

A STUDY OF HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION IN THE NOVELS OF  
SARAH WATERS: A CRITICAL STUDY

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**ENGLISH**

By  
**ANKITA JAMWAL**

**41800970**

**Supervised By**  
**Dr Sujan Mondal 27205**  
**Department of English**  
**Assistant Professor**



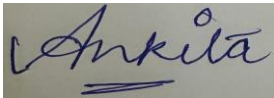
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I, hereby, declare that the present work in the thesis entitled “A Study of Historiographic Metafiction in the Novels of Sarah Waters: A Critical Study” in fulfilment of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is the outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr Sujan Mondal, working as Assistant Professor, in the Department of English of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with the general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

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Name of the scholar: Ankita Jamwal

Registration No.: 41800970

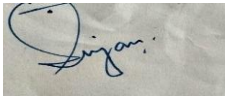
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Lovely Professional University,

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “A Study of Historiographic Metafiction in the Novels of Sarah Waters: A Critical Study” submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)** in the Department of English, is a research work carried out by Ankita Jamwal, 41800970, is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature appears to be 'Sujan' with a flourish underneath.

**(Signature of Supervisor)**

Name of supervisor: Dr Sujan Mondal (27205)

Designation: Assistant Professor

Department/School: English

University: Lovely Professional University

## ABSTRACT

The dissertation aims to critically examine the use of historiographic metafiction in Sarah Waters's novels, a term denoting postmodern historical fiction that presents alternate view points and interpretations of historical events. Waters employs this literary technique to reflect on and reinterpret historical events, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between fiction and history. The study seeks to identify the presence of multiple voices and the reframing of history within Waters's works. A key focus of the thesis is on how Waters challenges dominant beliefs and the singular narrative nature of history by amplifying the voices of the marginalized. The historiographic metafiction theory interrogates the intersection of fiction and history, employing self-conscious narrative strategies to engage with historical texts and events. By challenging the notion of objective history, historiographic metafiction prompts readers to question the reliability of narrative constructs and confront the nature of historical narratives. Waters's novels, *Tipping the Velvet*, *Affinity*, *Fingersmith*, *The Night Watch*, *The Little Stranger*, and *The Paying Guests*, spanning the Victorian and Post-War eras, serve as rich sources for exploring women's struggles within societal constraints, a theme central to her body of work. The analysis delves into various elements of 'Historiographic Metafiction,' including Metafiction, Intertextuality, Fragmentation, Pastiche, and Parody, to elucidate the connections between fiction and history in Waters's narratives. It underscores how these literary devices contribute to constructing alternative histories and reimagining historical events, emphasizing the continued relevance of the past in the contemporary world. A central aspect of Waters's work explored in the thesis is the representation of women in Victorian society, which challenges traditional gender norms and expectations. Waters's novels offer insights into how historical narratives can be reshaped to accommodate diverse perspectives and experiences. The research highlights the broader implications of historiographic metafiction as a literary genre, emphasizing its role in interrogating and reshaping historical narratives. Waters's novels provide a platform for marginalized voices and contribute to a deeper understanding of history and the complex relationship between fact and fiction. The dissertation sheds light on the significance of Waters's work in challenging normative structures and enriching historical discourse through the lens of

postmodern fiction. The objectives of the proposed research are to state the socio-political events of the postmodern age and the emergence of new writing techniques, to investigate the techniques of the historiographic metafiction theory of Linda Hutcheon, to analyse and reinterpret the texts of Sarah Waters and her concept of 'Historiographic Metafiction,' to discuss the growth of the historiographic techniques of Sarah Waters and to explore the metafictional elements in the novels of Sarah Waters. Sarah Waters presents historical facts and subject matter with artistic liberty. Her stories are stronger because of their authenticity than because of any hard evidence. Writing fiction allows Sarah Waters to express her sensibility and awareness of theoretical difficulties. Using parodies and pastiches, she questioned realism and assumptions and emphasised the novel's aesthetics in the nineteenth century, demonstrating her postmodern understanding. Postmodernists advocate a critical, rather than positive, return to history, casting doubt on historical knowledge. Hutcheon (1988) argues that it questions the distinction between historical and literary, "It is the rethinking and reworking of the forms and the content of past" (Hutcheon 5).

Waters parodies the Victorian sensation novel genre by incorporating exaggerated plot twists, melodrama, and sensationalism. She playfully subverts and exaggerates the conventions of the genre, offering humour and satire on the sensational novels of the Victorian era. Waters uses a form of parody by presenting a twist on the traditional Victorian gothic novel. She incorporates mystery, suspense, and the dark secrets of the past but subverts readers' expectations through unexpected plot developments and the manipulation of traditional gothic tropes. By incorporating elements of parody, Waters adds layers of complexity and self-awareness to her storytelling, offering readers a fresh and sometimes satirical perspective on familiar literary styles. Waters' postmodern texts rewrite and subvert historical material, questioning the relationship between history and fiction and bringing attention to the silenced histories of marginalized groups. Waters incorporates references to other novels and writing traditions, blurring the boundaries between texts and emphasizing intertextuality. Her postmodern novels are told in three dimensions: past, present, and future, and each episode takes place in a time-bound environment. The only truth that can be seen in Sarah Waters's universe is the deterioration and dissolution of her female characters. The story develops nonlinearly, with past and future becoming relative

concepts. Sarah Waters uses magic realism as a literary tool to alter set notions of conventions. She incorporates elements of magic realism to add depth and intrigue to her stories. The conventional historical values of an event are subverted through magical access. It also challenges the concepts of rationality. Magic realism and postmodernism construct multiple voices, truths, and worlds. History is not simple; it is complicated and fragmented. Waters' novels are primarily historical fiction. Sarah Waters' exploration of Historiographic Metafiction exemplifies the innovative spirit of Postmodern literature. Through her adept manipulation of historical sources and narrative techniques, Waters creates immersive worlds that transcend the boundaries of time and space. By inviting readers to engage with the construction of history, Waters' novels serve as a poignant reminder of the fluidity of truth and the enduring power of storytelling. In the grand symphony of Postmodern literature, Sarah Waters' novels resound as a symphony of voices, echoing across time and space, inviting us to reimagine the boundaries of the historical novel and the transformative power of fiction. Through her meticulous research and narrative innovation, Waters breathes life into forgotten worlds, resurrecting the voices of those relegated to the margins of history and challenging us to confront the biases inherent within traditional historiography. Yet, it is not merely the historical accuracy or narrative complexity that distinguishes Waters' work but the profound empathy with which she imbues her characters, illuminating the universal truths that transcend the constraints of time and place.

In Waters' novels, we encounter not merely historical figures but living, breathing individuals whose struggles and triumphs resonate with timeless significance, reminding us of our shared humanity amidst the tumult of history. Her novels have the potential for transformation and liberation from the constraints of linear time and conventional narrative structures. Through her exploration of Historiographic Metafiction, Waters invites readers to actively participate in constructing history, interrogates the stories that have shaped our understanding of the world, and envisions new possibilities for the future.

Keywords: Historiographic Metafiction, Postmodern, Metafiction, Intertextuality, Fragmentation, Pastiche, Parody, Magic Realism.

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## BRIEF CANDLE

Language is essential to literature, shaping our understanding of the world and reflecting societal realities. It is through language that ideas, experiences, and perspectives are transmitted and interpreted. As Peter Barry suggests, the reader and writer engage in a mutual process of generating meaning, highlighting the interactive nature of language and literature. Language is not static but shapes and constrains our perceptions of reality. It influences how we interpret and make sense of the world around us. Everything we experience is mediated through language and text, making language the fundamental medium through which knowledge is transmitted. Language, therefore, plays a crucial role in constructing and representing our understanding of reality. However, it is essential to acknowledge that language is not a fixed or absolute representation of truth. Meanings are contingent and subject to interpretation, influenced by personal, cultural, and historical contexts. Barry (1995) suggests that “politics is pervasive, language is constitutive, truth is provisional, meaning is contingent, and human nature is a myth” (Barry 36). The provisional nature of truth further emphasises the complex relationship between language, knowledge, and perception.

Literature is deeply intertwined with philosophy, culture, history, and religion. It serves a societal purpose by realistically portraying socio-economic and political situations, allowing readers to engage with and reflect upon their social contexts. Literature has the power to challenge and transform societal norms, providing a platform for critical thinking and fostering a deeper understanding of the human condition. Literature embodies the convergence of objects, language, and perception in this context. It encapsulates and expresses the multifaceted nature of human experiences, thoughts, and emotions. Through literature, readers engage with different perspectives, challenge preconceived notions, and explore alternative ways of understanding the world. Literature serves as a vehicle for empathy, enabling individuals to connect with diverse characters and situations, expanding their horizons of knowledge and understanding.

Thus, language is the primary means of transmission of knowledge, shaping our perception of reality. As a manifestation of language, literature plays a vital role in

portraying societal realities, challenging norms, and facilitating critical thinking. It reflects the interconnectedness of language, culture, history, and religion, providing a platform for exploring and interpreting the human experience. By engaging with literature, readers actively participate in the co-creation of meaning, highlighting the dynamic and transformative power of language and literature.

Modernism profoundly impacted various art forms, including music, painting, literature, and architecture, while challenging conventional artistic paradigms. It emerged as a cultural and intellectual movement during the late 1800s and early 1900s, challenging the established norms and traditions of artistic expression. Modernism aimed to break away from past constraints and embrace new forms, ideas, and techniques. In painting, modernism brought about significant shifts in artistic style and representation. Artists like Pablo Picasso, Wassily Kandinsky, and Georges Braque developed movements such as Cubism and Abstract Expressionism, which fragmented and reassembled forms, challenged traditional perspectives, and prioritised individual expression over realistic depiction. Modernist painters often aimed to evoke emotions and convey subjective experiences through their works. In literature, Modernism manifested in a variety of ways. Novelists like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and T.S. Eliot used fragmented structure, stream-of-consciousness writing, and inventive storytelling approaches. They explored themes of alienation, disillusionment, and the breakdown of traditional values, reflecting the changing social and cultural landscape of the early 20th century. Modernism rejected historical ornamentation in architecture and embraced simplicity, functionality, and technological advancements. The emphasis was on form following function and creating structures that responded to a rapidly industrial society's need. Modernism shattered the established conventions of the arts, challenging the notion of artistic representation and seeking new means of expression. It aimed to capture the spirit of a changing world and redefine the boundaries of creativity, leaving a lasting impact on the development of various art forms.

A collection of writing that arose following World War II is called Postmodern literature, mainly as a response against the accepted standards and traditions of modernist literature. It encompasses literary works from the Post-World War II period until today. Postmodern literature features a departure from modernism's narrative structures and stylistic techniques. Unlike modernist literature, which often adhered to

a linear and coherent narrative structure, Postmodern literature experiments with fragmented narratives, non-linear storytelling, and the mixing of different narrative voices and perspectives. These narratives break and challenge traditional notions of plot and linear storytelling, creating a sense of disorientation and complexity.

Postmodern literature strongly emphasises the exploration of the subconscious mind and the inner workings of human consciousness. It draws on techniques like stream of consciousness, free association, and dreamlike imagery to depict the character's inner thoughts, desires, and fears. This emphasis on the subconscious and the exploration of the human psyche reflects a departure from the more objective and rational worldview of modernist literature. Postmodern authors frequently draw on and reinterpret existing texts, blurring the boundaries of high and low culture, fiction, and reality. Postmodern authors often break the fourth wall, acknowledge the act of writing, and play with literary conventions, challenging the reader's expectations and questioning the author's authority. Postmodern literature is characterised by its innovative narrative techniques, exploration of the subconscious, and self-conscious reflection on the nature of literature. It represents a departure from the modernist literary tradition and has significantly impacted contemporary literature and culture. Historiographic Metafiction is a literary genre that emerged within the broader framework of Postmodernism. Many Postmodernist novelists incorporate traits of Historiographic Metafiction in their works.

Linda Hutcheon, a great literary giant and theorist, introduced and coined the term Historiographic metafiction in her outstanding work *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, published in 1988. Hutcheon has been highly influential in cultural and literary studies. She defined and redefined the contours of Postmodernism, giving her theories on literature, architecture, music, and the visual arts and discussing the relationship between history and fiction. According to Hutcheon (1988), Historiographic metafiction is a type of Postmodern fiction that affirms the uniqueness and particularity of each historical event rather than imposing present norms and ideas onto the past. It also refers:

A distinction between “events” and “fiction” ... the historian transmutes the signs of events into facts... As in Historiographic metafiction, the

lesson here is that the past once existed, but our historical knowledge of it is semiotically transmitted” (Hutcheon 122).

Hutcheon explores the Postmodernist approach to writing historical fiction and the interplay between history and fiction. She created the term “Historiographic Metafiction” to designate a particular genre of literature that questions established historical narratives and investigates how history is created and comprehended. Historiographic Metafiction is a literary technique commonly employed in Postmodern texts. Portraying historical events or individuals in a fictionalised way blurs the line between fact and fiction. This technique acknowledges that historical accounts construct narratives by subjective perspectives and interpretations. Authors often incorporate actual historical figures or events into their narratives while highlighting their work’s fictional nature. They may include footnotes, references, or citations to give the illusion of historical accuracy while subverting or challenging the traditional conventions of historiography. Postmodern Historiographic metafiction writers explore the idea that history is a constructed narrative subject to interpretation and manipulation.

Postmodern novels, particularly those classified as historiographic metafiction, are deeply preoccupied with history. They focus on historical events, making history itself their central theme, while simultaneously contemplating the nature of writing and interpreting history. The Postmodern writers challenge the notion of objective truth and question the authority of historical accounts. This technique allows them to engage with historical themes and critique dominant historical narratives while exploring the intersections of history and fiction. Historiographic Metafiction in Postmodern texts exemplifies the Postmodern concern with the fragmentation of knowledge, the blending of genres and styles, and the deconstruction of traditional narratives. It reflects the Postmodern scepticism towards grand narratives and emphasises the multiplicity of perspectives and the subjective nature of historical representation.

Historiographic metafiction is a literary approach that combines historical and fictional elements. It draws attention to its status as a fiction work and highlights storytelling’s artificiality. It challenges traditional notions of historical truth and exposes the constructed nature of historical narratives. The author enables the readers to provide commentary on the nature of history and question established historical

narratives. Historiographic Metafiction often incorporates elements of parody. It playfully imitates and satirises various literary and historical styles, conventions, and tropes. Through parody, it undermines the authority of historical narratives and exposes their limitations and biases. Hutcheon (1988) thus argues:

Parody has perhaps come to be privileged mode of Postmodern formal self-reflexivity because its paradoxical incorporation of the past into its very structures often points to these ideological contexts somewhat more obviously, more didactically, than other forms. Parody seems to offer a perspective on the present and the past which allows an artist to speak to a discourse from within it, but without being totally recuperated by it. Parody appears to have become, for this reason, the mode of what I have called the “ex-centric,” of those who are marginalized by a dominant ideology (Hutcheon 35).

Historiographic metafiction is self-aware and engages in playful experimentation, it also acknowledges the importance of historical reference and maintains that history serves as a crucial framework for understanding the world and our place in it. By incorporating historical events, figures, and contexts, Historiographic metafiction establishes a link to the past and examines the influence of historical events on our current understanding of reality. Historiographic metafiction does not aim for a simplistic mirroring or reproduction of reality. It recognizes that reality and fiction are human constructs and that fiction, including historical fiction, is another discourse through which we create and interpret versions of reality. It emphasizes historical narratives’ subjective and interpretive nature, highlighting their inherent limitations and biases.

Historiographic Metafiction also prominently features ‘Intertextuality.’ It involves the incorporation of multiple texts, such as historical documents, literary works, or other narratives, within the fictional story. Referencing and incorporating other texts is a significant aspect of metafiction, emphasizing the interconnectedness of historical events with other works of literature. These intertexts serve as reference points, adding depth and complexity to the narrative by connecting it to various historical and literary contexts. Historiographic Metafiction draws attention to the construction of history, interpretations and connection of multiple texts. By blending

history and fiction, Historiographic Metafiction creates “intelligible accounts of the past” beyond mere factual representation. It engages with the myths and narratives surrounding historical events, reimagining and reshaping them to offer alternative perspectives. The line between history and myth becomes blurred as Historiographic metafiction uses storytelling to create historical meanings. Roland Barthes’s (1972) statement that “Myth is a type of speech chosen by history” (Barthes 108) can be seen in ‘Historiographic Metafiction’. It suggests that history is a narrative shaped by choices in selecting and presenting events. Historiographic metafiction embraces this idea by using fictional elements to construct narratives that challenge traditional historical accounts and reveal the mythological aspects of history.

Historiographic Metafiction employs the instructional movement of time to refuel past events. It does not simply recreate the past as a static entity but actively engages with it, reinterpreting and reimagining historical events. It presents a new perspective on history and invites critical reflection and analysis. It creates colourful and multi-layered stories of the past by employing intertextuality, and a synthesis of critical opinion. It is a genre that combines history, fiction, politics, and culture to explore deeper social realities. Rather than offering definitive answers or resolutions, Historiographic Metafiction embraces contradictoriness and presents open-ended narratives.

Linda Hutcheon (1988) explores the concept of historiographic metafiction and provides examples of Postmodern authors who engage in this form of writing. Some notable authors in this genre include Salman Rushdie, Margaret Atwood, E.L. Doctorow, Umberto Eco, John Fowles, William Faulkner, Peter Ackroyd, Graham Swift, and Thomas Pynchon. These authors offer interpretations of historical discourse through their works, demonstrating the multi-conclusiveness and diversity of storytelling in Historiographic metafiction. The term “Historiography” highlights the importance of paying attention to history. At the same time, Metafictional tactics emphasize that history is not a fixed and objective entity but rather a constructed narrative. Hutcheon argues that the fusion of Historiography and Metafiction in Historiographic metafiction creates a unique form of experimental writing that relates to *The Poetics of Postmodernism*. It highlights the reliance on other texts to understand historical events and underscores the intertextual nature of all historical events. These

works invite readers to critically interact with the concept of historical truth and the manufactured character of historical narratives by utilizing a variety of storytelling styles.

Postmodernist novelists often engage with historical events, figures, or periods, revisiting them and presenting alternative or marginalized perspectives. They may manipulate or subvert historical facts or create hybrid characters and events that exist within the realm of both history and imagination and frequently employ intertextuality, referencing and incorporating other texts, both fictional and non-fictional, within their narratives. They draw their matter from historical documents, literary works, or cultural artefacts to create a multi-layered and complex narrative. The novelists of the postmodern era use metafictional devices to draw attention to the act of storytelling itself. The commentary on the narrative process addresses the reader directly or disrupts the linear progression of the story. All these devices highlight the constructed nature of the narrative and invite readers to question the reliability of the text. The postmodern writers often challenge authoritative voices and question the hegemonic narratives of history. Their objective is to rediscover and amplify the voices of those historically marginalized, addressing the omissions or absences in conventional historical records. The writers explore the social and political dimensions of history, exposing power dynamics and the construction of historical knowledge. They experiment with narrative structures, employing fragmentation, non-linear narratives, and multiple perspectives to disrupt traditional storytelling techniques. These traits of historiographic metafiction in postmodernist novels contribute to a re-evaluation and reinterpretation of history.

Several writers have contributed to the genre of historiographic metafiction by incorporating its elements into their novels. Jorge Luis Borges is considered a pioneer of 'Historiographic Metafiction.' His works, such as *Ficciones* (1944) and *The Garden of Forking Paths* (1941), blend historical events, fictional narratives, and intricate metafictional devices to challenge traditional notions of history and reality. Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980) can be interpreted as a work of historiographic metafiction. *Midnight's Children* (1980) intertwines the personal stories of characters with the more significant historical events of India's independence and partition, so making it more difficult to distinguish between reality and fantasy. While Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980)



combines a murder mystery plot with an exploration of medieval religious history, incorporating intricate details and metafictional devices to question the nature of historical truth.

Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace* (1996) offers a fictionalized account of a real-life murder case in 19th-century Canada. Through the perspective of the protagonist and the inclusion of historical documents, Atwood explores the complexities of storytelling and the construction of historical narratives. Julian Barnes's novel *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984) is an exploration of the life and works of Gustave Flaubert. It combines elements of biography, literary criticism, and fiction, challenging traditional biographical and historical approaches. William Faulkner's novels *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), incorporating multiple perspectives, non-linear narratives, and unreliable narrators. They explore the subjective nature of memory and challenge conventional historical accounts. Each writer brings their unique style and thematic focus on exploring history, blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction and inviting readers to reconsider established historical narratives.

British novelist Sarah Waters is well-known for her historical fiction. She was born on July 21, 1966, in Neyland, Wales. Waters received her PhD in English literature from Queen Mary University of London after studying at the University of Kent. She worked as an academic and taught literature and creative writing. Waters gained critical acclaim and a devoted readership with her debut novel *Tipping the Velvet* (1998). Then *Affinity* (1999) and *Fingersmith* (2002) also received widespread praise and were adapted for the screen. These novels are particularly notable for their intricate plot and twisted ending, set in Victorian London. Waters's other novels include *The Night Watch* (2006), set during World War II, and *The Little Stranger* (2009), a departure from her previous lesbian-themed works, delving into a haunted house's psychological and supernatural elements. Sarah Waters is known for her meticulous research and attention to historical detail, and *The Paying Guests* (2014) is no exception. The novel captures the atmosphere of 1920s London, highlighting the social and political climate. Her writing style is characterized by meticulous research, atmospheric settings, and complex, well-drawn characters. Waters's novels often explore themes of gender, sexuality, power dynamics, and social class within historical contexts. She has been

praised for her ability to create immersive worlds and blend historical detail with compelling storytelling. Sarah Waters has received numerous awards for her work like the Somerset Maugham Award, the Betty Trask Award, and the Lambda Literary Award. Her novels have been widely translated and continue to captivate readers worldwide.

Sarah Waters's novels can be seen as exemplifying the complex relationship between fiction and history. She consciously engages with historical discourse while maintaining the autonomy of fiction. She explores the interplay between history and fiction by reworking and referencing past texts, creating a parallel status for both the world and literature. Waters's novels go beyond traditional historical fiction by incorporating metafictional elements. She highlights reading, writing, and interpretation processes, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. She highlights how historical narratives are constructed and invites readers to engage with the past critically. One of the Postmodern techniques that Waters employs is intertextuality, which involves referencing and incorporating other texts within her works. This intertextual approach allows her to create layers of meaning and establish connections between different historical and literary sources. By intertwining historical events, cultural references, and fictional storytelling, she enriches the narrative and adds depth to her novels.

Waters utilizes Pastiche and Parody, two other Postmodern elements, to further explore the amalgamation of history and fiction. Pastiche involves imitating and combining different styles or genres, while Parody according to Hutcheon (1985) in *A Theory of Parody: The Teaching of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* not merely involves mocking or satirizing specific works or conventions, but it is a complex multifaceted form of cultural engagement. She emphasises that parody involves both repetition and difference, meaning it imitates an original work while also introducing an element of critical commentary. Through these techniques, Waters pays homage to the literary traditions of the past and subverts them. By adopting this method, the author introduces self-awareness into her storytelling, underscoring the artificial construction of historical accounts and the influence of fiction in shaping our perceptions of history. Incorporating these Postmodern elements and exploring the presence of the past, Sarah Waters exemplifies the intricate relationship between history and fiction. Her novels

engage readers in a thought-provoking exploration of how we perceive and interpret history while delivering compelling stories filled with rich characters and atmospheric settings.

Historiographic metafiction techniques focus on postmodernist issues in Sarah Waters' novels. Examining Waters's works through the lens of Linda Hutcheon's Postmodern ideas aims to qualitatively explore her novel's textual analysis. The study examines and compares the critical texts written by Sarah Waters. Using Historiographic metafiction as an analytical tool, Waters rewrites history and incorporates fictional elements into her narratives. This approach would allow us to investigate how she addresses Postmodernist concerns such as constructing historical narratives, intertextuality, and blurring boundaries between fact and fiction.

Waters' novels are analyzed, considering their narrative structures, themes, character development, and use of historical and literary references. A qualitative approach would involve close reading and interpreting the texts, identifying recurring motifs and narrative techniques. This analysis requires a deep understanding of both Waters's novels and Hutcheon's theories and the ability to draw connections and insights from their works. The present thesis sheds light on the Postmodern elements in Sarah Waters' novels and contributes to the broader understanding of her literary contributions. The research comprehensively analyses her works, highlighting their thematic and narrative complexities within the historiographic metafiction and Postmodernism framework. The primary texts of the present thesis are *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999), *Fingersmith* (2002), *The Night Watch* (2006), *The Little Stranger* (2009) and *The Paying Guests* (2014).

In her first novel, *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), Sarah Waters features Nancy Astley, a young working-class lady who, like Henry James's (1881) Isabel Archer from *The Portrait of Lady*, grows from innocence to maturity. Nancy Astley is infatuated with a male impersonator, Kitty. She explores her sexuality, enjoying sexual freedom for the first time in the Victorian age. Her observations of sex and morality add strength to the novel's plot. Sarah Waters has investigated the sexuality, class differences and gender issues of Victorian London. She expresses her love for Dickensian depth by describing the gas-lot streets of the 19th century, visualising the melodramatic scenes reminiscent of the historical events of the times of Wilkie Collins and George Eliot. Waters's plot

gives the Dickensian feel, banking upon postmodern Victorian culture. She has given the images of smoke and mirrors in the novel to describe the decline of values with the emergence of science and technology. The *Tipping the Velvet* is a part of the Postmodernist lineage that includes A.S. Byatt, Jean Rhys, and John Fowles.

The *Tipping the Velvet* blends elements of commercial thriller, lesbian romance, truth and fiction. Frederic Jameson, in his book *The Cultural Turn* (1998), observes that:

The problem of Postmodernism - how its fundamental characteristics are to be described, whether it even exists in the first place, whether the very concept is of any use, or is, on the contrary a mystification- this problem is at one and the same time an aesthetic and political one (Jameson 21).

Sarah Waters, John Fowles, and A.S. Byatt are prominent who became central to depicting current situations. The postmodern pastiche of Sarah Waters is fascinating and illuminating. John Kucich and Diana Sadoff (2000) argue that the novels of Sarah Waters have become popular because “the Postmodern fetishises notions of cultural emergence, and because the nineteenth century provides multiple eligible for theorising such emergence” (Sadoff xv). She borrowed from Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* the elements of the picaresque character and presented her heroine Nancy Astley, who experiences a short career as the music-hall star but later walks in the streets of London in male disguise as a “renter.” The focus is Nancy’s quest for freedom through impersonation in the late Victorian Age, puncturing the goody morality of the early Victorian Age in the male-dominated world. Hall (2006) reveals that Nan and Florence had a sexual encounter in the pantry, Florence led Nan into the pantry, and “put a broom across the door, and they caressed amongst the packets of flour and tins of treacle while the kettle whistled and the kitchen grew woolly with steam” (Waters 426). The central theme of lesbian sexuality is dramatized in the plot.

*Tipping the Velvet* is a thrilling and sensational tale dramatizing the scenes of a brothel house, the hysteric and Madhouse as stated by Michel Foucault’s critical work *History of Sexuality*. Foucault has given the concept of ‘other spaces’ in his book and Sarah Waters centers *Tipping the Velvet* on “other spaces” and embraces the gothic, melodramatic, and sensation book genres of Victorian popular literature. Her novels have an exciting blend of the elements of wonder and romance and psychological

realism. Her heroines battle to accept reality before setting out on an exciting quest to discover the truthful, gritty portrayal of the bars, theatres, coffee shops, pubs, and music halls that have come to represent historical figures.

Sarah Water's fictional work *Affinity* (2002) is a conspicuous example of her use of the literary technique of historiographic metafiction since the plot consists of diary entries written in the 1870s by two women. Sarah Waters has used the entries of Margaret Prior, a spinster and Selina Dawes, incarcerated in Millbank prison for her deceit. Sarah Waters has raised the voices of these women in the past to depict the themes of moral transgression, prudery, sensation, and strict patriarchal code. *Affinity* is a queer romance involving a middle-class spinster Margaret Prior, who discovers her affinity with Selina Dawes. The heroines are struggling to survive in a patriarchal society.

Margaret Prior is seen regaining her composure in their initial meeting following an unsuccessful suicide attempt. The spooky and eerie atmosphere of the novel draws the reader in, but it also captures the Gothic aura of Anne Redcliff and Edgar Allan Poe's books. Out of irritation, she becomes a charitable guest at Millbank Prison, where she meets Selina Dawes. They start an emotional affair, but both hatch a conspiracy to grab the inheritance and run away to another European country. However, there is a twist in the plot Selina elopes with the maid of Margaret, Ruth Vigers. Selina steals Margaret's dresses and money and cheats on her. This becomes the cause of depression of Margaret, and she decides to commit suicide. The ending of the novel is gloomy. Sarah Waters employs the key tropes of the Gothic novel as Selina conjures up the dead to possess supernatural powers. Margaret expresses her painful experience thus, "Paler each day, my flesh is streaming from me. I am becoming my own ghost! I think I will haunt this room when I have started my new life" (Waters 289).

At the novel's outset, Waters hints at something strange about Margaret. When Boyd hears loud sounds late at night, he delivers the warning and departs the house, "She said it has turned peculiar since Pa died" (Waters 56). At that point, Margaret is the only one awake: "You sit very late, Margaret. Have you heard nothing?" (57). Margaret is the only character who is doing haunting. Psychologically speaking, haunting is sometimes seen as an indication of repressed mental forces that result from loss or nostalgia. Very often this is used as a manifestation of social conflicts.

In *Affinity*, haunting elements symbolise the greed, lust, and human degradation of the Londoners. This is used as a manifestation of social conflicts very often. Sarah Waters is a postmodern novelist who has employed the literary device of haunting in conformity with the aesthetics of postmodernism. Haunting turns into a tool for the “Other” to regain control, and according to Jameson (1995), spectrality is: “What makes the present waver: like the vibrations of a heat wave through which the massiveness of the object world-indeed of matter itself-now shimmers like a mirage” (Jameson 38).

The novel *Fingersmith* (2002), is packed with sensational mystery and romance elements. The plot is structured around the historical personages of Sue and Maud and offers incompatible versions of the same story. The novel presents twin storylines and double characters with interchangeable names, such as Maud Lily, Marianne Lilly, Mr Christopher Lilly, Susan /Sue Trinder, Sue Smith and Mrs Sucksby. The multiple identities of the characters create an atmosphere of romance and wonder, reality and fiction and romantic adventure. The novel’s chief strength is mistaken identity, assuming madness and misperception. Sarah Waters uses these sensational devices to achieve the dimension of meta-fiction. Sarah Waters called the novel “a pantomime Victorian” (Dennis 50).

Sarah Water’s *Fingersmith* hinges on the challenges of women and presents a web of complex and fragmented matrilineal relationships. Adele Jones (2016) analyses Sarah Waters’s text through Julia Kristeva’s lens. She observes thus, “I will argue that reading the novel *Fingersmith* through a Kristevan lens highlights and reinforces that the essential that the essential position of Waters’ work is a feminist critique of woman’s subject position within patriarchy” (116). Maud Trinder and Susan Lily were raised as Susan Trinder and Maud Lily, respectively, because their mothers exchanged them after they were born. They still don’t know the mystery of their birth. Sue is the illegitimate child of Marianne Lily, and grew up in Lant Street, London, with the baby farmer Mrs. Sucksby. Through the mysterious plot, Sarah Waters explores the underworld, criminality and violence. Sarah Waters has depicted the gruesome atmosphere thus:

I supposed it was a pity my mother had ended up hanged; but since she was hanged, I was glad it was for something game, like murdering a miser over his plate ... some girls I knew had mothers who were mad:

mothers they hated and could never rub along with. I should rather a dead mother, over one like that (12).

Sarah Waters was impacted by the supernatural and sensational themes of Angela Carter (1977). She uses sensationalism in this novel to create an uncanny and gruesome atmosphere. Maud has developed a bloody design as she talks of her mother's murder:

I imagine a table slick with blood. The blood is my mother's. There is too much of it. There is so much of it. I think it runs, like ink ... This is only, still, that falling blood- drip drop! Drip, drop! – the beat telling off the first few minutes of my life, the last of hers (180).

The novel *The Night Watch* is set in turbulent wartime Britain depicting the sensational story of the four Londoners. Waters has given the horrifying scenes of blacked out, air raids, illicit relations, and glamorous girls. The plot unfolds through the eyes of four characters linked with wartime London. The plot of *The Night Watch* has a reverse pattern as the plot goes back to the period of 1947, and Sarah Waters depicts the images of intense bombardments of 1944. At the novel's end, all the characters feel older, wiser, and sadder since all have explored the reality of human existence. The main character, Kay, is tired of her life's monotony after the war and is searching for something to distract herself. The novel's primary interest is the topsy-turvy time scheme and the use of the postmodern tools of Irony, Parody, Disintegration, and Pastiche. Sarah Waters emerges as a "mystery writer" who depicts the Londoners' sordid, mundane, humdrum, and artificial existence. Her characters are exhausted, dejected individuals attempting to cope with their past suffering. Kay is seemed as she leaves for the day that "limp, suddenly; not fine so much as dried out, exhausted. She thought she could feel dust ...". To Duncan, she is one of those women "who'd charged about so happily during the war, and then leftover" (Waters 6-7). Like Ernest Hemingway, Kay had been in the World War II as an ambulance driver. Sarah Waters has depicted Duncan's exhausted and dreary existence, leading an alienated life with a mysterious uncle. Duncan's symptoms include panic episodes and suppressed desires. He has comfortable relations with his sister Viv who developed illicit relations with a married man. She repairs broken hearts in a lonely-hearts agency, helping lonely and dejected veterans of war. The novel is remarkable, depicting the themes of love, adventure, betrayal and despair of the war victims. All four characters lead a miserable,

depressed, and lonely life, and their shattered existence evokes sympathy and compassion.

Critical issues for Waters include the post-World War II genres, including homosexual and lesbian culture. Despite being a moment of joy and valour in Britain and worldwide, World War II was a national occupation. Waters' female protagonists are battlefield heroines who lose their professions after the conflict, which inspired her to use this study change. In this novel, Waters includes the gay and lesbian community and emphasises how stifling it became for female homosexuals who could no longer dress in indefensibly masculine or practical clothes while still acting as though they had created an unmarried woman to support them financially. Regarding the reverse chronological chronology in *The Night Watch* (2006), Waters noted;

Every time I tried to move my characters forwards; I met resistance ... It was not my characters' futures that would make them interesting to me; it was their pasts ... I saw that the novel might work best if I put its action in reverse – if I kept its opening in the post-war setting of 1947, but then plunged back into the trauma and excitement of the War itself (Waters, Romance).

*The Night Watch* is Waters's first book with a gay main character, though his sexuality is never directly discussed. The characters have their own ideas about gender and sexual desire. Even homosexual love and lust can fail; additionally, there is concurrent sexual betrayal. The novel is about human interaction, intimacy, disappointment, grief, and betrayal. The novel gives images of disfigurement and crippled bodies, creating a Gothic atmosphere in imitation of Angela Carter. She dismantles the stereotype of Victorian ladies as depicted as "The Angel in the house" and creates women suffering from physical and psychological trauma.

The novel *The Little Stranger* takes place in 1947-48 and is centred on the Ayres, an upper-class family struggling to adapt to post-World War II changes in British society. The rural mansion Hundred Hall is deteriorating, and the traditional British class structure is disintegrating. The Ayres family's situation worsens when a series of unexplained paranormal events occur. When Waters outlines the series of mishaps that kill off every family member, it is clear that her narrative is heavily influenced by gothic fiction. In the beginning, Faraday describes his first trip to the enormous building when



he was ten. He went with his mother, who used to be the family's nursery maid. Faraday is amazed that the mansion has lost all its former splendour nearly thirty years later. The Ayres family who had lived there can no longer afford to keep it up. Following his first visit, Faraday becomes even more curious about the Ayres and resolves to stay in contact with them. He convinces the three family members that he can heal their son Roderick, who suffered terrible damage to his legs during the War, and they grudgingly welcome him into their lives.

Caroline Ayres' brother Roderick sustained terrible leg wounds in battle during World War II. The family's proud mother, Mrs Ayres, struggles mightily to maintain the impression of riches and high standards in the Hundred Hall neighbourhood. Despite the difficulties of being the head of the family, sleeping in the office, and selling property to pay the bills, Roderick is trying to make living at the mansion comfortable. The family's daughter Caroline is referred to by the locals as a "natural spinster" since she is unmarried and in her late 20s. The ferocious dog of Ayres cripples Gillian; the scratches ravage the body, and Caroline is worried because of Gillian's mismatched features.

The characters in *The Little Stranger* are disfigured and ugly, evoking a gothic and gruesome atmosphere. Roderick is the Squire of Hundreds Hall, suffering from disfigurement and looking like a ghost in the novel. The novelist presents him thus: "his fingers felt queer against mine, rough as a crocodile in some spots, oddly smooth in some others, his hands had been burned ... He walked unhurriedly and with a noticeable limp" (6). The imagery of crocodiles invokes degeneration, mud, and dullness. Faraday describes the ugliness of Caroline thus: "She was older than Roderick... over tall for a woman; with "thickish legs" and ankles suggest her physical defects" (8). Caroline Ayres is another ugly woman, giving a shock to the readers. Women characters in the novel are ugly, deformed, impaired, crazy, maimed, afflicted, and love-deficient, struggling to explore love in a drab and mundane world. Faraday meets Caroline and finds her legs unshaven, each little hair; he does not find her attractive and appealing. Caroline is unable to get married because of her unattractive features. Caroline leads a life of frustration and is on the verge of collapse. Her neurotic mood is depicted thus: "Caroline's mounting hostility towards her brother, her impatience with her mother. Both her brother and her mother had become injured, just like Gillian Baker-Hyde"

(382). Sarah Waters has depicted the ugly, mysterious, distorted, and disabled characters in the novel, which become an eternal source of poignant experiences. The characters' ugly, disfigured, and uncanny figures create a ghostly atmosphere.

Sarah Waters breaks from the conventional Victorian fiction tradition and writes a Neo-Victorian fiction employing the literary devices of Postmodernism. Gendered disfigurement and ugliness are the novel's main themes as they impact the characters, creating frustration and despair. Mrs Ayres is sure that the ghost of her dead child, Susan, haunts the house. Caroline exclaims in horror: "Oh! It's grotesque-its filthy" (351). Waters creates a metahistorical narrative while challenging gender and class injustices in the past and today. Since the whole novel is told from the first-person perspective, readers are left to conjecture about the experiences of the other characters and are only provided with Dr Faraday's rational and disheartening explanations of the haunting at Hundred's Hall.

*The Paying Guests*, published in 2014, became a phenomenon in the world of fiction and was declared a bestseller by the *New York Times*. Her novel made the Baileys Women's Prize for fiction shortlist, earning a reputation within the literary community for the excellence of her work. The 'paying guests' are the occupants of Frances Wray and her mother. She wants to hide her social standing because Leonard and Lilian Barber, a lower-middle-class couple, are meant to live in the same house as her. Sarah Waters uses historical events to highlight the flaws in contemporary culture. Frances's home represents post-war British society as a microcosm. The blurring of class lines is one of the significant social shifts that followed World War I. The story commences with the affluent Wray family opening their doors to the less privileged Barbers, who become their lodgers. Middlebrow literature, which first appeared in the 1920s, is the primary influence behind the setting of *The Paying Guests*. Waters's most recent book is preoccupied with mess and disorder. It is connected to the aftermath of War, the tumultuous social upheavals and cultural trauma experienced in its wake, and the urge to restore order. Waters rejects any feeling of moral certainty and returns to an era of melancholy that followed the First World War.

Sarah Waters illustrates the ills of our society through historical events. Frances's home turns into a miniature version of post-war British life. The structure of British society changed after the First World War. Sarah Waters described how the families

suffered, and women had to live alone. The War took away the lives of all the young male members. Frances suffered financial difficulties as a result of her father's misguided investment and death. She laments her father's decision to send all of her siblings to fight in the front only to watch them slaughtered and describes her psychological anguish. The middle-class families suffered, and Sarah Waters realistically depicts their alienation and economic hardships in this novel. Lucy Delap (2011) claims that "The atmosphere of World War I ... led to numerous proposals for servant-less homes or simpler living" (Delap 103).

Many women worked in the munitions industry and other sectors connected to war. They had to lead a miserable life as most male members were killed in the War. The Wrays could not afford a servant since "the munitions factories had ... lured them away in 1916" (Waters 10), giving Frances's power over all household tasks. Frances Wray describes her internal conflict as "It seemed to her that the house must produce [the dust], as flesh oozes sweat" (Waters 25). She views cleaning as an ongoing effort, infinite in the same way that we must care for our bodies daily. Frances feels restless because the presence of her father haunts her house. The patriarchal authority of her father is represented by furniture, which appears to be a variety of "Victorian fakes" (Waters 24). Since the furniture contains her "father's heart," Frances's mother hesitates to discard it (Waters 34). The generational conflict between Mrs Wray and Frances illustrates how the cultural progressions in post-war society are mirrored in the narrative. This dynamic can be seen as a reflection of the changing societal norms and values during that period. Chris Baldick (2015) aptly states thus: "Mutual incomprehension between the Young and the Old is one of the most recurrent topics of the period's literature" (Baldick 28).

Young people often blamed the older people who were responsible for their sufferings. The tension between her main characters and their parents is a recurring theme of the novel. Frances's mother becomes the head of the patriarchy in their home following the death of her father. Frances experiences pressure to uphold the legacy or expectations associated with her father. This could suggest societal or familial expectations on her to conform to a certain standard or role attributed to her father's "passion for Olde England" (Waters 24). Frances must concede that the furniture is still there to "go scuttling around like a crab" (Waters 24). Frances left her lesbian

relationship with Christina because her parents wouldn't let her, and ever then, she's felt confined to the house. Frances's feeling of being confined primarily stems from the unsettling legacy of her father's responsibilities. The daily housework she engages in serves to legitimize and perpetuate this patriarchal order, contributing to her sense of captivity within those established societal norms. Leonore Davidoff (2015) states, "Housework is concerned with creating and maintaining order in the immediate environment making meaningful patterns of activities, people and materials" (Davidoff 75). But in the Wray's family, Frances is physically and emotionally constrained by her father's heritage and her need to uphold it.

Nicola Humble (2008) observes that "the cookery books of the years between the wars try to persuade the newly servant-less middle-class woman that the cooking she must now do is a high-status, fashionable activity" (Humble 322). Following the War, women were encouraged to explore and indulge in their passion for cooking. Gradually, the house becomes a queer heterotopic setting as her cooking vocabulary begins to express her sentiments toward Lilian. Frances uses culinary metaphors to structure her thoughts when she first realises that her feelings for Lilian may develop into a true love: "It was like the white of an egg growing pearly in hot water, a milk sauce thickening in the pan. It was as subtle yet as tangible as that" (Waters 91). The processes involving milk sauce and egg whites symbolize Frances's yearning for Lilian. The comparison suggests that Frances associates the intense and transformative nature of her emotions with these culinary transformations, using them as metaphors to convey the depth of her feelings for Lilian. When Frances observes biscuit crumbs on Lilian's clothing, it signifies a small, detail that draws attention to Lilian's actions or habits. This observation could be a subtle indicator of Lilian's activities or behaviours, prompting Frances to notice and contemplate the significance of their relationship. She feels "a housewifely urge, a house spinsterly urge; she supposed it ought to be called, in her case, to brush them free" (Waters 79). These terms about the home further represent Frances's efforts to change her home. She can explore her homosexuality in her home, which is a dark cave of domestic imprisonment and captivity. Interestingly, Frances's and Lilian's first sexual union take place in the scullery.

Waters describes how heterotopic spaces for transgressive impulses might arise from domesticity in middle-class houses. She blends Middlebrow with detective

literature with its murder and police inquiry narrative. Detective fiction became one of the most well-known literary genres following World War I. Despite its conservative image, detective fiction from the 1920s offers valuable insights into the evolving roles of women. Sarah Waters, in her works, employs and satirizes popular literary genres of that era to reproduce and reimagine the challenges surrounding lesbianism during the 1920s. This demonstrates presence of existing literary conventions to address and comment on societal issues.

*The Paying Guests* main plot points were taken from historical accounts of the well-known Thompson-Bywaters' case from 1922 by Waters. The young, lower-middle-class boyfriend of Edith Thompson, Frederick Bywaters, fatally stabbed Percy Thompson in 1922. Frederick accepted entire crime, but the investigating authority found correspondence records between Bywaters and Edith Thompson, in which Edith was the master mind behind the crime of killing Percy. Thus, Edith and her lover Bywaters were convicted and executed by hanging in 1923. Despite sharing a lower-middle-class background, Edith's mixed class standing as a successful bookkeeper and manager in a millinery company elevated concerns among the upper-middle class during the interwar period. This was particularly evident in worries about the adoption of new products and lifestyles by younger women in the lower-middle class. The class anxiety prevalent during the interwar years is discernible in Waters's works, specifically in the portrayal of the Wray family's struggle and decline from their upper-middle-class status. This thematic exploration reflects broader societal concerns and shifts in class dynamics during that historical period.

In *The Paying Guests*, the love triangle takes on a lesbian edge. The individuals' shift in sexual orientation alters the course of the subsequent murder inquiry, which also explores heteronormativity in 1920s Britain. The strategy that Frances and Lilian had to get out of their domestic predicament is not feasible. Social constraints that prevent characters from moving forward in a certain way do not dictate the areas where they end up the "patriarchal, heteronormative bounds" (Waters 37). The characters in Waters's novel are free to follow their own, intense desires. Nevertheless, characters are compelled to make concessions as they frequently want to remain in the repressive society despite their freedom. The union of Lilian and Frances at the conclusion of *The Paying Guests* is sad and unsettling. The uncertain future of Waters's characters is

relevant to queer heterotopic space. Waters emphasises the significance of her characters in “Staying in the Mess,” she argues; “I wanted my novels to, sort of, say ‘yes, the world is messy and we do have to live with mess.’ And if we can’t bear mess, you know, that’s at our own peril” (Waters 38).

The novel ends abruptly, providing a legal but not a moral ending. The novel takes place in 1922, long after the joy of the armistice that ended World War I had faded and London was desolate, lifeless, and depressing. Frances Wray’s youth, enthusiasm, and economic advantage were destroyed by the aftermath of the War and became symbols of these features of life after the War. Just as the glow on the slate tiles she polishes every day wears off, so too is Frances more ethereal than the deceased men, her father and brothers, who haunt her peaceful existence with her mother. However, Waters’ interest in this situation goes beyond the societal and personal destruction caused by the conflict.

By analyzing and comparing these primary texts, applying the techniques of ‘Historiographic Metafiction,’ and incorporating Postmodernist ideas, the readers can look into the complexities of Waters’s narratives, her engagement with history, and how she challenges conventional storytelling conventions.

The thesis is divided into five chapters;

Brief Candle

Chapter One: Historiographic Metafiction: A Critical Analysis

Chapter Two: Re-Visiting History

Chapter Three: Re-interpreting ‘Reality’

Chapter Four: Postmodern Characters and Identity: Issues and Challenges

Chapter Five: Metafictional Elements

Conclusion

Bibliography

The First Chapter of the thesis, “Historiographic Metafiction: A Critical Analysis”, deals with the emergence of historiographic metafiction and discusses its origin and influence in postmodern writings. Historiographic metafiction, a literary genre that arose in the late 20th century, involves the deliberate fusion of historical and fictional components within narratives, often showcasing self-aware storytelling techniques. By interrogating the fabricated aspect of history and the subjective lens

through which history is perceived, it contests conventional concepts of historical authenticity and storytelling. The literary critic Linda Hutcheon used historiographic metafiction to describe a specific kind of Postmodern fiction that engages with historiography. Historiographic Metafiction incorporates historical events, figures, and texts, but that undermines the authority of historical accounts and highlights its fictional aspects. The multiple narrative techniques, including parody, intertextuality, anachronism, and fragmentation, challenge conventional historical narratives and blur the boundaries between fact and fiction. They may create fictional characters interacting with historical figures or present alternative versions of well-known historical events.

One of the most influential works of the historiographic metafiction technique is John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). The novel employs a dual narrative structure, alternating between a Victorian-era romance and a metafictional commentary on the novel's writing. Fowles undermines the reader's expectations and challenges the idea of historical determinism. Another notable example is *Midnight's Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie. It is the story of Saleem Sinai, born during India's independence from British rule. Rushdie weaves together historical events and personal stories, which blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction and questions the reliability of historical accounts. Other prominent authors associated with include Thomas Pynchon, Umberto Eco, and Margaret Atwood. Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980) both engage with historical contexts while challenging the traditional modes of historical representation.

Chapter Two of the thesis, "Re-Visiting History," deals with historiographic techniques used in Sarah Waters's novels. This chapter explores the historiographic techniques acclaimed by Waters in her novels. Waters is known for her meticulous research and ability to recreate historical settings vividly. Her narrative strategies and her writings engage with historical sources. Readers can gain insights into her approach to historical fiction and the construction of historical narratives in her works. Waters's fiction presents periods of significant social, political, and cultural change, such as Victorian England or post-World War II Britain. By immersing her readers in these historical settings, she creates a sense of authenticity and invites them to explore the complexities of the past.

Sarah Waters's historiographic approach is her commitment to extensive research. She thoroughly reviewed the primary sources, including letters, diaries, newspapers, and historical records, to better understand the period. This research informs her descriptions of clothing, architecture, manners, and social customs, lending a high degree of authenticity to her narratives. Waters strives for historical accuracy, she acknowledges the limitations of historical sources and the gaps in our knowledge. She artfully combines factual details with fictional elements, allowing her imagination to fill the historical silences. This interplay between fact and fiction enables her to create compelling narratives that engage readers while remaining true to the essence of the historical period. Waters explores the experiences of marginalized individuals and communities in her novels, shedding light on their perspectives and challenging traditional historical narratives. Giving voice to characters from different social classes, genders, and sexual orientations, she disrupts the dominant historical discourse and offers alternative perspectives on the past.

Waters employs metafictional techniques that further complicate the historiographic dimension of her narratives. In *Fingersmith*, she presents multiple perspectives and twists in the plot that force readers to question their assumptions and challenge the reliability of historical accounts. These metafictional elements enhance the complexity of her storytelling and encourage critical engagement with historical representation. Waters also interrogates power structures prevalent in historical societies. She explores themes of gender, class, and sexuality, highlighting how these social dynamics shape individual lives and historical events. She unveils the intricate relationships between power and history by examining the interplay between personal narratives and broader historical forces. Sarah Waters's novels demonstrate a sophisticated engagement with historiographic techniques. Through meticulous research, an interplay between fact and fiction, the exploration of marginalised perspectives, metafictional strategies, and interrogation of power structures, Waters constructs historical narratives that challenge conventional understandings of the past. Incorporating these techniques into her storytelling, Waters captivates readers and encourages them to reflect critically on the construction of history and its relevance to contemporary society.



In the Third Chapter, “Re-interpreting ‘Reality’”, Waters challenges traditional views of truth and reality and employs new literary devices to articulate her vision of hyperreality. Drawing inspiration from the Gothic and Sensational Novels, Waters incorporates horror, terror, mystery, romance, the grotesque, and the absurd into her plots. She effectively depicts the nature of truth and reality in her historiographical metafiction. Waters’s novels uniquely blend fact and fiction, fantasy and reality, and historical events. This blending allows her to create a hyper realistic world where differences between what is truth and what is imagined become blurred.

These novels showcase Waters’s ability to intertwine historical context with elements of sensation and mystery, resulting in a heightened sense of hyperreality. Waters dissects the effects of war on personal relationships and challenges the conventional narrative of heroism and sacrifice. *The Night Watch* employs a non-linear structure, emphasizing the fractured nature of truth and reality. It makes it difficult for readers to distinguish between psychological suspense and the weird, leading them to doubt the veracity of reality. By using historical settings, gothic and sensational elements, Waters pushes the boundaries of traditional storytelling. Her novels offer a fresh perspective on truth and reality, inviting readers to question and reimagine the nature of the world they inhabit.

Chapter Four of the thesis “Postmodern Characters and Identity: Issues and Challenges” explores postmodern themes and issues of identity. Waters’s works delve into the complexities of human experiences and challenge traditional notions of gender, sexuality, and social constructs. Waters’s novels frequently feature characters who challenge and transcend traditional identities. The novels often navigate fluid or shifting identities related to gender, sexuality, and class. In all her novels except *The Little Stranger*, the protagonists explore their lesbian identity in Victorian England and the World War era. The characters challenge societal expectations and assumptions about gender roles. The characters defy traditional gender roles and expectations and embody androgyny, question binary concepts of gender, or engage in cross-dressing. These characters vague the boundaries of masculinity and femininity, highlighting the constructed nature of gender norms. Characters struggle with the limitations and expectations placed upon them by the periods in which they live. The historical settings of her novels provide a backdrop for exploring issues such as societal norms, class

distinctions, and the influence of cultural factors on identity formation. The characters navigate complex power dynamics and explore the intersection of power and desire. They challenge or subvert power structures through their sexual desires or relationships. In *Fingersmith* and *The Night Watch*, power imbalances and the consequences of desires significantly shape the characters' identities. The specific characterizations and narratives vary, each novel uniquely explores identity within its own historical and cultural context.

Chapter Fifth, "Metafictional Elements", of the thesis discusses how Sarah Waters employs various metafictional techniques to challenge and subvert conventional storytelling and engage the readers in the narrative process. Waters draws attention to the fact that her narratives directly address the act of storytelling within her works. Characters may comment on the nature of storytelling, discuss their roles as characters, or reflect on the artifice of the narrative itself. This self-awareness encourages readers to question the reliability and subjectivity of the narrative. Waters employs unreliable narrators or introduces conflicting perspectives to highlight the constructed nature of storytelling.

Waters frequently references and incorporates elements from other texts within her works. These intertextual references may include allusions to literary works, historical events, or cultural artefacts. By weaving these references into her narratives, she creates layers of meaning and invites readers to explore the connections and interplay between texts. She mimics and imitates the styles and conventions of different literary genres and periods. She creates narratives that evoke the atmosphere and language of Victorian literature while simultaneously subverting and challenging its norms. This blending of styles adds depth and complexity to her storytelling.

Waters employs specific metafictional devices, such as characters directly addressing the reader or incorporating fictional documents, letters, or diaries within the narrative. These devices heighten the self-consciousness of the text, reminding readers that they are engaging with a constructed story. Sarah Waters disrupts traditional narrative structures and invites readers to examine the act of storytelling critically. Her narratives become self-aware, encouraging readers to challenge the boundaries between fiction and reality.

### **Review of Literature of Past and the Present**

Cheryl A. Wilson (2006) in the article: “From the Drawing Room to the Stage: Performing Sexuality in Sarah Water’s *Tipping the Velvet*” focused on the gender performance and the ideas of Judith Butler. Wilson observes that the metaphor of music hall dominates the novel, more than half is devoted to describing the experiences of Nancy. In the Victorian age, the music halls were the main attraction of the rich people, and Nancy visits them to escape from the dullness of her routine life and in her quest for money, liberty and sexuality. The article gives an insight into London’s affluence and the images of dirt, vulgarity and degradation.

Mariaconcetta Costantini (2006), in her article “Faux-Victorian Melodrama in the New Millennium: The Case of Sarah Waters”, discusses the theme of Revisiting the Victorian era in the contemporary century and the obsession with the past. In her scholarly analysis, Costantini observes that Sarah Waters displays her passion for the old Victorian age in her three novels. The work is told in the first person by the main character, dramatizes a woman’s quest for sexual liberation in a world dominated by men.

According to Heilman and Llewellyn’s *Metafiction and Metahistory in Contemporary Women’s Writing* (2007), historical novels, including those written by Sarah Waters, are female-dominated genres. They also highlight the popularity of authors like Philippa Gregory and Sarah Waters on the best-selling lists. Heilman’s viewpoint suggests that Waters’ novels are categorized as historical and do not necessarily break away from literary tradition. This perspective implies that Waters’ works fit within established conventions of the historical fiction genre rather than pushing boundaries or subverting traditional structures. On the other hand, Mark Llewellyn, in his analysis of Waters’ first four novels, explores the presence of metafictional devices in her works. Fiction that subtly highlights its inherent artificiality, frequently blurring the lines between real and unreal, is referred to as Metafiction.

Llewellyn suggests that the characters become aware of their own identities through their engagement in reading and writing. This implies that the characters’ perception of themselves is greatly influenced by literature. It explores the intersection of metafiction and metahistory in the works of contemporary women writers. This collection of essays delves into how these literary techniques are employed by women

authors to challenge and reconfigure conventional narratives, both fictional and historical. The book examines various themes, including the deconstruction of traditional storytelling, and the exploration of alternative histories and perspectives. By focusing on women's writing, the editors highlight how Metafiction and Metahistory are potent tools for female authors to assert their voices and challenge dominant narratives.

Cora Kaplan (2007), in *Victoriana: Histories, fiction, criticism*, highlights Waters' use of Postmodern techniques, particularly pastiche. Pastiche refers to the borrowing and reimagining of various styles, genres, and literary conventions. Kaplan suggests that Waters employs pastiche with self-confidence, integrating Victorian-era elements while offering a contemporary perspective. Waters' novels, including *Tipping the Velvet*, *Affinity*, and *Fingersmith* explore feminism, gay, lesbian, and queer studies. This suggests that Waters incorporates these topics into her storytelling, contributing to feminist, LGBTQ+ literary scholarship, and queer studies.

Jerome de Groot (2009) *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*, explores the themes of self-reflexivity in Sarah Waters' novels. De Groot highlights the first-person narrative in both the novels *Tipping the Velvet* and *The Night Watch*. Waters adopts a sensationalist style reminiscent of the late Victorian era in *The Tipping the Velvet*, while *The Night Watch* portrays the dilapidated houses of London. De Groot argues that through her historical novels, Waters gives voice to marginalized individuals who have been suppressed by hegemonic forces. According to De Groot, navigating heteronormative norms within Sarah Waters' fiction can be a challenging endeavour. Her works delve into the complexities of interrelationships and histories, providing a unique perspective on the dynamics of power and sexuality. De Groot acknowledges Waters as a historical fiction writer and emphasizes that she goes beyond the confines of traditional historical fiction by incorporating elements of historiographic metafiction and re-examining the narratives of those on the margins of society.

Pulham and Rosario Arias (2009) in 'Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Possessing the Past' discuss the presence of spectral or ghostly elements within Sarah Waters' novel *Affinity*. Arias argues that Postmodern writers have a wealth of late Victorian elements to explore, allowing them to recreate or reimagine a world that

holds particular intrigue for them. These elements include the Industrial Revolution, the mysteries of the Victorian underworld, and the struggles of women's emancipation. Arias notes that Waters incorporates spectral elements in *Affinity* to depict the profound emptiness experienced by the narrator. Salina Dawes, a character in the novel, manipulates the protagonist, who believes in the presence of ghosts within her home. This disbelief prevents her from recognizing that Ruth Vigers, another character, is plotting forgery against her. Ultimately, the narrator tragically commits suicide. Sarah Waters' novels often touch upon themes of female confinement. Through her narratives, she explores the limitations and struggle women face in a patriarchal society, shedding light on their challenges for emancipation and autonomy.

Mandy Koolen (2010), in "Historical Fiction and the Revaluating of Historical Continuity in Sarah Waters's *Tipping the Velvet*", analysed that Sarah Waters is constructing a bridge to remove the gap between fact and fiction. She made the Victorian era fictional by adding elements of Postmodernism. She has often used the word 'Queer' in her novels. She wants to expose the queer world of the Victorian era. She uses impersonation and gender performativity in her novels.

Kate Mitchell (2010), in *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction* acclaimed the novels of Victorian Settings, *Affinity* and *Fingersmith*. She re-examined them as Neo-Victorian fiction. She considers that these novels follow Victorian culture, but her novels have metafictional elements. Sarah Waters has reconstructed history. She celebrates the past by giving it a new voice. Her novels examine the technique of historiographic metafiction.

Katharina Boehm (2011), analyses the tools of historiography. She wrote six novels; her approach is historiographic, and through her active imagination, she has blended the past and the present. The British novelist Sarah Waters' writings have had a profound influence on the "extremely active sphere of argument about history and the rediscovery of elided potentialities" (Middleton and Woods 1) in the Modern literature.

Katherine Cooper, in her book *The Female Figure in the Contemporary Historical Fiction* (2012), investigates the portrayal of women in the Postmodern British fiction of Sarah Waters. Cooper highlights how Waters diverges from conventional Victorian morality and offers multidimensional roles to her female protagonists. The role of women in contemporary British fiction has undergone a

significant transformation, liberating them from the constraints of orthodox Victorian morality. Women in Waters' novels can now join clubs, attend theatres, and participate in fashion shows, enabling them to explore their positions in the evolving global world. Cooper takes a historical perspective in her analysis of Waters' novels, considering the contextual background and societal shifts that have influenced the portrayal of women throughout the narrative.

Emily Jeremiah (2012) in her article: "The "I" inside and "her": Queer Narration in Sarah Water's *Tipping the Velvet* and Westley's Stace's *Misfortune*" relies on the performance view of Judith Butler in her analysis of the debut novel *Tipping of the Velvet*. Astley's infatuation for Kitty is on her imaginative vision of the theatre world. Jeremiah has reviewed the novel from the perspective of historicity. Margaret Prior is projected as a female historian struggling in the cruel for identity formation. There is no discussion of Neo-Victorian identity in all these articles.

Helen Davis (2012), in her book *Gender and Ventriloquism in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Fiction: Passionate Puppets*, offers an analysis of Waters' fiction *Tipping the Velvet* (1998) and *Affinity* (1999) as Neo-Victorian works. According to Davis, the narrators in these novels demonstrate a self-consciousness about the historical era they portray, suggesting an awareness of the limitations and constructs of that time. Davis notes that Sarah Waters has a keen interest in Victorian novelists and draws inspiration from them. Additionally, she highlights the influence of Oscar Wilde's treatment of gender in Waters' works. Wilde was known for his critique of patriarchal versions of history and his exploration of silenced and marginalized voices, particularly about same-sex desire. Davis suggests that Waters engages with similar themes and questions surrounding the silencing of same-sex desire. In Neo-Victorian fiction, which reimagines and reinterprets Victorian themes and settings, the idea of sexuality is a common theme. Davis argues that Butler's (1990) Theory of Gender Performativity, which examines how gender is constructed through repeated performances, influenced Waters' writing of *Tipping the Velvet*. By exploring gender performance and sexuality, Waters engages with the concerns and perspectives of the marginalized and silenced voices of the 19th century.

Diana Wallace, in her book *Female Gothic Histories* (2013), acknowledges that Waters' novels can be seen concerning the third wave of feminism. Waters initially

establishes an affinity with historical novels, drawing upon the conventions and tropes of the genre. However, she goes beyond traditional historical narratives and actively exploits them to subvert expectations and challenge societal norms. By using the term “Queer,” Waters introduces a sense of otherness and the presence of lesbianism on the margins of historical accounts. The theme of incarceration, which runs throughout all of Waters’ works, is one of their most important features. This theme reflects the restrictions and confinements imposed on individuals based on gender and sexuality. Sarah Waters’ gothic historical novels, as discussed by Diana Wallace (2013) engage with the third wave of feminism by presenting lesbian sexuality within a historical context.

In her piece “On Writing Neo-Victorian Fiction,” Patricia Duncker (2014) examines the Victorian era and the literature available on the subject. She remarks that Sarah Waters has explored the Victorian period thoroughly. The subjects of her novels are lesbian romance and lesbian desires. Neo-Victorian fiction becomes her textual trademark.

Martin Paul Eve (2015), in her article “New Rhetorics: Disciplinarity and the Movement from Historiography to Taxonomography”, argues that, like Thomas Pynchon, Sarah Waters has revived the history in the heyday of ‘Historiographic Metafiction.’ Waters has given a new life to the past seeking inspiration from the Victorian novelists and re-writing history in the Postmodern context.

Rachel Woods (2015), in the article “Walking and Watching in Queer London: Sarah Waters’ *Tipping the Velvet* and *The Night Watch*”, focusing on the strange aspects and changing city spaces in London between the 1880s to 1940s. Waters illustrated the historical distinctiveness and connection between same-sex desire and women dressed in masculine attire.

Adele Jones in her critical work *Sarah Waters and Contemporary Feminisms* (2016), explores Sarah Waters’s novels to feminist theory. According to Jones’s view, Waters approaches current conversations and debates about women and gender from a postmodern standpoint. Through her exploration, Jones examines the feminist concerns Waters addresses and the portrayal of postmodern women within the larger global context, highlighting their liberation from the patriarchal oppression inherent in orthodox Victorian society. Jones’s observations encompass various themes tackled by

Waters in her works. Patriarchy, female captivity, insanity, misogyny, oppression, repression, subjugation, abortion, marriage, spinsterhood, and other issues are among them. Jones notes that in her works, Waters fervently explores female autonomy, desire, aesthetics, female sexuality, and lesbianism. Waters contributes to contemporary feminist discourse and offers nuanced perspectives on the experiences and struggles of women.

Adele Jones, in her scholarly article: “The Feminist Politics of Textuality: Reading the Feminism of Julia Kristeva in *Fingersmith*” (2016), explores the poignant experiences of the marginalised women of Sarah Waters. Using Julia Kristeva’s ideas as a guide, she has seen that the fundamental theme of Sarah Waters’s literature is feminism’s critique.

In the article “Written on the Body: Wounded Men and Ugly Women in *The Little Stranger*” (2016), Helen Davis discusses the ugly world of Sarah Waters depicted in her novel *The Little Stranger*. The novel centres on Hundreds Hall of London, and all the inmates are disabled and physically disfigured. Sarah Waters gives images of War through the traumatic experiences of her female characters in this article.

Claire O’Callaghan, in her article “Re-Valuing Female Masculinity and Butch Subjectivity in *Tipping the Velvet* and *The Night Watch*” (2016), investigates the themes of lesbianism and sexuality. Sarah Waters is assumed to be the champion of the lesbian culture of England. In her novels, the elements of “lesbophobia” are plenty which becomes the leading cause of their disintegration of the self.

Claire O’Callaghan (2019) takes a unique approach to examining gender and sexuality in Sarah Waters’s writings by merging feminist and queer theoretical perspectives. O’Callaghan’s analysis covers a wide range of topics, including heterosexuality, homosexuality, masculinities, femininities, sex, pornography, and the cultural implications of domination and othering in novels such as *Tipping the Velvet*, *Fingersmith*, and *The Paying Guests*. The study also considers Waters’s academic writings, as well as the television adaptations of her works. By presenting Waters as both an insightful analyst and an active participant in contemporary debates on gender and sexual politics, O’Callaghan underscores the importance of Waters’s writing as a significant textual space for the investigation of modern gender and sexuality studies.



By exploring the mentioned themes within a historical context, Waters aims to bring lesbian sexuality into the mainstream consciousness and shed light on its often overlooked or marginalized presence throughout history. Waters utilizes the gothic genre to analyse and depict the free-floating anxieties surrounding class, gender, and sexuality. By situating her narratives within historical settings, she provides a platform to explore these societal constructs' tensions and power dynamics. Through her works, Waters questions the marginalization of gender and offers alternative visions for the future, suggesting that historical fiction can serve as a tool for challenging and reimagining traditional narratives. Waters uses the term "Queer" to signify the presence of lesbianism in the shadows of history. She also explores themes of imprisonment to highlight the constraints imposed on gender and sexuality.

### **Research Gap**

After conducting an extensive review of literature from both past and present, it has been found that there is a noticeable absence of a comprehensive study focusing on the topic of historiographic metafiction in Sarah Waters's novels. To bridge this research gap, the thesis intends to undertake a critical study that explores Waters' novels through the lens of Linda Hutcheon's theories. Waters skilfully employs the techniques of historiographic metafiction in her works. The study firmly asserts that Waters effectively utilizes historical events to portray the contemporary issues of our time. Through her Postmodern approach, innovative stylistic techniques, and adept use of literary devices, Waters has made a name for herself as one of the twenty-first century's important postmodern novels. Waters has been acclaimed for her historical novels that incorporate elements of Historiographic metafiction. Waters meticulously researches the historical periods in which her novels are set, providing readers with a vivid and accurate portrayal of the past. This commitment to historical detail enhances the sense of authenticity within the narrative.

Waters' novels weave fictional characters and events into the historical backdrop, creating a narrative where the line between historical facts and imaginative storytelling becomes blurred. The study challenges conventional historical narratives and perspectives. Waters' novels, through their unique storytelling techniques, encourage readers to question and reconsider historical truths, fostering a critical engagement with the past. The study focuses on characters from marginalized groups, such as women,

LGBTQ+ individuals, and those from lower social classes. By placing these characters at the centre of historical events. It provides a fresh and alternative perspective on history, addressing gaps in traditional historical accounts. The narrative strategies employed in historiographic metafiction encourage the readers to realise the constructed nature of historical accounts, emphasizing that history is not an objective truth but a subjective interpretation.

**Objectives of the Proposed Research:**

1. To state the socio-political events of the Postmodern age and the emergence of new techniques of writing.
2. To investigate the techniques of the historiographic metafiction theory of Linda Hutcheon.
3. To analyse and reinterpret the texts of Sarah Waters and her concept of ‘Historiographic Metafiction’.
4. To discuss the growth of the Historiographic techniques of Sarah Waters.
5. To explore the metafictional elements in the novels of Sarah Waters.

**Research Methodology to be Used:**

1. The intended research study will adhere to the MLA 9th style sheet edition.
2. The critical study of all the important texts of Sarah Waters will be done by applying the techniques of ‘Historiographic Metafiction’.
3. Linda Hutcheon’s postmodern ideas will be applied to investigate the texts of Sarah Waters.
4. This study is qualitative, based on the textual analysis of Sarah Waters’s novels. No fieldwork is necessary for this project because it is knowledge-based. A textual study of Sarah Waters’s work will be conducted to investigate the postmodernist literary methods used by Sarah Waters.

## Chapter: One

### Historiographic Metafiction: A Critical Analysis

The present chapter investigates and reconsiders the perspective of the historiographic metafiction theory propounded by Linda Hutcheon. It critically analyses historiographic metafiction, particularly through the lens of Sarah Waters' novels. Most critics of Waters have focused on her themes of sexuality and lesbianism. Stefania Ciocia (2007) discusses and explores the lesbian identity of the characters in Sarah Waters's novels. Susan Alice Fischer (2018) views that her female characters experienced lesbian desires; "they destabilize gender, sexual and class norms to varying degrees" (28). Paulina Palmer (2004) analyses and categorizes Sarah Waters' Gothic-inspired books as "Lesbian Gothic" (Palmer 119). Mark Llewellyn (2004) explored the lesbian desires of the protagonist of *Affinity*, transgressing the imprisoning boundaries that confine her. Patricia Duncker (2014), in her article, focused on Sarah Waters's "reinvention of Victorian sexuality" (Duncker 268) by making sexual secrets and pasting and coding them in the Victorian era. While analysing the novels of Sarah Waters, the present chapter explores how Waters intertwines historical events with fictional narratives, challenging the boundaries between facts and fiction.

Modernism is described as "a style and movement in art, architecture and literature popular in the middle of the 20th century in which modern ideas, methods and materials were used rather than traditional ones" (154) in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Ihab Hassan, in his well-known chapter "Towards a Concept of Postmodernism" (1987), contends that there exists little disparity between Modernism and Postmodernism, asserting that postmodernism encompasses modernism since postmodern writers employ the techniques of their modernist counterparts. However, postmodern writers diverge from Modern writers in terms of narrative style, symbolism, and meaning. Similarly, Brian McHale's 1992 publication, *Constructing Postmodernism*, posits that "Postmodern is not a found object, but a manufactured artifact" (McHale 1).

In the post-World War II era, Fredric Jameson advocated for postmodern concepts. At the same time, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard responded to the principles of modernism by publishing influential books that laid the foundation for postmodern culture. Lyotard's 1979 work, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, and Baudrillard's 1989 publication, *From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, marked significant milestones in this intellectual shift. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines Postmodernism as "a style and movement in art, architecture, literature, etc., in the late 20th century that reacts against modern styles" (123). The critics argue that the emergence of postmodern culture instigated novel changes in art and philosophy as a response to the philosophical ideas and style of modernism.

Linda Hutcheon is one of the most esteemed and well-known Canadian thinkers. She emerged as a great literary giant in contemporary times. She is the daughter of Italian immigrants, and by her perceptions and critical acumen, she became a professor at the University of Toronto. She broke the tradition of Italian culture and joined the University, confronting all opposition from her relatives and Italian friends. Her in-depth writings on postmodernism and feminism offer precise, concise assessments of even the trickiest subjects, such as parody, irony, and aesthetics. In twelve years, she produced a diverse and creative body of work, including eight volumes on subjects such as formalism, metafiction, and the aesthetics of Sigmund Freud. Hutcheon's research papers on Feminist postmodern theory and fiction have earned her international name and fame. Her main contribution to the literary criticism domain is the theory and practice of postmodernism. Like Fredric Jameson, she brought tremendous changes in cultural and literary studies. Hutcheon defined and redefined the contours of postmodernism, giving her theories on literature, architecture, music, and the visual arts.

In the book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), Hutcheon argues that historical novels, as examples of historiographic metafiction, explore contemporary historiography by questioning the boundaries between history and fiction. This type of fiction creates representations of distant worlds by drawing on past historical periods and figures. The fiction is situated in a specific historical period,

with some characters being historical figures engaged in activities for which there are no records. While these characters might not be found in encyclopedias, their actions are bound to that particular time and place. This genre exhibits traits of metafiction, where authors actively engage with the reader, often reminding them that they are reading a novel.

The critical theories of Linda Hutcheon impacted scores of novelists and critics worldwide. For example, Ian McEwan is a prominent British novelist whose famous novel *Atonement* (1948) is hailed as a typical Metafiction. He employs multiple points of view, and the structure of “Chinese Box” when he reworks history makes the novel a specimen of Historiography Metafiction. Hutcheon (1988) observes that “It is part of the postmodernist stand to confront the paradoxes of fictive/historical representation, the particular/the general, and the present/the past” (Hutcheon 106). There is no definitive qualitative distinction between narrative fiction and narrative history, according to an extensive analysis of the postmodern writings of Post-World War II writers. There is no denying that both fiction and history are discourses that build on signification systems to give readers a sense of the past. The processes that transform past events into current historical realities are what give them their structure and significance, not the events themselves. The theoretical writings of Michel Foucault, Hayden White, Dominick LaCapra, Louis O. Mink, Frederic Jameson, Edward Said, and Roland Barthes are the foundation for these presumptions. All these theorists have raised the same issues about historical discourse and its relation to the literary discourse as contemporary historiographic metafiction. E.L. Doctorow, Gore Vidal, Robert Coover, and Frederic Jameson have raised issues of narrative form, representation strategies, the function of language and the connection between historical truth and experimental occurrences that represent the challenges confronting humanity now.

Roland Barthes’ collection of essays “Mythologies” (1957) explores how cultural narratives (myths) shape our understanding of the world. He argues that these myths function as a form of ideological control, presenting cultural constructs as natural or self-evident truths. Historiographic metafiction similarly examines how historical narratives (cultural myths) shape collective memory and ideology. By rewriting or parodying historical events, historiographic metafiction reveals the constructed nature

of these narratives and challenges the idea of a single, objective historical truth. In his essay “The Reality Effect,” Barthes (1965) discusses how seemingly trivial details in a narrative contribute to the illusion of reality, making a fictional narrative appear factual. This is relevant to historiographic metafiction, which often plays with the inclusion of realistic details to blur the boundary between history and fiction. By mimicking the stylistic features of historical writing, historiographic metafiction questions the authenticity of historical narratives and highlights their narrative construction. Barthes’ ideas about the constructed nature of historical discourse, “the death of the author”, and “The interplay of myth and ideology” provide a critical framework for analysing how historiographic metafiction challenges the conventional boundaries between history and fiction, exposing the subjectivity and narrative techniques inherent in historical writings.

Hayden White (1973) of Michigan University wrote *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. He contends that historical writing was profoundly impacted by literary writing, which primarily depends on narrative to communicate meaning. White mentions the philosophical ideas of Karl Marx and Nietzsche, contending that both philosophers use their ideas to consider history, which “not only makes us know something about the historical process but know how it knows” (Hayden 277). He explored the problems of history regarding as the problem of the explanation. For Nietzsche, it is a problem of employment; for Marx, “it is a problem of the mode of the explanation” (Hayden 279). Hayden argues that a value-free history cannot exist. According to White, any historical discourse presented in the form of a narrative introduces a degree of fabrication since no true collection of historical events has an inherent plot, and the historian must necessarily add some created meaning to fit any chronology into a selected plot.

Jean Francois Lyotard (1984) investigated the metanarratives and examined the nature of knowledge and its function in society. Lyotard defines “postmodernism as incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard 24). Lyotard’s assertion that knowledge is not a universal truth but rather a series of localized narratives. This scepticism allows for multiple perspectives and voices to emerge in historical discourse, challenging the dominant narratives that have traditionally shaped our understanding of history. He

penned *Postmodern Condition* (1979), recognizing that advances in science and technology paved the way for the development of computers, mass media, and communication. Lyotard, who is regarded as the founder of the postmodernist movement, promoted the use of a variety of social and surreal literary techniques to convey the complexity of society. He offered a fresh perspective on the knowledge that emerged following the Enlightenment. According to Lyotard, cybernetics has taken over society since World War I. Lyotard considers that the metanarrative contains the treasure of knowledge of history. Metanarratives, according to Lyotard, are the knowledge reservoir.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) outlines in his essay “Discourse in the Novel,” how novelists and prose writers interact with historical data. He argues that while they may draw upon historical facts, they do so not to serve the purposes of objective historical recording, but to serve their narrative and thematic intentions. Bakhtin notes that the novelist appropriates historical material “to serve his/her intentions, to serve a second master” (300). This idea aligns with the practices of historiographical metafiction, where historical data is reinterpreted, manipulated, or fictionalized to fit the narrative’s purposes. In this way, historical facts are subordinated to the narrative’s agenda, which might be to question, critique, or offer alternative interpretations of historical knowledge. Bakhtin’s insight into how novelists use historical data underscores the idea that history in literature is not merely recorded but actively reimagined to serve new purposes, making historiographical metafiction a powerful tool for questioning the nature of truth and the processes by which history is written.

Susana Onega (1999) in her book *Metafiction and Myth in the Novels of Peter Ackroyd* explores the use of historiographic metafiction in the novels of Peter Ackroyd known for his complex interplay between history and fiction. She defines historiographic metafiction as a type of postmodern narrative that self-consciously blends historical fact with fiction. Like Hutcheon, Onega emphasizes that this genre problematizes the boundary between history and fiction, but she also explores how it engages with historical discourse to question the nature of historical knowledge and truth. Onega argues that historiographic metafiction critically interrogates the notion of objective historical knowledge. By blending fact and fiction, these narratives challenge

the traditional idea that history is an unbiased and accurate record of the past. Instead, they suggest that history is subject to interpretation, manipulation, and even fabrication. She points out that historiographic metafiction often presents multiple perspectives on a single historical event, thereby emphasizing the subjectivity and partiality inherent in any historical account. This multiplicity serves to destabilize the idea of a single, authoritative historical truth and encourages readers to question the reliability of historical narratives.

In the postmodern world, the view of art, literature, history, and fiction has changed tremendously. Literature and history were the two attributes that were associated in the nineteenth century. Russel B. Nye (1966), in *Essay History and Literature: Branches of the Same Tree*, observes that history's purpose "was to interpret experience for the purpose of guiding and elevating human being" (Nye 141) and was called the universality of human experience. Since antiquity, man has been urged to record events in history. History was not seen as an area of science throughout the Renaissance but as an art of presentation. Holt (1940) gave the term "Scientific History" (354). Poetry and figurative writings were identified with the last years of the Neo-classical age. Matthew Arnold gave an edifying age to literature and observed that poetry performs the role of religion, for William Wordsworth, a poet, was a prophet. Barbara W. Tuchman's book *Practicing History* (1981) analyses the differences between writing history and fiction. She wrote, "Good fiction, even if it has nothing to do with facts, is usually founded on reality and perceives truth- often more truly than some historians" (55). While a historian "cannot pick and choose his facts; he must deal with all evidence" (301). In *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), Hutcheon gives a detailed study of the relationship between history and fiction. She comments that historiographic metafiction is one kind of postmodern novel that "rejects projecting current beliefs and standards onto the past and asserts the specificity and particularity of the individual past event..." It also suggests:

A distinction between "events" and "fiction" that is one shared by many historians... for documents becomes the sign which the historian transmutes into facts... As in *Historiographic Metafiction*, the lesson



here is that the past once existed, but our historical knowledge of it is semiotically transmitted” (Hutcheon 122).

Furthermore, Hutcheon argues that a fact is discourse-defined, but events have no meaning. Hutcheon observes that; “Historiographic Metafiction often points to the fact by using the paratextual conventions of historiography to both inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations” (Hutcheon 123). The relationship between novels and narrative histories in the eighteenth century is examined by Leo Braudy (1970). These ambiguities are related to the writings of Henry Fielding, Edward Gibbon, and David Hume. Braudy believes “Gibbon wrote better history than Hume because he had read the novels of Fielding” (Braudy 5). The postmodernist dilemma was clarified by Hutcheon (1988); she contends that the postmodern age is contradictory. She restates that because postmodernism has so many meanings, it is over- and under-defined. Hutcheon objects to Hassan’s definition of de-centeredness. Hutcheon argues that Postmodernism is “an open, ever-changing theoretical structure” (14).

### **Evolution of ‘Historiographic Metafiction’: Historical Perspective**

Before the 19th century, literature and history were seen as two distinct disciplines, but in the 20th century, a new understanding of both fields developed. Bremner (1996) observes that “historian used analogy in their work because they believe that literature has meaning at one era” (12). Nye (1966) supported Bremner’s views and argued that “the function of history was to re-described one era and literature was to re-told that era; this is called as the universality of human experience” (123). Nye contends that “historian and poets have same important function, namely, to interpret the experience” (12). Holt (1940) gave the term “scientific history” (362) and observed that historical events can be re-described to depict contemporary reality. Literature may discuss what has occurred, is occurring, or will happen, but history can only discuss what has happened.

In his inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, J.B. Bury (1903) asserted that history should be regarded as a science, not merely a form of

literature. He emphasized that the study of history should adhere to scientific principles, focusing on rigorous methods and objective analysis rather than artistic or literary interpretation:

History is a science; no less and no more... History is not a branch of literature. The facts of history, like the facts of geology or astronomy can supply material for literary art... but to clothe the story of human society in literary dress is no more the part of historian than it is the part of an astronomer to present in an artistic shape the story of the stars (Bury 209-26).

Edward Gibbon was an English historian and member of Parliament, best known for his seminal work, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-89). This work is renowned for its detailed narrative and critical analysis of the Roman Empire's downfall. Gibbon's approach combined rigorous research with literary elegance, and his work has had a lasting impact on historical scholarship and the writing of history. His perspective that history is more a branch of literature than a social science reflects his belief in the importance of narrative style and literary quality in historical writing. He argues that history should be primarily considered a form of literature and only secondarily a social science. This perspective contrasts with the view that history and philosophy should be seen as mutually influencing each other through a scientific approach.

R.G. Collingwood (1889–1943) was a prominent British philosopher, historian, and archaeologist, known primarily for his contributions to the philosophy of history and aesthetics. His work significantly influenced 20th-century thought, particularly in historical understanding, art, and the nature of philosophical inquiry. Collingwood is perhaps best known for his book *The Idea of History* (1946), where he argued that history is a discipline distinct from natural sciences. He proposed that historical knowledge is not merely about discovering objective facts but understanding the thoughts and intentions of historical agents. According to Collingwood, history is a process of “re-enactment,” where the historian must mentally reconstruct the thoughts of people from the past to understand their actions. He outlines four key aspects of his

concept of history: it is logical, humanistic, objective, and self-impactful. He encapsulates the essence of history with the phrase, “all history is the history of thought,” (215) emphasizing that historical understanding is rooted in the intellectual processes of individuals. Collingwood views the progression of history not as circular but as a spiral, reflecting a continuous and evolving development rather than mere repetition. He argues that history is fundamentally a logical process, grounded in reason, which allows us to comprehend and interpret past events.

Hutcheon (1988) argues that there are many historians following poets to write their works, and there are many poets following historians to write their works. Mandelbaum (1967) argues that “Historical investigating and historical writing are essentially matters of constructing stories, narratives or connected chronicles terms” (413). It implies that everything about history was a retelling of fiction, indicating that even though the facts were as they would appear in a historical novel, history also contained fabrication. For example, *Saint Jones* (1923) by Bernard Shaw is a historical representation of past events, juxtaposing facts and imaginative events. Representation is a re-presence incorporated into a version rather than an original concept. Linda Hutcheon (1988) used the term historiographic metafiction to analyse the historical representation of the character in a novel. Hutcheon (1988) observes that “the novelist and the historian are shown to write in tandem with other- and with each other” (190). There are four difficulties in postmodern literature: “the nature of identity, the question of reference and representation, the intertextual nature of the past and the ideological implications of writing about history” (117). In this instance, the issue of reference and representation will be the main focus, particularly about the textualized extra-textual reference.

McLeod (1995) published *Rewriting History: Postmodern and Postcolonial Negotiations in The Fiction of J. G. Farrell, Timothy Mo, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie* and analysed the historical perspective of four great novelists: J. G. Farrell, Timothy Mo, Salman Rushdie and Kazuo Ishiguro. McLeod bases this research on the historical perspective of Homi Bhabha, who examines the connection between postmodern and postcolonial literary studies. McLeod’s study examines how these authors engage with the concepts of postmodernism and postcolonialism in their

literary works. He draws upon the ideas of Homi Bhabha, a renowned postcolonial theorist, to explore the interplay between postmodern and postcolonial themes in their narratives. McLeod critically examines how these writers contest and reinterpret prevailing historical records, frequently challenging accepted historical narratives, by concentrating on the link between history, postmodernism, and postcolonialism. He offers insights into these four novelists, then navigates and negotiates the complex intersections of history, postmodernism, and postcolonialism in their literary creations.

Gertrude Himmelfarb (1999) in an article “Postmodernist History,” examines the influence of postmodernism across various disciplines, including history. She observes that, under the postmodernist perspective, history is subject to the same skepticism that postmodernism applies to other fields. Postmodernism challenges the fixity of language and text, as well as the assumed connection between language and reality. Himmelfarb highlights the implications of these challenges for history, noting that postmodernism undermines the traditional understanding of historical narratives as objective and truthful accounts of the past. Instead, it views historical narratives as constructs shaped by language, power, and cultural contexts, leading to a more relativistic interpretation of historical events. She further points out that the impact of postmodernism on history includes a growing emphasis on the subjectivity of historical interpretation, the deconstruction of grand narratives, and the questioning of the possibility of attaining objective truth in historical writing. This shift has led to debates within the historical discipline about the nature of historical knowledge, the role of the historian, and the purpose of studying history itself. Himmelfarb’s critique of postmodernism reflects her concern that these developments could diminish the credibility and importance of history as a discipline dedicated to understanding the past. She points out;

A denial of the fixity of the past, of the reality of the past from what the historian chooses to make of it and thus of any objective truth about the past” (Himmelfarb 72).

Kirca (2009), in his thesis entitled “Postmodernist Historical Novel: Jeanette Winterson’s and Salman Rushdie’s Novel as Historiographic Metafiction”, examines how the postmodern novel constructs history, focusing on the events it describes rather

than the history found in documents. He explores the nature of the Postmodern novel in constructing a version of history that goes beyond traditional documented history. The thesis investigates how Winterson and Rushdie challenge and rework historical events, presenting alternative narratives that question the authority and reliability of official historical accounts. By analysing Winterson and Rushdie's postmodern techniques and strategies, Kirca aims to shed light on how the Postmodern historical novel engages with and reimagines history. It explores themes including the relationship between reality and fiction, how conventional historical narratives are constructed, and how subjective historical interpretation is. The thesis examines Winterson and Rushdie's application of historiographic metafiction to construct their versions of history, emphasizing the postmodern novel's capacity to challenge and reimagine traditional historical perspectives.

### **Historiographic Metafiction**

Historiographic metafiction is the act of rewriting history in a way never before documented by utilizing a fictitious work. Historiographic metafiction demonstrates a relationship to the deeper social reality by fusing history, fiction, politics, and culture. It rejects being definitive and only demonstrates contradictoriness. Political and societal issues are explored, but no resolutions are offered. The storytelling is diverse rather than in harmony. These pieces are multi-conclusive and open-ended. In her books, Hutcheon cites numerous instances of postmodern authors from various nationalities who have produced 'Historiographic Metafiction'. Numerous notable authors include Salman Rushdie, Margret Atwood, E.L. Doctorow, Umberto Eco, John Fowles, William Faulkner, John Fowles, Peter Ackroyd, Graham Swift, Thomas Pynchon and a few others. They all present interpretations of historical discourse's textuality. Hutcheon claims that (1995), "the meeting of metafiction and historiography produces a new kind of experimental writing uniquely capable of fulfilling the poetics of postmodernism" (Hutcheon 71). The importance of readers realizing that other texts are necessary to understand historical events is emphasized in metafiction. Thus, all historical events are therefore intertextual. Intertextuality and parody are significant features of Postmodern writing; historiographical metafiction shifts its focus to these intertexts between literature and History. Readers can only comprehend the truth as it

is introduced and maintained by employing an ethnic narration. Simon Malpas (2005) irrespectively argues that;

This Reworking of History, which Hutcheon names Historiographic Metafiction, can be seen in the work of a wide range of contemporary writers ... mixtures of magical and realistic events, and parodies of earlier literary and historical works, this sort of postmodern fiction challenges traditional ideas of narrative construction, verisimilitude, and historical truth (Malpas 101).

The Historiographic metafiction emphasises the need to pay attention to history and emphasizes—through the implementation of metafictional devices—that history is a structure rather than a particular object connected to the past. In Linda Hutcheon’s opinion, Historiographic metafiction is the scope of study of postmodernism that talks about the truth and lies about the novel:

The novels both install and then blur the line between fiction and History. This kind of generic blurring has been a feature of literature since classical epic and the Bible, but the simultaneous and overt assertion and crossing the boundaries is more postmodern (114).

Hutcheon believes that Historiographic metafiction represents “fiction to be historically conditioned and history to be discursively structured, and in the process manages to broaden the debate about the ideological implications” (120). The limits of “event” and “facts,” which are shared by most historians, are proposed by historiographic metafiction, which reinterprets historical events through the prism of contemporary reality. Historiographic metafiction uses “paratextual conventions of historiography (especially footnote) to both inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations” (123). Historiographic metafiction is a component of Postmodernism, according to Hutcheon. She defines it as “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” (5). Historiographic metafiction is associated with the “conventions of history and fiction and works within the

conventions to subvert them” (5). This new genre focused on “the past once existed, but that our historical knowledge of it is semiotically transmitted” (Hutcheon 122). Playfulness, parody, and critical irony, among other traditions and tactics, suggest that there are only interpretations of the truth rather than the actual presence:

Fiction does not mirror reality; nor does it reproduce it. It cannot... instead fiction is offered as another of the discourses by which we construct our versions of reality, and both construction and the need for it are what are foregrounded in the postmodernist novels (Hutcheon 40).

Historiographic metafiction is a terminology that Linda Hutcheon used to describe a postmodern subgenre of fiction that engages with history while also casting doubt on the viability of historical narratives such an endeavour as Kirchknopf (2008) views “historical fiction, as well as historiographic metafiction engage in a dialogue” (Kirchknopf 60). ‘Retro-Victorianism’ is a phrase coined by Sally Shuttleworth (1998) to describe the tremendous popularity of the historical novel. She discussed the advertising sector, “styles of the past swiftly replace one another; without any sense of the cultural and social baggage they had previously carried” (255). This suggests that nostalgic events play a significant role in the Neo-Victorian phenomena. Shuttleworth distinguishes between the British novels and the American historical novel, with the latter showing, “a deep commitment to recreating the detailed texture of an age, to tracing the economic and social determinants which might structure these imaginary lives” (255).

Dana Shiller (1997) observes that “the Neo-Victorian novel is at once characteristic of postmodernism and imbued with a historicity reminiscent of the nineteenth-century novel” (538). According to Shiller, Neo-Victorian literature “presents a historicity that is concerned with recuperating the substance of bygone eras, and not merely their styles” (540). According to Shiller, postmodern authors depicted present issues through historical occurrences. They used “a revisionist approach to the past” in that it attempts to investigate how the historical narrative is shaped by and affected by our current day while also being “indebted to earlier cultural attitudes towards history” (Shiller 540). Postmodern fiction, according to Shiller, attempts,

To reconstruct the past by questioning the certitude of our historical knowledge, and yet ... claim that even as these novels emphasise events that are usually left out of histories, they nonetheless manage to preserve and celebrate the Victorian past (Shiller 541).

By giving the reader access to marginalized perspectives and transforming the historical record into a story, it suggests that the historical record is fictitious. The postmodern novel is infused with a desire to understand the past, even though it is a fluid concept made up of several facts.

### **The Distinctions Between Historical and Postmodern Fiction**

Hutcheon claims, "Historiographic Metafiction plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record" (114). It contains the terms historical fiction and postmodern fiction. The two names are not the same, even though they were both coined in the nineteenth century and first appear to indicate the same concept. The meaning of truth has changed, and in modern times, people believe that historical truth can be used in writing fiction. Rushdie wrote his novel *The Midnight Children* (1981) using the events of the struggle for Indian Independence. He made efforts to give life to the dead bones of history. Bapsi Sidhwa wrote *Cracking India* (1992) and *The Pakistani Bride* (1983) to depict the events of the partition of India in the contemporary context. The different forms that exist are greatly influenced by history. Though they are limited in their explanations, theorists persist in their attempts to differentiate the two worlds. In postmodern fiction, the novelist uses the techniques of intertextuality, the formlessness of the plot, pastiche, and fragmentation elements to depict the protagonists' confrontation with existential realities.

Novelists of the modern era, such as John Updike, John Barth, and Thomas Mann, produced metafiction. There is an epic quality to Updike's *Rabbit Angstrom: A Tetralogy*. Mann's Joseph tetralogy is a classic example of metafiction. A bleak and challenging outlook is reflected in Updike's preoccupation with the strange and the spooky. Thomas Pynchon wrote novels following the techniques of meta-fiction. His books include a realistic mythopoeia. One excellent work of metafiction is *The World*



*According to Garp* by John Irving, published in 1978. When Updike (1990) wrote *Rabbit Run* and *Rabbit at Rest*, he emulated James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist* (1916) as a young man. Linda Hutcheon (1988) observes that "Deconstruction, Feminism, Marxism and post-structuralism" (188) are the primary hypotheses that seem to have fueled postmodernism's expansion. Hutcheon discusses postmodernist novels that make historical figures and events seem fictitious. In Updike's *The Poorhouse Fair*, for example, Stephen Conner, the protagonist, is a Cartesian hero—a linear, rational thinker who applies science to an illogical environment.

### **Linda Hutcheon and Intertextuality**

Linda Hutcheon thoroughly discusses the importance and applicability of the intertextual approach in the modern context. 'Intertextuality' is the term used to describe the relationship between texts. T. S. Eliot infused *The Wasteland* with references to and passages from the writings of other renowned authors, including the Hindu scriptures. To intensify the settings and situations, an author may use passages from other writers that they have borrowed and modified. As William Irwin (2004) puts it, "has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Kristeva's original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence" (Irwin 22). When used as a powerful weapon, intertextuality emphasizes the simultaneous collision of numerous voices in a text while denying the authority of a single interpretation. The consensus regarding recognized and accepted discourses by postmodernists and poststructuralists.

Kristeva demonstrates that a typology of texts is required in place of the conventional text analysis method. She focuses on the idea that all texts are absorbed and transformed from other writings and argues that any text is "each word is an intersection of words where at least one another word can be read ... Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, any text is absorption and transformation of another" (66). Kristy Butler (2014), in her essay "Kristeva, intertextuality, & Re-imagining '*The Mad Woman in the Attic*'" says:

Kristeva asserts the intertextual is not simply stories building upon other stories. Intertextuality is a process, a fluid state of oscillating interpretations that seeks to expose the plurality of meaning, both in texts and, indeed, at the most basic level of the signifier. The value of intertextual readings and re-readings of stories lies in their ability to open up a text to new perspectives while at the same time avoiding hierarchical categorizations. Interrogating the structure of truth as an object of language allows the polyphonic to replace the logocentric (Butler 130).

Linda Hutcheon (1995) asserts that one feature that distinguishes Historiographic metafiction from traditional historical fiction is intertextual parody. She makes the assumption;

The textual incorporation of these inter-textual past(s) as a constitutive structural element of postmodernist fiction functions as a formal marking of historicity- both literary and worldly. At first glance, it would appear that it is only its constant ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity that distinguishes post-modern parody from medieval and Renaissance imitation (Hutcheon 4).

There are always additional words and lines of text within a work of art. Since writing is influenced by repetition and modification of other textual structures. The idea of Intertextuality demands that we view text not as a self-contained system but rather as a divergence of other textual structures, the historical as traces and tracing of otherness. Intertextuality maintains that text cannot function as a closed system or as a self-contained entity. In historiographic metafiction, intertextuality and the underlying assumptions of subjectivity, authorship, individuality, originality, uniqueness, and autonomy are given priority.

### **Magical Realism**

Magic Realism is a style associated with a writing technique that incorporates magical or supernatural elements within a realistic narrative without casting doubt on

the plausibility of the elements. The combination of reality and fantasy is supposed to draw attention to the act of creation and call into question reality's nature. Magic realist literature can conjure up a setting rich with local legends, cultural beliefs, geography, history and political happenings, perhaps its most prominent trait. As a result, the backdrop of the work seems entirely accurate, yet the events that occur seem unlikely or even unthinkable. The magic realist work gives the audience a view of the universe in which nothing is taken for granted, and anything is possible. The external and internal aspects of human existence are frequently combined in magic realism; it blends scientific, physical, and psychological human reality. It contains elements of the human experience, like ideas, feelings, dreams, and imagination. Magic realism can show human reality more accurately by combining these two approaches. Fredric Jameson (1986) quotes;

The focus of the conception of magic realism would appear to have shifted to what must be called an anthropological perspective. Magic realism now comes to be understood as a narrative raw material derived essentially from peasant society, drawing in sophisticated ways on the world of village or even tribal myth. (Jameson 149).

It is the addition of fantastical or impossibly difficult components to a narrative. It depicts dreams as they occur in everyday life. It describes the return of deceased people, incredibly intricate stories, and crazy temporal shifts. These narratives often contain elements of myths and fairy tales that contain truth. This literary style finds inspiration in the works of American writers Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Frederic Jameson (1986) adopted a critical stance against the magic realism used by postmodernist authors. He defines thus; "magic realism depends on a content which betrays the overlap or the coexistence of pre-capitalist with nascent capitalist or technological features" (311). Magic realism was the literary style employed by Nobel Prize-winning Chinese author Mo Yan in her book *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*. In the novel *The Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie introduces us to his supernaturally gifted hero, Saleem. John Updike's books include a distinct blend of magical realism, harsh events, natural descriptions, and abstract metaphors. In a well-known and contentious novel *Terrorist* (2006), John Updike introduces Ahmad Mulloy, the protagonist, who is potentially a radicalised Muslim. The novel is the perfect example

of an “essentialist” work of fiction, full of fantastical elements and eerie moments. The postmodernist writers address every important topic facing the twenty-first century, including the American trade war, the terrorist attack on Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, and the AIDS pandemic.

### **Fragmentation**

Hutcheon observes that Dissonance and Fragmentation are dominant features in postmodern art and literature that align with the broader understanding of postmodern aesthetics. Postmodernism challenges the notion of a stable and unified reality, acknowledging the fluidity and complexity of life and the universe. Decay and the fragmentation of values are seen as inevitable aspects of this fluid reality. Postmodern works centre on the breakdown of the American Dream, which represents the fallibility of the principles and values that were approved by the pioneers of American society. Dissonance and inconsistency in the novels serve as a visual representation of this social reality. The use of dissonance in postmodern novels disrupts conventional narrative structures and reflects the fractured nature of contemporary society.

Postmodern novels often present each episode within a bounded world of the past, showcasing the temporal dimensionality of human experience. The works of authors like John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, and Kurt Vonnegut create distinct fictional worlds that are separate from external reality, emphasizing decay and disintegration as visible realities within those worlds. The non-linear development of the plot is another characteristic of postmodern literature. Past and future become relative terms, and the traditional linear progression of time is disrupted. Jameson, influenced by Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (1532), incorporates the concept of dissonance into his analysis of social reality, recognizing “duplicity” and “virtue” as the two interconnected aspects of society. In Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973), the actual present is often portrayed as an impasse, highlighting the challenges and contradictions of contemporary existence. The presence of dissonance and fragmentation in Postmodern literature reflects a critical engagement with reality’s complexity, fluidity, and decay. These literary techniques challenge established narratives and invite readers to question and interpret the multifaceted nature of our world.

### **Hyperreality**

An essential component of postmodernism is Hyperreality. It is a paradigm to explain the time's social and cultural circumstances. It is also helpful to note that the postmodernism period differs from the prior one. It gives rise to new notions like simulation and consumerism. It illustrates how the present society puts value on prestige value and not the use of value. One element in the development of hyperreality is the present symbol of exchange value. It reveals endless reproductions of fundamentally empty appearances. In our society, happiness is found through imitation of fleeting reality rather than through any interaction with any actual reality. Postmodern authors aim to create fiction rather than present reality as it is. However, the writers allude to the possible aspect that cannot be represented.

Postmodern intellectuals like Baudrillard points out that truth cannot be identified since it does not exist. He claims there is no realism in society and that the existing civilisation is a civilisation of signs, codes, and images; it is merely a society of simulations. Hyperreality is a semiotic notion coined by French sociologist Jean Baudrillard, and it is one of the aspects of postmodernism, exploited widely in literary and non-literary arts. Jean Baudrillard, in particular, is known for his theories on hyperreality and simulation. He argues that contemporary society is characterized by many signs and symbols. According to Baudrillard (1994), we live in a society of simulations, where images and signs are detached from any original referents and circulate endlessly, creating a hyperreal environment. It is an essential term because it helps to understand the current state of society and culture. Hyperreality refers to a condition in which reality and its representation become blurred. It becomes difficult to recognise what is real and what is a simulation or a representation of reality. In a hyperreal society, symbols and images dominate over the actual objects or experiences they are supposed to represent. This is often driven by consumerism and the obsession with appearances and prestige value. The focus shifts from the functional or practical aspects of objects to their symbolic or aesthetic value. Postmodern authors, influenced by this understanding of hyperreality, often create works of fiction that challenge traditional notions of reality and representation. They explore the idea that reality itself is constructed and mediated through signs, symbols, and simulations. The writers highlight the constraints of language and representation, implying that reality is illusive.

Understanding the concept of hyperreality can provide insights into the cultural and social conditions of the postmodern era, emphasising how consumerism, simulation, and representation impact our experience and perception of reality.

Hutcheon (1988) defines, “historiography metafiction as a genre that draws attention to the narratives of the past by exposing both history and fiction [as] discourses, human constructs, signifying systems” (93). Hutcheon’s concept of ‘Historiographic Metafiction’; is an effective rubric for interpreting the present historical novel. Roland Barthes (1970) outlined the roots of the historical novel thus:

Any linguistic feature by which we may distinguish on the one hand the mode appropriate to the relation of historical events- a matter traditionally subject, in our culture, to the prescriptions of historical ‘science’, and by the principle of ‘rational’ exposition- and on the other hand the mode appropriate to the epic, novel or drama? (Barthes 145).

Hayden White (1973) discusses, “historiography is centrally shaped by emplotment narrative and linguistic strategies by which a sequence of events is fashioned into a story” (White 7). The strategies can be analysed by considering historical texts for formal analysis. White claims the difference between the “four principal modes of poetic discourse in historical texts the tropes of Metaphor, Metonymy, Synecdoche, and Irony” (White 426). The New Historicist focuses on “the historicity of texts and the textuality of history” (Montrose 20).

The present thesis explores the historical vision of Sarah Waters, who revolted against the traditional styles and techniques employed by Gissing, George Eliot, Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy. In the early Victorian age, when Jane Austen, Bronte Sisters and George Eliot wrote, women were portrayed as the “angels of the house.” They were marginalised and denied liberty as they were not allowed to go outside, and sexuality was considered taboo. J.S. Mill and John Ruskin had differing views on patriarchal control, with Mill (1869) *The Subjection of Women* being strong critic of it. He argued for equality between men and women, advocating women’s rights in education, work and political participation while John Ruskin (1865) held more

traditional views that can be seen supportive of patriarchal control of women. In his essay ‘Of Queen’s Gardens’ Ruskin praised women for their virtues such as nurturing moral guidance but within very restricted domestic sphere. He believed that women’s roles were inherently tied to home and moral influence while men belonged in public and active realm. No wonder women were imprisoned within the four walls of the patriarchal prison in some of the novels of the Victorian era.

Sarah Waters had her vision of life, art, society, and feminism. She discarded all the conventional norms of the Victorian Age and expressed their liberalism in the true spirit of historiographic metafiction. Sarah Waters is famous for using lesbianism and historiographic metafiction in her novels. She reconstructed the events of the early Victorian and post-World War periods. Waters is a well-esteemed author of thought-provoking and privileges the protagonists with the options for hybrid sexuality. She is a postmodern author who writes about lesbian, feminist and queer. She analyses gender and sexual politics via historical fiction. Waters is the only writer who best exemplifies her period in her novels, presents intricate details of the past, and attempts to integrate into the respectable mainstream of contemporary fiction. Waters (2002) typically maintains a low image when discussing the sexual and psychological themes in what she refers to as “lesbo Victorian romps” (The Guardian). However, the general public has responded favourably to her intellectually helpful articles, making her an essential pioneer of contemporary writing.

Sarah Waters earned her undergraduate degree from Kent University, her graduate degree from Lancaster University UK and her PhD from Queen Mary, University London. Future narratives will benefit from Waters’s thesis, *Wolfskins and Togas: Lesbian and Gay Fictions, 1870 to present*. Her outstanding works of Victorian narrative drew inspiration from Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens and Brontes and contemporary authors that combined a Victorian and Postmodernist style, such as John Fowles and A.S. Byatt. The thesis explores the historical passion of Sarah Waters articulated in her novels *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999), *Fingersmith* (2002), *The Night Watch* (2006), *The Little Stranger* (2009) and *The Paying Guests* (2014).

Historiographic metafiction has frequently been used to interpret Sarah Waters' trilogy, and critics have focused in particular on Waters's fascination with the idea of history's textuality. Mark Llewellyn (2007) claims "acts of reading and their importance in the construction of both historical narrative and individual identity," asserting that Waters's novels contain "engagement with other literary works" (196). Waters' picture of Victorian London, as Revisionist historiography serves as the basis for Cora Kaplan's (2007) simulation and the "combined scholarship that historians of sexuality, together with feminist, gay, lesbian and queer studies" (111) created in the later half of the 20th century. Kaplan traces that Waters's novels are, "underwritten by the post-war social and cultural history of nineteenth-century London in particular, with its emphasis on gender, on the poor, on popular culture and on the pseudo-sciences, especially spiritualism" (111).

It is pertinent to add that each Sarah Waters's novel is replete with metafiction, intertextuality, pastiche, magic realism, parody, fragmentation, dissonance, playfulness, and paranoia. Greenblatt (2001), in his book *Practicing New Historicism*, observes that,

Both the literary work and anthropological (history) anecdote are texts that both are fictions in sense of things made that both are shaped by imagination and by available resources of narration and description helped it make possible to conjoin them ... the fact is neither is purpose-built for the other (Greenblatt 31).

### **The Emergence of Historiographic Metafiction**

After Jean Rhys's (1966) novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* and John Fowles's (1969) novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Andrea Kirchknopf (2008) contends that the 1960s saw a shift in popular culture. Marie Luise Kohlke's (2008) views regarding historiographic metafiction "stresses the dangers of treating literary and historical discourses as two wholly separate modes of apprehending the world" (Kohlke 162). The conspicuous characteristic of the fiction of Sarah Waters is historiographical metafiction. Linda Hutcheon is of the firm opinion that modern reality is the representation of the present and the past. Finding reality is impossible, so writers must use their imagination to reconstruct the past. Following Karl Marx, Linda Hutcheon (1988) believes that the historical process is inescapable and that man has no control



over the forces of history. The knowledge of the past is very significant for writers. Postmodern writers such as Frederic Jameson and Jean Baudrillard seek to explain the present by basing itself on historical texts. Jameson (1980), in an essay, writes:

In these circumstances indeed, there is some question whether the ultimate renewal of modernism, the final dialectical subversion of the new automatised conventions of aesthetics of perceptual revolution, might not simple be realism itself' (211).

Linda Hutcheon observes thus: "Postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or to represent the past in fiction and history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (Hutcheon 110). The postmodern understanding of history was articulated by Louis Montrose (1989) as a concern for the textuality and historicity of historical materials. He observes thus:

By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing. By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question... and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are constructed as the 'documents' upon which historians ground their own texts; called 'histories' (20).

Jonathan Culler (1982) opines that "History invoked as ultimate reality manifests itself in narrative constructs, stories designed to yield meaning through narrative ordering" (Culler 129). Sarah Waters depicts the challenges of women connected to institutions in each of her novels. The novels of Sarah Waters dramatizes the old historical events in the Victorian era: Canterbury Theatre or Britannia Music Hall in *Tipping the Velvet*, Millbank Prison of Women in *Affinity* and Madhouse in *Fingersmith*, and each setting has far-reaching effects. She has portrayed the Victorian ages realistically. The novels of Waters present the scenes of the brothel and the struggles of the prostitutes following the plot structure of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and dramatizing the models of sexuality like Foucault. The picaresque structure of her novels gives her scope to construct historical events juxtaposing reality with fiction, truth and imagination, past and the present, history and science. Waters

took a new Postmodern view of the philosophy of history in setting and dramatizing the events of her novels.

Historiographic Metafiction reflects the postmodern era's fascination with the nature of historical narrative and truth. As Linda Hutcheon asserts, this genre deliberately emphasizes the process of narrating the past by revealing the interplay between history and fiction and "both history and fiction as discourses, human constructs, signifying systems" (Hutcheon 93). Linda supplies a robust rubric for the interpretation of the historical novels, which contains multiple elements of postmodernism as propounded by Frederic Jameson, such as intertextuality, parody, magic realism, pastiche, fragmentation, dissonance, the formless structure of the plots and broken communication of the dialogues found in the plays of Samuel Beckett. An extensive analysis of Sarah Waters's writings from the past and present reveals that most of the critics and reviewers have explored the themes of lesbianism, feminism, gender politics, sexuality and eroticism. The idea that a postmodern novel is a mirror held up to external reality is something that postmodern novels attempt to disprove since they can "never imitate or represent the world but always imitates or represents the discourse which in turn construct the world" (Waugh 100).

## Chapter: Two

### Re-visiting History

Linda Hutcheon's introduction of the "Historiographic Metafiction" concept triggered a significant transformation in art and literature. This theory notably influenced the perspectives and creativity of postmodern authors like Thomas Pynchon, John Updike, and Kurt Vonnegut, profoundly shaping their literary approaches and sensibilities. Postmodern critics such as Bremner (1996), Nye (1955) and Holt (1940), who contended that the situation in the postmodern society has changed and the writers must employ historical facts to depict the contemporary malaise of the society. Nye believes history has a significant role in contemporary society as historical events can be re-described to articulate the universal human experience. Nye's perspective, in particular, suggests that the past plays a significant part in the contemporary world. According to Nye, historical events can be re-described or reinterpreted to articulate the universal human experience. Drawing on historical events and facts, writers can create narratives that resonate with society's current issues and concerns. This approach aligns with the postmodern notion of challenging traditional narratives and exploring multiple perspectives. Postmodernism frequently emphasizes that there is no objective truth or one correct historical interpretation. It encourages the examination of different narratives and the deconstruction of dominant historical accounts.

By employing historical facts and re-describing them, writers can provide alternative perspectives on societal issues, question established norms, and shed light on the complexities of contemporary life. This approach explores Postmodern society's social, cultural, and political conditions. Samuel Beckett (1980) employed this technique in his play *Ohio Impromptu* and surprised his critics. Holt talked about "Scientific history" and contended that historical events should be used to depict realistic situations in life. There should be a rational and scientific juxtaposition of fantasy and history. Linda Hutcheon (1988) observes that "historians have used the techniques of fictional representation to create imaginative versions of their historical real worlds" (Hutcheon 106).

The chapter, defines and discusses the relevant concepts, such as history and metafiction and the significance of their blending. History examines previous occurrences, and the term “history” is a concept moulded by selection and methods. The “Historiography” suggests that “history” cannot be defined as a consistent set of historical facts that accurately depict the past. However, according to Linda Hutcheon’s (1988) definition, historiographic metafiction is metafiction that approaches the historical subject from a Historiographic perspective. She insists that Historiographic metafiction is the study that talks about:

History and fiction are discourses, both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of past ... The meaning and shape are not *in the events*, but *in the systems* which make those past “events” into present historical “facts” (Hutcheon 89).

Thomas Pynchon wrote *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), *Vineland* (1990), *Mason & Dixon* (1997), the best examples of historiographic metafiction. Pynchon weaves together a wide range of characters, conspiracy theories, and historical references, creating a narrative that is both challenging. He interweaves historical events and cultural references to depict the changing landscape of America during that period. In his fiction, he combines historical accuracy with fictional elements, blurring the line between fact and fiction. The postmodern writers discard the old conventions of wit, humour and employ the postmodern devices of parody to depict the malaise of the postmodern society. According to Hutcheon (2000), parody is built on repetition and variation, “Parody requires critical, ironic distance” (37) in which “it is the fact that they *differ* that parody emphasises and, indeed, dramaticizes” (31). The Victorian novels *Tipping the Velvet*, *Affinity*, and *Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters are utilised to illustrate how regress and pre-emption are a recurring theme in all of these works. As Waters stated in *Affinity*, “I guessed what she guessed” (Waters 250) refers to the readers and the prison warder.

Waters introduces her PhD research’s counterfactual histories into *Tipping the Velvet* (1998). The heroine, Nancy Astley, first focuses on the 1890s Music Hall culture and develops a strong lesbian relationship to drag queen performer Kitty Butler. When

Kitty finally betrays her in this relationship by seeking out a heteronormative milieu, then that environment makes her miserable, Nan finds a way to get revenge by dressing as a homosexual male prostitute. But Nan spends a significant amount of time as the live-in sex slave of the vicious, unemotional lady huntress Diana before heading toward her last redeeming encounter with Florence. This is one of the more intriguing parts of the book as, as Mandy Koolen (2010) notes, it explores;

The power dynamics that exist in audience-performer relationships *Tipping the Velvet*, troubles the potentially dangerous myth that queer communities necessarily provide safe spaces for the expression of cross-gender identification (Koolen 372).

Sarah Waters's novel *Tipping the Velvet* is structured in Victorian England and the protagonist, Nan King, explores her sexuality and gender identity in the Music Hall scene. The novel problematizes the assumption that queer spaces are inherently safe for individuals to express their cross-gender identification freely. The implication is that despite the existence of queer communities, power imbalances and potential dangers can still be present, challenging the notion of these spaces as entirely protective or inclusive. Koolen's analysis highlights the importance of critically examining the dynamics within marginalized communities, even within spaces traditionally seen as safe and accepting.

Koolen observes that Waters borrows from Angela Carter the device of dehumanising eroticisation that Nan "endures in order to have her performances appreciated by Diana and her friends provides a complex commentary on the issue of eroticisation and consent" (Koolen 383). Waters uses subtextual references to Angela Carter's works. When Nan first enters Diana's house and climbs the stairs, she wonders whether "There might be ropes, there might be knives. There might be a heap of girls in suits – their pomaded heads neat, their necks all bloody" (Waters 238) referencing the legend of Bluebeard and Carter's rebellious, female portrayal. Mark Llewellyn (2004) also finds that in her novel *Affinity*, historical elements are used to depict the psychological agony of the prisoners during the early Victorian age:

In exploring in *Affinity* how women in the nineteenth century were ostracised, criminalised and placed outside society, having to operate and live within an underworld of their true feelings and desires, is not

Waters also questioning her role as a modern lesbian author? The use of a historical period can imply a parallel or affinity between the age of an author and the one in which she writes (Llewellyn 213).

### **Historiography Metafiction of Linda Hutcheon**

Malpas (2005), in *The Postmodern*, contends that historiographic metafiction is a self-aware literary style that considers its fictitious nature and explores the connection between reality and fiction. The emphasis on the past in this genre raises questions about our access to an objective and factual past, thereby challenging our present ideas and institutions. The genre's engagement with history deconstructs established narratives and prompts readers to examine historical accounts' constructed nature critically. By destabilizing notions of truth and exposing power structures, historiographic metafiction invites readers to question their perceptions and the influence of narratives on our understanding of the world. historiographic metafiction is a;

Self-conscious mode of writing, a writing that 'meta-fictionally' comments on and investigates its own status as fiction as well as questioning our ideas of the relation between fiction, reality and truth. Its focus on history opens up problems about the possibility of access to a 'true' past as a way of de-naturalising present ideas and institutions (Malpas 26).

Linda Hutcheon (1988) argues that historiographic metafiction exposes the state of past and highlights its discursive nature, leading to debates about the implications of ideology. By challenging the shared events and facts most historians accept, historiographic metafiction aims to explore the possibility of factual events:

Historiographic Metafiction shows fiction to be historically conditioned and history to be discursively structured, and in the process, manages to broaden the debate about the ideological implications ... for readers and for history itself as a discipline. (Hutcheon 120).

Hutcheon has given five phases of the process of historiographic metafiction: "Intra-textual Reference, Self-Reference, Inter-textual Reference, Textualized Extra-textual Reference, and Hermeneutic Reference" (154). Intra-textual reference refers to the references made within a specific text to other texts, elements, or themes within the

same work. It reinforces the connection between different parts of the text and can be used to underscore the author's thematic or stylistic intentions "through its autonomous and consistent formal unity" (155). In historiographic metafiction, Self-Referentiality refers to deliberately incorporating references to the fiction's construction and relationship to historical events. It presents "fiction as fiction... self-reference suggests that language cannot hook directly on reality, but primarily hooked onto itself" (155). This technique allows authors to draw attention to the narrative's artificiality and the process of storytelling. It challenges readers to reconsider how history is represented and understood in literature and, "indicates that language cannot be connected directly to reality" (155). Intertextual references involve deliberately incorporating references to external texts, historical events, or cultural artefacts within the narrative. By incorporating intertextual references, historiographic metafiction highlights the dynamic relationship between narratives and historical accounts, encouraging readers to engage critically with the multiplicity of perspectives surrounding a particular event or period.

In historiographic metafiction, a Textualized Extra-textual reference involves incorporating references to external sources, such as historical documents, archival material, or scholarly works, within the narrative itself. By integrating these extratextual references into the fictional text, authors create a dynamic interplay between the narrative and external historical discourse, blurring the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction. This technique allows for exploring the relationship between the fictional world and external historical realities, prompting readers to think that history is constructed and represented within the literary text. Textualised Extra-textual Reference is similar to Intertextuality; the only difference is that the former emphasises "history as an intertext and the second is historiography as presentation of the fact, as the textualised tracing of the event" (156). Hermeneutics, within the context of historiographic metafiction, refers to the interpretative process involved in understanding and analysing historical texts within the narrative. In this literary approach, authors often employ hermeneutic strategies to deconstruct and reinterpret historical events, emphasizing the subjectivity and complexity of historical interpretation. By engaging in hermeneutics, historiographic metafiction prompts

readers to question traditional historical narratives and encourages a more profound exploration of the multiple layers of meaning embedded within the text.

### **Postmodern Fiction and Historical Fiction**

Historical fiction and postmodern fiction are two concepts that Hutcheon (1988) claims are included in historiographic metafiction. Both names have the same meaning when first seen and understood; they were both associated with the nineteenth century. Their differences are explained thus; historical fiction focuses on the characters who are “ex-centrics the marginalised, the peripheral figures of fictional history” (114) and the narrative is formed using the facts. It utilises historical representations to address the historical notion inherent in the narrative. Postmodern fiction employs two techniques in the narrative: first, it challenges historical fact by implying the existence of certain purposefully fabricated historical documents. Secondly, the characters of Postmodern fiction are “overtly specific, individual, the marginalised, the peripheral figures of fictional history” (Hutcheon 114).

Hutcheon (1988) explored all the characteristics of historical fiction. The novelist uses the story's valid historical data to depict contemporary society's crisis. Historical fiction incorporates both postmodernist philosophies to imbue their writing with authenticity and uniqueness. The moral fall of historical figures is not made by the author in postmodern literature. In historical fiction, however, the historical figure experiences a moral downfall. Historiographic metafiction exercises “within the conventions of history and fiction, but tries to challenge and subvert them” (5). This form lies in “the past once existed, but that our historical knowledge of it is semiotically transmitted” (Hutcheon 122).

Hutcheon examines the key elements of historiographic metafiction, emphasising the use of humour, parody, critical irony, and the appropriate and inappropriate use of literary devices to show multiplicity of truth. Historiographic metafiction “self-consciously reminds us that, while events did occur in real empirical past, we name and constitute those events as historical facts by selection and narrative positioning. Moreover, even more basically, we only know of those past events through their discursive inscription, through their traces in the present” (Hutcheon 97). Historiographic metafiction is a much broader category than rewritings of the Victorian past. There has been a tremendous upsurge of novels about the historical past in British



fiction. The emergence of Victorian fiction is a unique variety of British Postmodern historical novels.

Sarah Waters employed her writing art to revive, revise and reinvent the Victorian age to depict the contemporary situation. Sir Walter Scott's novels were realist historical novels which were imitated by novelists such as Charles Dickens, and George Eliot. Archibald Allison's (1845) investigated the nature of Postmodern Metafiction and called it another form of historical romance which has become a source of aesthetic pleasures:

The historical romance ... unites the learning of the historian with the fancy of the poet; ... discards from human annals their years of tedium and brings prominently forward their eras of interest; ... teaches morality by example, and conveys information by giving pleasure; and which, combining the charms of imagination with the treasures of research, founds the ideal upon its only solid and durable base -the real (341).

In Victorian England, the growth of the realist historical novel was tremendous. The Victorian historical novel expressed faith in progress with a "reconsideration and a resifting of all that had gone before to shape the attitudes and ideas of the present" (Sanders 1). Writers of Victorian historical novels consistently discussed the influence of the past on the present, using their works as a repository of current affairs. The writers employed the events of the past propounding new theories about historiography. Hegel, Karl Marx, and Ranke's ideas had an impact on Victorian authors who attempted to revive interest in English historiography under Carlyle and Macaulay. They evoked the old style of art, Gothic romance, and Italian Renaissance. The consciousness of the age was steeped in time and history in the quest for solutions to the existential realities of the contemporary age.

George Lukács praised the historical metanarrative of progress, providing an organic view of society in *The Historical Novel* (1989). Lukács's idea of a historical metanarrative of progress is rooted in his Marxist worldview, where history is seen as a process of dialectical development, moving towards the ultimate liberation of humanity through the resolution of class struggles. He believed that the historical novel, as a genre, has the unique capacity to depict this dynamic process of social and historical change, portraying not just individual characters, but also the broader socio-economic

forces at work. According to Lukács, the best historical novels present history as a totality, where individual destinies are intertwined with the broader social and historical forces. This approach allows the novels to depict society as an “organic whole,” where the progress of history is not just a backdrop but a driving force that shapes the lives and destinies of the characters.

Hayden White (1973) is a historian and theorist who discusses the discourse surrounding the nature of historical writing. In his influential book *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973), White argues that historical writing is as much a literary art as it is a scientific discipline. White introduces the concept of “emplotment,” suggesting that historians impose narrative structures—such as tragedy, comedy, or romance—on historical events to create meaning. This idea resonates with the principles of historiographic metafiction, as it underscores the idea that history is a narrative construction rather than an objective recounting of facts.

Jean-François Lyotard, a French philosopher, is known for his work on postmodernism and his critique of grand narratives or “metanarratives” in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984). His ideas about the scepticism of grand narratives are foundational to the genre. Historiographic metafiction often critiques and deconstructs these grand narratives, exposing the biases and power structures inherent in traditional historical accounts. Lyotard’s emphasis on the fragmented, localized, and pluralistic nature of knowledge aligns with the themes of historiographic metafiction, which challenges the notion of a single, authoritative historical truth.

Fredric Jameson, a Marxist literary critic and theorist, has contributed to the understanding of postmodernism and its impact on culture and literature. In his work *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Jameson discusses the historical novel in the context of postmodernism, though his focus is more on the cultural and economic conditions that give rise to postmodern literature. Jameson argues that postmodernism reflects a crisis in the representation of history, where historical narratives become fragmented and commodified. His ideas help contextualize historiographic metafiction within the broader framework of postmodern cultural production, where history is no longer seen as a linear or objective process but rather as a series of competing narratives shaped by contemporary concerns.

Roland Barthes, a French literary theorist, is known for his work on the nature of texts and their relationship to culture and ideology. In his essay “The Death of the Author” (1967), Barthes argues that the meaning of a text is not determined by the author’s intentions but by the reader’s interpretation. This concept is relevant to historiographic metafiction, which often foregrounds the role of the reader in constructing historical meaning. Barthes’s idea that texts are open to multiple interpretations aligns with the self-reflexive and multi-layered nature of historiographic metafiction, where readers are encouraged to question the reliability of historical narratives and to consider how history is constructed.

Sarah Waters wrote novels imitating the theory of historiographic metafiction of Hutcheon and wrote *Tipping the Velvet*, *Affinity*, *Fingersmith*, *The Night Watch*, *The Little Stranger* and *The Paying Guests*. Sarah Waters belongs to the third wave of feminism, reflecting the sexual politics of past and present in her novels. The exciting part of her novels is her depiction of the sexualised culture of consumerism. Sarah Waters brings striptease culture in her novel *Tipping the Velvet*. McNair (2002) observes that “striptease culture is not only, nor even mainly, about pornography, but the pornographic is central to an understanding of cultural striptease” (12). Sarah Waters is concerned with the “sexualisation of culture” (McNair 7), that is, the growing prominence and presence of sex in society, especially in consumer culture. An illustration of this would be the growing usage of nudity and pornographic or sexually explicit images in her work. The elements of striptease can be witnessed in social media in the “various forms of sexual revelation and bodily exposure” (McNair 81).

Pauline Palmer (2008) observes that Sarah Waters “utilises the typically Postmodern strategy of treating in fictional form the topics and debates significant to the present-day lesbian community” (76). The third-wave feminists openly criticise capitalism and the gendered power structures that it imposes through commercial and beauty industries. As Rebecca Walker (1995) argues that “an awareness of the complexity and ambiguity of the world we have inherited” (20). Michele Miller (2008) highlights the contribution of third-wave feminists, thus commenting on the growth of consumerism and beauty culture:

Within the third wave, feminists focus on body politics that celebrates the strength of the female sexual body while recognising that there are

structural forces, such as patriarchy and capitalism, applying power on them and constraining the way they are expected to behave in the world. Instead of rejecting beauty and sexuality, third wave feminists focus on asserting their sexual selves, not necessarily for the male gaze but for themselves, allowing them to be both subject and object in their own sexual lives (67).

Thus, Deborah Siegel (2007) suggests, “In the third-wave paradigm, you could be a feminist aerobics instructor, a feminist aerobics instructor, a feminist exhibitionist, or a feminist supermodel” (143). Mark Turner (2003) contends that;

In conventional cultural histories ... queer encounters have remained footnotes at the bottom of the page, notes and queries in the margin or unarticulated suggestions lingering in the mind. That is, at best. At least as frequently, the traces of queer experiences have been lost in history – written out completely – and forgotten in cultural memory (43).

The use of Historiographic metafiction allows Waters to construct layered and intricate narratives. Multiple perspectives, temporal shifts, and intertextual references contribute to a rich storytelling experience that invites readers to actively engage with the text and its historical context. The chapter explores societal norms, cultural expectations, and power dynamics prevalent in historical periods. This serves as a form of social and cultural critique, using the past as a lens to comment on contemporary issues and challenge ingrained beliefs. It offers the readers a thought-provoking and immersive experience that goes beyond traditional historical fiction. The theory of historiographic metafiction deconstructs and challenges historical myths and conventional narratives. This process helps uncover hidden or suppressed aspects of history and provides a more nuanced portrayal of events. The study involves temporal shifts and intertextual references, connecting events across different periods. This interconnectedness reinforces the idea that history is a continuum, illustrating how past events shape the present and future.

There is a metafictional quality to *Tipping the Velvet*, which “is to be more playful with history, to ‘parade’ history and to parade its status as historical fiction” (Mitchell 131). Jerome de Groot (2013) states that most critics of the novel have noted, is the

continuous use of the word 'queer'. It is "repeated 43 times throughout the novel, and while it usually signals its original meaning of peculiarity, it also tends to imply its more recent usage as a word relating to sexual identity, dissidence, challenge, otherness" (62). The female protagonists in Sarah Waters' works come from a variety of socioeconomic origins and social strata. Their encounters vary from amicable to passionate to aggressive, and the novel's central theme is the variety of their sexual relationships. Their encounters vary from amicable to passionate, and the novel's central theme is the variety of their sexual relationships. Louisa Yates (2010) claims that *Tipping the Velvet* mostly depicts London's Roaring Nineties and aims to represent "the cultural landscape even as it re-vises the sexuality of those who inhabit it" (189).

Nan Astley is the heroine of the novel of Sarah Waters as the plot of *Tipping of the Velvet* revolves around her, and the novelist depicts the struggles and quest of Nan to forge an identity in a British society dominated by consumer culture. Waters describes her as "an oyster girl from Whitstable" (2). In the first twenty pages of the novel, the life, ambition, problems, poverty and dull routine life of Nan Astley are described by Waters to excite the readers' interest. Nan Astley was born in Whitstable, as she says;

Did you ever go to Whitstable and see the oyster-parlors there? My father kept one; I was born in it - do you recall a narrow, weather-boarded house painted a flaking blue half-way between the High Street and the harbour? Do you remember the bulging sign that hung above the door that said Astley's Oysters, the Best in Kent? (Waters 2).

Astley was taught to use the oyster knife in her early life as she was supposed to help her parents in the oyster parlour. Her life was dull and boring as she says: "I have said that there was nothing in my life when I was young, but oysters" (3). She was free and frank with her sister Alice and had developed a relationship with her boyfriend, Freddy. Astley was passionate about music and music halls; her passion for "music balls and the singing of them" (3) significantly transformed her life. She was sick of the monotonous life of Whitstable, for the town "has neither music hall nor theatre" (3). She was under the spell of "the theatre managers and artists, as the smell of laughter, the very odour of applause" (3), but soon she realised that "the essence not of pleasure

but of grief” (3). Astley is a mediocre girl passionate about doing something remarkable in her life. She is not an exceptional beauty as she confesses:

I was tall and rather lean. My chest was flat, my hair dull, my eyes a drab and an uncertain blue. My complexion, to be sure, was perfectly smooth and clear, and my teeth were very white; but these - in our family, at least - were counted unremarkable, for since we all passed our days in a miasma of simmering brine, we were all as bleached and blemishless as cuttlefish (4).

She is imprisoned in the cage of her house, stuck in the kitchen most of her time chained to “the routine of prising and bearding and cooking and serving, and Saturday-night visits to the music hall” (4). Astley’s quest for her identity begins when she comes in contact with the actress Kitty Butler at the theatre. She is charmed by the personality and dress sense of Kitty:

She was dressed in the trousers and the shoes that she had worn for her act, but she had removed the jacket, the waistcoat, and, of course, the hat. Her starched shirt was held tight against the swell of her bosom by a pair of braces, but gaped at the throat where she had undipped her bow-tie. Beyond the shirt I saw an edge of creamy lace (17).

Astley is hired as her dresser, and she leaves her home and goes to London, the city of romance, money, crime and vices. She felt a sudden change in her behaviour and thinking as she finished all her kitchen duties with enthusiasm to enjoy the company of Butler. She realised there is a lot of money and glamour in the world of theatre and films. Nan is fully prepared to exploit the theatre world’s culture, flouting all Victorian morality norms. She represents all the liberty-loving girls of middle-class England who wanted to puncture Victorian morality for material prosperity. Nan is assured that in exchange for having sex, she will get money and social benefits that were previously unattainable to her in her traditional Whitstable household. She values the lifestyle and living standard maintained by Diana thus:

My dear, I have said: you should have pleasure for your wages! You should live with me here, and enjoy my privileges. You should eat from my table, and ride in my brougham and wear the clothes I will pick out

for you—and remove them too, when I should ask it. You should be what the sensational novels call kept (249).

Diana pushes Nan to present herself well for Diana's and her friends' eyes by giving her a collection of suits, menswear, jewellery, and accessories. Nan notes that "To ... all places ... I went clad as a boy" (279). She even started doing menial jobs to win the confidence of Butler, as she says:

Watching Miss Butler perform upon the stage after having spoken to her, and been smiled at by her, and had her lips upon my hand, was a strange experience, at once more and less thrilling than it had been before. Her lovely voice, her elegance, her swagger: I felt I had been given a kind of secret share in them, and pinked complacently every time the crowd roared their welcome or called her back on to the stage for an encore (20).

Readers are encouraged by Sarah Waters to contemplate the differences between the past and present. She depicted the new attitude of women in the late Victorian age with the rise of capitalism and consumerism. The main character in Waters, Nan Astley, writes a letter to her sister declaring her love for Kitty, the Theatre performer. Her sister Alice expresses her feelings thus: "I can never be happy while your friendship with that woman is so wrong and queer" (134). Sarah Waters describes past events in the present context depicting her taste for historiography. Alice considers Nan's same-sex relationship with Kitty as queer, strange, odd and eccentric. Helen Hughes (1993) opines that in this romantic novel by Sarah Waters, "features of present-day society may be presented for criticism to defamiliarize them, encouraging a stricter scrutiny" (5). The novel is situated within the boundaries of the Victorian theatre world and the sexual underworld.

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler challenges preconceived conceptions about sex and gender while theorising gender and sexuality. She argues that gender is not something we are, but something we do—a series of repeated acts and behaviours that society interprets as masculine or feminine. This performative view challenges the notion of gender as a stable, biological fact and instead sees it as socially constructed and enacted. Butler argues that identity categories, such as "man," "woman," "gay," or "straight," are restrictive and fail to capture the

fluidity and diversity of human experience. She suggests that these categories are maintained through regulatory practices that enforce conformity to social norms. By exposing the constructed nature of these identities, Butler opens up the possibility for subversion and resistance against rigid gender norms.

Nan King has the typical talent to switch genders regularly. She performs disparate walks and clothing to pass as a man. In all these roles, her identity is fluid since she uses her skill to shift from appearing male to appearing female. In her portrayal of Nan, Sarah Waters exemplifies the influence of style. She is presented thus:

She looked, I suppose, like a very pretty boy, for her face was a perfect oval, and her eyes were large and dark at the lashes, and her lips were rosy and full. Her figure, too, was boy-like and slender— yet rounded, vaguely but unmistakably, at the bosom, the stomach, and the hips, in a way no real boys ever was; and her shoes, I noticed after a moment, had two-inch heels to them. But she strode like a boy, and stood like one, with her feet far apart and her hands thrust carelessly into her trouser pockets, and her head at an arrogant angle, at the very front of the stage; and when she sang, her voice was a boy's voice- sweet and terribly true (Waters 13).

Nan takes a historic decision to move to London, breaking all the barriers of her orthodox middle-class family. She firmly believes there is much money, glamour and sensational enjoyment in the theatre world. She considers herself fortunate to meet Kitty Butler, an actress at the local theatre. Astley is in a relationship with Kitty and serves as her personal assistant. Her quest for a new identity is full of adventures. Nan comes under the spell of Kitty and watches her performance with curiosity. She finds it endearing that Kitty is imitating a man and is using fashion elements to make herself appear impressive and masculine. She has a severely cropped hairdo, pants, and a top hat. On stage, she does a fantastic job of projecting a manly voice. Sarah Waters uses the elements of Gothic and fairy-tale in her novel. Kitty's transformation and multiple roles are staged with the speed of change. Sarah Waters has dramatised Nan's thrilling and romantic journey from a rural kitchen worker to an assistant to actress Kitty Butler. She also performs the role of a London theatre performer and Kitty's lover. They both



stay together and continue living a blissful life. Her romantic journey ends with her break up with Kitty, who falls in love with her manager Walter Bliss. Nan flees in despair to work as a street prostitute.

Fortunately, she gets a divine opportunity to develop relationships with Florence Banner, a social worker. Her life journey is a heartrending tale of a middle-class girl who becomes crazy to make money and enjoy the theatre world's glamorous life. Like Sophie by William Styron, who wrote the novel *Sophie's Choice* (1979), Nan is a victim of economic depression and social insecurity. The capitalist society and the fashion world crush her individuality and dehumanise her. Nan describes herself as plain, in contrast to Sister Alice's beauty. Astley describes, "girls like Alice were meant to dance upon a gilded stage, skirted in satin, hailed by cupids; and girls like me were made to sit in the gallery, dark and anonymous, and watch them" (Waters 8).

When Kitty tosses a flower at her from the stage, she starts transforming and gets attracted to her. She is immediately charged, and says: "When you threw this to me ... my life changed. I think I must have been asleep - till that moment: asleep, or dead. Since I met you, I've been awake - alive!" (55-6). Kitty calls Nan a "mermaid" (33), and Nan is lost in the world of romance and wonder and thinks of a peaceful abode in London: "Grease-Paint Avenue! ... a street set out like a make-up box, with narrow gilded houses, each one with a different coloured roof..." (61). Nan firmly believes that Kitty can perform any role and is able to charm others. "And there was nothing you would not do not sacrifice, to keep your heart's desire ..." (72). She is incredibly excited by her new attire, which "was made just for you, like Cinderella's slipper" (93) while "transforming it was practically a disguise" (94). Nan feels more like the mature lady and she has come to realise her real identity. Her change draws attention from men, which makes Kitty envious as "Miss Flirt" (98). The manager says that when Nan and Kitty have dressed in the suit and gentleman's attire: "Too real. She looks like a boy—but, if you follow me, she looks like a real boy. Her face and figure and her bearing on her feet. And that ain't quite the idea now, is it?" (Waters 118). When Kitty dresses up as a guy, nobody thinks she has a masculine heart; instead, they think she's just a feminine woman "cutely" acting like a male to amuse the audience. Marjorie Garber (1992) talks of transvestism which is employed by Angela Carter also in her novels. Garber observes thus:

The spectre of transvestism, the uncanny intervention of the transvestite, came to mark and indeed to overdetermine this space of anxiety about fixed and changing identities, commutable or absent selves. Transvestism was located at the juncture of class and gender, and increasingly through its agency, gender and class were revealed to be commutable, if not equivalent. To transgress against one set of boundaries was to call into question the inviolability of both, and the set of social codes ... by which such categories were policed and maintained (Waters 32).

Nan decides to change her identity and assume the identity of a young boy. She starts dressing up like a handsome boy to enjoy the new situation romantically. She is in a new world, thinking of herself in the fairy world where everything is possible. Nan uses drag to enjoy freedom and throw away the chains put on her female life. Nan steals the man's attire to walk as a man on London Street:

I left my dress and purse upon a chair, went out upon the landing, and locked the door behind me— my new dark heart, all the time, beating fast as a clock. As I had expected, the old bawd on the step barely raised her eyes as I went past her; and so, a little hesitantly, I began the walk down Berwick Street. With every glance that came my way, I flinched; at any moment, I expected the cry to be let up: A girl! There is a girl here in boy's clothing! (195).

Nan looks nervous and frightened when she wears the male attire for the first time, embracing the realness that her manager condemns. She looks restless, and the anxiety symptoms are visible as she prepares for her new gender performance transgressing Victorian morality. The leading cause of her fear stems from her consciousness of being recognised by someone. Garber observes that such anxiety is natural when a woman attempts to perform the role of a boy. Her performance is familiar in literature and art. Shakespeare's comic heroine Rosalind performs the same role in the play *As You Like It*, and Bolina and Viola perform the same performance to woo and outwit their lovers. Nan feels guilty for violating the social code in her adventurous passion. Nan realises that she can enjoy the life as a man: "to walk as a boy, as a handsome boy in a well-sewn suit, whom the people stared after only to envy,

never to mock well, it had a brittle kind of glamour to it, that was all I knew, just then, of satisfaction” (195). Nan deconstructs the old Victorian social morality to cater to late Victorian society’s tastes. Her new role and transformation symbolise the emergence of a new urban culture and consumerism. In her home kitchen, her fingers “were pink and puckered working with oysters are now yellow with tobacco” (93).

With the emergence of science and technology and the money culture London was transformed into a fairy tale glamorous city. Nan describes her enchanted voyage through the London night, “Beside us the pavement glittered with frost, and each sheet-lamp glowed in the fog, from the Centre of its own yellow nimbus...the driver, Kitty and I might have been the only wakeful creatures in a city of stone and ice and slumber” (101).

Nan is so much excited that she is transported to a fairy world, imagining a new sexual experience as she confesses: “The transformation seemed a little miracle, done just for Kitty and me. I saw us floating down the Thames, out to sea-past Whitstable, perhaps-on a piece of ice no bigger than a pancake” (102). Even the names of persons and animals suggest transformation. The manager of Kitty is from a theatrical family, and Walter Bliss is not their true name. He is “Walter Waters, Character Baritone” (65). Even the dog Bransby has a theatrical name, and he is called “Archie” (75). Nan looks sexy and unique in her marvellous jacket. Sarah Waters found that in late Victorian society, the position of women changed as they were given the freedom to go out and seek employment. Virginia Woolf had championed the cause of women’s freedom, and a new wave of feminism had started. Nan describes the social trends of transformation as she says: “Four months ago I was an oyster-girl in Whitstable” but Walter clears her doubt by telling her that Bessie was a rabbit-skinner four months ago when she “made a debut” (113). Nan goes to a tailor’s shop for her new look and becomes “a boy with buttons and a belt” (118).

Nan ventures into the realm of romance and fairies in search of the glitzy joys that await her. When Astley and Butler vacate Mrs Dendy’s room due to money, Nan “wished I could be plain Nancy Astley again, whom Kitty Butler loved with an ordinary love she was not afraid to show all the world” (141). Nan experiences tensions and psychological anxieties as she watches Kitty play the double role; she presents herself as a man on stage and a woman off stage. Nan is in the grip of psychological tension as

she finds it difficult to justify her double roles. She is after the material pleasures of life as she worships the glamorous and the brave, but in real life, she feels sick and despondent. At the end of the book, Nan loses everything her innocence, her middle-class status, and her transformation into a prostitute and Sarah Waters portrays her psychological anguish as the novel proceeds. As Nan's identity develops, she starts to resemble a princess from a fairy tale and yearns to be a dazzling explorer, displaying her exceptional confidence and the stardust of fame. In a theatre, Kitty portrays Cinderella's Prince and becomes an idol for her fans: "Nan only plays the idiot who delivers Cinderella the slipper" (Waters 148).

The novel *Affinity* blends multiple elements; realism, romance, lesbianism, socialism, and Gothic. The novel is loaded with elements of many genres, such as Gothic thriller and romance. She uses the concept of lesbian ghosts as a kind of red herrings to depict the traumatic experiences of her women characters. Waters' novel looks like a fairy tale. No wonder, when Margaret's initially visits Millbank, she is like an innocent princess looking earnestly at the Millbank prison. She twiddles her skirts, that have "caught upon some piece of jutting iron or brick ... lifting from my eyes from sweeping hem that I first see the pentagons of Millbank ... I look at them and feel my heart beat hard, and I am afraid" (Waters 8). She is rather taken aback by Millbank's architectural layout, which includes "a curious kind of charm to it" (8) and like "petals on a geometric flower" (8). Millbank prison in *Affinity* serves not only as a historical or physical setting but as a crucial thematic and symbolic element in the novel. Its oppressive atmosphere and history of reform reflect the characters' internal struggles. While its gothic and supernatural elements heightens the tension and mystery of the narrative. The critics of Sarah Waters have found the elements of romance also.

Liz Hoggard (2008) discusses that love emotions are associated with ghostly and haunting things in *Affinity*. Time when *Affinity* was released, a critic claimed it "a love letter to gothic fiction" (Hoggard 21). Pauline Palmer (2016) situates *Affinity* in the lineage of books that began with Rebecca and states "gothic romance that endorses the existence of the paranormal or a gothic thriller that exposes it as fake by furnishing a rational explanation for Salina's apparently paranormal powers" (Palmer 37). The novel is loaded with suspense, darkness, paranormal activity, and agony, but it also has a romantic narrative. Sarah Waters gives the image of madness to intensify the

psychological depth of Margaret's soul. She thinks the castle was designed by a madman "to drive its inmates mad" (Waters 8). The Millbank in *Affinity* serves not only as a historical or physical setting but as a crucial thematic and symbolic element in the novel. Its oppressive atmosphere and history of reform reflects the character's internal struggles, while its gothic and supernatural elements heightens the tension and mystery of the narrative. She feels giddy, and it has a spell on her. In fairy-tale style, the black castle has towers and spiral stairs. Margret describes the Millbank prison as "more featureless corridors, to a spiral case that wound upwards through a tower; ... a bright, white, circular room, filled with windows" (Waters 10). Sarah Waters uses the material from the old Victorian poem *Goblin Market* (1862) by Christina Rossetti to create an atmosphere of wonder and romance. Margaret thinks that the male inmates are "goblin men, with snouts and tails and whiskers" (35). The environment of the Victorian prison is ghastly and has terrifying effects on the mind and sensibility of Margaret. When she walks into the prison, she senses the barriers' progress, "like the clashing rocks of the Bosphorus" (8), and "fogs that seem to rise from the pavements as if brewed in the sewers in diabolical engine" (125).

The novel *Affinity* is a metafictional blending of various elements of different fiction genres. In the present chapter, the elements of history are investigated, relying on the theories of Historiographic metafiction of Linda Hutcheon. Sarah Waters weaves a tale about the sexual and psychological suffering of women in Victorian times through diaries and silent letters. Both research scholars of the historical novel and readers interested in women's historical fiction find resonance in Sarah Waters's work. Waters' work is layered with historiographic intertextuality. Continuing a trend of female authors penning historical novels, Sarah Waters's novel *Affinity* continues a trend of female authors creating historical novels. Several contemporary literary paradigms, including some crucial ideas about homosexual representation in the 20th century, were included in their pastiche. The novel is an excellent fusion of fiction and intertextual studies that employs Linda Hutcheon's and Frederic Jameson's postmodern methods. Waters incorporates elements of her analytical thinking into her stories. In Sarah Waters works, she recovers the homosexual voice and lends it historical authority. Margaret observes female inmates and remarks to a guard: "'They might be ghosts!' [...] But Miss Ridley had turned to me. 'Ghosts!'" she said, studying me queerly" (20). Margaret

is writing her diary recording all the activities of the women prisoners. Kohlke (2015) argues that Margret would “be historical subjectivity stages itself in the shadow of her dead historian-father” (Kohlke 157). Margaret articulates her plan thus:

All women can ever write, he says, are journals of the heart; the phrase has stayed with me. I have been thinking of my last journal, which had so much of my own heart’s blood in it; and which certainly took as long to burn as human hearts, they say, do take (70).

Sarah Waters has studied how the Matrons’ culture affects the lives of the female inmates. The role of the Matrons and the Lady Visitors was of great importance as they were expected to be sympathetic, friendly and cooperative to change the behaviour and character building of the women prisoners. Matrons were to show a good example of the ideal of womanhood “to provide a role model whose attributes, it was hoped, the inmates would observe, internalise, and eventually adopt” (Zedner 199). The prisoners had familiar relationships with their matrons as they called them “Mum” even when they were not kind to them.

Waters described different kinds of matrons according to their behaviour. Most of the matrons were oppressive and hard-hearted, they had become complicated, and iron had entered their souls because of their long-serving among criminals. Mrs Jelf was one of the prison matrons at Millbank prison who was less sympathetic than Miss Haxby a sympathetic and kind matron: “Mrs Jelf ... so grey and careworn, I should never have guessed her to have had a life, so recently, beyond the prison walls” (Waters 161). Margaret also could not believe that “a lady like Mrs Jelf should ever have come to Millbank, at all. She never saw a matron suited less to Millbank duties than her!” (Waters 161). The environment of Millbank is horrible, as a sensible person cannot stay there. Sarah Waters comments, thus intensifying the haunting atmosphere of the prison: “It is as if the prison had been designed by a man in the grip of a nightmare or a madness- or had been made expressly to drive its inmates mad. I think it would certainly drive me mad if I had to work as a warder there” (Waters 9).

Sarah Waters (2006) discussed in “Sensation Stories” her views on the writing of *Fingersmith*;

By the time I’d finished writing that book (*Affinity*), I was hooked on by “Sensation novels” of writers such as Wilkie Collins, Sheriden LeFanu

and Mary Elizabeth Braddon: novels whose pre-occupation with sex, crime and family scandals had once made them runaway bestsellers. Tentatively, I began to piece together a melodramatic plot of Victorian culture which still fascinated and intrigued me: asylums, pornography, bibliophilia, the world of servants, the world of thieves (Waters *The Guardian*).

The novel *Fingersmith* (2002) also employs the elements of ‘Historiographic Metafiction’. The characters of Waters are subjected to patriarchal pressures and escape to old European places for life stability. In Margaret Prior’s fantasy of *Affinity*, Italy is a utopian place. *Fingersmith* is a fine example of historiographic metafiction. Despite being written in the early twenty-first century, the story captures the culture of the early Victorian era. Although the novel takes place in the 1860s, the ideas, characters, storyline, and style imitate the early Victorian. The plot of the novel pastiche’s Victorian literature. The main effort of Sarah Waters is to reinvent and reinterpret the Victorian cultural transformation. Hutcheon (2006) discusses in *A Theory of Adaptation*:

The Victorians had a habit of adapting just about everything – and in just about every possible direction: the stories of poems, novels, plays, operas, paintings, songs, dances, and *tableaux vivants* were consistently being adapted from one medium to another and then back again. We Postmodern have clearly inherited this same habit, but we have even more new critical materials at our disposal (Hutcheon xi).

Kohlke (2008) argues, “everything that was written on the Victorians after the Victorian era which ends in 1901, with the Queen’s death – should in fact be investigated within the field of neo-Victorianism” (4). Kohlke further argues a “perceptible disjunction between the current fashion for all things Victorian and what might be called the relative unfashionableness of earlier twentieth-century works already in conversation with the resurrected Victorians” (4).

Sarah Waters used new literary techniques in her novels, according to John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff’s *Victorian Afterlife* (2000) and Christian Gutleben’s *Nostalgic Postmodernism: The Victorian Tradition and the Contemporary British Novel* (2001). Her perception of Historiographic metafiction gave her the strength to

revive and reinvent the old Victorian historical episodes. The general and founding editor of Neo-Victorian Studies, Marie-Louise Kohlke (2008), explains;

Neo-Victorian Studies is still in the process of crystallisation, or full *materialisation* so to speak; as yet its temporal and generic boundaries remain fluid and relatively open to experimentation by artists, writers, and theorists alike, a state of affairs that forms part of its strong attraction. What properly belongs *in* and *to* this emergent, popular, interdisciplinary field of study remains to be seen (1).

*Fingersmith* hinges on Sue and Maud's life and experiences. Sue Trinder is an important character in the novel as she is described as "poor and wily and prepared to do a very dark deed" (Waters Sensation Stories). Her origins are not clearly described. She is left with just the memories of her mother, the baby farmer Mrs. Sucksby. Mr. Ibbs, the locksmith serves as her stepfather. Mrs. Sucksby often tells her a fake narrative about her mother. Her mother was arrested at last and hanged as a murderess. Sue gives her information thus:

I think the people who came to Lant Street thought me slow – Slow I mean, as opposed to fast. Perhaps I was, by Borough standards. But it seemed to me that I was sharp enough. You could not have grown up in such a house, that had such businesses in it, without having a pretty good idea of what was what – of what could go into what; and what could come out (*Fingersmith* 14).

Sarah Waters employs the elements of sensational fiction of the old Victorian Age in her novel *Fingersmith*. She creates a sensational story to cherish and question the past at the same time. The plot of *Fingersmith* contains the elements of parody, and pastiche and is a fine juxtaposition of intertextuality and fragmentation. The postmodern theory of Linda Hutcheon highlights "its uses and abuses of conventions and characters and styles of past literary forms to achieve a specific goal" (Hutcheon 126). Sarah Waters used the metaphor of a madhouse to depict the issues of deception, murder and swindling to create an atmosphere of wonder, romance and sensation. Sue is led to believe that Maud will be locked up in the Madhouse after the scam. But Maud's account of the events subverts the entire narrative the readers have constructed



in their minds. Hutcheon (1988) points out that in “the postmodern fiction there is no absolute truth and there only versions of truth” (Hutcheon 109).

Maud and Sue are two strange characters in the sensation novel; they hold a limited view of the world. Maud has led a lonely life for years and is ignorant of the outside world, and Sue is illiterate and raised by a farm nurse. She is used to living in the lowest social levels. There are no fixed identities, and the confusions are multiple in the plot of *Fingersmith*. In the madhouse, the confusion of identities is described through a nurse’s questioning voice: “Eh, my lady? Mrs What-is-your-name? Mrs Waters, or Rivers?” (*Fingersmith* 398). Maud and Sue believe that they are aware of the truth but eventually discover that they were mistaken. At first, Maud believes that her mother has passed away at the insane asylum where she was nurtured, until her uncle brought her out to be employed as a secretary. The inheritance narrative is added to her truth when the Gentleman enters at Briar and recounts the scenario. Maud is then convinced that Sue will go to the Madhouse and Gentleman will take her to London, “separately, of course, . . . when the door of the house is closed” (*Fingersmith* 228).

However, Maud learns that her past is deceptive and her truth is misleading after reaching London. She knows her mother was a murderess and that she was exchanged for a lady’s child to be reared in her replacement. However, as the narrative progresses, Mrs. Sucksby confesses that Maud is her daughter and not the murderess’ daughter, this contradicts her reality once again. Ultimately, the reader is left feeling perplexed since the several accounts of what happened have changed so drastically. The mystery behind the gentleman’s murder is maintained throughout the novel, heightening the suspense. Everyone is puzzled by the unsolved murder mystery at the conclusion, just like Maud and Sue are,

I know there was the gleam of something bright, the scuffle of shoes, the swish of taffeta and silk, the rushing of someone’s breath . . . Maud stood a little before him, but now moved away; and as she did, I heard something fall, though whether it fell from her hand, or from his – or from Mrs Sucksby’s – I cannot tell you (*Fingersmith* 502-503).

The novels prominently use lunacy, which is typical of Victorian era sensational novels. These aspects can be found in madhouses where personalities are disposed of, such as in *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) and *The Woman in White* (1859).

In *Fingersmith*, Waters elaborates on Sue's treatment within the asylum. In her Notes to *Fingersmith*, Sarah Waters borrowed the madhouse scenes from Marcia Hamilcar's *Legally Dead: Experiences During Seventeen Weeks' Detention in a Private Asylum*. She has utilised the madhouse to represent the breakdown of a stable identity and just by being confined there, the residents lose their minds: "But you see, I'm afraid you must be mad since you are here" (*Fingersmith* 432). Waters makes several other textual allusions to establish *Fingersmith's* place in the nineteenth-century literary canon.

Samantha Matthews (2010), believes that neo-Victorian novels are known for their intertextual references, which are a component of their metafictional formal characteristics, "It tends to reclaim the period for a liberal agenda by privileging marginal identities and voices-servants, prostitutes, gays and lesbians, black and colonial peoples" (Matthews 287). Waters has used the elements of popular culture in Sue's narrative. Sarah Waters borrows from *Oliver Twist* (1837- 1839) of Charles Dickens. Mrs Sucksby is arrested after the murder of Gentleman: "Her taffeta dress was soaked in his blood, the brooch of diamonds at her bosom turned to a brooch of rubies. Her hands were crimson, from fingertip to wrist. She looked like the picture of a murderess from one of the penny papers" (Waters 508). The narrative of Maud is full of allusions to pornographic literature written to the rhythm of early Victorian fiction. The plot mirrors several nineteenth-century views about women's education and their exposure to sensational literature. The doctors consider that Sue's madness is due to "overindulge [d herself] in literature" (*Fingersmith* 421). Costantini (2006) believes that Sarah Waters, in total, "incorporates explicit references to Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Alfred Tennyson, Mrs Henry (Ellen) Wood, Joseph Sheridan LeFanu [sic], Thomas Hardy, Oscar Wilde, and other writers, including the less known (often anonymous) authors of Victorian pornographic literature" (Constantini 18).

Her novel is a typical Postmodern novel containing the elements of history, as Hutcheon (1988) suggests, "of previously "silent" groups defined by differences of race, gender, sexual preferences, ethnicity, native status, class" (Hutcheon 61). Sarah Waters gives voice to once-silenced groups in society, including women, lesbians, pornographers, and criminals. According to Matthews, "the privileging of marginal

identities and voices ... implies a rather Victorian Sensationalism as well as a determination to project contemporary social concerns onto the past” (287). Hutcheon observes thus:

Historiographic Metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity. This kind of Postmodern fiction also refuses the relegation of the extratextual past to the domain of historiography in the name of the autonomy of art (Hutcheon 93).

*The Night Watch* carries on Sarah Waters’s experimental historiographic metafiction. Sarah Waters uses a narrative that travels backward in time like a shuttlecock to create a tale that contrasts the present with previous occurrences. The plot starts in 1947 and then jumps back in time to 1941 and 1944 to relive events leading up to and including the War. The lives of a group affected by the harrowing events of War are reported. They feel stressed and experience trauma since they find life useless and happiness elusive. Kaye Mitchell (2018) connects the circumstances of 1940s Britain with this historical narrative form that, “War is sufficiently disruptive of normative temporalities that queer temporalities prevail in wartime (Waters 86).

Mental health problems arise from the characters of *The Night Watch* experiencing agony and shame. The characters are the victims of guilty consciousness as in 1944, Viv became pregnant and had an abortion. She continued her illicit affair with Nigri in 1947. The heterosexual partnership between Reggie Nigri and Vivien Pearce is a cause of psychological distress. They have no future, as Emma Parker (2015) refers, “countering the romanticised, sentimental, and utopian tone of much lesbian feminist fiction, *The Night Watch* addresses the trauma, pain, and anguish of the characters” (Parker 215). The ambiance in *The Night Watch* is depressing, and the setting is grim. Adele Jones (2013) remarks thus: “The novel ends with the beginning of the war, so ... the possibility of change through the forward movement of time is as curtailed as love and hope in their lives” (Jones 43). Sarah Waters has structured the

narrative in a sombre atmosphere, and the historical events of 1941, 1944, and 1947 are in the plot's background. At the end of the novel, in 1941, Kay saves Helen from the ruin, when she's "unable to believe that something so fresh and so unmarked could have emerged from so much chaos" (Waters 503). In the novel's 1947 section, Kay notices the darkness recollects the past when London was bombed. During that time, women used to wear military clothes, and Kay is wearing masculine military clothes:

The bold cut of her hair, her mannish clothes, her sharp, distinguished looking profile. He thought she might once have been a lady pilot, a sergeant in the WAAF, something like that: one of those women, in other words, who'd charged about so happily during the War, and then got left over (Waters 7).

The metaphor of darkness is employed to depict the sense of helplessness of the characters. The protagonists' incapacity to escape turmoil and disorder is expressed by darkness, which reminds them of their horrific background. The novel's narrative structure is backward. Kay is seen in her male uniform and performing the role of an ambulance driver. In this context Rachel Wood (2015) claims, "New possibilities for gender and sexual identities flourish in the destroyed spaces, open spaces, dark spaces, and invisible spaces of London under attack" (313). Helen sees Julia, they decide to explore the abandoned, death-wreathed, and dismal London.

The imagery is threatening the lives of the Londoners, and these events of the War create an atmosphere of chaos and disorder. Julia says: "If we can't see them, they can't see us. Besides, they'd probably take us for a boy and his girl" (Waters 363). Helen and Julia try to make love in darkness and emerge as a homosexual couple. The area they discover is "impossibly dark" (374). Julia and Helen were brought together by darkness, which also contributed significantly to Helen's feelings of isolation and hopelessness. Soon Julia forms intimate relations with her friend Ursula Waring, and Helen points out the "mischievous dark gaze" (60) of Ursula. Similarly, Julia is also described as "smooth and self-possessed as a cool dark gem" (263).

The imagery of darkness is very effective; it reflects the mood of the characters and the threat of the external forces, as darkness in London is the leading cause of concern for London's people, forcing them to recollect the harrowing memories of War and bombing. Helen's loss of hope is described when she comes back home: "to find

the room unlit, making her aware ... of a sort of deadness to the place” (140). Her suspicion related to Julia’s detachments is indicated by darkness. Duncan shows Viv a jug he discovered, creating an atmosphere of sombreness and juxtaposing the present and the past: “I think it must be eighteenth-century [*sic*]. Imagine ladies, V, taking tea, pouring cream from this!” (Waters 26). Mark Llewellyn (2007) observes thus that “he collects materials from an unknowable yet more comforting and earlier period” (207). He makes an effort to erase the memories of his friend Alec’s suicide. Sarah Waters marks the scene of sombreness thus; “there was a tiger-skin rug on top of a carpet, and satin cushions on the bed ... paint and plaster, that must have been shaken down in raids. The room smelt damp, un-lived-in” (Waters 398).

The imagery of “a tiger-skin rug” and “satin cushions” suggests the chaotic sensuousness of her metafiction. Viv’s relationship with Reggie remains flimsy and soon brings chaos and disorder to the life of the lovers. The material objects encapsulate the characters’ guilt, returning them to their traumatic past. Their first meeting is on a train to London because “it was impossible to say where exactly, for the train kept stopping at what might or might not have been stations” (457). Reggie and Viv begin acting as though they are strangers at a Motel. Mr Leonard, Kay’s landlord warns her thus: “You must lift up your gaze, dear. You must learn to look away from perishable things” (169). Kay’s ring reminds her of her painful past and the primary source of psychological anguish. The ring gives a false identity to Viv as a married woman creating an illusion in the novel of false utopia, but this becomes a source of suffering at the end. Her harrowing past always haunts Viv, and she liberates herself, returning her ring to Kay. Though it provides her a sense of independence, Viv’s choice to split from Reggie holds no future prospects. Viv puts the ring “amongst the cigarette stubs ... leaming, undimmed by ash, which suggests Kay’s inability to give up the past” (Waters 171). The behaviour of Kay in “putting the ring back on her slender finger; and closing her fist, to keep it from slipping again stresses the fact that she cannot move on” (171).

*The Night Watch* is an alternate history book that provides a unique vision of World War II, focusing on women and sexual minorities. The novel combines historical fiction and postmodern storytelling elements, presenting realistic and alternative viewpoints. Waters frames her narrative as a historical novel, which allows for the

incorporation of realistic perspectives based on historical events and settings. However, her primary focus on sexual minorities demonstrates a postmodern approach, where she challenges traditional historical narratives and introduces alternative viewpoints to shed light on marginalized experiences during the war.

The novel's non-linear narrative shifts backwards in time, adding to its Postmodern nature. An open-ended conclusion is a hallmark of many postmodern novels, that is achieved by keeping the reader in the dark regarding the characters' future developments. The presence of an unresolved element in the novel prompts readers to challenge traditional storytelling conventions and invites them to delve deeper into the intricate lives and experiences of the characters. *The Night Watch* exemplifies how postmodern historical fiction can offer innovative perspectives on familiar historical events and explore themes of identity, sexuality, and the human experience during times of upheaval.

*The Little Stranger* demonstrates the components of historiographic metafiction since the storyline blends the past and the present. The plot focuses on the events of 1947–48 when London was reeling under the pressure of rehabilitation. Mrs Ayres struggles to adapt to the post-war changes in British culture, which has disturbed her psychologically. Waters has portrayed the breakdown of the old British social system; the family's rural home, Hundreds Hall, is in despair, signifying the chaotic and disorderly environment. The decadence is reflected through many accidents that occur in the novel's plot, destroying the contentment of the wealthy family. Waters employs the elements of Gothic fiction to characterise historiographic metafiction. Julian Wolfreys (2002) states that the spooky Country house "is the place where the blurring of boundaries is given its most literal depiction, in the motion of ghosts through walls" (7).

The Hundreds Hall is depicted as a mansion with a haunted reputation. Waters illustrates the dissolution of social barriers in the aftermath of the two world wars. Letissier (2013) contends thus: "To address the still traumatic repercussions of the transitory post-war years, Waters borrows the ghost story's plotline and symbolically foregrounds its favourite locus: the haunted house" (35). Waters integrates various intertexts to align with the concept of historiographic metafiction. The setting of Hundred Hall draws inspiration from the Gothic narratives. The novel features an

intriguing fusion of queerness with the Gothic. Palmer (2016) asserts, “the emphasis that the haunted-house narrative places on familial secrets, especially ones of an illicit kind, makes it admirably suited, of course, to treating themes relating to queer sexuality and experience” (41).

The supernatural recurring in the life of Ayres’s family excites the suspense and anxiety of the readers. In the vein of the Gothic tales of the Victorian era, the novel invokes the devastating events of World War II to create an atmosphere of melancholy and wonder. Ann Heilmann (2012) claims that, “Waters engages with the twenty-first-century nostalgia for the Victorians as well as with 1940s explorations of Gothic doom and class upheaval as symbols of the post-war condition” (54). The narrative juxtaposes the social unrest of the 1940s with nostalgia. Ayres wants to leave Hundreds, symbolising the decline of the class structure. Dr Faraday is the main narrator who wants to marry Caroline to grab the house belonging to Ayres.

Waters stays true to the recurring themes in her novels by emphasising the societal inequality that exists between genders and classes. The novel participates in the gothic style by presenting a haunted home that challenges the reader to identify the cause of the haunting while posing a hazard to the characters. The narrative invokes the essence of the Country House novel from the perspective of an untrustworthy first-person narrator, yet its themes subvert the genre’s romantic idealism. The house, Hundreds Hall, which had previously been a source of grandeur and wealth, is now shown in *The Little Stranger* as a source of haunting and ruin, subverting the past.

*The Little Stranger* reflects the shifting class dynamics of the time. The protagonist, Dr Faraday, comes from a working-class background but has risen to a respectable position as a doctor. His interactions with the Ayres family reveal the tensions between the declining aristocracy and the rising middle class, emphasizing the changing social order. Waters explores how the past haunts the present, both literally and metaphorically. The Ayres family is plagued by grief and loss, particularly the loss of fortune and glory during the war. This personal tragedy is intertwined with the larger national trauma of the war, illustrating how history leaves deep scars on individuals and society. Through the interactions between characters and the crumbling state of Hundreds Hall, Waters reflects on what it means to be British in a time of transition.

The novel questions the value of clinging to the past and the old social order, suggesting that such nostalgia can be destructive.

While traditional Gothic novels often feature female protagonists who are victimized by patriarchal forces, Waters subverts this by focusing on Dr Faraday, a male character, and by exploring his complex relationship with the Ayres family. This shift allows Waters to critique gender roles and the power dynamics within both the family and society at large. Waters challenges the romanticization of the past. The Ayres family's longing for their former glory is portrayed as not only futile but also harmful. The novel suggests that an inability to adapt to change and an obsession with the past can lead to one's downfall. This historical revisionism breathes new life into the Gothic genre, making it relevant to a modern audience. Sarah Waters revisits history not simply to retell it, but to interrogate it, revealing the complex interplay between past and present, the personal and the political, and the psychological and the social. Through this nuanced exploration, she offers a critical perspective on post-war British society and the lingering ghosts of its past.

The characters Frances Wray and Lilian Barber in *The Paying Guests* attempt, even unsuccessfully, to escape their domestic issues, persisting in their struggles throughout the narrative. Their efforts to transform the oppressive environment prove futile. Waters' characters carve out a queer heterotopic space, enabling them to safeguard their homosexual desires. Despite their yearning for freedom, they often find themselves drawn to the constraining world they inhabit. Waters emphasizes the significance of her characters in "Staying in the Mess":

At the heart of the book is the sense of loss-muddle. Things were politically unsafe; things felt how they do now. The War had been dreadful, and people thought it would only lead to another, which of course, it did. Everyone was newly very unsafe and full of conflict (Waters *Lambda Literary*).

Sarah Waters depicts her characters' struggles for a better future in the oppressive world of post-World War I. Judith Halberstam (2011) contends that "under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world" (Halberstam 2). Sarah Waters has depicted the characters' plight in



the quest for heterotopic space because of the uncertainties caused by two World Wars. The novel reveals the aftermath of World War I, a period during which Britain grapples with the consequences of the conflict. In *The Paying Guests*, Frances, the unmarried woman, is compelled to manage her household without assistance. Frances's aspiration to elope and live with Lilian is shattered when an unintended incident leads to Leonard's death. The future of Lilian and Frances remains uncertain until the novel's conclusion. The characters of Sarah Waters suffer because they do not conform to community traditions. Gill Plain (2013) claims, "While the hostilities ceased in 1945, the impact of the war continued to be felt – psychologically, emotionally and economically – in the state of the nation, the grief of the inhabitants and the pain of readjustment" (1). The narrative structures of *The Night Watch*, *The Little Stranger*, and *The Paying Guests* all convey this sense of helplessness. Waters has described the shattered dreams and bleak future of the characters haunted by the gruesome scene of War. Sarah Waters employs a postmodern framework to structure the aspirations and ambitions of the characters affected by the trauma of war, applying this approach to the World War II experience.

Linda Hutcheon (1988) aptly argues thus: "Postmodern literature reveals the 'provisional, indeterminate nature of historical knowledge', pointing to the fact that both history and fiction are discourses, that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past" (Hutcheon 88). Waters "reinstates dialectics and contradictions, reintroduce little known or suppressed aspects of war" (Rau 209). She considers 'queer' in her novels. Waters uses the imagery of blackness and darkness to depict the utopian longing of the characters entrapped in the abyss of darkness. Waters understood the cultural shifts following the War and portrayed these alterations in class dynamics in her novel *The Paying Guests* (2014). Ironically, the Wray family, belonging to the upper class, accommodates the Barbers, who come from the lower class, as their lodgers.

Nicola Humble (2001) observes that Waters is presenting the form of hybrid fiction of the postmodern society, blending historical events of the history with contemporary situations. Waters' application of metafiction is packed with the elements of wonder and romance and may be called "the literature of the middle classes" (Humble 3). The plot of *The Paying Guests* reflects "feminine aspects of life, a

fascination with domestic space, a concern with courtship and marriage, a preoccupation with aspects of class and manners” (Humble 11). The introduction of the murder and investigation plot intensifies the seriousness of the metafiction. Waters combines famous mystery and detective stories with old historical events to strengthen her metafiction. As Melissa Schaub (2013) affirms, “Mystery novels by women ... took on an interesting and repeated set of similarities in form and content combining a light ironic tone with a consistently ambiguous feminism” (Schaub 2).

Frances’s house is a microcosm reflecting British society after the War. Haunted by the traumatic experiences of the conflict, the characters grapple with psychological disturbance and an unsettling sense of uncertainty about the future. The house functions as a collective trauma and societal changes experienced by Britain in the aftermath of World War I. This domestic setting becomes a stage where the characters face the profound impact of the war on their lives and relationships. The introduction of “paying guests” symbolizes economic challenges and class shifts, mirroring the changing social dynamics of post-War Britain. The microcosm encapsulates not only the visible transformations but also the hidden traumas and unspoken tensions reflective of the broader societal shifts. In this context, Frances’s house becomes a rich narrative space where the author brings the complexities of post-war British society, portraying the struggles, secrets, and adaptations of individuals. The characters wrestle with psychological turmoil and an overwhelming apprehension about the uncertainties that lie ahead, mirroring the broader societal struggles of the time.

The Wray’s family serves as a representation of the time’s middle-class homes lacking servants since “the munitions factories had ... lured them away in 1916” (10), putting Frances in command of all domestic duties. Frances thus expresses her struggle thus: “It seemed to her that the house must produce [the dust], as flesh oozes sweat” (25). Frances’s frustration with her mother, who clings to outdated Victorian values, mirrors the cultural shifts taking place during the era. The conflict between them serves as a reflection of the evolving societal norms and values during that time. Sarah Waters employs the imagery of kitchen wares to depict Frances’s emotional bankruptcy, who is in quest of a queer heterotopic space. She develops relationships with Lilian to overcome her emotional void.

An initial sexual encounter between Frances Wray and Lilian Barber unfolds in the scullery, a setting marked by its dimly lit and shadowy atmosphere. The choice of the scullery as the backdrop for this intimate moment adds a layer of symbolism to the scene. The dim lighting and shadows create an ambiance of secrecy and concealment, reflecting the societal constraints and the clandestine nature of their relationship in the context of the time period. This setting not only serves as a physical space for the characters' interaction but also contributes to the overall mood, emphasizing the private and furtive nature of their burgeoning connection: "The scullery was dark as blindness after the gaslit kitchen, and the darkness was abashing" (222). Their sexual union is an attempt to rebel against the social morality of the Victorian Age. Frances says, "I've to start thinking about my mother's dinner", and Lilian adds, "And I've to start thinking about Len's" (105). Sarah Waters employs cookery imagery to depict the homosexual desires of her characters, who seek to escape the dull domestic existence of developing lesbian relationships in the darkness. Frances's mother does not understand or approve of her lesbian sexuality, while Lilian is married to Leonard. She gains freedom as the people do not realise that they are having sexual affairs, but she is not happy since she cannot openly declare her lesbian identity. She "almost wishes she were a man" (269) so that she could openly declare her love for Lillian. She can only enjoy the fruits of her love in the kitchen, which doesn't promise privacy. Frances's mother "almost walks in on her and Lillian" (258). The affinity between them grew day by day, "It was like making love: the thrill and intimacy of it, the never letting go of each other, the clutching of fingers and the bumping of thighs, the racing and matching of heartbeats and breaths" (278).

Frances and Lilian create their world of love and romance to escape post-war society's emotional bankruptcy. They seek a life separated from society puncturing the conventional morality of the Victorian Age. They enjoy limited freedom because they know living in a world of romance and fantasy for a long time is complicated. They express their confinement thus:

We're like gipsies! Like the gipsy king and queen. Oh, don't you wish we were? We could go miles and miles from Camberwell, and live in a caravan in a wood, and pick berries, and catch rabbits, and kiss, and kiss (245).

Sarah Waters has given the image of a glass dome to describe the fragile nature of their love passions. Frances realises that “as long as they are content with their fantasy plan, they will not be able to escape their confinement” (269). A glass dome represents Frances’s and Lilian’s utopian imagination symbolising the transient nature of their sexual pleasures. Frances wants to spend her life and love in a flat, but this romantic plan is dangerous and the product of fantasy, as she admits:

We began to want to live together. We planned it, seriously. We did everything seriously in those days. Christina took type writing and book-keeping classes. We looked at rooms, we saved our money ... Christina and I talked as though we were part of a new society! Everything was changing. Why shouldn't we change too? (Waters 177).

Frances and Lilian’s love affair ends in a fiasco, and Sarah Waters gives the imagery of loss and crumbling walls to depict the psychological anguish of Frances and Lilian. The dream element is quite effective in conveying the sense of loss of her characters:

Suddenly she found herself in an unfamiliar house with crumbling walls. How had she got there? She had no idea. She knew only that she had to keep the place from collapsing. But the task was like torture. The moment she got one wall upright, the next would start to tilt; soon she was rushing from room to room, propping up sagging ceilings, hauling back the slithering treads of tumbling staircases. On and on she went, through all the hours of the night; on and on, without pause, staving off one impossible catastrophe after another (403-404).

This dream suggests that her adventurous love affair is chaotic and not permanent. The imagery of walls, ceilings, staircases and old buildings symbolised the process of disintegration. The theme of dissonance and disintegration is trendy in postmodern fiction. Fredric Jameson and Linda Hutcheon talk about the malaise of disintegration gripping the psyche of the postmodern people. She expresses her emotional bankruptcy thus:

The whole thing, she decided, was like a nightmarish wedding, with Lilian the unhappy bride, Leonard the eternally jittering bridegroom, and none of the guests wanting to be there or quite knowing what to do.

Even the coroner, Mr Samson, looked a little like vicar-like, in a chinless, wet-lipped sort of way (427).

Sarah Waters is a postmodern novelist who juxtaposes the past and the present to achieve the effects of historiographic metafiction. She wrote novels employing the techniques of Postmodernism and the theories of historiographic metafiction. Waters skilfully integrates historical documents, letters, and ephemera into the narrative, blurring the boundaries between fiction and historical record. The novels are set from the Victorian era to post-World War I and II, and the characters are the victims of the forces of chaos and destruction. Their dreams are shattered as the future is bleak for them. In their state of loneliness, they attempt to develop sexual lesbian relationships to break from the traditional morality of the Victorian Age. In their attempt to escape guilt and trauma, the characters indulge in sexual adventures. Sarah Waters uses the imagery of darkness and old dilapidating buildings to depict the psychological anguish of her characters. Her novels contain elements of gothic romance, intertextuality, fragmentation, pastiche, Identity Crisis, metafiction and black humour in the Historiographic metafiction tradition. Sarah Waters re-visits history in her novels by meticulously reconstructing past eras, often focusing on marginalized voices and subverting traditional narratives. She gives voice to those who have been historically marginalized, challenging the dominant narratives of the past. Waters is known for her complex narratives and use of unreliable narrators. This technique allows her to revisit history in a way that questions the reliability of historical records and the subjectivity of memory. Her novels often contain unexpected plot twists that challenge the reader's assumptions and offer new perspectives on the past.

## Chapter: Three

### Re-Interpreting ‘Reality’

Sarah Waters was confronted with the problem of exploring reality in the contemporary postmodern world. The early Victorians believed there was harmony in the universe and that nature gave the people moral and spiritual strength. The Romantics had mystical and transcendental visions of life and reality, but in the late Victorian period, the wave of nihilism and pessimism gripped the psyche of the people. Sarah Waters followed the philosophical theories of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), who wrote *The World as Will and Representation* (1844), which characterises the phenomenal world as the product of blind noumenal will. Schopenhauer explored the transcendental idealism of Immanuel Kant and developed his theory of metaphysical reality. The views of Schopenhauer and Fredrick Nietzsche, who wrote *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1833) and propounded the theory of nihilism, deeply inspired Sarah Waters. In the post-Victorian world, Sarah Waters was well aware of postmodernism and its new radical characteristics. John Barth, the American novelist, revolted against the traditional view of reality and wrote an essay, *The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodern Fiction* (2005), propagating the ideas of pastiche, intertextuality, magic realism and fragmentation.

In the 1960s Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard reacted against the tenets of modernism and published books to disseminate new concepts of reality. Lyotard (1979) wrote *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* and Jean Baudrillard published his seminal work *From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond* (1989). According to Baudrillard, the Postmodern individual experiences a state known as “the desert of the real” (*Simulacra 1*). In this state, the concept of absolute reality becomes obsolete, as the proliferation of simulacra overwhelms and erases the boundaries between reality and fiction. This phenomenon gives rise to what he terms ‘hyperreality,’ where the distinction between reality and its representations becomes increasingly blurred. As a consequence, the notion of an objective truth

diminishes, and people are immersed in a world where simulations and copies dominate, leading to a loss of a fixed reality.

Robert Alter, James Sloan Allen, Gerald Graff, and Ihab Hassan have all expressed their belief in ‘Metafiction,’ a literary technique that blurs the lines between fiction and reality. This technique has given rise to what is known as hyper-reality, where the boundaries between the real world and the fictional world become increasingly unclear. In novels such as Paul Auster’s *Moon Palace* (1989) and John Fowles’s *The Magus: A Revised Version* (1977), readers encounter convincing examples of postmodern fiction that delve into hyperreality. In these works, the concept of reality becomes fragmented, leading to a complex and blurred understanding of history and its significance. The absence of a fixed reality in these novels challenges traditional notions of historicity, leaving readers questioning the authenticity and reliability of the events and characters portrayed. The authors use metafictional techniques to create narratives that immerse readers in a world where the boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred, contributing to a sense of hyper-reality that is both thought-provoking and captivating. Through their exploration of fragmented historicity, these postmodern works embrace the complexities of human existence and offer compelling reflections on the nature of reality in a hyper-realistic literary landscape.

The characters of Sarah Waters live in a world of rootlessness where nothing is certain and permanent. Her heroines are trapped in a world of chaos and disintegration, and they use their sexuality to escape from the disorderly, chaotic reality. In such a universe devoid of divergence, every postmodern individual ultimately becomes indistinguishable from the millions of others, yet they feel isolated and alone. The mundane condition of the world creates a world of hyperreality where everything seems intriguing, bringing depression and psychological anguish to the characters. Zygmunt Bauman (1992) states that postmodernity can be seen as a “*re-enchantment* of artifice in a world that modernity tried hard to *dis-enchant*” (Bauman x). In this regard, Sarah Waters is confronted with post-Victorian questions, challenges and redefines the limits of reality and its perception in her novels. Each of her women is a disillusioned individual struggling to escape society’s absurdity and alienation. Gaston Bachelard (1994) claims that “both room and house are psychological diagrams that guide writers

and poets in their analysis of intimacy” (38). Sarah Waters noted that it is challenging to comprehend the nature of reality as it is difficult to differentiate between what is real and what is not. She created fiction blending real and unreal and even fantastic to create metafiction.

Jean Baudrillard (1994) states that the concept of ‘hyperreality’ emerges in which reality and representation continually blend. According to Baudrillard, hyperreality is a generation of “models of a real without origin or reality” (*Simulacra 1*), and; therefore, everything in this universe comes to exist only through its representation which can be endlessly multiplied. As a result of the proliferation of these models, the contemporary world is “the desert of the real itself” (*Simulacra 1*). Baudrillard (2000) firmly believes that in the Greek world, man could understand the nature of reality, and no wonder Socrates and Aristotle had a clear perception of reality and truth. However, in the post-Victorian society, there is existence of reality as he says:

Let us be clear: if the Real is disappearing, it is not because of a lack of it—on the contrary, there is too much of it. It is the excess of reality that ends reality, just as the excess of information puts an end to information or the excess of communication puts an end to communication (Baudrillard 65).

Ihab Hasan and Frederic Jameson explored the nature of reality depicted by the post-Victorian novelists. These novelists utilized various narrative techniques, such as metafiction, stream-of-consciousness, and fragmented storytelling, to convey multiple perspectives on reality. These techniques allowed them to blur the boundaries between reality and imagination, inviting readers to question the stability and coherence of the world they inhabited. Through their scholarly work, Hassan and Jameson shed light on the complex relationship between literature and reality, highlighting how post-Victorian novelists confronted and reshaped the very notion of what is real and what is perceived. Their analysis deepens our understanding of the ever-evolving nature of literature and its profound impact on our perception of reality. Sarah Waters’ depiction of hyper-reality in her works goes beyond the boundaries of traditional realism, offering readers a unique and engaging experience. By weaving together elements of fantasy and Gothic themes, she blurs the line between the ordinary and the extraordinary, creating an atmospheric and immersive world for her characters and readers.



In the postmodern era, the concept of reality has transformed, and Waters embraces this shift by exploring alternative narratives and questioning the traditional notions of truth. Her novels are concerned to the complexities of human experiences, emotions, and relationships, offering a rich tapestry of different perspectives and realities. The use of literary devices such as fantasy, romance, horror, wonder, and supernaturalism enhance the depth and richness of her storytelling. These elements allow Waters to deal with the inner struggles of her heroines, providing insight into their fears, desires, and aspirations. Through these literary devices, Waters not only captures the external events but also goes through her characters' internal emotional landscapes. Waters creates narratives that challenge readers to reflect on the multifaceted nature of reality and the power of imagination. Her novels go beyond simple escapism, encouraging readers to question the boundaries between truth and fiction and inviting them to consider human existence's diverse and complex layers.

Sarah Waters's adept use of hyper-reality, fantasy, and Gothic themes elevates her storytelling to a level that captivates and resonates with readers. She explores of the struggles and triumphs of her heroines, and provides a powerful and thought-provoking examination of the human condition in the postmodern world. Sarah Waters rejected the old conventions and techniques of the early Victorians and evolved and employed new stylistic methods to depict the complexities of her age. Bran Nicol (2009) observes that "the novel is not meant to inform us about reality but to constitute reality – in other words, to create an aesthetic world which exists separately from the real world and does not necessarily correspond to it" (Nicol 21).

Sarah Waters's novels *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999), and *Fingersmith* (2002) depict the nature of hyper-reality. Waters's representations of female sexuality are articulated through her new vision of reality. Waters employs the images of the rooms, houses and institutions to depict the alienation of her characters. Each novel deals with a new space; the music hall in *Tipping the Velvet*, the women's prison in *Affinity* and the private Madhouse in *Fingersmith*. Each text reveals the severe concern of Sarah Waters in depicting the wounded psyche of the post-Victorian female characters. The characters of Waters move between these spaces and eventually beyond them in their attempts to find ways to express their lesbian sexuality.

Sarah Waters claimed in an interview with Debbie Taylor (2004), claiming: “Having gone through academia, I do think that a good book should have an agenda ... something that gives it a point” (Waters 4). Sarah Waters completed a PhD thesis on gay and lesbian writing. Her first novel, *Tipping the Velvet*, is focused on the complex issues regarding homosexual identities as she states: “Lesbianism is at the top of the agenda for my books because it’s at the top of the agenda for my life” (Waters 1). The plot articulates hyper-reality through the images of brothels and music halls. The lust for money and the hunt for the glamorous life of the contemporary youth is reflected through their journey to the brothel houses and Madhouses. Astley’s journey from her native Kentish town to the capital betrays her views of freedom and self-development. Her experiences of the city are horrible as she explores an abyss of corruption: “I felt safer in the carriage ... in a city that was vaster and smokier and more alarming than I could have thought possible” (64). From her misadventures as a cross-dressing prostitute, she learns that there are no absolute distinctions between the glamorous places of the metropolis and the filthy streets where she gratifies her customers’ lusts. The glittering world of the music halls where she starts her career has much in common with the “gay world of prostitution” (203).

Sarah Waters centres her narratives around ‘other spaces’ Foucault (1984) labels institutions such as prisons or psychiatric hospitals- established to contain society’s nonconformists “heterotopias of deviation” (Foucault 25). In contrast to utopias, these heterotopias are blends of natural and unreal. Foucault (2019) further asserts that heterotopic institutions of deviance are spaces that supposedly contain and isolate people with abnormal desires in an attempt to spare society from “their infernal mischief” (Foucault 4). All her novels are concerned with the sexuality of her female characters. Susan Alice Fischer and Stefania Ciocia discuss the lesbian identity of Nancy Astley, the heroine of *Tipping the Velvet*, as it is depicted against the backdrop of nineteenth-century London.

The novel *Tipping the Velvet* depicts a new vision of Sarah Waters of hyper-reality expressed through the technique of historiographic metafiction, Linda Hutcheon (1988) described it as writing in which “theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs ... is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past” (Hutcheon 5). Historiographic metafiction privileges

“decentred perspectives,” preferring the “ex-centric” or “marginal” (12). In the issue of *History Today*, Juliet Gardiner (2009) observes that Sarah Waters switched to historical fiction when she wrote her novel *Tipping the Velvet*, discarding all the traditional conventions to articulate her perception of reality. Her book is not about the king’s life and achievements, but she expresses her concern about the ordinary people of England. She has depicted common women’s hopes, dreams, and aspirations in her debut novel. Georg Lukacs, in his *The Historical Novel* (1965), observes thus:

What matters, therefore in the historical novel is not the retelling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events. What matters is that we should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality (Lukacs 42).

Hutcheon also remarked that many historians have created imaginative versions of the natural world using the approach of fiction. Therefore, the postmodernist must face the paradoxes of fictional/historical representation, specific/general, and the present/past. The only issue is that these historians choose which events will be accepted as historical facts. Hutcheon argues that our historical information is only transmitted semiotically because it is presented as signs inside pre-existing semiotically formed contexts. The earliest histories, which implicitly combine fact and myth, contain aspects of fiction. The term ‘story’ is a part of the word ‘history’. As realism gained ground, history came to stand for objective reality and the novel for subjective invention.

Sarah Waters evolved her stylistic techniques to articulate her new perception of reality as she ignored the significant events in her historical novel. Sarah Waters has focused on the:

People’s history, this history from below, that had admitted not only a new constituency of the previously unrecorded or unheard – women and the poor in particular – but also gave weight to the power of irrationality, to the role of accident and contingency (Gardiner 55-56).

Nancy Astley is the novel’s heroine, a small-town oyster seller who assumes multiple identities. Nancy becomes the Nan King, a music hall entertainer assuming and dancing as a male impersonator. She is a cross-dressing streetwalker, and at the end

of the novel, she emerges as the concubine of an influential widow. Her journey ends when she finally finds love and joins a society of lesbian social workers and activists. The landscape of *Tipping the Velvet* is primarily that of London's Roaring Nineties, and what the novel does, according to Louisa Yates (2009), is to reproduce "the cultural landscape even as it re-vises the sexuality of those who inhabit it" (189). The novel's female characters, including Nancy, are written into English history describing when female homosexual activities were considered vicious, taboo, and an outcome of medical abnormality "Various medical disciplines put forward different interpretations of female same-sex desires as diseases" (Beccalossi 8). The novels focus on same-sex desires and relationships, as Louisa Hadley (2010) states: "Waters's recuperation of the past is explicitly politically motivated" (Hadley 89). Waters observes that *Tipping the Velvet* is stuffed with a "cheer and a rising ripple of applause" (472). The plot blends historical reality and fantasy, demonstrating the themes of women's self-representation, sexuality and neurotic behaviour.

Sarah Waters narrates the various stages of the development of Nan both as a lover and a performer. These two aspects of her life are invariably intertwined, and her romantic connections always influence Nan's rendition. She cohabits with all her lovers freely; consequently, these women continually influence her narration and performances. Nancy's journey of life explores the hyper-reality of Waters. The novelist has demonstrated her perception of reality and her vision of socialistic reality following the postmodern currents of the age. The traditional structure of *Tipping the Velvet* establishes Nan as a typical Victorian realist narrator who recollects events from a certain point after their conclusion. She makes many observations, such as: "Later still I came to know it as the essence, not of pleasure, but of grief. That, however, is to get ahead of my story" (6). The novel's structure possesses what was "valued in Victorian novels: rounded characters, a dramatic plot, and a neat ending" (Hadley 141). Sarah Waters employs the technique of pastiche, which can serve to emphasise the neo-Victorian content of the text. Waters creative aspect of language is indeed remarkable. There is a meta-fictional quality to *Tipping the Velvet* and what it achieves, according to Waters herself: "is to be more playful with history, to "parade" history and to parade its status as historical fiction" (Mitchell 131). Interestingly, the word queer is repeated 43 times in the novel to emphasise the meta-fictional element of the novel. Jerome de

Groot (2013) observes that “The word queer is a word relating to sexual identity, dissidence, challenge, otherness. Waters’ use of the word seems a minor wink to the reader” (62).

Nan uses the word queer to articulate her desires thus: “I understood at last my wildness of the past seven days. I thought, how queer it is! - and yet how ordinary: I am in love with you” (33). It is revealed in a scene where Nan cross-dresses and poses as a homosexual male prostitute: “The man had looked like Walter; I had pleased him, in some queer way, for Kitty's sake; and the act had made me sicken” (200). Nancy’s first love, as well as the person who draws her into the sphere of performance, is a cross-dressing singer called Kitty Butler. In her work *Gender and Ventriloquism in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Fiction*, Helen Davies (2012) declares that “Waters’s representation of gender as performance can ... be understood as ‘talking back’ to Judith Butler’s work” (137). Nan is a very shrewd and decent girl; she begins her short career as a masher, and in her role, she creates a pseudonym for the stage persona as she does not want to embarrass her parents by involving their name with show business.

Astley assumes a new name highlighting the theatricality of Nan King, the drag king. Kitty claims “that Nan looks too real when she is wearing a man’s suit, which highlights the social danger of actually passing as male, even in theatrical spaces where cross-dressing is celebrated” (Koolen 380). Hence as a masher, Nan must be “clad not exactly as a boy but, rather confusingly, as the boy she would have been, had she been more of a girl” (Waters 120). Cheryl A. Wilson (2006), in his article “From the Drawing Room to the Stage: Performing Sexuality in Sarah Waters *Tipping the Velvet*,” observes that: “the working-class music hall performers, like their domestic counterparts, could not pose a direct threat to traditional masculine authority—the gender-crossing behaviours that were applauded on the stage were forbidden on the street” (294).

Sarah Waters demonstrates her perception of reality through the complex character of Nan. She struggles in a sophisticated environment to create her own identity. Her multiple roles and double consciousness demonstrate the hyperreality of Waters. The character Nan is keeping her new found sexuality hidden or closeted. Nan says: “I felt as though I was bound and fettered with iron bands, chained and muzzled and blinkered” (127). By this, it can be seen that her happiness is overshadowed by the concealment she has to enact constantly. After Nan undergoes severe trauma when

Kitty leaves her for their manager Walter because Nan is “too much like a boy” (171), Astley seeks refuge in a masculine identity. She feels insecure and depressed, and as she says: “There was a darkness, a heaviness, a stillness at the very centre of me ... I crossed my arms over my ribs and embraced my dark and thickened heart like a lover” (190). When she first ventures into the streets of London by herself after the separation from Kitty, Nancy cannot tolerate the harassment she receives from men. However, she somehow condones it by saying, “Such a girl, I suppose, is a kind of invitation to sport and dalliances” (191) due to her distraught manner. It seems that “to walk as a boy, as a handsome boy in a well-sewn suit, whom the people stared after only to envy, never to mock” (195), is for Nan for a limited period. Her confused notions of gender, sexuality and performance demonstrate Postmodern hyper-reality. Being dressed as a young boy, she receives invitations to gratify men in exchange for money sexually. She confesses:

I never felt my own lusts rise, raising theirs. I didn't even need the coins they gave me. 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. My one regret was that, though I was daily giving such marvellous performances, they had no audience ... a bold a knowing eye that saw how well I played my part, how gulled and humbled was my foolish, trustful partner (206).

Nan's next lover is Diana, who is a wealthy and influential widow and the leading member of an elite Sapphic society. Diana is an abusive and domineering person who objectifies Nan and treats her as her cross-dressing puppet. She is called by Diana's circle: “shows that performing masculinity does not necessarily free women from gender constraints and the valuing of female bodies over minds” (Koolen 386). Nan goes on to change identities because the novelist believes that truth and reality are uncertain things in the modern world. In her next “performance”, Nancy takes up her old surname, Astley and Nan receives “a sexual thrill from the double taboo of expressing same-sex desire while wearing male clothing” (Koolen 382). She projects her new self without a sense of shame and guilt. In her life story, there is no need for moral preoccupations, despite the “confessional tone of an autobiographical narrative ... [with a] narrative voice at a point in the future [that] enables [the narrator] to pass

judgment on his former actions and so reassures the reader” (Hadley 40). *Tipping the Velvet* thus transforms the traditional coming-of-age and presents the hyperreality of Sarah Waters.

In *Affinity* (1999), Sarah Waters explores her perception of reality, reflecting on the significant cultural changes occurring during her time, including the Industrial Revolution. This era saw a notable shift with the mass migration of rural populations to shift in urban areas in pursuit of factory employment, shaping the social and economic landscape of cities and towns. The rapid urbanisation brought about the evils such as prostitution, criminal activities, fraud and thefts. Her traditional view of reality changed when she wrote novels. The novel describes the realities of imprisonment, the reformation system imposed on the prisoners and the staff-inmate relations. The plot of the novel *Affinity* consists of entries in a diary by two young women, Margaret Prior, a spinster, and Selina Dawes, a psychic wreck. Both women are in prison for assault and fraud.

Sarah Waters employed the scenes of madhouse, underworld prostitution, and lesbian sexuality to depict the true nature of hyper-reality. She took inspiration from writers like Charles Dickens or Wilkie Collins. The conspicuous feature of the novels of Sarah Waters is the rich intertextuality and historicity. She shares an intense curiosity for the world of her ancestors, which she brings back to life in her narratives. In her passion for exploring truth and reality, Waters investigates the germinal phase of social, political and sexual discourses. There is a strange blending of fact and fiction, past and present, to characterise her theory of reality in her works.

The plot is packed with scenes of fantasy and reality, reconstruction of the past and awareness of her historical facts. The plot is set in Millbank prison, which opened in 1816 and existed till 1890. It was situated near the Thames. The prison accommodated 1120 women prisoners held in separate wards. At the novel’s core are two contrasting worlds: the middle-class respectability of Margaret and the criminal world inhabited by Selina Dawes. Margaret is under acute stress since her father’s death grieves her. Her lover abandoned her, and the stifling environment of her home oppressed her. She becomes a Lady Visitor of Millbank prisoner for freedom and peace of mind. Margaret is searching for liberty and happiness because she feels that the prison environment is better than the stifling environment of the outside world. She

comes in contact with the convict Selina Dawes who revives her desire to move to Italy and enjoy lesbian pleasures far away from the conventional society of London. Sarah Waters has demonstrated the fraudulent form of truth and reality prevalent in urban London. Selina uses many tricks to cheat and deceive Margaret, who lives in a world of dreams and fantasy. She makes her best effort to arrange for her escape and, once freed, has no scruples about crushing her hopes and shattering her dreams. Margaret willingly chooses self-confinement while the convicts endure forced imprisonment. She makes multiple efforts to detach herself from the oppressive society. She fails to kill herself and assumes a mourning attitude, taking refuge in her memories and dreams.

Millbank symbolises a new concept of hyper-reality of Sarah Waters. It is deceptive and threatening where she looks for a genuine relationship, and Italy symbolises the deceptive journey leading to the suicide of Margaret. In her first encounter, Margaret is struck by the calm and natural pose of Selina and interprets it as a sign of spiritual activity:

I was sure that I had seen her likeness, in a saint or an angel in a painting of Crivelli's I studied her for, perhaps, a minute; and all that time she kept her eyes quite closed, her head perfectly still. There seemed something rather devotional about her pose, the stillness, so that I thought at last, she is praying! and made to draw my eyes away in sudden shame (18).

Margaret is trapped in the web of false truth and deceptive appearances. Selina does not prove to be a beacon of truth, but she appears to her a riddle until her final catastrophe. Selina assumes melancholy quietness and successfully entraps Margaret. Margaret fails to fully grasp Selina's true thoughts and intentions, as Selina's mental activities and plans remain elusive and deceiving to her. Consequently, Margaret is unaware of Selina's true motives. However, unbeknownst to Margaret, Selina has her hidden agenda, and her actions lead to unforeseen consequences and tragic events. The complexity of their relationship and the characters' secretive plans add intrigue and suspense to the narrative. She hatches a tragic plot to flee from jail and reunite with her lover Ruth Vigers. Selina is associated with the underworld of criminality. Sarah Waters has depicted all unreality and deceptive appearances; she swindles and has no moral scruples. Her feigned psychic powers and hiding vicious intentions are essential



aspects of the corrupt nature of urban truth and reality. The climactic point of her corruption is reached by discovering her relationship with Ruth Vigers. The negative influence of her secret lover, with whom she is in the league to cheat and rob Margaret, is evident in the journal entry for which Selina is sued and jailed:

She is saying “Why are you writing?” I tell her I am writing for my Guardian’s eyes, as I do everything. “Him” she says, “She is laughing, her dark brows coming together over her eyes & her shoulders shaking. Mrs Brink must not hear us” (352).

Selina is a shrewd and crooked woman. She perceives that Margaret is moving on from stereotypical social conventions and not “bred to do more of the same – that is [women’s] function” (Waters 209). Dawes instead belonged among the “ladies [that] throw the system out, make it stagger” (Waters 209). Margaret seemed to enjoy more the company of the convicts than of her people because she internally believed that she belonged among them, having tried to commit suicide, an act that was punishable by imprisonment. She felt ashamed and guilty that, being herself a lady, she was saved, while other similarly distressed women were imprisoned: “I took a draught of morphia, meaning to end my life” Margaret once confessed to her mother’s visitors,

And should have died, if they had not found me. It was careless of me to be found; I suppose. But it was nothing to me – do you see? – if they saved me and knew. Don't you think that queer? That a common coarse-featured woman might drink morphia and be sent to gaol for it, while I am saved and sent to visit her – and all because I am a lady? (Waters 255-6).

Her internal guilt was why she decided to become a Lady Visitor and help ease the women’s suffering. Nevertheless, her initial experience of the prison was horrible as she confesses:

It was horrible, to have to sit and look on while the scissor-blade rasped, and the pale girl wept and shuddered. It was horrible – and yet, I could not turn my gaze. I could only watch along with the prisoner fascinated and ashamed, until at last the matron lifted her fist, and the severed hair hung until at last the matron lifted her first, and the severed hair hung

limp; and when a strand or two of it sprang the girl's damp face, she twitched, and so did I (78).

Margaret met the matrons of the prison and found them depressed and miserable. Margaret was surprised that “Mrs Jelf ... so grey and careworn, I should never have guessed her to have had a life, so recently, beyond the prison walls” (161). She also could not believe that “a lady like Mrs Jelf should ever have come to Millbank, at all. She never saw a matron suited less to Millbank duties, than her!” (161). However, Margaret was happy that the poor women had someone to take care of them, for “[Mrs Jelf] had a hundred women on her wards, all helpless as infants, all looking to her for care and guidance; and [Margaret] thought she must be a kind mother to them all” (162). Margaret being the Lady Visitor of Millbank prison, was to reform women prisoners. As Mr Shillitoe explained: “Let them see the miserable contrast between her speech, her manner, and their poor ways, and they will grow meek, they will grow softened and subdued” (12).

Margaret’s aim as the Lady Visitor was to befriend some of the women and ideally continue in these friendships after the women’s release. A Lady Visitor “had helped [the prisoners] at last to places suited to their station, had led them to new lives, away from their shame, away from their old influences, away from England itself sometimes, to marriage, in the Colonies” (214). Visits of a Lady Visitor were seen as significantly influential, because “if a lady takes an interest in [the prisoners] then it will encourage them, of course, to take an interest in themselves” (213). Waters describes Margaret’s miserable and lonely condition when she arrives at Millbank prison. She is on the verge of breaking out, and soon she identifies with the women prisoners who are fallen women living in the tense environment:

It was like having sand cast in one’s face, and being forbidden to blink. It was like an itch, an ache – ‘you must cry out or die! But when you do cry out, you know yourself a – a beast! Miss Haxby comes, the chaplain comes, *you come* – we cannot be beasts then, we must be women. I wish you wouldn’t come at all’ (184).

Margaret is shocked to observe the stifling and terrifying environment of Millbank prison. She observed that women prisoners were put into the dark cell. It was

a horrible place, a dark dungeon where life was horrible and everything looked terrifying:

Beyond this point the walls were barely wider than our skirts. There were no gas-jets, only a single lighted candle in a sconce, which Miss Haxby seized and held before us as we walked, her hand about it to shield its leaping flame from some salt, subterranean breeze. I looked about me. I had not known there was a place like this, at Millbank. I had not known there was a place like this in all the world, and for a second, I felt a rush of terror. I thought, they mean to murder me! They mean to take the candle and leave me here, to find my own, blind, groping way to light, or madness! (180-1).

Margaret experienced the terror when Mary Ann Cook was put into the darkness once: “It was the fear fullest place I ever was in. Some girls only laugh at the blackness – but not me, ma’am. Not me” (183). Miss Manning explained to Margaret, “It was the loneliness ... that made them do it. She herself had seen hard women there turn quite love-sick, because they had taken a fancy to some girl they had seen, and the girl had turned the shoulder on them, or had a pal already that she liked better” (67). However, Margaret was somewhat appalled by the idea of women forming such relationships, which was concerning her strong bond with Selina Dawes quite surprising: “I have heard them talk of ‘pals’ before, and have used the word myself, but it disturbed me to find that the term had *that* particular meaning and I hadn’t known it” (67).

Sarah Waters employs the techniques of supernaturalism to create an atmosphere of mystery and haunting. The novel’s protagonist, Margaret, is haunted by the lifelike “waxen hands of Peter Quick,” (132) adding an eerie and unsettling element to the story. As Margaret enters the reading rooms of the British National Association of Spiritualists, she is confronted with a display of “plaster casts, and waxen moulds, of faces and fingers, feet and arms” of spirits. However, her attention is particularly drawn to one grotesque object - a mould of a hand, the hand of a man. Waters vividly describes this hand as more than just a wax representation but an unsettling and disturbing manifestation – “five bloated fingers and a swollen, vein-ridged wrist” (129-130). It is made of wax, symbolising the spirit of Selina, and Peter Quick is presented as the ghost and a monster.

Margaret imagines thus: “I imagined I might turn and see the hand jerk, might see it pressed to the glass of the cabinet with one gross finger crooked and beckoning to me!” (154). Margaret realises that the wax mould is “a kind of glove” (239). The hollow interior of Peter Quick’s waxen glove exhibits the ghostly figure as she notes: “I saw then how the wax ended, neatly, at the bone of the wrist. I saw how absolutely hollow it was. Inside it marked out very clearly upon the yellowing surface of the wax, are the creases and whorls of a palm, the dents of knuckles” (229). These vivid and haunting descriptions of the waxen hands and moulds add to the sense of supernaturalism in the novel, creating an atmosphere of mystery and foreboding. The portrayal of lifelike representations of spirits and the grotesque hand mould heightens the ambiguity between reality and the spiritual realm, drawing readers into a world where the boundaries between the natural and the supernatural are blurred.

Sarah Waters evokes a sense of unease and intrigue, engaging readers in Margaret’s haunting experiences and inviting them to question the nature of reality and the mysterious forces at play in the narrative. The techniques of supernaturalism contribute to the atmospheric and immersive quality of *Affinity*, making it a compelling exploration of the complexities of the human psyche and the inexplicable realms of the unknown. Waters introduces the theme of haunting and the presence of ghosts to both entertain and illustrate the nature of hyper-reality. The novel dives into the psychological complexities of its characters, particularly Margaret, who becomes entangled in a haunting and mysterious relationship with the spiritual world. It particularly adds an eerie and suspenseful element to the narrative, capturing readers’ attention and keeping them engaged in the unfolding story. As Margaret enters the world of the British National Association of Spiritualists, she becomes fascinated by the waxen moulds and representations of spirits, creating an atmosphere of mystery and intrigue.

By introducing the theme of haunting and incorporating ghostly figures, Sarah Waters creates a multi-layered narrative that entertains readers while also prompting them to contemplate the nature of reality and the supernatural. The exploration of hyper-reality in *Affinity* invites readers to question the boundaries between the tangible and the intangible, leaving them to ponder the complexities of human perception and the unexplained mysteries of the spiritual world. Waters has deconstructed the

traditional concept of reality installed by existing philosophical and political systems. She has employed Gothic fiction elements to intensify her haunting themes. Avery F. Gordon (1997) remarks, “Haunting is a constituent element of modern social life. It is neither pre-modern superstition nor individual psychosis; it is a generalisable social phenomenon of great import” (7). Gordon claims that “the ghost is just the sign or the empirical evidence ... that tells you a haunting is taking place; the ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life” (8).

The novel *Affinity* demonstrates a postmodern view of the hyper-reality of Sarah Waters as the novel is loaded with the elements of Gothic romance, magic realism, truth and fantasy. Susan Alice Fischer (2018) observes thus: “While Margaret has been given more voice and narrative space, the novel ending with Selina's subversive liberation leaves another ‘sister’ in the darkness of death and opens the reader’s eyes to a desperate resistance to a system rooted in class hierarchy” (28). In *Affinity*, Sarah Waters explores the theme of hyper-reality by blurring the boundaries between the real and the imagined. The novel deals with the psychological and emotional complexities of its characters, especially Margaret Prior, who becomes entangled in a haunting and mysterious relationship with Selina Dawes, a prisoner she befriends.

The hyper-realistic elements in the novel are evident in Margaret’s interactions with Selina and her involvement with the spiritual world. As a visitor to Millbank Prison, Margaret becomes increasingly fascinated with Selina’s spiritual abilities and claims of being haunted. This fascination leads Margaret to question the boundaries between reality and the supernatural. In the narrative, Waters employs intricate storytelling techniques to create a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty. The characters’ perceptions of reality are constantly challenged, leading readers to question the authenticity of events and the reliability of the narrators.

The hyper-reality in *Affinity* contributes to the novel’s atmospheric and suspenseful tone, as readers are drawn into a world where the line between fact and fiction is blurred. The story’s exploration of spiritualism and its impact on the characters’ lives heightens the sense of mystery and intrigue, inviting readers to contemplate the complexities of human perception and the mysteries of the unknown. In *Affinity*, Sarah Waters masterfully weaves hyper-realistic elements into the narrative,

creating a thought-provoking exploration of the human psyche and the blurred boundaries between reality and imagination. The novel's immersive storytelling and psychological depth make it compelling and haunting, leaving a lasting impression on readers long after the final page.

Sarah Waters's novel *Fingersmith* (2002) demonstrates the view of the reality of the novelist. The novel is a fine example of 'Historiographic Metafiction'. Linda Hutcheon (1988) points out that historiographic metafiction works "within the conventions of history and fiction, but tries to challenge and subvert them, that the past once existed, but that our historical knowledge of it is semiotically transmitted" (Hutcheon 122). Sarah Waters employs the literary techniques of parody, critical irony, and playfulness to explore "the truth". She believes the "truth does not exist; there are only versions of the truth, truths" (Hutcheon 3-13). The vision of Sarah Waters is comprehensive in her attempt to explore the nature of hyper-reality as she employs the elements of the sensational novel *Fingersmith*. The plot of *Fingersmith* contains specific characteristics, such as a mysterious setting with "isolated and possibly haunted castles, dungeons, or sublime landscapes" (Pykett 195). Her novel *Fingersmith* is loaded with visions, dreams, hallucinations, and metamorphoses to create an atmosphere of the monstrous and supernatural. Its plot involves "violence, tyranny, imprisonment, and persecution (especially of women)" (Pykett 195).

Waters's third novel *Fingersmith* is the story of a young woman Susan Trinder, an orphan raised by thieves. Sue Trinder is a typical heroine of Gothic and Sensational Novels. She is young and mysterious as the novelist describes her as "poor and wily and prepared to do a very dark deed" (5). Her origin is described in the novel's opening sentences; She does not know when or to whom she was born. Mrs Sucksby, the baby farmer, raised her, and Mr Ibbs, the locksmith, acts as her stepfather. She lives in the company of petty thieves. She is respected by her neighbours and regarded as brave, reckless and fearless. She lives in Sucksby's house on Lant Street. Her kitchen is full of all the stolen goods. Gentleman observes thus about the people of Lant Street:

I think the people who came to Lant Street thought me slow – Slow I mean, as opposed to fast. Perhaps I was, by Borough standards. But it seemed to me that I was sharp enough. You could not have grown up in such a house, that had such businesses in it, without having a pretty good

idea of what was what – of what could go into what; and what could come out (Waters 14).

Richard Rivers, known as Gentleman, wants Sue to join him in swindling a wealthy heiress and locking her away in a Madhouse. Sue is hesitant at first but later agrees to be a maid acting against her conscience, wondering “Ain’t it a very mean trick, and shabby?” (*Fingersmith* 47). She finds Maud Lilly to be an ignorant, unworldly girl who will be easily persuaded into marrying Richard Rivers. Sue discovers that Maud is “only pretty lonely, and pretty bookish and bored – but who wouldn’t be, in a house like that?” (*Fingersmith* 78). The novelist has depicted the atmosphere of loneliness and dreariness. The protagonist, Sue Trinder, reflects on her conflicted emotions and actions in her relationship with Maud Lilly. Sue is part of a scheme orchestrated by Gentleman to deceive Maud and gain control of her inheritance. Initially, Sue plans to follow Gentleman’s instructions and take advantage of Maud’s vulnerability. Once he has committed her to send Maud to a Madhouse. However, as Sue spends more time with Maud and witnesses her innocence and goodness, her emotions change regarding Maud.

Sue is concerned regarding the internal struggle between her loyalty to Gentleman’s plan and her growing compassion for Maud. Sue becomes protective of Maud and unable to carry out her original malicious intentions. She feels torn between the role she is supposed to play in the deception and her genuine feelings of kindness towards Maud. The complexity of Sue’s emotions is depicted through the contrast between her thoughts and actions. Although she may have initially intended to harm Maud, she finds it difficult to go through with her cruel plans when faced with Maud’s innocence and vulnerability. Instead, she chooses to be kind to Maud and distract herself from dwelling on the impending deceit and betrayal. This highlights the intricacies of human emotions and the troubles faced by Sue and Maud. It serves as a pivotal moment in Sue’s character development, showcasing her capacity for empathy and raising questions about the power of compassion and kindness in the face of deceit and manipulation.

Sarah Waters has depicted the sexual compulsions of Sue and Maud entrapped by Gentleman. Sue is concerned about the fate of Maud, but she feels helpless. When

Gentleman arrives and seems to seduce Maud, Sue realises that Maud does not care for him at all;

Only now I saw, she was not stroking the flesh so much as rubbing at it. She was not nursing the kiss. She felt his mouth like a burn, like an itch, like a splinter, and was trying to rub the memory of it away. she didn't love him at all. She was afraid of him (Waters 125).

Sue encourages Maud to rebel against Gentleman's expectations;

'What can I do?' She shivered. 'He wants me. He has asked me. He means to make me His''

'You might – say no' She blinked, as if she could not believe I had said it. I could not believe it, either.

'Say no to him?' she said slowly. 'Say no?' Then her look changed.

'And watch him leave, from my window? . . . -Oh, Sue, don't you think I should wonder, over the life I might have had? Do you suppose another man will come visiting, that will want me half as much as he? What choice have I? (Waters 126).

Sue and Maud are confined by their sex; both are under psychological compulsion and they are bound to comply with male expectations. Sue makes efforts to persuade Maud to marry Gentleman. Maud is fed up with her uncle's confinement and her mother's hereditary madness. Sue is also depressed because of her class confinements and abject poverty. She has to be an accomplice of Gentleman who is a thief and an imposter:

Now I thought suddenly, who did he think he was? He might pretend to be a lord; he was only a con-man. He had a snide ring on his finger, and all his coins were bad ones. I knew more than he did about Maud's secrets. I slept beside her in her own bed. I had made her love me like a sister; he had made her afraid. I could turn her heart against him if I wanted to, like that! It was enough that he was going to marry her at last. It was enough that he could kiss her, whenever he liked. I wouldn't leave her now to be tugged about and made nervous. I thought, 'Damn you, I'll get my three thousand just the same!' (Waters 129).



Sue emerges as a cogwheel in the plan of Gentleman; she is alone with him. He repeatedly reminds her that she is just a girl and a servant while he is a gentleman. She decides to do nothing and act as if she cannot prevent what will happen: “and I hated it, but turned away. I thought, it can’t be helped. I thought, It’s their business” (Waters 136). Soon she realises that she is in love with Maud as she confesses:

The more I tried to give up thinking of her, the more I said to myself, ‘She’s nothing to you’, the harder I tried to pluck the idea of her out of my heart, the more she stayed there. All day I sat or walked with her, so full of the fate I was bringing her to I could hardly touch her or meet her gaze; and all night I lay with my back turned to her, the blanket over my ears to keep out her sighs... It’s like you love her, I thought” (Waters 136)

Sarah Waters was greatly impacted by the blood and sex theory of D.H. Lawrence in the man-and-woman relationship depicted in his novels. Waters believes the lesbian relationship is a reality as she describes this as revolutionary and unconventional. Sue is ashamed of her feelings; she feels nervous and afraid, wondering what her friends would think of her back home. Sarah Waters dramatises love love-making scene before the wedding of Maud. The darkness of the room conceals their actions, but the following day, Sue is confronted with the truth: “I remembered what I had done, and thought, My God” (Waters 142) and “I went to my room. I began to feel ill. Perhaps I had been drunk . . . Perhaps I had a fever” (Waters 143). Her love for Maud weakens her determination to go through with Gentleman’s plan:

And I think, that if I had drawn her to me then, she’d have kissed me. If I had said, I love you, she would have said it back; and everything would have changed. I might have saved her. I might have found a way – I don’t know what – to keep her from her fate. We might have cheated Gentleman. I might have run with her, to Lant Street (Waters 144).

Sue feels confused as her fear and shame keep her from performing such ugly actions. She feels guilty about promoting the wedding plan of a Gentleman. She is confronted with the truth of life, and she appears bewildered as she lacks the moral strength to express her decision. She confesses thus:

I felt that thread that had come between us, tugging, tugging at my heart – so hard, it hurt me. A hundred times I almost rose, almost went in to her; a hundred times I thought, Go to her! Why are you waiting? Go back to her side! But every time, I thought of what would happen if I did. I knew that I couldn't lie beside her, without wanting to touch her. I couldn't have felt her breath come upon my mouth, without wanting to kiss her. And I couldn't have kissed her, without wanting to save her (Waters 123).

The climax comes at the Madhouse, where the swindle becomes clear to Sue. She confronts reality for the first time as the feelings of fear and guilt grip her: "I was not thinking, now, of Gentleman and Maud. I was thinking of myself. I was growing horribly afraid . . . I had an idea that, once they got me into a room, they would kill me" (*Fingersmith* 397). At the Madhouse, Sue feels psychologically disturbed, and for the first time, she starts doubting her sanity: "I suppose I really seemed mad, then; but it was only through the awfulness of having said nothing but the truth, and being thought to be deluded" (*Fingersmith* 416). She does not even recognise her reflection in a window:

I looked, as the lady had said, like a lunatic. My hair was still sewn to my head, but had grown or worked loose from its stitches, and stood out in tufts. My face was white but marked, here and there, with spots and scratches and fading bruises . . . The tartan gown hung on me like a laundry bag. From beneath its collar there showed the dirty white tips of the fingers of Maud's old glove, that I still wore next to my heart. You could just make out, on the kidskin, the marks of my teeth (Waters 133).

Sue is trapped in an ugly and monstrous situation, but the unexpected arrival of Charles, the knife boy from Briar, arrives at the Madhouse and helps her to escape to London together. Sue feels afraid when she sees the Gentleman and Maud in Lant Street:

I saw him and quivered right through. But my feelings were queer. 'The devil!' I said. I should like to have killed him and struck his face. But the sight of him had also made me afraid – more afraid than I ought to

have been – as afraid as if I were still at Dr Christie’s and might at any moment be taken, shaken, bound and plunged in water (Waters 472).

Sarah Waters employs the Gothic novels’ wonder and surprise elements in dramatising the ugly situation in which Sue and Maud are involved. Sue cries in despair, expressing her helplessness: “Oh! She has taken everything and made it hers, in spite. She has made Mrs Sucksby love her, as she made ‘Oh! I’ll kill her, tonight!’ I ran in a kind of fever, back to the shutter to look at the face of the house, I said, ‘Now, might I climb to the window? I could force the bolt, creep in, and stab her as she lies sleeping? Where is that knife?’ (*Fingersmith* 476). However, she keeps calm and plans to reach Mrs Sucksby and explain the truth about the swindle to her. Unfortunately, the plan fails, and Sue confronts the conspirers in Lant Street’s kitchen. When she sees Maud there, she is angry and strangely confronted with their – supposedly gone - by – love;

‘If you hated him, why did you do it?’

‘There was no other way’ she said. ‘You saw my life. I needed you, to be me’

‘So, you might come here, and be me!’ She did not answer. I said, ‘We might have cheated him. If you had told me. We might have –’

‘What?’

‘Anything. Something. I don’t know what...’ (Waters 123).

The death of Gentleman and the ensuing imprisonment of Mrs Sucksby results in the miseries of Sue, who feels lost and forlorn. People in the Borough despise her, but the loss of Mrs Sucksby gives her psychological anguish. Her return to the empty house in Lant Street has made her melancholic:

And I did not say how, as I swept and scrubbed the kitchen, I chanced on a thousand little reminders of my old life – dog-hairs, and chips of broken cups, bad farthings, playing cards, the cuts on the door-frame made by Mr Ibbs’s knife to mark my height as I grew up; nor how I covered my face and wept, at everyone (Waters 514).

At Mrs Sucksby’s trial, Sue sees Maud again at the trial of Mrs Sucksby after the gruesome murder of Gentleman. She is visibly upset and appears insane: “I knew she never came to Lant Street . . . for, of course, I would have throttled her if she had” (Waters 515). The unexpected reunion revives all the old memories as she comments:

“It was Maud. I saw her, not expecting to see her: and I’ll tell you this, my heart flew open; then I remembered everything, and my heart flew shut” (518). The last meeting is tragic and heartrending as she has to witness the hanging of Mrs Sucksby. Sue is distraught to know for the first time the mystery of her birth and the role played by Mrs Sucksby in her upbringing. The truth about her birth and ancestry gives her a psychological jolt.

I began to shake. I began to shake as a rusted lock must shake, when the tumblers lift against their groaning springs, and the bolt is forced loose and flies. My mother – ‘I said. I could not finish. It was too much to say – too much, even to know! My mother, Maud’s mother! I could not believe it’ (Waters 533).

Sarah Waters has depicted the mysterious relationship between Sue and Maud. Sue realises that Maud is unaware of the truth and lies, too. Sue regrets every nasty thing she said to or even felt towards Maud. She expresses her regret thus:

But then, I grew still. I was thinking of Maud, starting up with the knife. I was thinking of Maud, letting me hate her. I was thinking of Maud, making me think she’d hurt me, to save me knowing who had hurt me most ... I saw it, sharp and clear as a line of lightning in a sky of black. Maud had tried to save me, and I had not known. I had wanted to kill her, when all the time – ‘And I let her go!’ I said ... ‘If I had said – If she had turned – If I had known – I would have kissed her –Kissed her?’ said Dainty (*Fingersmith* 534)

To conclude, Sarah Waters depicts the nature of hyper-reality breaking from the traditional ideas about truth and reality. The novel’s plot is replete with scenes of fantasy and the Gothic. Waters believes that the concept of reality has changed in the Postmodern era. She employed the literary devices of fantasy, romance, horror and wonder and supernaturalism to depict her heroine’s struggle. In the context of *Fingersmith*, Sarah Waters continues her exploration of hyper-reality and the blurring of truth and fiction. The novel is filled with twists, turns, and unexpected revelations, keeping readers on the edge as they navigate through a labyrinth of deceit and deception. Through intricate plot devices, including role-playing, mistaken identities, and unreliable narrators, Waters crafts a narrative that challenges readers’ perceptions

of reality. The story revolves around the lives of Sue Trinder and Maud Lilly, whose paths intertwine in a web of manipulation and intrigue.

As the plot unfolds, readers are immersed in a world where nothing is as it seems. The characters assume various roles and personas, blurring the lines between their true selves and the facades they present to others. This sense of hyper-reality adds complexity to the novel, inviting readers to question the authenticity of every twist and turn. The novel presents the power dynamics between characters, with themes of gender, class, and social status influencing their actions and motivations. Exploring these themes further emphasises the malleability of truth and reality in the context of the characters' lives.

Waters expertly employs elements of fantasy and Gothic themes, immersing readers in a world of dark secrets and hidden agendas. The supernatural atmosphere heightens the sense of intrigue, blurring the boundaries between the natural and the supernatural. Waters masterfully weaves together hyper-reality, intricate plotlines, and rich character development, resulting in a captivating and thought-provoking narrative. The novel challenges readers to reconsider their understanding of truth, reality, and the complexities of human nature, leaving a lasting impression long after the final page.

*The Night Watch* is an experimental novel dealing with the themes of gay and lesbian politics, and the novel's plot is structured around historical events. The background of the novel *The Night Watch* is the Second World War situation in London. There are four major lesbian women characters: Kay, Helen, Julia and Viv; one of them is a straight woman, and a man, Duncan, whose sexuality is ambiguous. The first impression of the novel is its striking feature of a historical novel. Georg Lukacs (1962) depicts the characteristics of the contemporary historical novel, which contains the elements of fragmentation and the Sensational novel. Sarah Waters commented thus: "We can't reconstruct the past or capture the past, we can only reinvent it, so I wanted the novel to be very self-consciously a piece of lesbian historical fantasy" (Mitchell "Interview" 131). Kaye Mitchell (2013) is of the view that "Waters' novels have been crucial in the development of historical fiction as a genre, contributing to its enormous increase in popularity in recent years" (Mitchell 6).

Lynne Hanley (1991) observes that "since women are presumed to be absent from war, they are presumed to have no story to tell" (Hanley 7). Sarah Waters claimed

that she took ideas and inspiration from sources like novels, diaries, and letters produced during and after the Second World War. The extensive list of resources depicts her perception of hyper-reality. Women characters live in London and experience nightly bombings of the city. Alan Robinson (2011) uses the term “present past” when writing about a historical novel. According to him, the “present past is the past as it now exists in our conscious imagination, which may or may not correspond to the past as it actually was” (Robinson 51). The nature of truth and reality is explored from various dimensions. De Groot (2010) argues that “historical novelists seek solace in authenticity and fiction simultaneously – citing their extreme research at the same time that they distance themselves from reality” (De Groot 57). Sarah Waters employs the literary devices of postmodern fiction such as Parody, Pastiche and the elements of magic realism fiction to depict the nature of Hyper-reality. Robinson comments thus on the nature of her historical novel, “Feminist alternate histories as those by Carter, Winterson and Sarah Waters attempt to reclaim a female past either through transformative fantasy or by rewriting it, with conscious or unconscious anachronism, in the light of present concerns” (Robinson 26). Robinson has analysed the nature of reality described in the plot as he claims that “what is disorientating for readers is that historical fiction blurs indistinguishably what is imported from known historical data and what is invented” (Robinson 29). He continues to write that “the ambiguous referentiality of historical fiction can be illustrated by the frequent coexistence of real-world ‘prototypes’, such as Napoleon, and invented characters” (Robinson 29).

Rigney (2001) writes that “the ontological pedigree of the story elements is smoothed over in the narrative. The ‘factual’ and the ‘fictitious’ are not located in discrete formal units that can be identified as such” (Rigney 23). Waters has blended facts and fiction to create believable fictional characters. Norman W. Jones (2007) states that the study of historical fiction “tends to emphasize points of connection alongside differences: similarities enough to make the past readable (literally and figuratively), and differences enough to keep it interesting” (Jones 2). The plot doesn’t run in - chronological order. The four characters are Kay, Duncan, Helen, and Vivien. The fifth character is Julia. Duncan and Vivien are brother and sister, and Vivien works with Helen, who is in a relationship with Julia, who had a relationship with Kay. De Groot (2013) observes that *The Night Watch* is a typical historical novel containing the

features of Postmodern fiction. Waters has blended fact with fiction and added various elements from the Gothic novel and sensational novel to achieve the “totalizing effect of historical representation” (De Groot 57). Bran Nicol (2009) contends that Sarah Waters has presented a new vision of her Postmodern reality. Her novel *The Night Watch* is a “dramatization of a specific historical period a few decades at least before the time of writing and focuses on a central character who is affected directly in some way by real historical dramas, the outcome of which readers already know” (Nicol 99). Interestingly, *The Night Watch* is full of the “interesting and complex tragedies and comedies of love” in the lives of women.

Sarah Waters gives the picturesque details of the 1944 war situation; Kay gives the photographic picture as her friend Mickey drives the ambulance:

The route was a grim one, the shabby houses at the heart of Pimlico giving way, with dismal regularity, to patches of devastated land, to mounds of rubble, or hollowed-out terraces and goes on to write as if the War had stripped London back, made a series of villages of it, each of them defending itself against unknown forces, darkly and alone (Waters 200).

The first pages of the plot provide a sensational situation of the War, highlighting the chaos and disorder: “The chaos was extraordinary. Every time Kay put down her feet, things cracked beneath them, or wrapped themselves around her ankles – What amazed her too, was the smallness of the piles of dirt and rubble to which even large buildings could be reduced” (Waters 201). Julia takes Helen to a house she is working in and shows the scene of death and destruction. Helen is shocked to note the bombed house and destroyed furniture:

All of it dusty, and heavily marked by flying glass and fallen plaster, or else the damp, the wood with a bloom on it and beginning to swell and the room beyond was just as wretched as this one – its window smashed, its velvet curtains marked with rain, spots on the floor where birds had dirtied, soot and cinders blasted from the hearth (Waters 278).

The destruction scene had a nihilistic impact on the minds of the characters. Sarah Waters observes thus:

Before the War, Kay had been able to stand at her window and watch young men and women in the workshops painting swags and cupids on lovely old tables and chairs. Now the workshops had been closed down ... The fact of there being so much wood there, and so much varnish and paint, made the mews a dreadfully unsafe place (Waters 326).

On Helen's birthday, she and Kay visit the park and are shocked to observe the havoc there: "They remembered it as lush, green, lovely. But now the trees were utterly bare, revealing, here and there, the brutal, barbed-wired flans of anti-aircraft batteries and military gear" (Waters 329). On their walk, Kay crushes ice and "it became white powder – exactly the powder of broken glass at a bomb site" (Waters 330). The plot of *The Night Watch* is non-linear as the plot moves backwards into time from 1947 to 1944 and 1941. Waters uses the word queer many times in the plot. The word queer is also used to describe something strange as she writes: "but the queer thing was, the sensation of unsafeness, even of dislike, was almost exciting" when Helen is thinking about how she feels about Julia (Waters 235). Another example is Kay looking at Helen: "Her expression was a queer one – a smile, soft, but also troubled" (Waters 330). Waters (2013) comments in her interview that "of course, we can't reconstruct the past or capture the past, we can only reinvent it, so I wanted the novel to be very self-consciously a piece of lesbian historical fantasy" (Mitchell 131). She further observes that "she was aware that we have many stereotypes about the War, and they are overwhelmingly heterosexual ones. And I wanted to try to play with those, to overturn them or to use them – to use that landscape but put gay men and lesbians into it" (Mitchel 131).

Sarah Waters depicts the fate of women during wartime and highlights their sexual liberties. She writes thus: "The wartime was bit of a golden age, really – for all the obvious reasons: women were moved around, away from the surveillance of their families, they were in barracks, they had permission to be a bit butch if they wanted to be" (Mitchell, "Interview" 132). Waters "[got] the feeling ... that the war gave many lesbians a license to do things they had always enjoyed doing but which, until then, they'd had to do more or less illicitly – such as cutting their hair, wearing ties and trousers, driving cars" (Waters, "Romance"). On the first section of the novel, Helen and Julia live together in a building hiding their relationship. They even have a spare



bedroom in their apartment, which “got presented to neighbours and visitors as ‘Helen’s room’” (Waters 53). Helen is fear-ridden since “other people of their age and class” had them, but they cannot do this because “it would be too much fuss ... to have to pretend to a daily woman that Helen slept there every single night” (Waters 53). Helen is in a relationship with Kay, but she has to hide it: “She’d left her own friends behind when she moved in with Kay, or she kept Kay a secret from them. And Kay’s friends were all like Mickey – all like Kay, in other words” (Waters 284). Helen’s friends are also lesbians. She has not even told her family about her sexuality: “I’d never want to advertise it. I’d never dream, for example, of telling my mother! But why should I? It’s a thing between Kay and me. And we’re two grown women. Who does it harm?” (Waters 285). The wartime allowed sexual liberties to women: “They walked arm in arm – Helen not minding the fact that they were two women, now for one expected to see women, she said, on a Saturday afternoon” (Waters 329).

The romantic relationship is masked as a platonic friendship. While Helen benefits from this stereotype, she wishes that she and Kay could enjoy their relationship openly: “I hate having to sneak and slink so grubbily about. If we could only be married, something like that” (Waters 338). For Kay: “it was one of the tragedies of her life, that she couldn’t be like a man to Helen – make her a wife, give her children...” (Waters 338). Kay even mentions this to her friends: “If I were her husband, I’d be off fighting” (Waters 263). When they see heterosexual couples in the park, Kay “wanted to kill them. The urge to take Helen in her arms and the consciousness that she must not do it, was making her twitch, making her ill” (Waters 339). Helen dislikes utopian relationships between men and women: “how easy it was, she thought unhappily, for men and women. They could stand in a street and argue, flirt – they could kiss, make love, do anything at all – and the world indulged them. Whereas she and Julia” (Waters 126). During the War, women got many opportunities to move out freely between their homes and the outside world. Most of the men were shipped to War, and women had to take jobs in offices. Sarah Waters has depicted the cultural situation of the War period thus:

The Second World War was one of the most contradictory periods in British history for the boundary between male and female roles ... In the social and cultural borderlands in which new indicators of the limits of

masculinity and femininity were generated, old definitions of what it meant to be a man or a woman were at the same time strengthened, weakened and preserved intact (232).

Sarah Waters has deviated from the traditional conventions to demonstrate her hyperreal perspective. The plot of *The Night Watch* explores the corners of the human mind, and this study claims that the hyper-real is focal in their storylines. In the novel, reality is scrutinised deeply, and the fictive and the non-fictive are elaborated. No wonder the women protagonists venture into hyper-reality. There is a strange blending of real and unreal as Hutcheon (1989) adds that Postmodernism “takes the form of the self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement” and; thus, the distinctive feature of Postmodernism lies in its “commitment to doubleness’ and duplicity” (Hutcheon 1). Lyotard (1979) also suggests that “Postmodern works are not governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment by applying familiar categories” (Lyotard 81). Bauman (1990) argues that it is strange to falsify the truth when “nothing has the courage and the stamina to declare itself as truth for everybody and for all time” (Bauman viii). Hence, it is true in the novels of Sarah Waters that “no reality claims to be more real than its representation” (Bauman viii). The critical analysis of the plot of *The Night Watch* reveals the strange and unconventional amalgamation of the images and metaphors to depict the Postmodern hyper-reality. Bauman observes that “piles of images, heaps of information, flocks of desires have made everything too much, resulting in the images referring back to only themselves. In the same vein, information loses its functionality in informing, and desires turn into their own simulacra” (Bauman 151-52). Hence, “everything colludes to hide the fact that reality has been banished” (Bauman 153).

In many ways, Waters pioneered a new approach to dealing with the past by striking a balance between historical imagination and a commitment to factual accuracy. Waters established new goals for herself. Choosing a new period—moving from the Victorian era to World War II and its aftermath—was not the fundamental change; rather, it was facing recent history. Furthermore, there was a requirement for the ethical obligation of being accountable to living witnesses, as well as the time-consuming task of sorting through a massive volume of unrecorded primary materials. In *The Night Watch*, Waters deviated from the conventions of romance by opting for

third-person narration's relative objectivity, heavily referencing historical memoirs and diaries, and using a variety of literary devices.

In Sarah Waters' novel *The Night Watch*, the theme of hyper-reality is skilfully explored through its unique narrative structure and the depiction of the character's internal struggles. The novel is set during and after World War II and narrated in reverse chronological order, beginning in 1947 and moving backwards to 1941. This unconventional narrative technique blurs the boundaries between past and present, creating a sense of hyper-reality where time and memory intertwine. The characters in *The Night Watch* are haunted by the traumas of war and the secrets they carry. Their experiences during the war have deeply impacted their lives and relationships, leading to a complex web of emotions and interactions. Waters delves into the characters' inner lives, exploring their desires, regrets, and vulnerabilities, further blurring the line between reality and imagination. The novel's vivid descriptions of the post-war London landscape and the scars left by the bombings contribute to the sense of hyper-reality. The city's physical and emotional devastation becomes a tangible backdrop for the characters' experiences, heightening the novel's immersive quality.

Waters interweaves the themes of love, loss, and identity with the historical context of the war. The characters' lives are intricately connected, and their journeys are marked by a sense of fragmentation and the search for meaning in a chaotic and uncertain world. The exploration of hyper-reality in *The Night Watch* invites readers to reflect on the complexity of human experiences and the impact of war on individual lives. The novel's immersive storytelling and intimate portrayal of the characters' emotions create a powerful and thought-provoking reading experience, drawing readers into a world where the past and the present merge, and reality becomes a tapestry of memories, desires, and emotions.

Sarah Waters centres on an upper-class family, unlike the middle-class family, which dominates the plots of *The Paying Guests* and *The Night Watch*. The novel *The Little Stranger* (2009) of the novel is about the Ayres, an upper-class family which is at a loss to contend with the post-war changes in British society. The Hundred Hall is Gothic in structure and is haunted by supernatural events. It is on the decline, and the family is getting setbacks every day as the situation is made worse by a series of preternatural events. The unnatural accidents occur one after the other destroying the

happiness of each member of the upper-class family. The plot is packed with the elements of mystery, romance, horror and terror as the novelist borrows from Gothic novels. Julian Wolfreys (2002) asserts that “the haunted house is the place where the blurring of boundaries is given its most literal depiction, in the motion of ghosts through walls” (Wolfreys 7). By setting up Hundreds Hall as a haunted country house, George Letissier (2012) also comments thus: “To address the still traumatic repercussions of the transitory post-war years, Waters borrows the ghost story’s plotline and symbolically foregrounds its favourite locus of the haunted house” (Letissier 35).

Following Fredric Jameson’s theory of Postmodernism, Sarah Waters employs intertextuality techniques. The plot of *The Little Stranger* is entire of inter-texts reminding the readers of the tales of Edgar Allan Poe and the haunting environment of the story *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839). There are lines borrowed from *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte and from *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) by Henry James. Paulina Palmer (2016) observes that there is a strange bending of the Gothic and queerness in the plot of the novel, “The emphasis that the haunted-house narrative places on familial secrets, especially ones of an illicit kind, makes it admirably suited, of course, to treating themes relating to queer sexuality and experience” (Palmer 41). The fate and tragedies of the Ayres family are reported by Sarah Waters, depicting the destructive impact of supernatural forces. Her view of Truth and Reality is described in terms of the role of fate, Chance and Supernatural forces. She contends that man’s life is very uncertain, and he has to confront external forces. The members of the Ayres dynasty struggle to escape from the destructive environment. They suffered the damages of the Second World War and experienced the collapse of the utopian society. They witness the collapse of the aristocracy and the transformation of British culture. War situation brings total transformation as the members of the tribe resort to queerness to escape from the psychological trauma. Faraday is at the centre of the plot, and his queerness is also brought to the fore. Each member feels nostalgic as they remember the lost past and the golden days of the aristocracy.

*The Little Stranger* creates an atmosphere characterised by both timeliness and timelessness. Ann Heilmann (2009) comments thus: “Waters engages with the twenty-first-century nostalgia for the Victorians as well as with 1940s explorations of Gothic doom and class upheaval as symbols of the post-war condition” (Heilmann 54).

Interestingly, Sarah Waters presents a combination of nostalgia for the past clashing with the social turmoil of the 1940s. The presentation of two conflicting utopian visions symbolises her vision of truth and social reality. Caroline Ayre is sick of The Haunted House as she has witnessed so many unnatural events. She longs to get away from the destructive and stifling environment of the house, but on the contrary, Dr Faraday is anxious to grab the property of The Hundred House by marrying Caroline. Sarah Waters has depicted the disintegration of the aristocracy and the decline of the utopian visions employing the techniques of the Gothic.

Caroline Ayres knows that the old pomp and glamour is no more and life is very hard for her. She is anxious to leave the haunted Country House as she wants to accept the reality of her impoverishment and the loss of her upper-class status. Roderick is the real biological heir, but Dr Faraday manipulates and plans to grab the Hundred Hall through the matrimonial alliance with Caroline. Sarah Waters has structured the plot employing the issues of class and identity. The Country House is the main site where the conflicting plans of Dr Faraday and Caroline inter cross. Dr Faraday is presented as a haunting figure trapped in liminality. The multiple issues of class structure, identity crisis and declining utopianism are dramatized through the atmosphere of the Gothic. The text of *The Little Stranger* exhibits' layers of various narratives. Waters creates an atmosphere of ambiguity and tension within the narrative, allowing various themes such as class, trauma, and societal change to intersect and intertwine. The novel's exploration of the haunting presence and its impact on the characters and their relationships adds to its enigmatic appeal. This complex entanglement of seemingly disparate elements contributes to the novel's allure, prompting readers to delve deeper into the layers of its narrative and themes.

Sarah Waters has presented Betty as a disgruntled working-class figure. She pretends that she is "sick to escape her duties" (10). She serves as a maid at Hundred Hall and actively participates in sexual rivalries and class conflicts. Faraday sees through Betty's lies on first meeting her because he has a working-class background like her. At first, Faraday is sympathetic towards Betty, for she reminds him of his mother: "I thought of my mother. She was probably younger than Betty when she first went out to Hundreds Hall" (14). At the same time, he envies Betty's treatment at Hundreds since she is the only servant who lives with the Ayres family. When Betty

gets to live in Roderick's room after he is sent to a mental institution, Faraday registers his discomfort: "I found myself faintly unsettled by it, and when I looked into the room shortly after she had moved in, I felt more unnerved than ever" (233). However, Betty is the first character who tells Faraday (and the reader) about the possible existence of a supernatural being at Hundreds "It isn't like a proper house at all!" (13). The supernatural and grotesque scenes depict the hyper-reality of Sarah Waters. According to Wolfgang Kayser (1957), "the grotesque presupposes that the categories which apply to our worldview become inapplicable" (Kayser 185).

Sarah Waters presented the Gothic terror scene in the cocktail dinner party when the shaving glass charged Roderick. He says, "It was all the more sickening, for the glass being an ordinary sort of object" (161-162). He aptly calls this event "the most grotesque thing of all", for the term "grotesque" describes a situation where the ordinary becomes extraordinary" (161). *The Little Stranger* is packed with images and scenes of grotesque and gothic horror, and Sarah Waters dramatizes her vision of Truth and Reality through these experiences. The language and prose style of Waters is unconventional as the imagery is gruesome, and there is a unique juxtaposition of fact and fiction and fantasy and uncanny romance. The dream element further enhances the Gothic atmosphere. Dr Faraday has a dream described thus:

And in the slumber, I seemed to leave the car and to press on to Hundreds: I saw myself doing it, with all the hectic, unnatural clarity ... I saw myself cross the silvered landscape and pass like smoke through the Hundreds gate. I saw myself start along the Hundreds drive (473).

Thus, in *The Little Stranger*, Sarah Waters reflects the theme of hyperreality, blurring the lines between the real and the imagined. The novel creates an atmosphere where the boundaries between the supernatural and the rational become increasingly ambiguous, leading to a heightened sense of intrigue and uncertainty. As the story unfolds, the haunting occurrences at Hundreds Hall challenge the characters' perceptions of reality. The supernatural events and eerie phenomena that take place within the grand estate provoke questions about the true nature of what is happening. Readers, like the characters, are left to grapple with the uncertainty and mystery surrounding the occurrences, making it difficult to discern what is genuinely real.

Waters crafts an atmosphere of suspense and unease, inviting readers to question the reliability of the narrators and the authenticity of the events they describe. The novel's narrative ambiguity adds to the sense of hyperreality, where the boundary between fact and fiction becomes increasingly blurred. *The Little Stranger*, is an exploration of hyperreality serves to immerse readers in a world where the supernatural and the ordinary coexist, leaving them to ponder the true nature of the haunting phenomena and the psychological impact on the characters. By blurring the lines between reality and the imagined, Sarah Waters weaves a compelling narrative that keeps readers questioning and engaged until the very end.

*The Paying Guests* has bewitching and sensational plot dealing with the themes of love, sex, crime, and betrayal. Sarah Waters has presented the complicated women characters who live in the harsh and oppressive environment of the Gothic world. The First World War is over, and a new world and class structure are emerging, offering new challenges to the characters. *The Paying Guests* of Sarah Waters is about Frances, of twenty-year-old, shocked to witness the city of London devastated by the War. She lives with her mother in a large, decaying house ruined by the bombing of War. Most of her male members are killed, and the family is suffering from acute emotional trauma. Frances's two young brothers were killed, and the family is trapped in debt. Her mother is grief-stricken, and she decides to rent the house to overcome the debt. Her new tenants are a newly married couple, and here is where everything spirals out of control. The intriguing young couple brings transformation in the life of Frances. Frances is fed up with the forces of patriarchal domination and believes in feminism. The understanding between Frances and Barbers enhances. The Barbers living standard and reasoning amuse Frances. At the skating rink to which Lilian takes Frances, for instance, they can show their intimacy to each other: "It was like making love: the thrill and intimacy of it, the never letting go of each other, the clutching of fingers and the bumping of thighs, the racing and matching of heartbeats and breaths" (278).

Her mother constantly chastises her and does not allow her the freedom she demands. Frances is presented with lonely and frustrated crazy to escape from the boredom of life. She is trapped in the snares of Barbers who excite her sexual passions, leading her to experience murder, betrayal and forbidden romance. The clash of the upper-middle class and the lower-middle class is at the core of the storyline of *The*

*Paying Guests*. Frances Wray is an upper-middle-class spinster who establishes intimacy with the lodgers, Mr and Mrs Barber. At the outset of the plot, Frances Wray takes an interest in Lilian and Leonard Barber. She is influenced by her Christian friend Christina who has moved on to a steady relationship with a woman named Stevie. The Barbers bring about a drastic transformation in life and thinking of Frances, who is attracted by the presence of Leonard, “Taking up her hand, Frances notices that Lillian’s kimono parted as she landed, exposing more of her nightdress, and giving an alarming suggestion of the rounded, mobile, unsupported flesh inside” (26).

The graceful personality of Lilian also attracts Frances and develops feelings for her, and Lilian, too, begins to value the friendship of Frances. Lilian invites Frances to a family party and gives Frances a remarkable makeover. Frances confesses to Lilian that she has had a relationship with another woman in the past. This shocks Lilian, who doesn’t speak to her for several days. However, over time, Frances endures her mother and a family friend, Mrs. Playfair. Leonard invites her to spend the evening with him and Lilian. Frances and Lilian still behave like strangers, but the three grow more and more drunk in the party. Leonard bullies Lilian as they play a game of snakes and ladders involving Lilian stripping. They smoke cigarettes together and enjoy liberties. Frances feels free, and the evening merriment fosters a greater intimacy between Frances and her paying guests. They dance together intimately, and soon Frances realises that Lilian is attracted to her.

When they return home, they find that an unknown assailant has attacked Leonard. Though he has suffered only a black eye and broken nose, the event ruins the intimacy of the evening- until Lilian sneaks from bed. Lilian and Frances have sex for the first time in the kitchen scullery. Frances openly admits to loving Lilian; Lilian reciprocates sometime after. In the course of time, Frances and Lilian begin a secret relationship and long for an independent space. They do not like the presence of Mrs Wray and Leonard in the house. Toward the end of the summer, Lilian and Leonard are to leave on vacation. The separation for a week seems unbearable to the two women. Lilian surprises Frances with a visit to the skating rink before she goes. Frances awaits a letter from Lilian, almost becoming disenchanted with their relationship. Eventually, a letter does come. Lilian is miserable; she misses Frances and wishes to leave Leonard. Frances pressures Lilian to leave Leonard and plans to run away and live together.



Lilian shocks Frances by revealing that she is pregnant. To Frances's horror, she plans to get an abortion. Lilian tries to reassure her; she has had an abortion before, early in her marriage. She purchases pills and plans to finish the process on a Friday on which both Leonard and Mrs Wray will be absent from the house. Leonard's unplanned and unfortunate arrival and murder complicates all issues. Frances and Lilian decide not to go to the police and haul Leonard's body out of the house through the garden and into the lane. Lilian is physically exhausted and still bleeding. The two spent one last night together. Outside, it begins to rain. A policeman comes the next day and tells Lilian and the Wray that there has been an accident and it is likely that Leonard is dead. Mrs Wray is horrified. Lilian is asked to go to the morgue to identify the body, and Frances comes along. Frances and Lilian are wracked by panic and guilt. They are asked to go to the police station for questioning. Sergeant Heath interrogates Frances and Lilian to find out the mystery of the attack on Leonard. Lilian has a breakdown and rushes for the bathroom. Kempe questions Frances alone, and the police doctor inspects Lilian. He determines that the shock of Leonard's death brought on a miscarriage. They are allowed to go home so Lilian can recover. In this section of the novel, Frances experiences guilt, anxiety, and fear. The strain Frances feels causes friction between her and her mother. She begins to believe that her mother suspects her.

Sarah Waters has exposed the immoral love affair between Frances and Lilian. The next weeks are fraught with guilt, anxiety, and fear for Frances and Lilian. The news spreads throughout town through rumours and newspaper speculation. Frances and Lilian are largely separated; Lilian insists on going back to her familial home, Champion Hill because Lilian's mother and sisters will not leave her alone. The strain Frances feels causes friction between her and her mother. Sarah Waters has exposed the immoral love affair between Frances and Lilian. In her novel *The Paying Guests*, Sarah Waters introduces the murder and police investigation plot. There are many complex situations and elements of detective fiction. Sarah Waters makes effective use of literary and Gothic devices to depict the nature of hyper-reality, interpreting the issues of lesbian sexuality.

The love triangle between Leonard, Frances and Lilian is given a homosexual twist. The change in the sexuality of the characters transforms the nature of the murder investigation theme, enhancing the elements of mystery and romance of the Gothic

nature. Frances looks depressed because her father's misguided investment plunged her and the family into economic hardship. She hates her father, who sent all her brothers to the battlefield and got them killed. The Wray's led a miserable life, and the household was not equipped with servants because "the munitions factories had...lured them away in 1916" (10). Frances uses the imagery of the house and compares it to a human body claiming "it seemed to her that the house must produce the dust as flesh oozes sweat" (25). She is always under pressure to maintain her father's passion for "Old England" (24). Frances has to agree the furniture remains symbolising the dead values of Old England. The old furniture forces her to "go scuttling around like a crab" (24). Her parents' opposition to Frances's lesbian relationship with Christina made her abandon it, and since then, she has been trapped in the house. The presence of her father's legacy, and her duty to honour it, work to constrain Frances both physically and emotionally. Sarah Waters has depicted the servant-like attitude of Frances before she encounters Leonard Barber and Lilian:

She had no real interest in food, neither in preparing nor in eating it, but she had developed a grudging aptitude for cookery during the War; she enjoyed, anyhow, the practical challenge of making one cheap cut of meat do for several different dishes (24).

Sarah Waters uses the vocabulary of the kitchen to portray the dull and lonely life of Frances in the novel. Frances is effective in depicting the feelings of frustration and the cravings for freedom. The images of the old and dilapidated furniture and the vocabulary of cooking and kitchen effectively describe the depressed life of Frances. These processes involving the white of an egg and a milk sauce symbolise the steady progression of Frances's yearning for Lilian. Also, when Frances realises that there are "biscuit crumbs on Lilian's clothes, she feels a housewifely urge – a house spinsterly urge, she supposed it ought to be called, in her case – to brush them free" (79). Ironically, Frances's and Lilian's first sexual union takes place in the scullery" (224). Sarah Waters creates an atmosphere of wonder and Gothic romance as they make love with each other. The imagery of the gipsy world and the Gothic world are blended together: "We're like gipsies! Like the gipsy king and queen" (Waters 245)

In *The Paying Guests*, hyper-reality is evident through the intense exploration of the characters' emotions, desires, and the impact of their actions. The novel is set in

1922 London, and the story revolves around the lives of two women. The boundaries between reality and fantasy become increasingly blurred as the characters grapple with their hidden passions and the consequences of their choices. The intense emotional connection between Frances and Lilian leads to a hyper-realistic portrayal of their forbidden love, where the lines between friendship and romance become indistinguishable.

Waters' attention to intricate details, such as the character's internal monologues and the vivid descriptions of their surroundings, further contributes to the hyper-realistic nature of the narrative. Readers are drawn into the characters' inner lives, experiencing their hopes, fears, and vulnerabilities in an immersive and intense manner. The characters confront the harsh realities of society's expectations and the consequences of breaking societal norms. It deals with the complexities of human relationships and the characters' emotional turmoil, presenting a hyper-realistic exploration of the human condition. Its intricate storytelling, rich character development, and the exploration of societal constraints, *The Paying Guests* captures the essence of hyper-reality. The novel invites readers to reflect on the intricate layers of human emotions and the impact of personal choices in a world where reality and fantasy intertwine. It is a compelling and thought-provoking examination of the complexities of desire, love, and the consequences of daring to break free from societal norms.

To conclude, Sarah Waters revolted against the traditional view of truth and reality depicted by the British and European novelists, and she evolved new literary devices to articulate her new vision of hyper-reality in her novels. She borrowed heavily from the novels and tales of the Gothic and Sensational Novels and added in her plots the elements of horror; terror; mystery; romance; grotesque, and absurd to depict the nature of Representation and Reality. Her stories combine fact and fiction, imagination and reality, and historical events in an original way that exemplifies the Historiographic metafiction idea. Waters' novels dramatize her perception of hyper-reality. In *Tipping the Velvet*, Waters explores themes of gender and sexuality in Victorian England, using a historical backdrop to frame her characters' experiences. Similarly, *Fingersmith* delves into deception, identity, and power dynamics in Victorian society through a gripping and complex narrative. *The Night Watch* takes a

different approach by exploring the lives of individuals during World War II. *The Little Stranger* delves into the supernatural, as Waters introduces a ghostly presence in a post-World War II setting. *The Paying Guests* shifts its focus to the 1920s, exploring class tensions and forbidden desire within a domestic setting. Waters masterfully combines historical accuracy with a sense of unease, creating an atmosphere that keeps readers guessing about the nature of truth and real.

## Chapter: Four

### Postmodern Characters and Identity: Issues and Challenges

The quest for identity is a significant problem in Sarah Waters's novels. In this chapter, the identity crisis of the characters of Sarah Waters is explored and examined through the lens of Linda Hutcheon's postmodern theories. Stryker and Burke (2000) believe it is tough to define identity as identity theory; "The language of identity is ubiquitous in contemporary social science, cutting across psychoanalysis, psychology, political science, sociology and history" (284). It is fascinating to explore the multiple aspects of the identity of the characters of Sarah Waters. They move into different places and come in contact with various people in their process of identity formation. The identity formation process is social, as identities are the traits and characteristics of social relations. A person's identity is often focused on the past, the present and the future as one expects to become or achieve his goals in life. Stryker believes identity formation is a social construct essential to personality development. The exciting part of the identity of the characters of Sarah Waters is their self-images and self-feelings. When they come in contact with other people, they feel that they know themselves; it means they have a self-identity.

In the identity formation process, the characters of Sarah Waters struggle to maintain a dynamic equilibrium between the self and experiences. They suffer when they fail to assimilate and maintain the balance as the socio-political forces bulldoze their personality. They fail to confront the existential realities, resulting in the tragic fracture of identity. The novels of Sarah Waters are set in the Victorian theatre world and sexual underworld. Waters uses multiple sources from history to construct her fiction. Her novels are loaded with elements of melodrama, sensation and social realism. The publication of her novels established her in the domain of British fiction, as her novels were reviewed massively by editors and reviewers. Diana Wallace wrote *The Women's Historical Novel* (2005). In this book, she credited Sarah Waters's novels as "the most radical example of texts that privilege the female point of view and thus expose the subjective and phallogocentric nature of mainstream history" (206). Kaye Mitchell (2013) observes thus: "Waters' fiction is an enduring tension between

historical and contemporary demands, that the texts not only express a desire for the past but also reflects upon the significance of that desire in the present” (Mitchell 8). The novels of Sarah Waters were reviewed by Cooper and Short in their book *The Female Figure in Contemporary Historical Fiction* (2012) as the first in an avalanche of historical novels that “problematizes historical fiction by women, for and about women” (Cooper and Short 3).

Sarah Waters is a controversial novelist because she deals with the radical themes of lesbianism and sexuality. Nobody can deny that her novels deal with lesbian politics and the protagonist’s fight to achieve social acceptance. Waters is known for providing a voice to historically marginalised characters, particularly those whose voices have been overlooked or confined to the footnotes of history due to their sexuality, gender, and class differences. By placing these characters at the forefront of her narratives, Waters aims to shed light on their experiences, struggles, and perspectives, ultimately bringing them back into historical and present consciousness.

Through her writing, Waters confronts societal norms and challenges of the historical erasure of individuals who did not fit into the conventional norms of their time. By exploring themes of sexuality, gender, and class, she provides a platform for the voices that have been silenced or neglected in traditional historical accounts. Waters’ literary contributions serve as a compelling reminder of the significance of recognizing and acknowledging the diverse experiences of individuals across history. Her work highlights how these varied narratives contribute to a more holistic understanding of the historical and the contemporary. Sarah Waters is primarily interested in the voice silenced throughout history. Due to the sexuality, gender, and class disparities, the voices of Waters’s characters are predominantly relegated to the margins of historical narratives. She believes the female bodies colonised by affluent males and women must suffer marginalisation and discrimination. Sarah Waters rescues the voices of her characters from the margin and foregrounds them in her novels. Waters endeavours to reclaim the streets of London, shifting the focus away from conventional historical narratives and reintroducing her characters into the historical fabric of the city. Her novels depict many Londoners, offering them opportunities for growth and transformation in their struggle to forge an identity in society.

Sarah Waters is an acclaimed Postmodern novelist of England who established her name in the domain of fiction with the publication of her novels *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999) and *Fingersmith* (2002), which presents the Victorian era and *The Night Watch* (2006), *The Little Stranger* (2009) and *The Paying Guests* (2014) represents the war-ravaged London of the 1940s. The issue of the protagonists' shattered identities is explored in the novels. The plots are steeped in deception and double-crossing, lies and megalomania. Her novels continue the themes of marginality and illegitimacy. These elements add complexity and intrigue to her stories, captivating readers with twists and turns. Waters's works consistently explore themes of marginality and illegitimacy, highlighting the experiences of characters who find themselves on the fringes of society due to various factors, such as their sexuality, gender, or social status. By delving into these themes, she sheds light on the challenges. She struggles with individuals who face outside societal norms, providing a deeper understanding of their lives and the obstacles they encounter. The intricate plots and the exploration of marginalised experiences make Sarah Waters's novels compelling and thought-provoking. Her ability to craft compelling narratives while addressing critical societal themes has contributed to her success as a prominent and acclaimed author.

Sarah Waters employs the techniques of gothic fiction, domestic melodrama and the elements of sensational novels. In *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), London's people need help finding a secure space in the metropolis with limited opportunities for growth and transformation. Sarah Waters is a celebrated author recognized for her historical fiction novels, where her heroines take center stage within the narratives rather than on physical stages. In her novels, Waters often explores the lives and experiences of women in various historical settings, shedding light on their challenges, aspirations, and relationships. While her stories may include settings related to the entertainment industry or the historical context of music halls, her heroines are typically characters within the narrative rather than performers on stage.

Sarah Waters' heroines, in their fruitless pursuit of a new identity, adopts male attire and confidently navigate the streets of Piccadilly, assuming male personas. The author portrays them to underscore the performative nature of gender and the constraints placed on women by societal norms. The postmodern storyline of Sarah

Waters's first book, *Tipping the Velvet*, emphasises the heroine's performative and flexible sense of self. London is portrayed as a stage, and the novelist uses carnivalesque elements as Nancy Astley can present herself as an actor and a spectator. The novel's plot portrays the picaresque development of Nancy Astley, like *Moll Flanders* (1722) of Daniel Defoe. The episodic structure of the plot is a conspicuous feature as Stefania Ciocia (2005) observes that "the narrative framework the only form of character development we encounter, if any, is the result of a theatrical apprenticeship, rather than a genuine sentimental education" (2). She is confronted with the reality of urban life, struggling to forge her identity, trying all strategies to achieve glamour and success at the theatre.

Sarah Waters has introduced the harrowing stories of lesbian women, gay men and middle-class working people who feel alienated and neglected in urban London. Nan finds happiness in her Brit Theatre like Mrs Dendy, but soon all the glamorous dreams of Nan are shattered. No one can catch the falling stars, as appearances are always deceptive. She forgets her family and believes that Brit Theatre is her natural home. However, all the illusions soon vanished when her bother Davy "marked with a faded arrow like a treasure map to show me where home was, in case I forgot" (Waters 151). Butler emphasizes: "I should never have taken away from Whitstable Bay, Miss Mermaid" (Waters 152). She feels homesick and longs to return home but is so lost in the fairy world that there is no escape. In her home town, "things appear to have changed for the worse due to Nan's altered perception" (Waters 154). Astley's Whitstable accent has transformed, "all lardy-dah" (155). She travels to London and gives her family extravagant presents, which are "trash" (157). Nan has become very sensitive and vulnerable and "can no longer help with the oysters as it now hurts her fingers" (163). She notices the Canterbury Palace bill as "second rate" (164). She returns to London, but when her relationship with Kitty breaks down, her fantasy world quickly crashes.

Walter Bliss, another prince from a fairy tale, replaces Astley. Kitty falls in love with her manager, and the nemesis falls on Nan. She undergoes her darkest transformations. She has no place to go as reality is very bitter; she discovers the love affair of Kitty and feels shattered. Sarah Waters presents Nan as a boy in her new role of "male prostitute" (Waters 197). In a Persian tale, a beggar is given a beautiful



princess and is forced to lead a wretched life. Nan is also “offered a brief span of luxury as Diana’s tart before being discarded” (218). Marlowe’s *Dr Faustus* depicts the degeneration of a learned divinity who sells his soul for material and sexual pleasures. Nan’s fate is similar to that of Dr Faustus as she suffers psychological anguish at the novel’s end. Waters’s unambiguous message is that the fairy realm can only provide fleeting joys, and trappings and illusions are painfully deceiving. She is presented as a “Roman stature at Diana’s party” (308). Kitty and her upper-class friends enjoy sadistic pleasures in ridiculing her “appropriation of cultural capital” (47). Nan has no choice as she becomes Florence’s lover, domestic help and political help mate. Butler emerges as a conventional Victorian woman. She enjoys sexual pleasures and material affluence at the beginning of her adventurous life, but soon, the magical mirror is broken, and she is forced to reap negative consequences. She has to run away from the glamorous world of Walter and Kitty to become “a homeless, men grope Nan as she walks alone in the city” (191). Nan’s new identity “is that of a prostitute” (97). She finds a new home with Mrs Milne and “her daughter Gracie” (24). In the last phase of her identity process, she gets an opportunity for redemption and regeneration. She arranges a new date with social worker Florence but breaks away. She struggles to save herself from the “seduction attempt of Diana, an addict of sensation” (249).

Sarah Waters exposes hollowed domestic scenes in this part of the novel. Nan lives as a housekeeper for Florence and her brother Ralph and minds infant Cyril. The love of social worker Florence and Nan’s new domestic role redeems her. She makes up her mind and writes to her family after a “long silence” (468). Sarah Waters employs elements of melodrama in the novel. Kitty reappears at Hyde Park, offering help to Florence for loyalty. Waters has used the images of melodrama to resolve the issues and to achieve the redemption of her heroine Nan. The melodrama contains horrific images and emotions. The London night is described as sinister: “the great dark jagged bulk of the Houses of Parliament looming over the river; its water grey and sluggish and thick” (101). Nan is still under the magical charm of Kitty and asks Kitty if she would cross the ice. Kitty undermines Nan’s fairy tale, saying, “We would sink and drown, or else be stranded and die of the cold” (102). No wonder Kitty’s kiss “sadistically flays Nan’s lips” (103). Poor Nan fails to understand the inner intentions of Kitty. Nan believes that “she loves me, she loves me like a fool with a daisy-stalk,

endlessly exclaiming over the same last browning petal” (114). In excitement, Nan feels herself “melting exactly as if my chest were the hot, soft wall of a candle, falling in upon a burning wick. I was eighteen and knew nothing. I thought, at that moment, that I would die of love for her” (99).

Sarah Waters has given the novel a blend of tragic and comic elements to achieve melodramatic effects in a true Dickensian style. Nan and Kitty’s first kiss is followed by the tragic news of comedian Gully Sutherland “who shot himself dead” (99). The scene of violence towards Walter and Kitty is reported thus:

‘If you have hurt her ... I laughed outright at that.

Hurt her? Hurt her? I should like to kill her! Had I only a pistol on me now I would shoot her through the heart-and myself as well! And leave you to marry a corpse!’ (169).

Like Angela Carter, Sarah Waters employs the elements of fairy tales and Gothic romances, borrowing the events of old history. Madness and degradation are typical features of the Gothic. Walter observes that “Nan has gone mad” (171) in response to discovering his affair with Kitty. This scene reflects the tales of the 1880s when women were discouraged from participating in the theatre. Nan runs away into the mysterious streets of London, “a wood-house or a rat looking for a small, mean room to burrow or hibernate” (191). In this novel section, Nan is presented as a Gothic Mermaid: “wasted and grey; my eyes were swollen and purpled with shadows. My hair was long and filthy; my lips were bitten almost to the blood; my frock was stained and rancid at the armpits. Mrs Best fears Nan is going to cut her “wrists into the water” (188). Her heart has hardened and deadened symbolically. Nan’s journey for identity begins with her unconventional career and sexuality. Sarah Waters has used the elements of old Victorian history, mainly dealing with the theatre world. Sarah Waters has depicted the scenes of old Victorian history by dramatizing the relationships between Nan and Kitty, Diana and Florence. Her use of old names, such as Nan King and Kitty Butler, is historical. It is pertinent to note that Sarah Waters came under the influence of Charles Dickens, and she introduces unpleasant characteristics in a Dickensian style. For example, Walter Bliss has a “golden watch-chain as thick as the tail of a rat” (43). Nan feels “stifled as a rat in a box” (61).

The imagery of the dirty and ugly insects effectively dramatises and symbolises human degradation. Sarah Waters has the poetic power to depict the ugly and dirty realism emphasising the squalor “this street looked so very grey and mean” (68). The landlady “Mrs. Dendy has threatening cough and fingers quite yellow with tobacco stains” (68). Sarah Waters borrows the comical style of Dickens, rendering the pleasant and unpleasant experiences in the novel: “I sat on the sofa with Bransby, and wrote a postcard to my family. I am in the queerest-looking parlour you ever saw and everyone is extraordinarily kind. There is a dog here with a stage name! My landlady says to thank you for the oysters” (76). Sarah Waters describes the music hall of London in true Dickensian style. The relationship between Nan, Kitty and Walter reflects gendered relationships in Victorian theatre. Nan narrates thus: “He negotiated our contracts, our publicity and held our money for us; he paid Kitty and she, as before, gave me whatever little cash I needed, when I asked her for it” (135). Dickens is famous for realism, and Sarah Waters vividly describes the scenes of crude and ugly realism as Nan writes: Whitstable; the house, I thought, was shabbier than ever;

The sign Astley’s Oysters, the Best in Kent-hung on the hinge and was cracked where the rain water had soaked it. The stairs we climbed were dark and narrow, the room into which I finally emerged smaller and more cramped than I could have believed possible. Worst of all the street, the stairs, the room, the people in it, all reeked of fish! (154).

Nan passes through many phases of life, and she comes in contact with many people in London, the house of evil mongers. She has an opportunity to have first-hand experience with greedy, mean and avaricious Londoners who are unscrupulous in their morality. They are ugly and behave like monsters. Nan reflects that winter in London was popular with those who worked in the theatre industry:

I remember my brother Davy sitting at our parlour fire on January evenings, and weeping ... with pain, as the life returned to his split and frozen hands, his chilblained feet ... frosts and chill winds, fill theatre. For many Londoners a ticket to the music hall is cheaper than a scuttle of coal, or, not cheaper, then more fun, why stay in your own miserable parlour (91).

Nan gets the most tremendous shock of her life when she discovers Kitty and Walter's affair and the changed attitude of Kitty. She is so depressed that she runs away to a Dickensian underclass London "at Smithfield, at the Dead Meat Market" (18) to escape psychological tensions that grip her psyche. The world of glamour has vanished, and the world of misery and squalor welcomes her. Her new room at Mrs Best's is "cramped and mean and perfectly colourless...bleached or grimed to some variety of grey" (183). The Princess of the fairy world is doomed to experience hunger, alienation and poverty. Nan is "Miss Astley again" (184), burdened with loss. Her new role is that of a prostitute, and she is now "part of hidden London" (200), described by Sarah Waters following the irony and humour of Charles Dickens. The Victorian novelist was famous in those days for his concern for the preceding social hardships.

In her novel *Tipping the Velvet*, Sarah Waters features political activism in an ironic and humorous style. No wonder Nan sees her rescuer as Florence, who undertakes social work for the poor and the downtrodden. She introduces Nan to politics: "The Class Question, The Irish Question...The Woman Question" (226). Sarah Waters revives the political events of the early 19th century in chapters 15 and 19 of the novel. The scenes of political movements are presented as Nan is depicted participating in rallies for "Union and Suffrage meetings" (443). In her new role, Nan's life is realistic and pragmatic and not theatrical fantasy. She has got new awareness of the social order. In this part of the novel Sarah Waters incorporates the literary characteristics of melodrama and morality tale. Melodrama is a crucial aspect of theatrical pantomime. Nan describes then rejects the classic Victorian melodrama as Nan says: "My mother wept; my father struck me as a response to her leaving plans" (59). When Nan watches the love rival Walter Bliss Nan narrates: "I should like to say I felt a thrill of foreboding, but I did not. I only felt piqued, that our time alone together...should be made shorter" (42). Nan's belief about her compatibility with Kitty is another dramatic hint about the end of their relationship. At this point of the novel, both feel "they have been given heart's desire" (72). Kitty desires her stage career to flourish, but Nan is concerned to be Kitty. "I know that Kitty and I felt just the same-only about different things. I should have remembered this, later" (72).

Sarah Waters presents a highly melodramatic grotesque scene; Nan discovers Kitty and Walter together. She observed Walter's face "gave a kind of twitch, horrible

to behold” (168). Henry James wrote *The Portrait of Lady* (1881), presenting her heroine Isabel Archer and her journey from innocence to experience. Sarah Waters portrays Nan in the same Jamesian style. Nan’s passage from innocence to experience forms the novel’s core: “Even then, I think, I didn't understand” (168). Kitty falls from grace, “drenched with tears and slobber” (169). Her “spell-like hold over Nan is broken” (72). Melodrama is known for heightened dramatic conflict, leading to a cheerful ending. Dickens is known for melodramatic tales, and Sarah Waters imitates the melodramatic techniques of Charles Dickens, employing the elements of irony, wit and humour. Morality in melodrama is black and white, and Nan is depicted as a respectable class girl, metaphorically “blemishless” (7). Ironically, Nan compares Kitty’s singing to “a fallen angel” (25). She charts her moral descent as she “ran to the station” like a hoyden (44). Her moral descent is mirrored by her flight from the Victorian ideal home. She neglects writing to her family, and her mother reproaches her; they want regular contact with her, not expensive gifts (166). Her sister Alice writes a moral warning reminding her of her moral transgression and sinful activities: “But look to yourself and the path that you are treading and ask yourself if it is really Right” (134). She correctly asserts, “You think you are happy, but you are only misled” (134). Kitty stumbles on the Deacon’s Music Hall stage, reacting to being called a Tom or lesbian. Kitty’s morality is meaningless as the money culture and the values of oppressive capitalism regulate their life. Money constantly “threatens Kitty’s respectability” (145). Interestingly, Sarah Waters wrote under the influence of Charles Dickens in her use of narration, characterisation, imagery and social realism. Kitty was born in Rochester (39), where Dickens lived and is an orphan like *Oliver Twist*.

Sarah Waters perfectly blends dark social realism and arguments for social change. Waters is not doing this, but she perhaps has a political agenda of giving gay history prominence, making it less of a secret history. When Mrs Dendy shows Nan and Kitty to their bedroom, she says: “You won’t mind doubling up, of course; you’ll be quite on top of each other in here-though not so tight as my boys downstairs, who only have the one room” (70). Sarah Waters has employed compelling imagery to expose the evils of the theatre world. “Nan and Kitty’s love is invisible to Walter, who exploits it as a double act” (110). Nan reflects that “making love to Kitty and posing at

her side in a shaft of limelight ... these things were not so very different. A double act is always twice the act the audience thinks it ... there was a private language” (127).

Waters employs the history of popular culture to expose and ridicule the spirit of consumerism. Waters mainly focuses on the myth of social mobility and social respectability of the Victorian Age. With the rise of science and technology and money culture in the early Victorian Age, middle-class girls were crazy about leaving their homes in the villages and rushing to the cities for a glamorous life. Nan is anxious to achieve social respectability and sexual freedom because she wants to scrap the old orthodox conventions and restraints imposed on women. She lives in the romantic world of fairy tales believing that the actress enjoys real life and that social mobility is the only way to enjoy material prosperity; however, Sarah Waters gives an accurate picture of the hardships of the theatre world; the actresses had to face the economic hardships and exploitation in their professional career. Nan’s theatrical career and lesbian relationship with Kitty are explicitly linked:

And so, the day that I became Kitty’s sweetheart was also the day that I joined her act and began my career ... on the music- hall stage. Nan interacts with popular culture, even while preparing oysters. We read of her lips continually moving to the words of some street singer's or music-hall song (4).

In the novel’s opening, Nan’s trips to the music hall in the Canterbury Palace of Varieties are vividly described. The theatre manager, Tony Reeves, facilitates Nan’s seeing Kitty (15). Nan and Kitty sing “popular songs in their bedroom” (109). Nan uses all her skills and “mentalist powers to make Kitty notice her” (18). Nan and Kitty highlight the ugly aspect of the theatre world of London, highlighting the sex trade flourishing at that time. Nan is a historical character as many girls like Nan left their sweet Victorian homes and shifted to London’s theatre land. Their social mobility resulted in their exploitation and the sex trade. Having fled to London streets, Nan wears boys’ clothes to enjoy freedom and independence. She degenerates into a “male prostitute or renter” (202).

Sarah Waters depicts the traumatic experiences of Nancy Astley and her fractured identity in the novel *Tipping the Velvet* while she struggles in the urban world of London. In this novel, Nan feels exhilarated when she finds that the theatre can allow

her to realise her dream of enjoying name, fame, and prosperity. She uses her sexual liberties to envision her future with Kitty instead of staying with her family in Kent. Her dream project proves counterproductive as she lands in the world of moral disorder, losing herself and her moral dignity. The plot is narrated in the first-person, dramatising Nan's search for freedom and sexual identity in a male-dominated world. *Tipping the Velvet* is a fairy world; all the women characters are lesbians and mysterious. They embark on a journey to achieve name, fame and glamour, and eventually, they exhibit moral and spiritual degeneration. They belong to the fancy world, as their actions are unpredictable. Nan, Kitty, and Diana represent the vicious set of British society as these women demonstrate that a life of idleness was neither desired nor the norm for Victorian women. Nan's slothfulness and stupor demonstrate the damaging effect of imposed leisure during her time with Diana. At one point, she says she "has not seen the sun for a week. In a house kept uniformly warm by the labor of servants ... even the seasons lost their meanings" (283).

In *Affinity* (1999), Sarah Waters explores the issues of loss of identity. The novel's plot is a queer romance set in the mid-Victorian period focusing on the life and struggles of a middle-class spinster, Margaret Prior. The world of *Affinity* is of romance and wonder, as Waters borrows from Charles Dickens. *Affinity* is a queer romance set in London in the 1970s, involving ostensibly a middle-class spinster, Margaret Prior, who is thirty years old and living with her possessive and dominating mother. The novelist uses the classical identity of Aurora to represent a wound for her heroine, Margaret Prior. Aurora's identity haunts Margaret, and the plot revolves around this haunting episode. Margaret's main psychological obsession is her relationship with her former lover Helen, and Aurora is Helen's nickname for Margaret during their relationship (Waters 114). The elements of haunting dominate the plot of *Affinity*.

Haunting is often considered a sign of suppressed psychic content or mourning for the loss. Allegorically, it is a manifestation of social conflicts dramatized by the novelist. Essentially, Margaret is haunted by a ghost of herself in the form of an identity. Margaret feels unhappy that her brother Stephen and her sister Priscilla are married and sharing healthy relationships. She gets two profound shocks; her father dies, and her loving friend Helen deserts her and marries her brother. She feels sick and despondent and contemplates suicide to end her alienation and psychological anguish. Her doctor

advises her to find some source of entertainment to overcome psychic pressures and to lead an everyday life. Margaret decides to visit Millbank Prison in “the Riverside of the Thames” to become a “Lady Visitor” to serve the depressed and despondent jail inmates. Sarah Waters has employed the imagery of a madhouse to depict the stultifying and depressing environment of Millbank:

The prison, drawn in outline, has a curious kind of charm to it, the pentagons appearing as petals on a geometric flower—or, as I have sometimes thought, they are like the coloured zones on the chequerboards we used to paint when we were children. Seen close, of course, Millbank is not charming. Its scale is vast, and its lines and angles, when realised in walls and towers of yellow brick and shuttered windows, seem only wrong or perverse. It is as if the prison had been designed by a man in the grip of a nightmare or a madness—or had been made expressly to drive its inmates mad (9).

Margaret’s visit to Millbank Prison symbolises the characters’ confinement suppressed by the ugly urban environment. Mr. Shillitoe, the prison governor, introduces Millbank to Margaret thus: “You see, we are quite a little city here!” (9). When Margaret Prior first sets foot there as a Lady Visitor, she is amazed to observe the dismal condition of the prison inmates. She describes her encounter with Miss Ridley thus:

She was youngish, pale, and quite unsmiling, and dressed in what I was soon to see was the uniform of the place: a grey wool dress, a mantle of black, a grey straw bonnet trimmed with blue, and stout black flat-heeled boots (11).

Mr Shillitoe talks of the prison’s massive structure and its callous surveillance system inside the prison. As Mark Llewellyn (2004) argues: “What Waters asks us to recognise in *Affinity* is a transference of [the panoptic design of Millbank] to a disciplinary procedure outside the prison, within society itself” (206). Indeed, this prison is a miniature of the disciplinary system that permeates the society where Margaret lives. Sarah Waters gives the images of confinement and darkness to depict the fractured identity of Margaret, who is leading a lonely and desperate life in her mother’s home. She has lost all hope and believes life is not worth living since all her



dreams are shattered. She had developed a relationship with Helen, who gave her real love, but she also deserted her marrying her brother. She is a victim of the cruel social patriarchal system. As Susie L. Steinbach (2012) writes,

In the Victorian era, middle-class and upper-class women who loved and desired women had education and financial resources that could be freeing, but at the same time their class status imposed on them the requirements and restraints of respectability. Inside of the constraints, women who loved and desired women looked to a number of available models- including friendship, marriage, and daughter-mother love- to create different kinds of same-sex relationships (250).

This imposition is justified by the centrality of marriage and motherhood to the normative gendered identity of adult women in late Victorian England. Selina Dawes also expresses the same idea when she says, “All the world may look at me, it is part of my punishment” (47). No wonder Margaret, a spinster with a homosexual nature, is subject to a similar gaze everywhere she goes. Her mother kept a close eye on everything she did inside the house. She took serious steps to keep Margaret on the right path, following the norms of Victorian Society confining her and compelling her to take the role of a middle-class lady. After her suicide attempt, her mother gives her chloral hydrate (later laudanum) and ensures she takes it. Her mother “watched and nodded” (30) as Margaret takes the medicine, imposing her authoritative position on her daughter. Her mother reminds Margaret where she should belong when she is running late for the family dinner because of work at Millbank:

Your place is here! ... not at the prison. And it is time you showed that you know it. ... Your place is here; your place is here. You shall be here, beside your mother ... And your place – how often must I say it? – your place is here, at your mother's side (252 – 253).

The repeated warning of her mother always haunts Margaret: “Your place is here”, and Margaret feels oppressed by the stifling environment and oppressive control of her mother. She developed a lesbian relationship with Helen to escape frigidity and repression. She is shocked to observe the change in Helen, who betrayed her, remarking: “Indeed, Mrs Prior, you sound like my own mother” (59). In Millbank, Margaret believes she is a prisoner of her mind and in complete disarray. She lives in

the darkness and criminal environment of Millbank Prison, identifying with the prison inmates. Being abandoned by her lover Helen, grieved by her father's death and oppressed by her callous mother, she seeks comfort in the relationship with Selina Dawes. The sound of “slamming the bolts” (313) vivifies the imagination of her imprisonment. On other occasions, however, she displays her vigilant attitude towards the sounds she hears in the house: “Only I sit awake — only I, and Vigers, for I hear her stir above me, in Boyd’s old room” (116). The novels of Charles Dickens inspire the socially adventurous mission of Sarah Waters.

Millbank is isolated from the rest of London and is portrayed as a virtual nightmare for the convicts. Margaret encounters Selina Dawes, a well-known medium. Sarah Waters traces the growth of Selina Dawes’s lesbian love affair, the stages of her adventurous journey, and her quest for sexual identity. Interestingly, the novel’s plot is a patch of a series of diary entries, some written by Selina and some by Margaret. The novel is loaded with the elements of gothic romance, a sensational thriller rich in stylistic complexities. Lucy Armit and Sarah Gamble (2006) describe the creativity of Sarah Waters as “a curious intermingling of passion, crime and sensationalism and social injustice that characterises her creativity” (141). Jerome de Groot (2013) observes that the novels of Sarah Waters work “backwards and forwards, commenting upon contemporary lesbian identity and the working of sexuality in modernity” (62).

The two diaries of Selina and Margaret are different and present two different perspectives. The diary of Selina was written in 1874, and Margaret’s was written in 1872 and 1873. Selina Dawes is in Millbank Prison, serving her term sentence for the assault leading to death. She is living with her servant companion, Ruth Vigers. Dawes develops an emotional affair, and Margaret plans to escape to Italy together. Margaret develops an emotional affair with Selina, despite Selina being in prison. She plans to run away to Italy with Selina, believing that Selina’s supposed supernatural abilities will enable them to escape from Millbank Prison. However, Unfortunately, Margaret’s trust in Selina is misplaced. Selina ends up betraying Margaret, causing her to experience an unprecedented shock in her life. Selina’s actions lead to Margaret’s distress and disappointment. Margaret is duped by appearances when Selina betrays her and causes her to experience an unparalleled shock in her life with Margaret’s lady servant Ruth Vigers. She plays a significant role in the story’s climax. After Selina’s

betrayal, Ruth joins Selina in fleeing with Margaret's stolen money and clothing, leaving Margaret affected by the deception and loss. Ruth fled with Selina Dawes after stealing Margaret's money and clothing. The plot's core revolves around the relationship between Selina and her servant companion, Ruth Vigers. They have a close bond, possibly more than a typical servant-and-employer relationship. Their connection and interactions are central to the story. The novel is filled with deceit, emotional connections, and unexpected turns, making it an intriguing historical fiction narrative.

The myth of *Affinity* is debunked in the book, and Margaret commits herself out of desperation. Palmer (2016) observes that the novel *Affinity* appears as "lesbian Gothic" (1). Sarah Waters comments thus: "... paler each day. My flesh is streaming from me. I am becoming my own ghost! I think I will haunt this room, when I have started my new life" (Waters 289). *Affinity* depicts the heroine Margaret's fractured identity. She commits suicide at the end because she fails to forge a solid identity and remains bewildered and lost, oppressed by the oppressive environment at home and Millbank Prison. Margaret and Selina disappear, and ultimately, Selina and Ruth take their place and escape. The text moves from the scene of the ethereal and ghostly, with Margaret supposing that Selina will be able to feel her soul departing from her body: "I wonder: when the thread grows slack, will you feel it?" (Waters 351) to an entirely fleshier place. Selina and Vigers are holed up in her room: "Ruth is lying on my bed with her shoes kicked off. She is smoking one of Peter's cigarettes." The last line of the text also gestures to the body: "'Remember,' Ruth is saying, 'whose girl you are'" (352).

The novel *Affinity* is a comparative study of the upper class and women belonging to the underworld. The quest of Margaret and Selina Dawes is for sexual liberty, stability of life, and a safe and secure place where they can enjoy peace and happiness. The journey of Margaret is full of trials and tribulations as she is confronted with the challenges of life, and she emerges too fragile to confront the existential realities. Her two suicide attempts symbolise her mental turmoil and acute depression commonly found in women after the War. Her idealistic view of life collapses when the spiritualist Selina Dawes swindles her at the novel's end, who plans a conspiracy in league with her lover and deserts her.

The novel *Fingersmith* also deals with the fractured identity of the characters, highlighting the life of lesbians and the consequent sexual disorder of the women characters. The novel *Fingersmith* (2002) was written in the first years of the twenty-first century, but its focus is on the Victorian Age. The novel's plot is set in the 1860s. Its plot, style and themes are Victorian. Maud Lilly and Sue Trinder are women who struggle for survival in the harsh environment of urban London. In the very first section of the novel, Sue gives information about her thus:

My name, in those days, was Susan Trinder. People called me Sue. I know the year I was born in, but for many years I did not know the date, and took my birthday at Christmas. I believe I am an orphan. My mother I know is dead. But I never saw her, she was nothing to me. I was Mrs Sucksby's child (1).

The two primary female characters were born with different mothers. Sue Trinder, whom Mrs Sucksby adopted, collaborates with a man known as Gentleman to become Maud's maid of honour through a cunning plan. Lilly steals money to help him to marry her. It is decided that Maud will take half of the payment from inheritance. However, the trick rebounds on Sue, giving her psychological pain. She escapes from the asylum and returns to Mrs Sucksby, where Maud kills Gentleman accidentally. Mrs Sucksby confesses to the crime and receives the death penalty. Susan learns that she is the true heiress and that Maud is Mrs Sucksby's daughter. She discovers the truth regarding the baby swapping. To raise Maud as a lady and protect Sue from Marianne's father and brother, Mrs Sucksby and Marianne, Sue's mother, swapped the girls at birth.

Female characters are aware that they are telling stories or being told the stories to build an atmosphere of wonder and romance. The plot is rich in the elements of the Gothic and sensational novel of the Victorian Age. Ironically each woman character is oblivious to her true identity. The novel opens with the theatre play of Charles Dickens, where Sue is present. Sarah Waters describes the agony of Mrs Sucksby: "So Mrs Sucksby told it; and every time, though her voice would start off steady, it would end up trembling, and her eyes would fill with tears" (11). Sue says: "You are waiting for me to start my story. Perhaps I was waiting, then. But my story had already started- I

was only like you, and didn't know it" (14). When she returns home from the asylum, she confronts Mrs Sucksby, Gentleman and Maud, expressing her agony thus:

Do you suppose a girl is sitting here? That girl is lost! ... She has only bones, stripped white! She is as white as a page of paper! She is a book, from which the words have peeled and drifted - ... My life was not lived, I say in a whisper. You have told me; it was a fiction (336).

*Fingersmith* is a sensational novel packed with Gothic romance, actual and imagined episodes, and Waters employs the imagery of fairy tales. Sue wears Maud's silk attire, much as in Cinderella, and Maud is disguised as a servant. Sue's kiss similarly changes the perfectly innocent Maud into Sleeping Beauty. Waters illustrates the romantic scene of furniture in Maud's darkened parlor, which like the baskets in which Ali Baba's thieves hid. This is the scene in which Maud convinces Sue of her terror and convinces her to stay with her in her bed, "The bed was dark, like a box. Her breath came out of the darkness (88).

The implication is that Maud is a thief of Sue's sexual innocence and a metaphor for the criminal intentions each is hiding from the other. Sarah Waters uses the elements of the Gothic to depict the fractured identity of the women characters. The Gothic elements help her to dramatize, as Kelly Hurley (1996) observes, "the loss of a unified, stable human identity, and the emergence of a chaotic and transformative abhuman identity in its place" (10). The two narrator heroines become villains of the other's story, losing their identities.

### **The Use of Gothic and Animal Images to Portray the Fluid Identity of Women**

Sarah Waters uses the imagery of the Gothic, supernatural and animals to portray the fluid identity of her characters. Maud and Sue transform child-like ignorance and naivety into adult self-realisation and awareness. Sue and Maud remain unaware of all the facts until the novel's end. Characters are described as innocents and fools. Sue is: "slow" (14) while Maud is a: "dummy" (36-7) and is thought childlike or girl-like by Sue (89), like Laura Fairly in Wilkie Collins' *Woman in White* (1859). She employs the imagery of fate, chance and magic to portray the fluid identity of her women characters. The characters form a deck of cards: "Mr Lilly is King of Diamonds, Gentleman, Jack of Spades, Maud, a Queen" (23). Maud tells Sue her "grandmother was a gypsy-princess" (98). Maud disdains this story, claiming: "You are too fair in the face" (100),

a clue to Sue's elite origins. Waters employs the imagery of jewellery, suggesting the economic value of characters. Sue regards Mrs Sucksby's treating her as a jewel "as a sign of love, as she is of ordinary face and talent" (12). Gentleman who wears "counterfeit jewels" (18) claims of Maud: "She's our little jewel, Suky. Soon I shall praise her from her setting and turn her into cash" (114). Maud leaving Briar is "like a pearl coming out of an oyster" (79). Mrs Sucksby says of the note left in her care, which Sue's mother addressed to Susan Lilly on her eighteenth birthday: "Kept this closer than gold!" (338).

In *Fingersmith*, the imagery of food and animals is employed, suggesting human frailty and uncertainty in their life. Maud is a "tabby cat" (180), harmless looking, yet a predator, but also prey, a "veal calf" (182), a "pigeon", and a "chick" (66). Maud's naked body is "soft as butter" (83). Her tooth is sharper than a serpent's (97). Sue meets Maud in a room with "a dead snake in a glass case with a white egg in its mouth" (65). Sue is a "spider" (128) at the centre of Gentleman's web of ambition. Sue realises Maud has tricked her. Sue's leaving supper is a stuffed pig's head, "its snout gummed brown with treacly tears". Sue's mood mirrors the pig's tears: "I grew sad" (43). Waters's narrative in *Fingersmith* is also Dickensian. Like Dickens, Waters employs a complicated plot. Oliver Twist is a workhouse boy who falls into the clutches of London's criminal underworld.

Petty thieves and baby farmers abduct Fingersmith's upper-class orphan heroine. *Fingersmith* is also a detective story. Sue discovers her birth mother and origins, like Esther in Dickens' *Bleak House* (1852), who discovers that she is the illegitimate daughter of an aristocrat, Lady Dedlock. The novel's ugly and deadly Gothic environment eventually shatters and bulldozes the identity of women characters. Sue thinks that Mrs Sucksby is seeing her dead baby:

'I see her in you', she'd say... 'Poor girl, she'll never come back! Your fortune's still to be made. Your fortune, Sue, and ours along with it... 'I let her think it; but thought I knew better. I'd heard once that she'd had a child of her own, many years before, that had been born dead. I thought it was her face she supposed she saw, when she gazed so hard at mine. The idea made me shiver (13).

Waters employs the imagery of a locked box to portray the fractured identity of the mother. She is always confused and puzzled. Maud keeps portrait of her “mother locked in a box” (73). Maud herself does not recognise that her mother is hanged for murder. Maud recalls: “A strange bare girl had once run, shrieking, down Lant Street, with a policeman and a nurse behind her. Suppose Miss Lilly took fright like that, and I had to grab her?” (36). Maud’s brutal version of birth and her mother’s death scene is reminiscent of *Frankenstein* (1818). Maud’s mother, “strapped to a table” (179), is a more malfunctioning machine than a human, accompanied by clocks beating and blood dripping. Despite her betrayal, Maud reveals her love for Sue: “My own poor mistress. Oh! My heart is breaking!” (168-171). Maud claims: “For it was my birth that killed my mother. I am as to blame for her death as if I had stabbed her with my own hand!” (122). These women use their exceptional wits to free themselves from the slavish patriarchal oppression and domination.

The novel *Fingersmith* is a sensational tale of betrayal, deception and patriarchal oppression. The harsh and Gothic environment threatens all women characters. They struggle for survival and resort to cheating and deception but ultimately experience the loss of identity and happiness. Sue Trinder is the leading woman character in the novel, and Sarah Waters describes her as “poor and wily and prepared to do a very dark deed” (12). Despite her betrayal, Maud reveals her love for Sue: “My own poor mistress. Oh! My heart is breaking!” (168-171). Maud claims: “For it was my birth that killed my mother. I am as to blame for her death as if I had stabbed her with my own hand!” (122). Such extremes are ripe for parody, like Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1803). *Fingersmith* presents three female characters: Sue Tinder, Maud and Mrs Sucksby, who is hanged for murder. All these women are mysterious and involved in the murderous conspiracy of the villains. They have no heroism though Sue Tinder shows her genuine sentiments for Maud. The plot is replete with the elements of the Gothic and the fairy-tale world. The plot evokes the images from the novels of Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield* as Sarah Waters depicts the life and struggles of lower-class women such as Sue Tinder and Mrs Sucksby.

*The Night Watch* (2006) is a dark, historical fiction novel by Waters, which got her Man Booker Prize for Fiction and Orange Prize for Fiction in 2006. The plot is set in 1940s London during and after World War II. Sarah Waters depicts the fragmented

lives and the strange interconnections between the four characters. Interestingly, all the women characters subvert the traditional gender roles during wartime. They are writers, workers and ambulance drivers. Women revolt against the traditional morality of the Victorian age who cut their short hair, wear trousers and smoke cigarettes like men. Three women are lesbian, and the fifth character is a man. The gender performativity theory of Judith Butler (1990) holds that the binary opposition of man-woman relationships can be deconstructed by revealing how “they are discursively constructed within a heterosexual matrix of power” (Butler 30). Women, particularly Kay, behaves as man, and she is often mistaken as a “young man”. People are hostile and unkind toward Kay because of her masculine appearance.

Waters frequently describes the heroic quality of Kay, who “carried stretchers in the wartime” (Waters 55). Such binary oppositions of gender are also challenged and criticised by Judith Butler. The lives of the female characters are entwined as two are related, and two are in a sexual relationship. Sarah Waters has a terrifying setting; the scenes of the bombing raids, rationing, the scenes of fleeing people filled with anxiety and their struggles for survival remind me of life during World War II. Sarah Waters’s main thrust is on the emotional disturbance of the characters trapped in the abyss of darkness and chaos. Once again, Sarah Waters takes up the theme of the sexual and lesbian identity of women and their traumatic experiences. *The Night Watch* depicts the traumatic experiences of four citizens of London who lived during the 1940s. Kay Langrish, serves as an ambulance driver during the War. Helen is her former lover, now running a dating service. She is in a relationship with her married soldier lover. Duncan served in prison during wartime. The novel's plot unfolds profound loneliness and shattered identities of women characters. Sarah Waters has depicted the emotional symptoms of shell shock in *The Night Watch*. She experiences the loss of her lover and feels emotionally and psychologically displaced. In many ways, the plot describes the social disturbances of the Second World War and the struggles of women in their quest for sexual freedom and identity. In an interview with Kaye Mitchell (2018), the novelist observed thus:

I have written that ... every time I tried to move my characters forwards; I met resistance ... It was not my characters' futures that would make them interesting to me; it was their pasts ... I saw that the novel might



work best if I put its action in reverse –if I kept its opening in the post-war setting of 1947, but then plunged back into the trauma and excitement of the War itself (Mitchell 93).

Sarah Waters has used the technique of reverse chronology to structure the novel's plot signifying the drag of the romantic past upon the characters. Waters explores the wartime situation depicted as a time of terror and uncertainty but as an idealised period of liberty and self-determination for women. Kay sarcastically remarks: "Don't you know the war's over?" (94). Thus, Kaye Mitchell has argued that "Kay's status as unmarried, childless, queer, jobless, presumably possessed of a private income" means that she "cannot be contained by the routines, the strictures, that bind other people" (85). Kay loses her original identity as a war heroine in war-damaged London, reduced to a hermit. Kay is a watcher. She loses confidence and looks depressed and lonely, aimlessly wandering the streets. She has no place in the "well-swept, devastated, post-war city" (6). In the first section of the novel *The Night Watch*, the female characters are portrayed through the imagery of ash and dust. Viv has the impression of "a sort of greyness" carried about with her.

According to Sarah Waters "A layer of grief as fine as ash just beneath the surface" (17) and the tenuous connection between Helen and Julia is reduced to a "faint, gusty echo" (6) heard through a telephone receiver. The imagery of emptiness and darkness is used to depict her isolation and loss of identity. Her room is "empty and featureless" (5), and the glass of the windows has been replaced with linoleum, "the room was dim" (5). Helen and Julia live "in a dusty, untidy flat" (47). Sarah Waters depicts the chaotic environment thus through the compelling image;

The cups and stubs of cigarettes had Julia's lipstick on them. A tumbler had a smudge left by her thumb ... Everywhere, in fact, there were bits of Julia—Julia's dark hairs on the sofa cushions and the floor; her kicked-off espadrilles beneath the desk; a clipping of nail beside the waste-paper basket, an eye-lash, powder from her face (135).

The relationships in *The Night Watch* are permeated by anxiety and restlessness haunting the characters living in turbulent periods. They are aware of the impending danger and the threatening wartime period bringing in their life trauma and dissolution of self. Kay has "a secret, persistent dread of coming back and finding that the place

[the home she shares with Helen] had been hit, was in flames or ruins” (200). Kay feels displaced “as her secret, persistent dread of homelessness and violence” brings about real psychological trauma and the eventual loss of self. Viv is the victim of psychic pressures as she has to endure the consequences of her abortion. In the threatening wartime situation, Reggie makes love in the shadow of a ruined building thus:

Grass grew through the gaps between its flagstones. Pigeons fluttered in its beams, and its floors were covered with bird droppings and broken slate and glass. Somebody, at some point, had cleared a space and made a fire; there were cans and bottles, and filthy messages on the walls. The cans were rusty, the bottles silvery with age (61).

The conspicuous feature of the novel *The Night Watch* is the dramatization of the post-war ruined urban landscape and the performance of love by the women characters to escape their psychic anxieties. They make love to get release from the psychological tensions though it is not “the condition to which women should aspire” (36). Ruin and destruction symbolise the inner tensions and turbulent state of women. The post-war urban landscape, reduced to abject ruin, thus becomes a metaphor for the status of women in culture. No wonder Kay sees herself as trapped in a melancholic attachment to the past, comparing her ‘grief’ thus: “A fallen house, and one has to pick one’s way over the rubble to the ground on the other side ... I’ve got lost in my rubble, Mickey. I can’t seem to find my way across it. I don’t think I want to cross it, that’s the thing. The rubble has all my life in it still” (102). Similarly, a house damaged by an incendiary bomb exhibits a kind of misery; it is, she says, “like a life with a cancer in it” (210).

The images of the ruined buildings, of piles of rubble symbolise the lost life of women characters. The external destruction reflects the inner chaos of the life of the characters. They seem lost and bewildered, living in an atmosphere of corruption, illness and injury. The novel *The Night Watch* presents people living in London during the Second World War. Four of them are women, three of them are lesbian, and one man is gay. Mitchell observes that the novel’s plot depicts the helplessness of the women characters confronted with the wartime situation and their anxiety about the fragility of the future in wartime. Each woman character suffers from a sense of loss and psychological trauma. Mitchell (2013) comments thus:

It can be read as communicating the experience of having no future, or rather being unable to speculate about the future, suppressing any possible future; but it seems also an attempt to resist endings, and the close and meaningfulness they apparently confer (Mitchell 93).

Boehm (2011) argues that Waters's way of writing has "an approach that concentrates on the effective and disruptive ways in which tactile encounters with architectural places and material objects shape our investments in the past" (Boehm 238). Boehm notes that in all of Waters' novels, buildings are never only there for a background, and continues to write that "the representation of architectural space is frequently tied to the novels' larger concern with history and reflects on the ways in which a modern culture 'inhabits' and lives in dialogue with the past" (Boehm 241). Sarah Waters has realistically described the bombed buildings and ruined towers of London. These images of death and destruction psychologically impact the characters' lives and psyche, leading to their moral and spiritual degradation. Waters observes thus:

Before the War, Kay had been able to stand at her window and watch young men and women in the workshops painting swags and cupids on lovely old tables and chairs. Now the workshops had been closed down ... The fact of there being so much wood there, and so much varnish and paint, made the mews a dreadfully unsafe place (Waters 326).

Sarah Waters has portrayed the complexities of interpersonal connections. In 1944 Helen and Kay go to the park to celebrate the birthday of Helen. They are shocked to see the havoc there: "They remembered it as lush, green, lovely. But now the trees were utterly bare, revealing, here and there, the brutal, barbed-wired flans of anti-aircraft batteries and military gear" (Waters 329). On their walk, Kay crushes ice and "it became white powder –exactly the powder of broken glass at a bomb site" (Waters 330). They end up walking up a hill from where it was possible to see all over London: "Because of the distance –and the smoke from so many chimneys –even the patches of rubble and the hollowed-out roofless buildings had a certain smudgy charm" (Waters 335). While these quotes show the realistic destruction of the War, there is still a lingering hope amidst the devastation.

In the novel's first part, Helen and Julia are in a relationship and live together in a building with another family. They have to hide their relationship. They even have a spare bedroom in their apartment, which "got presented to neighbours and visitors as Helen's room" (Waters 53). Sarah Waters uses the metaphor of hiding to depict the tensions and anxieties of the lovers. The lesbian characters of *The Night Watch* deal with their sexualities and relationships. Helen is in a relationship with Kay, who also feels like she has to hide it: "She'd left her own friends behind when she moved in with Kay, or she kept Kay a secret from them. And Kay's friends were all like Mickey –all like Kay, in other words" (Waters 284). Helen is guilt-ridden afraid of how her friends might react to her being a lesbian and living with another woman. On the other hand, Kay's friends are "all like Kay," meaning they are lesbians and perhaps more open about sexuality than Helen. She has not even told her family about her sexuality: "I'd never want to advertise it. I'd never dream, for example, of telling my mother! But why should I? It's a thing between Kay and me. And we're two grown women. Who does it harm?" (Waters 285). Alden (2013) writes that Waters "alludes to the possibility of not being well-adjusted about one's sexuality, but contains it, taking it no further" (Alden 81). *The Night Watch* provides detailed descriptions of the situation:

The chaos was extraordinary. Every time Kay put down her feet, things cracked beneath them, or wrapped themselves around her ankles—What amazed her too, was the smallness of the piles of dirt and rubble to which even large buildings could be reduced (Waters 201).

As Julia says in 1944: "Nature triumphant over war" (213); as it is customary for people to talk about new species of birds or flowers, they have seen the midst of the terror of the War. Kay's And "Kay's friends were all like Mickey" (284) –all like Kay, in other words. The novel *The Night Watch* is a harrowing tale of the shell-shocked women characters who struggle to forge their sexual identity and establish their sexual and lesbian relationships but eventually experience psychological anguish. They remain fear-ridden and guilty conscious till the end of the novel. They fail to forge a stable identity, and the images of ruin, death and destruction symbolise their inner turmoil and fluid personality. Doreen Massey (1994) argues thus:

The identities of place are always unfixed, contested and multiple. And the particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by

placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counter-position to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to that 'beyond' (Massey 89).

Sarah Waters stated that she took ideas and inspiration from novels, diaries, and letters written during the Second World War. Women characters are not on the front lines; they all live in London and experience death and destruction. *The Night Watch* is Waters' historical novel in which Sarah Waters employs gender and queer theories in creating female characters. Robinson (2011) argues thus:

Her representations of late Victorian London in fact, create an ontologically distinct, parallel entity, and unprecedented neo-Victorian London. Waters' Victorian present past – the past as it now exists in our conscious imagination, which may or may not correspond to the past as it actually was – arguably has less to do with the past present of that society than the identity politics of the present (Robinson 51).

In *The Night Watch*, Sarah Waters vividly portrays the aftermath of War-torn London. She explores women's journey to establish identities in a city devastated by bombings. These women utilise their sexualities to escape life's traumas during this turbulent period. The War's impact has been brutal, with husbands losing their lives in the conflict and homes reduced to rubble. The upheaval has left the city in disarray, with scarce job opportunities and death looming on the streets. In these dire circumstances, women are compelled to leave their homes and take on office roles, necessitating a transformation of their identities to adapt to this harsh and uncertain environment. The novel delves into the struggles and resilience of women during this chaotic time, highlighting how they navigate through the challenges of a shattered city, and employ their sexualities as a means of survival and empowerment. *The Night Watch* offers a compelling narrative of the resilience of women during World War II and their quest for identity and survival amidst the devastating aftermath of War in London.

*The Little Stranger* (2009) is based on folk stories, fairy tales, and Gothic romances, and the female characters are struggling and enjoying love and escape from the tensions and anxieties of life. Waters builds on women's ghost story precedents, evoking the scenes depicted in Susan Hill's novel *The Women in Black* (1983) and the

haunting scenes of Dauphine du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* (1938). Sarah Waters is also indebted to the storyline of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, echoing the decayed landed gentry. In each of these novels, the heart-rending tale of a woman is depicted who is cast out and killed off because of patriarchal domination. Waters draws the matter of the novel from the second wave of feminism championed by Gilbert and Gubar (1979), presenting the horrible scenes of the entrapping and fractured identity of women. Waters employs the strategies of the Gothic in depicting the tragic fate of Caroline Ayres, daughter of the great house, Hundreds Hall. Mrs Ayres is the remnant of the decayed gentry. She is neurotic and hysterical, haunted by her daughter Susan. The Hundred Hall has a Gothic environment; the oppressive and threatening environment of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic world pervades it. Susan's ghost always haunts Mrs Ayres. Dr Faraday is an outsider who plans to grab Mrs Ayres' massive property by marrying Caroline, who struggles to escape from the stifling environment of The Hundred House.

The present fiction is a gothic thriller with a traumatic and depressive twist. Sarah Waters shows her passion for the historical events of the 1940s in *The Little Stranger*. Waters reveals her passion for the Gothic romances and creates women characters who are the victims of psychological tensions and anxieties. Waters combines the twentieth-century theme of the demise of a Country House and family with the Victorian trope of the Gothic mansion engulfed by the past. There is a delicate juxtaposition between the golden age of the Victorians and the broken age of the post-World War period. The novel opens with the narrator's memory of the Empire Day commemorations he attended in 1919 at the local country estate Hundreds Hall, "an absolute mansion in the ten-year-old village boy's stunned eyes" (Waters 1).

The plot of the novel *The Little Stranger* (2009) is set in a ruined mansion in Warwickshire, England, in the 1940s. Sarah Waters deviates from the earlier novels, discards the theme of lesbianism, and presents a country doctor who is the story's main narrator. He develops friendships with the people of the old gentry family of declining fortunes living in an old crumbling estate. The stress of improving the financial condition forms the core of the novel. Dr Faraday is the main protagonist of the novel, who begins his journey visiting an old 18th-century mansion to treat a young maid. She is a neurotic woman who hates the spooky, drafty house with its creaks and the

oppressive feelings of alienation. Emma Parker (2015) observes that the novel *The Little Stranger* “explores the destructive effects of class structure on the psyche of the women characters, challenging also the ideologies of gender and sexuality” (Parker 112). The female characters of Sarah Waters live in the world of fairy tales and struggle to forge a solid identity.

Dr Faraday is the novel’s main protagonist, the son of a housemaid. He has built a life of respectability as he became famous as a country doctor. In 1948, he was called to see a patient at Hundreds Hall, where his mother worked. The Ayres family owned this Hall, but it is on the decline after the destruction of World War II. Mother Mrs Ayres, her son Roderick and daughter Caroline live here in the Hall, a haunted place. The Hall now belongs to Roderick Ayres, a scarred Royal Air Force veteran. The elderly Mrs Ayres also lives there with her daughter, Caroline. Upon arriving, Dr Faraday observes that the house has decayed over the years and that the family is in severe financial straits. He is well-mannered and has an amiable personality. However, as the plot progresses, Sarah Waters reveals some of the darker emotions, anger and bitterness. He is disgusted because he feels alienated and is haunted by a sense of failure. Roderick assures Dr Faraday that the Hall is haunted and that supernatural forces rule this Hall. The Gothic elements intensify the gruesome atmosphere of the novel.

Lady Ayres commits suicide; her baby daughter Susan dies in her childhood, and even Caroline dies. Roderick, a pilot who participated in the War and later returned with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), is also receiving treatment from Dr Faraday for his wounds. Dr Faraday later meets with Roderick, who claims a supernatural force in the house hates him. Dr Faraday takes this as evidence of Roderick being of unsound mind and becomes alarmed when he learns Roderick is planning a land sale. Roderick accosts Dr Faraday about intruding into the Ayres’ affairs. Roderick later sets fire to his room and is committed to an asylum. Dr Faraday resolves to stay and care for the Ayres. He becomes romantically involved with Caroline, despite her being of a higher social class. Julian Wolfreys (2002) observes that the novel is full of Gothic elements: “The haunted house is the place where the blurring of boundaries is given its most literal depiction, in the motion of ghosts through walls” (7).

Hundreds Hall is systematically accompanied by disasters striking the family and the house. The horrifying Gothic environment of the novel reminds the readers of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). The fundamental conflict of the narrative is Caroline's desire to flee the creepy house and Dr Faraday's desire to seize the estate. He intends to seduce Caroline into marriage. Dr Faraday and Caroline strive for social prominence, but their utopian visions end in disaster. Faraday's muted fury is aimed at the family, which has been humiliating him and his family for a long time, but also at the house, which embodies everything he has ever aspired to class, sophistication, beauty and status. His frustration with the house, his ambivalent feelings of admiration and the wish to destroy are hidden in his conspiracy. Waters observes thus:

If Hundreds Hall is haunted, however, its ghost does'nt show itself to me. For I'll turn, and am disappointed—realising that what I'm looking at is only a cracked window-pane, and that the face gazing distortedly from it, baffled and longing, is my own (Waters 498–499).

Caroline becomes fragmented and loses herself due to her impulsive temperament and desire to leave the house. Faraday possesses qualities of destructiveness, love, hatred, and frustration. She is eager to forge a new existence for herself outside of the customs that tie her to a deceased heirdom. Waters calls them ghosts buried within: "They are as some sort of energy, or a collection of energies. . . They're not ghosts. They're parts of a person. Unconscious parts, so strong and troubled they can take on a life of their own" (Waters 364).

Faraday plans to marry Caroline to rise the social ladder and become the estate owner. He conflicts with Roderick as the novelist has dramatized the conflicting sense of class and identity. Faraday wants to capture the estate, but Caroline longs to escape the haunted house. Faraday expresses his dream thus:

It was simply that, in admiring the house, I wanted to possess a piece of it – or rather, as if the admiration itself, which I suspected a more ordinary child would not have felt, entitled me to it. I was like a man, I suppose, wanting a lock of hair from the head of a girl he had suddenly and blindingly become enamoured of (Waters 3).



Faraday's emotional attachment to Caroline eventually brings disintegration and loss of Caroline's identity. He desires her to capture the estate and not for love because he can access the Country House, he has always coveted through her. Caroline confronts Faraday and asks him: "Do you [want me], really? ... Or is it the house you want?" reveals Faraday's true intention (448). Faraday's inner intentions are exposed as he feels embarrassed and fails to answer her satisfactorily. However, he feels proud of himself for "bringing Caroline Ayres along to a party" (265), given that she is the daughter of a Squire. Caroline is so stressed that she behaves abnormally at the dance party. She ignores Faraday and is lost in socialising with her friend. In desperation, she decides to break off the engagement with Faraday after "thinking about what I wanted, and didn't want", which shows her determination not to be confined to the hetero-patriarchal environment (Waters 446). Gina Wisker (2016) observes thus, "Caroline [has no] real commitment to romance, sexual encounter [nor] the marriage narrative constructed for her by others or the socio-cultural gender politics of the in which she lives" (103).

Her reluctance to dress femininely is apparent at the cocktail party when she evidently feels ill at ease and not quite herself wearing a pointedly feminine gown. Sarah Waters has depicted her as a lost lady, depressed and entrapped in the chaotic disorder. She wears a blue chiffon gown, silver shoes, and gloves, emphasising the masculine parts of her body, her prominent "collarbones and the tendons of her throat" (82). Faraday takes Caroline to this place on the night of the dance after Caroline is unwilling to return home. She says: "God, I don't want to go back to Hundreds! Take me somewhere else, can't you?" (273). Caroline sees Faraday not as her romantic partner but as someone who can help her escape the suffocating life at Hundred Hall. Dr Faraday and Caroline live in a different world. He wants to grab the estate, and Caroline longs to run away from it and its suffocating environment. She is a neurotic figure hating everyone in desperation and suffering from disintegration and dissonance of self. She's cast back into the home, and her energies are curtailed by gender and class, which is figured in the incarceration of the house and grounds. Her striking figure and her ability to talk to the builders, her unease in grand occasions, ball gowns and romantic encounters suggest she would have been happier in a different context. The novel depicts her potential thwarted. Caroline's mother, Mrs Ayres, lives the remnants

of a dream of the decayed aristocracy, the rotting fabric of her house falling about her, surrounded and confused by the memories of the lost daughter, Susan, and reminders of lost hopes. She often talks about the first daughter, dead of a disease the NHS helped stamp out: diphtheria. She refuses to recognise the damage done in War.

In *The Little Stranger*, Sarah Waters continues her exploration of fallen and lesbian women characters, enveloping them in a haunting Gothic environment. The novel sheds light on the plight of Caroline, who finds herself in a helpless and marginalised position while residing in the eerie and haunted Hundreds Hall. Waters delves into the struggles and complexities faced by Caroline, highlighting her vulnerabilities as a woman with limited agency and societal standing. The Gothic atmosphere of Hundreds Hall further amplifies the eerie and oppressive atmosphere surrounding her life.

The novel masterfully weaves themes of gender, class, and sexuality, providing a compelling narrative that captures the challenges and experiences of women like Caroline, whose voices and identities have been historically silenced or overlooked. She creates a haunting and atmospheric tale that not only entertains but also serves as a poignant reflection on the position of marginalised women in a Gothic setting, evoking a sense of empathy and understanding for characters like Caroline.

In *The Paying Guests*, the theme of fractured and fragmented identity plays a significant role in the story's unfolding. The novel delves into the psychological complexities of its characters, particularly Frances Wray, as they grapple with the repercussions of societal expectations and their own hidden desires. Frances, the protagonist, experiences a fractured identity as a result of the changes brought on by the aftermath of World War I and her family's financial struggles. The loss of their former social status and the burden of running the household lead her to assume new roles and responsibilities that challenge her sense of self. She finds herself torn between her duty to her family and her own desires, creating a fragmented internal struggle. The arrival of Leonard and Lilian Barber, the paying guests, further complicates Frances' identity. Her growing attraction to Lilian and their subsequent clandestine relationship brings about feelings of guilt and secrecy, leading to a further fragmentation of her sense of self. Frances is torn between the expectations of society and her own desires, resulting in internal conflict and emotional turmoil.

Lilian's identity is also depicted as fractured in the novel. She is trapped in a loveless marriage and longs for freedom and a sense of self, leading her to seek solace in her connection with Frances. However, the societal constraints of the time prevent her from fully embracing her true identity and desires. The novel skilfully examines how societal norms and the pressures of concealment impact the characters' identities, leading to internal dissonance and a sense of fragmentation. Sarah Waters intricately weaves together themes of desire, secrecy, and societal expectations, highlighting the profound impact on the characters' sense of self and identity. *The Paying Guests* offers a compelling exploration of the complexities of identity during a transformative and socially restrictive period in history.

Sarah Waters presented great interest among the critics and the reviewers. The novel narrates the tale of a mother and daughter who struggle to survive in 1920s London. They are confronting poverty and financial crunch, so they are forced to take on lodgers to meet the daily needs of life. The result of taking guests brings suffering to these women as the love affair results in a terrible crime. The main themes of the novel are the strictures of class, the politics of a judicial system and the subjectivity of women. Sarah Waters stated in her interviews that she was inspired by the miserable life of the lower-class women who led horrible life during the War. Frances Wray and her mother, Mrs Emily Wray, are passing through a financial crisis, so they decided to take the lodgers, Leonard Barber and Lilian, to meet the daily needs of life. Mr Wray had mismanaged the family wealth bringing them poverty. Frances is the sole housekeeper who shares her secrets with her girlfriend, Christina, for a free life as she develops a steady relationship with a woman named Stevie. She is responsible for looking after her aged mother. The arrival of Barbers brings a drastic change in the life of Frances, who quickly takes a liking to Lilian. Lilian too, begins to value her friendship with Frances.

Sarah Waters depicts the changes in society after World War II. The novel's plot is structured around the conflict between the upper and lower classes. The storyline begins when Wrays belonging to the upper-middle class welcome the Barbers of the lower class as lodgers. The plot is set in the 1920s featuring Frances Wrays and her widowed mother. She has to rent her house to meet the daily expenditure. Frances Wrays is a spinster who has to maintain the house without a servant. Mr and Mrs Barber

rent their house, which is a significant relief for the women. The plot depicts the transcendental relationship between two women, Frances and Lilian, a tenant. The plot deals with the issues of mysterious murder and the identity crisis of the main female characters. The house of the spinster contains the typical value system of British society. All the young male members of the family were killed in the War. Frances lost her father, and her family plunged into an economic crisis because of the misguided investment of her father. All her brothers also were killed in the War. She expresses her anguish and hardship; she links the house to a human body while cleaning it “It seemed to her that the house must produce the dust as flesh oozes sweat” (25). The house is haunted as each item in the house reminds her of the memories of her father and brothers.

The furniture of her father collected turns out to be a collection of “Victorian fakes” (24). Frances’s mother is reluctant to dispose of it, saying it has her “father’s heart” in it (24). Frances is under acute depression because of her mother’s rigid and conformist attitude. She hates the obsolete Victorian values. Her mother assumes rigid and oppressive patriarchal authority after her father’s death. She is under pressure to maintain her father's passion for “Olde England” (24). Her mother opposes and condemns the lesbian relationship of Frances with Christina. This opposition to her mother and rigid patriarchal oppression brings internal disorder and becomes the root cause of her fragmentation and loss of her identity. She feels trapped in her own house and thinks it is more than a den where she cannot enjoy freedom. She expresses her anguish thus after being reduced to a servant;

She had no real interest in food, neither in preparing nor in eating it, but she had developed a grudging aptitude for cookery during the War; she enjoyed, anyhow, the practical challenge of making one cheap cut of meat do for several different dishes (24).

Frances revolts against the patriarchal, heteronormative order of her mother and gradually develops a sexual relationship with Lilian transforming her home into a queer place. She organises her thoughts with expressions related to cooking:

There was a quickening, a livening – Frances could think of nothing to compare it with save some culinary process. It was like the white of an

egg growing pearly in hot water, a milk sauce thickening in the pan. It was as subtle yet as tangible as that (91).

The first sexual union of Frances and Lilian takes place “in the scullery” (220), a dark place symbolising the inner darkness of Frances: Maud and Sue’s sexual union in *Fingersmith* in the dark bedroom of Briar Works. Waters employs cookery imagery to depict the homosexual desires of the fallen women and their struggle to subvert traditional Victorian values. They indulge in these sexual actions to escape their domestic confinement. The darkness of the scullery symbolises their dark sexual conduct and moral degradation. Frances’s mother disapproves of her lesbian sexuality, while Lilian is married to Leonard Barber. Frances and Lilian are in quest of sexual freedom. Frances hides her lesbian identity as she “almost wishes she were a man” (269) so that she could declare her love for Lilian openly. Only inside the house and within the house in their rooms can they express their love for each other. Frances and Lilian show their intimacy openly thus: “It was like making love: the thrill and intimacy of it, the never letting go of each other, the clutching of fingers and the bumping of thighs, the racing and matching of heartbeats and breaths” (278).

Both Frances and Lilian display their sexual intimacy in the dark scullery breaking the traditional norms of Victorian society. They desperately seek a life separated from the society in which they are confined. Sarah Waters uses the imagery of “a glass dome” to describe the fantastic relationship between Frances and Lilian are under acute depression and fear that “as long as they are content with their fantasy plan, they will not be able to escape their confinement” (269). A glass dome representing Frances and Lilian’s utopian imagination is a possible image of “heterotopia of illusion” in miniature form. Frances expresses her neurotic sexual desires thus:

We began to want to live together. We planned it, seriously. We did everything seriously in those days. Christina took typewriting and book-keeping classes. We looked at rooms, we saved our money ... Christina and I talked as though we were part of a new society! Everything was changing. Why shouldn't we change too? (177).

Frances builds a house of cards that collapses, bringing her psychological anguish. She is fear-ridden as their plan “look rather flimsy” (178). Frances fears that she and Christina may not be able to “shake off tradition, cast, all that her Bohemian

lifestyle with her new lover Stevie” (177). She exhorts Lilian thus: “I want you to leave Leonard. Lilian I want you to leave him and live with me” (300). Her imaginative gypsy life is impossible since it can only happen in the dream world. When Lilian murders Leonard, their plan for a new life is shattered, and her house of cards collapses. Patricia Juliana Smith (1997), in *Lesbian Panic*, comments thus on their turning neurotics:

The lesbian panic of these women degenerate them, disintegrate their self and the disruptive action or reaction that occurs when a character is either unable or unwilling to confront or reveal her own lesbianism or lesbian desire. Lesbian panic often leads a character to commit irrational or illogical acts that inevitably work to disadvantage or harm of herself or others. In such a situation neurotic behaviour is inevitable (Smith 2).

*The Paying Guests* continues Waters’s exploration of fallen and mysterious women, as is a common theme in her works. Set in 1920s London, the novel follows the lives of Frances Wray and her mother, who decide to take in lodgers, or “paying guests,” in their home due to financial difficulties after World War I. Frances, the protagonist, is portrayed as a fallen woman, as her life has been significantly altered by the War and her family’s financial decline. Her status in society changes, and she is forced to take on new responsibilities and adapt to the challenging circumstances. The arrival of the paying guests, Leonard and Lilian Barber, introduces mystery and intrigue to the story. Frances becomes entangled with the enigmatic Lilian, and they develop a complex relationship. As the narrative unfolds, secrets and hidden desires emerge, adding to these women’s mystery. Sarah Waters weaves a tale of suppressed desires, societal expectations, and the consequences of crossing boundaries throughout the novel. *The Paying Guests* presents a captivating exploration of fallen and mysterious women during societal change. It offers a thought-provoking glimpse into their struggles and aspirations during this transformative historical period.

To conclude, the women characters in Waters’ novels; *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999), *Fingersmith* (2002), *The Night Watch* (2006), *The Little Stranger* (2009), and *The Paying Guest* (2014) are women who struggle desperately to forge their identity in the British society through lesbian sexuality. Sarah Waters pointed out that they are trapped in a mess because of their irrational actions—the fractured identity of the women characters of Sarah Waters. The conspicuous feature

of her novels is the presence of Gothic elements and women's quest for sexual liberties. Women break from traditional morality and are in quest of freedom and identity. However, they resort to multiple ways in their struggles and eventually experience alienation, displacement and fractured identity. She presents fallen and depressed women who indulge in lesbian activities to escape their anxieties and sexual frigidities. Sarah Waters has depicted a galaxy of fallen women in her novels called by different names, such as prostitutes, unmarried women (spinsters) engaged in sexual relations with men, victims of seduction, adulteresses, and various delinquent lower-class women.

In Sarah Waters' novels, the theme of fallen identity often features prominently as she explores characters' experiences grappling with societal norms and expectations, often leading to a loss of social standing, reputation, or personal agency. These fallen identities are typically associated with characters who defy conventional norms, particularly concerning sexuality, gender, and social class. Waters' characters are often women who find themselves on the margins of society due to their sexuality or unconventional relationships. These women may be considered 'fallen' in the eyes of society, facing judgment and consequences for defying traditional roles and expectations. Through her storytelling, Waters delves into the complexities of these characters' lives, offering insight into their challenges and resilience in navigating a world that deems them outsiders. The exploration of fallen identity in Waters' novels goes hand in hand with themes of secrecy, hidden desires, and the struggle to carve out a sense of self amidst societal pressure. Her characters often face internal conflicts as they come to terms with their identities, seeking acceptance and understanding within a society that may reject them. Sarah Waters' portrayal of fallen identity in her novels is a powerful commentary on the limitations and biases of the societies in which her characters live. By giving a voice to these marginalised characters, Waters challenges societal norms and encourages readers to empathise with those who face adversity due to their perceived fallen identities.

## Chapter: Five

### Metafictional Elements

Metafiction has gained popularity as a significant literary technique in the postmodern theory of art and literature. Metafiction is a unique form of fiction that displays self-consciousness about its construction, language, narrative style, and the nature of storytelling. They may break the fourth wall, directly address the reader, or include elements that disrupt the linear progression of the story. By being aware of their own constructed nature, metafictional works invite readers to consider how language shapes our understanding of reality and how narratives are constructed. This technique encourages critical reflection on the nature of literature itself and the act of storytelling. It blurs the line between fiction and reality, challenging the traditional conventions of literature and offering a more complex and intellectually stimulating reading experience.

Metafiction is a significant aspect of postmodern literature and art. By challenging conventional narrative structures and questioning the boundaries of fiction and reality, Metafiction enriches the literary landscape and offers a deeper exploration of language, form, and narrative possibilities. In the Postmodern fiction of John Barth, who wrote *Lost in the Funhouse*, Kurt Vonnegut wrote *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Thomas Pynchon wrote *Crying of Lot 49*, which contained the elements of Metafiction. McHale (2009) comments thus about the use of metafiction in the novels of Thomas Pynchon:

Pynchon appropriates the conventions and materials of genres that flourished at the historical moments during which the events of his story occur. His genre-poaching is synchronized with the unfolding chronology of his story world (McHale 10).

Jameson observes that the elements of metafiction are found in abundance in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387), Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605), and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847). William H. Gass was the first writer who coined the term "Metafiction" in his book *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (1971). He had depicted the most recent fiction that was in some way related to fiction itself. Self-consciousness,



Self-awareness, and Self-knowledge are characteristics of Metafiction. Gass described the use of Metafiction in contemporary fiction as writers such as Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Nabokov, and John Barth discarded the old conventions and employed the elements of pastiche, magic realism, fantasy, supernaturalism, and intertextuality. The Postmodern novelists stressed a better understanding of the medium, eventually leading to a drastic change in the approach toward fiction.

Patricia Waugh (1984) argues that Metafiction is “a more general cultural interest in the problem of how human beings reflect, construct and mediate their experience of the world” (Waugh 3). Patricia Waugh’s argument about Metafiction aligns with the belief that this literary technique reflects a broader cultural interest in how humans perceive, construct, and interpret their experiences of the world. In post-World War II society, authors like Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut, among others, rejected the idea of conventional fiction.

The results of World Wars I and II led to a fundamental shift in society’s understanding of truth, reality, and human experience. The conventional medium of storytelling, which relied on linear and straightforward narratives, seemed inadequate to capture the intricate and multi-dimensional nature of the post-war world. The chaos, uncertainty, and rapid changes in technology and society demanded a more flexible and self-aware form of literature. Metafiction allowed authors to explore reality’s fragmented and subjective nature. By consciously drawing attention to the constructed nature of their narratives and experimenting with non-linear storytelling, they could reflect the complexities and uncertainties of the post-war world. Through Metafiction, authors challenged traditional notions of storytelling and truth, acknowledging that human experiences are mediated through language and subjective perspectives. By breaking away from conventional narrative conventions, they sought to explore the limitations of language and how stories shape our understanding of reality.

Pynchon, Vonnegut, and others rejected rendering the world through fiction. They realized that society after the two World Wars had become highly complex, so the conventional medium could not articulate the fundamental nature of Truth and Reality. The prominent Postmodern critics’ Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn (2007) explored the concepts of Metafiction and Metahistory in their essays and books on critics. Fredric Jameson explored and investigated the concept of pastiche and parody.

Jameson (1991) characterizes Postmodern parody as a blank parody and argues that in the Postmodern time, parody has been replaced by pastiche;

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter (Postmodernism 17).

Metafiction relies on formal self-exploration and is employed as a literary device to explore how human beings construct their world experience. Patricia Waugh (1984) defines metafiction thus:

Metafictional novels tend to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion . . . to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction. The two processes are held together in a formal tension that breaks down the distinctions between creation and criticism and merges them into the concepts of interpretation' and deconstruction (Waugh 1).

Metafiction helps writers construct worlds through language and eventually becomes a model for the construction of reality rather than a reflection of it. Reality is explored from a broader perspective and is regarded as a construct instead of objective truth. This new Postmodern technique helped the writers to create a world through the medium of language that does not reflect the real world. Language is considered an "independent, self-contained system which generates its meanings and a means of mediating knowledge of the world" (Waugh 5). The works of Sarah Waters are excellent examples of the Historiographic metafiction subgenre of Postmodern historical fiction. The interplay and mutual implication between fiction and history in Postmodernism is complicated. Historiographic metafiction demonstrates a connection to the deeper social reality by fusing history, fiction, politics, and culture. It rejects being definitive and merely demonstrates contradictoriness. Political and societal concerns are explored, but no resolutions are offered. The storytelling is diverse rather than in harmony. These fragmentations are multi-conclusive and open-ended.

Linda Hutcheon (2000) propounded the theory of parody, pastiche and ‘Historiographic Metafiction’. The events that occurred in the empirical past are self-consciously brought to our attention through ‘Historiographic Metafiction’. We label the events and establish them as historical truths through selection and narrative. The discursive inscription of historical events and their legacies in the present is how we learn about them. Hutcheon argues that parody is based on “repetition that includes difference: an imitation with critical, ironic distance” (Hutcheon 37), in which “it is the fact that they *differ* that parody emphasizes and, indeed, dramatizes” (Hutcheon 31). Historiographic metafiction “attempts to demarginalize the literary through confrontation with the historical, and it does so both thematically and formally” (Waugh 289). Linda Hutcheon differentiates the terms ‘Metafiction’ and ‘Historiographic Metafiction.’ Hutcheon (1988) contends that “in deliberate contrast to what I call late modernist radical metafiction (American fiction), attempts to demarginalize the literary through confrontation with the historical, and it does so both thematically and formally” (Hutcheon 108). Works are dubbed historiographic metafiction because of their conscious concern with history. Historiographic metafiction are novels that are intensely parodic but also re-introduce historical context into Metafiction;

Both parodically rewrite the historical events and works of art of the past, thereby questioning the stability of the meaning of both. By incorporating known historical events and personages within their texts, both manage to problematize historical knowledge and break any illusionist frame (Hutcheon 220).

They employ “a questioning stance through their common use of conventions of narrative, of reference, of the inscribing of subjectivity, of their identity as textuality, and even of their implication in ideology” (Hutcheon 106).

### **The Spectrum of Metafictional Technique**

Thomas Pynchon, specifically, emerged as a prominent figure in American Postmodernist literature. Contrary to the 19th-century view of optimism, Pynchon turned to science and technology to explore the causes and symptoms of the modern malaise affecting contemporary Americans. Notably, his novels, like *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973) and *The Bleeding Edge* (2013), adopt non-linear structures and incorporate a vast array of subject matter, genres, and themes, ranging from history and

music to science and mathematics. Pynchon's works exemplify Metafictional techniques, employing irony, paradox, and a self-conscious style that reflects a connection to a world characterized by a perplexing multiplicity instead of unity. Pynchon grapples with a deterministic order, introducing the concept of spontaneity where contradictory possibilities coexist within his narrative framework.

Barthes' (1967) essay "The Death of the Author" is one of his most influential works and has significant implications for metafiction. In this essay, Barthes argues that the identity and intentions of the author should not dictate the interpretation of a text. Instead, meaning is generated through the interaction between the reader and the text. This idea encourages readers to view a work of fiction as independent from its creator, thus opening up possibilities for self-referential narratives and the exploration of the text's nature. In metafiction, this idea manifests as the text's acknowledgement of its construction, often questioning the role of the author and highlighting the multiplicity of meanings that can emerge from a single work. Metafiction turns readers into co-creators of the narrative, situating Barthes' emphasis on the active role of the reader in generating meaning.

In 1984, Patricia Waugh discussed the nature and significance of Metafiction, identifying three types of postmodern metafiction. She argued that authors like John Fowles and Thomas Pynchon departed from the conventional literary devices employed by earlier writers such as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer.

Norbert Wiener presented his theory of decline, death, and disorder in the universe in his book *The Human Use of Human Beings* (1989). This theory, particularly concerns with the concept of entropy and decline, had a significant impact on thinkers like Thomas Pynchon. Wiener's assertion that "The universe is running downhill" (41) encapsulates the essence of the theory. In a different literary context, John Fowles contributed to the evolution of narrative techniques with his novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), challenging the role of a traditional omniscient narrator. Patricia Waugh notes that some contemporary metafiction can be labelled as the "introverted novel," "the anti-novel," "irrealism," "surfiction," "the self-begetting novel," and "fabulation." These terms underline the diverse and unconventional nature

of modern literature, reflecting a departure from traditional narrative norms and the emergence of innovative storytelling approaches.

### **Characteristics of Metafiction**

Metafiction is a unique literary device employed by postmodernist novelists. The conspicuous feature of Metafiction is intertextuality references and allusions. It is the practice of rewriting history using a fictional work in a way that has not been documented before. Sarah Waters's novels are loaded with intertextuality elements violating narrative levels employed by traditional writers to transform and filter reality. She contends that no singular truths or meanings exist. No text stands alone. It is constantly linked to other materials. T. S. Eliot, a poet and theorist renowned for his "quasi-intertextual concepts," is another example from mainstream literature. In his 1919 essay "Tradition and Individual Talent," he makes use of intertextuality. Intertextuality is the dependence of a text on prior words, conceptions, meanings, codes, traditions, unconscious behaviours, and texts. Each writing is an intertext that, whether consciously or unconsciously, draws on the rich achievements of the prior culture.

Postmodern literature cannot be evaluated from a traditional or objective standpoint. It is important to evaluate modified character of postmodernist literature through a variety of movements, genres, and perspectives. Intertextuality stands out as one of Pynchon's distinctive features, consistently woven into the fabric of all his novels. However, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, this literary device takes on a heightened significance. The novel exhibits an intricate layer of intertextuality, evident in the incorporation of historical headlines and references to scientific concepts. These elements serve not only as narrative devices but also function as a form of authentication within the novel. Molly Hite (1983) analyses and underscores the profound impact of intertextuality in Pynchon's work, emphasizing its role in enriching the narrative and connecting the fictional world to broader cultural, historical, and scientific contexts, "Pynchon's novels are obsessed with connections" (Hite 33). Like Pynchon's novels, the fiction of Sarah Waters relies on subversion and deconstructed narrative structure. Metafiction employs unconventional and experimental techniques to depict hyper-reality.

### **Fragmentation**

Sarah Waters realized that in life and the universe, reality is fluid and decay and fragmentation of values are inevitable. The collapse of the Victorian moral system reflects the disintegration of the values upheld by the Romantics. In her novels *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999), *Fingersmith* (2002), *The Night Watch* (2006), *The Little Stranger* (2009), and *The Paying Guests* (2014), there are elements of melodrama, sensation, the Gothic and social realism to depict the loss of self of the women characters. Social reality is depicted by dissonance as the women characters of Sarah Waters are trapped in the abyss of darkness and pessimism. They feel directionless, and they venture to embark on a journey in quest of name, fame, and glamour. They throw away all the norms of morality in the wind and design their moral values to gain success in society. The world of Sarah Waters is distinct from the external world, and the only reality visible is decay and disintegration. There is non-linear development in her plots; past and future become relative terms.

### **The Purpose of Metafiction**

Linda Hutcheon believes the novel written with metafictional elements gains significance beyond its fictional realms by presenting its inner self-reflexive tendencies. Ironically, the metafictional novel becomes real by not pretending to be real. Mark Currie (2013) argues that a metafictional novel allows a better understanding of the contemporary experience of the world as a series of constructed systems. He believes that reality or history is provisional, “no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures” (Currie 44). Metafiction provides an “unlimited vitality: which was once thought introspective and self-referential is outward-looking” (Currie 2). Waugh (1984) further contends that:

Far from dying, the novel has reached a mature recognition of its existence as writing, which can only ensure its continued viability in and relevance to a contemporary world that is similarly beginning to gain awareness of precisely how its values and practices are constructed and legitimized (Waugh 19).

### **Difference between Metafiction and Historiographic Metafiction**

The reader is reminded through metafiction of the particular work’s fictitious nature. The fact that fiction is just- fiction- and nothing more than reality also stimulates reading. By introducing the outside world into the tale, Metafiction has the effect of

temporarily erasing the boundary between fiction and reality. According to Patricia Waugh (1984):

A term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality (Waugh 2).

The term metafiction can be understood by Linda Hutcheon (1980) in an article “Modes and forms of Narrative Narcissism: Introduction of a typology.” She claims that it has a connection to postmodern literature, “linguistically self-reflexive, demonstrating their awareness of both the limits and the power of their own language” (Hutcheon 23). As she further states:

Historiographic Metafiction, in deliberate contrast to what I call late modernist radical Metafiction, attempts to demarginalize the literary through confrontation with the historical, and it does so both thematically and formally (289).

The conspicuous feature of historiographic metafiction is its conscious concern with history. These novels contain the elements of facts and myth. History came to represent objective fact, and the novel came to represent subjective fiction. Hutcheon (1988) argues that novels that are intensely parodic “rewrite the historical events and works of past, thereby questioning the stability of meaning of both. By incorporating known historical events and personages within their texts” it “manages to problematize historical knowledge and to break any illusionist frame” (Hutcheon 5). Such types of novels employ a “questioning stance through their common use of conventions of narrative, of reference, of the inscribing of subjectivity, of their identity as textuality, and even of their implication in ideology” (Hutcheon 106). Beyond reconnecting history and fiction, Linda Hutcheon remarks that, “Postmodern fiction suggests that to rewrite or to represent the past in fiction and history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological” (110). In an attempt to depict past events through historiographic metafiction;

plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record ... Certain known historical details are deliberately falsified to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and inadvertent errors (Hutcheon 114).

John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) is regarded as a quintessential metafictional novel. Fowles employs several metafictional techniques in this novel that highlight its constructed nature and engage readers in a reflection on the processes of storytelling. The narrator openly discusses the difficulty of creating characters with free will within a deterministic narrative framework, raising questions about the nature of fiction and reality. Fowles offers three different conclusions to the story, each with a distinct outcome for the characters. This technique challenges the traditional notion of a single, authoritative ending and underscores the idea that stories and history are subject to interpretation and contingency. The novel's refusal to settle on a definitive ending forces readers to confront the narrative's constructed nature and the author's power in shaping meaning. This multiplicity of endings is a direct challenge to the conventions of realistic fiction, which typically aims for closure and coherence.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) is a literary mode that combines self-reflexive narrative techniques with a critical engagement with historical events. *Midnight's Children* intertwines the personal narrative of its protagonist, Saleem Sinai, with the larger history of India, particularly focusing on the period surrounding Indian independence and Partition. The novel presents historical events through the subjective lens of Saleem's memory, mixing fact with fiction. This blending of the personal and the historical highlights that history is not an objective recounting of events but is constructed and interpreted by individuals. The novel questions the reliability of historical narratives by presenting them through an unreliable narrator. Saleem frequently acknowledges the fallibility of his memory, thus casting doubt on the accuracy of his recounting of historical events.

Colson Whitehead's (2016) *The Underground Railroad* (2016) novel exemplifies historiographic metafiction through its blend of historical events with fantastical elements and its self-conscious engagement with the processes of historical representation. The novel weaves together real historical events, such as the Fugitive Slave Act and various aspects of 19th-century American slavery, with this fictionalized version of the railroad, thus complicating the boundary between history and fiction. This blending reflects Hutcheon's idea that historiographic metafiction simultaneously invokes and problematizes historical narratives. The novel's protagonist, Cora, serves



as a subjective lens through which the reader experiences the brutal realities of slavery and the various dystopian landscapes she encounters. While Cora's experiences are grounded in the historical context of 19th-century America, her journey also takes on allegorical and surreal qualities, further complicating the distinction between history and fiction.

Sarah Waters's novel revolts against and subverts the Victorian tradition of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. Cooper and Short (2012) observed that Sarah Waters's writings are revolutionary as they are multi-dimensional and historical in nature, "written by and for women" (Short 11). The novels of Waters contain metafictional elements and are populated by female characters from different social classes and backgrounds. They are sexual, friendly, lustful, and violent, representing the typical Postmodern women, psychologically sick and neurotic, crazy to make easy money in the world of glamour. Gaston Bachelard (1964) claims that "both room and house are psychological diagrams that guide writers and poets in their analysis of intimacy" (38).

The diversity of sexual and romantic relations in *Tipping the Velvet* is a unique feature of the plot, as the text is lined with rooms, houses, and theatre halls. In *Affinity*, the Millbank Prison of Women is predominant, and in *Fingersmith*, the private Madhouse is the main centre of the action. In *History of Sexuality* (1978), Michel Foucault notes that during the Nineteenth century, societal norms confined Non procreative models of sexuality to specific bodies and spaces. Foucault points out that the prostitute and brothel, as well as the hysteric and the madhouse, were traditionally the only contexts where non-procreative forms of sexuality were tolerated. This observation underscores the regulated and compartmentalized nature of sexuality during that historical period, emphasizing the limited spaces where alternative sexual expressions were deemed acceptable within societal frameworks, "the brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance" (Foucault 4). Sarah Waters follows the literary devices of postmodernism through fragmented narrative, parody and pastiche, selective vocabulary, narratorial commentary, anachronistic insertions of modern theories and concepts, distrust of commonly accepted facts, or simply an awareness of contemporary discourses, which shows through in the text. Mandy Koolen (2020) argues in *Tipping the Velvet*;

Waters re-creates lesbian history by undertaking the important work of filling in gaps in the historical record by speculating about past experiences of same-sex desire that have been erased or neglected in many historical studies (Koolen 373).

In *Tipping the Velvet* (1998) Nan Astley is introduced as a lonely and highly ambitious girl as she admits: “I have said that there was nothing in my life when I was young, but oysters” (Waters 3). She had no opportunity to rise on the social ladder: “And last of all I had a fondness - you might say, a kind of passion - for the music hall; and more particularly for music-hall songs and the singing of them” (3). She led a boring and mechanical life: “The routine I have described - the routine of prising and bearding and cooking and serving, and Saturday-night visits to the music hall - is the one that I remember most from my girlhood” (4). Nan Astley’s quest for her lesbian identity is dramatized in her encounter with different lesbian communities. Her main activity is presented in the theatre and in the music hall of London, depicting her diverse activities and revealing her different stages of growth and her sexuality.

Waters employs the techniques of cross-dressing and impersonation, dramatizing the performativity of gender and sexuality. With repeated gender performances, Nan subverted Victorian cultural standards and developed her own gender identity—which is unacceptable in a patriarchal Victorian culture. Nancy is presented as a prostitute, and Daniel Defoe wrote *Moll Flanders* (1722), depicting the sexual adventures of a picaro.

### **Fairy Tale and Gothic Elements**

*Tipping the Velvet* is exceptional in the storyline as the heroine emerges as a fairy tale picaro enjoying freedom throughout the novel. Sarah Waters discards traditional conventions. Nan Astley, the main character in the novel, plays multiple roles. Following the tradition of the picaresque, the third-person status is given to the heroine exposing the contradictions and hypocrisy of her culture. Nancy Astley is in perpetual motion, moving from one place to the other in her journey of self-discovery on the stage of the Victorian metropolis. Like a fairy-tale heroine, she comes in contact with different social classes and experiments with different lifestyles. She doesn’t stick to anyone in her theatrical career. Nancy’s development is paradoxically caught up in a blurred opposition between acting, living and shuttling between appearance and reality,

deceitful surfaces, and hidden depths. Nancy's evolution towards self-discovery is circular, and it is a journey against the current towards and within the metropolis, from Whitstable to London and from the glittering West End theatres to the East End slums.

Nancy Astley in *Tipping the Velvet* feels like an "alien". Sarah Waters borrows the concept of dissonance from Machiavelli's (1532) *The Prince*, believing that "duplicity" and "virtue" are two aspects of social reality. Nan first views London from a carriage travelling along the Strand. Her elevated ride takes in: "Nelson on his pillar, and the fountains, and the lovely, bone-coloured front of the National Gallery, and the view down Whitehall to the Houses of Parliament." (64). All these glamorous images dazzle innocent Nan, who has rarely ventured further than her father's Whitstable oyster bar. She is excited to see the city's theatres and music halls. 'Her Majesty's', 'The Haymarket', 'The Criterion', and 'The London Pavilion'. She is transported to a fairy world, expressing her excitement. Ironically, "however, behind the Empire's columns and glinting cressets' bathed in a soft electric glow" (65) is another world, the world of shadows and illicit liaisons. The theatre hall appears to be a haunt of upper-class prostitutes who would parade up their bodies to trap wealthy customers. No wonder Nan moves into a city of flux, shifting boundaries in her craze to be a part of the music hall depicted as a place of illusion, disguise, and deception.

### **Fragmentation and Dissonance**

Sarah Waters depicted the fractured identity of her heroine Nancy Astley. She begins her adventurous journey as an oyster girl of Whitstable and soon adopts, in turn, the role of spectator. She changes her role and assumes the role of an actor and delights in performing the role of a male impersonator. Her role changed, and she became a masher and in the city streets as a rent boy. Nancy becomes a director at the end of the novel. Her final role symbolically takes her to the heart of London. Her self-discovery urges Nancy to terminate her 'theatrical' career. She reconciles herself with a newfound identity involving a radically different attitude to the urban space. Nancy is an alienated woman, cut off from society and culture; she is at the lowest ebb as she has lost everything in the glamorous society of London. Sarah Waters has employed the elements of grotesque and carnivalesque in imitation of Bakhtin, separating life from art, as Bakhtin (1984) says: "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people" (Bakhtin 7).

The plot unfolds various scenes of life and art, the enclosed location of the Palace in Canterbury and the West End playhouses, or even the privacy of Diana Lethaby's world to the improvised life on the streets of London. The story of Nancy's metamorphic from male impersonator to streetwalker and later on as a social worker unfolds the stages of her downward journey and moral degradation. There is an acute sense of psychological anguish experienced by Nancy as she confesses:

My family would have thought me cruel, I know, to see me laugh while they were sad at home without me ... And soon, too, I had London to gaze at and marvel over ... There was much, of course, to look at Mr Bliss [Kitty's agent] had suggested we take in the sights a little before we headed for Brixton, so now we rolled into Trafalgar Square — towards Nelson on his pillar, and the fountains, and the lovely, bone-colored front of the National Gallery, and the view down Whitehall to the Houses of Parliament (Waters 63-64).

Nancy's downward journey begins when she assumes the role of Kitty Butler's dresser in London. Walter Bliss warns her thus:

I am going to ask you to do something which, if I were any other kind of gentleman than a theatrical agent, I should be quite ashamed to do. I am going to ask you to go about the city — and you must assist her, Miss Astley, 'he added when he saw me looking; you must both of you go about the city and study the men! Scrutinize them' (Waters 83).

The second part of the novel deals with Nancy's cataclysmic decline as Waters depicts her separation from Kitty. She leaves the music hall and becomes a rent boy and then a kept woman. Nancy's transgression as a masher is only skin-deep, and she finds herself in the streets. Nancy expresses her poignant situation thus:

I thought what a cruel joke it was that I, who had swaggered so many times in a gentleman's suit across the stages of London, should now be afraid to walk upon its streets, because of my girliness! If only I were a boy, I thought wretchedly. If only I were a boy ... (Waters 191).

She is lost, groping in the darkness: "With my hair trimmed, I thought, and a pair of proper boy's shoes upon my feet, anyone - even Kitty herself! - might meet me on the streets of London, and never know me for a girl at all" (Waters 192). After leaving

Kitty, Nancy uses her tomboy persona to restrain and conceal her erotic passions, which, as is later revealed, only uplifts her when she is picked up by a wealthy woman named Diana, who turns Nancy into her sex slave with her consent after sensing her repressed desire for women. The only thing Nan does is get dressed up, take a thorough bath, and get ready to please her mistress whatever she pleases. Nan misses the enthusiastic audience and equal cooperation once more. She was unable to express her love for her outside of their private area. Following nearly a year of participating in same-sex relationships, Nancy feels disgusted and bored by the incessant posing and performance.

Nan and Kitty's relationship, which begins with passion and connection, ultimately disintegrates due to secrecy, shame, and betrayal. Kitty betrays Nan by entering into a heterosexual relationship with Walter Bliss, a music hall manager. Kitty's struggle with her sexual identity and her desire to conform to societal norms ultimately leads to the breakdown of their relationship. Nan's journey towards self-acceptance and empowerment is marked by her ability to move beyond the fragmented and unfulfilling relationship with Kitty. This fragmentation reflects the broader societal pressures that shape their identities and highlights the challenges of maintaining an authentic and fulfilling relationship in the face of such pressures. The novel explores the tension between desire and disillusionment. Nan's passionate love for Kitty is ultimately undermined by Kitty's inability to fully embrace their relationship. This disillusionment is a key aspect of the fragmentation, as Nan's initial idealization of Kitty gives way to a more complex and painful understanding of their relationship.

### **The juxtaposition of Facts and fiction**

Waters employs the technique of disguise and presents a fine blend of past and present. Being broken and depressed after Kitty's betrayal, Nancy exults in her freedom walking through the streets of London, hiding her sexual identity disguised as a boy. She keeps on attracting people's admiration, even as it deceives them:

To walk as a boy, as a handsome boy in a well-sewn suit, whom the people stared after only to envy, never to mock - well, it had a brittle kind of glamour to it, that was all I knew, just then, of satisfaction (Waters 195).

Nan's objectifying, threatening male gaze is another phase of her impersonation. Nancy's disguise as a swell, young man-about-town doesn't lead her to happiness but lands her into other troubles. This disguise propels her into her new career as a rent boy. Nan cannot shed her masquerade, and she encounters the rich and dominating second lover Diana Lethaby. She can thereafter find ways of expressing her homosexuality without fear of incurring public censure. Diana's mansion and Sapphic household, where Nancy's real sexual orientation is allowed to come out in the open, Nancy continues to perform. She is treated like a commodity, a peacock strutting in a golden cage for her mistress's pleasure. Her sexual orientation is clear, but she is still wearing a different kind of mask.

In the third part of the novel, Sarah Waters dramatizes the failure of the relationship of Nancy with Diana and the scenes of her fragmentation and loss of self. There is an awakening in Nancy's social conscience as she seeks social redemption. She develops her relationship with Florence, who is a socialist. Nancy's story contains even the magic fairy tale sequence of three suitors in the number of her meaningful, long-term relationships with Kitty, Diana, and Florence, respectively. Nancy finally puts an end to her histrionics when she repudiates her stage name "Nan! [Kitty] she cried ... 'Don't call me that I said pettishly'. 'No one calls me that now. It ain't my name, and never was'" (Waters 467). There is a sense of realization:

What a fool I'd been! ... I had thrust myself upon [Florence] and her brother, and thought myself so sly and charming; I had thought that I was putting my mark upon their house, and making it mine. I had believed myself playing one kind of story, when all the time, I was only clumsily rehearsing what the fascinating Lilian had done so well and cleverly before me! (Waters 398).

Astley's self-discovery is sick and neurotic at the end of the novel. She doesn't abandon the world of appearances and performances. She silently cries as she broods over her moral collapse: "I turned back to [Florence], took her hand in mine, crushed the daisy between our fingers and — careless of whether anybody watched or not — I leaned and kissed her" (Waters 472).

In *Tipping the Velvet*, the main protagonist, Nan Astley, goes through five key stages during which she repeats her gender presentation. In the first stage, a sweet oyster

girl goes about doing her chores. In the following phase, she joins Kitty Butler in the theatre and discovers her sexuality via drag performances. This is the phase in which she feels deceived. The third stage is that of a “renter,” where she uses her sexuality as a tool of exploitation to gain financial security. The fourth phase, in which Diana and her Sapphic class physically abused her, is rather terrible. The final stage is the happiest because she finally meets her true love in Florence and lives a blissful existence. Astley’s progress adheres closely reflects her journey as a circular path, lacking any significant ethical or emotional development. Nancy concludes her theatrical career with a symbolic act, stepping off the stage and refusing both reconciliation with Kitty and impersonation of Lilian to gain Florence’s favour. This gesture symbolizes her outright rejection of theatrical pretences and histrionics.

In *Tipping the Velvet*, metafiction creates a self-conscious, multifaceted narrative that challenges traditional storytelling conventions. The novel follows the journey of the protagonist, Nan King, as she discovers her identity and sexuality in Victorian England. The novel is self-aware of its construction as a work of fiction. Sarah Waters deliberately incorporates elements that disrupt the traditional narrative structure and engage the reader in an active role in interpreting the story. The novel addresses the reader directly, breaking the fourth wall and acknowledging its existence as a fictional creation. The novel plays with various literary tropes and genres, further exemplifying Metafictional elements. It blends elements of historical fiction, romance, and coming-of-age narratives, all the while subverting and reimagining these genres to suit the story’s unique perspective. This deliberate blending of genres challenges conventional literary boundaries and invites readers to reconsider their expectations of storytelling.

By exploring Nan’s journey of self-discovery and embracing her lesbian identity, *Tipping the Velvet* challenges societal norms and conventional portrayals of sexuality in literature. Through this exploration, Waters encourages readers to question the constructed nature of gender roles and expectations, further reinforcing the novel’s metafictional nature. It exemplifies metafiction through its self-awareness, deliberate disruption of traditional narrative conventions, and subversion of literary genres. Sarah Waters employs these techniques to create a nuanced and engaging narrative that not only explores the complexities of identity and sexuality but also encourages readers to

critically examine the nature of storytelling and the representation of marginalized experiences in literature.

Critics like Elizabeth Ho (2012) have argued that Waters' novel engages in a form of "queer historiography," where the past is not merely represented but is re-imagined and reinterpreted through a modern, queer lens. This deliberate anachronism highlights the text's metafictional nature, as it openly acknowledges its role in constructing a particular version of history. She points out;

Neo-Victorian authors satisfy both a postcolonial and postmodern agenda by offering their rewritings of the nineteenth century to fill the gaps of an incomplete archive whose lack of artifacts, traces and documents have created a situation of trauma in the present (Ho 18).

Elizabeth Ho argues that Waters reclaims and reinterprets historical narratives from a queer perspective, challenging traditional heteronormative histories. This approach not only brings visibility to marginalized identities but also critiques the limitations of historical representation. She argues that Waters uses the techniques of postmodernism to question the authenticity of historical narratives and to explore the constructed nature of both history and identity.

*Affinity* (1999), is a unique and engaging postmodern text. The novel showcases an exemplary use of postmodern pastiche in its plot construction. Waters incorporates fictional letters and diaries, which are significant elements in postmodern fiction, to unravel the complex and interwoven narratives of the characters. The novel's narrative structure relies on pastiche, where conflicting viewpoints and experiences are presented through the various diaries and letters. These fragmented sources create a multi-layered, non-linear narrative that challenges traditional storytelling conventions. Multiple perspectives allow readers to piece together the different accounts and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the character's thoughts and emotions.

The themes of confession, secrecy, and seduction run throughout the novel as the characters grapple with their desires and inner struggles. At the core of the novel is the exploration of women's struggles to articulate their lesbian desires in a society that is often repressive and judgmental. Through the fragmented and intersecting narratives,



Waters presents a nuanced portrayal of the characters' complex emotions, desires, and challenges, inviting readers to empathize with their experiences.

By incorporating metafiction and postmodern pastiche, *Affinity* becomes a thought-provoking and engaging novel that delves into the complexities of human emotions and identities. Using fictional letters and diaries adds depth and authenticity to the narrative, making it an immersive and rewarding reading experience. Through its exploration of confession, secrecy, and seduction, *Affinity* captures the struggles and triumphs of women seeking to express their authentic selves and desires in a society that often marginalizes and silences them. Waters was inspired by A.S. Byatt, who wrote *Possession: A Romance* (1990), employing the technique of epistolary form. *Affinity* is a fictional historical novel set in Millbank Prison of the 1880s, and the novel's plot describes the realities of imprisonment and staff-inmate relations. The novel is loaded with the gothic elements of romance, wonder, sensation, surprise, and horror.

Margaret Prior is the main female character who is seen putting herself back together. She is passing through a very crucial phase of her life after the death of her father and the abandonment of her lover. She attempted to commit suicide, but she decided to be a lady visitor at Millbank Prison to overcome her grief and alienation. She is sick of the stifling environment of her home dominated by her orthodox mother. Margaret's narrative brims with allusions to items of dress which become sites of sexual and spectral significance throughout the novel. Beginning with the suggestive imagery of "a lady and her servant, and petticoats and loose hair" (7), Margaret's narrative culminates with her discovery of "a mud-brown gown, from Millbank, and a maid's black frock, with its apron of white ... tangled together like sleeping lovers" (341). In Millbank Prison, Margaret meets fake Selina Dawes, and she develops an emotional relationship in her passionate desire to overcome alienation and frustration. Margaret is gullible by nature; she is a poor judge of character. She believes that Selina's spiritual powers will help her escape Millbank. In reality, consternation falls on Margaret when she discovers that Selina is passionately involved with her maid, Ruth Vigers. Ruth figured a real escape was stealing money and Margaret's dresses for her flight. In desperation, Margaret decides to end her life. Palmer (2016) suggested that *Affinity* is set against the backdrop of grim, neo-Victorian London and marked by instances of

attempted suicide and encounters with spirits, so Palmer categorizes *Affinity* as a form of “lesbian gothic” fiction (Palmer 1).

### **Gothic Elements in the Novel**

Sarah Waters relies on Gothic strategies in structuring the plot of *Affinity*. Selina Dawes assumed the famous key tropes of the gothic, the presence of the ghost, the environment of horror and haunting, and the false and deceiving spiritual powers that intensify the gothic environment. Sarah Waters uses the images of hand and glove to intensify the gothic atmosphere. Selina and Margaret can communicate via a complex set of exchanges and gestures that foreground hands, fingers, and gloves. Margaret obsessively writes: “I took my glove off and placed my naked palm upon the binding, and the leather seemed warm, still, from the grip of her rough fingers” (116). Selina is engaged with conjuring up the dead and possessing spiritualist powers, whilst Margaret becomes sick through her painful romance: “Paler each day. My flesh is streaming from me. I am becoming my own ghost! I think I will haunt this room when I have started my new life” (Waters 289).

At the very outset of the novel, the haunting supernatural forces appear as Boyd, the servant of Margaret, finds something spooky about Margaret. Boyd leaves the house, fearing loud noises heard late at night: “She said it has ‘turned peculiar’ since Pa died” (56). Margaret is the only person who is awake at that time: “You sit very late, Margaret. Have you heard nothing?” (57). Margaret is already the one doing the haunting. Castle (1993) argues that this association between lesbian characters and spectrality is nothing new, as Castle makes plain in her seminal study of the ghosting of lesbians. Lesbian characters throughout Western Anglophone literature are portrayed as spectres haunting the text: “What better way to exorcise the threat of female homosexuality than by treating it as ghostly?” (Castle 34).

Margaret firmly believes that spirits do exist. However, at the end of the text, spiritualism is revealed to be a trick, and if there is any magic, it’s sleight of hand: one lesbian couple, Margaret and Selina, disappears, and another, Selina and Ruth, takes their place and escapes. The text moves from the scene of the ethereal and ghostly, with Margaret supposing that Selina will be able to feel her soul departing from her body; “I

wonder: when the thread grows slack, will you feel it?" (Waters 351), to an entirely new fleshly place. Selina and Vigers are holed up in her room: "Ruth is lying on my bed with her shoes kicked off. She is smoking one of Peter's cigarettes... Remember, 'Ruth is saying, 'whose girl you are'" (Waters 352). For Arias and Pulham (2009), the text has led us into a trap:

We are prepared ... to believe that Selina is able to contact the spirit world and transplant herself to Margaret's bedroom rather than acknowledge the presence of the servant woman Ruth Vigers' (Arias and Pulham 30).

At the end of the novel, we witness that there is a ghost in the house, but it isn't whom we think of. The ghost is present in the form of betrayal and deception.

### **Intertextuality in the Plot of *Affinity***

Intertextuality is the hallmark of metafictional novels, and *Affinity* of Sarah Waters is an amalgamation of different texts. It parodically witnesses two diary entries with secret letters that refer to the critical discourse of Victorian sexualities and the spiritualism of the nineteenth century. Margaret Prior records the struggle of a marginalized community, societal restrictions, and prevailing gendered restrictions of past. Waters, in her critical writing *Wolfskins and Togas: Lesbian and Gay Historical Fiction* (1995), discusses her grounds for writing gay and lesbian novels in epistolary form;

An enduring gay historical motif is that of the recovery of a secret book or 'lost diary', the hitherto forgotten or unpublishable homosexual testimony ... the motif has been employed to recover the homosexual voice and lend it historical authority, to represent the evasion or defiance of heterosexual suppression and the exposure of the other, non-traditional routes along which historical knowledge might be passed (Waters 245).

Lucie Armitt and Sarah Gamble (2006) have justified how Waters switches from Foucault's explanation of the Panopticon mechanism and unveil it as "optical" (148). The two diary entries are;

Superimposed one upon the other to create a sort of palimpsest. As documents they enjoy the privileged relationship to authority: they are self-affirming and as such we are at no time actively encouraged to challenge the truth-value of any of the material inscribed in them (152).

*Affinity* is set up as competing and ultimately converging diary entries from the two leads, not to mention the letters. Without each partner, the narrative may lack closure. Helen, Margret's former girlfriend, deceives her and marries her brother. A complex system of intertextual allusions is brought into play. Waters has borrowed from various texts, and her intertextual references enhance the metafictional depth of the novel. Sarah Waters used historical fiction as a platform to justify the absence of same-sex love in literature. Margret is represented as a nineteenth-century writer, and several intertextual references to Victorian writers and texts are manifested in the novel. J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *The Rose and the Key* (1871) is referred to by Margret when she becomes suspicious of her mother's intentions, "Mr Fanu's novels, about the heiress who is made to seem mad" (Waters 20).

The Millbank prison implies the prison in Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1857). Frequent reference to the text is used in the novel. Margret prior dictates the text to her mother. Peter Quint has a direct reference to the wicked and ghostly servant in Henry James' *Turn of the Screw* (1898). Margaret refers to the famous poem of John Keats (1820), *The Eve of St. Agnes*, placing her and Selina as the fleeing phantom lovers. There are also references to *Aurora Leigh* (1856), a verse epic of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Salina Dawes mentions Margret 'Aurora-Aurora' at Margret's suggestion, but hearing the reflection of her past liaison, Margaret screams, "The word made me flinch, for I caught, behind them, the voice of Helen, who had once named me for a figure in a book" (Waters 187). Margaret and Selina are described as characters "who will flee to the Continent together" (359). The text of *Affinity* is multi-dimensional; it is a thriller, a gothic romance, and an erotic lesbian melodrama. Margaret assumes the role of Helen of Troy figure as Waters argues: "She appears temporarily reconstructed as an object - and perhaps subject - of lesbian desire, but ultimately one of those wives and mistresses bound in complicity with the patriarchal system" (28). Her first compassionate relationship is with Helen, her sister-in-law. Selina ridicules Margaret thus: "You are not Mrs Browning, Margaret—as much as you would like to be. You

are not, in fact, Mrs Anybody. You are only Miss Prior (25).” The love plot in *Affinity* is ethereal and insubstantial. The ethereal nature of *Affinity* between Selina and Margaret is described thus in the tone of parody:

With Selina’s green eyes upon me, I did not think ... I looked only at her, heard her voice only; and when I spoke, at last, it was to ask her this: ‘How will a person know, Selina, when the soul that has the affinity with hers is near it?’ She answered, ‘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 death to her (Waters 210-211).

*Affinity* is a failed romance of Sarah Waters. The real romantic novel should be sensual and breathy, but Selina and Margaret’s sexual love affair is unrealistic, fantastic devoid of real emotions:

She ran and leaned to the wall, until her face was close to mine and her breath came on to me. I said, ‘I’ll do it. I’ll go with you. I love you, and I cannot give you up. Only tell me what I must do, and I will do it!’ ... My soul left me – I felt it fly from me and lodge in her (280).

### **Power and Dominance of Marginalized Voices**

Margaret Prior and Salina Dawes are central characters in the novel *Affinity*. The novel deals more with treachery, deception, betrayal, discomfort, and trauma than the supernatural elements. Margaret is a spinster and the daughter of a historian. She wants to follow her father’s footsteps by acknowledging the history of Millbank prison. The structure of Mill bank prison is explained in detail by the author;

The prison, drawn in outline, has a curious kind of charm to it. The pentagons appear as petals on a geometric flower. . . Seen close, of course, Millbank is not charming. Its scale is vast, and its lines and angles, when realized in walls and towers of yellow brick and shuttered windows, seem only wrong or perverse. It was as if the prison has been designed by a man in the grip of a nightmare or madness – or had been made expressly to drive its inmates mad (Waters 8).

### **Panopticon design of Millbank Prison**

Margaret's mother is a traditional orthodox high-class woman who teaches her daughter the mannerism of the elite class. She restricts her from visiting the Millbank Prison and suggests her place in society. Margaret is the victim of her desire and cruel social system. She feels alienated and tries to escape from the uncanny family circle. She chooses to visit the Millbank jail as a "Lady Visitor" and finds comfort there. She dislikes her mother for being too protective of her. She finds comfort in solitude. She has remained depressed since her father died. She tries to commit suicide twice, once after the death of her father and secondly when Helen, her lover, betrays and marries her brother. In both cases, she feels desolate and heartbroken. After recovering from two failed suicide attempts, she becomes a regular visitor to Millbank. The mourning of the loss of her father and Helen paves her way toward Salina Dawes, another prominent character in the novel. She performs witchcraft and serves as a spirit medium. She is accused of treachery and imprisoned for cheating common people.

Margaret Prior gets enthralled with Salina Dawes's charms and beauty. She convinces Margaret that she is a spirit-medium. Salina Dawes is a middle-class unmarried woman who plans to escape from prison. To execute the plan, she plots a master plan, and Margaret becomes the victim of this intricate plot. The novel contains another romantic affinity between Salina Dawes and Ruth Vigers, a queer relationship. Ruth Vigers is a low-class woman who works as a maid in Margaret's home. The lady is shrewd, cruel, clever, emotionless and the mastermind behind Salina Dawes' plans. She convinced Salina to engage in witchcraft, and Margaret has a fantasy that Salina practises spiritualism.

The plot unfolds through the diary entries of Margaret Prior from September 1874 to 1875, which documented her experience in the prison of Millbank. Waters created the scenes of prison as horrible, gloomy, intense, and uncanny. Salina Dawes is named as a spirit 'medium' who performs seances and opens the door to the afterlife. The significance of lower-class and higher-class characters is equally important. Both classes are haunting the past in their way. Salina, for the sake of survival, earns a living through séances. The bereft sophisticated high-class women visit them to gratify their souls. Ruth, the mastermind, betrays the faith of the public during those sessions. She pretends that they have an old and good reputation for this spirit medium art. Through this, they get financial control over the elite class and enjoy the lives of the middle class

and aristocrats. The reader of the novel may connect séances to supernatural elements, but in-depth, it is the question of survival of the poor class. They betray emotions and play with the minds of the sophisticated public for financial support and a good living. Fischer (2018) points out;

While Margaret has been given more voice and narrative space, the novel ending with Selina's subversive liberation leaves another 'sister' in the darkness of death and opens the reader's eye to a desperate resistance to a system rooted in the social hierarchy (Fischer 28).

Margaret is initially haunted by the memories of her dead father and witnesses her father in dreams:

I dreamt my father was alive—that I glanced from my window to see him leaning on the parapet of Albert Bridge, gazing bitterly at me. I ran out and called to him: 'Good God, Pa, we thought you were dead!' Dead?' (Waters 89-90).

It is followed by another traumatic experience of her lover Helen who marries Margaret's brother and starts living under the same roof. The final trauma takes her life when Salina Dawes betrays her emotionally and elopes with Ruth Vigers to England. Haunting for upper-class women can be interpreted as social and emotional security, as Margaret was deprived of both, while for low-class origins haunting can be taken as an issue of survival. In the past, low-class origins were marginalized, exploited, and suppressed by the high-class origin. Those silenced voices took revenge in the contemporary novels of Sarah Waters. She subverts the role of low-class people and provides them with all the rights and privileges. The readers are transported to the past to witness the sufferings of the inferior sex and the working class and then brought to the present to improve their fate. The repressed classes are allowed to enjoy better fate, liberty, equality, and justice, which was not possible in the past. Interestingly Waters amends and changes the horrible history through her writing. Ruth and Selina take revenge for their inferior social condition and neglect. Hadley (2010) observes, "Waters adopts a Marxist perspective by drawing attention to the position of the lower classes" (Hadley 89).

The novel *Affinity* is structured around a cruel trick depicting the deceptive lovers engaged in lesbian romance. The intertextual references of the documents show how

the writer manipulates implicit metafictional aspects of epistolary diaries. The text is a typical postmodern metafiction containing the elements of gothic and sensational novels. Margaret Prior plans to elope with Salina Dawes, but unfortunately, the plan fails. The reason for the failure of the plan is not homophobia but Selina's choice for Ruth Vigers. The dark ending reveals that Margaret commits suicide while Selina moves away with Ruth. The queerness of the characters remains beyond the end of the narrative. There is no male character who dominates, but Margaret feels suppressed in the company of her dominating mother.

Metafiction plays a significant role in shaping the narrative and engaging readers in a thought-provoking exploration of storytelling and the nature of truth and reality. The key Metafictional elements in *Affinity* is the use of multiple narrative voices. The novel is structured around the interplay of various diaries and letters written by different characters, including Margaret Prior and Selina Dawes. This Fragmentation of the narrative allows readers to view events from different perspectives and raises questions about the reliability and subjectivity of each character's account. The presence of fictional documents, such as diaries and letters, creates a sense of self-consciousness within the novel. Readers are constantly reminded that they are engaging with a constructed narrative that reflects the characters' perceptions and emotions. This self-awareness challenges readers to consider the role of storytelling in shaping our understanding of truth and reality. The novel explores confession and deception and further emphasizes its metafictional nature. As characters reveal their innermost thoughts and desires through the written word, readers are compelled to question the sincerity and honesty of their confessions. The interplay between truth and deception in the characters' writings blurs the line between reality and fiction, highlighting the constructed nature of the narrative. The metafictional elements in *Affinity* invite readers to contemplate the power of storytelling in shaping our perceptions of the world and our understanding of others. The novel challenges the notion of objective truth and highlights the subjective nature of human experiences and emotions. By engaging with the complexities of narrative construction and the multiplicity of perspectives, *Affinity* offers readers a compelling and intellectually stimulating reading experience.

*Fingersmith* is a remarkable achievement in the realm of postmodern fiction, blending various literary devices and genres to create a captivating and multi-layered



narrative. The novel demonstrates Waters' mastery in weaving together elements of magic realism, fantasy, supernaturalism, and the Gothic and Sensational genres. The plot of *Fingersmith* starts with a sense of mystery and romance, drawing readers into a world filled with secrets and intrigue. As the story unfolds, the elements of the gothic and sensational novels take centre stage, adding a sense of darkness, suspense, and emotional intensity to the narrative.

Magic realism and fantasy elements are interwoven into the story, blurring the boundaries between reality and imagination. The novel's setting and atmosphere, often evoke a dreamlike quality, contributing to the sense of magic. The use of supernaturalism further adds to the novel's eerie and haunting ambience. The presence of ghosts, spirits, and unexplained phenomena creates an air of uncertainty and unpredictability, keeping readers on the edge of their seats. By incorporating all these major literary devices, Waters creates a layered and complex narrative that defies easy categorization. The interplay of various genres and themes allows for a rich exploration of human emotions, desires, and the complexities of identity. *Fingersmith* thus stands as a brilliant example of postmodern fiction, showcasing Sarah Waters' ability to seamlessly blend postmodern elements. The novel's evocative setting, intriguing plot, and multifaceted characters make it compelling and thought-provoking, leaving a lasting impression on its readers. The plot begins with mystery and romance. The elements of the gothic and sensational novels dominate the plot. Lyn Pykett (1994) discusses Sensational novels:

The sensation plot usually consisted of varying proportions and combinations of duplicity, deception, disguise, the persecution and/or seduction of a young woman, intrigue, jealousy, and adultery. The sensation novel drew on a range of crimes, from illegal incarceration (usually of a young woman), fraud, forgery (often of a will), blackmail and bigamy, to murder or attempted murder (Pykett 4)

Sue is the main female character in the novel, and Waters describes Sue in one sentence as "poor and wily and prepared to do a very dark deed" (Waters 2). Her birth is mysterious as she relies on the memories of Mrs Sucksby, the baby farmer who raised her. Her mother was a criminal who was hanged as a murderer. Sue believes that her mother was brave, reckless, and fearless. Sue's house is a haunting place on Lant Street;

her kitchen is stuffed with all kinds of stolen goods. Sue provides information about her thus:

I think the people who came to Lant Street thought me slow – Slow, I mean, as opposed to fast. Perhaps I was, by Borough standards. But it seemed to me that I was sharp enough. You could not have grown up in such a house, that had such businesses in it, without having a pretty good idea of what was what – of what could go into what; and what could come out (Waters 14).

The mysterious appearance of Richard Rivers, a villain known ironically as “Gentleman” who plans to steal a heiress’ fortune. Sue is promised three thousand pounds of the heiress Maud Lilly’s inheritance. Sue agrees to Gentleman’s proposal to defraud Maud. She is so excited that she declares that she will “come back dressed in a velvet gown ... ‘With gloves up to here, and a hat with a veil on, and a bag full of silver coin’” (31). Sue falls into the trap of a Gentleman with an evil design to swindle a rich heiress and lock her away in a Madhouse. Sarah Waters employs the literary device of disguise, which is common in sensational novels. Sue disguises herself as a maid. She knows that she is working against her conscience: “Ain’t it a very mean trick, and shabby?” (47). Nevertheless, Sue leaves for Briar, Mr Lilly’s manor in the country. She is extremely surprised to find Maud Lilly to be an ignorant and unworldly girl. She is “only pretty lonely, and pretty bookish and bored – but who wouldn’t be, in a house like that?” (78). Maud is lonely living in the stifling environment of Briar Castle. Sue feels guilty and is concerned about the dismal future of Maud:

It was just I suppose, that we were put together for so many hours at a time, and it was nicer to be kind to her and not think too hard about what lay before me than to dwell on it and feel cruel (Waters 96).

Sue plans to save her from the clutches of the Gentleman. When Gentleman arrives and seems to seduce Maud, Sue suddenly realizes that Maud does not care for him at all:

Only now I saw she was not stroking the flesh so much as rubbing at it. She was not nursing the kiss. She felt his mouth like a burn, like an itch, like a splinter, and was trying to rub the memory of it away. She didn't love him at all. She was afraid of him (Waters 125).

Sue then encourages Maud to rebel against Gentleman and to end her futile relationship with him, but Maud doesn't dare to blatantly decline his proposal;

‘What can I do?’ She shivered. ‘He wants me. He has asked me. He means to make me his.’ ‘You might – say no’

She blinked as if she could not believe I had said it. I could not believe it, either.

“Say no to him?” she said slowly. “Say no?” Then her look changed. And watch him leave, from my window?... Oh, Sue, don't you think I should wonder, over the life I might have had? Do you suppose another man will come visiting, that will want me half as much as he? What choice have I? (Waters 126).

Sue and Maud's relationship is mysterious and sensational. Both women are confined by their sex – they feel as if they do not have another choice but to comply with male expectations. Both need Gentleman's plot to gain independence – Maud from her uncle's confinement and her mother's hereditary madness, and Sue from her poverty and low-class status. She knew that Gentleman was a thief and an impostor; “Now I thought suddenly, who did he think he was? He might pretend to be a lord; he was only a con man. He had a snide ring on his finger, and all his coins were bad ones” (129). Waters has depicted the conflicts in the mind of Sue, who is in love with Maud. Her affinity with Maud is pure now. She no longer wants to deceive her and wants to get rid of the plan. She feels;

I felt her – I felt her, through the walls of the house, like some blind crooks are said to be able to feel gold. It was as if there had come between us, without my knowing, a kind of thread. It pulled me to her, wherever she was. It was like – It's like you love her, I thought (Waters 136).

One night, when Maud asks her what will be expected of her on her wedding night, Sue and Maud end up making love. The darkness of the room conceals their actions, but the next morning, Sue is confronted with the truth: “I remembered what I had done, and thought, My God” (Waters 142) and “I went to my room. I began to feel ill. Perhaps I had been drunk . . .” (143). Her love for Maud weakens her determination to go through with Gentleman's plan:

And I think, that if I had drawn her to me then, she'd have kissed me. If I had said, I love you, she would have said it back; and everything would have changed. I might have saved her. I might have found a way – I don't know what – to keep her from her fate. We might have cheated Gentleman. I might have run with her, to Lant Street (144).

Right before her wedding night with Gentleman, Maud kisses Sue again, and no matter how much Sue loves this, she draws away out of fear that someone will discover their “affair”. At the Madhouse, the swindle becomes clear to Sue, and she is enraged and gripped by a terrible fear; “I was not thinking, now, of Gentleman and Maud. I was thinking of myself. I was growing horribly afraid ... I had an idea that, once they got me into a room, they would kill me” (397). After a while in the Madhouse, she is choked to know about the dreariness and tortures. She curses herself and doubts her sanity. “I suppose I seemed mad, then; but it was only through the awfulness of having said nothing but the truth and being thought to be deluded” (416). She does not even recognize her own reflection in a window:

I looked, as the lady had said, like a lunatic. My hair was still sewn to my head, but had grown or worked loose from its stitches, and stood out in tufts. My face was white but marked, here and there, with spots and scratches and fading bruises ...The tartan gown hung on me like a laundry bag. From beneath its collar, there showed the dirty white tips of the fingers of Maud's old glove that I still wore next to my heart. You could just make out, on the kidskin, the marks of my teeth (Waters 433).

### **Uncanny Language of the Gothic Novels**

The language used by Sarah Waters in the novel is an imitation of the language used in Gothic novels. The scene of Sue's incarceration portrays another expression of class, namely language, where Maud uses proper grammar and is taught to speak, Sue hardly uses proper language, “We thought you were the blues” (Water 19). When she becomes Maud's maid, Sue knows how she speaks and refrains from using phrases such as “you was” while she is at Briar. When she first arrives there, her strange language is observed by other servants “tittered to hear her speak” (58). Her use of language at Briar is a means by which Sue upholds the act that she is more than a common thief: “You bloody swine! ... You fuckster!” (174). The doctors tell her that “there is no place

for words like those” (174) in the asylum – a madhouse for distressed gentlewomen – as those are not the type of words that a lady should say. Sue’s and Maud’s use of language differs not only in spoken form but in written form as well. Maud is taught to read and write, while Sue is never taught.

### **Twined Storyline and Double Characters**

*Fingersmith* of Sarah Waters is a typical narrative double. The novel’s plot presents twin storylines and double characters with similar names, such as Maud Lilly, Marianne Lilly, Mr Christopher Lilly, Susan/Sue Trinder, Sue Smith, and Mrs Sucksby. This literary device is often found in the Sensational Novel *The Woman in White* (1860) by Wilkie Collins. The elements of mistaken identity, assumed madness, and misperception is found in abundance. Pykett (1994) gives the details of the main characteristics of the Sensational genre thus:

Collins was the master of all of the main elements of the sensation genre: the construction and unravelling of an intricate, crossword puzzle plot, the atmospheric scene, the mysterious, prophetic dream, obsessive and disordered mental states, overtly respectable villains, and bold, assertive and/or devious and scheming heroines and villainesses (Pykett 24).

Moreover, his fragmented, multivocal narratives were the boldest experimentations with the narrative form to be found in the sensation mode. The novel *Fingersmith* has many characteristics of the Sensational novel, such as metatextual references, the triple-decker style, the atmospheric scene, and the mysterious, prophetic dream. The villain in the novel is Gentleman who appears honest and respectable, but in reality, he is a swindler and a scoundrel. Waters called this novel a “pantomime Victorian” text (Dennis 50). The term conveys the dramatization involved in rewriting the past while linking it semantically with issues of mimicry and sartorial disguise. Sue has multiple identities; she is a low-class girl from Lant Street and a maid who is forcibly clothed in madhouse garb. The glove functions as a reminder of Maud’s duplicity and as an incriminating marker of Sue’s new, false identity, for the glove has Maud’s name sewn into its lining. Maud writes: “On to my hands she pulls a pair of white skin gloves, which she stitches at the wrists” (189). Maud’s glove acts as a kind of talisman in reverse:

I saw something, pale upon the floor. It looked like a crumpled white hand, and it gave me a start, at first; then I saw what it was ... It was that glove of Maud's, that I had taken that morning from her things and meant to hold on to, as a keepsake of her (401).

In the last scene, Maud and Gentleman's deception has been fully realized, and Sue is locked in her cell at the asylum. She says, "I lay with Maud's white glove in my fist, and now and then put the tip of one of its fingers to my mouth, imagining Maud's soft hand inside it; and I bit and bit" (420). Sarah Waters explores and presents the Victorian World in detail. Her insight and imaginative power give immense pleasure to the readers. Cora Kaplan (2008) discusses Waters's fascination inclined towards the Victorian Age:

One of the pleasures for Victorianist readers of Waters's novel is that as we admire her skills, we simultaneously understand the story she tells is always as a parallel universe, counterfactual imaginary, confected out of range of materials that include Victorian fiction, and modern rewriting of the Victorian by feminist historians and critics among others (Kaplan 53).

### **Pastiche and Intertextuality of Nineteenth-century Sensation Novels**

Waters considers *Fingersmith* to be the pastiche of a nineteenth-century sensation novel. In an article in *Guardian* (2006), Waters discusses her first two novels;

Working on *Tipping the Velvet* had given me a sense of the sort of lush, lesbian stories it might be possible to tease out of the Victorian setting, and *Affinity*, with its prison cells and séances, had only drawn me further into the darker, queerer institutions of 19th-century life. By the time I'd finished writing that book, I was hooked on the "sensation novels" of writers such as Wilkie Collins, Sheridan Le Fanu, and Mary Elizabeth Braddon: novels whose pre-occupation with sex, crime and family scandals had once made them runaway bestsellers. Tentatively, I began to piece together a melodramatic plot of my own, drawing on all those aspects of Victorian culture which still fascinated and intrigued me:

asylums, pornography, bibliophilia, the world of servants, the world of thieves (*Guardian*).

The intertextuality in the novels creates the idea that there is the possibility of a ‘real’ narrative. The incidents that Waters presents in her novels seem real as she introduces intertexts of the nineteenth century. Waters provides a voice to the marginalized identities of society. Charles Dickens *Oliver Twist* (1837) is referred to in Sue’s narrative. She consciously attends the play- *Oliver Twist* in the theatre, “I remember it as terrible. I remember the tilt of the gallery and the drop to the pit. I remember drunken woman catching at the ribbons of my dress” (Waters 1). She recalls her memory when Mrs Sucksby narrates her story of *Oliver Twist* and tells her about Nancy, a character in *Oliver Twist*. All the pornographic texts that Maud reads in the novel for her uncle are authentic nineteenth-century erotic texts. These texts are lesser known these days because of their bold and controversial subjects. In her notes, she includes and refers to all the texts as real nineteenth-century works: *The Festival of the Passions* (1828), *The Curtain Drawn Up* (1818), and *The Lustful Turk* (1828). Mrs Sucksby murders Gentleman and gets arrested to rescue Sue and Maud. Sue acknowledges the condition with sensation-seeking papers from *Penny Press* (1830). She refers to Mrs Sucksby;

Her taffeta dress was soaked in his blood, the brooch of diamonds at her bosom turned to brooch of rubies. Her hands were crimson, from the fingertip to the wrist. She looked like a picture of a murderess from one of the penny papers (Waters 508).

Sarah Waters reflects the opinion of the society of the nineteenth century regarding women’s education and exposure to sensation fiction. Sue’s madness, according to doctors, is due to her overindulgence in literature. The doctor believes Sue to be Maud. Doctors believe that excess reading of literature and contact with literature is not ideal for a woman. As Gentleman explains her condition to the doctors; “My wife... was born into literary life. Her uncle, who raised her, is a man dictated to the pursuit of learning and saw to her education as he might have seen to a son’s. Mrs. Rivers first passion is books” (Waters 300). The reference to lesbians is in common between Collins, *The Woman in White* and *Fingersmith*. In the former text woman- the woman’s love relationship is indirect, while in the latter lesbian relationship of Maud

and Sue is an important part of the narrative. Both novels have common settings from Victorian England and present the picture of the countryside and London. Throughout the novel, the readers believe that Gentleman plans the whole plot, but in reality, it is Mrs Sucksby who is responsible for plotting the treachery and making each character a pawn. Similarly, *The Woman in White* concludes that Fosco was the one to figure out the entire plot, while Glide was a mere Confederate. In *The Independent*, Simon Usborne (2009) claims that Sarah Waters recreated *The Woman in White* into;

A tale of lesbian sexual politics in *Fingersmith* -perhaps because in Wilkie Collins original the relation between Marian and Laura, and between numerous other heroines in Victorian fiction is already so suggestively close (*Independent*).

Sarah Waters' *Fingersmith* is a masterful example of the sensation genre, where she includes numerous references to Victorian sensation literature to create an intricate and gripping narrative. The novel draws inspiration from various Victorian literary works, seamlessly blending their elements to craft a unique and captivating story. Waters borrows the intricate narrative technique from Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* which adds layers of suspense and mystery to the plot. Additionally, she appropriates the theme of switching identities from Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, further enhancing the novel's intrigue and complexity.

The image of a decaying mansion, reminiscent of Dickens's *Great Expectations*, adds to the atmospheric setting and contributes to the overall Gothic ambience of the novel. References to Dickens' *Oliver Twist* appear multiple times in the text, enriching the Victorian context and depicting the darker aspects of society. Through these intertextual references and the depiction of Victorian society, Waters presents a vivid and authentic portrayal of the period, shattering the illusion of a sanitized and idealized version of the past. She portrays the darker underbelly of the Victorian era, revealing the corruption, deceit, and moral ambiguity that coexisted alongside its conventional ideals.

*Fingersmith* is a testament to Sarah Waters' ability to blend elements of Victorian sensation literature, constructing a gripping and evocative narrative. By drawing on multiple references and portraying the darker aspects of Victorian society, the novel provides readers with a captivating and immersive journey into a world of intrigue,



deception, and unexpected twists. The novel plays with the conventions of the Victorian sensation novel, a genre known for its intricate plots, twists, and dark secrets. Waters uses these genre conventions self-consciously, inviting readers to question the reliability of the narrative and the authenticity of the historical representation. The novel's multiple perspectives and shifting narratives force readers to reconsider what they know, revealing the constructed nature of the story. This self-awareness is a hallmark of metafiction, where the text draws attention to its fictionality. *Fingersmith* deconstructs the traditional narratives of Victorian literature by subverting reader expectations and revealing the manipulations involved in storytelling. The novel's intricate plot mirrors the theme of deception, not only within the story but also in how the narrative deceives the reader.

*The Night Watch* departs from her earlier novels' focus on the Victorian era. It deals with the theory of gay and lesbian historical fiction, presenting a new challenge for the author. Her previous works often depicted lesbians struggling against the repressive heteropatriarchal Victorian order, while *The Night Watch* shifts its focus to the more recent past of World War II. In this novel, Waters explores the lives of various characters living in different areas of London during the 1940s. The narrative follows multiple stories of women with diverse social statuses, ideologies, and sexual orientations. This shift in setting and period allows Waters to peep into a different historical context and explore the experiences of individuals living in the aftermath of a devastating war.

Unlike her earlier novels, which primarily centred on the Victorian era, *The Night Watch* presents a more diverse and complex range of characters and situations. By venturing into the World War II era, Waters opens up new avenues for exploring themes of identity, freedom, and relationships within a different historical context. *The Night Watch* demonstrates Waters' versatility as a writer, showcasing her ability to portray various historical settings and create nuanced and multidimensional characters. Through this novel, she further establishes herself as a master of gay and lesbian historical fiction, offering readers a compelling and thought-provoking exploration of the complexities of human experiences and relationships in different periods.

The novel is set in London during Second World War. There are five main characters, of which three are lesbian, one is a straight woman, and one is a man who

is gay. Characters express their sense of loss and acute symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Natasha Alden (2014) argues that *The Night Watch* is aimed at stimulating “the post-memorial identification between the affective community of lesbians now and at any point in history” (Alden 179). Alden (2014) discusses Judith Butler’s theory of loss and argues that the novel fictionalizes “the loss of loss itself” (178). Alden further contends that *The Night Watch* is centrally concerned with responding to “the intense need amongst lesbian authors and readers for representations of a lesbian past” (179). Alden argues that Sarah Waters wrote *The Night Watch* to depict the different stages of lesbian novels written during and after World War II. As Sarah Waters told Lucie Armitt (2007) in an interview;

The key to the understanding of *The Night Watch* is that everybody in the book was engaged in illicit or clandestine activities ... Actually, I don’t think of them as marginal people at all; I just think of them as perfectly ordinary people from the 1940s (Armitt 122).

In her interview with Kaye Mitchell (2013), Waters admitted that *The Night Watch* is unique as it contains a wealth of metafictional allusions to lesbian historical figures and lesbian texts:

Of course, we can’t reconstruct the past or capture the past, we can only reinvent it, so I wanted the novel to be very self-consciously a piece of lesbian historical figures . . . full of little gestures to other canonical lesbian novels, for example. But increasingly, as a novelist, I’ve found myself becoming much more interested in character and motivation and emotional dynamics, which means that I’m less interested in playing with history than in creating a kind of emotional experience for my reader (Mitchell 131).

*The Night Watch* is a dark historical fiction novel, and the storyline follows the fragmented lives of four women characters. These women subvert the traditional gender roles during wartime by being writers, workers, and ambulance drivers. They take sexual liberty by cutting short hair, wearing trousers, and smoking cigarettes. Lucie Armitt (2016) argues;

By the time she wrote *The Night Watch* in 2006, Waters’s interest in those members of the society who inhabit the ‘shadows’ in the 1940s

(conscientious, objectors, gay men, adulteress, prison inmates) leads to her establishing an assemblage of such characters alongside a steady core group of young lesbians (Helen, Micky, Julia and Kay) in order to demonstrate, often through the use of light and dark imagery, the complex manner in which cultural erasure takes place (Armitt 26).

In *The Night Watch* Kay's identity and appearance become a subject of scrutiny and mockery as she continues to wear the same trousers she wore as an ambulance driver during the War, even in peacetime. Her choice of clothing sets her apart from the conventional gender norms of the time, leading others to question her identity and fashion sense. When Kay visits Mickey at her post-war job in a petrol station, she finds her dressed in "dungarees and boots," (Waters 101), which are typically associated with masculine attire. The mention of Mickey reading a copy of H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* (1897) further reinforces the theme of identity and appearance. The novel, set in Post-World War II London, portrays the challenges and adjustments faced by individuals in the aftermath of the War, including their choices of clothing, which can be symbolic of their identity and experiences during wartime.

As the narrative moves back in time from 1947 to 1941, Waters immerses her readers in the real world of post-World War II London, vividly portraying the lives of its residents and the impact of the War on their identities and relationships. The novel explores the complexities of human experiences and emotions during this transformative period in history, allowing readers to engage with the characters' struggles and growth. It exemplifies Waters' skill in creating a compelling historical narrative, intertwining personal stories with the broader context of the period. Through Kay's unconventional choice of clothing and the portrayal of post-war London, Waters creates issues regarding themes of identity, adaptation, and the profound impact of War on individuals and society. Hanley (1991) reports:

Since women are presumed to be absent from War, they are presumed to have no story to tell. The only woman who can claim the authority to speak about the War is the rare woman who has been near the combat zone the odd nurse, and the motorcycle cops volunteer (Hanley 7).

Waters, in *The Night Watch*, writes that she gathered the ideas and stuff of the novel from sources like diaries, novels, and epistles, the authentic sources of that period.

The extensive material proves that women were participating during and after World War II. All the women characters experience bombing of the city. All of them play different roles in normalizing the war situation. In *The Guardian* (2006), Waters echoes the account of the situation of London in the 1940s;

How the landscape [of the city] became a shifting, provisional, disorienting one. People emerged from shelters to find familiar landmarks gone, roads blocked, objects displaced, and surfaces-pavements, trees, flowers, walls, everything- made ghostly with plaster and dust (*The Guardian*).

The setting of *The Night Watch* is full of destructive mansions, smashed-up windows, and ruined bricks and beams. The non-alignment characteristic of the novel makes it dynamic and more curious for the readers. Sarah Waters further refers to the reverse chronological order in *The Guardian*;

Every time I tried to move my characters forward, I met resistance ... it was not my characters' future that would make them interesting to me; it was their pasts ... I saw that the novel might work best if I put its action in reverse -if I kept its opening in the post-war 1947, but then plunged back into the trauma and excitement of the War itself. (Waters "Romances")

### **Gender Performativity in *The Night Watch***

Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity is a conspicuous feature of this novel. The plot reveals that "they are discursively constructed within a heterosexual matrix of power" (Butler 30). Women behave manly; Kay is always mistaken as a "young man", exemplifying Butler's notion that gender is constructed and performed. Society is hostile towards Kay on account of her masculine physical appearance. Waters frequently describes her female characters as manly and heroic and "carried stretchers" in wartime (Waters 55). Waters created women in the novel who wear men's clothing and perform various roles in the open society, exposing women's oppression caused by gender norms related to femininity. The female characters feel comfortable in men's clothing, characterized by looseness, comfort, and practicality. In the novel, when Helen is injured in a big explosion and is crushed under a collapsed house, the doctor who came to examine her body "was a brisk, handsome woman of forty-five or so. She

was dressed in dungarees and a turban” (Waters 380). This image of a tough woman shows that women have the same presupposed masculinity, such as courage and calmness in the face of difficulties and crises.

*The Night Watch* begins with the appearance of Kay Langrish, belonging to an upper-middle class. Kay is leading a lonely life and is on the verge of depressive disorder and trauma. She lost her job as an ambulance driver and her beloved partner Helen Giniver, who left her for her former partner, Julia Standing. Kay was shocked when she discovered their affair the night the apartment she shared with Helen. Kay lives in a hired garret room in a derelict house owned by Mr Leonard. She passes her uneventful, drab days watching films twice over. Kay watches Mr Leonard’s patients coming for faith healing. Kay is often mistaken for a man because of her neat short hair and men’s clothing. She is often called “young man” or even “son” by older women. Kay performs the male sex and challenges the traditional sex distinction. Her appearance of “masculinity subverts the traditional image of women dressed as a lady, with gentle demeanour” (21). Kay is biologically female but subverts the presupposition that men should have masculinity. The construction of gender identity is a parody of identity Politics. This strategy is based on the idea that “the inner truth of gender is a fabrication” (Butler 186).

Julia is another woman character who worked in a stifling environment in London. She was an architect and was responsible for surveying the bombed house. Julia’s working environment was highly intolerable. She travelled through London’s “tall and gloomy, dilapidated” houses all day. These houses have become “deserted” under the impact of gunfire. Julia invited Helen to see her work. After they entered this empty house, Helen found that,

The house was dusty, and heavily marked by flying glass and fallen plaster. The room beyond was just as wretched as this one-its window smashed, its velvet curtains marked with rain, spots on the floor where birds had dirtied, soot and cinders blasted from the hearth (Waters 206).

Images of “soot”, and “cinders” depict the destruction of London’s urban architecture. Julia herself said, “we are recording ghosts” (Waters 239). Kay watches the scene of destruction, standing near the window:

Before the War, Kay had been able to stand at her window and watch young men and women in the workshops painting swags and cupids on lovely old tables and chairs. Now the workshops had been closed down ... The fact of there being so much wood there, and so much varnish and paint, made the mews a dreadfully unsafe place (Waters 326).

However, Julia enjoyed herself in this “queer” job. Although “she would be smashed and bruised by dilapidated buildings from time to time, she thought this job is suitable for her because it’s so solitary, so silent” (Waters 206). The emotional affairs and sexual entanglement of Kay, Julia and Helen form the main structure of the plot. The romantic relationship between them reflects the masculinity of women. The lesbian relationship in the novel is the diversified manifestation of sexual desire. They challenge the “system of compulsory heterosexuality that operates through a system of compulsory sexual reproduction” (Butler 150). The first encounter between Kay and Helen was almost the hero rescued from the beauty style. In the first section of the novel, the women characters are connected. Duncan and Vivien are brother and sister, and Vivien works with Helen, who is in a relationship with Julia. In the novel’s second part, it is revealed that Helen and Kay used to be in a relationship. Waters has depicted the scenes of chaos and disorder prevailing in London during the War:

The chaos was extraordinary. Every time Kay put down her feet, things cracked beneath them or wrapped themselves around her ankles – What amazed her too, was the smallness of the piles of dirt and rubble to which even large buildings could be reduced (Waters 201).

Waters portrays the character of Kay, showcasing her calmness, wit, and bravery in the face of challenging situations. One notable instance is when Kay finds Helen in the ruins after an air raid and comes to her rescue. Helen is distressed and injured, but Kay patiently tends to her wounds and provides comfort through conversation, displaying her compassionate and caring nature. Waters cleverly subverts the traditional gender roles and storytelling conventions by depicting Kay as the rescuer, challenging the notion of the hero always being a male figure saving a damsel in distress. This portrayal of Kay as the hero who rescues Helen creates a refreshing and empowering representation of women in the novel.

The novel also incorporates fairy tales and fantasy elements, adding to the story's atmosphere and exciting the readers' sensations. Waters draws inspiration from classic fairy tales like Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, and Sleeping Beauty, where the heroines often endure various hardships, abuses, and curses from wicked figures. The use of fairy-tale elements, Waters, heightens the emotional impact of the plot, allowing readers to connect with the characters' struggles and triumphs. Including dreamlike and fantastical elements enriches the narrative, creating a sense of wonder and enchantment. Waters deftly weaves together historical realism with elements of fantasy and fairy tales, presenting a unique and captivating story that challenges traditional gender roles and offers a fresh and imaginative perspective on relationships and heroism. The portrayal of Kay and Helen's relationship, with its echoes of fairy-tale dynamics, adds depth and complexity to the novel, making it a compelling and thought-provoking text.

At the end of the story, in *The Night Watch*, Waters breaks away from the traditional fairy tale ending, where a brave and handsome male figure typically saves the day. Instead, she creates a romantic and unconventional encounter between Kay and Helen, subverting the typical gender roles found in traditional fairy tales. Kay is portrayed with a heroic and masculine temperament, challenging the conventional portrayal of male heroes saving damsels in distress. Her courageous nature disrupts traditional gender norms, presenting a refreshing and empowering representation of female characters. The novel develops a subtle and secret affection between Kay and Helen, adding depth and complexity to their relationship. Waters delicately explores the complexities of their emotions and desires, creating a unique and compelling love story that defies societal expectations and norms.

By depicting Kay as the hero with a masculine temperament and presenting a romantic encounter between her and Helen, Waters challenges the traditional notions of gender and love. The novel embraces a more inclusive and diverse portrayal of relationships and affection, inviting readers to question and reimagine the conventional tropes found in classic fairy tales. She creates a romantic and secret affection between Kay and Helen, and provides readers with a compelling and thought-provoking exploration of love, desire, and identity in a beautifully rendered historical setting. Kay says: "she does not want to leave her, after all; gazing at her in a sort of wonder; unable to believe that something so fresh and so unmarked could have emerged from so much

chaos” (Waters 383). In the relationship between Kay and Helen, Kay represents the male side of the heterosexual love model. Kay’s ex-girlfriend Julia once said to Helen, “Kay wants a wife ... She wants a wife-someone good, I mean; someone kind, untarnished. Someone to keep things for her, hold things in place” (Waters 324). The War allowed women to move outside the home to work to earn money. Kay and Helen get involved in a love affair and contribute to the unexpected love affair between Julia and Helen.

Julia and Helen walk through the streets of London late at night like “urban wanderers”. While Julia was walking with Helen, the two were attacked by air strikes. Helen realized that she had a secret affection for Julia. She fell into deep entanglement and pain because she had already lived together with Kay. Just as Helen was struggling and depressed, this sudden airstrike became a catalyst between her and Julia. For Helen, the light control period was always disturbing because “Anyone could come at us out of the dark” (Waters 277). Julia thought this was a good thing, “But if we can’t see them, they can’t see us. Besides, they’d probably take us for a boy and his girl” (Waters 277). In a heterosexual society, “gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences” (Butler 190), and society often punishes those who ‘wrongly’ perform their gender. The homosexuality between Julia and Helen is a kind of ‘wrong’ gender performance. As a writer, Julia faced such a social situation and had to hide her sexual orientation from the public. As Helen said, “Now that Julia’s books were doing so well, they had to be more careful than ever” (Waters 48). However, in 1944, the War disrupted and affected people’s daily lives and gave homosexuals temporal freedom. They wandered in the city under the control of the lights and became the “invisible” (Waters 286) and could be like heterosexuals without covering their sexual orientation. Waters is interested in the marginalized voices of the era. The objective of Historiographic metafiction in most of the critical works as discussed by Linda Hutcheon (1988):

It is narrative be it in literature, history or theory-that has been usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic Metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs- is made the



grounds for its rethinking and reworking of forms and contents of the past (Hutcheon 5).

In *The Night Watch*, the reader witnesses the present first and is then transported to the past. It deals with a fictional world that strives to recreate a history of the marginalized and suppressed voices of the past. However, the fictional world is identical to the contemporary world. Waters is aware of the historical events. She searches for the silenced and marginalized history and uses the historical events and the data to reassemble them as a lost archive. The storyline, the historical events of the World War, and women's active participation highlight British society's cultural transformation. Gender performativity is articulated by most of the female characters. They are emotionally shattered souls who find solace in serving the community in different ways. The scenes of death and destruction, the subversion of traditional values of society, and Kay and Julia's reaction against Victorian morality are the main characteristics of the novel.

Sarah Waters employs a reverse chronological structure, which disrupts the traditional narrative flow and challenges the reader's understanding of cause and effect. This structure is a metafictional technique that draws attention to the artificiality of narrative construction. By starting the story at the end and moving backwards in time, Waters invites readers to reconstruct the story themselves, highlighting the role of the reader in making sense of the narrative. Waters uses innovative structure and explores themes like time, memory, and trauma. The novel's structure mirrors the fragmented lives of its characters, who are dealing with the aftermath of World War II. The metafictional approach not only enriches the narrative but also underscores the themes of loss and recovery.

*The Little Stranger* (2009) novel features Gothic and sensational novel imagery. Sarah Waters continues to be interested in illustrating Historiographic metafiction in her book *The Little Stranger*. Sarah Waters uses historical episodes to depict contemporary situations like Thomas Pynchon and John Updike. Linda Hutcheon refers to metafiction, treating the subject of history through the lens of historiography and treating history as a social construct. *The Little Stranger* is structured around the Second World War events depicting British society's moral and social crisis.

Historiographic metafiction utilises two modes of narration, multiple points of view and an openly controlling narrator, that blurs subjectivity.

The novel's plot focuses on the upper-class society of Ayres and the Gothic environment of Hundreds Hall. The imposing structure of the Hall symbolizes the grandeur and the glory of "Olde England" (54) of the Victorian Age, which is declining as the Hall is haunted by the supernatural events of deaths and gothic terror found in the novels of Edgar Allan Poe and Mrs Redcliff. The Ayres are confronted with a sense of loss with the emergence of a new society after the War. They observe that the values are fast declining, and the country's house is also declining. The recurring accidents in the life of the Ayres destroy the family's happiness. Sarah Waters borrows gothic novels' horrible and threatening scenes to create a sensational novel. The novel *The Little Stranger* has various intertexts to heighten the gothic atmosphere. Palmer (2016) observes: "The emphasis that the haunted-house narrative places on familial secrets, especially ones of an illicit kind, makes it admirably suited, of course, to treating themes relating to queer sexuality and experience" (Palmer 41). Dr Faraday is at the centre of the plot and wants to grab the estate of Caroline, entrapping her in a deceptive love relationship. He belongs to the lower class, as his mother is a maidservant. He believes that he can rise on the social ladder by marrying Caroline, who seeks the help of Faraday to escape the Hall.

Ann Heilmann (2012) claims that: "Waters engages with the twenty-first-century nostalgia for the Victorians as well as with 1940s explorations of Gothic doom and class upheaval as symbols of the postwar condition" (54). Waters creates a combination of nostalgia using the historical events of British society. She has presented two conflicting visions; the plan of Caroline to escape the Hundreds Hall and of Dr Faraday, who wants to grab the estate for his selfish and greedy motive. He wishes to marry Caroline to achieve the social status of a Squire and respectability.

Waters depicts the essential events of the disintegration of the British class society during the Wars in the novel employing the symbols of the crumbling superstructure of the old Hundreds. Caroline is keen to make a new life indulging in sexualities and developing lesbian relationships. She believes that her sexual freedom will give her a new societal identity. Faraday's utopian mission is to take over the entire Country House. The opening establishes his interest in Hundreds Hall, an "absolute mansion",

in which his mother was in service, where Betty is in the kitchen –and where the ghost later speaks through the tube. However, Dr Faraday aims to gain above his station: “In admiring the house, I wanted to possess a piece of it” (3).

There are similarities between *The Little Stranger* and *Rebecca*. Both novels feature unnamed protagonists, Dr Faraday and Mrs De Winter, who find themselves in haunted mansions that hold the memories of the deceased. These mansions play a significant role in the narratives and evoke a sense of mystery and unease. Dr Faraday becomes involved with the Ayres family at Hundreds Hall, a once grand but now decaying mansion. He returns to the house multiple times, and the mansion’s haunting presence affects him psychologically as the story unfolds. In *Rebecca*, the protagonist, Mrs De Winter, enters Manderley, the grand estate where her husband’s deceased first wife, Rebecca, once lived. Mrs De Winter’s experience with the mansion is more dreamlike, significantly when she imagines herself being overshadowed by the lingering presence of Rebecca. The themes of returning to the past, encountering haunting memories, and a mansion being a central element in both novels create a parallel between Dr Faraday’s experiences in *The Little Stranger* and Mrs De Winter’s journey in *Rebecca*. These similarities add depth to the narratives and highlight both books’ gothic and atmospheric aspects. Sarah Waters’s novel may draw inspiration from *Rebecca*, but each story maintains its unique plot, characters, and themes. Faraday notices the gothic surroundings hiding secrets and history, “overgrown and untended”, which was in the past full of “neat rhododendrons and laurel” (Waters 5). The house seems alive with a “belly” and his responses register loss: “aghast”, “decline” “chaos” (5).

Dr Faraday remembers her mother whenever he meets Betty; the maid of the house. He assumes, “I thought of my mother. She was probably younger than Betty when she first went out to Hundreds Hall” (14). When Roderick is sent to the asylum, Betty goes to live in his room and at this stage. Faraday expresses his discontentment: “I found myself faintly unsettled by it, and when I looked into the room shortly after she had moved in, I felt more unnerved than ever” (233). Betty is always scared of the supernatural forces of the estate, as she admits: “It’s not a proper house at all” (13). Roderick shares his problems with Faraday and discussed the incident that happened after the dinner party. He expresses his fears thus: “It was all the more sickening, for

the glass being an ordinary sort of object” (161). He calls the event “the most grotesque thing of all” (161).

The novelist uses the image of the grotesque to describe the chaos and disorder of the British society of the 1940s. Ayres’s family was known for grandeur once but is now a symbol of death, destruction, and financial ruin. The characters struggle to gain social climbing, haunted by supernatural forces. The grand social life is declining as the estate’s heir wants to run away from there. Hutcheon alludes to the postmodern parody technique of incorporating the past into the present. In this novel, Sarah Waters uses the parody technique to expose the decline and historical disintegration of the British society of 1940.

### **Gothic Thriller ‘Haunting the Past’**

*The Little Stranger* is a gothic thriller, which takes place in the lonely and haunted mansion ‘Hundreds Hall’. Waters emphasizes the past marginalized voices and finds a favourable ground for interrogating and denouncing all forms of representation. Historiographic metafiction is a tool that subverts and enables other histories to be verbalized. The novelist utilizes authentic historical data and fictionalizes the characters and events. Waters explored the hidden secrets of the past and, through her characters, introduced the malaise of contemporary society. In a literary context, haunting is allied with suppression, traumatic experience, and the grief of loss. However, it may also be used to express hidden social conflicts. Waters’s novels are a delicate blending of past and present, and they are playful reworkings of the past. Her novels represent the physical and mental trauma of the characters. Historical novels have always followed the considerate and innovative mode of writing. De Groot (2013) views, “Fiction undermines the totalizing effects of historical representation and points out that what is known is always partial, always a representation” (Groot 57).

The novel has metafiction, suspense, mystery, dark, paranormal, romance, and gothic thriller elements. The past is associated with marginalized or suppressed voices. Waters explores the hidden, repressed, and silenced voices and emotions through her works. The novel presents the theme of haunting and the images of ghosts and poltergeists. It can also be considered a power to stand up to the loss of the past. Gordon (1997) remarks, “Haunting is the constituent element of modern life. It is neither pre-modern superstition nor individual psychosis, it is generalizable social phenomena of

great import” (Gordon 7). Thus, “the ghost is just the sign or empirical evidence... that tells you a haunting is taking place; the ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure” and it leads to the “dense site where history and subjectivity make social life” (Gordon 9).

The word haunting is interestingly related to the social problems of the past and provides an awareness of terrifying histories. Waters’s *The Little Stranger* may be illustrated as the creative application of the haunting theme, which is used to overcome the severe and social problems of the past. The novels are expressions of marginalized emotions and indicators of decisive social conflicts. The characters of the present novel psychologically satisfy their peculiar desires and fulfil their secret aims. The broader point of view can be held with the mark of unseen and long-lasting oppressive social hierarchization. The helpless and mistreated people make retributive justice of the past. In Waters’s novels, the characters are victims of social injustice and secondly, as a nemesis who takes revenge against misconduct. Haunting is socially and politically active in the works of Waters, and she attempts to examine the social and psychological problems of the past and seeks to be faithful in rectifying the undesirable past.

### **Subversion of Class Hegemony**

The *Little Stranger* (1999) deals with the devastated effects of World War II. The characters in the novel are fragmented and disfigured. It can be examined as a Gothic novel. Apart from queer and lesbian themes, this novel has heteropatriarchy characteristics. The main character is Dr Faraday, who revisits his past and remembers his mother’s sufferings and hardships in Hundred Hall, seemingly a cursed mansion. The Hall represents a symbol of British Aristocracy, full of noble virtues Englishmen could ever offer. Dr Faraday belongs to a working-class physician. However, subconsciously his memories haunt and visit the past to take revenge for the suffering and ignorance that he and his mother confronted.

The novel presents the mystification of class oppression. Dr Faraday is the first-person narrator, and the whole story is shaped according to his point of view. Boehm (2011) described it as a “ghost story” and discussed the novel as Gothic fiction. The novel represents the political and social transformation era after the Second World War’s end. The post-war condition, according to the low-class Betty, is more favourable. Dr Faraday also favours the transformation that took place after the War.

He feels that people with low incomes need the land owned by Ayres, favouring the new council houses constructed on that land. Betty is elated at the novel's end with the closure of Hundred Hall. She is unhappy working as a maid but feels satisfied when she takes the job in the bicycle factory. Dr Faraday revisits Hundred Hall to represent the prejudice that justifies the heteropatriarchy and uplifts class hegemony.

Dr Faraday is lively, well-mannered, docile, rational, and intelligent. However, deep down, he harbours dark emotions of anger and envy related to his social status. He is disappointed by the hardships of life, his unfulfilled dreams, and his lower social position. The Hundreds Hall, once prosperous, is now in a state of disaster after World War II. The Ayres family, who reside there, are no longer comfortable and relaxed due to their diminished circumstances. The narrative takes a chilling turn after an unfortunate accident where Gyp, the dog, badly bites a little girl, leading to her severe injuries. This event marks the beginning of a series of unsettling occurrences. Roderick, a member of the Ayres family, has been disfigured in the War. He informs Dr Faraday that Hundreds Hall is haunted by supernatural powers, which he believes control the estate.

Dr Faraday initially treats Roderick's claims about supernatural forces as signs of insanity. However, as the story unfolds, he becomes entangled in the matter, possibly driven by his desires and attachment to the estate. Roderick wishes to sell the property of Hundreds Hall, but Dr Faraday interferes in this matter, leading to tension and conflict between them. The escalating tension reaches a breaking point when Roderick, in a fit of anger, sets fire to his room and attempts to take his life, culminating in a harrowing and tragic event.

*The Little Stranger* combines elements of psychological suspense, a decaying aristocratic family, and supernatural occurrences to create an eerie and gripping narrative that delves into the complexities of human emotions and societal shifts after the war. Dr Faraday stays in Ayres's House with Caroline and her mother. He falls in love with Caroline despite her high social background. The main plot unfolds when it is revealed that Dr Faraday wants to take over charge of the Country house. The Country house represents the end of orthodoxy, Ayres defies modernity, and the novel intends to remove the leftovers of an obsolete hierarchal system. Dr Faraday is a mysterious and selfish character. Since childhood, he dreamed of owning a Hundred Halls, where

his mother was a maid. He always wishes for sophistication, power, and status. Caroline comes to know his inner intentions. She rejects his advances toward her. Like Margaret Prior, Caroline Ayres wants to escape from the haunted Hundreds Hall. Their shared desire to leave the estate is likely due to the unsettling and eerie atmosphere surrounding the house.

The haunting nature of Hundreds Hall is rooted in the memories of Susan Ayres, a seven-year-old who died during her childhood. Her presence seems to linger in the Hall, creating an eerie and ghostly feeling throughout the story. Despite the supernatural occurrences and beliefs surrounding Hundreds Hall, Dr Faraday remains sceptical about such stories. He does not believe in ghosts or supernatural forces and does not want to leave the estate—his rational and scientific approach to events clashes with the unsettling atmosphere of the house. The characters' interactions and contrasting beliefs add to the tension and mysterious ambience of *The Little Stranger*. The novel weaves psychological elements, haunting memories and scepticism, creating a captivating and thought-provoking narrative that keeps readers engaged until the end. He believes;

It was simply that, in admiring the house, I wanted to possess a piece of it – or rather, as if the admiration itself, which I suspected a more ordinary child would not have felt, entitled me to it. I was like a man, I suppose, wanting a lock of hair from the head of a girl he had suddenly and blindingly become enamoured of (Waters 3).

Caroline is suspicious of Faraday's intentions. Caroline's behaviour of ignoring Dr Faraday at the party and wanting to break off the engagement indicates that she is assertive and unwilling to accept a lack of satisfying answers or communication. She is unwilling to conform to traditional gender roles or societal expectations that may confine women to submissive positions in a hetero-patriarchal environment. Caroline's decision to break off the engagement demonstrates her independence and agency. Instead of accepting a situation where her needs or feelings are not being addressed, she takes control of her life and decides to align with her desires and standards. Caroline's actions suggest that she is willing to challenge and reject the norms and expectations imposed by a hetero-patriarchal society. She asserts her worth and autonomy by demanding satisfying answers and refusing to tolerate humiliation. Her insistence on a satisfying answer may indicate that she values emotional intelligence

and effective communication in a relationship. Her desire for a meaningful connection could highlight her understanding of her self-worth and the importance of mutual respect and understanding. She asks at the end of the novel and Faraday expresses his real intentions for the possession of Hundred Hall:

If Hundreds Hall is haunted, however, its ghost doesn't show itself to me. For I'll turn, and am disappointed— realizing that what I'm looking at is only a cracked window-pane and that the face gazing distortedly from it, baffled and longing, is my own (Waters 498–499).

Haunting in *The Little Stranger* lies in the frustration of class hegemony and status inferiority. Dr Faraday, the central character, faces humiliation because of his social status and revisits Hall to regain his lost status. He uses Caroline as a ladder to fulfil his dreams. He longs for dignity and status. Sarah Waters' perspective on the haunting elements in *The Little Stranger* is a unique and psychologically intriguing aspect of the novel. By portraying the ghosts as manifestations of the characters' troubled subconscious, she enters the depths of human psychology. The impact of repressed emotions and experiences' exploration of these unconscious energies as integral parts of the characters' identities contributes to the haunting and enigmatic nature of the novel, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of human nature and the hidden forces that shape our experiences.

The novel leaves room for various interpretations; it is open to speculation whether Dr Faraday's actions are driven by a desire for revenge against the injustices perpetrated against the low-class community. Waters' narrative weaves elements of class conflict, societal tensions, and personal motives, leaving readers to ponder the extent to which Dr Faraday's haunted spirit may be seeking retribution for the mistreatment of the lower classes. The novel's exploration of these themes underscores the intricacies of human behaviour and the impact of societal dynamics on the individual psyche, inviting readers to contemplate the profound implications of historical injustices and their lasting effects on society. His regular visit to history helps him to wipe out the sad memories of the past. In an interview with *The Guardian* (2009), Sarah Waters acknowledges that readers disliked the character of Dr Faraday, "I have grown used to hearing Dr Faraday abused as dull, annoying, frustrating" (*The Guardian*).



In the past, the working class always aspired to social justice. Sarah Waters comes up with justice and provides the improvised more opportunities to take revenge for the misconduct of the past. The repressed emotions of the characters represent the silent traumas of the past that result in frustration and anger. Dr Faraday creates his own space and honour by replacing the age-long domination of class hegemony and attacking the heteropatriarchal order. 'Haunting the Past' within the novel's narrative structure permits the reworking and crucial rethinking of the concepts of truth. Haunting can be seen as a social and psychological phenomenon instead of a dead person returning to life. Waters brings to the forefront the forgotten tales and muted voices of working-class existence, empowering characters from humble origins to confront and seek retribution for historical injustices. Her narrative also captures the evolution of British society following the 1940s, providing insights into the societal changes and tensions that shaped the country's cultural landscape during that time. Ayres's social status declines over time. In the neo-forties of Waters, she walks away from the lesbian subjects previously used in her novels.

Waters blends elements of the gothic novel with historical fiction, creating a narrative that is both haunted and haunting. The novel's ambiguous treatment of the supernatural is never fully confirming whether the haunting is real or a product of psychological disturbance. It challenges the reader to consider the reliability of the narrative. This ambiguity is a metafictional device, and forces readers to engage with the text on multiple levels, questioning what is real within the story. Waters explores post-war British society's anxieties, particularly the decline of the aristocracy. The novel's metafictional approach allows it to comment on the genre itself, as well as on the historical period it depicts, blending social critique with narrative self-awareness.

The sixth novel *The Paying Guests* (2014) by Sarah Waters explores the traumatic experiences of women characters trapped in a destructive war. They suffer from poverty and acute financial crisis as they are forced to rent their house to survive in the harsh British society. The renting of the house opens the opportunity for Frances to develop sexual relations with Lilian. *The Paying Guests* has the elements of a sensational novel as the family drama is turned into the crime story of the horror of Gothic novels. The novel became a best seller in *The New York Times* and was ranked the best book of 2014 in many popular US papers.

*The Paying Guests* presents a multifaceted narrative that intricately weaves together elements of both a love story and a crime drama. The novel explores the relationship between Frances and Lilian forms the core of the love story, highlighting the complexities and challenges inherent in their connection. Simultaneously, the unfolding crime drama introduces suspense and tension, compelling readers to unravel the intricacies of the character's actions and motivations. Waters' adept storytelling seamlessly integrates these dual plot lines, creating a rich and engaging narrative that delves into the complexities of human emotions, desires, and the consequences of one's choices. Waters intelligently juxtaposes fantasy with the reality of World War II to create a historiographic metafiction. Linda Hutcheon (1988) comments thus: "both history and fiction are discourses, that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past" (Hutcheon 89). The novel's uniqueness stems from its skilful use of a manipulated narrative structure. This narrative technique allows for a compelling and intricate storytelling approach, enabling readers to experience the plot from various perspectives and timeframes, ultimately enhancing the depth and complexity of the narrative. Waters tries to "reinststate dialectics and contradictions, reintroduce little known or suppressed aspects of war" (Rau 209). Nicola Humble (2001) contends that the storyline draws inspiration from Middlebrow fiction, embracing its focus on interpersonal relationships, domestic conflicts, and psychological intricacies, often reflects, "feminine aspects of life, a fascination with domestic space, a concern with courtship and marriage, a preoccupation with aspects of class and manners" (Humble 11).

The narrative unfolds in 1922, depicting the struggles of Frances Wray and her mother, Emily Wray, who grapple with poverty in their South London residence. The aftermath of the Great War has left the family burdened with debts, intensifying their financial struggles. Frances, constrained by societal norms, experiences a sense of isolation and psychological distress, unable to embrace sexual freedom or explore life beyond the confines of her domestic responsibilities. Her daily routine revolves around mundane tasks such as tending to household chores, attending weekly cinema outings with her mother, and secretly indulging in cigarette smoking in her bedroom. Frances's predicament bears resemblances to the challenges faced by Margret Prior in *Affinity*,

where both characters contend with overbearing maternal figures and societal constraints that restrict their autonomy. Gildersleeve and Sulway (2019) observe:

Having the Barbers in the house makes public and explicit the reduced circumstances of Frances and her mother. It increases the amount of domestic labor that Frances must undertake – labor that Frances’ mother and her peers consider beneath her. The presence of the Barbers in the house also reduces the privacy that Frances and her mother have enjoyed, and brings them into close and intimate contact with people, objects, and behaviors that disrupt their already-disrupted household. (Gildersleeve and Sulway 14).

Waters drew inspiration for *The Paying Guests* from two compelling cases: Edith Thompson and Fredrick Bywaters in 1922, and Alma Rattenbury and Percy Stoner in 1935. Both incidents involved a husband, his wife, and her younger male lover, culminating in a tragic outcome stemming from a moment of reckless violence, leading to the loss of almost all parties involved. Even a cursory look at these tales reveals how chaotic this type of crime is, unlike the clean, bloodless killing of the era’s detection fiction. Waters, thus, wonders how a situation like Thompson’s might have developed differently if the relationship had not been so stereotypically heterosexual. she claims in an interview with Morgan Ribera (2014); “I became really interested in that classic domestic crime scenario — a wife, a husband, and a male lover and I began to think about what it might look like if the lover was a female rather than a male” (Waters Interview).

*The Paying Guests* represents an ambitious and passionate blend of romance and thriller, characteristic of the unique style of novelists like Waters. The intricate love story is entangled with a deteriorating marriage, an accidental crime, and the subsequent moral dilemmas that arise. Frances Wray’s decision to invite the tenants Barbers, in order to generate income, sets the stage for the unfolding narrative. Frances feels that “opening up the house to thieves and invaders” (Waters 7) reflects the social discrimination in society after World War II. They belong to the clerical class and are below in status. Leonard exudes a bold and self-assured demeanor, displaying a penchant for flirting with Frances, while Lilian’s attire includes a “gipsyish” fringed skirt and Turkish slippers, reflecting her distinctive and unconventional style. Frances

observes the Barbers unloading their luggage, setting the scene for the dynamic interactions and beginning of new interactions;

[A] mess of bursting suitcases, a tangle of chair and table legs, bundle after bundle of bedding and rugs, a portable gramophone, a wicker birdcage, a bronze-effect ashtray on a marbled stand ... The thought that all these items were about to be brought into her home – and that the couple, who were not quite the couple she remembered, who were younger, and brasher, were going to bring them, and set them out, and make their own home, brashly, among them – the thought brought on a flutter of panic (Waters 6).

Here, chaotic stuff refers to the chaotic relationship of the couple because of Frances. She spends her idle moments sleeping and overloading her room with ostrich feathers. The first half of the novel concerns reveals the stages of development of Lilian's intimacy with the Barbers. *The Paying Guests* explores the theme of class boundaries and societal changes after the War. It provides a fascinating look into the post-war period in British society. After World War I, Britain underwent significant societal transformations, often leading to the blurring of traditional class boundaries. The aftermath of the War brought economic challenges to many families, and the once rigid class distinctions began to soften as people from different social backgrounds were forced to interact more closely due to shared hardships and experiences. The influx of women into the workforce during the War also contributed to shifting gender roles and dynamics. In a microcosm like the household of Frances Wray, where they had to rent out part of their property to make ends meet, the clash of different social classes living together could create tension and provide a rich backdrop for exploring themes of identity, desire, and societal expectations. It allowed for a more intimate exploration of how individual lives were affected by more considerable social changes.

Sarah Waters is known for her ability to portray historical periods and social dynamics in a nuanced and engaging. By using the setting of a house with paying guests, she could offer a multi-layered examination of the characters' lives and interactions and the broader impact of the War on British society during that time. Frances vocalizes her internal conflict with household chores, metaphorically comparing the house to a living, breathing entity as she diligently tends to its upkeep.

This introspective perspective highlights her deep emotional connection to the domestic space and underscores the intricate relationship between Frances and her environment: “It seemed to her that the house must produce [the dust], as flesh oozes sweat” (Waters 25).

Sarah Waters always delights in bringing gothic elements into her novels. She creates horrible situations to entertain and surprise her readers. Frances’s home is haunted; the presence of her late father always haunts her. She feels the presence, and this disturbs her mentally. Waters writes: “The furniture her father collected, despite his belief in its authenticity, turns out to be a collection of Victorian fakes” (24). The furniture that Frances’s mother possesses, with her, has the “father’s heart” in it, but she is unwilling to sell it (24). Frances is annoyed by her mother’s traditional beliefs and her devotion to her father’s outdated furnishings. Frances and her mother represent women of the Victorian age as Frances’s “pinned up hair” and “blouse tucked into her high-waisted skirt, after the fashion of the war, which was already four years over” (Waters 7).

Frances has to concede to her mother’s plan, forcing her to “go scuttling around like a crab” (24). Thus, her father’s furniture restrains her physically and morally, reminding her of her duties and the heteronormative codes governing the house. She felt pressured to end her connection with Christina, who was also a lesbian. When Frances’s mother discovered their love letters, Frances and Christina’s relationship ended. Eventually, Frances Wray remains occupied in the household chores while Christina has found her new lover, Stevia. The lingering presence of her father acts as a constraining force, impacting Frances both physically and emotionally, as she grapples with the enduring influence of her father’s persona and the memories associated with him.

The majority of Frances’s time is spent in the kitchen. She needs her “little successes in the kitchen as they give a small, uneventful, but significant pleasure to her everyday life” (25). Her vocabulary around cooking is the main factor in bringing Lilian near her. Frances soon comes to understand that her emotions for Lilian have the potential to develop into true love. Sarah Waters utilizes the symbols of a white egg and milk sauce to depict the gradual development of Frances’s longing for Lilian. Their intimate encounter in the dimly lit scullery represents Frances’s defiance of the

prevailing heterosexist norms within the household. By intertwining the themes of cooking and homosexuality, Waters seamlessly integrates Frances' lesbian desire into the context of Middlebrow fiction, providing a naturalized portrayal of same-sex attraction within the narrative structure. The 'Cooking' is the central metaphor in the novel exploring the relationship between Frances and Lilian. Frances shows her concern towards her mother, "I've to start thinking about my mother's dinner", and Lilian reciprocates her concern for her husband, "And I've to start thinking about Len's" (105). Through the use of cookery imagery, Waters vividly portrays the clandestine nature of a queer relationship adding further complexity to their relationship. The allure of a bohemian lifestyle represents a utopian fantasy shared by Frances and Lilian, underscoring their shared aspirations for a life beyond the confines of societal expectations.

Frances's mother is a typical Victorian woman, who spies on her daughter and Lilian. Sarah Waters has employed the images borrowed from Hollywood films presented by D. W. Griffith's (1916) and George Melford's (1921). Frances soon realizes that "as long as they are content with their fantasy plan, they will not be able to escape their confinement" (Waters 269). Frances describes her intimacy with Christina thus, "We looked at rooms, we saved our money ... Christina and I talked as though we were part of a new society! Everything was changing. Why shouldn't we change too?" (177). Frances affirms that they decide their new journey together which indicates that they planned their new life willingly: "We began to want to live together. We planned it, seriously. We did everything seriously in those days. Christina took typewriting and book-keeping classes" (177). In desperation, Frances cries out: "I want you to leave Leonard Lilian. I want you to leave him and live with me" (178).

By incorporating these metafictional elements, Sarah Waters invites readers to engage in a more active and critical reading experience. The self-awareness embedded in the narrative encourages reflection on the nature of storytelling, challenging traditional notions of fiction and reality. Sarah Waters' works explore the Historiographic metafiction writing tradition. It has sought to recover and redefine the lost, marginalized voices of the past while blurring the previously established versions of history using metafictional and postmodernist tactics by critically examining the gaps in the existing and hegemonically recorded histories. All the novels by Sarah

Waters, such as *Tipping the Velvet*, *Affinity*, *Fingersmith*, *The Night Watch*, *The Little Stranger*, and *The Paying Guests*, are packed with the elements of Metafiction. She has discarded the traditional literary device used by the early Victorian novelists and evolved her to depict the struggles of women trapped in the destructive war situation. Her Historiographic metafiction is entertaining and exhilarating, and she has employed techniques such as parody, Intertextuality, Pastiche, Magic realism, Fragmentation and the elements of horror and fantasy borrowed from the Gothic and Sensational novels.

By drawing attention to the artificiality of narrative and genre conventions, Waters' novels encourage readers to question the boundaries between history and fiction, reality and imagination. These metafictional elements are not merely stylistic choices but are integral to how Waters' novels critique and reinterpret historical and literary traditions. Her novels deconstruct the traditional narratives of Victorian literature by subverting reader expectations and revealing the manipulations involved in storytelling.

## Conclusion

There is a unique blend of historical fiction and metafictional narrative techniques in the novels of Sarah Waters. She presents the constructed nature of history, using elements of unreliable narratives and anachronisms to question traditional historical narratives while creating engaging stories. The postmodern approach invites the readers to consider the interplay between facts and fiction. In this research, Sarah Waters's novels are examined, relying on the technique of historiographic metafiction.

The theorist Linda Hutcheon is a Canadian literary scholar well-known for her seminal work *The Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction* (1988). In historiographic metafiction, authors often explore and engage with historical events, figures, and narratives while highlighting historical representation's fictional and constructed nature. The present thesis investigates the theory of historiographic metafiction, analyzing how contemporary writers manipulate and reinterpret historical sources and narratives in their fiction. This fiction often challenges the established notions of truth, the role of storytelling, and the complexities of representation. Hutcheon's ideas have had a significant impact on literary studies and have contributed to discussions about the intersections of history, fiction, and postmodernism. Her work has been influential in exploring how literature engages with, critiques, and reimagines historical realities. The theory of historiographic metafiction is applied to Sarah Waters's novels.

Sarah Waters, a Welsh novelist, has gained renown for her progressive outlook and expertise in historiographic metafiction. Her most remarkable works were crafted in the early 20th century, focusing on the reconstruction of events from the early Victorian era and the periods following World War I and II. Sarah Waters subverts traditional historical narrative conventions in her novels. Waters challenges the reader's expectations by introducing elements such as complex characters, relationships, and unconventional perspectives and blurring the boundaries between different time periods. The subversion adds layers of depth and complexity to her storytelling, encouraging readers to question established norms and interpretations of history.



Waters manipulates and reconstructs historical settings to serve her narratives. Her novels accurately portray the time periods, as well as identifying instances from historical facts for narrative purposes. The characters subvert societal norms related to gender and sexuality. The study discusses how the characters interact with and influence the historical context in which they exist. Historiographic metafiction often involves self-reflexive technique, intertextual references, parody, fragmentation, multiplicity of voices etc. to historical documents or other works of fiction. Her innovative stylistic techniques, non-linear narratives, and metafictional devices contribute not only to the evolution of literary forms but also to the ongoing discourse surrounding the boundaries of representation, authenticity, and the role of storytelling in our complex world. Waters employs these devices to create layers of meaning and complexity within her novels. Waters's novels engage with the idea that history is not a fixed, objective truth but rather a construct influenced by perspectives and agendas. Her characters or narratives challenge traditional historical narratives and explore the subjective nature of historical representation. Historiographic metafiction invites readers to critically engage with the fictional narrative and its historical context.

Waters encourages readers to reflect on how they consume and interpret history through fiction. The study intends to bridge a gap in the existing literature and focus on Waters' employment of historiographic metafiction techniques to portray contemporary issues. She has the power of illuminating a rich tapestry of literary innovation, thematic exploration, and socio-cultural commentary. She deals with the intricate interplay between historical narratives and fictional constructs. This study sheds light on Waters's adept manipulation of history to reflect contemporary issues. This research seeks to unravel the layers of narrative complexity and the elements of Postmodernism that define Waters's novels.

By meticulously tracing the threads of historiography interwoven with narrative fiction, the study unveils how Waters reimagines and reinterprets historical events, presenting an alternative perspective that challenges and subverts conventional historical narratives. The comprehensive analysis of Waters' novels, seeks to provide a literary contribution to the broader discourse on the intersection of history and fiction in postmodern literature. The study aspires to contribute a significant piece to the mosaic of literary scholarship, unveiling how Sarah Waters's perspective of the theory

of historiographic metafiction offers a window into the intricacies of human perception, memory, and storytelling.

Sarah Waters has authored six novels characterized by their experimental narrative structures, featuring intricate layers of meaning and intertextual allusions that echo the postmodernism advocated by Linda Hutcheon. Hutcheon's concept of Historiographic metafiction identifies as a genre that deliberately highlights the narratives of the past, revealing the intertwined nature of history and fiction as constructed forms of communication and meaning. Hutcheon provides a valuable framework for comprehending and interpreting the modern historical novel. Waters stands out as a prominent and respected author, celebrated for her intellectually stimulating Victorian novels that feature protagonists exploring fluid notions of sexuality. Waters possesses a unique ability to encapsulate her chosen eras within her narratives, meticulously weaving intricate details of the past.

As a Postmodern writer, Sarah Waters encompasses themes of lesbianism, feminism, and queerness, dissecting gender and sexual dynamics through the lens of historical fiction. Waters's fictional works feature two notable trilogies that span distinct historical periods, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of different eras and their impact on the theory of 'Historiographic Metafiction'; The Victorian era Trilogy and The Post World War trilogy.

### **The Victorian Era Trilogy**

Waters' initial trilogy unfolds within the context of the Victorian era, known for its rigid social norms and hierarchical framework. This trilogy includes: *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999), and *Fingersmith* (2002).

*Tipping the Velvet* is situated in the 19th century and embarks on Nan King's journey of self-discovery and explores her queer identity amidst the vibrant and diverse backdrop of Victorian London's entertainment scene. Sarah Waters's novels engages with a captivating blend of historical context, literary traditions, and themes of identity and exploration. In *Tipping the Velvet*, Sarah Waters masterfully weaves together elements of Foucault's concept of "other spaces" (1986) with the conventions of popular fiction from the Victorian age. It refers to spaces that exist outside of the established norms of society, where different rules and dynamics apply. These spaces often allow for alternative identities and experiences to emerge. Waters uses this

concept to create a narrative that delves into the hidden and often taboo aspects of Victorian society, such as the brothel house, the hysteric and madhouse, the prison and other venues where marginalized identities and desires found expression.

The influence of Victorian literary genres is evident in *Tipping the Velvet*. The incorporation of gothic elements adds to the enigmatic atmosphere and sense of intrigue within the narrative, while the melodramatic and sensational components amplify the emotional depth and intensity of the characters' experiences. This blending of genres allows Waters to explore complex themes while maintaining a sense of engagement and entertainment. The novel explores Victorian society- clubs, theatres, coffee houses, pubs, and music halls that serves as a lens through which the characters begin their adventurous journey of self-discovery. These historical icons become the backdrop for Astley's exploration of identity and desires, and her encounters with various facets of Victorian culture and society. Waters' ability to interweave themes of wonder, romance, and psychological realism contributes to the novel's multi-dimensional nature. The characters' struggles and triumphs, as they navigate the complexities of their identities and relationships, resonate with readers on a profound level. This blend of emotions and psychological depth adds layers to the narrative, making it a compelling exploration of personal and societal dynamics.

Nan's psychological anguish is a central theme in the narrative, and Waters portrays her complex emotional trajectory. The loss of her innocence, middle-class status, and eventual descent into prostitution are powerful symbols of Nan's personal and societal struggles. This progression highlights the challenges marginalized individuals face in a society that enforces rigid norms and expectations. Nan's transformation into a "fairy-tale princess" and a seeker of glamorous adventures is an intriguing exploration of her desire for self-discovery and autonomy. By embracing these roles, Nan can step outside the confines of her previous life and explore facets of her identity that were previously suppressed or hidden. This quest for identity and agency is intertwined with her pursuit of confidence and celebrity status, as she navigates the vibrant and often tumultuous world of Victorian entertainment.

Nan Astley's rise to fame in the context of the entertainment industry becomes a means of empowerment and self-expression, allowing her to challenge societal norms and expectations. This exploration of celebrity and its effects on identity adds a layer

of complexity to Nan's character and the themes addressed in the novel. Nan's transformation from innocence to empowerment is reflective of the broader societal shifts occurring during the Victorian era. Waters' portrayal of Nan's experiences aligns with the evolving role of women in society and the challenges they face in navigating traditional gender roles. Nan's story becomes a microcosm of the broader struggles and aspirations of individuals seeking to define their identities and destinies.

*Tipping the Velvet* (1998) uses dissonance and fragmentation to explore themes of sexuality and identity. The dissonance arises between societal expectations and personal desires. Fragmented narratives and shifting perspectives amplify the complexities of her experiences. Nan's entry into the world of fairy and romance, driven by a desire for the pleasures of glamour and adventure, sets the stage for a narrative filled with tension, anxieties, and internal conflicts. Nan's yearning to return to her simpler, authentic self as Nancy Astley reflects her internal struggle as she navigates the contrasting roles and personas demanded by her relationship with Kitty. The duality of Kitty's stage persona as a man and her true self offstage highlights the dissonance that Nan experiences. This dissonance becomes a source of psychological tension, as Nan grapples with the complexities of Kitty's double life and her desires for material and emotional fulfilment.

The depiction of Nan's inner turmoil highlights the dichotomy between the allure of the glamorous world and the harsh realities of everyday life. While Nan is drawn to the idea of a glamorous and brave existence, the discontent between her fantasies and her actual experiences leaves her feeling unfulfilled and despondent. This contrast between aspiration and reality adds depth to Nan's character and underscores the challenges she faces in reconciling her desires with the constraints of her circumstances. As the novel unfolds, Sarah Waters portrays Nan's psychological anguish and the gradual erosion of her identity and status. Nan's loss of innocence, her descent into prostitution, and her eventual degradation are emblematic of the harsh realities of her choices. This trajectory serves as a commentary on the sacrifices and consequences of pursuing superficial notions of glamour and adventure. The comparison between Nan and a fairy-tale princess emphasizes her transformation into an icon of celebrity and stardom, paralleling the narrative's exploration of fame, performance, and identity. Nan's role as a "fool" who assists Cinderella aligns with her internal conflicts, as she

grapples with her changing sense of self and the roles she assumes in her relationship with Kitty. Sarah Waters captures Nan's multifaceted journey, from aspiration to disillusionment, from yearning for glamour to confronting the harsh realities of her choices. The exploration of psychological tension, identity formation, and the complexities of relationships adds depth to Nan's character.

In *Affinity*, Margaret struggles with her own suppressed desires and sexual identity. Her attraction to Selina raises questions about her feelings and societal expectations. This internal struggle contributes to a sense of identity crisis, as she navigates her emotions and societal norms. Margaret's upper-middle-class background and her interactions with Selina, who is of a lower social class, further complicate her identity crisis. The rigid class divisions of Victorian society are reflected in the power dynamics between the two women, adding to Margaret's uncertainty about her place in the world. There is a presence of spiritualism and illusion in the novel. Selina's claims of supernatural abilities challenge Margaret's understanding of reality and truth. As Margaret indulges deeper into the world of spiritualism, she confronts her doubts and uncertainties about what is real.

As Margaret becomes more involved with Selina and her world, she undergoes a process of self-discovery and transformation. Her interactions with Selina lead her to question her own beliefs and assumptions, ultimately leading to a re-evaluation of her identity and priorities. Waters' exploration of the identity crisis in *Affinity* is a reflection of the broader societal shifts and challenges faced by individuals during the Victorian era. Through Margaret's experiences, the novel delves into the complexities of personal identity, desire, and the impact of social norms. In *Affinity*, the dissonance between rationality and spiritualism is heightened by the fragmented structure, drawing readers into the psychological turmoil of the protagonist. Waters' adept use of dissonance and fragmentation enhances the texture of her narratives, encouraging readers to question assumptions, navigate uncertainties, and engage with characters and historical contexts in profound ways. Through the integration of these narrative techniques, Waters creates immersive and contemplative experiences that resonate with readers, encouraging them to confront the intricacies of human emotions, relationships, and the interpretation of historical events.

*Fingersmith* (2002) takes place during the 19th Century. It reflects the themes of deception, misery, revenge, and personal transformation. The theme intricately weaves together the lives of two women, Sue and Maud, as they navigate complex relationships and societal expectations. Within this historical context, Waters explores the concept of postmodern identity, which encompasses a fluid and fragmented understanding of self in a world marked by shifting realities and multiple perspectives. The fragmentation of the narrative reflects the postmodern notion that reality is not a fixed and singular entity, but rather a result of multiple interpretations. As the story unfolds through the viewpoints of different characters, readers are exposed to different versions of events, challenging traditional notions of a cohesive narrative and singular truth.

The characters in *Fingersmith* undergo significant shifts in identity and self-perception. Susan Trinder, the protagonist, starts as a thief's accomplice but later embraces her true identity as Maud Lilly. Maud herself navigates between societal expectations, her role as an heiress, and her feelings for Susan. The blurring of identities and the character's ability to adapt and transform themselves reflect postmodern notions of fluidity which is not fixed and constantly negotiated. Both Susan and Maud challenge traditional gender roles and expectations. Their romantic relationship defies societal norms and questions the binary understanding of sexuality. Waters' portrayal of these characters' experiences reflects the idea that identity is not solely determined by biological factors but is shaped by individual experiences and choices. The novel's exploration of power dynamics and agency is intertwined with the theme of postmodern identity. Characters often wield power through deception and manipulation, blurring the lines between reality and illusion. The characters' ability to manipulate their identities and those of others underscores the malleability of truth and the construction of identity as a performance.

*Fingersmith* also engages with postmodern elements through intertextual references and homage to Victorian literature. Waters pays tribute to and subverts conventions of the gothic novel and sensational fiction, creating a meta-narrative that plays with reader expectations and highlights the constructed nature of storytelling and identity. Waters interweaves historical settings and postmodern sensibilities, creating a narrative that challenges traditional notions of identity, reality, and narrative structure. The characters' journey of self-discovery and transformation reflect the multifaceted

nature of identity in a world marked by complexity and shifting perspectives. The narrative structure presents the same events from different perspectives, and introduces fragmentation, challenging readers to piece together the truth from the fractured accounts.

### **The World War and Post-War Trilogy**

Moving forward in time, Waters' second trilogy shifts its focus to the aftermath of World War I and World War II, capturing the changing landscape of society and its impact on queer and gender experiences. In an interview with Malinda Lo (2006) Waters states:

With the first three books, the Victorian-set ... I mean, *Affinity* and *Fingersmith* had pretty complicated plots, so I had to really have the plots worked out before I started writing ... But with *The Night Watch*, it was very different sort of book to write and quite unnervingly for me, it was character-led ... I knew the broad structure, and I knew broadly what happened to the characters (Interview with Sarah Waters).

*The Night Watch* is set during and after World War II, the novel explores the lives and relationships of several characters, revealing how the war redefines notions of identity and love. The novel is set in 1940s London during and after World War II. It follows the lives and relationships of several characters, exploring themes of love, loss, and the impact of war on personal and societal levels. The narrative structure of the novel is unconventional, as it unfolds in reverse chronological order, adding to the complexity and depth of the story. The novel has been praised for its evocative portrayal of the period and its character development, showcasing Waters's skill in creating rich, historically resonant narratives.

The historiographic metafictional elements in *The Night Watch* are profound and thought-provoking. Through intricate structure and narrative techniques, the novel plays with the concept of time, presenting events in a reverse chronological order which allows readers to observe the consequences of characters' actions before understanding the causes. This deliberate manipulation of time challenges linear historical narratives and encourages readers to reflect on how our understanding of history is shaped and told. The characters exemplify the intertwining of history and fiction. The personal stories of the characters are intricately interconnected to the historical context of the

war and its aftermath, blurring the lines between individual experiences and larger historical events. This approach prompts readers to consider how personal narratives contribute to our understanding of history and how history influences our perception of personal stories.

The characters' relationships and interactions also contribute to the metafictional aspect of the novel. The shifting perspectives and narrative focus offer different interpretations of events, presenting how individuals perceive and remember the same occurrences. This exploration of subjectivity and multiple perspectives reflects the challenges inherent in constructing an objective historical account. *The Night Watch* combines historiographic elements with metafictional techniques to create a narrative that prompts readers to question traditional historical narratives and consider the complex relationship between history, memory, and storytelling. Sarah Waters employs a diverse cast of characters whose lives intersect and intertwine in complex ways, reflecting the complex relationships between history, memory, and personal experience.

As a central character, Kay's experiences as an ambulance driver during the war reflect the broader historical context, but the novel presents her story in reverse chronological order. This approach challenges readers to consider how an understanding of a character's past shapes our interpretation of her present circumstances. Helen, Kay's lover, adds to the metafictional dimension by embodying the idea that individual perspectives shape historical understanding. Her experiences as a shelter warden and her post-war life are presented in a way that highlights the subjectivity of memory and the nuanced ways in which people remember and interpret events. Duncan's narrative in the novel offers valuable perspectives on the repercussions of decisions made during the war. His role as a conscientious objector prompts discussions about individual agency within historical circumstances, thereby challenging conventional ideas of heroism. Vivien's relationship with Reggie and her involvement with Duncan create layers of complexity. Waters's narrative encourages readers to scrutinize the reliability of memory and the subjective nature of personal recollections, reflecting the complexities involved in constructing historical narratives. Julia's narrative intertwines with Kay's in a way that challenges linear historical storytelling. The revelation of their past relationship invites readers to question the



assumptions they may have made about the characters and the implications of revisiting history.

The narrative of *The Little Stranger* (2009) unfolds in the Post-War era, digging into the themes of class dynamics, societal shifts, and the spectral presence haunting an ageing English estate. The novel blends historical accuracy with metafictional techniques to create a haunting narrative that challenges conventional interpretations of history and reality. The character of Dr Faraday in the novel serves as a channel for exploring the complex relationship between personal experiences and historical context. As a country doctor, Faraday becomes intertwined with the Ayres family and the dilapidated Estate, Hundreds Hall. Waters employs the doctor's perspective to cultivate an atmosphere of unreliable narration, casting uncertainty on the demarcation between the supernatural and the psychological realms. and to cast doubt on the boundaries between the supernatural and the psychological.

Dr Faraday's account of events, influenced by his biases and desires, raises questions about the accuracy of historical representation. Readers are left to decipher whether his perceptions reflect objective reality or are coloured by his perspective. The novel's post-war setting allows for an exploration of the societal changes and shifts in class dynamics during the period. The Ayres family's diminishing prosperity and the evolving English landscape form a backdrop that calls into question conventional portrayals of historical advancement and development. The crumbling estate becomes symbolic of the fading glory of the aristocracy in the face of modernity. *The Little Stranger* contains ambiguity regarding supernatural occurrences. The reader is presented with a series of eerie events, but these events can also be interpreted through psychological and social lenses. The blurring of the line between the paranormal and the psychological underscores the novel's exploration of subjective interpretations of history. The impact of war trauma and the weight of historical burdens emerge as recurring themes throughout the novel. The characters' traumas are entangled with the historical trauma of the war, raising questions about how individuals and societies remember and cope with traumatic events.

The Ayres family, including Mrs. Ayres, Roderick, and Caroline, embodies a fading aristocracy struggling with societal transformations. The decline of Hundreds Hall parallels the decline of their social standing, intertwining personal and historical

narratives. The estate symbolizes the dominance of history and the uncertainty of the future. The decay of the estate and the supernatural events occurring within its confines serve to question conventional ideas of progress, suggesting that the past retains a powerful influence on the present. The various interpretations of the mysterious events at Hundreds Hall exemplify the historiographic aspect, as different characters see the same events through their subjective lenses. Caroline's physical scars from a childhood accident reflect the lasting effects of traumatic events on both personal and historical levels. Her emotional and psychological scars, though not physical ones symbolize the scars left by war on individuals and society. The interconnection between personal and historical trauma enhances the novel's profound examination of history and memory, imbuing the narrative with added depth and complexity.

Returning to the post-war era, *The Paying Guests* novel follows the lives of Frances and Lilian, who become entangled in a complex and forbidden relationship that challenges societal expectations and norms. Waters' decision to span different historical periods in her trilogies allows her to explore how shifting social, cultural, and political landscapes impact the lives and identities of queer individuals. By transitioning from the Victorian era to the aftermath of two world wars, the Victorian era is characterized by its distinctive style, themes, and societal norms. When discussing the Waters Victorian Trilogy, we encounter a captivating blend of historical and metafictional elements that create a unique narrative experience. It intertwines historical accuracy with metafictional techniques to offer readers a thought-provoking and immersive journey. To conclude, Waters reconstructs the Victorian period, bringing to life its cultural, social, and political landscapes.

The historiographic aspect further deepens the narrative complexity. With the present study of historiographic metafiction and interpretation. Waters challenges the traditional historical narratives. She encourages readers to scrutinize the credibility of historical narratives, the biases of those who document them, and the presentation of historical occurrences on personal experiences. This interweaving of history and fiction serves not only to captivate but also to stimulate critical reflection on the very construction of history.

Sarah Waters utilises postmodern historiographic elements within her storytelling. This involves a conscious blending of historical facts with fictional

narratives, questioning the authenticity of historical accounts, and emphasizing the subjectivity inherent in the construction of historical truths. She employs elements of intertextuality, parody, self-reflexivity, dissonance and fragmentation. She encourages readers to critically engage with the complexities of history, memory, and narrative representation. The inclusion of metafiction encourages readers to take an active part in the art of storytelling and its influence on our perceptions of reality. Waters integrates intertextual elements, drawing upon a diverse range of sources, from historical texts to cultural touchstones, to enhance the depth and resonance of her stories. The use of intertextuality shows literary craftsmanship and invites readers to engage in a deeper exploration of narratives, making Waters' novels a captivating and intellectually stimulating literary experience.

Parody is a literary technique that surfaces prominently in the novels of Sarah Waters. Through parody, Waters playfully engages with established literary genres and conventions, subverting them for critical commentary. In *Tipping the Velvet*, Waters employs parody by satirizing the Victorian sensation novel genre. She exaggerates plot twists, melodrama, and sensationalism, offering humour on the genre's conventions. By doing so, she not only entertains but also underscores the absurdities and tropes inherent in Victorian sensationalism, allowing readers to view the genre through a more critical lens. *Fingersmith* is another example of parody as Waters twists the traditional Victorian gothic novel. While incorporating elements of mystery, suspense, and dark secrets, she deliberately manipulates these aspects to yield unexpected outcomes. The subversion of expectations challenges typical gothic conventions, offering a fresh perspective on the genre's motifs. The novel deconstructs the established literary forms, and the readers engage in a dynamic interplay between familiarity and innovation, ultimately contributing to the distinctiveness and thought-provoking nature of her storytelling.

Self-reflexivity is a recurring and notable trait present in the novels of Sarah Waters. This literary technique involves a conscious awareness and acknowledgement of the narrative's construction, form, or connection to the reader. Waters employs first-person narrators who engage in introspection and openly acknowledge their role as storytellers. These narrators might comment on the act of storytelling itself, directly address the reader, or reveal their personal biases and limitations. Waters' encourages

readers to consider the events in the story and the process of storytelling. This technique prompts a heightened sense of engagement and critical analysis, making her novels thought-provoking and intellectually stimulating literary experiences.

The concepts of dissonance and fragmentation play integral roles in understanding the narrative complexity and thematic depth within the novels of Sarah Waters. It engages readers in a thought-provoking exploration of characters, plotlines, and historical contexts. Dissonance in literature refers to discord or incongruity between various elements within a narrative, such as conflicting emotions, ideas, or perceptions. In Waters' novels, dissonance frequently emerges through juxtaposing contradictory emotions, motivations, or societal norms within characters or situations. This technique adds complexity to her characters' internal struggles and external interactions, inviting readers to grapple with the tensions that arise.

Waters' novels weave metafictional elements, where the text consciously contemplates its existence as a work of fiction. This manifests through characters who acknowledge their presence within a fictional narrative and cast doubt on the narrative's reliability. Waters frequently anchors her narratives within distinct historical epochs, painstakingly reconstructing those times' settings and social norms. This meticulous attention to historical accuracy illuminates the inherently constructed nature of historical representation. By juxtaposing fictional characters and plots within authentic historical contexts, Waters provokes readers to scrutinize the trustworthiness of historical interpretations and their role in shaping our comprehension of bygone eras. In this way, Waters' masterful interplay between metafiction and historical reconstruction encourages a thoughtful exploration of the complex relationship between storytelling, fact, and our understanding of history.

Sarah Waters has crafted several metafictional novels that artfully blend elements of self-awareness and storytelling within the narrative. In *Fingersmith* (2002), Waters employs metafiction by intricately weaving a web of deception and unreliable narration. As readers navigate through twists and turns, they are prompted to question the accuracy of the narrative and explore the characters' shifting perspectives. *The Night Watch* (2006) utilizes the metafictional elements to invite readers to piece together the fragmented lives of its characters. In *The Little Stranger* (2009) Waters blends a ghost story with metafictional elements, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty where readers

are left to ponder whether the supernatural occurrences are products of the characters' psyches or actual supernatural forces. In *The Paying Guests* (2014) Waters portrays the complexities of human relationships and societal norms, engaging in a subtle form of metafiction as characters navigate their identities and desires in a world constrained by social expectations.

Sarah Waters challenges traditional storytelling conventions, urging readers to critically scrutinize the distinctions between fiction, reality, and the process of narration. This deliberate blurring of boundaries prompts a deeper exploration of the complexities inherent in storytelling and narrative construction. Waters creates thought-provoking and immersive literary experiences that invite readers to question and explore the very essence of storytelling. Waters employs fragmentation as a narrative tool to mirror the complexities of memory, historical records, or characters' subjective experiences. By presenting the narrative in a fragmented manner, Waters invites readers to piece together the story's puzzle, mirroring the challenges of understanding history and human experience. This approach can evoke a sense of uncertainty, reflecting the fragmented quality of historical records and underscoring the subjective nature of truth.

The fragmentation contributes to the layers of meaning and interpretation in Waters' novels. This narrative approach often challenges readers to actively engage with the text, questioning assumptions and seeking deeper understanding. In essence, dissonance and fragmentation are not merely stylistic choices in Waters' novels; they are tools that enable her to create intricate, multi-dimensional narratives that reflect the intricate tapestry of human emotions, history, and the complexities of interpretation. Waters invites readers to navigate the intricacies of her characters' lives and the historical contexts in which they exist, challenging them to embrace ambiguity and actively participate in the construction of meaning.

Historiographic metafiction presents historical characters as complex individuals with their motivations and struggles. Readers are encouraged to understand people's perspectives from different times and cultures, fostering a more empathetic and tolerant society. It allows for creative and innovative storytelling techniques, breaking away from traditional historical narratives. This can make history more engaging and accessible to a broader audience, including those not drawn to conventional historical texts. The study contributes to preserving cultural memory by reimagining and retelling

historical stories. Through fictionalized accounts, it helps to keep historical events alive in the collective consciousness, ensuring that they are not forgotten.

The research contributes substantially to understanding how postmodern reinterpretations of historical narratives shape our insights into the changing dynamic between historiography and historical fiction. The thorough approach, employing an eclectic and multidisciplinary analysis, showcases a well-rounded understanding of historiography within the framework of Sarah Waters's novels. Sarah Waters's novels in the context of historiographic metafiction are comprehensive and insightful. History is depicted as a cultural and subjective entity interwoven with literature and language is particularly fascinating. The acknowledgement of the ever-changing nature of history, historiography and the assertion that the representation of the past is subject to change adds depth to the research. The study serves as a platform for critiquing social norms, cultural practices, and power structures prevalent in historical periods. This critique extends beyond the past and prompts individuals to reflect on contemporary societal issues.

The postmodern context in literature challenges both historical and experimental narratives, and the examination of epistemological inquiries regarding the writing of history demonstrates the intellectual rigor of the research. The blending of historical fiction and metafiction in Waters's novels blurs the distinction between history and fiction, offering diverse perspectives on the past. Historiographic metafiction disrupts the traditional comprehension of historical facts and accurate representation, aligning with current trends in literature. Acknowledging the impossibility of addressing all essential factors within a single doctoral thesis. Embracing a forward-thinking perspective, and the potential for future exploration into noteworthy and unexplored aspects of 'Historiographic Metafiction'.

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