"We Have to Do the Things They Tell Us" –

Nation, Masculinity and War

LITERATURE AND NATIONAL PROPAGANDA

National propaganda in all of its forms, from official speeches to fictional narratives, gains importance at times of crisis when more subtle means of control, such as state-enforced laws, become insufficient vehicles of surveillance. Particularly during the Second World War, cultivating a collective British identity and sense of belonging became vital conditions for warding off the threat coming from continental Europe. Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* argues that the myth of the Unknown Soldier plays a central role in the construction of national identity and in assimilating men into a nationalistic discourse when turning them into soldiers.[1] The novels discussed here negotiate and challenge this myth by depicting male characters which refuse to lay down their life for the nation. Whilst Adam Fitzroy's *Make Do and Mend* (2012) questions the authenticity of the People's War by dramatising the long standing tension between Wales and England (thus plunging into a debate on Britishness versus Englishness), Sarah Waters' *The Night Watch* (2006) illustrates institutionalised nationalism in form of prison routine and the inmates' disobedience to claim the war as *their* war. "We have to do the things they tell us" (481) is one of the characters' weary recognition moments before he commits suicide to escape serving in a People's War that is, in reality, led by "a load of government men[...]" (481). Mary Renault's protagonist Laurie Odell is similarly disillusioned in *The Charioteer* (1953). His conflict with his stepfather and clergyman Mr. Straike demonstrates the church to be an institution of nationalistic convictions. Finally, Walter Baxter's *Look Down in Mercy* (1951) demonstrates the struggles of a heteronormatively conditioned officer, who becomes aware of his feelings for another

1 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, [1983], (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

man, which puts the military as a masculine institution representing the ideals of the nation into crisis. Kent's inability to perform heroically in battle is only overcome when he allows his homosexual feelings to surface. Baxter's novel thus drafts an alternative version of performing wartime masculinity that is informed and complemented by femininity.

This chapter investigates the lingering implication of norms concerning gender and sexuality within nationalist ideologies which People's War propaganda tried to subsume. I will uncover the tight link between the creation of nation-states and patriarchal power structures organising gender by looking at the various ways in which characters try to circumvent the system of masculinist power bestowed upon their male bodies. I argue that the novel's characters may come to symbolically represent the British nation as Unknown Soldiers and in doing so reify the myth of immortality through mortal bodies. At the same time as being complicit, these characters often resist fully identifying with the myth and thus challenge its overarching authority. These frictions and paradoxes contribute to the wariness and the author's often discernible uncertainty over how to represent the war. In order to more fully grasp the novels' approach, I will question when and why nationalistic propaganda becomes compelling for characters and, more importantly, at what point it disintegrates. Through this disintegration, homosexual war narratives can significantly broaden the canon of war literature by challenging dominant perceptions of military masculinity as tough and heroic, and of conscientious objectors as weak and effeminate.

Narratives grounded in masculine heroism or other legends of bravado function to (re)create and sustain the elusive and illusive nation. Anderson carves out national immateriality by defining the nation as "an imagined political community"[2] where people do not personally know each of their national neighbours, yet where each citizen envisions themselves as belonging to the same community. Anderson's emphasis on the nation as an *imagined* and therefore phantasmal community leads scholars such as Antony Easthope to lament the lack of theorising the nation "as collective identity" in favour of "promulgat[ing] merely another version of nation as unreal"[3]. This criticism oversimplifies Anderson's connotation of the term imagined: he does not deny the physical reality of nation-states and their economic, political and institutional capacities. Instead, Anderson questions any logical substance that precedes the creation of nation-states. In *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* Sara Ahmed clarifies Anderson's conception as an "approach [that] allows us to recognise that the

2 Anderson, (1991), p. 6.

3 Anthony Easthope, *Englishness and National Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 8.

boundaries of nations are not simply geographical or geopolitical (though they take both these forms), but also discursive"[4]. She further argues that

> [t]he imagination of the nation as a space in which 'we' belong is not independent of the material deployment of force, and the forms of governmentality which control, not only the boundaries between nation states, and the movements of citizens and aliens within the state, but also the repertoire of images which allows the concept of the nation to come into being in the first place.[5]

Despite the geopolitical and institutionalised reality of nation-states, they remain essentially fictitious. In order to compensate for their insubstantiality, nations need a "repertoire of images" that creates and reifies national belonging. These images do not simply work to distance the nation from other nations but also to establish a hierarchy among citizens by denoting some as 'friends' and others as 'strangers'. Nationalism is thus a complex process of differentiation between nations and among national citizens that requires tropes of identification. Texts enhance a sense of national belonging and lay "the bases for national consciousness"[6]. Because of this dependency on images and texts, Anderson is right to claim that nationalism cannot be grasped by looking for an authentic centre or a single origin because, as Geoffrey Bennington agrees, "we undoubtedly find narration at the centre of nation: stories of national origins, myths of founding fathers, genealogies of heroes"[7]. The repetition of these founding and heroic stories determines a sense of naturalisation, making the nation-state's centre forever obscured through myth. Consequently, "[t]he nation is a reification, a conceptual abstraction, but through representations and rhetoric it appears to exist in a concrete form."[8]

National propaganda of a People's War was a vital image for inducing conformity among national citizens during the war in order to strengthen an imagined community. It helped the national leadership to disguise the monitoring of gender conformity by promulgating the war as genderless, classless and sexless

4 Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 98.

5 Ibid., p. 98.

6 Anderson, (1991), p. 44.

7 Geoffrey Bennington, "Postal Politics and the Institution of the Nation" in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 121.

8 Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 7.

to highlight the United Kingdom as *one* nation that fights the threat of invasion. Mark Rawlinson argues in *British Writing of the Second World War* that texts spanning various genres of fiction, letters, propaganda, documentaries and diary entries (often unconsciously) perpetuate the narrative of the People's War. He asserts that "[w]artime literature is both critical of the content and vehicles [that legitimate the war], and fully implicated in the reproduction and invention of alternative justifications of violence."[9] In such replications that vindicate war violence, writers become part of the machinery that disseminates People's War rhetoric. George Orwell's *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* is an example of such a text that simultaneously criticises the division of Britain's people, and praises their solidarity in times of crisis. Despite emphasising Britain as "the most class-ridden country under the sun" that is "notoriously two nations, the rich and the poor", and recognising his language as offensive when using "the word 'England' oftener than 'Britain'", Orwell maintains that "somehow these differences fade away the moment that any two Britons are confronted by a European"[10]. Perceiving themselves as a "family", Orwell continues, there is a "tendency of nearly all [British] inhabitants to feel alike and act together in moments of supreme crisis"[11]. Whilst representing Britain as a complex nation where people hold diverse and often conflicting social positions, Orwell's *The Lion and the Unicorn* illustrates Rawlinson's argument that texts can come to support and spread the myth of the People's War, regardless of their inherent incongruities. By calling Britain a "family" whose inhabitants "feel alike and act together", Orwell advocates solidarity against so-called Nazi Germany. He points out that any differences among Britons subside in the event of jeopardy. These rhetorical abstractions insinuate a greater focus on issues of identity, predominantly national identity during war, and the need to create a narrative that unites people around a collective goal. Writing is thus a major means of establishing and maintaining a grand narrative of a shared identity when people such as Orwell disseminate nationalistic opinions to be read by large numbers of people. In times of crisis, such representations that proclaim a cohesive nationalistic identity increase and manipulate people into subordination to the national Government.

9 Mark Rawlinson, *British Writing of the Second World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 3.

10 George Orwell, The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius, [1941], (The University of Adelaide: eBooks@Adelaide, 2014) <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/o/orwell/george/lion_and_the_unicorn/> [last accessed, 18/07/2017], chapter 3.

11 Ibid., chapter 3.

Kristine A. Miller's *British Literature of the Blitz* "challenges the mythology that Rawlinson and others describe by approaching the literature not as a coherent collective defence of the war but as an expression of imaginative freedom to disagree about the People's War"[12]. According to Miller, wartime writings represent diversity rather than homogeneity and often challenge authenticity claims within People's War propaganda. Quentin Crisp's *The Naked Civil Servant* (1968) illustrates Miller's opposition to a categorical argument that views accounts of the war as either supportive or antagonistic. Crisp perceives the war as simultaneously thrillingly exceptional when liberating people's sex lives, yet as exasperatingly conservative in the monitoring of gender norms. Since the number of soldiers and sailors on British soil grew, intense male friendships and even homosexual conduct became more frequent. However, Crisp was discharged from military service due to his effeminacy, and he was repeatedly violently assaulted for transgressing gender norms. Crisp's contradicting experiences illustrate Miller's compelling thesis that "[b]ecause People's War ideology simultaneously magnified and masked existing problems within the social system, different civilians imagined the People's War in very different ways."[13] Sarah Waters' character Julia uncovers this very paradox of "magnify[ing] and mask[ing] existing problems" when she states: "I hate this passion for uniforms, too. Uniforms, armbands, badges. I thought the military impulse, as it's grown up in Germany, was what we were against!" (273) Uniforms as a collective style seems ironic at best: whilst outwardly levelling people and confirming their shared interest in winning the war through signalling patriotism, they disguise not only Britain's proximity to their enemy, but also the exclusion of those not wearing uniforms. In *Make Do and Mend*, Harry also points out that uniforms can come to increase differences among people when he observes that his sexual transaction with Clive translates into "the RAF, fucking the Navy" (179). Julia's and Harry's reflections are grounded in the narratives' modern vantage point that enables Waters and Fitzroy to narrate the war "within a more comprehensive set of existing narratives and images"[14]. Because with hindsight there comes a greater understanding of events, the once "blissful clarity"[15] of mythic images begins to fade. Whereas "accounts of the Blitz written in the 1940s demonstrate a keen awareness of their relationship to the dominant cultural ideology of a

12 Kristine A. Miller, *British Literature of the Blitz: Fighting the People's War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 11.

13 Ibid., p. 11.

14 Ibid., p. 4.

15 Barthes, (1973), 143.

People's War"[16], modern re-writings stand on less restraining ground. Despite this greater distance to the events, which allows for a more critical perspective, it seems significant that all novels share a more or less pronounced reluctance to identify with the war as a People's War. Their perspective reveals the lingering scepticism described by Miller and suggests that more than half a century later, there still seems to be wariness over the ideologies propagated by Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Moreover, the rehearsal of doubt uncovers the uncertainty over how to deal with the Second World War retrospectively – how to handle a past that was so destructive that it continues influencing the present. The confusion of the 1940s is often expressed through incongruities when depicting characters which simultaneously oppose and propagate the war.

Interestingly, the homosexual protagonist Harry in *Make Do and Mend*, who repeatedly criticises his brother Thomas for his conservative and nationalistic attitude helps to perpetuate the myth of the People's War most effectively by writing reports for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Harry has been asked to meet up with Hywel Vaughn, the brother of Thomas' wife Joan, to write about the routine at the front. Hywel outlines the basic idea of these reports:

> [Joan will] have mentioned that I'm a producer for the BBC? The fact is, I'm also on attachment to the Ministry of Information, and my contribution to the war effort is to make the people who are staying at home feel personally involved on as many fronts as possible. I've been asked to find personnel from different services to give talks about their lives, and that's why Joan thought I should approach you. Nothing too grim, obviously – accommodation, food, routine, the occasional funny story – just to give the families an idea of what their boys experience every day. (150-151)

This representation of the BBC demonstrates Bennigton's thesis that "we undoubtedly find narration at the centre of nation"[17]. Hywel explicitly outlines what sort of identity the BBC wants to narrate and transmit: one that is nationalistic and British, indicated by its *British* Broadcasting Corporation production, but one that is also global when covering "as many fronts as possible". It is meant to be positive and to describe a rose-tinted routine of soldiers "just to give the families an idea of what their boys experience every day". Death and fear as well as other war atrocities will find no space in the report because they are "too grim". Asking Harry to create this sort of narrative is highly ironic considering that he is only available because he is on convalescent leave due to bad injuries

16 Miller, (2009), p.4.

17 Bennington, (1990), p. 121.

incurred during the war. This irony is enhanced by Harry's formulation a few weeks later: "he was intending to visit Hywel Vaughn in Bristol [for a spell check] before the war claimed him again" (161). The term "claimed" clearly determines the powerful hold the war has on soldiers and that service is not just about "accommodation, food, routine [or] the occasional funny story". Regardless of this, Harry is eager to write about his experiences, obviously unaware that in doing so, he glorifies the national war effort.

Walter Baxter's *Look Down in Mercy* (1951) depicts the exact opposite to Harry's eagerness to narrate his experiences when the protagonist Toni Kent is shown to struggle writing a letter to his wife Celia. Unlike Harry who enjoys sharing his experiences and thus contributes to the myth of the People's War, Kent is more reluctant: "He hated writing letters but one had to do it, and of course one wanted to do it." (7) Kent's self-description as "one" signals disidentification with the role of husband composing a love letter to his wife and indicates his increasing emotional indifference towards Celia. It also universalises soldiers at the front as a group that faced the difficulty of putting their experiences into words appropriate to People's War propaganda. These letters were meant to contain the sort of stories Hywel wants Harry to write for the BBC: "Nothing too grim, obviously" (150-151). Kent is thus left with a limited scope of things to write about and circumvents this challenge by focusing on the home front:

> You don't say very much about the bombing, my sweet. I suppose you are trying to avoid adding to the white man's burden, but nothing you could say or not say would make me worry more than I do. And I feel so phoney too, living out here in the lap of luxury, literally thousands of miles away from the nearest shot being fired in anger and with nothing more dangerous to cope with than being poisoned by the mess cook. But it's no good grumbling I suppose, there's nothing I can do about it and as you can imagine the Army could scarcely care less about my personal problems. (8)

Kent's mentioning of the Blitz on Britain in 1940 and 1941 illustrates the paradigm shift regarding wartime narratives of the Second World War: whereas the First World War and its literary negotiation was dominated by soldier experiences from the front, the scale of the Second World War made civilians as much witnesses of wartime atrocities as soldiers. Kent's account represents this new emphasis on the home front where "[s]urrounded by the dead and dying, many civilians began to feel that they were fighting as soldiers in a People's War"[18]. In contrast to such atrocities, Kent lives in the "lap of luxury" at the beginning of

18 Miller, (2009), p. 3.

the novel, far away from gun fire and bombing. His apparent concern for Celia and his alleged dissatisfaction with his "phoney" lifestyle, however, is not meant sincerely. This becomes obvious when comparing his written words to his internal ponderings accompanied by actions that symbolise a deep satisfaction with his current situation.

Kent talks of a "personal problem" to insinuate that he would prefer to fight and die in the war as any good national citizens would. To substantiate his regrettable sense of safety, Kent states humorously that the only thing that could cost him his life is the military food. His fear of "being poisoned by the mess cook" is a blatant lie, as Kent has his own private chef to order about: "'Dinner in ten minutes, Ahmed, I'm going to have another drink and look at the paper. Bring the bottle and some more ice.'" (10) Moreover, Kent is in no hurry to see any frontline action when he "slump[s] into a long wicker arm-chair and lazily pull[s] a newspaper off the table" (10). The authenticity of his letter is further compromised when he laments the shortage of officers, whilst silently embracing his "novel and delicious sense of importance; having another officer in the company could only diminish that feeling" (9). Kent refrains from disclosing these true thoughts to Celia not simply because letters were read to ensure that no information would pass to the enemy[19], but because Kent finds the savouring of his luxurious lifestyle "embarrassing" and "difficult to express" (9). According to the laws of the People's War, Britons were glad to defend their country and Kent cannot confess that he is an exception to this rule. He is aware that his attitude does not conform to wartime propaganda disallowing military personnel to embrace moments of safety. Consequently, his letter to Celia taints his true feelings in favour of demonstrating a false allegiance to nationalism and patriotism.

Kent's and Harry's contradicting participation in producing propaganda shows that those who, like Harry, are generally wary of the war can come to unconsciously spread its ideologies through creating stories of praise, whereas oth-

19 In Make Do and Mend Harry's brother Freddie writes a letter to his family at Christmas from Germany whilst being a prisoner of war: "*we had sausage and sauerkraut for Christmas dinner and the Red Cross sent enough plum cake for everyone. Church parade in the morning, good Scottish chaplain and plenty of lusty hymns to keep us warm. In the afternoon we had a concert, with people singing and reciting poetry and rather a good comic turn, and then someone got on the piano and we sang until we were hoarse.*" (137) [emphasis original]. This cheerful representation of German imprisonment is highly doubtful and obviously informed by conducts that require soldiers to present their situation as bearable according to Red Cross standards. Only Freddie's closing words "I've had enough adventures for a while!" (138) [emphasis original] disclose Freddie's true feelings and the fear that accompanies war captivity.

ers like Kent, who are prone to the promise of glory, may fail to identify with the war.

In addition to People's War propaganda, the Unknown Soldier myth becomes another unifying trope to further collectivity:

> No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. [...] Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings.[20]

Nationalistic discourse fashions the myth of the Unknown Soldier in order to universalise the "ghostly national imaginings" of ancestral graves as "loom[ing] out of an immemorial past [...] glid[ing] towards a limitless future"[21]. This projection of a genealogy and an undisrupted continuity is vital for the survival of nation-states. Even though the "cenotaphs and tombs" are "void", they remain charged with meaningful projections that are turned into narration through repetition. However, Joanna P. Sharp remarks pointedly that the "Unknown Soldier is not entirely anonymous. We can all be fairly sure that the soldier is not called Sarah or Lucy or Jane ..."[22] Because the metonymic Unknown Soldier could be any man (notably not a/ny woman), "who has laid down his life for the nation, the nation is embodied within each [fighting] man and each [fighting] man comes to embody the nation"[23]. The effect of the soldier risking his life in war is then the symbolic participation in and representation of national affairs, which enhances the sense of belonging to the imagined community. It follows that "symbols of nationalism are not gender neutral but in enforcing national norm, they implicitly or explicitly construct a set of gender norms"[24]. Literature about the Second World War is thus embedded in a specific narrative on gender that functions to portray soldiers as masculine representatives of the national war effort.

The military administration had a great interest in portraying the Army and Navy as highly masculine and heterosexual institutions and therefore intensified

20 Anderson, (1991), p. 9.

21 Ibid., pp. 11-12.

22 Joanne P. Sharp, "Gendering Nationhood: A feminist engagement with national identity" in Nancy Duncan (ed.), *BodySpace: Destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 99.

23 Sharp, (1996), p 99.

24 Ibid., p 98.

their efforts to exclude non-conforming individuals in order to guarantee pretence of control. Screening processes were invented to spot and discharge effeminate men.[25] The resulting assumption of the military as a homogeneously masculine institution has led to a scarce analysis of soldier masculinity during and after the Second World. In *Gender and Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Textual Representations*, Angela K. Smith polemically accounts for this lack of research into masculinity and warfare: "There is no need to extrapolate masculinity from man – in the soldier they become one."[26] Indeed, influential works such as Paul Fussell's *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* compassionately represent the daily lives of soldiers, but do not analyse the challenging task of keeping up to masculine ideals fashioned by the military.[27]

In the ground-breaking study *Masculinities*, Connell destabilises various myths concerning male gender performance and develops a more diverse structure to explain how masculine power tries to retain its dominance. First of all, masculinity "is *not* a coherent object about which a generalizing science can be produced", which explains Connell's insistence on pluralising masculinit*ies* as variously constructed according to socio-historical moments and discourses.[28] Secondly, while bodies "in their own right as bodies, do matter" they do not determine masculine (or feminine) performance.[29] This envisions a liberating move from sex as the determining factor of gender performance to permitting male *and* female subjects to perform masculinity. Thirdly, "'[m]asculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'" and intersects with issues of race, class, age and other social statuses.[30] The concept of patriarchy unites these varying markers that accompany the study of male gender performance and provides the ground on which masculinity builds.

Around 1970 the concept of patriarchy "came into whispered use"[31]. It describes a "system of gender domination" where men control the "governments,

25 Allan Bérubé, *My Desire for History: Essays in Gay, Community, and Labor History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), p. 90.

26 Angela K. Smith, "Introduction" in Angela K. Smith (ed.), *Gender and Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Textual Representations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 4.

27 Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

28 Connell, *Masculinities*, [1995], (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), p. 67. [my emphasis].

29 Connell, (2016), p. 51.

30 Ibid., p. 68.

31 Ibid., p. 41.

corporations, media", where men have "better jobs, incomes and command of wealth", and where men police "the means of violence, and the entrenched ideologies that push[...] women into the home and dismiss[...] their claims for equality"[32]. Hegemonic masculinity is the engine that attempts to keep this structure faultless – it gains its force from men's constant efforts of reaching an ideal gender performance and their inevitable failure. It is also "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women"[33]. Hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy are thus two sides of the same coin since the former validates the latter's dominance and *vice versa*. Moreover, "violence on the largest possible scale is the purpose of the military; and no arena has been more important for the definition of hegemonic masculinity in European/American culture"[34]. This does *not* mean that a selected group of men (e.g. soldiers) are capable of performing their gender in such a way that they undisputedly fall into the category of hegemonic masculinity; indeed, it is impossible that a subject embodies all of its aspects. Connell's hegemonic masculinity is an *idealised concept* which needs to be understood as a blueprint for a version of male gender performance that is effectively unattainable but provides the model against which every other form of "'doing man' can be constructed and performed" [35]. Because the myth of the Unknown Soldier assimilates male bodies as the "essence of warfare" [36], homosexual soldiers who escaped discharge may come to idealise and perpetuate masculine identity during war despite their deviating desires. Analysing narrative negotiations of masculinity in connection to the nation at war facilitates a more complete understanding of the often contradictory social position of men within a patriarchal society. It also helps to disclose at what point the promise of hegemonic masculinity becomes unconvincing for homosexual men, who will never succeed in their pursuit of dominance within a heteronormative order. It is decidedly not my aim to rehearse narratives of stigmatisation when foregrounding homosexual characters who suffer under the pressure of command, but to reveal the damaging and often traumatising nationalistic structures that control and coerce men into battle. Homosexual storylines break with that standard and – facilitated through national crisis – enable a re-negotiation of gender and sexuality.

32 Connell, (2016), p. 41.

33 Ibid., p. 77, [my emphasis].

34 Ibid., p. 213.

35 Carrie Paechter, "Masculine Femininities/Feminine Masculinities: Power, Identities and gender" in *Gender and Education* Vol. 18, No. 3 (2006), p. 255.

36 Smith, (2004), p. 4.

Moreover, there is an ironic slippage inscribed in the propagated pride of the military as a highly masculine institution: through the coming together of large numbers of people of the same sex, deriving from the spatial division of soldiers at the front and women at the home front, homosexuals found companionship that peacetime did not offer to the same extent. Convincingly, Bérubé asserts that the spirit that led to the gay liberation movement in the late 1960s and 1970s "was born under fire during World War II"[37]. The increasing number of homosexual men serving in the military troubles its masculine self-image and calls into question the stability of national propaganda more broadly.

The following will critically analyse the novels' representation of wartime propaganda and the characters' growing sense of disidentification with such ideologies. *Make Do and Mend*, in particular, questions the ground on which the myth of the People's War rests when dramatizing how a collective British national identity is constructed at the expense of localised nationalities that become subsumed, subordinated and shattered.

ONE NATION FIGHTING A PEOPLE'S WAR?

Adam Fitzroy's *Make Do and Mend* (2012) portrays the life of Harry Lyon after a submarine accident that has damaged his lungs so badly that he is no longer able to serve as an active officer. The story begins when Harry returns to his childhood home Hendra – a farm and family estate that is managed by his brother Jack, and which represents Harry's former battles with his late father Sir Charles whose conservative attitude has driven his son to serve in the Navy. Two maids named Kitty and Blanche work and live in the Hendra house, and the farm labourer Jim Brynawel inhabits a farm hut on the estate. When encountering Jim for the first time, Harry is immediately captivated and the reader becomes aware of his homosexuality. When becoming more accustomed to the routine at Hendra and developing a relationship with Jim, Harry begins to disidentify with his former position as an officer and starts questioning the benefit of the People's War.

Whereas the myth of the Unknown Soldiers depends on the male body to "willingly" die to preserve a "horizontal comradeship" and "fraternity"[38], the myth of the People's War requires national unity among England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In his speeches, Churchill praises Britons who "are

37 Bérubé, (2011), p. 112.

38 Smith, (2004), p. 7.

proud to be under fire of the enemy"[39] for their endurance and altruism in overcoming social differences. In order to guarantee good morale at times of national crisis, he promises the bereft people that "the light of glory shines on all"[40]. Churchill's emphasis on the effort of women who "marched forward in millions [to take up] all kinds of tasks and work"[41] traditionally performed by men, underlines his argument for a People's War where *everybody*, including women, get involved. Furthermore, Churchill and Government propaganda more broadly, pledged that the People's War would bring about social change and lasting equality between the sexes, in addition to the termination of tension between the individual countries on the British Isles. In the following, I will first trace the debate surrounding Englishness versus Britishness to subsequently analyse how Fitzroy's *Make Do and Mend* represents this lingering conflict by looking at Harry's growing identification with his home country Wales followed by the disassociation with his military association with Britain and the People's War. In doing so, my reading of the novel questions the authenticity of the Unknown Soldier myth facilitating an imagined community built on national unity. Since such a unity lacks credibility when Harry prefers a Welsh identity over national identification, both the myth of the People's War and that of the Unknown Soldier are represented as inherently flawed.

Robert Burden states that "Britishness seems to have been invented to extinguish the difference between the English, the Scots, and the Welsh" to place them under the rule of England disguised as Britain.[42] He continues by citing Linda Colley's argument that "Britishness was an invention 'superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and in response to conflict with the Other'"[43]. The Other stands in opposition to a group sentiment due to various markers covering religion, ethnicity, class, gender, but also national membership. For the exclusion of the Other, a definition of a collective national identity is needed that establishes a common sense of belonging

39 Winston Churchill, "'Westward, Look, the Land is Bright,' Address Broadcast April 27, 1941" in Charles Eade (ed), *The Unrelenting Struggle* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1942), p. 93.

40 Ibid., p. 93.

41 Winston Churchill, "The Women of Britain" in Charles Eade (ed.), *Onwards to Victory: War speeches by the Right HON. Winston S. Churchill* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1944), p. 285.

42 Robert Burden, "Introduction: Englishness and Spatial Practices" in Robert Burden and Stephan Kohl (eds.), *Landscapes and Englishness* (New York: Radopi, 2006), p. 16.

43 Ibid., p. 16.

in relation to and opposition with those who do not belong. However, debates concerning the conflict between Englishness and Britishness reveal a more complicated picture where England – sometimes reduced to London – is the locus of authority within the United Kingdom, which challenges a collective sense of national belonging.

The situation in Britain also illustrates Sara Ahmed's argument that Othering does not simply occur between nations but also within one nation.

> The proximity of strangers within the nation space – that is, *the proximity of that which cannot be assimilated into a national body* – is a mechanism for the demarcation of the national body, a way of defining borders within it, rather than just between it and an imagined and exterior other [emphasis original] [44].

Ahmed carefully distinguishes between defining the nation against external and against internal strangers. Internal strangers are "those who are not recognised as 'typical' of a nation"[45] and can come to threaten a collective national identity. However, these internal strangers are, just like external strangers, crucial for defining who 'we' are in response to, and opposition with, those who are different. In the case of Britain, such a negotiation of internal strangers is enhanced due to the multiplicity of 'sub-national identities' (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish) that become integrated into Britishness. Additionally, British is often used synonymously with English and *vice versa*, which indicates "the lordly English habit of subsuming British under English" [46] and demonstrates an Anglocentric hegemony. Such inner conflicts over the question of national identity destabilise the already vague sense of national unity. It follows that the United Kingdom presents a complex and conflicting situation that can be best explained by examining the various terms that are meant to denominate British identity.

The term Britain was first recorded by the Greeks to denote an offshore island that was home of the Celts. The Greek term was translated into the Latin word Britannia by the Romans and given to the Celts' island. In the fifth century AD, the Angles and Saxons came to the island Britannia and renamed it "Englaland" [47] disregarding earlier terminologies. Subsequent attempts to unite the countries of England and Scotland since the 16th century were limited, until in 1707 "the Act of Union with Scotland" was signed and "the united kingdom of

44 Ahmed, (2000), p. 100.

45 Ibid., p. 100.

46 Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 1 and p. 4.

47 Ibid., p. 5.

Great Britain" was established.[48] The term Britain was quickly adapted as a shorthand for Great Britain and the adjective British became equally familiar. However, Kumar claims that today "[t]he majority of English, Welsh and Scots do not think of themselves as 'British'" but only use the term to "refer to their trade with other nations, their economy, their armed forces, their legal nationality, the inhabitants of the pre- and non-Anglo-Saxon cultures of the island called Britain".[49] To Britons, then, being British is a legal and economic position and not a denomination of "their social, cultural or personal life"[50]. Such personal identifications remain within the realm of the individual countries of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Fitzroy's *Make Do and Mend* demonstrates this discrepancy between a forced British national identity intensified through the myth of the People's War, and a more localised Welsh nationality marginalised into and subsumed under Britishness. The protagonist's account of his changing sense of identity from British to Welsh in addition to his homosexuality, demonstrates Harry's reluctance to symbolically reiterate both the myth of the Unknown Soldier and that of the People's War.

Several hints regarding the history of Welsh identity versus English superiority are given at the beginning of the novel, when Harry talks about "a Licence to Crenellate issued by King Henry IV" (12) and how "Cromwell's men" (12) destroyed part of the Hendra house. He also claims that the Lyon family is "supposed to be descended from King Edward III" (20). Later Harry is given a book entitled "*The Enigma of Owain Glyn Dŵr*" (175) [emphasis original] authored by someone named Rhys Montgomery. To most readers this information will not be particularly enlightening, but the repetition with which nationalistic figures and symbols are referred to suggests their relevance for the story. Towards the end of the novel a conversation between Harry and Jim picks up these threads and begins to mend them when Harry says: "You believe that Owain Glyn Dŵr might be buried on our land? [...] You're aware that Hendra was originally fortified *against* Glyn Dŵr, I suppose?" (200) [emphasis original] The story of Glyn Dŵr and the Lyon family's connection to the English crown seem to be the cornerstones that create a metanarrative about the history of Welsh identity. In order to fully grasp the historical background and how *Make Do and Mend* fictionalises it, the relationship between England and Wales needs to be briefly reconstructed from the 15th century onwards.[51]

48 Kumar, (2003), p. 5.

49 Ibid., p. 6.

50 Ibid., p. 6.

51 The following recollection of events is based on Robert Rees Davies' study *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* and the website of the "Owain Glyn Dŵr Society" chaired by

Owain Glyn Dŵr or Owain Glyndŵr (1359- ca. 1415) was a Welshman whose success in fighting against English rule made him a national legend. In the Middle Ages Wales was entirely controlled by the English crown which constantly caused conflicts over land ownership and citizen rights. In 1400 Glyn Dŵr got involved in one of these conflicts and complained to the English Parliament that his land had been unlawfully taken by his neighbour. Instead of settling the dispute, the Parliament scorned the plea upon which Glyn Dŵr swore revenge against the English and was crowned Prince of Wales by his supporters. Adapting farm tools into weapons, Glyn Dŵr's men unexpectedly won several battles against the heavily armed English knights. For three years, King Henry IV repeatedly attacked Wales, but Glyn Dŵr and his men managed to defend their country.

Throughout their reign over the British Isles, English kings have granted loyal Welsh knights permission to fortify their property and to build castles in Wales. In return, these castles demonstrated English dominance on Welsh ground and bound the knights to serve the crown. In order to strengthen his power and to cast out the English for good, Glyn Dŵr began to attack these symbolically important castles and in 1404 declared victory over England. A year later, however, he was defeated in the battle of Pwll Melyn – Glyn Dŵr's brother was killed and his son was captured. From that point onwards, Glyn Dŵr's dominance dwindled, but he continued to fight the English and defended his remaining castles for five more years. Historic accounts of the period after 1409, when Glyn Dŵr had to go into exile to escape captivity, are scarce, but it is presumed that he died in 1415. To date, neither his body nor his grave have been found. This uncertainty over his death has increased the force of the legendary figure of Owain Glyn Dŵr. In *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*, Robert Rees Davies argues that as the last Prince of Wales, Glyn Dŵr's death was turned into myth and that he "was, and has remained, exclusively and proprietorially Welsh"[52]. He thus illustrates Bennington's thesis that national narrations of founding fathers and heroic figures augment in people a sense of belonging together, of sharing a genealogy.[53] In order to understand the repeated references to such a national narra-

Adrien Jones and Eirwyn Evans. R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Adrien Jones and Eirwyn Evans, "Owain Glyn Dŵr Society" <www.owain-glyndwr.wales/> [last accessed: 21/12/2016]. For further information see the short film "Bloody Britain – The Welsh Rebellions" accessible through the "Owain Glyn Dŵr Society" website.

52 Davies, (1995), p. 325.

53 Bennington, (1990), p. 121.

tive, it is necessary to examine how and why *Make Do and Mend* dramatises the myth of Owain Glyn Dŵr.

The novel establishes that the Lyon family fought against Owain Glyn Dŵr in the Middle Ages. This is indicated when Harry claims that the Lyons are descendants of King Edward III who held the English crown from 1327 until his death in 1377. Not impressed by his royal ancestors, Harry sarcastically remarks: "The King and I are only sixteenth cousins at best" (20). Yet, the memory of the family's connection to royalty lingers on, and because this knowledge is shared by all characters in the novel, its relevance is substantiated. Another indication for a hidden storyline is Harry's seemingly arbitrary mentioning of the "Licence to Crenellate", making Hendra a "fortified manor house" but not a "castle" (12) – a dispute over status indicating the conflict between Harry and his brother Thomas Griffith-Lyon, which will be examined later. This "Licence to Crenellate" is the name of the document signed by the English King which gave permission to knights to fortify their land on Welsh ground. Having been given to the Lyon family, the Licence illustrates that, at the time of Owain Glyn Dŵr's fight for Welsh independence from the English crown, Hendra and the Lyon family were still positioned on the side of the English King and *against* their Welsh countrymen.

Two centuries after Owain Glyn Dŵr's death, Parliamentarians and Royalists fought over control of England in the English civil wars (1642-1651). The novel represents this historic event by stating that the Parliamentarians under the command of Cromwell took "the time and trouble to slight two of [Hendra's four towers]" (12-13). Here the second hint – Cromwell – seemingly randomly given at the beginning of the novel, becomes meaningful. Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) led the English military against first King Charles I and later his son Charles II, which ended English monarchy and established the Parliament's direct influence on politics. *Make Do and Mend* fictionalises Cromwell's rebellion and implies that his attack on Hendra was not arbitrary but a result of the family's historic alliance with the English crown against which the Parliamentarians fought. The damage caused by Cromwell's men is significant for the story as it prevents the characters from using the entire house, making it an uncanny and uncertain element threatening to collapse and bury its inhabitants.

Laying emphasis on the decaying house and its history at the beginning of the novel distracts from the events of the Second World War, Harry's position as a Navy officer, and his life-threatening injuries caused by his submarine running aground. Instead, a more local story of Welshness is accentuated and steadily broadened in Harry's transformation from embodying the British nation at war, towards glorifying Welsh independence. As a naval officer, he adheres to British

nationalism propagated to overcome regional boundaries and interests, which causes a loss of Welsh identity illustrated in Harry's unfamiliarity with his Welsh native tongue. When his loyalty to Britain is devastated because war is "wasteful" (212), Harry abandons his sense of Englishness grounded in his family's history and connection to the crown and begins to resurrect the myth of Owain Glyn Dŵr when travelling to Liverpool.

Whilst being aboard a train that brings Harry to his new office post in Liverpool, German bombers start their nightly attack. In the midst of the bomb fire, "a magnificent rolling bass" (157) begins to sing a popular Welsh Hymn called *Cwm Rhondda*. The disembodied "owner of the stirring voice" "strongly carry[s] the melody despite the chaos that reigned outside" (158). Only when the raid is over and the lights are switched on again does this voice reveal its embodiment in a "tiny, white-haired, elderly man in a shabby raincoat" (158). This figure is so at odds with the description of the strong voice that Harry believes it to be "a miracle in itself" (158). Initially, this passage does not appear to be more than the rallying of Welsh morale at times of distress, and the power of song to drown out the sound of the war. Yet, at the very end of the narrative, the scene is re-invoked and given a much deeper meaning when Harry links the strong voice and the encounter of its ill-fitted body to the myth of Owain Glyn Dŵr. By identifying the voice as the determining feature of the man, Harry projects his fantasy of a united and independent Wales onto the man's body and assures that "Glyn Dŵr is all around us" (296). Harry's exclamation asserts that the spirit of a free Wales lives within such voices, and that "the legend of Glyn Dŵr is the sort of thing that never, ever dies" (296). Davies argues that the memory of Owain Glyn Dŵr constitutes "an independent Wales, politically, ecclesiastically, culturally, and educationally"[54]. Harry's solidarity with this national legend therefore represents a strong sense of Welshness and a wish for independence from England.

Later in the story, the farm worker Jim Brynawel is revealed as the author of *The Enigma of Owain Glyn Dŵr*. Before the war, Jim was a historian who tried to solve the mystery of Glyn Dŵr's death. He assumes that the last Prince of Wales is buried at Hendra, which Harry refutes on grounds of his family's loyalty to the English King. Jim explains:

Well, my research suggests that your distant ancestor Hugues de Lyon may have been one of several nobleman in the area playing both ends against the middle – as it were. If I'm right, he may be identifiable with a person named in the ballads as Huw Glascrow – which in rough translation would be 'Hugh the Blue-eyed'. He's described as having light-

54 Davies, (1995), p. 326.

coloured hair, which seems to indicate a Norman – rather than a Celtic – background; much like yourself, in fact. (200)

As a historian Jim wants to put the unsolved death of Glyn Dŵr to rest by suggesting that Harry's ancestor Hugues de Lyon may have provided cover for the Prince of Wales when he was fleeing from the English army. This implies treachery of Hugues de Lyon against the English King and would change the role of the Lyon family by transforming their supposed loyalty to the crown into support for Welsh independence. While this hypothesis seems entirely fictional – to my knowledge there exists no such theory based on historic accounts – Jim's proposition marks a profound wish for Welsh nationalism directed against English rule.

In the end Jim's theory is no longer pursued because Harry is "positive" (296) to have run into Glyn Dŵr on his train ride to Liverpool. Referring to the disembodied voice of the old man, Harry undermines the possibility of ever finding the grave of Glyn Dŵr because "he isn't really dead at all" (296). Searching for his grave is pointless "and even if you did succeed in finding it I'm sure you wouldn't find him" (296). Harry's position illustrates that the mystery of Glyn Dŵr's death is important for his prevalence as a national legend. His grave has to forever remain empty to be filled with significance and to proclaim the immortality of Welsh nationalism. Harry makes this explicit by saying: "You can bury a man, of course, but you can never really bury a dream – or not completely, at any rate, and certainly not forever." (297) This rhetoric illustrates Anderson's argument that "cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers" are "void" of "mortal remains" but "nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings"[55]. Because the grave of Owain Glyn Dŵr has never been found, his tomb is as empty as that of the Unknown Soldier, yet retrospectively filled with symbolic meaning of Welsh national identity. Desires for independence can be projected onto the figure of Glyn Dŵr *because* his death remains obscured by myth. Jim follows this thought and agrees that "Glyn Dŵr's a type" (296).

[L]ook at Evans Milk and Pritchard the builder – and look at Philip [...]. They're all the same, aren't they – tough little lifelong countrymen who'd give their last penny or their last drop of blood if they believed in the rightness of their cause? (296)

Reminiscent of Harry's projection of the disembodied voice onto the myth of Glyn Dŵr, Jim creates a collective Welsh identity, which is characterised in its people's endurance despite straining conditions. By envisioning Glyn Dŵr as a

55 Anderson, (1991), p. 9.

'type of person', Jim fashions an imagined community of Wales. This replaces English rule and a forced British identity with Welsh nationalism by projecting the myth of Glyn Dŵr onto individual Welsh bodies. The novel thus creates a shared knowledge of Welsh nationalism among its characters grounded in a myth that obscures the complicated and often positive bonds with England and uses the same imaginary strategies as People's War propaganda.

Polemically, Harry adapts the myth of Glyn Dŵr into the discourse of the Second World War by stating that "an army of Glyn Dŵrs" will continue to fight the enemy and that "if ever England is invaded, we'll know that without a doubt Wales will still hold on" (297). Harry's antagonism against the People's War is here most distinct when he differentiates between a Welsh "army of Glyn Dŵrs" and an unspecified English army. The possibility of England being invaded challenges Britain's propagated endurance and its unity in fighting for a common cause. In Harry's version, England and Wales are distinct countries that fight independently, whilst England is characterised as weaker than Wales to compensate for the history of oppression and subordination. Accordingly, *Make Do and Mend* does not simply reconstruct the Second World War, it also displays the dispute between England and Wales and the resurrection of Welsh nationalism since independence was lost in the Middle Ages. The propagation of a People's War during the 1940s is thus characterised as inherently flawed, because the centre of British patriotism was England and *not* a *united* Kingdom. It is then not only the Hendra house as an emblem of Englishness, which threatens to collapse, but also English rule on Welsh ground when the myth of Owain Glyn Dŵrs is resurrected to stand for a collective Welsh nationalism.

This battle between Welsh and British identity is paralleled in the dispute between Jim Brynawel and Harry's brother Thomas Griffith-Lyon. Thomas is a conservative character who represents the ideology of the People's War and consequently prohibits his family to associate with the conscientious objector Jim. Thomas' and Jim's different social and political positions are represented and reinforced in their last names. Thomas Griffith-Lyon is a composition of two surnames: 'Griffith' deriving from Middle Welsh and 'Lyon' from Latin meaning lion. 'Gruffudd' is the origin of the modern version Griffith and translates in its suffix -udd to 'lord'.[56] The meaning of the first element remains unclear, which leads to the commonly simplified translation of 'Griffith' as 'lord'.[57] Both names and their translation to 'lord' and 'lion' represent male strength and authority, with Griffith implying a direct link to the affairs of the nation, since a lord is

56 Basil Cottle, *The Penguin Dictionary of Surnames* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Publishers, 1967), p. 123 and p. 174.

57 Cottle, (1967), p. 123 and p. 174.

considered to be more influential in national and political affairs than a regular citizen. This recalls Harry's observation that the Lyon family are descendants of King Edward III. Double barrelled surnames additionally denote a higher social class in British English, which explains why Thomas diverges from social convention when he marries a widow and adopts not only her two children but also her surname Griffith to hyphenate it with his family name Lyon: it allows him to articulate and emphasise his self-assessment as a representative of the nation. Thomas' initiative challenges Nirmal Puwar's claim that "the universal figure of leadership and representative of humanity continues to be conceptualised in the shadow of the nation"[58]. In Puwar's formulation, the nation produces those who come to represent it, whereas the novel lays greater emphasis on the subject, Thomas, as the self-assigned embodiment and defender of the British nation. While the discursive power and the tales of nationhood remain undisputed in both formulations, the appropriation of Thomas' name shows greater agency and initiative when participating in the distribution of national power.

In contrast, the name Jim Brynawel translates from Welsh 'bryn' meaning hill, and 'awel' meaning windy or breeze, to 'windy hill'[59], which indicates simultaneously the geographic location of Jim's cottage and his involvement in building a windmill. The 'windy' part in Jim's name symbolises that there is some strange element to his character, which leads Thomas to question Jim's intentions and trustworthiness. Thomas' suspicions are grounded in Jim's unknown past as a historian and is fostered by the fact that Jim is keeping to himself instead of participating in village life. The name Brynawel signals Thomas' antagonism and fear towards suspicious subjects that, like wind, cannot be fully incorporated into and controlled by the nation. The characters' conflict illustrates Ahmed's argument that "[t]he recognition of others as being from the same nation, or as sharing a nationality, [...] involves an everyday and much rehearsed distinction between who does and does not belong within the nation space."[60] This question of whether or not Jim belongs "within the nation space", is one repeatedly asked by Thomas. Ahmed asserts that a conservative person such as Thomas would perceive "strangers [as] the ones who are encountered at the border, and whose proximity threatens the coherence of national identity"[61]. Thomas

58 Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place* (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2004), p. 34.

59 Evans H. Meurig and William Owen Thomas and Christopher Daviers, *Y Geiriadur Mawr: The Complete Welsh-English English-Welsh dictionary* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1980), p. 59 and p. 36.

60 Ahmed, (2000), p. 99.

61 Ibid., p. 100.

approaches Jim in exactly this way, as a danger that needs to be excluded from the community. However, Ahmed continues arguing that "[n]ational identity emerges as a site of social conflict: there is a constant redefinition of who 'we' are through the very necessity of encountering strangers within the nation space."[62] Thomas ignores his own dependency on Jim in order to self-identify as a national citizen and tries to eliminate Jim, the stranger, and his pacifist thoughts by accusing him of murder – an inherently paradoxical accusation given that pacifism is defined as a resistance to violence.

Paranoid that someone might roam through the outskirts of the village, Thomas positions a "Boy Scouts troupe up on the hillside" (239) to spy. They find a dead body close to Jim's hut and conclude that Jim, who does not have an alibi, is "the only half-way decent suspect" (239-240). Harry, of course, is furious and blames Thomas' Boy Scouts for the situation:

> in Thomas's eyes Jim's pacifist leanings make him a target anyway, and I wouldn't be surprised if he'd sent them up the mountain in the hope of catching [Jim] out in some misdemeanour or other – all the time being conspicuously elsewhere himself, of course. To some men [...] just being different is enough to arouse suspicion. (242)

Harry elaborates that Thomas suspects Jim because of his pacifism, which makes him a general target in wartime and substantiates his outside position within the village. The vicar Philip agrees with Harry's negative evaluation of Thomas' action and clarifies that the unfounded accusation against Jim results from "all those public information films about 'traitors among us'" (235). Such propaganda to counteract treason stirs anxieties in people and elevates a constant monitoring and supervising of behaviour. The post office lady Mrs. Parry, for instance, reads private letters and passes information to the police (78). She is also terrified over not knowing the whereabouts of a German pilot who crashed in the hills during an air raid around Christmas: "They never found his body, did they? He could be anywhere, creeping around the valley at night looking for a chance to cut all our throats?" (102) Harry in contrast, "had little doubt the man was dead" (102). In the end it is revealed that Mrs. Parry's caution was appropriate. In a Germaphobic interlude the novel reveals that the pilot *had* survived the crash, and in need for a vehicle, he had cut the throat of a van driver who Thomas' Boy Scouts later found buried nearby Jim's hut. The interlocking of events that lead to the solving of the murder case illustrates the fabricated and entangled dynamics between 'friend' and 'stranger'. Thomas' unfounded suspicion of Jim further shows how easily characters, who are "different" become pre-maturely

62 Ahmed, (2000), p. 101.

judged and condemned, because "[a]ny male of apparently military age who was not in uniform was at risk of being seen as a 'bad citizen', even though there were men on the home front 'doing their bit' for the country."[63] Because fighting was the 'national norm' during the 1940s, conscientious objection was seen as disloyal to both the nation and to fellow men who risked their lives in battle. Jim's expressed pacifism contributes to Thomas' aversion, and when Harry tells his brother about his intentions of fixing a chimney with Jim's help, Thomas exclaims:

'Well, for Heaven's sake, Harry, don't allow the man to consider himself your equal, whatever you do. I realise that in a time of war social distinctions can become blurred, but nobody with a position to maintain could possibly associate himself with someone who refuses to do his duty to his country; there can be absolutely no honour in it. (52)

This scene focuses on the "blurr[ing]" of class distinctions during war and the struggle of those "with a position to maintain" to remain recognisable as more respectable. Thomas' attitude, however, places him in opposition to the People's War as a leveller of classes and challenges his nominally claimed representative position within the British nation. His emphasis on men's "duty" to serve their country is similarly ridiculed as he himself is not in the army because his job as a lawyer is regarded as 'too valuable'. Through his occupation, Thomas substantiated his higher class and discloses the People's War as a false narrative. Moreover, Thomas' constant fear that Jim Brynawel's pacifist attitudes might spread in the village and destroy its morale, illustrates the shaky foundation on which British nationalism rests:

[Jim] had the unmitigated gall to turn up at a service of remembrance wearing a white poppy. White, I ask you; I'm beginning to think he's a fifth-columnist as well as a coward! Talk of peace will get him nowhere in a village full of patriots who have given their sons and brothers to defend their country; nobody around here takes any notice of those who spread gloom and despondency, thank goodness. (57)

The expressed relief ("thank goodness") with which Thomas responds to the unbroken patriotic mood of the village despite Jim's act of resistance is conspicuous. He is aware that the loss of "sons and brothers" can turn a favourable spirit sour, which threatens the war effort and weakens the nation as a whole. However, instead of campaigning for keeping up morale despite raids, losses and bombing as done in People's War propaganda, Thomas equalises the prospect of peace

63 Rose, (2003), p. 287.

with gloom and despondency. Contrary to historic reconstructions in which the sustainment of "morale despite the hardships imposed by war [...] emerges as something to be actively cultivated", Thomas is fully supportive of wartime inconveniences. This attitude works against the spirit of 'make do and mend', and positions Thomas in opposition to the novel's title. Consequently, Thomas has a twofold function within the text: externally representing British nationalism and a collective British identity promulgated to win the war, whilst unconsciously revealing the alleged unity among people as illusionary when emphasising class differences and the threat of pacifism. In depicting a nationalistic character who misunderstands and misrepresents the fundamental ideology of the People's War *Make Do and Mend* debunks the lingering disunity within Britain during the Second World War.

Despite his unwillingness to concede to the war as a straining time for people in the village, Thomas manages to correctly capture the ideology of the People's War as gender-neutral when saying that the village is "full of patriots". The choice of words indicates that the nation and the war effort are concealed as non-gendered, making women as much part of the war as men. Collectively, the village should rebuke Jim's pacifism and when a boy throws an egg at him for wearing a white poppy, Thomas' efforts seem momentarily successful. The white poppy was initially introduced by pacifists as an alternative to the red poppy, or remembrance poppy, which is a symbol in the Anglo-American culture for remembering the soldiers who died during the First World War. First established in 1921, the red poppy is still used in this way today, especially in Britain and Canada. The white poppy, however, symbolises not only mourning for the dead but also a political standpoint postulating peace. Jim's wearing of it illustrates a silent protest which circumvents Thomas' announcement that "[t]alk of peace will get him nowhere". While the patriotic village might decide to not listen to talks about peace, they are more inclined to notice a white poppy in the midst of a hundred reds.

However, Thomas' patriotism changes the symbolic meaning of both poppies significantly when the red poppy turns into a symbol for not simply remembering the dead, but for laying emphasis on the nation and its heroic effort in defending the country in the current war. The white poppy, respectively, becomes more than a symbol for peace – it turns into a sign for treason, because Thomas calls Jim a "fifth-columnist", which means "traitor" or "spy"[64] and thus uses national symbols in order to foster a patriotic spirit among the people, and to justify the exclusion of the already suspicious conscientious objector Jim from village

64 "Fifth column, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2017. Web. 21 August 2017.

life. Jim's behaviour is punished (verbally and physically by throwing an egg) because he represents a threat to the positive spirit in the village. Thomas can manage to control Jim only as long as his white poppy continues to stand alone in a sea of red, which in turn directs the village's anger over wartime shortcomings against Jim.

The significance of this scene is renewed in the context of the murder case when the solicitor remarks that Jim "is a pacifist and made something of an exhibition of himself by wearing a white poppy on Armistice Day" (247). Due to his previous actions, Jim seems to repeatedly arouse suspicions. Despite the fact that Jim's pacifism should rule him out of a murder, the solicitor questions Jim's character based on his aversion to the war. The paradox of suspecting someone of murder for postulating peace illustrates how wartime conduct is judged and interpreted along arbitrary norms.

Harry's response to the solicitor is characteristically forthright and indicates his growing disidentification with the People's War and with his professional occupation in the Navy: "Pacifism isn't illegal, you know; in fact I'm seriously considering joining him next Armistice Day and wearing a white poppy myself." (247-248). Similar to scenes of sexual frankness, Harry's challenge to the nation at war shows the slippages within historical fictions when opting for open resistance rather than silence and assimilation. Especially the solicitor's response: "That's your own business, of course" (248) seems rather inauthentic considering that this very behaviour has paved the way into prison for Jim. Clearly, it was not Jim's "own business" what to wear, but whereas Jim is constantly judged based on his position as an 'ordinary' farm labourer, Harry's higher class and reputation seem to protect him from antagonism, even when displaying open critique on the national leadership.

In the end, everybody who has judged Jim as 'lesser' is proven wrong when the narrative reveals that Jim is an academic with a doctorate title. Harry exploits the latter's newly recovered position when he formally introduces him as "Dr James Rhys Montgomery" (286) to Thomas, whose masculinity and class is in the next moment entirely subordinated: "I'd like you to meet my brother Tom." (286) Not only does Harry deliberately skip his brother's surname, which would have positioned him as almost equal to Jim due to its royal implication, he also calls him by his childhood nickname "Tom", which infantilises and subordinates him further. Moreover, Jim's discovered birth name, in addition to his doctorate title, works to lastingly change the gender and class dynamics between the men. The translation in *The Penguin Dictionary of Surnames* deciphers the name "Montgomery" as meaning 'hill' and 'Man Powerful' with an Old French and

Germanic origin.[65] With this background, Montgomery loosely translates to 'top of man power' and relates to Jim's former profession as a historian to imply that, before the war, his knowledge was considered a resource of high reputation – an interpretation that recovers not only his masculinity but also his upper-class upbringing.

The situation has thus become even more diverse: not only is Jim Brynawal the counterpart to Thomas Griffith-Lyon and an incalculable factor within the nation, his position as a conscious objector has also emasculated and downgraded him compared to his former profession as an academic. Under the name Jim Brynawel he is declassed, emasculated and considered to be dubious, but when resurrected as Dr. Montgomery his masculinity and class outranks Thomas'. The latter's accusation that Jim is a stranger within the nation is turned upside down, when Thomas himself becomes an outsider, who continues to scorn the conscientious objector whilst the rest of the village has changed their opinion of him. The novel seems to suggest that class and gender are unstable factors in a person's life, but, more importantly, that those who claim to represent the nation can come to forfeit this right when they misunderstand its structure, which turns them into stranger. Hence, *Make Do and Mend* creates a highly tangled, diverse and flexible epistemology of gender and class according to which social position and gender performance are absolutely dependant on circumstances.

OUTSIDERS INSIDE: IMPRISONING RESISTANCE

Whilst *Make Do and Mend* dramatises the inherent struggle between friend and stranger in the conflicting positions of Jim and Thomas, Sarah Waters' *The Night Watch* (2006) casts non-conforming characters who threaten the war effort behind bars. The prison is the institutionalised representation of Thomas' efforts to dispose of Jim, and functions to extract negative voices from ordinary society to protect the national war effort. This nationalistic sub-narrative becomes clear with view to the inmates' 'offences': Giggs and Atkin are deserters, Watling and Fraser are conscientious objectors, Stella is queer and the protagonist Duncan was convicted for attempted suicide to evade active service. Their crimes are thus characterised as a resistance to the war effort, and their exclusion functions not simply as a punishment for 'misbehaving', but portraits Sara Ahmed's intriguing observation that "as the outsider inside, the alien takes on a spatial func-

65 Cottle, (1967), p. 196.

tion, establishing relations of proximity and distance within the home(land)"[66]. The men are not simply removed from society but remain inside as outsiders who function to compare and contrast decent behaviour. The prison is the abjected and confined space within the universal nation and additionally a space where prisoners are made to encounter their own exclusion from the inside of prison walls and from the inside of society to which they have become "outsiders inside". The following section will firstly disclose the means by which order and control are established in the prison, to then focus on Duncan's queering of the prison space when fantasizing about his cellmate Fraser. Ultimately, it will be revealed that state control collapses under the homosexual desire of non-conforming subjects.

In order to contain and control unruly subjects, the prison displays mechanism of degradation that function to destroy the inmates' self-worth and attempts of critical thought. The press as an instrument of collective national identity, for instance, is banned from the prison to degrade its inmates and to increase their feeling of expulsion from the war effort. This strategy becomes more plausible with view to Anderson's theorisation that "print-capitalism" is "the embryo of the nationally imagined community" and vital for its citizens to know (of) their place within the nation-state's boundaries.[67] When Fraser holds up a cut-up newspaper, a discussion over the restrictive distribution of knowledge unfolds among the prisoners. Katharina Boehm states that:

> Emptied of the written word – of any information about the political events unfolding outside the prison walls – the newspaper is no longer a vehicle of knowledge but has been reduced to its materiality, a seemingly worthless pile of grubby paper.[68]

While I largely agree with this analysis that print media fails to distribute shared knowledge in prison, the narrative goes beyond such an obvious reading. Not only does the cut-up newspaper keep the prisoners from "hear[ing] about things from the world outside" (236) because that would "stir[...] [them] up" (236), it also re-directs Duncan's desires towards heteronormativity by reducing its message to emphasise family life. Duncan describes the cut-up newspaper as resembling "Christmas snowflakes made by children" only leaving "the family pages, the sporting pages, and cartoons" (235). This is an allegory of typical family life where the father reads the "sporting pages", the mother the "family pages" and

66 Ahmed, (2000), p. 3.

67 Anderson, (1991), p. 44.

68 Katharina Boehm, "Historiography and the Material Imagination in the Novels of Sarah Waters" in *Studies in the Novel* Vol. 43, No. 2 (2011), p. 248-249.

the child(ren) the "cartoons". Duncan's futile nostalgia for the family that promises traditional gender roles and male power, even for those men who do not fight as soldiers during the war, enhances his sense of exclusion. Consequently, Fraser's worry over "what they'll do to your [Duncan's] mind […] if you let them" (235) is a double entendre: the obvious message of withstanding prison methods that keep inmates from having critical thoughts, but also resisting the attempt of heteronormalising Duncan by advocating family life.

Boehm continues reading Duncan's situation in prison as allowing him "to repress unwanted memories of the outside world and grant[ing] him a certain measure of imaginative license"[69]. That Duncan does not mention Alec, his friend who succeeded in committing suicide, and hides the real reason for his imprisonment, indeed suggests that he is trying to keep his past and his memories from entering into the prison. Boehm's argument that Duncan "repress[es] unwanted memories of the outside world" is therefore not without credit: however, her claim of this giving him "a certain measure of imaginative license" remains problematic. In another argument with Fraser over dinner, Duncan is in fact resigned to his uselessness as a prisoner to the outside world when he claims that he does not "see the point of going on about things all the time" (235). While Boehm's assertion that Duncan tries to keep the outside world outside is again demonstrated, the outcome is not "imaginative license" but helplessness and resignation. The prisoners', especially Fraser's, constant talk about the events at the front agitate Duncan:

> We can't change anything. Why should we try? It's someone else's war, not ours.' […]
> 'Is it?' Fraser asked Duncan.
> 'It is,' said Duncan 'when you're in here. Just like everything else is someone else's too. Everything that counts, I mean: nice things, as well as bad –' (235)

The generalising terms "anything" and "everything" suggest a pessimistic mood in Duncan's talk: nothing can be changed from inside the prison, and outside life has no effect on the inmates, just like they have no effect on it. Fraser is unfamiliar with Duncan's past and cannot understand Duncan's pessimistic outburst. Only when uncovering the circumstances in which Alec dies, and how his opinion towards the war has lastingly influenced Duncan, can the latter's attitude in prison be fully understood.

When Alec receives the letter to join the military in 1941, he announces that "the war's not [the soldiers'] war but a load of government men's. It's not our war, either; we have to suffer in it, though. We have to do things they tell us."

69 Boehm, (2011), p. 149.

(481) Alec points at the power of the nation to order its citizens to fight in a war that is neither "their[s]", nor Alec's or Duncan's. Transferring his words into prison proposes an analogy between inmates and soldiers who both feel like the war is not theirs – the former because he cannot participate in the world outside and the latter because it is the nation that takes control and order over his life. Only when knowing Alec's account can the reader infer what Duncan means when he says that "[i]t's someone else's war" – a hidden but strong repetition of Alec's evaluation that it is not a People's War but specifically lead by "a load of government men [...]". This is modified in Duncan's speech by the word "someone" indicating singularity and hinting at Alec's identification of the nation with "*Mr Winston Churchill*" (485) [emphasis original] in his suicide note:

'*To whom it may concern ...*' [Alec] looked at Duncan. 'Shall I put that? Or shall I put, *To Mr Winston Churchill*?'
Duncan thought it over. '*To whom it may concern* sounds better,' he said. 'And it might be to Hitler and Goering and Mussolini then, too.' [emphasis original] (485)

Eva M. Pérez Rodríguez argues that "Alec and Duncan wish to commit suicide in response to the English government's decision to turn them into the murderers of others"[70]. Rightly, Pérez Rodríguez identifies the English government as the abstract institution that determines men's lives during a national crisis that was provoked by a small number of political leaders – the same leaders who now send men as soldiers to the front to fight for a cause with which they often fail to identify.

Duncan challenges this patriotic narrative of good (Britain) versus bad (so-called Nazi Germany) when he refuses to differentiate between Churchill, Hitler, Goering or Mussolini. To him, all of these men are responsible for his and Alec's desperate situation and whilst "*Mr Winston Churchill*" is the immediate reference point for Alec, Duncan's perception conflates the prime minister with the dictators of Germany and Italy – a powerful critique on the political leadership of Britain as indistinguishable from fascist leaders during the Second World War. Another inmate named Hammond picks up on Duncan's "someone" when stating: "It's someone else's fucking war, all right!" (235) Unlike Fraser, Hammond has understood Duncan's clumsy reference to Churchill, but since this nuanced critique is overheard by the rest of the prisoners, Duncan's argument loses is provocative power, so he attempts to be more explicit: "Just like everything

70 Eva M. Pérez Rodríguez, How the Second World War Is Depicted by British Novelists since 1990: The Passage of Time Changes Our Portrayal of Traumatic Events (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2012), p. 24.

else is someone else's too. Everything that counts, I mean: nice things, as well as bad –" (235). This explanation needs to also be compared with Alec's argument from three years before:

> They ought to let the stupid people fight, and everybody else – everybody who cares about important things, things like the arts, things like that – they ought to be allowed to go and live somewhere on their own, and to hell with Hitler – (481)

Once more Duncan echoes his friend's words and reinforces the strong connection he still feels towards Alec. Striking is the change from the domineering words "someone else's" in Duncan's version to "everybody who cares" in Alec's. Whereas Alec laid emphasis on the people who cared, Duncan anonymises these people further, no longer sure if there is anyone left who cares. Equally, when Alec in 1941 still knows of the "important things, things like the arts", three years later Duncan only remembers that there used to be "everything that counts" without quite knowing what these things are. Duncan's recollection is thus inspired by a memory where a group of people – people like those who have become prisoners – still had reason to fight against fighting by resisting to serve in the military. But this memory is fading, leaving Duncan with an inadequate and incomplete version of an argument, which has nevertheless notably and lastingly influenced his world views – despite the prison's efforts of reducing oppositional thoughts. It thus seems that the prison is little effective in regulating subjects when Duncan is free enough to inscribe a certain degree of critique over Britain's leadership in his formulations.

Moreover, the prison scenes repeatedly dramatise how the threat of inversion troubles Britons' self-image as impregnable. During air raids, when the wardens go into the shelters, the inmates are left behind to take care of themselves. Shouting and disorder, prisoners climbing on chairs and yelling encouragement to the pilots, visualise the lack of power the nation has over its citizens when the threat of invasion becomes physically palpable in rattling furniture and windows, fires or blasts. When a prisoner named Miller begins to sing, this mood of restlessness is momentarily silenced:

I hear your voice, I reach to hold you,
Your lip touch mine, my arms enfold you.
But then you're gone: I wake and find
That I've been drea-ming... (302) [emphasis original]

Singing of a lost love and dreaming of its prevalence, Miller queers the restless atmosphere of the prison by expressing emotions conventionally coded feminine. The song does not establish who the "I" and the "you" are, which potentially leaves open their sex and gender. Yet the qualities assigned to masculinity and femininity deciphers the "I" as male and the "you" as female when the former "hold[s]" the latter. This holding references stereotypical male strength and protection whereas the "touch[ing]" of lips indicates traditional female softness. Set in heteronormative terms, it is not simply the display of emotions which is troubling in Miller's song, but the fact that this relationship between a man and a woman is a product of the mind emphasising the inmates' exclusion from society. Atkin, another prisoner, cannot bear this moment of shared "longing" (302) and begins to counter Miller's song with another one sharply separating emotion from sexuality:

Give me a girl with eyes of blue,
Who likes it if you don't but prefers it if you do! (302) [emphasis original]

Give me a girl with eyes of black,
Who likes it on her belly but prefers it on her back! (303) [emphasis original]

Duncan notes that Atkin's song "sounded like something a serviceman would sing" (302), which immediately re-articulates masculinity in the prison by registering the song as military slang. Whereas the first lines are rather innocent despite shallowly focusing on female appearance, the second line of each stanza concentrates on sexual intercourse and the girl's alleged longing for and enjoyment of male penetration. Duncan notes that "[f]or almost a minute the two songs ran bizarrely together; then Miller gave in" (303). Atkin's vocalisation of military masculinity subordinates Miller's romantic image of heterosexual love, because instant sexual satisfaction is a more sought-after state than enduring relationships and soft emotions.

After the 'all clear' when the inmates have settled down, Fraser remembers the first song by Miller and he explains to Duncan: "I think I danced to this tune once. [...] I probably laughed at the bloody thing, then. Now – Now it seems strikingly apt, doesn't it? Christ! Trust Miller and a popular song to be so honest about longing." (302) Fraser captures the atmosphere of Miller's song to express "longing", which is exactly why Atkin countered it with a bawdy song. "Longing" is not appreciated among men in prison because it sheds too much light on emotions traditionally connoted feminine. Fraser, too, cannot accept his obviously romantic desires and transforms them into a misogynistic fantasy of seducing

a "plain, stout, stupid, grateful girl" (305) thus rearticulating masculinity into Miller's soft lyrics. He continues:

> I'd have her, fully clothed. I wouldn't take off a stitch. I'd only loosen a button or two at the back of her dress – and I'd undo her brassière, while I was about it – and then I'd draw the dress and the brassière down to her elbows and get my fingers on to her chest. I'd give her a pinch. I might pull her about a bit – there wouldn't be a thing she could do if I did, for the dress – do you see? – the dress would be pinning her arms to her sides ... (306)

Fraser's fantasy betrays his profound need to prove his masculinity in a place that emasculates men who are not part of the war effort. He therefore fantasises about a girl instead of a woman, because girls are easier to charm and seduce due to their lack of experience. His wish for the girl to be "grateful" emphasises the fragility of his masculinity and his sub-conscious need for approval. Moreover, his incessant use of "I" signals superiority over his victim, but also reveals his need for self-affirmation. Beginning the narration with the utterly disrespectful phrase "I'd have her" establishes Fraser as the penetrator and denies the possibility of mutual pleasure by focusing exclusively on his needs. This is further illustrated when stating: "I wouldn't take off a stitch" – indicating that he wants to fully relish in his role as penetrator and not undress his victim to allude to the impression of 'conventional sex.' The girl becomes reduced to her sexual parts as well as the victim of objectification. Savouring this, Fraser constantly pauses (dashes) to meticulously explain the scene to Duncan. His focus on detail and the instructive tone is especially patronising in the end when Fraser explains to Duncan that he will enchain the girl with her own dress "pinning her arms to her sides". Fraser's rhetorical question ("do you see?") substantiates his need for Duncan to understand that he is in complete control of the girl, at least in his fantasy.

With this idea of performing sexual power in mind, Fraser puts his hand "to his cock; and after another moment he began, with a subtle, even motion, to stroke it" (306). Duncan, lying on the bunk underneath Fraser, queers this misogynistic account of heterosexual sex by also masturbating with the distinct difference of doing it whilst fantasising about his cellmate. Clinging to the wires of Fraser's bunk, Duncan's erection is a reflection of the male body above him. In this way, Duncan challenges the authority of compulsory heterosexuality and cross-gender erotisation when illustrating how "non-normative masculinity [...] undermine[s] the power of the discourse [prison] that seeks to control it"[71]. De-

71 Adele Jones, "Disrupting the Continuum: Collapsing Space and Time in Sarah Waters's *The Night Watch*" in *Journal of Gender Studies* Vol. 23, No. 1 (2014), p. 38.

signed to enforce heteronormative order, Duncan shatters the power of the prison by not simply romancing about men, but by turning Fraser's heterosexual discourse of sexual dominance over a girl into homosexual erotisation. In this way, Duncan's homosexual desires also challenge the prison's effort of trying to redirect him towards heteronormativity.

'THOU SHALT NOT KILL': NATIONALISM AND RELIGION

My analysis has thus far illustrated the outside position of men who do not participate in the war effort. Whereas *Make Do and Mend* exemplifies Jim Brynawel as a stranger within the village who is subordinated to Thomas Griffith-Lyon's nominally claimed authority, *The Night Watch* expels non-conforming men into the prison space. The stigma of emasculation follows such expulsions and functions to degrade conscientious objectors. In Mary Renault's *The Charioteer* (1953) the protagonists Laurie and Andrew subvert this dominant narrative when Laurie fails to feel pride in being a soldier and Andrew is not ashamed of being a pacifist. Additionally, Andrew's Quaker beliefs oppose Laurie's soon-to-be stepfather Mr. Straike, whose hostility towards non-fighting men reveals a discrepancy between the church and Christian values that disagree with the idea of war. As a vicar, Mr. Straike should represent these virtues, but his patriotic attitude in combination with his clerical position establishes the church as a hypocritical institution that perpetuates wartime nationalism and heteronormativity. The three characters' personal and ideological differences insinuate an opposition between institutionalised religion subsuming under wartime nationalism, and the personal enactment of Christian ideals according to which killing is a sin because every person should be treated with respect. The following will first examine how the church enforces gender norms, to then deconstruct the opposition of Mr. Straike as a vicar and Andrew's Quaker beliefs. Lastly, I will analyse Laurie's complicated situation as a homosexual soldier increasingly unconvinced by wartime nationalism, but equally bewildered by Andrew's moral integrity.

Anderson explains the proximity between nationalism and religion when he asserts that nation-states have "a strong affinity with religious imaginings"[72], because religious world-views are concerned with "the contingency of life". When the Enlightenment brought forth the "dusk of religious modes of thought", "the dawn of the age of nationalism" [73] was announced, because only an imagined

72 Anderson, (1991), p. 10.

73 Ibid., p. 10 and p. 11.

community could provide immortality in ways similar to religion. Nationalism and religion thus stand on similar ground and the following scene in which Laurie's mother Mrs. Odell marries Mr. Straike illustrates that the church enforces gender norms through marriage, which helps the British nation to maintain a semblance of order despite the chaos of the Second World War:

'… and, forsaking all other, keep thee only to her, as long as ye both shall live?'
In a round, announcing voice, Mr. Straike said, 'I will.'
The full realization of his physical presence hit Laurie like a blow. He stared at the floor and reminded himself that he was in church. But church had become a smell of hassocks and furnace coke and, ubiquitously, of Mr. Straike. It was an extension of him.
'Wilt thou obey and serve him, love, honor, and …'
Oh, God, make her say no.
'I will.'
He heard Aunt Olive behind him give a satisfied sigh.
'Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?'
'I do,' Laurie said. [...] He took a measured pace forward and handed his mother to Canon Rosslow to hand to Mr. Straike. He fell a pace back again. With a dry, empty relief, he realized that this was all. He had spoken his line; he could get back into the chorus. There was his place ready for him, beside Aunt Olive in the corner of the front pew. He moved toward it. (279)

Mrs. Odell's role in this scene represents conventional femininity that compels women into marriage by assuming their position as dependent and in need of guidance by men. Similar to the nation that fashions a collective identity among its citizens, the church, embodied in Mr. Straike, organises men and women into married couples by replacing Mrs. Odell's subjectivity with the role of 'wife'. Despite performing the traditional active part of masculinity when handing his mother to her husband, Laurie's position cannot be read as easily as his mother's. Movement is demonstrated here in two ways; in the active (Laurie) and the passive (his mother). Mrs. Odell is being handed from one man to the next until she arrives at her destination, which is Mr. Straike. Laurie, however, is taking "measured pace forward" and "a pace back again", which shows that movement, especially walking, does not come naturally to him like it should. His inhibited action is not only caused by his leg injury, but also by the physical presence of Mr. Straike. Two male bodies encounter each other here, where their physicality sets the terms on which they measure their own and each other's masculinity. Laurie, already feeling insecure about the limited mobility of his leg, sees him-

self as inferior to his stepfather, who represents a conservative attitude that scrutinises love between men due to his position as a vicar.

In contrast to her future husband, Mrs. Odell's life is less obviously embedded in a heteronormative structure. As a divorced woman and single mother, Mrs. Odell portrays a sense of (sexual) freedom, autonomy and self-determination, which the church, as an institution advocating traditions of gender roles, wants to see restricted in women. When, according to Linda Martin Alcoff, "women are defined in reference to men, as helpmates, wives, mothers, [and] caregivers of men", Mrs. Odell, who performs neither of these duties in a traditional way, is 'undefinable' and uncontrollable in patriarchal terms[74]. Order needs to be re-established and Laurie, as the cause of his mother's defection from the 'right path', has to symbolically as well as literally let go and give "this woman to be married to this man". By neither naming Mrs. Odell nor Mr. Straike but making them an anonymous couple of "this woman" and "this man", differences in sex and gender are emphasised, which substantiates and confirms the heteronormative character of marriage.

Consider the different emphasis during the ceremony addressing first Mr. Straike "... and, forsaking all other, keep thee only to her, as long as ye both shall live?" and then Mrs. Odell "Wilt thou obey and serve him, love, honor, and ..." (279). Mr. Straike's contractual obligation is to only stay faithful to his wife, whereas Mrs. Odell has to additionally "obey", "serve", "love" and "honor" him. This indicates a stereotypical understanding of marriage that is based on a submissive wife and an empowered husband. Mrs. Odell's abandonment of her house and home to move into Mr. Straike's vicarage substantiates her marriage as a means of control and re-establishment of traditional norms of femininity. Whereas her old home, a kind of "anti-home" as coined by Victoria Steward[75], is marked by her divorce and single parenting, her new accommodation represents an order of conventional gender roles, highlighted in its connection to the church.

At one point during the wedding, Laurie silently begs for her to reject Mr. Straike: "Oh, God, make her say no" (279). His choice of words needs deconstructing considering that the church is an extension of the Christian God, who in every bit stands for heteronormative matrimony. To hope that God would make Mrs. Odell turn down Mr. Straike is thus paradoxical and doomed to fail. Mrs.

74 Linda Martín Alcoff, "Feminist Theory and Social Science: New knowledges, new epistemologies" in Nancy Duncan (ed.), *BodySpace: Destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 25.

75 Victoria Stewart, *The Second World War in Contemporary British Fiction: Secret Histories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 144.

Odell's "I will" serves to underline this inevitable failure. Language is here instrumentalised as a performance: the words "I will" not only state agreement but actually perform the wedding: they are what Judith Butler terms after John Langshaw Austin 'illocutionary': "speech acts that, in saying do what they say, and do it in the moment of that saying"[76]. The power of illocutionary language lies not only in its inherent agency, but also in its ritualisation of the moment when spoken. Mrs. Odell's "I will" is not only the performance of the act of getting married, it also works to further ritualise the moment of heteronormative marriage. Hence, by performing an illocutionary speech act, Mrs. Odell moves into the anonymous discourse of heteronormativity, again becoming "this woman".

Moreover, the scene broadens Butler's argument by showing that illocutionary speech does not need to be composed of words in order to be intelligible. Aunt Olive "give[s] a satisfied sigh" after Mrs. Odell has pronounced the momentous two words that change not only the bride's life, but also that of her relatives. Aunt Olive's reaction shows that social disgrace does not necessarily only affect those people who brought it upon themselves through deviating actions or lifestyles, but also those who are connected to such non-conforming subjects. In communicating her relief as a "satisfied sigh", Aunt Olive participates in the ceremony and articulates the desirability for a woman to become a wife. While the sigh is not strictly speaking a speech act that "performs its deed" [77], it nevertheless becomes an expression that exceeds itself by legitimising the wedding and confirming the rightness and heteronormative significance of Mrs. Odell's "I will".

Laurie's homosexuality is contrasted to his mother's heterosexual wedding, which makes her deviating son an outsider in church and by extension expels Laurie from the new family. This is one reason why Laurie, narrating the story, drifts in and out of the ceremony and shuts out the formal voice of the church, whilst thinking of his mother and his relief over having come to the wedding despite hesitations. Such thoughts constantly disturb the authoritative voice marrying Mrs. Odell and Mr. Straike, which fragments the narrative flow and takes away some of the vows' overarching and regulating power. By asking himself "how she would have managed without him", Laurie remembers a time in their relationship where neither of them could have existed on their own. To him the past of having his mother to himself, and the present in which she is being claimed by another man, are intermingled, illustrating nostalgia and Laurie's la-

76 Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 3.

77 Butler, (1997), p. 3.

tent oedipal relation to his mother. The sudden perception of the formal voice disturbs Laurie's thoughts and reminds of his forthcoming replacement by Mr. Straike. The narrative thus attracts the attention from Laurie's personal thoughts back to the heteronormative language of the wedding.

When Mr. Straike's "physical presence hit[s] Laurie like a blow" (279), Laurie is deeply unsettled by an awareness that the vicar is more than the earthly representation of God: "But church had become a smell of hassocks and furnace coke and, ubiquitously, of Mr. Straike. It was an extension of him." (279) Since the voice marrying his mother cannot be explicitly identified as the pastor's, it is strongly linked to Mr. Straike. As the town's vicar, he would logically be the extension or hand of the church (of God), but in Laurie's formulation the church becomes an extension of Mr. Straike. This does not simply make Mr. Straike speak in the name of God but embodies him *as* God making the disembodied voice His voice. Consequently, when Mr. Straike completes his union with Laurie's mother "[i]n a round announcing voice" stating "I will", he does not re-cite former wedding vows as Mrs. Odell has done but utters the ultimate wedding vow in which every citation finds its origin. Laurie's next movement is consequentially *away* from Mr. Straike, who embodies an ideology that scrutinises Laurie's homosexuality. He instead moves towards "[a]unt Olive in the corner of the front pew." With this retreat Laurie's masculinity is brought to the same level as aunt Olive's femininity, who was previously "behind" him whilst he was standing. Now he is sitting "beside" her. As this is the only description of bodies in spatial relation to one another, it emphasises not only Laurie as a moving body in a static scene but his movement downwards – literally in him sitting down next to aunt Olive and symbolically in the lowering of his masculinity. This scene illustrates "our inability of defining either masculinity or femininity except in relation to each other"[78]. Due to men's capability to mentally distance themselves from female gender performances, a dichotomous categorising is possible that proclaims rational acts as masculine and emotional conduct as feminine. It follows that Laurie's regular contact with female nurses enable him to model his masculinity in nuanced ways to differ from femininity. He consequently feels little threatened by potential emasculation, and remains calm when levelling his masculinity with aunt Olive's femininity. The depiction of aunt Olive crying, after all, distances her from Laurie's rational indifference to the seemingly romantic atmosphere of the wedding. In his acceptance of his place in the front pew, Laurie expresses ambivalence towards his mother's approaching conservative lifestyle as well as the nation's regulation of men through the threat of emasculation.

78 Paechter, (2006), p. 254.

This unimpressed attitude is similarly evident when Mr. Straike discredits his nickname Laurie as "a sissy name" (286). Immediately after the ceremony, his new stepfather deploys a parental role over Laurie by repeatedly calling him by his full name Laurence. The names Laurence and Laurie have very different connotations to Mr. Straike: Laurie being the "sissy" version of Laurence which automatically genders 'Laurie' as feminine and 'Laurence' as masculine.[79] In his persistence of calling him Laurence, Mr. Straike not only shows his disapproval of the nickname Laurie, he also, and more significantly, wields power over him by renaming and redirecting him towards heteronormativity. His attitude towards Laurie exemplifies Halberstam's claim that "fixity conferred by names also traps people into many different identities, racial as well as gendered"[80]. Butler similarly argues that "one is already claimed by the voice that calls the name"[81]. In calling Laurie by his birth name, Mr. Straike tries to claim authority over his stepson in order to coerce him towards gender appropriateness. Laurie registers unemotionally that "[h]e was being rechristened as a bracer". (286) The term "bracer" is puzzling here and needs evaluation. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "bracer" most commonly means "[t]hat which clamps, binds, etc.; a cincture, bandage, brace" or "[t]hat which braces (the nerves); *hence* a tonic medicine" of which neither explanation sheds light on Mr. Straike's usage.[82] Another approach to the term is reading it as a verb deriving from 'to brace one-

79 Note the misogynistic implication of the abusive word "sissy". It is one of many examples where negatively evaluated femininity is applied to homosexual men in order to simultaneously degrade their masculinity and women's femininity. When found in contemporary usage, abusive connotations are often lost or remain unconscious, which highlights the importance of Butler's effort to emphasise that speech is always a citation of previous discourses making its implication different to its current usage.

80 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 8. In an interview with Sinclair Sexsmith for Lambda Literary Halberstam states: "So some people call me Jack, my sister calls me Jude, people who I've known forever call me Judith—I try not to police any of it. A lot of people call me he, some people call me she, and I let it be a weird mix of things and I'm not trying to control it." In order to do justice to the preferred gender fluidity that is also the object of Halberstam's professional work, I will refrain from gendering Halberstam. Sinclair Sexsmith, "Jack Halberstam: Queers Create Better Models of Success" (Interview from 2012) <http://www.lambdaliterary.org/interviews/02/01/jack-halberstam-queers-create-better-models-of-success/> [last accessed 11/08/2017].

81 Butler, (1997), p. 32.

82 "Bracer, n.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2015. Web. 23 February 2016.

self', which means "summoning up resolution for a task", or "to pull oneself together for an effort"[83]. By being called Laurence, Laurie is told to start 'being a man' and to pull himself together, which entails leading an independent life. This reading is reinforced when Mrs. Odell "had gone to change into her going-away things" (286), which is the last thing the novel ever says about her. Mr. Straike's "rechristening" of Laurie as Laurence can be understood as illocutionary, just like his mother's "I will" completing the church's aim for re-establishing Christian morality and normality in the family, which is (momentarily) successful: the 'unnatural' mother-son bond is broken and the deviating subject is expelled from his family. Laurie realises that Mr. Straike will be adopting a parental role as his stepfather just like the nation controls his life as a soldier. Religion and nationalism are thus combined in the character of Mr. Straike who tries to control the life of his stepson according to heteronormative parameters. This demonstrates a connection between church and nation following Anderson's proposition that nationalism builds and expands on religion because fundamental ideologies such as Christian values inform the establishment of nations as imagined communities to which the Unknown Soldier serves as a stabilising myth.

Moreover, when Mr. Straike learns that a group of Quakers, among them Andrew, work at Laurie's hospital, he reveals his deep-rooted nationalistic and patriotic convictions. In his view, religion is not a sufficient reason for not helping the war effort, which devastates his position as a clergyman further. Ahmed exposes that "[t]he construction of the nation space takes place alongside the production of national character as instances in which 'the nation' itself is fleshed out as *place and person*"[84]. By adopting a favourable position towards the war and a strict attitude against those men who refuse to fight, Mr. Straike – paradoxically a non-fighter himself – becomes the embodiment of nationalism. His role as vicar is only a distraction from his nationalistic attitude. During an argument with Laurie concerning conscientious objectors Mr. Straike claims:

'In fact, I well recall saying to your mother in [sic] the train that if conchies *must* be employed to wait upon war casualties, possibly in the hope of arousing some vestigial sense of shame, they might at least be kept where they need not affront the eye, in suitable activities such as scrubbing latrines, and so on.' (268) [Emphasis original]

83 "Brace, v.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2015. Web. 23 February 2016.

84 Ahmed, (2000), p. 99.

Mr. Straike's use of the passive voice ("be employed", "be kept") removes subjectivity from the argument to enhance its aspired persuasive power as 'collective truth'. He indicates superiority and forestalls any counter-arguments on Laurie's part by introducing his position with the words "[i]n fact". In combination with his emphasis on "well" recalling his words from some time ago, the conviction and intractability of his opinion is established, which follows his depiction as an intransigent character. The word "*must*", emphasised in italics, substantiates his aversion towards those men who refuse to fight, which is underscored by the derogatory use of the abbreviation "conchies" – not 'worthy' of being called by the technical term 'conscientious objector'.

By creating a long and entangled compound sentence, Mr. Straike tries to impress Laurie and to convince him of his superior knowledge on the subject in order to preclude protest. The use of punchy words ("shame", "affront the eye", "scrubbing latrines") and his emphasis on "*must*" distract from Mr. Straike's confusion over the point he wants to transmit. Aiming for acceptance without challenge, he does not realise that his argument is highly paradoxical thus nullifying its claim for validity: Mr. Straike wants non-serving men to feel ashamed of themselves for refusing to fight, which is induced in them by waiting on and physically/visually encountering injured men. At the same time, he demands that they stay out of sight of soldiers. In consequence, the sight of the injured should at once generate shame for the conscientious objector but equally "affronts the eye" of the soldier. The solution of making them "scrub [...] latrines" to effeminise them puts the affronting subjects out of sight for the soldiers, but also prevents them from having to encounter that which should shame them. Mr. Straike's argument is thus untenable and tautological. Additionally, he is not aware that "shared shame [is] a prime instrument for strengthening the sense of mutuality and community"[85]. The Quakers' conviction that fighting is morally wrong unites them and countermands the threat of shameful emasculation desired by Mr. Straike's speech.

Laurie responds sarcastically to his stepfather's illogical argument: "How did you guess? When I met my best friend he was doing that very thing [scrubbing latrines]." (268) In giving the 'conchie' a social status as his best friend, Laurie attacks the ground on which Mr. Straike's argument rests, namely conscientious objectors as anonymous obstacles to the war. Additionally, Mr. Straike's solution for them to scrub latrines to keep them out of sight has been proven ineffective because this activity seems as socialising as waiting upon injured soldiers. By pointing out Mr. Straike's reasoning as faulty and short-sighted, Laurie frees

85 Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (eds.), (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 156.

himself from both the increasing influence of his stepfather and the nation's desire to keep its soldiers away from conscientious objectors – a liberating move atypical for a soldier but in accordance with Laurie's disobedient character. Laurie continues challenging Mr. Straike:

'Oh, well,' said Laurie pleasantly, 'we all reacted to their arrival, of course. But actually, we found persecuting Christians awfully overrated. Perhaps we needed lions or something. Perhaps we ought to have tried burning them alive. Perhaps we just needed to be civilians and not soldiers. I wouldn't know.' (269)

In this highly sarcastic outburst Laurie addresses many metaphors of national power: "persecution", "lions", "fire" and "soldiers". National institutions persecute subjects for wrongdoings, the characteristics of the lion such as strength, fearlessness and power to destroy, are figuratively used to also describe the qualities of a nation. Fire is the symbol for burning abjected subjects in the Middle Ages initiated by the national leadership. The soldier, as has been established, is the embodiment and representation of national dominance. In judging all of these symbols as ridiculous in the dealing with conscientious objectors, Laurie scorns the nation and its ideologies. His use of the collective pronoun "we" includes his fellow hospital patients and soldiers and demonstrates that not he alone is of this critical opinion. Most interesting is the penultimate sentence "[p]erhaps we just needed to be civilians and not soldiers" to find an appropriate response to men who refuse to be the murderer of others that would satisfy Mr. Straike. Laurie implies that civilians have a much more hostile opinion towards conscientious objectors than those who actually fought. The suffering the soldier has seen during combat makes him lenient and understanding towards other men who have chosen a pacifist life, whereas civilians who stayed at home due to age or bodily infirmity do not know, or have forgotten, the horrors of war. This concretely positions Mr. Straike on the side of the civilian being too old to fight, and Laurie on the side of the soldier emphasising their personal difference as well as the discrepancy in their performance of masculinity. Since traditionally, soldiers are rewarded with heroic masculinity, the civilian Mr. Straike is subordinated to Laurie, and by claiming the moral high ground in the defence of conscientious objectors, Laurie erodes his stepfather's authority further. His evaluation that only "civilians and not soldiers" would share Mr. Straike's radical attitude towards non-fighting men, belatedly names the reason for the vicar's implausible reasoning displayed earlier: his lack of fighting experience makes him unfit to judge any war related issues including conscientious objection.

Make Do and Mend affirms Laurie's evaluation of soldiers as more lenient towards conscientious objector than civilians, when Thomas accuses his brother Harry of "condon[ing] the presence of a conshie" (53) (meaning Jim) to which Harry replies: "Simply because I *have* seen the war at close quarters […] I don't believe a man should be bullied into killing another man if his conscience won't support it." (53) [emphasis original] A straightforward analysis of soldiers as representatives of patriotism and nationalism is thus challenged when novels differentiate between the rigid attitude of civilians and an understanding approach by soldiers. *The Charioteer* and *Make Do and Mend* demonstrate that civilians, who never directly encountered the horrors of the battlefield, come to ideologically superimpose the power of the nation, whereas the soldier sympathises with lenient and altruistic Christian values represented by the Quakers. Anderson explains that it is vital to distance these religious values "from their role in the legitimation of specific systems of domination and exploitation"[86]. Through the oppositional depiction of Andrew and Mr. Straike, *The Charioteer* differentiates 'traditional religious world-views' such as charity and compassion from the institution of the church. Whereas Mr. Straike is an emblem of collective national identity rather than of Christian virtues, Andrew's Quakerism is an individual representation of Christianity against nationalistic pressures to conform to and fight in the war. Laurie is positioned in between Mr. Straike and Andrew and seems confrontational to both extremes: as a homosexual soldier, he opposes traditional religious faith in heterosexuality, matrimony and procreation, but stands in equal distance to nationalistic attitudes and the myth of the Unknown Soldier as represented by Mr. Straike. Laurie has to constantly negotiate between these conflicting positions if he wants to find his place at a time characterised by extremes.

Laurie's reluctance to uncritically follow national narratives is initially broached at the very beginning of the novel after his father has left the family. He is lying in bed and his mother is telling him the story of St. George, a famous tale of the patron saint of England. The legend of Saint George glorifies courage, chivalry and heroism and is often adapted as a children's bedtime story emphasising the heroic action of Saint George when rescuing a princess from a dragon: "Then St. George pulled out his sword, and he said ... [Laurie's mother] paused, because this was the line on which Laurie liked to come in. But he had fallen asleep." (13) Laurie's failure to complete the nursery tale leaves the reader wondering what the hero might have said to the princess and signals a significant change in the protagonist: the parade of nationalism and glory has lost its fascinating hold on him. Caroline Zilboorg rightly emphasises that "Laurie can no

86 Anderson, (1991), p. 10.

longer fully accept the traditional national identity suggested in the nursery tale."[87] Before falling asleep, Laurie shuts out his mother's voice and perceives that "no one would ever look from these eyes but he: that among all the lives, numerous beyond imagination, in which he might have lived, he was this one, pinned to this single point of infinity; the rest always to be alien, he to be I." (13) This realisation of identity challenges the nursery story's projection of nationalism and heroism. Laurie pledges allegiance not to St. George, not to Britain, not to religion but to himself. His distance to master narratives of hegemonic masculinity and heroism during battle, increases throughout the novel until, after an argument with Andrew, he is no longer acknowledged as a soldier. In addition to his growing disidentification with the war, Laurie's friendship to Andrew starts losing its purity because of their conflicting points of view regarding the fate of a fellow hospital patient.

Having deceived himself for the better half of the text that Andrew's pacifism does not stand between them, Laurie comes to recognise their differences to be greater than expected, when he tries to take care of a fellow patient named Charlot, who is close to death. A French fisherman coming under fire during British retreat from Dunkirk, the heavily wounded Charlot ended up in the same hospital as Laurie. As the only person speaking French, Laurie befriends the fisherman. Because of this friendship, only Laurie can approach Charlot now that he is dying. Andrew, on the other hand, who is supposed to be in charge of the patient, cannot handle the situation and repeatedly calls for the Nurse to come and help. In his absence, Laurie tries to understand Charlot's incomprehensive muttering and perceives the words "*péché mortel*" (237) [emphasis original] which means 'mortal sin'. Laurie infers from this that "[h]e wants a priest" (237). Unable to get hold of "Father James" (238), Laurie suggests that Andrew should pretend to be a priest since Charlot no longer recognises his face and would not know the difference. Of course, Andrew dismisses this idea and explains his firm aversion against deceiving a dying person in this way. Laurie, sub-consciously aware that Andrew is right, loses his temper:

'Oh God. What difference does it make? He can't talk sense anyway. Just so he can go feeling it's all right.'

'You know we can't do it,' Andrew said. He stared at Laurie with a lost, exploring look.

Laurie had a reasonless but terrible feeling of having been discovered and condemned. He tried to push it away, but his mind still felt shocked, bleeding and raw. 'But you don't believe those church things matter. So long as what he feels is right. You've always said so.

87 Caroline Zilboorg, *The Masks of Mary Renault: A Literary Biography* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2001), p. 107.

It isn't much to do for him.' [...] 'It's a responsibility neither of us has any right whatever to take.' Andrew's face had set with decision; Laurie felt that it had hardened against him. [...] With a sudden stab of nostalgia [Laurie] thought, Ralph would have understood.
'You're pretty hard, aren't you?' [Laurie] said.
Andrew had read in Laurie's eyes the will to hurt, his altered face showed it. It showed too that he knew that he was being punished partly for what he was and believed. He said, 'That doesn't mean anything. A thing's either right or it isn't.' (238-239)

Laurie and Andrew have had an understanding that the latter's pacifism and religion are personal ideals incompatible with warfare, but equally detached from the traditional institution of the church. Highly suspicious of the church, which Laurie associates with Mr. Straike, he is shocked about Andrew's assertion, and interprets Andrew's strict position as a betrayal of their friendship and as a sign of his friend's former dishonesty. Their conversation betrays a double discourse: the literal disagreement over Charlot's fate and the subliminal pronunciation of differences between the characters. Laurie's closeted homosexuality forecloses shared knowledge between the characters and obscures their communication, leading to Laurie's "reasonless but terrible feeling of having been discovered and condemned". The allusive style of writing complicates a clear reference to what Laurie might be "discovered and condemned" of. He seems to fear that ignoring moral conventions at the deathbed has revealed his sexual difference to Andrew. At the same time, he misinterprets Andrew's refusal to play the priest as a negative evaluation of his homosexuality, and thus confers his friend's words with meaning beyond Andrew's control.

Becoming conscious of their different social and ideological positions, Laurie thinks of Ralph who, as a homosexual officer, can relate to Laurie and would probably share his attitude in a crisis. The personal discrepancies between Andrew and Laurie, which until now had constituted their mutual attraction, determine their disagreement. Instead of admiring Andrew for his strength to withstand national pressures to join the military, Andrew's status as a conscientious objector becomes the ground on which Laurie can formulate his aversion, because the real reason for his struggles – his homosexual love for his friend – remains hidden from public discourse. Consequently, Andrew can perceive that he "was being punished *partly* for what he was and believed" [my emphasis]. The other part of Laurie's accusation remains unintelligible to him. Innocent of any sub-text, Andrew can only grasp him in terms of moral deceit. When Andrew defends his position by challenging Laurie "[d]on't you see, some things are too important to be tampered with" (239), Laurie feels the difference between them growing more profound and he realises that in "his gray hospital-orderly's coat

[Andrew] looked more like a soldier than Laurie did in his battle-dress. He was distinct and separate and far away. And strikingly good-looking." (239) Laurie begins to realise that even in comparison with a conscientious objector, his deviating lifestyle makes his attitude alien to heteronormative order. This is most severely expressed when Laurie compares his battle dress to Andrew's hospital uniform which paradoxically makes the latter a more convincing embodiment of the Unknown Soldier than the serving Laurie whose sexuality stands in direct contradiction to what he is supposed to represent. The disinterest in the nursery tale from the beginning of the novel, therefore, constitutes Laurie's life as a soldier: required to represent a collective national identity when his individuality rebels against such standards.

Laurie increasingly realises that every set of norms is failing for him – he neither identifies with wartime standards on masculinity and heroism, nor with Andrew's version of religious beliefs untainted by the conservative church grounded in gender norms and heterosexual wedlock. His constant struggles disclose the scripts of nationalism that circulate during the Second World War as deceptive when aiming for a collective identity that kills off individuality.

"MASCULINE, PATRIOTIC, MATURE AND CAPABLE"? – PERFORMANCES OF MILITARY MASCULINITIES

In Walter Baxter's *Look Down in Mercy*, (1951) Toni Kent suffers from the same burdens encountered by Laurie when his attraction to the batman Anson stands in contradiction to his role of commanding officer. Whereas Laurie is relatively unimpressed by potential emasculation when he is largely indifferent towards Mr. Straike's attempted rechristening, Kent is constantly afraid of losing privileges that position him as the nation's metaphoric Unknown Soldier – highly masculine and the ideal version of what Connell has coined hegemonic masculinity. In the "Introduction" to the 2014 edition of the novel, Gregory Woods indeed characterises Kent as "masculine, patriotic, mature and capable"[88] which would make him a stereotypical wartime protagonist representing the nation despite his deviating sexuality. Wood's automatic attribution of masculinity to the officer shows that bodies are made to stand for an identity – that a serving male body represents the nation even when his homosexuality contradicts its standardised myths. In contrast to Woods' assertion, I will argue that *Look Down in Mer-*

88 Gregory Woods, "Introduction" *Look Down in Mercy*, [1951], (Richmond: Valancourt Books, 2014), p. ix.

cy develops a much more complex character, who comes to challenge the myth of the Unknown Soldier when failing to act heroically, and who falls in love with another man. The novel reveals that the failure of hegemonic masculinity is grounded in the fact that men are either judged as too emotional and weak (Kent) or as too indifferent making them inhumane and savage (Goodwin, one of Kent's soldiers). Military masculinity modelled after hegemonic masculinity is thus a traumatic concept for men not only because it is unattainable, but because it leaves men in a constant state of anxiety over how their performance is perceived by others.

The following analysis will challenge Woods' judgement of Kent as "masculine, patriotic, mature and capable" by focusing on the protagonist's diminishing masculinity compared to other men, and the novel's development of an alternative version to masculine heroism that is informed by feminine emotions. It will also disclose that efforts of representing British masculinity as 'untarnished' by unnecessary violence in order to contrast it from the brutal enemy, are failing when Goodwin commits a vicious murder that brings him in close proximity to the savage Japanese.

In part two of *Look Down in Mercy*, Kent's latent reluctance to identify with the People's War discussed previously transforms into an inability to perform appropriate to his commanding position. Although at times carrying life-threatening responsibilities, Kent values his role as an officer because it entails reputation and honour. He is consequently devastated when in the midst of battle his professional incompetence comes to the fore and when he additionally falls in love with his batman Anson. At first, the bond between Kent and Anson rests on the latter's ability of making his officer "put aside the slowly accumulating burden of his responsibilities" (53). Despite identifying his position as a "burden", Kent is unwilling to resign his post (if that was an option), which illustrates Richard Howson's claim that "hegemonic characteristics must continue to be privileged over all others"[89]. The subject performing hegemonic masculinity needs to be rewarded in such a way that the potential danger of his action is marginalised and rendered insignificant. Rosi Braidotti calls this dualism of power "negative (potestas) in that it prohibits and constrains [but] also positive (potential) in that it empowers and enables"[90].

This paradoxical element of power is aptly demonstrated in Fitzroy's *Make Do and Mend* when Harry comes to realise that his position as a naval officer has

89 Richard Howson, *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 60-61.

90 Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p. 21.

earned him the white-enamelled gilt cross for Distinguished Service Order (DSO) whilst simultaneously killing his lover Michael in a terrible accident:

'I'd been on duty pretty much continuously for about a week when it happened,' Harry began. [...] 'Well, as one of the junior escorts, we had to wait our turn to enter harbour and be signalled a berth. [...] I decided to get my head down for a while. It should have been safe, it was nothing I hadn't done before, and I'd left instructions to be called if anything untoward happened. My First Lieutenant, however ... '
Harry stopped then, suddenly aware of an obstruction in his throat. 'My First Lieutenant,' he began again, after a pause, 'countermanded my order. [...] In theory he should have been fine – he'd taken us into harbour on his own before and never had any problems – but those sandbanks are moving all the time[.] [...] The boat ran aground, and still Michael didn't send anyone to wake me; instead he decided to sort it out himself, along with our chief engineer, so that we could surface. [...] Anyway – by the time somebody did come to wake me they'd got most of the repairs done but the batteries were damaged, the engine-room had started filling up with fumes, and they'd both passed out. Two of us had to go in after them, but in the end it wasn't any good – Hutton and Michael both died.' (211-212)

Until quite late in the novel, the reader is unfamiliar with the exact circumstances of this accident, which obscures Harry's past as an officer and emphasises his present handicap and inability to perform active service. Only after this passage does the reader understand Harry's hesitations to enter into a relationship with Jim as it is the death of his former lover Michael and the impossibility of public grieving which have scarred him so deeply. Due to social conventions, Harry was only allowed to "mourn him as a comrade and not as a lover" (61). By telling his story, Harry begins to make up for this lack and liberates himself from the past to consider a new relationship with Jim.

Recollecting the accident in the past tense indicates a growing distance to it and enforces Harry's placement in the present as well as a potential future with Jim. His representation of events is factual and largely informed by military practice of reduction for transmitting information rather than emotional states. Harry continues his story in a clinical manner true to his military training even when realising "an obstruction in his throat" and needing to pause to regain self-control. This sober tone changes when the story is finished and Harry compares his former feelings for Michael to his growing affection for Jim: "But it seems to be so much more, somehow, this time – it isn't just a pleasant way to pass the time, but something I can't escape and shouldn't really try to. Inevitable, I suppose." (212) Parting with his military rhetoric based on clear and largely uninterrupted syntax to convey information, Harry now speaks hesitantly, which indi-

cates insecurity over expressing his feelings for Jim. His confession that his present affection is stronger than his former feelings for Michael is disrupted by the word "somehow". No longer sure of what he wants to say, Harry is unable to put his emotions into words. This insecurity is climaxed when saying "[i]nevitable, I suppose". Designed as a short, punchy sentence, Harry's "I suppose" reverses the apparent inevitability of his love for Jim to substantiate his confusion over recalling the accident for the first time, and in doing so distancing himself from it.

Reluctantly he concedes that Michael's action "was wonderfully heroic, of course, but the line between heroism and stupidity is always such a narrow one, and I can't help thinking of it as an awful waste of a life. War is wasteful, though, isn't it?" (212) The juxtaposition of "wonderful" and "heroic" against the backdrop of hegemonic masculinity always comprising the possibility of death seems almost ironic yet substantiates the pleasure in acting heroically in battle. This thin line between "heroism and stupidity" is the engine that keeps the military running, but Harry no longer feels this tug to compel him into acts of heroism when he realises that war is not pleasurable at all but thoroughly "wasteful". His manner of speaking substantiates a discrepancy between the serving officer Harry representing the Unknown Soldier, and the homosexual Harry unfit for active service.

Although making a "big mistake" when falling asleep, Harry's attempted rescue of his comrades has guaranteed him the Navy's support, who awarded him with the white-enamelled gilt cross. This symbol of national service demonstrates hegemonic masculinity and openly displays not only service, but service of a special, life-threatening kind for the country. Repeatedly Harry is reduced to this award which functions to heterosexualise and masculinise him in the eyes of women, making him a desirable candidate for marriage. Consequently, whilst clearly accepting his homosexuality, Harry's association with the military remains undisputedly heteronormative – after all, a hero can never be openly homosexual.

During a conversation with Bettles, a member of the Women's royal naval service (WRNS, more commonly called Wren), Harry protests against her interpretation of the gilt cross by stating that "there are plenty of better-looking men about", to which Bettles returns that those would not be "decorated war-heroes who are baronets into the bargain" (104). In wearing the DSO, Harry is the embodiment of the Unknown Soldier and this status overrules shortcomings in physical appearance, health, gender performance and even homosexuality. Through the symbolic power of the DSO, Harry becomes a good-looking, capable, masculine, heterosexual man who is attractive to women. Not even his

nephew Gareth Griffith-Lyon can take his eyes from the gilt cross: "His gaze had barely brushed Harry's face and was now fixated on the shining medal he wore." (57) Gareth's fixation on the cross instead of his uncle's face, whom he is meeting for the first time, suggests the profound significance of national symbols: "Traditions of ceremony, monument and national celebration have instilled national identity into the calendar and the landscape."[91] Harry's DSO functions in very similar ways and it withdraws subjectivity from Harry to project a mythic national identity onto his male body wearing the gilt cross. Deprived of personality, Harry-the-commanding-officer comes to be used by the nation to demonstrate its power against the enemy, and to perpetuate civilian enthusiasm for and fascination with the war.

Sarcastically, Harry understands his decoration as a distraction from the incident and the Navy's way of making "the best of a bad job – as usual" (56). Since "the Navy liked his officers to be gallant and resourceful in sorting out messes" (153), Harry's own proximity to death "had almost, but not quite, balanced out the fact that he was asleep in his bunk" (153) when tragedy struck. Because his injuries and lifelong disability does not quite compensate for the death of two men, the DSO functions as a further humiliation. Outwardly proclaiming honour and distinguished service, it is a reminder of Harry's personal and professional failure. Harry "wish[es] he could explain that he had done nothing to earn the white-enamelled gilt cross" (56) and complains that people such as Wren Bettles "were inclined to take them [decorations] out of context" (56). Yet he never does explain, and despite his sarcasm and open criticism, Harry continues to wear the gilt cross. While downplaying the accident as not "very exciting" (57) and "feel[ing] like a fraud" (56), the protagonist neither attempts to clarify under which circumstances he 'earned' the DSO. Similar to Kent in *Look Down in Mercy* who becomes increasingly uncomfortable with his commanding position, Harry claims unease when having to identify with the position ascribed to him by the nation. This contradiction between the characters' personal attitude versus their public behaviour questions Kent's and Harry's truthfulness when complaining about the burden of command. Suspiciously, neither character ever actively rejects their position, which substantiates the argument that hegemonic masculinity and the association with the Unknown Soldier are simultaneously oppressive and decidedly pleasurable for men who perform authoritative roles.

Similar to Harry, Kent has the strong desire to possess a power that is not only damaging and accompanied by burdens, but also highly pleasurable when wielding it against others, which is illustrated in the following scene where Kent

91 Sharp, (1996), p. 98.

relentlessly emasculates and subordinates a soldier called Goodwin.[92] Moments before encountering the Japanese enemy, Kent is gathering his men to secure a village and to retreat in an orderly fashion. Unable to find Sergeant Cording who is supposed to accompany him, Kent asks Goodwin to identify the sergeant's location: "Down there I think, Goodwin answered." (79) Upon hearing this, Kent falls into an exaggerated demonstration of his power:

'Down there you think,' Kent mimicked quietly, and then raised his voice angrily: 'Think what?'
'Sir.' Goodwin spoke sullenly to the ground.
'Get up when you talk to an officer, damn you.' Kent spoke viciously, a rage that he did not understand seethed in his mind and as Goodwin scrambled awkwardly to his feet it was as much as he could do not to kick him savagely in the side. (79)

Kent's aggression towards Goodwin, indicated by the insistence on being called "Sir" and be spoken to in a manner befitting his rank, shows that masculinity is not automatically attributed to officers, but requires constant demonstration of power and the subordination of lower ranks. Kent emphasises his superiority by "rais[ing] his voice" and ordering Goodwin to stand up. Alan Bairner stresses that it is important to "remember that some of those men who […] engage in [...] violence […] do so not because they are powerful, other than in a purely physical sense, but precisely because they feel that they lack power"[93]. Outwardly, Kent's exaggerated display of masculinity functions as a demonstration of power, but it is his anxiety regarding the adequacy of his general performance and qualities as an officer, which underlies his actions.

Moments before this scene, Kent and his company sergeant-major Tarrant had discovered three dead men, who had gone ahead of the platoon to secure the path. Juxtaposing Kent's and Tarrant's reaction to the horrible sight demonstrates why the company commander is not recognised for a tough and masculine performance:

[Kent] smelt the sickeningly appetising smell of cooked flesh and drew back sharply, white with nausea, the tips of his fingers shaking as he pictured how these men had died. He looked up and saw Tarrant watching him closely and he tried to smile.

92 Nickie Charles, *Gender in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 10.

93 Alan Bairner, "Masculinity, Violence and the Irish Peace Process" in *Capital and Class* Vol. 69 (1999), p.143.

'I suppose the rest of them are keeping warm inside,' Tarrant said lightly, successfully hiding his own qualms, thinking that the men were dead and that there was no point going as white as a sheet about it. (78)

The paradoxical "sickeningly appetising smell" that fills Kent with "nausea" illustrates his conflicting position: on the one hand, he has to fulfil his position as an officer by giving orders and setting a good example for his men. On the other hand, he is a weak individual who cannot hide his insecurities and who is morally compromised when the smell of human flesh stirs his appetite. Despite evoking feelings of hunger, Kent is clearly more moved by the sight than Tarrant, who can "successfully" hide his "qualms", whereas Kent has turned pale and his fingers are visibly "shaking". Tarrant immediately judges his officer as spineless for showing an emotional response: "there was no point going as white as a sheet about" dead men. Whereas Kent is incapable of talking, Tarrant's black humour that "the rest of them is keeping warm inside" demonstrates masculine toughness. In contrast, Kent's masculinity is threatened by his inability to appear in control of his body, which signals a stereotypically feminine reaction. Lynne Segel asserts that the definition of what 'men ought to be' does

not derive from any intrinsic characteristic of individuals, but from the social meanings which accrue to these ideals from their supposed superiority to that which they are not. To be 'masculine' is *not* to be 'feminine', *not* to be 'gay', *not* to be tainted with any marks of 'inferiority' – ethnic or otherwise.[94]

Butler similarly argues that men are always dependant on women to know of their superior status: this "radical dependency of the masculine subject on the female 'Other' suddenly exposes his autonomy as illusionary"[95]. By remaining silent and letting his body take control, Kent has unwittingly displayed traditional feminine traits of emotionality and weakness, which signals emasculation. Consequently, Kent's increasing self-doubts result from moments such as this one when he fails to live up to his commanding position and the ideal of hegemonic masculinity. His exaggerated rage against Goodwin in the scene quoted previously is a belated reaction to and compensation for his inability to hide his discomforts at the sight of death. Subconsciously, Kent recognises that his treatment of Goodwin is unfounded ("a rage that he did not understand"), but the

94 Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, [1990], (London: Virago Book, 1997), p. xxxiv.

95 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, [1990], (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2006) p. XXX.

need to counter his earlier trespass towards femininity is greater than any sense of justice.

Kent is constantly confronted with his inability to perform an authentic military masculinity, which is once more evident after witnessing the threat of aerial bombing. Again, Kent's reaction is contrasted to Tarrant's who says: "I counted eighteen planes, did you make it that or were there more?", to which Kent replies: "About eighteen, I think, [...] although it had not occurred to him to count them" (52). Whereas Tarrant substantiates his previously examined masculine performance, Kent had fallen "on the ground" feeling "the explosions kick through the ground against his body" (52), unable to make any attempt at counting planes. Immediately afterwards, Kent takes his anger over his inability to think rationally like Tarrant out on Anson: "Did you think I'd need a nice strong cup of tea after the nasty bombing? You really are an old woman." (53) The bombing had evidently unnerved Kent, who projects his own shame onto Anson's kind gesture. Kent's anger that Anson may have approached him as a subject tainted with fear instead of presuming that he is superior to such emotions, resonates in Kent's sarcasm: "nice strong cup of tea"; "nasty bombs". His style of speaking is designed to mock Anson by highlighting the duties of a batman as stereotypically female tasks thus not only downgrading women's social position but also Anson's within the military.

Mimi Schippers argues that when men like Anson transgress into performances of typically feminine quality through "homosexual desire [or] being weak and ineffectual", their performance is "*not* symbolically constructed as problematic *masculine* characteristics; they are constructed as decidedly feminine"[96]. Kent's comparison of Anson to an "old woman" functions to emasculate his batman. However, this is only momentary and derives from Kent's need to establish himself as superior to Anson. If non-conforming men became immediately associated with femininity – which permanently removes them from recognition and power – hegemonic masculinity could no longer rely on subordinated and marginalised masculinities to assist in the process of regulation and perpetuating patriarchy. While I agree that subordinated men are often (but not always) stigmatised as feminine, their masculinity remains superior to femininity if only by possessing a male body. If Anson was immediately and permanently perceived as feminine because he assumes 'the domestic female role', Kent would not need to constantly prove his masculine superiority. It is doubtful that a society strictly and lastingly denying masculinity to effeminate or otherwise marginalised men could retain hegemonic masculinity as a compelling concept for men to

96 Mimi Schippers, "Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony" in *Theory and Society* Vol. 36, No. 1 (2007), p. 96.

strive for. Instead, by allowing for momentary emasculation as punishment and the promise of hegemonic masculinity as an achievable goal, Connells' theorisation of "[r]ecognizing multiple masculinit*ies*", which form difference and proximity to hegemonic masculinity and femininities, is far more compelling than Schipper's concept of immediate and permanent emasculation.[97] Connell distinguishes between hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalised masculinities in order to more fully grasp the coordination of masculine power that perpetuates patriarchy. Complicit men are those who unconsciously contribute to the patriarchal system by benefitting from male superiority. Marginalised masculinities, on the other hand, are performed by individuals who differ from a social standard and are often discriminated against through institutionalised racism and/or classism. Lastly, homosexual men perform subordinated masculinities and are constantly in danger of becoming emasculated because "[t]he institutional dimension of hegemonic masculinity gives it a social authority that shapes perceptions of gayness"[98]. Homosexuality is consequently left doubly subordinated and "at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men"[99]. However, marginalised and subordinated masculinities do not automatically and permanently transform into femininity as Schippers argues, but function to 'cluster around' hegemonic masculinity. Despite Anson's position and occasional emasculation, fellow soldiers such as Goodwin respect him, which highlights military masculinity as a complex system of negotiation and compromise.

This respect for Anson is evident when he and Kent approach Goodwin in their attempt to find Sergeant Cording. Whereas Goodwin is unimpressed by Kent's position as an officer, he averts his gaze at the sight of Anson: "He saw Anson and dropped his eyes" (79). Goodwin's behaviour indicates that Anson is more respected by the men than Kent. Goodwin and Anson used to be close friends, but when Goodwin punches Anson during one of his drunken escapades, their break up is initiated, which leads Anson to become Kent's batman. In his new position, Anson benefits from Kent's status as an officer and locates his own masculinity in relation to Kent's. Goodwin, in contrast, verbally as well as physically subordinates Anson, and in doing so acts in opposition to hegemonic masculinity that needs to conceal its dominance whenever possible in order to retain it: "[i]t is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony", according to Connell.[100] Goodwin's mistake of un-

97 Connell, (2016), p. 76, [my emphasis].

98 Connell, "A very Straight Gay: Masculinity, Homosexual Experience, and the Dynamics of Gender" in *American Sociological Review* Vol. 57, No. 6 (1992), p. 746.

99 Connell, (2016), p. 78.

100 Ibid., p. 77.

necessarily using violence against Anson has not only provoked the latter to terminate their friendship and to obtain a higher position, it has also subordinated Goodwin to a fellow soldier who is homosexual *and* performs traditionally female tasks when caring for Kent. Goodwin's respect for Anson demonstrates that gender performance is a highly paradoxical matter and disallows for categorical explanation. It follows that although Connell's differentiation between four masculinities (hegemonic, complicit, subordinated and marginalised) is a helpful guide to understand different forms of masculinity, it is ultimately too restrictive to capture the multiplicity and inherent contradictions that accompany masculine gender performance.

Moreover, contrasting Woods' examination quoted earlier, Kent cannot be recognised as a "positive representative of homosexuality: masculine, patriotic, mature and capable (in all these respects matching the less visible but steadier Anson)"[101]. Kent fails to identify with the People's War, yells at soldiers for no discernible reason and cannot control his body and emotions when encountering death. Kent is certainly neither "masculine, patriotic, mature and capable" nor "a positive representative of homosexuality" but marked as fighting his emerging feelings for his batman. Anson, however, is depicted as more capable and less fearful than Kent but remains marginalised and bracketed in Wood's analysis. Due to personal and professional shortcomings, Kent needs to exaggerate Goodwin's manner as inappropriate and Anson's domestic duties as feminine in order to contrast himself from the common soldier to become recognised as an officer of higher rank. Unquestioningly attributing masculinity to all soldiers because according to Smith "[t]here is no need to extrapolate masculinity from man – in the soldier they become one"[102] thus overlooks this complicated structure of the military where various forms of masculinities are constantly in flux and emasculation a threat to guarantee hierarchy among soldiers and their enclosed obedience towards officers.

This structure of various masculinities organising the military and facilitating a corporeal appearance of toughness and dominance is further diversified in the British army's opposition with the Japanese enemy. A stereotypical view that racialised bodies are subordinated to the white colonisers is illustrated and perpetuated in the inscribed 'moral hierarchy' of the British compared to the savage Japanese military, particularly in a scene where Goodwin and another soldier named Venner part with their platoon to have a swim in a nearby stream. Thinking themselves relatively safe, despite the noise of the water impairing their

101 Woods, (2014), ix.

102 Smith, (2004), p. 4.

senses, the two men enjoy their swim, but when Venner sunbathes on top of a rock, Goodwin observes a man with a sword emerging behind Venner's back:

> Venner's head hit his left knee, bounced on the rock and fell into the pool. A fountain of blood shot into the air and drenched his naked body as it toppled slowly over. The big man seemed to laugh as he picked up Venner's shirt and wiped his sword. (48)

The detailed description of displaced body parts in this scene is disturbing and the sequence of the head first falling on Venner's knee, then bouncing on the rock and finally landing in the water makes it appear utterly unreal. Goodwin's fascination with the materiality of the body – the head – and lack of horror when witnessing the murder, mirrors a twisted psyche and denotes utter lack of compassion. The hyperbolic "fountain of blood" not only works to demonstrate the brutality of the Japanese, but also reflects on Goodwin's personality, who lives in constant need for drama and delights in causing abuse. Not only does he fail to show any kind of emotional response to the murder, he also praises himself for his "marvellous escape" (48).

When telling Corporal Bonar about the incident, Goodwin "suddenly remembered the extraordinary way Venner's head had bounced on the rock and he wanted to roar with laughter" (48). The term "extraordinary" signals the grotesque movement of Venner's head and its displacement from his body. Goodwin's hidden pleasure is revealed in his wish to laugh, which connects him to the murderer, who also laughs whilst cleaning his sword with Venner's shirt, showing no signs of respect for the dead. Whereas Kent is criticised as effeminate for being too emotional when encountering death, Goodwin has to hide his excitement ("he *wanted* to roar with laughter"), because delighting in death would mark him as inhumane as the Japanese. Once more the impossible position of military personnel is demonstrated: they can neither show an emotional response nor delight in violence.

Goodwin's lack of horror concerning the murder, in contrast to Corporal Bonar's unease when hearing about it indicates Goodwin's hidden fascination for and eroticisation of violence. This gains more traction when considering that Goodwin commits a murder himself at the very beginning of the novel. Drunk and in need of money, he decides to break into a temple. Upon encountering a sleeping figure outside, he infers that this must be the watchman and that "he'll have the keys of the gate" (25). Without any warning and absolutely unfounded, Goodwin begins to choke the person to death.

He reached the body and straddled it gracefully, at the same time his fingers dug viciously into the throat and his fingers pushed the blanket tight around the neck and then locked together. He smiled gently at the terrible paroxysms of the body as it writhed in the blanket and twisted in terror and agony, trying to break away from this unseen, unimaginable horror. [...] [H]e felt a slowly swelling pressure of desire that took its tempo from the twisting body against which he now pressed his own, exquisite pleasure that made him whimper; in that split second between the unbearable pleasure breaking and the flood of relief he dug inwards and upwards with his thumbs and felt the neck snap. (26)

This murder scene reveals a perverse pleasure of possessing masculine power and illustrates Kathy J. Phillips' argument that "people trained in a sex-hating society may feel excitement at suffering, even without any sex"[103]. Goodwin does not simply feel excitement – he feels sexual pleasure. The detail of how his fingers enclose the person's head, who is blinded by a blanket, accentuates that the perverse violence of the murder increases Goodwin's "sense of power" (26), which makes the whole incident pleasurable to him. These desires are strongly connected to his wish for dominance and superiority. Subordinated to both his officer Kent and his former friend Anson, Goodwin reclaims his masculine power by exerting it over an innocent victim. The more the defenceless body struggles, the more aroused Goodwin becomes, which is indicated by the use of semicolons and compound sentences to convey the impression of excitement and speeding simultaneously towards orgasm and death. Combining the sibilance "slowly swelling pressure" with the harsh t-sounds in the alliteration "took its tempo from the twisting body" conflates sexual and murderous desire. The 'soft' sexual pleasure seems to almost legitimize the harsh homicide when the scene focuses on Goodwin's rising desire culminating in an orgasm to the motion of murder. The snap of the neck is the final tone of both the victim's life and Goodwin's humanity.

Goodwin's savage brutality against a civilian suggests that the perverted violence aligns him with the Japanese. However, in contrast to Venner's death, his murder is kept a secret only shared by the reader. Through this disguise the novel demonstrates a need to conceal exaggerated British military masculinity from becoming public knowledge because "those who behaved in too aggressive or too strident a manner or advocated 'toughness' over 'goodness' risked being thought of as fascistic"[104]. A fascistic masculinity as associated with the enemy does not belong into the scripts of British nationalism. The display of violence

103 Kathy J. Phillips, *Manipulating Masculinity: War and Gender in Modern British and American Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 106.

104 Rose, (2003), p. 287.

brought against Venner and witnessed by Goodwin, who finds his own perversion mirrored in its sight and expressed in his murder, explains why Kent, when rebuking Goodwin in the scene quoted previously, needs to satisfy his desire to subordinate by yelling instead of kicking: because Kent is the representative of the British nation, he needs to openly refrain from unnecessary demonstration of violence. Otherwise, he would become undistinguishable from the Japanese enemy – brutal, merciless and primitive.

Metaphorically, Goodwin's victim wields a belated revenge and subverts Goodwin's fantasies of demonstrating masculine "power" (26), when it is revealed that his victim was actually a woman. Whereas hegemonic masculinity subordinates femininity, narratives of chivalry state that women and children need to be protected from harm. Goodwin's execution of masculine power against an innocent and *female* victim further endangers the respectable code of conduct British soldiers had to follow during the war. Goodwin's repeated violation of that code is punished when it becomes known that the woman was infected with leprosy. Throughout the novel, Goodwin is repeatedly paranoid over being infected with the disease, which completely changes his manner from disrespectful and brutal to deeply troubled:

> One of the straps supporting his pack was chafing his shoulder. Or was it the start of a sore? [...] He knew nothing about the disease [leprosy] and was too frightened to ask in case it might connect him with the murder [...]. [...] In any case they never hanged white people out here. Or did they? That was something else he dared not ask. (45-46)

No longer confident that his murder will remain a secret if he begins to show infectious spots, Goodwin ponders the symptoms of the disease but is too scared to ask for medical advice. His malicious and narcissistic attitude that has manoeuvred him into this situation is momentarily gone, and he is left a frightened man scared for his life. Yet, Goodwin finds comfort in the belief that "they never hanged white people out here", because white soldiers are privileged over colonial subjects. Since the victim is a poor, female Indian, her case is not a priority to be solved and Goodwin's assumption that he would not be hanged is not put to the test.

Kent buttresses Goodwin's racism when he complains about the police's half-hearted investigations if any British soldiers were near the temple during that night:

> 'Wasn't that absolutely typical of the civilian attitude toward the troops – anything they can't solve, blame it on the Army. I suppose they weren't getting anywhere and probably

paid some wretched Indian to say that he saw a soldier in the temple. Can you imagine any of our men going there in the middle of the night [, Tarrant]?' (31)

Kent's racism against the Indians and his naive protection of his men prevents him from considering the possibility that a soldier might be responsible for the murder. Instead, he blames the local police for not doing their job properly – that questioning the army is exactly the police's job is conveniently passed over by Kent. The officer's evaluation of events subverts the role of victim and culprit: "The whole thing was a nonsense, we were only dragged in as a face-save for the police." (32) Vehemently defending his men, Kent's attitude illustrates how decisive it is for the British army to keep clear of scandal and to represent a 'moral war' in contrast to the enemy who is associated with savage brutality.

The mercilessness of the enemy is substantiated when Kent and Anson get captured by a group of Japanese who torture Kent for information. After enduring severe beating, Kent finally concedes: "There are three regiments, don't hit me again, please, please ... I'll tell you everything, three regiments, two of them Indian and mine and some gunners, and I'll tell you about the tanks." (164) Interestingly, Kent's high treason has no consequences for the immediate storyline or for his career, because gun fire breaks out and the Japanese party scatters into the woods leaving Anson and Kent to take care of themselves. It is distinctly left open whether or not Kent's information has given the enemy any advantage because from this point onwards, the story concentrates on his and Anson's flight from Burma without giving a broader context. However, when Kent recovers from his wounds and re-encounters Tarrant, there occurs a moment of tension when Tarrant talks about "the river fiasco" (189) after which the platoon is "only about quarter strength" (190). Although using a telling reference, Tarrant does in no way suggest that Kent has caused the "fiasco", and Kent reflects that the inconsistencies, gaps and contradictions of other reports will make it hard to discover what really happened, which saves him from being court-marshalled:

He had already listened to five or six accounts from different men who had visited him in hospital, and now he knew that all the versions he might hear would differ fundamentally from the others, that they were, and could only be, accounts of what had happened to individual people. (190)

Due to the many and personal versions of the event, it is credible that Kent focuses on his fate when recalling his flight from the Japanese: "I'm rather vague about the whole thing, I had only half come to from the crack on my head and being beaten up didn't help me to think any more clearly." (190) Emphasising

his wounds and pointing towards the despicable acts of the Japanese who beat him up, Kent positions himself as a victim who should not be questioned any further. In doing so, he acts in exactly the manner Anson assumes of him, when he imagines two versions of how the incident could have played out that would both save Kent's reputation and honour as an officer. In an internal monologue Anson ponders:

> [Kent] could pretend that he didn't remember anything that happened in the clearing because of the wound in his head, or that he had only been trying to save Anson. He might even pretend that he didn't believe there were any tanks at all, and only said it to confuse the Japanese. (167-168)

Because people "would say Kent had behaved like a coward and a traitor in the clearing (167) if they knew the truth, Anson needs to narrate the incident in a certain way that establishes Kent as either badly injured, or as brave, controlled and calculating. Anson's tactic emphasis on Kent's alleged bravery despite the "wound in his head" shows how History is written by the victors – a History that is impersonal (Anson is referring to himself as a third person) and fundamentally created to convey the image of national success.

At the same time as fashioning a heroic tale, Anson believes that most people would have acted in the same way Kent did as soon as "the stick was raised a second time and with the thought present in their minds that this was only the beginning of repeated pain. There were heroes of course, he thought, [...] that woman Joan of Arc for instance, she must have been one" (167). Of all the heroic figures that history has produced, Anson distinguishes one of the very few women, and he challenges the assumption that heroism is reserved for the male body when, by the use of female pronouns, forcing the reader to recognise Jeanne D'arc *as* a woman.

Ultimately however, even a heroine is a myth, for "there always seemed to be something odd about heroes, either they got religion or believed in something else or just wanted to show off" (167). A hero(ine) is largely dislikeable, according to Anson, and in need of some form of divine guidance in order to fulfil greater-than-human deeds. "It wouldn't be easy for most people to be heroes, most people didn't believe in anything very much, at least nothing important, nothing except themselves." (167) Moving from the concrete example of Joan of Arc as a heroine to "most people", Anson legitimises why Kent can never be a hero: he is like "most people" preoccupied with himself and not interested in the well-being of another person or cause. Consequently, Kent can never live up to the heroic ideal nationalism demands of its officers – not as long as heroism is

synonymous with bravery and altruism. Anson thus reveals a paradox in narratives of national heroism: if soldiers are masculine and heroic, but Anson believes that heroes are either not real or female, the soldier discourse cannot be real or attainable for men either.

Joseph Campbell's study *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* examines another significant difference that hampers heroic action today compared to "the comparatively stable periods of those great co-ordinating mythologies which now are known as lies"[105]: whereas the hero of ancient times was formed and forged by a group, "today no meaning is in the group [...] all is in the individual"[106]. It follows that heroism needs to rise and produce from within a person: "It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse."[107] Warfare is thus built on a structure that annihilates itself when military personnel are required to perform heroically although heroism is an insubstantial myth as displayed by Anson. The military thus fails to create a convincing corporate image of masculinity and heroism when men like Kent privilege their personal well-being over the collective cause of winning the war.

Kent substantiates Anson's critique on heroic action when he rescues Goodwin from certain death but does so for reasons contradicting stereotypical narratives of masculine heroism. Goodwin is lying on plain ground injured and exposed to possible enemy fire, which endangers the rest of the platoon. About to order two men to catch Goodwin and save him from death, Kent realises:

> If they were ordered to go they would, but there was no inner compulsion to make them do it for its own sake, all they understood was that it was infinitely desirable to be alive, that the mere act of living was a sufficient justification, the only true reality. (81)

This distinction between a "true reality" for the soldiers, which means being alive, and a 'false' or 'insignificant' reality, which is Goodwin's survival, is the reason for Kent's conflict. Instead of disregarding the feelings of his men, he foregrounds them to the effect of reversing his role as an officer required to give orders. Kent's predicament is then not only an inability to command but connected to his feelings for his men and their survival. Kent's behaviour resembles stereotypically female preoccupation with the realm of the emotional and stands in contradiction to the dominant narrative of male rationality. Since any trace of femininity needs to be excluded from male thinking, Kent translates his sympa-

105 Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, [1949], (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 388.

106 Ibid., p. 388.

107 Ibid., p. 391.

thy into a challenge for himself to counteract his self-doubts. After pondering his choices, he comes to the conclusion that

> he himself would have to go and fetch Goodwin in, because if he did not people would say he had been afraid, that he had failed as a company commander. He might not succeed in the attempt, that was not important, the attempt had to be made. (81)

If staying alive constitutes "true reality" for the soldiers, then it is the rescue of Goodwin which determines Kent's fate. An act of masculine heroism that saves another person's life whilst demonstrating fearlessness, courage and leadership qualities in front of fellow soldiers would confirm Kent's position within the army and could silence his self-doubts concerning the adequacy of his gender performance. Masculine heroism is drummed into military personnel, especially officers, during their training, and "works by linking the sense of personal worth to the needs of an organization that specializes in violence"[108]. This pattern is, according to Campbell a stereotypical element of heroism because "[t]he hero is the man of self-achieved submission"[109]. That Kent is prepared to perform masculine heroism shows a shift in focus away from his subjectivity towards the military, reinforced in his sudden self-identification as the "company commander" to emphasise and submit to his rank. In consequence, Kent's individuality is marginalised and his position within the military as an anonymous and nationalistic force becomes highlighted. The possibility of dying to save Goodwin is irrelevant, what counts is "the attempt" and therefore the substantiation of Kent's role as an officer in perpetuating the myth of the Unknown Soldier.

Anson indirectly proposes to 'accidently kill' Goodwin when "mov[ing] the muzzle of his tommy-gun" (82). However, killing Goodwin would undermine Kent's rank and might take away privileges. Anson's subsequent offer to rescue Goodwin himself and thus spare Kent the danger is met with equal despair as it would reverse their social and military positions. By standards of class and rank, Kent's situation is a more privileged one making his masculinity superior to Anson's. In offering to rescue Goodwin without showing signs of fear as observed in Kent, the batman unconsciously challenges the positions of power between them. It is Anson's masculinity that comes closer to the hegemonic ideal in this situation, consequently subordinating Kent. Agreeing to Anson's proposal to rescue Goodwin would substantiate Kent's failing masculine performance – a trespass that is momentarily broached when his "head dropped forward as relief

108 Connell and Rebecca Pearse, *Gender In World Perspective*, [2002], (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 140.

109 Campbell, (1973), p. 16.

swept through him. He tried to control a long sigh but it was impossible." (82) The dropped head signalling gratitude that someone else might put their life in danger demonstrates Tomkins' analysis of shame:

> Shyness, shame, and guilt are not distinguished from each other at the level of affect [...]. [...] This is not to say that shyness in the presence of a stranger, shame at a failure to cope successfully with a challenge, and guilt for an immorality are the same experience. Clearly they are not. [...] Yet the affect that we term shame-humiliation, which is a component of each of these total experiences, is one and the same affect.[110]

The shame-humiliation complex deriving from "failure to cope successfully with a challenge" is evident in Kent's gesture to drop his head and audible as "a long sigh". Kent experiences shame over personal weakness, which functions to induce conformity despite hesitations. He seems to follow a conservative path where "cultural norms force men to endure trauma and master fear, in order to claim the status of 'manhood'"[111]. Such a reading is challenged when Kent "turned his head and looked at Anson, his eyes soft with gratitude" (82).

> They looked at each other for what seemed a long time; the dust still glittered on Anson's cheek, the sweaty streak of dirt, a dried spot of blood on his chin, the pulse in his throat, all were beautiful and suddenly, without knowing why, Kent was calm and happy. He smiled and put up his hand and rubbed the smeared dirt on Anson's face with his finger. He could feel the roughness of the beard on his finger-tips.
> 'No,' he whispered, shaking his head, 'not you.' The words were spoken without thinking, and immediately he was embarrassed. He went on quickly: 'I want a batman, not a corpse, besides I know you loathe the man.' (82)

The scene describes how Kent gives in to his feelings and realises that he could not bear to lose Anson. Instead of being forced into action by the military, Kent's love for another man has an empowering effect on him. This change undermines the military, and by extension the British nation, for its relentless manipulation of subjects when pressuring male bodies into acts of masculine heroism to perpetuate a collective national identity. When the two men look into each other's eyes unabashedly, conventional meaning and conduct is disturbed. Their mutual gaze increases the impression of making time stop and troubles traditional ac-

110 Tomkins, (1995), p. 133.

111 Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, [2001], (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 264.

counts on time as "typically coded masculine and space, being absence or lack, as feminine"[112]. According to Adele Jones, time reigns over space since "constructions of space are naturalized by the temporal practices to which they are subordinated"[113]. In accordance with the gender binary, time is figured as masculine, tightly linked to the public and politics, whereas space is coded feminine. In this depiction, the connotation of time as masculine "aligned with history, progress, civilization, politics and transcendence" [114] fades by not only bringing time to a halt, but also by connecting it to the feminine sphere of being looked at.

When considering that the scene takes place just before Kent is rescuing Goodwin, who is still lying on the road exposed to enemy fire, space is accentuated because it is Goodwin's geographic location, which most severely endangers Kent's life in the rescue. Space being contrasted to time as "stasis, passivity and depoliticization" therefore seems to detract its immediate impact in a life or death situation.[115] As the scene features two males with romantic feelings for each other, the very concepts of time and space are challenged and the event turns into a parody of traditional conduct. This parody of gender norms is enhanced when the sight of Anson's sweaty face where dirt has dried, plunges Kent into a calm happiness. Kent's reaction shows that blood can become beautiful and a male beard can be tenderly touched with male finger-tips – a gesture abnormal in conventional terms. It is thus the *conflation* of typically masculine and feminine qualities which challenges the duality of gender because masculinity is no longer associated with strength (and time) and femininity with emotional weakness (and space). This inversion of concepts enables a performance of masculine heroism that is informed by love for another man and not induced by an institution using femininity as a threat to soldiers.

Kent's experience of 'feminine emotions' enables him to fulfil his hegemonic role, whereas pressure and shame as regulating mechanism had left him doubtful and clinging to his own life. As long as hegemonic masculinity rests on the assumption of a 'pure masculinity', its performance is doomed to border on the grotesquely extreme, evident in Kent's outburst towards Goodwin or the latter's murder outside the temple. Constantly haunted by the fear of exposing femininity, hegemonic masculinity kills off human sensitivities and compels men to become the Unknown Soldier devoid of emotions. Kent's hesitations and reluctance to give his life for the benefit of the nation shows that the reward of recognition does not equal the sorrows men have to endure to earn it. In light of this

112 Doreen B. Massay, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 6.

113 Jones, "Disrupting the Continuum" (2014), p. 33.

114 Ibid., p. 6.

115 Ibid., p. 6.

context Kathy J. Phillips' evaluation of why men fight is too simplistic: "Whenever a culture locates masculinity pre-eminently in fighting, a constantly fanned uncertainty about masculine status helps push men of all sexual orientations to war."[116] The analysis of Kent's behaviour has shown that while aware of the attribution of hegemonic masculinity when rescuing Goodwin, and prone to social shaming, Kent is only persuaded to commit the act after experiencing emotions commonly dismissed as feminine. Consequently, in contrast to Phillips' argument it is not a desire for masculinity that pushes Kent into action, but his love for Anson which makes his heroism a parody of traditional narratives.

Nevertheless, Kent's performance, although originating from feminine feelings, effectively substantiates the stereotypical image of hegemonic masculinity ascribed to a person of his rank. This (re)attribution can be observed in the moment after the successful rescue of Goodwin where the image of a proud, roaring lion is used to reflect Kent's brave act in the language of patriarchy: "He scrambled to his feet and wanted to roar with laughter for pride and relief." (84) When before Kent was shown to diverge from masculinity, he is now behaving like a stereotypical man who performed masculine heroism successfully. Consequently, it would be too superficial to understand hegemonic masculinity as the *only* engine working sovereign power – instead an examination of the complex and often paradoxical structure of gender performances in connection to the nation-state is always essential for understanding its diverse functions.

FILLING THE GRAVE WITH MORTAL REMAINS: DISINTEGRATION OF THE *UNKNOWN* SOLDIER MYTH

The analyses of the four novels uncover the Western system of nationalism, patriotism and propaganda as highly unstable and in need of perpetually constructing heroic myths as unifying troops to guarantee national immortality. By disregarding the subject in the relentless inscription of meaning onto their bodies, the British national leadership tries to counter this body's emancipation and challenge to the system. The fabrication of a forced national identity is especially obvious in characters who refuse to willingly die for their country. At this point the tomb of the Unknown Soldier is figuratively opened and filled with mortal remains of soldiers who never stop questioning the cause of their death. In the last section of this chapter I will disclose that the bodies of soldiers challenge the myth of the *Unknown* Soldier when directing attention to male physicality that

116 Phillips, (2006), p. 98.

traditional order likes to trivialise through emphasising male reason. In his work on *British Writing of the Second World War*, Rawlinson asserts that "[f]ar from being visible, the wounded body is always liable to disappear"[117]. I wish to challenge this assumption by arguing that the very opposite process is at work in the novels under discussion. Instead of creating a "linguistic route for the disappearance of the hurt body"[118], Baxter enhances the body's significance in *Look Down in Mercy*, when Kent and Anson get captured by the Japanese. Kent's somatic control fades entirely and embarrassingly as a result of the Japanese's officer's beating: "He lay there helplessly, shaking in every limb and suddenly there was a rush of gas and excreta as he voided his fæces into his shorts." (165) The symbolic significance of this and other scenes in which the male body is illustrated as weak, wounded and lacking control becomes clear with regard to Simone de Beauvoir's ground-breaking study *The Second Sex*, in which she states:

> Woman has ovaries and a uterus; such are the particular conditions that lock her in her subjectivity; some even say she thinks with her hormones. Man vainly forgets that his anatomy also includes hormones and testicles. He grasps his body as a direct and normal link with the world that he believes he apprehends in all objectivity, whereas he considers woman's body an obstacle, a prison, burdened by everything that particularises it.[119]

De Beauvoir asserts not only that men are conventionally considered to perform an active role in the world, making women their passive counterpart, but also that the two sexes are trapped by their bodies in different ways. She argues that because women are stereotypically identified by and through their bodies due to their reproductive capacities, they are strongly linked and limited to them. Their disempowered social position is a direct consequence of this abjected corporeality and its negative association with pain and restraint. Men, however, are empowered through disembodiment, making them different to, or positioned outside of, their physical shell: "[h]e thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it."[120] De Beauvoir, therefore, distinguishes between female *em*bodiment and male *dis*embodiment, which is further elaborated on by Butler, who links this concept to the constitution of 'the rational man' whose body is

117 Rawlinson, (2000), p. 25.

118 Ibid., p. 27.

119 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, [1949], (London: Vintage Books, 2011), p. 15.

120 Ibid., p. 5.

"reason dematerializ[ing] [women's] bodies that may not properly stand for reason"[121]. Butler rightly criticises the familiar binary of sex and gender and the different rendering of bodies in order to maintain a set of standards.

The Night Watch exaggerates this paradigm by making female embodiment appear almost grotesque to the point where the dichotomous construction of bodies is revealed as imaginary: Winnie, a co-worker of Duncan at a candle factory after the war, is "a girl with a deformity of the face, a squashed-in nose and a pinched-up mouth, and a pinched-up nasal voice to match" (37). The focus on the face and its deformed mouth reflects the stereotype of female unreason addressed by Butler and emphasizes Winnie's female embodiment. Len, another co-worker, builds a wax figure with "oversized breasts and hips, and waving hair" to resemble Winnie. Len's action not only reveals the misogynistic image of culturally fashioned femininity, but also women's arbitrary position as both grotesquely deformed and beautifully manufactured to fulfil men's sexual fantasies. The latter becomes abundantly clear when Len "passionately kissed [the wax figure] [...] [and] put[s] his fingernail to the fork of its legs and pretended to tickle it" (37). The implication of sexual intercourse demonstrates the paradox of female embodiment: women's bodies are not only "a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it", they also need to be the source of desire for men in order to return to their function as reproductive vessels. Winnie and the wax figure render visible that women simultaneously represent the abjected sphere of reproduction and bodiliness, whilst the female physique (breasts, hips) is perceived as attractive to men. Consequently, that which is being rejected by the rational male as grotesquely embodied at the same time attracts him and guarantees the survival of the human species.

The debate on bodily transcendence versus immanence brought ub by Sedgwick was revived during Second Wave Feminism by Iris Marion Young, who argues that "[t]he lived body as transcendence is pure fluid action, the continuous calling-forth of capacities that are applied to the world"[122]. Contrary to de Beauvoir, Young understands transcendence not as disembodiment, but as a lived experience that originates from the body and transforms into uninhibited action. Bodily movement and action is lived differently by women and men, and "[r]ather than simply beginning in immanence, feminine bodily existence remains in immanence or, better, is *overlaid* with immanence, even as it moves out

121 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, [1993], (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2011), pp. 21-22.

122 Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like A Girl" and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 36.

toward the world in motions of grasping, manipulating, and so on"[123]. What Beauvoir has named the particularities of the female body, Young understands as her inability of moving beyond immanence to achieve transcendence. The grand trope of male 'disembodiment' *versus* female 'embodiment' thus continues to be of issue in feminist studies.

When Kent in *Look Down in Mercy* is beaten by the Japanese, his body is abjected, which challenges male transcendence and illustrates Butler's argument that despite his ideological disembodiment, man is "one which is nevertheless a figure of a body"[124]. Aware that the Japanese will torture Kent to get vital military information, Anson tries to deceive the enemy by pretending to be in command. The Japanese officer, however, suspects the diversion and begins to violently abuse Kent, calculating that any officer would object to be treated in such a disrespectful manner. When Kent exclaims in commanding tone: "Don't treat me like this [...] I'm an officer, I've done nothing wrong" (162), the Japanese is proven right and "smile[s] affably" (162). It is the clear structure of distributing hegemonic masculinity to white, middle class, male bodies which makes it possible for the Japanese to recognise Kent as a potential officer. Having been treated with respect throughout his life, Kent cannot accept abuse from a man whose racially marked masculinity is subordinated to the white male. When demanding respect, Kent manoeuvres himself into an ever more desperate situation. The profound wish for recognition and respect determines his resistance to being beaten and shows that masculinity is not only abusive towards femininities and other masculinities but also works as a blindfold for critical self-reflection.

Even though Kent, being a Caucasian fighting in Burma, is located outside the realm of his home and race, which makes him a "body out of place"[125], his performance illustrates Ahmed's argument that the "reduction of the stranger to a being" becomes a "fetishisation"[126]. Ahmed pledges to "examine the affect of the transnational movement of peoples" without "assuming an ontology of the stranger"[127]. This is relevant for the analysis of Kent's position *vis-à-vis* the Japanese enemy, because a reading of him as an inferior stranger, who has left "the home of [his] nation", would exaggerate his body as a site of dislocation, whilst marginalising his privileged social position bestowed upon him by the British nation.[128] In fact, Kent continues to benefit from historically constructed white

123 Young, (2005), p. 36.

124 Butler, (2011), p. 21.

125 Ahmed, (2000), p. 78.

126 Ibid., p. 79.

127 Ibid., p. 79.

128 Ibid., p. 78.

supremacy regardless of his dislocated body. This is most obvious when the Japanese officer strikes "Kent across the face with his stick" (162). Although physically abused, Kent manages to maintain control over his body when only flinching in fear. Rather than the beating, it is the officer's poor hygiene which causes the highest level of discomfort in Kent and leads him to "involuntarily turn[...] his head away, sickened by the smell of fishy dental decay, and the wet splutter that showered into his face" (162). The Japanese officer's nauseating outward appearance distracts from his position of power when causing pain. Due to the contrast between Kent's Western standards of aesthetics and the officer's rotten teeth and bad breath permanently marking his face, the roles of capturer and captive are momentarily disturbed. This reversal of power redirects Kent towards a hegemonic and masculine position in control of his body to identify him as superior to Japanese violence.

In the next moment, Kent fails to maintain this self-control, and "a mouthful of hot frothy vomit [...] shot on to the sleeve of the officer's uniform" (162). Whilst this is a classic example of Julia Kristeva's theory on abjection where "I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself*"[129], the cause of Kent's repulsion – "a gob of stinking slime and phlegm [spat out by the Japanese] coat[ing] Kent's nostrils" – emphasises the Japanese's insufficient physical hygiene as well as manners and redirects abjection back to the colonial subject. It is thus ultimately the Japanese, and not Kent, who becomes the victim of degradation/abjection (being vomited on), initiated by the colonising white race. At this and other points in the story, *Look Down in Mercy* displays the internalised colonial narratives of oppression that no inversion of power can re-write: the Japanese officer can inflict the white man's body with pain, but he cannot cleanse Kent of disgust.

Ultimately, Kent's white superiority over the Japanese dwindles and unable to accept any more pain, Kent's control over his body fades. Gail Kern Paster's analysis in *The Body Embarrassed* shows why neither the female nor the male body is dead matter that can be transcended. "Humoral physiology ascribes to the workings of the internal organs an aspect of agency, purposiveness, and plenitude to which the subject's own will is often decidedly irrelevant."[130] When regaining consciousness after being captured by the Japanese, Kent realises that "his hands were throbbing with pain and that one side of his head seemed to be full of blood trying to burst through his skull" (160). This exemplifies Paster's

129 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 3.

130 Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 10.

claim that agency may be assigned to the body's interior. Kent is incapable of monitoring and subordinating his "opinionated body"[131]. Furthermore, Paster asserts a link between the stereotypic assumption of women as the physically 'weak vessel' to their bodily peculiarity as the 'leaky vessel' deriving from female menstruation.

> The male body, opened and bleeding, can assume the shameful attributes of the incontinent female body as both cause of and justification for its evident vulnerability and defeat. *At such moments, the bleeding male's blood comes to differ, shamefully, from itself.*[132]

The *bleeding* body alters the semantic meaning of contained blood and gives agency to the body beyond subjective control. Kent's involuntary defecation worsens his case and asserts complete loss of control. Both moments – bleeding and defecation – are judged as depriving the male subject of rationality because "man [is] one who is without a childhood; is not a primate and so is relieved of the necessity of eating, defecating, living and dying"[133]. Kent is thus not only forfeiting his privileged position as a rational, disembodied and empowered male, but comes to be emasculated by bleeding, which aligns him with the female sex. With this new emphasis given to his body, Kent is becoming progressively more abjected. Butler, like Kristeva, returns to the physical roots of abjection as imprinted on the body arguing that "[t]he 'abject' designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered 'Other'"[134]. This means that when the body becomes abjected, comes to disdain the controlling mind, the subject forfeits recognition on the social level. The myth of male disembodiment is thus challenged when Kent's injuries subordinate the officer's ability of semantic control. Men are thus not above the physical reality of their bodies which is similarly shown in Waters' novel.

Whereas the initial description of the workers in *The Night Watch* has singled out Winnie as physically deformed whilst disregarding Duncan's and Len's male bodies, the narrative amends this impression by showings Len "lurching a little from side to side, like a stout old lady; for his left leg was short, and fused at the knee" (81). The reference to a woman – the "stout old lady" – illustrates

131 Isabelle Stengers, "Wondering about Materialism" in Levi Bryant and Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (eds.), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data, 2011), p. 373.

132 Paster, (1993), p. 92, [my emphasis].

133 Butler, (2011), p. 21.

134 Butler, (2008), p. 181.

how embodiment is still conflated with women and relegated from the realm of male thinking. Duncan, in contrast, is "one of our ablest workers" (42) according to the factory boss Mrs. Alexander – simultaneously denoting his skills and his physical health.

However, during a conversation with Fraser, who wonders how Duncan can stand working in the factory, Duncan explicitly compares himself to the other workers when saying: "Everybody else there stands it. Why shouldn't I?" (87) The question Fraser is really asking is why a physically healthy person works at a place for disabled people. Duncan does not see a paradox in his occupation because he believes that his deviating sexuality is marked on his body just like Winnie's female embodiment is marked on her face. This levelling of physical disability and homosexuality is similarly noted by Claude J. Summers, who judges the war injury of Mary Renault's protagonist Laurie to be "symbolic not only of his oedipal dependence [...] but also of his homosexuality itself"[135]. According to Summers, the characters' homosexuality is manifesting in their physical injuries – in Ralph's "clawlike" (144) hand, and in Laurie's lameness. While I generally agree with this observation, Summers' conclusion that Laurie's "sexual difference [is] more crippling than his physical disability"[136] seems to be reductive.

When Laurie is being given a boot with which to walk without having to use crutches, he refers to it as a "cripple's boot", "ugly" and with a thick sole (90). The terms 'cripple' in Laurie's version and 'crippling' in Summers' analysis refer to opposite things. The former denotes his stiff leg, while the latter ascribes it to Laurie's homosexuality. To say that Laurie's "sexual difference [is] more crippling than his physical disability" reverses the character's own assessment of his condition. This becomes even more obvious when considering Laurie's identity formation informed by the cripple's boot: "One might as well learn to laugh it off, because this was not transitional like the crutch or the stick. This, henceforward, was Laurie Odell." (90-91) Even if Laurie had regarded his homosexuality as a hindrance before, in this moment of adopting to the boot, which will be a part of him for the rest of the life, his identity has changed from homosexual to cripple making his "physical disability" a greater burden than his "sexual difference".

A similar observation can be made for Ralph, who keeps his deformed hand hidden by a glove because there is "[n]o point in upsetting people" (190) by which he means particularly women. His insecurity over showing his injury is

135 Claude J. Summers, *Gay Fictions: Wilde to Stonewall: Studies in a Male Homosexual Literary Tradition* (New York: Continuum, 1990), p. 162.

136 Ibid., p. 162.

more tightly linked to his deviating sexuality than Laurie's struggles, for Ralph has experienced women as cruelly judgemental and "expect[s] that they would punish him with his deformity" (185). Since only "get[ting] along with real bitches", which might be read as a form of self-punishment for having 'abnormal' desires, Ralph's experiences with women have been wholly negative, and a woman's startled reaction upon seeing his uncovered hand confirms his premature judgement. In contrast to Laurie, whose injury replaces his homosexual identity, Ralph's hand substantiates his abjected status and infiltrates into his attitude of hiding his true self from women (and heteronormative society in general). Waters' *The Night Watch* illustrates female cruelty in similar ways when Viv makes an effort of being nice to a man with a stiff leg "because she didn't want him to suppose she wouldn't [think about going out with him], because of his leg" (251). Both *The Night Watch* and *The Charioteer* suggest that it is not only men who consider themselves as disembodied, but that women, too, find the sight of injured male flesh difficult to endure. Despite or maybe because of this aversion, the novels emphasise that men's bodies are prone to injury and male disembodiment reveals itself as a myth at wartime when the very bodies of men turn into protagonists and are, contrary to Rawlison's argument, *not* "liable to disappear"[137]. In giving the body an identity that struggles to the fore in representations of deformations, blood, and even faeces, the myth of the *Unknown* Soldier disintegrates and collapses.

The novels depict diverse ways of resisting the war either by disclosing the lingering social differences that render the People's War inauthentic, or by portraying characters who actively oppose their roles as soldiers. In their shared antagonism towards the Second World War, the novels reveal that it was not only *not* heteronormative as shown in the previous chapter, but also that it was not received with the kind of enthusiasm broadcasted by propaganda. Moreover, the People's War and Unknown Soldier myth fashioned to create a national community are in danger of revealing their insubstantiality when the wounded bodies of men strive for attention. The body is therefore a significant space of and for resistance, as it enables to break with various norms regarding gender, sexuality and the ideology of male disembodiment. In the following chapter I wish to elaborate on the significance of spaces by examining the inscriptions of gender norms onto the body and into the home, in order to disclose a narrative resistance to follow heteronormative scripts regarding the gendered politics of space.

137 Rawlison, (2000), p. 25.