

BACHELOR THESIS ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

# GLOVES, DRESSES, AND THIMBLES

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## CLASS AND QUEERNESS IN ADAPTATIONS OF FINGERSMITH

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### Abstract

This thesis examines the representation of the relationship between the two main female characters in adaptations of the novel *Fingersmith* (2002) by Sarah Waters, namely the BBC TV series *Fingersmith* (2005) and the South-Korean film *The Handmaiden* (2016). This thesis uses intersectionality theory as well as queer theory to examine how this relationship is portrayed and focuses on how class, colonial relations, queer identity, and the differences and similarities between the two adaptations from different cultures determine this portrayal. This thesis argues that although *The Handmaiden* was produced in a culture where same-sex relationships are not accepted as much as they are in the West, the women in *The Handmaiden* have more agency in the narrative than the women in *Fingersmith*. Both relationships start out with definite social inequalities between the women, but it is the differences in how they act upon their feelings that makes for different representations of this relationship.

### Key words

Sarah Waters; *Fingersmith*; *The Handmaiden*; Intersectionality theory; Queer theory; Class; Colonialism; Queerness; Adaptations

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## Introduction

In a 2007 interview with *Feminist Review*, Sarah Waters said that she imagined and expected her readers to understand not only the literary references which are embedded in her narratives, but that they “would [also] ‘get’ the lesbian stuff” (qtd. in Armitt 117). It has always been Waters’ goal to write the unknown lesbian and gay stories of the past, a passion that remained after she finished her PhD on the same topic (120-121). Her novels are praised both in popular culture and within academia. She has won a number of literary prizes, including the Lambda Literary Award for Fiction and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, and her novels have been shortlisted for the Man Booker and the Orange Prize (Mitchell 1).

Waters’ third novel, *Fingersmith*, was published in 2002. It is the story of a young woman named Susan Trinder, an orphan who was raised on a so-called baby farm to become a thief. When a conman named Richard Rivers, or Gentleman, asks her to help him with an elaborate scheme to steal money from a wealthy heiress, Sue agrees. She becomes the maid to Maud Lilly, a naive woman of high standing, and will share the proceeds of their scheme with Gentleman if she aids him in making Maud fall in love with him. When they secure the inheritance, they plan for Maud to be sent off to a madhouse and Sue would be able to pay back the people who raised her. However, Sue begins to care for Maud and it turns out that not everything is as she had presumed it was. After a number of plot twists, the relationship that was beginning to form between Sue and Maud falls apart and is turned inside out so that by the end of the novel there is a different dynamic between the two of them.

In 2005, the BBC adapted the Neo-Victorian crime novel into a TV series. Kaye Mitchell argues that this adaptation “cemented Waters’ public profile as a purveyor of literate, plot-driven period dramas” (5). Eleven years later, in 2016, the South-Korean producer Park Chan-wook directed *The Handmaiden*, a transcultural adaptation of the novel now set in Korea under Japanese colonial rule during the 1930s. The novel, the BBC miniseries, and the Korean film deal with the relationship between two women of different social backgrounds. These social backgrounds will be briefly illustrated in the paragraphs below.

Both the novel and the BBC adaptation of *Fingersmith* are set in England in the late 1870s. In Victorian society, and also within the strict nuclear Victorian family, a person’s place was firmly set in stone. Women were generally restricted to the domestic sphere to take care of the household and had very limited rights (Wylie et al 1095). They were thought to have no sexual interests, and Carl Degler explains that nineteenth-century doctors were “so convinced that women did not feel any sexual interest” that when they did express the slightest interest in sexual intercourse, they “resembled a man” and were thought to be

undesirable (1468). “[A]nyone who was not clearly heterosexual” was thought to be psychologically disturbed and while male homosexuality was more visible in legal and medical reports, Ardel Thomas argues that “there were certainly instances of female homosexuality” in Victorian society, but this queerness was usually kept as a “part of the family secret” (142).

In contemporary Great Britain, sexuality is no longer a taboo subject and people are able to be in a relationship with another person based on attraction. This, however, Wylie argues, “does not apply among some minority ethnic groups, nor to social-class groups where a socially suitable marriage is encouraged” (1095). These groups, though, are not as present in modern society as they used to be in the Victorian era. Although the Victorian standard of the working man and the – mainly – domestic woman still exists, the concept of gender is becoming more fluid as for instance transsexuality has become more visible in the twenty-first century (1105).

The South-Korean adaptation of *Fingersmith*, *The Handmaiden*, is set in Korea – before the North and South divide – under Japanese rule in the 1930s. When Japan colonised Korea in 1910, they aimed to erase the Korean culture and make Korea part of not only the Japanese empire, but of Japan itself (Choi et al 934). Similar to the status of women in Great Britain in the Victorian era, women in Korea were responsible for the family and the education of their children while men were in control of their public affairs (935). The position of a woman in Korean society depended – before her marriage – on the position of her father and later on her husband, followed by her son (935). Women were generally treated as secondary citizens, with no rights of their own.

According to Hyung-Ki Choi – author of the chapter on South-Korea in *The Continuum Complete International Encyclopedia of Sexuality* (2004) – sexuality or sex in general has always been, and still is, a taboo subject within Korean society, though with the growing popularity of the internet, people are opening up to “modern currents of sexual liberation” (939). The sexual culture of Korean history was geared towards the male population, as women were taught to be passive in their sexual urges while men were allowed to experiment sexually (939). This, Choi argues, included a limited acceptance of same-sex relationships between men – most often of the ruling class – while “lesbian relationships were not treated with the same acceptance” (947). Paradoxically, expressing one’s homosexuality was easier in Korea than it used to be in the West, since the existence of homosexuality was denied completely (948). A homophilic touch between friends of the same sex – such as holding hands – was seen as a platonic and not a romantic gesture. In present-day South Korea,

Choi states, “sexual liberation [is] increasingly accepted,” but “female virginity and sexual passivity” are still expected and highly valued (944). Both male and female homosexuality is no longer officially seen as an illness, but is still thought to be “socially unacceptable and dysfunctional” (948).

Sarah Waters’ early works have been read from the perspective of Judith Butler’s performativity theory by academics like Emily Jeremiah, who analysed the way gender was performed and perceived in *Tipping the Velvet*, referring to the opposition of perception and reality within the novel (Mitchell 8-9). Jeremiah argues that in *Tipping the Velvet*, Waters relates gender to theatre, as Nan and Kitty’s real gender becomes a ‘performance’ when they are cross-dressing (9). Other scholars, such as Helen Davies, claim that Waters is doing the exact opposite of Butler’s performativity theory, arguing that the intentions of this theory “do not necessarily translate into a Victorian context,” since what gender entails now is not necessarily the same as it was in Victorian England (qtd. in Mitchell 9). Besides Butler’s performativity theory, Waters’ novels are also commonly read with a feminist perspective in mind. Armitt and Gamble question Waters’ relationship with feminism and feminist theory since, as they argue, the author “refuses to idealize her female characters,” who are often involved in criminal activities (qtd. in Mitchell 10). Mitchell adds to this that there is “a degree of ambiguity in [Waters’] handling of crucial feminist concerns,” which once again underlines the question of the author’s relationship with feminism (10). It is true that the characters in Waters’ novels are rarely ideal women, but feminism is about the real and varying experiences of all women, including the experiences of the more deplorable female characters.

Recently, class-relations have become of greater concern while critically reading and writing about Waters’ works. Heilman, for instance, looked at Waters’ *The Little Stranger* “as an exploration of class anxieties and resentment,” arguing that the novel’s main characters challenge the restraints their class puts on them (qtd. in Mitchell 11). Overall, in prior research on Sarah Waters and her novels, themes of gender, femininity, and sexuality have always been on the foreground, albeit in ambiguous or even contradicting ways.

In this thesis, the focus will be on two of these topics, namely on class and queer identity. As stated above, sexuality and gender – and thus queerness – have been prevalent in research regarding Waters’ novels but class, on the other hand, not as frequently. Additionally, these topics have not yet been researched together in relation to Waters’ works, while they do often play a significant role within the narratives of her novels. In *Fingersmith* especially, these two aspects of identity – class and queerness – are highly fluid in the main female

characters and change throughout the narrative. The two adaptations of *Fingersmith* address this fluidity in class and queer identity as well. This thesis will therefore address the question: in what ways do the two adaptations of the novel *Fingersmith* and their representations of class and queer identity portray the relationship between the main female characters?

Since *The Handmaid* was produced in a culture where homosexuality is not accepted as much as it is in Western popular culture, the relationship between the two women is likely to be represented and perceived differently – both by the characters in the narrative as well as the audience, although the latter will be of no concern in this thesis – compared to BBC's *Fingersmith*. Also, since *The Handmaid* does not only deal with class differences but also with nationality and colonial differences – as seen when lady Hideko teaches Sook-hee not only to read, but to read Japanese as well as Korean – the relationship between these women may encounter obstacles other than Sue's and Maud's relationship in *Fingersmith*, which in turn will lead to a different portrayal of their relationship altogether.

The way this thesis will analyse the relationship between the two women in both adaptations of *Fingersmith* is first of all through detailed reading of the novel and critically studying the way it portrays this relationship. In order to be able to fully understand the portrayal of a queer relationship in both adaptations, this introduction has given a brief overview of the position of women in society during Victorian times in England and during the 1930s in Korea as well as how a same sex relationships would have been perceived then and now in those respective cultures. This thesis will do a detailed reading of both adaptations, first focussing on the influence of class – and in *The Handmaid*'s case, colonial relations – on the portrayal of the women's relationship before moving on to how queerness is portrayed and perceived by the characters in both adaptations. The differences and similarities between the two adaptations and the way they portray the relationship between the two women will form the conclusion of this thesis.

The detailed readings of the novel and the adaptations will be approached through an intersectional framework of class and queer theory. Intersectionality is a theory that studies social identities build from systems or categories – such as race, nationality, gender, or sexuality – that intersect to create an identity that differs from its components. Although intersectionality theory deals with identities, it is an analysis of power structures rather than an analysis of identity and focuses on social, political, and structural inequalities. The second part of the theoretical framework for this thesis is queer theory. This theory intends to deconstruct the binary oppositions within gender and sexuality and challenges heteronormativity in society. 'Queer' or 'queerness' as a term assumes fluidity of identity,



thus including sexualities besides homosexuality such as bisexuality, asexuality, and others. Both these theories will be further explained in the first chapter.

The main sources this thesis will be working with on intersectionality theory and queer theory are written by Kimberlé Crenshaw and Sharon Marcus respectively. Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in her article “Demarginalizing the Intersection” (1989), in which she examines a number of court cases where the complexity of the identities of women of colour went unrecognised. In a later article, “Mapping the Margins” (1991), Crenshaw argues that examining one or two aspects of one’s identity does not mean that those aspects constitute their entire identity, but that intersectionality can be used as a method for researching any form of marginalisation (1242).

Regarding queer theory, Sharon Marcus’ “Queer Theory for Everyone: A Review Essay” (2005) gives an overview of how queer theory has established itself within the academic field over the last decades. Marcus dives into the meaning of ‘queerness’ – a fluidity of sexual identity – and its relation to feminist theory as well as lesbian and gay theory. This thesis will analyse how the female characters’ sexuality or queerness challenges the heteronormative societies in which they live and will then apply intersectionality theory when researching how both class and queerness determine the representation of the relationship between the women in the two adaptations of *Fingersmith*.

Both of these sources and others will be further explained in the first chapter. This chapter will give a comprehensive description of the theories that will form the theoretical backbone of this research, namely intersectionality theory and queer theory. Additionally, the first chapter will also give an evaluation of the main sources on these theories and explain the way they will be applied in this research.

The second chapter will look at the representation of the relationship between Sue and Maud in the novel *Fingersmith*, so that there is a starting point for all comparisons that are made in the thesis. An analysis of the BBC adaptation of *Fingersmith* will follow within the same chapter, as the BBC adaptation does not deviate much from the source material and both analyses will go hand in hand. First, this chapter will analyse how class alters the dynamics between the two women before examining how the representation of their queerness affects how their relationship is perceived by other characters. The subquestions for this chapter are: how are Sue’s and Maud’s social class portrayed? How does this change over the course of the narrative? In what ways are the differences in class between Sue and Maud in the adaptation represented on screen compared to how they are portrayed in the novel? How is

queerness represented in and by the characters? How is this queerness perceived by other characters? Finally, how does this affect the way their relationship is represented?

The third chapter will analyse the South-Korean adaptation, *The Handmaiden*, by applying the same structure as the previous chapter. In addition to the subquestions used in the previous chapter, the subquestion for this chapter is: how does the added element of colonialism in *The Handmaiden* change the identities of the women? When both adaptations are analysed, a comparison will be made to form the conclusion of this thesis.

## 1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis consists of intersectionality theory, which studies social identities built from systems or categories – such as race, nationality, gender, or sexuality – that intersect to create an identity that differs from its components. Since this thesis researches the relationship between women with two different identities in adaptations of *Fingersmith*, the categories that will be analysed are class and sexuality, since they differ the most between the characters in the narrative. Class is a contrast between the two main female characters and their sexuality is a deviation from the norm set by social and political structures.

Although intersectionality theory deals with identities, as shown by Kimberlé Crenshaw who coined the term intersectionality in the 1980s, it is an analysis of power structures rather than an analysis of identity. Barbara Tomlinson notes that “if critics think intersectionality is a matter of identity rather than power, they cannot see which differences make a difference. Yet it is exactly our analyses of power that reveal which differences carry significance” (qtd. in Crenshaw, McCall, and Cho 798). Intersectionality theory adapts a way of thinking that analyses problems of “sameness and difference and its relation to power,” thus emphasising structural – and mostly political – inequalities (795). Intersectionality theory strives to make disadvantages within these power structures more explicit since, as Crenshaw argues in her article “Demarginalizing the Intersection” (1989), the privilege of white maleness and heterosexuality is frequently so implicit that it is rarely perceived at all (45).

Intersectionality theory was introduced to academia in the 1980s as a theory that focuses on “the dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness” (Crenshaw, McCall, and Cho 787). It is most often used in discussions about feminism and race. One such example is Kimberlé Crenshaw’s article “Demarginalizing the Intersection,” in which she examines a number of court cases where women of colour were unsuccessful in representing either all people of colour or all women. Crenshaw comes to the conclusion that “struggles are categorized as singular issues” and a complex identity – such as a person of colour who is also a woman – is disregarded and perceived as either one or the other, but never both (48). Crenshaw’s goal is “to facilitate marginalized groups,” create a discussion that is “critical of the dominant view,” and thus shape a new way of thinking about discrimination and identity politics (49).

In a later article, “Mapping the Margins” (1991), Crenshaw expands on her previous research and examines identity politics, a political position based on aspects of one’s identity, in relation to violence against women of colour. She argues that the “problem with identity

politics is that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences,” by which she means that even if identity politics looks at women of colour as having complex identities, there are still other differences between them (1242). These differences can range from class to sexuality or level of education, and can make all the difference in comparing one person’s experience to another’s. Intersectionality, she proposes, should also be used when examining identity politics in relation to other categories. This way, intersectionality theory may provide a method for dealing with other marginalizations as well.

Together with Leslie McCall and Sumi Cho, Crenshaw wrote “Towards a Field of Intersectionality” (2013), in which they explored three different fields of study where intersectionality theory is operational, namely application in research, discursive investigations, and in reality – or as they call it, praxis (785). This thesis will employ the first of these fields, namely the application of intersectionality theory in researching how both class and queerness determine the representation of the relationship between the women in the two adaptations of *Fingersmith*.

Before her cooperation with Crenshaw and Cho, Leslie McCall wrote “The Complexity of Intersectionality” (2005), in which she argues that a “wider range of methodologies is needed to fully engage with the set of issues falling under intersectionality” (1774). Many scholars, McCall states, will not see intersectionality theory as a neutral approach to identity politics (1771). When researching identity there is indeed a possibility of bringing objectivity to the research, but when used subjectively, intersectionality theory can give compelling insights into identity politics. In her article, McCall examines and explains three approaches to intersectionality. The first of these is called “anticategorical complexity,” which deconstructs the categories researched within intersectionality (1772). The second, “intercategorical complexity,” studies and documents inequality among social groups whereas the last approach, “intracategorical complexity,” focuses on “neglected points of intersection” within these social groups (1772-1774). In the case of this thesis, intercategorical complexity will serve to expose the inequality between the social groups represented in the narratives. These social groups can be divided as such: there are the lower class people from the Borough in *Fingersmith* and the Korean population in *The Handmaiden*, and then there are the upper class Lilly family and the wealthy Japanese family from *Fingersmith* and *The Handmaiden* respectively. Naturally, not all research using intersectionality theory as its framework will fall within only one of these approaches, as these approaches are as fluid as identity itself.

In reaction to both Leslie McCall and Kimberlé Crenshaw, Jennifer Nash wrote “Re-thinking Intersectionality” (2008) in which she critically questions the underlying

assumptions that intersectionality theory makes. Nash focuses especially on the lack of a defined methodology, the convoluted definition of intersectionality theory, the use of black women as the usual subjects, as well as the empirical validity of intersectionality theory (1). In reaction to McCall's approaches to intersectionality, Nash says that although McCall does highlight the differences between conceptions and practices of intersectionality theory, in reality research "often replicate[s] precisely the approaches that they critique" (6). By these approaches Nash means, for example, the concept of creating a complex identity by combining a number of categories or the use of marginalized experiences to problematize social processes (6). In response to Crenshaw's contribution to the theory of intersectionality, Nash argues that her analyses tend to focus on only two categories – namely race and gender – and specifically on black women (7). Crenshaw, according to Nash, does not address the fact that there are more categories that constitute an identity and that not all black women may share the same experiences. As stated above, however, Crenshaw has addressed this issue with identity politics in her article "Mapping the Margins" when she said that the "problem with identity politics is that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences," meaning that identities even within a certain group of people are all complex and unique and therefore it is a challenge to compare these identities based on only one or two categories (1242). Besides the exclusion of intragroup differences, intersectionality theory has also excluded analyses of identities that are considered either partly or entirely privileged. This, according to Nash, "demonstrates the shortcomings of intersectionality to capture the sheer diversity of actual experiences" (9). She therefore calls for a more complex way of interpreting and analysing identity as well as oppression and other power structures (1).

As stated above, intersectionality theory tends to exclude identities that are (at least partially) privileged, such as white women like Sue and Maud in *Fingersmith*. Though Kimberlé Crenshaw originally coined the term 'intersectionality theory' to describe her analysis of the experiences of women of colour – an analysis of gender and race – this thesis will be expanding the scope of intersectionality theory to analyse white, queer women who despite their white privilege are still socially disadvantaged since they are female and because of their sexual orientation. In *The Handmaid's* case the women are not white, but as they are from the two opposing sides of the Japanese occupation of Korea, their nationality proves to be a social inequality between them. Additionally, intersectionality theory will be used as an analysis of power rather than an analysis of identity. Therefore, this thesis will analyse the structural inequalities between the characters, especially with regards to class and, in *The Handmaid's* case, national and colonial differences.

The second part of the theoretical framework for this thesis is queer theory, which is a post-structuralist theory about the social construction of sexual identities. Peter Barry defines queer theory as an extension of lesbian and gay theory while rejecting its female separatism (138). Lesbian and gay theory emerged in the 1980s as a reaction to feminism's exclusion of women who were not white, middle-class, and straight, which resulted in a way of thinking within lesbian theory itself, lesbian feminism (135). Like feminism, lesbian feminism – and also lesbian and gay theory – aimed for political and social change such as “resistance to homophobia [...] and institutional practices of heterosexual privileges” (135). Critiques of lesbian feminism claimed that sexuality is not a static state of being, but rather an identity that is subject to change. This in turn resulted in a less essentialist form of lesbian feminism and lesbian and gay theory which grew into what is now known as queer theory (137). ‘Queer’ or ‘queerness’ as a term assumes fluidity of identity, thus casting aside the terms ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’ and including sexualities such as bisexuality, asexuality, and others (Marcus 196). Since queer theory draws heavily on post-structuralism, it intends to deconstruct the binary oppositions within gender – male/female – and sexuality – hetero/homo – and argues that the hierarchy of these binaries can be turned around (Barry 138). Again, as with intersectionality theory, white maleness and heterosexuality are implicitly the social norm and queer theory strives to counter this perception.

Sharon Marcus, like Peter Barry, gives an overview of how queer theory has established itself within the academic field over the last few years. However, unlike Barry, Marcus dives deeper into the meaning of queerness and its relation to feminist theory as well as lesbian and gay theory. According to Marcus, ‘queer’ assumes a fluidity of identity that is more flexible than ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay,’ but that is not to say that the latter two deny fluidity of sexuality completely (196). Marcus argues that the most important contribution queer theory has made to its field is to “demonstrate how homosexuality and heterosexuality mutually define each other” and that one would not exist without the other (197). Many queer theorists, however, argue that categories such as ‘homosexual’ and ‘heterosexual’ are restricting freedom of sexual expression and thus queer studies encourages the expansion of the definition of sexuality (205). This thesis defines queerness as experiencing sexual and/or romantic feelings for another person that would deviate from what is expected in a heteronormative society. This means that any sexual or romantic relationship in which either one or both of the participants feels attracted to someone who does not belong to the opposite sex, can be called a queer relationship.

Being queer, according to Kathy Rudy, was not merely a matter of being gay or lesbian – the only sexualities she includes in her article “Radical Feminism, Lesbian Separatism, and Queer Theory” (2001) – but being queer meant being “committed to challenging that which is perceived as normal” (212). Where categories such as ‘male/female’ and ‘straight/gay’ are seen as normal oppositions, queer theorists aim to disrupt this normality and the stability of these categories. Rudy, who comes from a background of radical feminism, says that the way queer theory differs from feminism is in “their varying association with men” and gay men in particular (213). Compared to radical feminism, queer theory as well as queer communities are much more open and accepting of ethnic, racial, and class differences and therefore find it easier to build “coalitions across a wide variety of social issues,” making queer theory more inclusive than (radical) feminist theory has been (216). Coming from a feminist point of view, however, Rudy does argue that queer theory and its “desire to break open the dichotomy between women and men” means that many characteristics regarded as female are dismissed or even ridiculed in favour of being “in-your-face” and public about one’s queerness, which are characteristics usually seen as male (216). Suzanna Walters too fears that queer theory does not complicate gender, but dismisses the presence of gender altogether to which Shane Phelan adds that there is a “need for feminist analysis within queer theory” (qtd. in Rudy 217). So, although feminism is not as inclusive as queer theory, it seems to Rudy that “we should recognise that both interpretations are necessary and ought to exist side by side” (221).

As stated above, queer theory intends to deconstruct the binary oppositions in gender and sexuality. For the purpose of this thesis, however, the subject of gender will be limited to female sexuality as it would be problematic to achieve a complete analysis of the characters’ gender within the scope of this research. Therefore, this thesis will analyse how the female characters’ sexuality or queerness challenges their heteronormative societies and, by employing intersectionality theory, how class or colonial relations influence the way that this is done. The way this thesis will analyse the relationship between the two women in both adaptations of *Fingersmith* is first of all through a detailed reading of the novel and critically studying the way the relationship between Sue and Maud was originally portrayed. Then, a detailed reading of both adaptations will follow, first focussing on the influence of class – and in *The Handmaiden*’s case colonial relations – on the portrayal of the women’s relationship before examining how queerness is portrayed and perceived by other characters in both adaptations. The differences and similarities between the two adaptations and the way they portray the relationship between the two women will form the conclusion of this thesis.

## 2. Class and Queerness in *Fingersmith*

Sarah Waters' third novel, *Fingersmith*, was published in 2002 and adapted by the BBC into a TV series in 2005. This adaptation, Kaye Mitchell argues, is what "cemented Waters' public profile as a purveyor of literate, plot-driven period dramas" (5). The original novel too was received particularly well, with Julie Myerson from the *Guardian* calling the novel a "fabulous piece of writing," though she hesitates "to call it lesbian, because that seems to marginalise it far more than it deserves" (Myerson). The novel was shortlisted for the Orange Prize as well as the Man Booker Prize and was proclaimed "the most popular Booker contender with the book-buying public" (Mitchell 1). Both the novel and the BBC adaptation of *Fingersmith* are set in Victorian England in the late 1870s. This chapter will be analysing how the relationship between the two main female characters in *Fingersmith* is represented in both the novel and the adaptation with regards to class and queer identity.

*Fingersmith* is the story of a young woman named Susan Trinder, an orphan who was raised to become a thief on a so-called baby farm in the Borough in London. When a conman named Richard Rivers, or Gentleman, asks her to help him with an elaborate scheme to steal money from a wealthy heiress, Sue agrees. She becomes the maid to Maud Lilly, a naive woman of high standing who lives in a secluded mansion called Briar with her uncle and a handful of servants. Sue will share the proceeds of their scheme with Gentleman if she aids him in making Maud fall in love with him. When they secure the inheritance through marriage, they plan for Maud to be sent off to a madhouse and Sue would be able to pay back the people who raised her. However, Sue begins to fall for Maud and it turns out that not everything is as she had presumed it was. When Maud and Gentleman are married and Sue's part in the plot – as she knows it – is over, the three of them ride to the madhouse but instead of leaving Maud behind, it is Sue who is taken in by the doctors. Sue realises that she was only a pawn in Gentleman's plot and that Maud was in on it from the beginning.

The narrative then shifts to Maud's point of view and the reader finds out that she was not as naive as Sue had thought. Maud had been raised as her uncle's secretary to read his pornographic novels not only to him, but to other gentlemen who came to visit Briar. When Gentleman – using the name Richard Rivers – comes to Briar and hears Maud read, he offers her an escape from the estate and promises her freedom in exchange for a share of her inheritance. Maud agrees, fully aware of the fact that Sue – who she has not yet met – will be put in a madhouse in Maud's name. As the girls get to know each other, however, Maud too begins to fall for Sue and finds it increasingly difficult to stick to the scheme. When Sue is left to the doctors and nurses of the madhouse, Gentleman brings Maud back to the Borough



where she is not permitted to leave the house where Sue grew up. Mrs Sucksby, the woman who raised Sue as if she were her own daughter, finally tells Maud that she and Sue swapped places after they were born. Maud is actually Mrs Sucksby's daughter, while Sue is the true lady of Briar. Mrs Sucksby was promised a share of Sue's inheritance if she kept her away from Briar and let Maud take her place instead. Meanwhile, Sue plans to escape from the madhouse and succeeds with the help of a servant boy from Briar. She returns to the Borough only to find that Maud – who she now despises – has taken her place as Mrs Sucksby's daughter. When a confrontation between all the characters takes place, Gentleman is killed and Mrs Sucksby takes the blame, resulting in her execution. After Mrs Sucksby's death, Sue finds out the truth about her family history and begins her search for Maud, who she finds back at Briar. Mr Lilly has died and all but one of the servants have left. After making up, Sue and Maud plan on staying together at Briar.

The shifts that occur in the relationship between Sue and Maud are caused not only by their own lying and the deceitful start of their relationship, but also by the differences between the two women regarding social class and the queerness of their relationship. In order to answer the research question of this thesis, namely how the two adaptations of the novel *Fingersmith* and their representations of class and queer identity portray the relationship between the main female characters, both the novel and the BBC adaptation will be analysed in this chapter. The novel will be used as a starting point from which the comparisons are made between the BBC adaptation in this chapter and the South-Korean adaptation in the next. Since the BBC adaptation stays close to the source material, it will be analysed alongside the novel. This chapter will focus on how class and queerness are portrayed in both the novel and the adaptation and examine the influence of these characteristics on the relationship between Sue and Maud. The subquestions for this chapter are: how are Sue's and Maud's social class portrayed? How does this change over the course of the narrative? In what ways are the differences in class between Sue and Maud in the adaptation represented on screen compared to how they are portrayed in the novel? How is queerness represented in and by the characters? How is this queerness perceived by other characters? And finally, how does this affect the way their relationship is represented?

First of all, this chapter will address the question of how Sue's and Maud's social class is represented in the novel *Fingersmith*. A character's social class can be expressed in a number of ways, such as appearance and clothing, their use of language, and also by directly separating them from characters who belong to other classes. Clothing, for instance, is used to a great extent to express social status and class differences between the characters in

*Fingersmith*. At the start of the novel, when it is decided that Sue is to leave for Briar to become a maid, she is given a brown – and stolen – dress. Although Sue “should have rathered a blue gown, or a violet one,” this brown dress will help her blend in with the other servants at Briar rather than make her stand out (Waters 38). Maud, on the other hand, wears dresses of fine materials and the skirts are “full and short and showed her ankles” – which was considered scandalous in Victorian England (66; Ewing 64). Maud comments that they are “rather out of the way of fashion” at Briar, and that a lady from London would probably have laughed at her dresses, but Sue remarks that “grand clothes meant nothing, since it was the person inside the clothes that ought to be judged” (Waters 67-68). When Maud asks Sue why she only wears the brown dress and finds that Sue has nothing else to wear, she offers Sue one of her own. Maud helps Sue to put on the dress – exclaiming that she is now Sue’s maid – but when Sue sees her own bare ankles she comments that if a boy from the Borough had seen her like that, she “should have fallen down and died” (102). When seconds later Margaret – the kitchen maid – comes in, she mistakes Sue for Maud and calls her “mistress,” indicating that clothes really do make the man (103). This expression was considered a “perceptive truth about the workings of [Victorian] society,” which symbolised society’s hierarchy (Roberts 554). Helene Roberts, who wrote an article on how clothing represented the Victorian woman, argued that clothing “could influence the actions and attitudes of both the wearer and the viewer” (554). A maid and her mistress, as they belong to different social classes, should wear different clothes to signify this dissimilarity between them. When Sue is dressed in one of Maud’s dresses, she takes on Maud’s identity and social status, resulting in Margaret calling her ‘mistress’. It is Sue’s change of clothes that changes her outward identity and incarcerates her at the end of the first part of the novel. Maud had been wearing the same dirty dress for days when the doctors came to talk to her and Sue, while Sue was wearing a nice silk dress of Maud’s. Gentleman tells the doctors that Sue is a lady who in her insanity thinks she is Maud’s maid. The doctors believe him instantly, as Sue looks more like a lady than Maud does, and they admit her to their asylum.

The scene of Sue’s incarceration portrays another expression of class, namely language. Where Maud uses proper grammar and is taught to speak and recite clearly, Sue hardly uses proper language at all, especially when she is among her people in the Borough (“‘We thought you was the blues,’ [Sue] said”) (Waters 19). When she becomes Maud’s maid, however, her use of language changes to fit the proper environment at Briar. And although Sue is aware of the way she speaks and refrains from using phrases such as ‘you was’ while she is at Briar, when she first arrives there her London accent is immediately noticed and the

other servants “tittered to hear [her] speak” (58). Her use of language while she is at Briar is a means by which Sue upholds the act that she is more than a common thief. At the moment of Sue’s incarceration, this act suddenly stops and the first thing she says – being her true self – is “You bloody swine! [...] You fuckster!” (174). The doctors tell her that “there is no place for words like those” in the asylum – a madhouse for distressed gentlewomen – as those are not the type of words that a lady should say (174).

Sue’s and Maud’s use of language does not only differ in spoken form, but in written form as well. Maud is taught to read and write, while Sue – like many lower class people – is never taught either. As the girls are talking about whether or not Sue likes to read, to which Sue answers that she most likely would “if [she] was to be shown” how, Maud tells Sue that she would not allow for it (69). When this scene is told from Maud’s perspective, she calls Sue’s inability to read a “fabulous insufficiency – like the absence, in a martyr or saint, of the capacity for pain” (244). This difference in how the girls perceive their ability or inability to read is striking. Sue, as a lower class woman who never had the opportunity to learn an advantageous skill like reading or writing, feels like her illiteracy is a shortcoming. Maud, on the other hand, who has learned this skill which many people at that time did not have, does not see the benefits that it has to offer as her judgement is clouded by her uncle’s influence. In the final scenes of the novel, Sue has found out that she is a lady and has no need for work as she inherits Briar as well as a significant sum of money. Maud, on the other hand, has nothing and must make her own fortune. She starts writing her own pornographic novels and earns her money that way. While Maud may have felt like her ability to read and write was a curse when she was working for her uncle, eventually it allows her to experience the freedom she wanted. There is still, however, a considerable class distinction between Sue and Maud. Since Maud did not allow for Sue to learn how to read or write, Sue remains – in that regard – inferior to Maud.

The class differences between Sue and Maud are not only represented by their clothes or use of language, but also through the use of separate spaces. Sarah Gamble, who wrote “‘I know everything. I know nothing’: (Re)Reading *Fingersmith*’s Deceptive Doubles” (2013), argues that there are numerous oppositions between Sue and Maud which cause asymmetry between them (47). These oppositions can be straightforward, like during Maud’s time with her uncle in the library as well as during supper. Maud takes her supper with her uncle and the visiting gentlemen in a grand room, while Sue is downstairs eating with the other servants. Even among the servants there is a hierarchical division. Sue is taken down to the pantry by Mrs Stiles and Mr Way to eat her pudding there with them while the other servants are

upstairs in the kitchen – again signifying a social and structural inequality between characters. When Sue unknowingly upsets this hierarchy (by saying good morning to the kitchen maid before greeting the cook) she is scolded for it, as one is not supposed to disturb these class divisions.

Class in *Fingersmith* is portrayed as a performance rather than an actual part of a character's identity. Gentleman and Sue, for instance, both pretend to be someone that they are not. Sue pretends to be a maid, someone of a higher standing than an orphaned fingersmith from the slums of London, and Gentleman pretends to belong to a different social class as well. He assumes the role of an actual gentleman when he is first introduced to Maud and additionally – when he is first introduced to the reader – he is described as a real gent who “had money once, and lost it all to gambling” (Waters 21). By the end of the novel, it is revealed that in reality he was the son of a draper rather than the gentleman he had said he was. We also see that both Maud and Sue, who were raised in the upper and lower class respectively, do not actually belong there. It could therefore be argued that class is not only portrayed as an act or a performance, but that *Fingersmith* actively exposes class as a social construct.

Not only are boundaries and separate spaces in *Fingersmith* used to show class differences, they convey sexual tension as well. There is a difference in sexual knowledge and innocence between the girls. When Sue picks up Maud from her uncle's library, she must stay behind the brass finger. Both Maud and Sue did not see the ‘finger’ when they first entered the library. Sarah Gamble has pointed out that this “boundary of innocence” is perceived differently by both of them (47). Sue thinks it is Maud who is the innocent one, but Maud recognises that Sue is the one who knows less than she presumes, both about the scheme and about Maud herself. Another boundary between the girls is Maud's gloves, as she is only permitted to take them off when she is working for her uncle. These white gloves represent innocence to the outside world, while in reality her hands are tainted with the pornography she touches. When Sue and Maud make love, however, the gloves come off and it is hands and fingers that “satisfies their desires” (48). Still, it is Sue – in all her innocence – who explains to Maud that this is what is expected of her on her wedding night. This intimate scene is not the only one where, when the reader is given Maud's perspective, it is tainted by her uncle's pornography. When Sue is working on Maud's sharp tooth with a thimble, for example, Maud asks herself if a lady may “taste the fingers of her maid? She may, in my uncle's books. – The thought makes me colour” (Waters 256). Thus, the sexual boundaries are not always there. Sue, as Maud's maid, is always close to Maud and although Maud is not

usually permitted to take off her gloves, Sue is allowed to clip her nails for her, thus touching the most hidden – and therefore most sensual – part of Maud’s body. Diana Wallace argues that Waters used this closeness or intimacy between the girls “to build erotic tension” (178).

This erotic tension or intimacy does not work the same for all characters. When Maud and Gentleman slip away from Sue’s watchful eye for a short period of time, Gentleman coaxes Maud to let him kiss her. Instead of kissing her on the lips, he pulls back her glove and kisses the palm of her hand. Where Maud had felt no issue with Sue touching her hands, she cannot seem to rub the feeling of Gentleman’s lips from her palm. Gentleman, who at this point knows about Maud’s feelings for Sue, tells her to “imagine my mouth hers” (Waters 276). Heterosexual relationships – whether they are fake or real – are not portrayed in a positive manner in *Fingersmith*. The first time that the reader is confronted with relationships is at Lant Street, Sue’s home in the Borough. Here, John Vroom and Dainty seem to have a rather abusive relationship and Mrs Sucksby’s husband, who was a sailor, had “been lost at sea,” but now lives in the Bermudas, leaving his wife behind (44). The heterosexual relationship between Gentleman and Maud is of course a fake one. Maud is only entitled to her fortune if she marries and Gentleman offers her her freedom in exchange for a share of her inheritance. He offers her “not the commonplace subjection of a wife to a husband,” but liberty (226). This kind of liberty, Gentleman argues, is “not often granted to members of [Maud’s] sex,” as women in Victorian times were generally restricted to the domestic sphere and had very limited rights (226; Wylie et al 1095). As Sue and Maud are in a same-sex relationship and are not allowed to marry, neither of them will experience this ‘commonplace subjection’. *Fingersmith* and its portrayal of relationships – favouring Sue’s and Maud’s same-sex relationship over a heterosexual one – challenges both Victorian and contemporary society’s dominant view of what a relationship is supposed to resemble.

As stated above, Gentleman is aware of the attraction between Sue and Maud, but rather than declaring the girls insane, he tells Maud that she “may love and be damned for all [he] care[s],” as long as she will go on with their scheme (Waters 274). Gentleman uses his knowledge of Maud’s feelings to persuade her into acting out their heterosexual relationship. He does say, however, that other gentlemen’s “appetites are said to be pricked, by matters like that,” but he himself does not care for it (274). It may be possible that Gentleman’s acceptance of the girls’ feelings for each other stems from his own ‘sexually deviant’ desires, as this is not the only time that it has been hinted that Gentleman might be a “nancy” (19). This also subtly deconstructs the binary oppositions between gender and sexuality, as

Gentleman – who at the surface is the aggressive male who comes in between the female characters – might not have any interest in women at all.

Gentleman's acceptance or indifference about the girls' relationship, however, was not often shared by his contemporaries. William Hughes, who wrote a chapter on Victorian medicine and its application in Gothic novels, noted that the "presence of mental and physical disabilities" was thought to originate from participation (of one's self or even an ancestor) in "such transparently deviant practices as masturbation, homosexuality, polyandry, and incest" (186). Carl Degler explains that nineteenth-century doctors were "convinced that women did not feel any sexual interest" at all and Ardel Thomas added that anyone who expressed – or was thought to express – homosexual tendencies was found psychologically disturbed (Degler 1468; Thomas 142). It is therefore not uncommon for women such as Sue to be put in a madhouse for their perceived sexuality – note though, that the term 'sexuality' did not yet exist in the Victorian era (Reay 224). In the madhouse too, Sue is confronted with the distaste of others for her sexual preferences. In one scene, the drunk nurses are having a contest to see which of them weighs the most. They use Sue as a means of measurement, lying on top of her and seeing who can make her scream the loudest. When one of the nurses moves her hips "in a certain way," they start bullying Sue for her sexual preferences (Waters 442). Sue panics and begins screaming, which results in her punishment, a cold water plunge. All the nurses in the madhouse are described as "stout" and masculine women whose physiques contrast that of the "small" Sue (403; 405). It is this 'masculinity' and their authority as nurses that allow them to judge and criticise what they think are Sue's immoral tendencies and act upon this judgement accordingly. As William Hughes argues, Sue's perceived homosexuality labels her as psychologically disabled and would have seen her incarcerated for the rest of her life.

The 2005 BBC adaptation of the novel *Fingersmith* stays true to the novel. Therefore, there are not many differences between the adaptation and the source material. However, through a different medium, the same themes from the novel can be expressed in different ways. Just as clothing is described meticulously in the novel to establish the social differences between the characters, the adaptation visually expresses a character's social class by their clothing before anything else. While Sue is living at Lant Street, before Gentleman has come to fetch her for Briar, she is wearing lively colours like blues and pinks and she wears bangles. These bangles were not described in the novel, but they are a visual representation of Sue's lower class. As Dainty at one point mentions, "maids do not wear bangles" and Sue has to leave them behind, effectively abandoning her life as she knew it (*Fingersmith*). Near the end of the film, when Maud has found out that she is Mrs Sucksby's daughter, she puts on Sue's

bangles, signifying how their roles are mirrored and, as Sue says, that Maud has taken over her life.

Maud's first appearance in the series is similar to her appearance in the novel as well, although her skirts do not rise above her ankles like Sue frequently described. Maud wears a crinoline to make her skirt look fuller and a corset to make her waist smaller, as the fashion at that time demanded. Helene Roberts argued that wearing the crinoline "transformed women into caged birds" like Maud, to whom Briar is a prison from which she longs to escape (557). During her first days at Briar, Sue is wearing her brown dress and in the shots where Sue and Maud are standing next to each other the differences between them are quite clear. As time goes on, Maud gives Sue some of her own dresses so that Sue may become her. To signify Sue's change into a lady, she begins to take over Maud's style in the same manner that Maud puts on Sue's bangles. Sue is dressing in lighter colours and even starts wearing multiple petticoats so that her skirts grows bigger in every scene. When Gentleman arrives at Briar, he looks genuinely surprised to see that Sue has changed as much as she has. The class differences between Sue and Maud are diminishing as the clothes that were typically attributed to a particular social group are worn by someone else such as Sue, who does not belong to that group.

Not only their way of dressing, but the differences in the girls' use of language, and especially spoken language, returns in the adaptation as well. In the beginning of the series, both Sue and Maud are corrected in their pronunciation of certain words. In the scene where Mr Lilly comes to collect Maud from the madhouse where she grew up, he asks her to read to him. Maud is given a Bible and reads "blessed are the poor in spirit" and her uncle immediately corrects her pronunciation of "blessed" (*Fingersmith*). Similarly, when Sue is practicing on a chair how to dress a lady, she holds up a "chimmy," but Gentleman corrects her and tells her to pronounce it "chemise" (*Fingersmith*). Pronunciation and accents are substantial manners in which a character's class can be expressed. Maud, specifically in adulthood, speaks RP with perfect grammar and enunciation. Sue, on the other hand, tries to hide her bad grammar and London accent when she is at Briar, but it seeps through even in her narration. This shows that Sue has not been able to shake off the way that she was brought up and the same goes for Maud, once more confirming that in *Fingersmith* class is a performance rather than an genetic part of someone's identity.

Besides class, the characters' sexualities are performed as well. The relationship between Maud and Gentleman, for example, is one large act. In the adaptation, the actors make sure that it is known when they are 'performing' within their performance. When Sue

compliments Maud's paintings, for instance, Maud tells her that they are awful. Her voice is steady and she sounds confident. Then, she starts her act and lies about how she hopes to improve under Mr Rivers' guidance. She averts her eyes and raises the pitch of her voice. Her demeanour changes dramatically between these two sentences, as she pushes herself to give Sue the idea that she cares for Mr Rivers when in reality, she does not.

As shown in this chapter, boundaries are used to convey innocence and sexual tension. Gloves are both in the novel and in the adaptation a symbol of innocence as well as sensuality. Maud is always wearing her gloves, even as Sue is undressing her for bed. The only time that Maud is seen without her gloves is when Sue is clipping her nails. When Maud is putting her gloves back on, it seems to be a ritual. Sue is the one to take the gloves out of the dresser and who opens the buttons before she passes them on to Maud. Maud's hands are shown in a close-up as she puts the gloves back on and slowly buttons them up. The gloves return both in the novel and the adaptation when the girls and Gentleman are heading out to the madhouse. Sue takes one of Maud's gloves with her and carries it over her heart on the inside of her dress. This was at first a simple gesture of love, but as Maud betrays Sue, this glove serves as a reminder of that betrayal and is repeatedly chewed on and beaten by Sue.

Hands seem to play a significant role in representing sexuality in the adaptation. When Sue and Maud are making love – which they do twice in the adaptation compared to the one time in the novel, see the paragraph below – Maud's gloves are the first to come off to reveal her naked hands. In the scene where Gentleman means to kiss Maud, he does not go for her lips but for the palm of her hand, which Sue comments is “somewhere better, much better” (*Fingersmith*). After Sue has witnessed this kiss and returns to her place to wait for the others, Gentleman can be seen grabbing Maud's hand who, unwillingly, lets him – again establishing a unfavourable view of a heterosexual relationship. It is, however, not only Maud's hands which are used to show affection in the adaptation. When Sue is tending to Maud's sharp tooth, the scene is filmed in a very intimate manner. The frame is a close-up of the girls' faces, intensifying the effect of their eye contact as Sue places her hands on Maud's cheeks more than once, caressing her as if she was leaning in for a kiss.

The first time that Sue and Maud make love, it is Sue who has to ‘teach’ Maud how the sexual act works. Maud asks her what a wife is supposed to do on her wedding night. She knows that there is something, she mentions innocently, as she has read about it in her uncle's books. The second time the girls are shown in an intimate moment, it is on Maud's wedding night. Here, Maud is taking the lead and instigates their intercourse. She may do this out of desperation or fear of losing Sue, as she know it will happen shortly after that night. This



second scene in the adaptation helps to establish the relationship between Sue and Maud further and also shows that it is the mistress who seduces the maid.

Another scene in which the adaptation deviates from the novel, is the scene in which Gentleman kisses Maud's naked hand while Sue is spying on them. Contrary to the novel, when the scene of Gentleman's kiss is read from Maud's perspective, the Gentleman in the adaptation does not feel sympathetic towards her feelings for Sue at all. He has just found out about these feelings when he caught Maud staring at her sleeping maid. In the adaptation, the shots go from Maud's intrigued face to Sue's breasts, then – again – her hands, and at last Sue's face. In the novel, Gentleman tells Maud that he is not bothered about her feelings for Sue as long as Maud will obey him in their scheme. In the adaptation, however, he only tells Maud that Sue would "laugh in your face if she'd knew. If [he] told her" (*Fingersmith*). He makes Maud feel like her relationship with Sue is a trick or a farce, which leads to her submissiveness to their – Gentleman's and Maud's – fake relationship. Rather than deconstructing the male/female dichotomy as the novel did, this scene reinforces Gentleman's character as an aggressive male who complies with society's dominant views rather than counter them.

In order to answer the research question of this thesis, namely how the two adaptations of *Fingersmith* and their representations of class and queer identity portray the relationship between the main female characters, both Waters' novel and the BBC adaptation were analysed in this chapter. It focused on how class and queerness are portrayed in both the novel and the adaptation before examining the influence of these characteristics on the relationship between Sue and Maud. Since the BBC adaptation stayed close to the source material there were not that many differences between them. Clothing and language were in both the novel and the adaptation an effective means of showing a character's class, as was the representation of sexuality through hands and gloves. Where the adaptation differs from the novel is in its representation of the social dissimilarity between the two girls. Since Maud is raised as a lady and Sue is a thief from London, there is an inequality in their social statuses. Seeing this in terms of power relations, Maud is privileged compared to Sue. It is the closeness and intimacy of a lady and her maid that provokes erotic tension between the two of them, but in the adaptation – and contrary to the novel – it is always Maud who instigates the intimate moments between them, exercising her authority over Sue. Another difference between the novel and the adaptation is the reaction from other characters, Gentleman's in particular. Where in the novel he was sympathetic to Maud's feelings, in the adaptation he ridiculed her, making his character a more aggressive male counterpart to Maud's soft

femininity. Rather than deconstructing the male/female dichotomy, this scene in the adaptation reinforces Gentleman's compliance with society's dominant views which sets apart Sue's and Maud's relationship even further from the social norm. Sue's incarceration, for example, is not only supported by her so-called fantasy of being Maud's maid, but also because of her 'advances' towards Maud. Maud is not perceived as homosexual by the doctors, and is seen as a victim of Sue's advances. Sue's perceived queerness thus labels her as psychologically disabled and would have seen her incarcerated for the rest of her life if it was not for her escape. In both the novel and the adaptation it is the realisation that the girls have been swapped after they were born that tears down the structural inequality between them and allows Sue and Maud to pursue their relationship, albeit secluded from the rest of society.

### 3. Class, colonial relations, and queerness in *The Handmaiden*

Eleven years after the BBC adapted *Fingersmith* for the TV, the South-Korean producer Park Chan-wook directed *The Handmaiden* (2016), a transcultural adaptation of Sarah Waters' novel which is set in Korea under Japanese colonial rule during the 1930s. *The Handmaiden* was met with both popular and critical acclaim, the *Economist* saying that the film is "a new masterpiece" that is likely "to inspire a new generation of film-makers" (K.S.C.). Peter Bradshaw, from the *Guardian*, also argued that the film "is certainly a brilliant adaptation of Sarah Waters' original novel" and "about something that most other movies can only guess at: pleasure and rapture" (Bradshaw). Among the less jubilant about the South-Korean adaptation was Tim Robey, reviewer for the *Telegraph*, who questioned why the film needed to "feel so craven and soft-porny" (Robey). Nevertheless, most of the reviews for *The Handmaiden* are overwhelmingly positive and the film was even shown at the Festival of Cannes in 2016. Since the film is still recent, however, there are not many secondary sources on it. This chapter will therefore mostly refer to reviews such as the ones above in the analysis of how the relationship between the two main female characters is represented with regards to their class and queer identity.

Like *Fingersmith*, *The Handmaiden*'s narrative is told in three major parts. It begins in Japanese-occupied Korea, with the – fake – Count Fujiwara asking Sook-hee to help him swindle a young Japanese heiress, lady Hideko. Hideko is under the control of her uncle Kouzuki, a Korean man who gained Japanese citizenship and means to marry his niece. Sook-hee travels to their estate to become Hideko's maid. She and Hideko grow closer as the days pass and Sook-hee becomes reluctant to follow through with Fujiwara's plan. Hideko too expresses her concern about the marriage between her and Fujiwara, as she does not love him but someone else – that someone else being Sook-hee. When Kouzuki is away on business, Hideko and Sook-hee leave the house so that Hideko and Fujiwara can elope. After the marriage is consummated, Fujiwara takes Sook-hee and Hideko to the asylum, where it is Sook-hee who gets left behind.

It is from the second act onwards that *The Handmaiden* starts to diverge from Waters' novel and the BBC adaptation. The film shifts its perspective to Hideko, who as a young child was taught to read by her aunt, Kouzuki's late wife. Kouzuki's library is full of antique erotica which both Hideko's aunt and later Hideko herself are forced to read in front of an audience of gentlemen and government officials. Hideko's aunt, driven mad by her husband's abuse, hangs herself from the cherry tree in their garden. It is, however, heavily implied that Kouzuki murdered his wife when she tried to run away from him – one of the instances where

the adaptation differs immensely from the original novel. Hideko then takes her aunt's place and it is during one of the readings that Hideko meets Fujiwara. Fujiwara meets with Hideko in private and offers her an escape from her uncle's house in exchange for half of her inheritance. They plan to employ a new maid, Sook-hee, who must aid them in getting married only so she could be passed off as Hideko and spend the rest of her life in an asylum. Hideko initially agrees, but her feelings for Sook-hee get in the way of their plan. When Sook-hee tells her that she must marry Fujiwara, Hideko attempts to hang herself on the same cherry tree as her aunt, but Sook-hee saves her and confesses – unlike either Sue or Maud in *Fingersmith* – that she is not the kind of maid Hideko thought she was. Hideko too confesses her part in the scheme and they both vow to get revenge on Fujiwara and Kouzuki, whose library they destroy before Hideko marries Fujiwara and Sook-hee is incarcerated to the madhouse.

In the third act, Sook-hee is saved from the asylum by Bok-seen, her former caretaker. That same night, Hideko drugs Fujiwara in their hotel room using the opium he had given her in case their plan failed. Sook-hee and Hideko reunite and with the help of Sook-hee's con-family they forge their passports and leave for Shanghai. Where in *Fingersmith* the uncle dies before the narrative's conclusion, in *The Handmaiden* Kouzuki finds Fujiwara in the hotel room and brings him into the basement of his estate, where he tortures him and asks about details of the wedding night. Fujiwara lies about sleeping with Hideko as he smokes cigarettes laced with mercury, slowly killing both Kouzuki and himself.

As with Sue and Maud in *Fingersmith*, both Sook-hee and Hideko come from contrasting backgrounds. Sook-hee and Hideko start off with a deceitful relationship, yet despite their differences they slowly begin to care for one another. In order to answer the research question of this thesis, namely how the two adaptations of the novel *Fingersmith* and their representations of class and queer identity portray the relationship between the main female characters, this chapter will analyse the representation of class and queerness in *The Handmaiden*. It will first focus on how the characters portray class and queerness in the adaptation before examining the influence of these characteristics on the relationship between Sook-hee and Hideko. The subquestions for this chapter are: how are Sook-hee's and Hideko's social class portrayed? How does this change over the course of the narrative? How does the added element of colonialism in *The Handmaiden* change the identities of the women? How is queerness represented in and by the characters? How is this queerness perceived by other characters? And finally, how does this affect the way their relationship is represented?

First, this chapter will examine how class and colonial relations are represented in *The Handmaiden*. As in *Fingersmith*, both the way that characters dress and their use of language represent their social standing. In *The Handmaiden*, class is also determined by the added aspect of colonialism and the characters' different nationalities. The Japanese government explained that by annexing Korea, they would "secure the well-being of the Korean imperial family, [...] promote the prosperity of the country, and at the same time [...] ensure the safety and repose of the Japanese and foreign residents" (Brudnoy 162). When Japan colonised Korea in 1910, however, the reality was that they aimed to erase the Korean culture and make Korea part of not only the Japanese empire, but of Japan itself (Choi et al 1934). This period in Korean history, the *Economist* argues, allows for the characters in *The Handmaiden* to have "nuanced motives and emphasises the shifting balances of power and control that writhe throughout the film" (K.S.C.). In *The Handmaiden*, this opposition between the Japanese and the Koreans – in which the Japanese colonisers fancied themselves superior to the Koreans – is expressed in multiple ways. One such example is Kouzuki, a Korean man who gained Japanese citizenship and who desperately wants to be accepted into Japanese society. He divorced his Korean wife – who remains the housekeeper at his estate – to marry Hideko's Japanese aunt and he plans on marrying Hideko to keep that familial relation to the Japanese culture. Count Fujiwara too assumes a Japanese identity to fit in with the government officials and other Japanese gentlemen that visit Kouzuki's estate, where he would have stood out negatively as a Korean. This, a review from the *Independent* says, "emphasise[s] the vexed nature of the relationship between the Koreans and their Japanese rulers" (Macnab). It is this difference in social standing between the Koreans and the Japanese, as intersectionality theory aims to demonstrate, that causes a structural inequality between the characters of diverse nationalities. The distrust that existed on a national level between the Japanese oppressors and the Korean population is mirrored in the distrust and deceitful relationships between the characters.

Sook-hee is a young Korean woman who grew up among thieves and conmen in Japanese-occupied Korea. She agrees to Fujiwara's plan and hopes to leave Korea with the money she can earn with their scheme – unlike Sue in *Fingersmith*, who believed that London was the height of civilisation. This shows that Sook-hee as a character has a more cynical and perhaps more realistic world view than Sue did, which sets the tone for the rest of the film. As Sook-hee arrives at the estate, she is told by the housekeeper that the Mistress – Hideko's late aunt – was fond of both Japanese and English architecture, which is why the estate is built in both styles. In its review of *The Handmaiden*, the *Economist* argued that "Mr Park's

interpretation [of *Fingersmith*] has benefitted greatly from a cross-pollination of Korean and Western influences” (K.S.C.). This combination of Asian and Western styles returns not only in the estate, but also in the way the characters dress. Hideko, for example, can most often be seen wearing dresses in a Western style and only wears traditional Japanese clothing in a handful of scenes. The most prominent of these scenes is when she is reading her uncle’s erotic books in front of his visitors, all of whom are dressed in Western suits, thus making Hideko seem exotic compared to her audience. This shows an intragroup difference in the Japanese community where Hideko is sexualised and alienated by her male and Westernised audience. The other times that Hideko is not wearing Western clothing is in the scene where Sook-hee walks in on her kissing Fujiwara, the scene of Sook-hee’s incarceration – which are both later revealed to be acted by Hideko – and at her own wedding. It could be argued that Hideko wears her Japanese kimonos only when she is playing a part that was imposed on her by the male characters such as Kouzuki and Fujiwara.

Fujiwara himself consistently wears a Western suit, except for when he first arrives at Kouzuki’s estate. Then, he wears a traditional Japanese outfit and apologizes to Hideko for not wearing proper clothing when she receives him. Even at his own wedding, while Hideko is wearing a kimono, Fujiwara wears a Western suit. Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, author of “Kimono and the Construction of Gendered and Cultural Identities” (1999), argued that in Japanese culture, men were seen as more rational – and more Western – compared to women, who were seen as more traditionally Japanese (351). This belief still exists in contemporary times, as women are “encouraged to put on [a] kimono” and men wear the more “rational, ‘active’ Western suits” even at ceremonies such as weddings (352). This Westernisation further estranges the upper from the lower class and heavily influences traditional East-Asian identities.

Unlike Hideko and Fujiwara, Sook-hee always wears traditional Korean clothing, the only exception being when Hideko dresses her. The first time Hideko dresses Sook-hee, she puts her in a Western dress. Hideko states that Sook-hee could “pass for a lady” as the latter puts in Hideko’s earrings and admires herself in the mirror (*The Handmaiden*). As stated above, Western dresses and suits are status symbols that separate the rich from the poor. Later, after Hideko and Fujiwara are married, Hideko dresses Sook-hee in more traditionally Japanese clothing, which ensures that Sook-hee indeed passes for a Japanese lady and is eventually admitted to the asylum. Furthermore, that Hideko dresses Sook-hee in traditionally Japanese clothing does not only mean that Sook-hee takes on a different identity regarding her social class, but that she assumes a completely different nationality.

Besides the contrast between Western and East-Asian clothing that the characters wear, a distinction is made as well between Korean and Japanese culture. Class and colonial differences in *The Handmaiden*, even more so than in *Fingersmith*, are especially characterised through the use of language. Japanese, being the language of the colonisers, was thought to be superior to Korean. As stated before, it was the Japanese government's goal to assimilate Korea not only into a Japanese colony, but into an extension of Japan itself. David Brudnoy, who wrote the article "Japan's Experiment in Korea" (1970), states that the "eradication of the native [Korean] language was high priority policy" to the Japanese government, which resulted in the Korean language being banned in schools and on the streets in the late 1930s (186). The dialogue in *The Handmaiden* consists of both Korean and Japanese, which helps to "emphasise the social order" between the characters (K.S.C.). When Sook-hee is appointed as Hideko's maid, for instance, she is expected to speak Japanese to her mistress. She is thus astonished when Hideko starts speaking to her in Korean. Hideko, who only knew Japanese when she came to her uncle's estate as a young girl and learned Korean over the years, finds her native language to be "a bother" since all the books her uncle makes her read are in Japanese (*The Handmaiden*). Hideko's and Sook-hee's use of the Korean language makes the relationship between them more cordial than a regular relationship between a mistress and her maid would be. They bridge the gap created by the prejudice between their respective social groups, namely the Korean subjects and the Japanese colonisers. When examining characters like Kouzuki and Fujiwara – both of them Koreans who assume a Japanese identity – they speak Japanese in order to maintain this fabricated identity. Only when Fujiwara is talking to Sook-hee does he speak Korean, thus showing his true character as a conman who pretends to be a better person than he truly is, both morally and culturally.

Much like Sue in *Fingersmith*, Sook-hee does not know how to read or write. When Hideko discovers that Sook-hee lied to her about being able to read, she tells her that "you can learn the alphabet. You can even curse at me or steal things from me, but please do not lie to me" (*The Handmaiden*). Hideko, in contrast to Maud in *Fingersmith*, teaches Sook-hee to read and write in both Korean and Japanese. It is this ability to write that eventually saves Sook-hee from the asylum as she was able to contact her former caretaker, Bok-seen, who helped her escape. Hideko sends a letter to her uncle after she leaves his estate, in which she asks him if she can explain her gift – a drugged Fujiwara – to him in Korean. She tells her uncle that she likes women and that she is grateful that Fujiwara sent Sook-hee to be her maid.

Sook-hee's and Hideko's ability to read and write represents their freedom, as their freedom was either gained or expressed through writing.

This new-found freedom allows Sook-hee and Hideko to pursue their relationship away from Hideko's controlling uncle and Fujiwara's scheming. The attraction between the two women is represented explicitly in the film, both through the script and through visuals. When Sook-hee and Hideko first meet, for instance, Sook-hee silently curses Fujiwara as "[h]e should have told me she was so pretty. She has me flustered" (*The Handmaiden*). Sook-hee, in an attempt to make Hideko fall in love with Fujiwara, tells her mistress that Fujiwara thinks about her face before he goes to sleep. Hideko says she does not understand that sentiment but a few scenes later, when Sook-hee is dressed up and "pass[es for] a lady," Hideko mentions that she now understands what Sook-hee had meant (*The Handmaiden*). She then adds that Sook-hee's face is the last thing she sees every night before she goes to sleep and Sook-hee is noticeably shocked by this confession, as it is socially not acceptable for a mistress to talk to her maid as such.

Besides these explicit confessions of attraction, *The Handmaiden* shows the girls' interest in each other through its cinematography as well. Similar to *Fingersmith*, for example, there is a scene in *The Handmaiden* where Sook-hee is helping Hideko with her sharp tooth. This scene and many others are presented much more sensually than in *Fingersmith*, both compared to the novel as well as the TV series. In *The Handmaiden*, Hideko is taking a bath and sucking on a lollipop when she tells Sook-hee about her tooth. In the following moments, when Sook-hee takes a thimble to Hideko's tooth, the film shows close-ups of both the girls' eyes, mouths, and Hideko's breasts. At one point, Hideko has closed her eyes and caresses Sook-hee's arm. The sex-scenes in *The Handmaiden* rely on this intimacy between maid and mistress as well. "The film's eroticism never stems from the crass desires of either Uncle Kouzuki or the count" and instead it is "the growing connection and intimacy between the two women [...] that yields the film's most erotic moments" (K.S.C.). *The Handmaiden* represents male sexuality as something revolting, especially in Kouzuki's character. In Kouzuki's case, his distasteful desires lead to his wife's madness and eventually her death. Female sexuality, on the other hand, is presented in a more sensual and romantic way which, in Sook-hee's and Hideko's case, ends much more pleasantly and thus challenges conventional views on gender and – queer – sexuality.

The focus for the erotic moments and sensuality in *The Handmaiden* seems to be on mouths rather than on hands, as it was in *Fingersmith*. In the scenes where Sook-hee and Hideko are making love, most of the affectionate and sexual gestures are made with their



mouths and again, these gestures are the focus of most of the shots. The link between sensuality and mouths appears in another scene as well, though in a different manner. In one of the scenes where Hideko is shown as a young girl in her uncle's library of erotica, she is punished by Kouzuki for talking back to him. He tells her to put a metal ball in her mouth and he hits her hand with the other balls attached to a string. Hideko has kept these balls as she grew older and they are used, once more symbolising how Hideko cheats her uncle and his perverted ways, in the final scene of the film where Sook-hee and Hideko are making love to one another as they are leaving Korea.

In these scenes, where Sook-hee and Hideko board a ship to leave Korea and go to Shanghai, the girls are using false papers so Kouzuki will not be able to track them down. Sook-hee is dressed in one of Hideko's dresses and pretends to be a lady – a nod to Sue's true identity in *Fingersmith* – whereas Hideko is pretending to be a man, going even as far as to put on a fake moustache. Where two women travelling together might have raised eyebrows, a lady travelling with a man was not exceptional and they were allowed to board the ship. Here, Sook-hee and Hideko chose to conform momentarily to society's heteronormative views to avoid suspicion. On the ship's deck, Sook-hee helps Hideko remove the fake moustache and sticks it to a pair of gloves that have Hideko's wedding ring around one of the fingers. Sook-hee then throws the gloves towards the sea and the girls both watch them being taken away by the wind, symbolising how they are leaving their old lives behind. Then, when Sook-hee and Hideko have been led to their room, they engage in an intimate moment during the last scene of the film. In these couple of scenes, both Sook-hee and Hideko have completely changed their identities in order to maintain a low profile as they are escaping the country, abandoning their Korean and Japanese backgrounds in favour of the neutral city of Shanghai where in terms of nationality they would be equals.

Sook-hee and Hideko do keep their relationship a secret from the other characters. During their stay at the temple after Hideko and Fujiwara got married, the girls can be seen kissing through a gap in the door as Fujiwara is standing only a little further away. Fujiwara, however, does not notice and he seems unaware of how close the girls have grown over the weeks. It is only at the end of the film that he knows how they have beaten him at his own game. Kouzuki, who captures Fujiwara to torture him for eloping with his niece, received a letter from Hideko explaining where she went and also where he could find Fujiwara, the "gift" Hideko had left for him (*The Handmaiden*). This letter is the only instance in the film where the unconventionality of the relationship between Sook-hee and Hideko is addressed. Hideko writes to her uncle that she is not in a "pressured relationship" – once again underlining the

film's preference for female sexuality – and that she “love[s] women” (*The Handmaiden*). Kouzuki is obviously upset that his niece has left, but he does not react to the fact that his niece left with another woman. Fujiwara does not say anything about it either. *The Handmaiden* also shows that in the scene where Sook-hee and Hideko are getting their false papers to leave Korea, Sook-hee's family of thieves is standing around them and they seem supportive of the girls' plan. It is unsure if they know about the relationship between the girls, but Sook-hee and Hideko were shown to be kissing publicly in front of the front door moments earlier. So, none of the characters in *The Handmaiden* has reacted to Sook-hee's and Hideko's relationship or their attraction to women. This reaction may have been left to the audience of the film, but the characters themselves do not express any opinion – positive or negative – about the relationship between Sook-hee and Hideko.

In order to answer the research question, namely how the two adaptations of *Fingersmith* and their representations of class and queer identity portray the relationship between the main female characters, this chapter examined the South-Korean adaptation *The Handmaiden* (2016) by director Park Chan-wook. This analysis focused on how class, colonial relations between Korea and Japan, and queer identity are portrayed in the adaptation before examining the influence of these characteristics on the relationship between Sook-hee and Hideko. Class and colonial relations in *The Handmaiden* are mainly represented through clothing and language. The characters who belong – or pretend to belong – to a higher social class wear more Western clothing than traditionally Korean or Japanese clothes, which are only worn by the lower class people or by upper class women during ceremonial events. Besides the opposition between Western and Asian characteristics, *The Handmaiden* showed the colonial differences between Korea and Japan as well. The distinct use of language helps to identify the social order between the characters, where the Japanese are superior to the Koreans. The fact that Sook-hee and Hideko speak Korean when they are together, even in their most intimate moments, makes the power structure within their relationship more balanced. It is at the intersection between class and queerness where the social inequalities between Sook-hee and Hideko are made clear though, as Hideko initially appears to be freer to express her admiration for Sook-hee than Sook-hee is to return this sentiment. Their relationship and sexuality is presented as particularly sensual and preferable to the aggressive male sexuality of, for example, Kouzuki. The film often focused on the girls' lips and tongues in the most intimate scenes. It is striking, however, that none of the other characters seem to have knowledge of this relationship, as no one acknowledges or responds to it. This can imply a number of things, the first of which is that Sook-hee and Hideko kept their relationship a

secret in fear of prosecution and the second is that the other characters simply accepted their relationship. In the 1930s in Korea, however, it would have been more likely to be the former, but the adaptation does not address the social constraints their same-sex relationship would have faced. This allows Sook-hee and Hideko to – at least seemingly – pursue their relationship freely, without any social restrictions imposed on them by society.

## Conclusion

In a 2007 interview with *Feminist Review*, Sarah Waters said that it has always been her goal to write about the “untold gay stories” of the past after she finished writing her PhD thesis on the same topic (Armitt 120-121). Waters’ third novel, *Fingersmith*, was published in 2002 and adapted by the BBC into a TV serial in 2005. Eleven years later, in 2016, the South-Korean producer Park Chan-wook directed *The Handmaiden*, a transcultural adaptation of Waters’ Victorian crime novel. The novel, the BBC series, and the South-Korean film all deal with the relationship between a mistress and her maid. The analysis of this relationship focused on two aspects of the women’s identities, namely class and queerness. In the novel *Fingersmith*, these elements of identity are highly fluid in the main female characters and they change throughout the narrative. The two adaptations as well address this fluidity in their characters’ class and queerness. This thesis therefore addressed the question: in what ways do the two adaptations of *Fingersmith* and their representations of class and queer identity portray the relationship between the main female characters? In order to answer this question, this thesis used intersectionality theory as well as queer theory to analyse the characters’ identities and their relationship.

Intersectionality theory examines social identities that are build from systems or categories – such as race, nationality, gender, or sexuality – which intersect to create an identity. This theory, however, is used as an analysis of power structures rather than an analysis of identity alone. Therefore, this thesis employed intersectionality theory to analyse the structural inequalities between the characters, especially regarding class and, in *The Handmaiden*’s case, colonial relations. The second theory that was used to examine the relationship between the female characters in adaptations of *Fingersmith* is queer theory, which intends to deconstruct the binary oppositions in gender and sexuality. Thus, the analysis in this thesis focused on how the female characters’ sexuality or queerness clashes with social norms and values and, by combining queer theory with intersectionality theory, how class or colonial relations influenced the way that this was done.

The chapter on *Fingersmith* examined how the relationship between Sue and Maud is represented in both the novel and the BBC adaptation with regards to social class and queer identity. Since the BBC adaptation stayed close to the novel’s material, there were not that many differences between them. Clothing and language were used in both the novel and the adaptation to show a character’s social standing. Moreover, the representation of sexuality through hands and gloves was noticeable in both narratives, as was the representation of how the intimacy between a mistress and her maid provokes erotic tension. There is an

unmistakeable difference in social class between Sue and Maud, which in terms of power relations means that Maud has authority over Sue. It is Maud who instigates the intimate moments between the two of them, especially in the sex-scene that was added in the adaptation. The attraction between Sue and Maud eventually leads to Sue's incarceration, as her queerness labels her as psychologically unstable and unfit for society. In the end it is the realisation that the girls have been swapped at birth that saves them from the social inequalities between them and allows them to be together, though they are secluded from the rest of society as their relationship is not thought to be acceptable.

Next, the chapter on *The Handmaiden* focused on how class, colonial relations between Japan and Korea, and Sook-hee's and Hideko's queer identities influenced the representation of their relationship. Class and colonial relations in *The Handmaiden* were mainly expressed through a character's clothing and their use of language. Characters who belong to a higher social class, like Hideko, were seen wearing more Western clothing than traditionally Korean or Japanese outfits which the lower class people like Sook-hee and the other maids wore. Besides this opposition between Western and Asian characteristics, *The Handmaiden* made colonial differences between Korea and Japan clear through the characters' distinct use of language. Japanese, as the language of the colonisers, was considered superior to and more formal than Korean. Since Sook-hee and Hideko mostly spoke Korean to each other, their relationship was instantly represented as a more intimate relationship than usual between a mistress and her maid. The power relations between them therefore became more even or balanced. To show the sensuality of this relationship, the film oftentimes focused on their lips and tongues and, compared to the novel or BBC's adaptation, added more intimate scenes between the two women. Since none of the other characters explicitly reacted to their queerness, Sook-hee and Hideko seemingly find little to no opposition in pursuing their relationship once they leave the confined space of Kouzuki's estate and the watchful eye of the male characters.

When comparing the BBC TV series to Park Chan-wook's transcultural adaptation of Sarah Waters' *Fingersmith*, it could be argued that the South-Korean adaptation took a more explicit approach to the source material's intimacy in the relationship between the female characters. The focus for sensuality shifted from hands and gloves in the BBC adaptation to mouths, lips, and tongues in Park's film, which made the added – as well as the previously existing – sex-scenes more outspoken than the BBC's. The most significant difference between the two adaptations, however, stems from the added aspect of colonialism in *The Handmaiden*. Where in *Fingersmith* Sue and Maud were swapped at birth, Sook-hee and

Hideko – being different nationalities – could not possibly have traded places. Because of this, the realisation that Sue and Maud had about their true identities never happened to Sook-hee and Hideko. *The Handmaid* solves this missing plot twist from the original novel by having Sook-hee and Hideko confess their schemes to one another and work together to actively gain their freedom rather than being passive pawns in someone else's plot like Sue and Maud were. When fleeing from Korea, the girls use false papers that say that Sook-hee is a lady – a nod to Sue's true identity in *Fingersmith* – and Hideko dresses as a man, thus changing their outward identities completely before they can embrace who they really are.

In the introduction to this thesis, the hypothesis was that since *The Handmaid* was produced in a culture where same-sex relationships are not accepted as much as they are in the West, the relationship between Sook-hee and Hideko might find more opposition than the relationship between Sue and Maud in the BBC adaptation. This, however, proved to be incorrect. Naturally, both of the relationships find oppositions in their respective cultures, but Sue's and Maud's relationship was actively vilified whereas Sook-hee's and Hideko's was not. To conclude it could be argued that in *Fingersmith* the girls' class and queer identity and the fluidity of these characteristics make their relationship a complicated one with regards to the power structures between them whereas in *The Handmaid* the girls start out with a definite social structure between them, but they chose to disregard this in favour of their attraction to one another. Both Sue and Maud were mere pawns in someone else's plot, whether it was Gentleman's or Mrs Sucksby's scheme. When comparing their relationship to Sook-hee's and Hideko's, Sue and Maud still retain more of the class differences between them. Maud never taught Sue how to read or write, leaving Sue helpless when she is trying to decipher the letter that holds her true identity. Because of her ignorance, Sue spends a significant amount of time hating Maud for betraying her. Sook-hee, on the other hand, has been taught by Hideko to read and write, gaining her freedom from the madhouse through this ability. Also, because both of the girls confessed their initial intentions, there were never any hard feelings between them. So, both relationships start out with definite social inequalities between the girls, but it is how they chose to give a voice to their feelings that makes for different representations of these relationships.

As could be expected, more research could be done on Sarah Waters' novels and subsequent adaptations that goes further than the scope of this thesis. The subject of gender, for instance, has completely been omitted in this research as it has been examined frequently in relation to Waters' works, but it would make for a compelling research when combined with other elements such as class, colonialism, or agency. It would be interesting to see these

themes in relation to some of Waters' other novels as well, as they all lend themselves very well for academic research. Naturally, both subjects touched upon in this thesis – class and queer identity – are broad topics and this research could definitely be expanded upon.

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