certain expectations that may not always meet reality. However, the interesting outcome is that not all characters wanted to escape their ‘old’ life entirely. This rule does not apply to Sue Trinder, a thief from *Fingersmith*, as she initially did not demand the change in her life. Even after Gentleman presented his plan, Sue thought about declining it. During her storytelling, she always thought of her ‘old’ life with Mrs Sucksby in Lant Street. This phenomenon is outstanding compared to the other selected novels, as neither Margaret nor Nancy ever thought of undoing their effort and going back to the life they lived before.

I discovered that the more was the possible change in their life tied to the emotional connection to another character, the greater the hopes or possibly disappointment were. Also, the emotional stability offered by another character boosted the protagonist’s confidence, fearlessness and courage, helping them make a bold move and speed the change.

Also, the thesis studied the symptoms of disappointment. The disappointment was connected to psychological as well as physical inconveniences. The greater the frustration, the greater the physical symptoms were. The physical symptoms usually included weaknesses, aches, problems with eating and excessive sleeping. The greater symptoms were similar to some illnesses, causing tiredness and high fever. However, dealing with this negative feeling differed from character and situation. In certain situations, protagonists run away from difficult conversations, which caused uneasy feelings. The protagonists needed to process their grief and sorrow alone in other

¹¹³ Edwards, “Better a prison,” 133.

situations, when they spent time overthinking, sleeping or weeping. Additionally, the protagonists could also choose aggressive behaviour and swearing as their coping techniques, helping them release the tension and anxiety immediately.

In the last chapter, I described the most crucial relationships made by the protagonists. I aimed to capture their development and influence on the protagonist's decision-making and behaviour. However, Waters's novels are complicated in terms of love and relationships, as 'love is both problem and solution in her neo-Victorian world.'¹¹⁴ This statement is connected to a problematic identity search and search for freedom, as their love enables them to gain the courage to change their lives. However, the protagonists seem over-empowered for being Victorian women, causing the incredibility of the story.

The last chapter analysed the relationships with women and summarised the development of relationships with men. However, the analysis has shown that the protagonists usually lack a deeper emotional connection with men and therefore, the protagonists' relationships with men are not severely developed in the novels.

¹¹⁴ Edwards, "Better a prison," 148.

Resumé

Cílem této práce bylo analyzovat motivy naděje, zklamání a citové deprivace v neo-Viktoriánské literatuře. Jako zástupce neo-Viktoriánské literatury jsem vybrala tři díla Sarah Watersové – *Náklonnost*, *Na špičce jazyka* a *Zlodějka*. Tato práce se snažila analyzovat výskyt těchto jevů a jejich napojení na protagonistky zmíněných románů, tedy především na jejich citové prožívání těchto jevů a jejich snahu se s těmito pocity vyrovnat.

V první kapitole jsem se zaměřila na úvod do neo-Viktoriánské literatury. Představila jsem problematiku vymezení tohoto směru a také jeho nejvýznamnější autory (u některých jsem také představila jejich díla), část kapitoly jsem také věnovala životu a dílu Sarah Watersové jakožto autorky vybraných děl. Druhou kapitolu jsem rozdělila do tří podkapitol, z nichž každá zkoumala naději a citovou deprivaci v jednotlivých dílech. Třetí kapitolu jsem analogicky rozdělila podle jednotlivých děl a zaměřila se na zkoumání jevu zklamání ve vybraných dílech. Kapitola zaznamenávala, jak protagonistky reagovaly na zklamání, liti nebo smutek a jaké volily strategie při vypořádávání se s těmito negativními pocity. Poslední kapitola byla zaměřena na vztahy vytvořené protagonistkami. Každému dílu jsem věnovala dvě podkapitoly, jedna pro vztahy protagonistek s ženami a druhá pro vztahy s muži. Jak se ale ukázalo, vztahy s muži nebyly příliš rozvinuté, a většina této kapitoly věnuje především vztahům s ženami.

Ukázalo se, že čím více se možná změna jejich života pojila s emocionálním spojením s další postavou, tím větší pocity naděje či zklamání byly. Emocionální spojení s další postavou pomohlo protagonistce se zvýšením sebevědomí a odhodlání, což urychlilo proces změny. Analýza zklamání ve vybraných dílech ukázala, jaké fyzické a psychické symptomy byly nejběžnější v souvislosti s tímto pocitem. Často se objevovaly příznaky podobné nemoci, jako například různé bolesti, nespavost, žaludeční problémy, horečka, únava a nadměrný spánek. Nejčastějším doprovodným projevem zklamání byl samozřejmě pláč.

Každá situace působila na protagonistky jinak. Někdy protagonistka zvolila útěk z oné nepříjemné situace jako strategii, jindy potřebovala špatné pocity hned uvolnit, což způsobilo agresivní chování. Objevilo se také tzv. “zamrznutí”, kdy byla daná osoba úplně paralyzována tímto pocitem, že na něj nedokázala reagovat ani slovně, ani fyzicky.

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Annotation

Surname and name: Kresničerová Nikol

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title of the thesis: Hope, Disappointment and Emotional Deprivation in neo-Victorian literature

Supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

Number of pages: 48

Keywords: neo-Victorian literature, hope, disappointment, emotional deprivation, relationships, identity search, Affinity, Fingersmith, Tipping the Velvet, Sarah Waters

The bachelor's thesis is focused on women and their relationships in Neo-Victorian literature. The analysis of women has been done in selected works of Sarah Waters. The research primarily focuses on the novels *Tipping the velvet*, *Fingersmith*, and *Affinity*. The main characters are connected mainly by deep emotional deprivation which is associated with big hope followed by disappointment. The individual stories are interconnected with problematical identity search, which sometimes takes place in hostile conditions. The thesis is further concerned with other novels of Neo-Victorian Literature and whether emotional deprivation is also presented there. The women characters will also be analysed in terms of their social status and their relationships with men.

Anotace

Příjmení a jméno: Kresničerová Nikol

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Naděje, zklamání a citová deprivace v neo-Viktoriánské literatuře

Vedoucí práce: Mrg. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

Počet stran: 48

Klíčová slova: neo-viktoriánská literatura, naděje, zklamání, citová deprivace, vztahy, hledání identity, Náklonnost, Na špičce jazyka, Zlodějka, Sarah Waters

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na osudy protagonistek a jejich vztahů v Neo-viktoriánské literatuře. Rozbor žen byl prováděn ve vybraných dílech Sarah Watersové. Pozornost je věnována především románům Špičkou jazyka, Zlodějka a Náklonnost. Pojítkem mezi jednotlivými příběhy je především hluboká citová deprivace, s čímž souvisí velká naděje a následné zklamání. Jednotlivé příběhy také spojuje problematické hledání identity, které se často odehrává až v nepřátelských podmínkách. Dále tato bakalářská práce zkoumá, zda se citová deprivace objevuje i v dalších dílech Neo-viktoriánské literatury. Protagonistky budou analyzovány mimo jiné z ohledu na jejich společenské postavení a také na základě jejich vztahů s muži.