Chapter 4
"Thank God for the war"
Urban Destruction and Queer Chronotopes in *The Night Watch*

Introduction

Waters' shift in writing about the nineteenth century to produce literature set in the 1940s displays an interesting development in her work, particularly in terms of the ways she uses history and of the ways she represents London. As the critic Katharina Boehm has elucidated, the significant transformations in Waters' work, once she begins writing about the twentieth century, relate to the possibility of researching historical archive.[1] In the production of her prominent neo-Victorian novels, Waters pursues the project of creating a fictional lesbian historiography in the Victorian period; this is achieved by taking as a premise the postmodernist concern of including narratives of subjects that have been traditionally excluded from normative historical accounts.[2] In an interview in *The Guardian* in 2006, Waters points to the differences in historical research, claiming that, in writing the Victorian period, she greatly relied on literary books that gave her the feeling of the period in the quality of "a stage set, already mythicized by its own extravagant fictions".[3] In turning to fiction as a historical resource, Waters suggests that her depiction of the Victorian Era is based, to a certain extent, on literary depictions and the literary genres of the period.

In writing fiction set in the first decades of the twentieth century, however, Waters begins to rely on archival material – photographs, documents, objects, and interviews from the period –, granting the fictional representation of history a materiality that is by and large imagined in her nineteenth century works. In Boehm's reading of *The Little Stranger* (2009) and *The Night Watch* (2006), she argues that these novels draw the reader's attention to the ways in which history "is sedimented in historical buildings

1 Boehm, "Historiography and the Material Imagination in the Novels of Sarah Waters", p. 242.

2 This topic will be discussed further in Chapter 8, which will deal with Hutcheon's concept of 'historiographic metafiction'.

3 *Idem*, "Romance Among the Ruins" in *The Guardian* on 28 January 2006, available in http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/jan/28/fiction.sarahwaters. Accessed on 25 January 2016.

and objects, as well as to the relationship between materiality and memory".[4] This shift in Waters' literary production also leads to transformations in her modes of narration, particularly in *The Night Watch*. While the neo-Victorian novels present autodiegetic narrators that are developed according to the literary genres to which they refer (i.e., the picaresque novel and the *Bildungsroman* in *Tipping the Velvet*; the diary form in *Affinity* and the sensation novel in *Fingersmith*), Waters introduces a heterodiegetic narrator in *The Night Watch* who focalizes on the characters separately in order to convey various experiences from the war.[5]

Apart from changes in the depiction of history and in narration, Waters' *The Night Watch* presents a very specific representation of London in her body of work, displaying the 'Little Blitz' in 1944 as the narrative's main event. Waters' depiction of urban destruction is constructed alongside notions of potential disruptions of dominant social norms regarding class, gender, and sexuality during the war, which commentators such as Rose, Jennings, and Smith have pointed out.[6] In this chapter, I aim to discuss how Waters' representations of urban destruction in London yield different queer chronotopes that disrupt the normative order of space and time. The novel's reverse chronology not only allows us to experience the lack of linearity triggered by post-war experience, as Stewart argues,[7] but it also displays the process of reverse deconstruction: we begin the novel with the reconstruction of the city and of the characters themselves only to then learn *why* and *how* both London and the protagonists became dismantled, lost, and disorientated.

The novel's first part is set in 1947, after the war, where we learn about the consequences of urban destruction in the characters' lives; the second part shifts to 1944, during the war, when the characters' relations and their social positions in the war are clarified; lastly, the novel ends in 1941, in the part in which we learn the origins of the characters' relationships and are, thus, able to make sense of the outcome of their lives presented in the first part. In 1947, the apparent normality of post-war London is sustained by peace, the lack of danger, and the absence of air raids. Yet, what we notice during this period of the city's reconstruction is the impossibility for the characters to return to their 'normal' lives, considering their traumatic experience during the war. In 1944, four years into the war and one year before its end, we notice how the characters have established a routine in their lives among extraordinary circumstances that are marked by blackouts, air raids, and the possibility of death.

The tension between normal and extraordinary circumstances during the war is crucial in Waters' novel, particularly regarding the relationship between the subjects

4 Boehm, 'Historiography and the Material Imagination in the Novels of Sarah Waters', p. 243.

5 In *The Little Stranger* (2009), Waters maintains the autodiegetic narrator, but it is a male protagonist who is the narrator in this novel. Set in a Georgian mansion in rural Warwickshire after the Second World War, this is the only novel written by Waters that does not take place in London. In her latest novel, *The Paying Guests* (2014), Waters uses a heterodiegetic narrator to narrate a crime novel set in the 1920s in Camberwell, South-East London.

6 Cf. Jennings, *A Lesbian History of Britain*, pp. 135–141; Rose, *Which People's War?*, pp. 71–92; 107–150 and Smith, *Britain in the Second World War*, pp. 12–16.

7 Stewart, "The Second World War in Contemporary Women's Fiction: Revisiting the Home Front", p. 419.

and their spatial environment. While it seems impossible to live a normal life in 1947 because of the transformations that the characters underwent during the war, living a normal life in 1944 is what gives the characters some kind of stability in completely abnormal circumstances. In both instances, however, there is a mismatch between subject and space that enables the characters to appropriate space as a means to make their lives livable: in this process, appropriation is always enacted within the movement of stabilizing and destabilizing norms.

Much has been said about the reverse chronology of the novel. Alden reads the reverse chronology in tandem with Henry Green's temporal and narrative complexity in *Caught* (1943), arguing that Waters' refusal of linearity reverberates the fragmentary act of giving an account of war.[8] Adding to the discussion about reverse chronology as a post-war narrating strategy, Stewart contends that the movement from effect to cause is linked to the narrative structure of the detective novel, since Waters constructs her narrative upon elements of suspense that will focus on *how* the protagonists will survive. In this sense, she argues that, like in the detective novel, past actions and events in *The Night Watch* are structured like "the forward-moving narrative of the investigation, so that the action progresses forward and backward simultaneously".[9] It moves forward because we slowly gather more information about the characters' connections and wartime experiences and it moves backwards because, since we are reading their future before their past, we always refer back to the post-war period in order to make the necessary connections between 1944 and 1947.

Mitchell goes further into the reading about the novel's reverse chronology to argue that the "temporal oddness" is not only a structural and narrative device in the plot, but it also relates to the ways in which the characters live outside regular frameworks of time and also outside normative frameworks of society as a whole. She contends that Waters conjures a "queer temporality" in the novel, given that "the war is sufficiently disruptive of normative temporalities", as the characters can only live the present and have difficulties in planning the future.[10] The lesbian characters, she argues, are outside heteronormative time because they do not live in the logics of reproductive and marriage linearity. This is especially the case for Kay Langrish, a woman in her mid-thirties who had worked as an ambulance driver during the war, while, in 1947, she lives as a lost ghost in the city, unable to hold on to her former job. One of Waters' few male protagonists, Duncan, also finds himself outside of heteronormative time due to his implicit homosexuality, his attachment to the past, and particularly because time in his life is marked by prison time.

Even the novel's heterosexual characters, Mitchell explains, are bound to live in queer forms of temporalities, since they also embody "non-normative ways of being".[11]

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8 Alden, "'Possibility, Pleasure and Peril': *The Night Watch* as a Very Literary History", in Mitchell (ed.) *Sarah Waters*, p. 74.

9 Stewart, "The Second World War in Contemporary Women's Fiction: Revisiting the Home Front", p. 429.

10 Mitchell, "'What does it feel like to be an anachronism?': Time in *The Night Watch*", in Mitchell (ed.) *Sarah Waters*, p. 86.

11 *Ibid.*

Viv, Duncan's sister, for instance, has a conflictive relationship with a married man, Reggie. Their encounters take place outside of regular familial or reproductive times, given that they can only meet in secret places, often outside of London. In 1944, Viv gets pregnant and they find a dentist who performs abortions in his clinic. The traumatic experiences of pregnancy, and later of abortion alongside Reggie's deliberate negligence, characterize their affair outside heteronormative time and, at the same time, shows that the 'sexual freedom' during wartime was limited to certain people and circumstances, as I will explain further throughout this chapter. In a time in which abortion was a crime, Viv finds her supposed freedom thwarted by strict reproductive legislation that allows men to walk away from pregnancies and puts women in serious risks; thus, while heterosexist norms enable Reggie to move on as if nothing happened, they place Viv as a cast-off character who must bear the consequences of an undesired pregnancy.

According to Mitchell, Waters' concern with time structures in *The Night Watch* deals "with the frustration of temporal progress and the abandonment of conventional temporal markers, with the subjective distortion and affective force of time versus tyranny of 'objective' and institutional time".[12] Crucial to her argument is that all of the novel's characters are submitted to a temporality that follows on from their non-normative subject positions and of the emotional situation in which they find themselves, thereby suggesting that there is always a tension between "'objective' and institutional time" (e.g., reproductive, family, and industrial time) and their own subjective time.

By using the expressions 'family time' and 'industrial time', Mitchell references Harvey's discussions about time-space experiences in both modernity and late modernity. Harvey defines 'family time' as the time to have and raise children, as well as the time to transfer assets and knowledge from one generation to the next through the already established relations of kinship. 'Industrial time' is related to capitalism, to labor, and to the rhythms of technology in society. According to Harvey, family time works according to industrial time, given that the first functions as a means to attend and sustain the norms of the latter. In this normative framework of the experience of time, the notion of stability is granted through "cyclical and repetitive motions" that also entail the idea of progress.[13] For Harvey, this stability is disrupted in situations of recession and of war, which put the sense of progress in check. In these cases, he contends that we seek stability and reassurance by holding onto cyclical time, something that could warrant the possibility that these extraordinary situations will come to an end.

For Mitchell, the novel's queer temporality is conveyed in its wartime setting, in its reverse chronology, and in its characters' subjective/affective time frames. In her reading, the novel's queer temporality undermines the notion of lesbianism as an infantile and 'backwards sexuality', prompting instead significant consequences in the characters' lives.[14] The characters disrupt institutional temporality by rejecting

12 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

13 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 202.

14 Mitchell, "'What does it feel like to be an anachronism?': Time in *The Night Watch*", p. 98.

the continuity of reproduction and by creating their own notions of keeping track of time, as we notice with Kay's character in the first pages of the novel. By watching her landlord's (Mr. Leonard) patients coming and going, "she really could tell the time by them: the woman with the crooked back, on Mondays at ten; the wounded soldier, on Thursdays at eleven".[15] Kay's time, being secured with fixed income due to her upper-class background, cannot be measured by the time at work after the war, as is the case for her friend Mickey who works at a gas station; instead, it is measured by her watching others' temporal routines.

Throughout this chapter, I will reiterate Mitchell's notion of queer temporality, but I wish to reflect on this idea alongside the novel's spatial aspects which are not considered in her reading. It is true that time plays a crucial role in *The Night Watch*'s narrative structure, as Mitchell has thoughtfully elucidated, but it is also important to consider the novel's potential to create queer spatialities. As I will argue in the following pages, I consider how the destruction of London and the measures of control and regulation over the population during the war affect the characters in different ways: where the 'war effort' provides the female characters in the novel with the possibility of financial and personal autonomy, and more sexual freedom than they experienced previously, it completely takes away Duncan's freedom and it traps him into a very sensitive mental state. Apart from imposing non-normative time frameworks upon individuals, as Mitchell has pointed out, war also dramatically changes the spatial order of a specific territory and its population.

Neville Chamberlain's government expressed great preoccupation with urban areas in the beginning of the war, namely the most populous ones and the damages that German attacks might cause. London, of course, was known to be the main target. It was because of this territorial and spatial concern during the war that British governments, first Chamberlain's and later Winston Churchill's, adopted measures to regulate and control the population, knowing that "even more than in the Great War, the civilian would be as much in the front as the soldier in uniform".[16]

It was important to keep the population engaged with the war effort and, to do so, the government massively invested in propaganda and in surveys that could reflect people's public opinions during the war. This methodology of controlling the population was crucial to guaranteeing the country's functioning during wartime and to creating an overall ideology that there would be radical progress after the war, and that the country was united against their common enemy, the Germans. Waters' *The Night Watch* shows that these mechanisms of regulation and control were not completely effective. In the novel, she demonstrates how the characters' wartime experiences display unequal effects on their agency, autonomy, and freedom. In this sense, it is possible to argue that their wartime experiences were not only marked by non-normative temporalities, as Mitchell contends, but also by non-normative spatialities, in which the destruction of places and buildings also means a continuing process of destabilizing norms (destruction) to later re-establish them (reconstruction) in conventional ways.

15 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 3.

16 Thorpe, 'Britain', in Noakes (ed.) *The Civilian in War*, p. 21.

In my reading, I will argue that Waters depicts the relationship between individuals and space, whereby notions of space are conveyed in relation to wartime ideology and to notions of identity. Waters' depictions of spaces are always entangled with notions of temporality and often convey the idea that identities are constructed through and across space. For instance, Kay arrives in a house that has just been destroyed in 1944:

> […] broken window-glass mixed up with broken mirrors, crockery, chairs and tables, curtains, carpets, feathers from a cushion or a bed, great splinters of wood. […] What amazed her, too, was the smallness of the piles of dirt and rubble to which even large buildings could be reduced. This house had had three intact floors to it, an hour before; the heap of debris its front had become was no more than six or seven feet high. She supposed that houses, after all – like the lives that were lived in them were mostly made of space. It was the spaces, in fact, which counted rather than the bricks.[17]

Although the description of the shattered house in the beginning looks like bits and pieces, these objects (mirrors, glass, crockery, chairs and tables, curtains, carpet) give us a notion of this destroyed site as an actual home. The description of this place that has been turned into rubble refers to past and present: the found objects symbolize the material construction of the house in the past, whereas their scattering represents the rubble that the house has become in the present. The last sentences, referring to the spatiality of lives, indicate that theses lives are narrated through space, instead of being narrated *exclusively* through time: life is not a linear series of events narrated through temporality alone, but it is also constituted by and through space. It is the subject's relation to space and the way space will constrain or empower the individual's conditions of living that will shape and form their identity.

Space alone cannot be regarded as the physical and architectural representation of London in the novel; space must be coupled with the ideological framework of nationhood, which works under the premise of the 'People's War' rhetoric in wartime. As Calder's and Rose's studies elucidate, governmental measures of regulation, surveillance, and propaganda functioned as a way to create an ideology that attempted to keep the population engaged with the war efforts[18] and, moreover, acted as an ideology that promised great transformations in England's social structures, especially in terms of gender, class, and race.[19] Wartime ideology consisted in an overall ideal that the war was "being fought by and for a country imagined as a unified land of 'ordinary people'".[20] As Feigel notes, the myth of the Blitz, which "portrayed the Blitz as a scene of cheerful togetherness and courage",[21] was also an attempt to produce an environment of normality in abnormal circumstances. In Feigel's words: "[w]hile

17 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 195.

18 Cf. Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, pp. 119–140.

19 Cf. Rose, *Which People's War?*, pp. 1–29.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

21 Feigel, *The Love-Charm of Bombs*, p. 5.

fighting in the First World War took place far away, the bombing of the Second World War was superimposed onto a relatively normal London life".[22]

As I will show throughout this chapter, Waters reworks the myth of the Blitz by challenging the notion of a generalized union among citizens and by exploring the sexual freedom that women (lesbian and straight) experienced during the war. In using different focalizers throughout the narrative, she emphasizes individual stories that do not always overlap with the ideal sense of engagement with the war effort. Waters' construction of her characters, of London, and of wartime must be read beyond the scope of lesbian and gay sexual identities and apart from the pervasive idea of wartime sexual freedom. Rather, I will suggest that its reading should be extended to the effects of the war's ideology in the characters' lives and in their relationship with London. As I will further elucidate, the characters' appropriation of non-normative spatial and temporal circumstances imposed by the war *can* produce queer spaces and queer temporalities. However, sometimes they will yield normative time and spaces that reflect pre-war norms or, at times, they also entail notions of futurity that are ingrained within heteronormative marriage and kinship.

Queer Chronotopes

In order to explore the relation between temporal and spatial frameworks in the novel, it is relevant to discuss the pervasive clear-cut division between space and time. Drawing on discussions of Laclau and Jameson, Massey argues that time has always been placed as the positive side of the time-space binary, being connected to change, movement, history, dynamism, progress, science, order, and reason, whereas space has been put into the negative pole of the binary, often being related to stasis, aesthetics, reproduction and chaos.[23] According to Massey, it is crucial to think of the relation between time and space in an "irrefutable four-dimensionality (indeed n-dimensionality) of things", having in mind that "space is not static, nor time spaceless".[24] For Massey, it is crucial to understand that social relations are spatial, that they change throughout time and that these relations could take place in a very local level but also extend itself to the global.

It can be fruitful to look into Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, in which the novel's temporality is considered more important than its spatiality, in light of Massey's notions of space-time. In doing so, we can reflect on the chronotope within Massey's premise that both time and space must be regarded in relation to the other, instead of having one category being prioritized over the other. If we consider space to be a product that undergoes endless transformations that are influenced by social relations, history, social norms, and the ways individuals can appropriate space, collectively or subjectively, then it is possible to argue that there is also movement and transformation in space that will materialize in different ways over time. While

22 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

23 Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, pp. 256–257.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

Bakhtin's discussions of the chronotope contend that time warrants the representability of the world in literature, Massey suggests that space can also be a dynamic means of representation of history, politics, and the social. In this case, I would argue that space is also a crucial element of narrative that cannot be regarded as isolated from the temporal or as a product *of* time in literary representations of the world: in literary chronotopes, it is essential to reflect upon the ways in which space and time shape each other.

Waters' *The Night Watch* definitely defies time as a primary representational element in its narrative, given that it becomes clear that space can also materialize time and can represent history. The destruction of London and the process of its reconstruction are pivotal to the development of events, and to the characters' queer relations between each other and with their environment. In 1947, for instance, Reggie picks Viv up at Waterloo to drive outside of London for one of their encounters. They cross the Strand, the City, and drive past the Whitechapel, in East London:

> He speeded up. The streets grew clearer. Billboards appeared at the side of the road, advertising *Players, Please!* and *Wrigley's, 'Jiffy' Dyes* and *Vim*. She sat more loosely, watching the peeling back of the city – the blitzed Victorian high streets giving way to red Edwardian villas, the villas giving way to neat little houses like so many bowler-hatted clerks, the little houses becoming bungalows and prefabs. It was like hurtling backwards through time – except that the bungalows and prefabs turned into open green fields, and after that, she thought, if you narrowed your eyes and didn't look at things like telegraph poles or aeroplanes in the sky, you could have been in any time, or no time at all.[25]

The spatial elements that describe their drive from Waterloo to the outskirts of London are the marks of time. First, it is the present that is indicated by the 1940s advertisement billboards, which are followed by a linear architectural history that begins in the Victorian period and ends with post-war prefabricated houses and bungalows in the East End. The description, with the image of a blitzed Victorian street that leads directly to an Edwardian villa, can be read as a spatial portrayal of the modernist ideal of breaking with the Victorian past. Once turned into little houses, the architectural aspect of buildings is then directly linked to the new clerk class, an affluent working- and middle-class that grew in the beginning of the twentieth century and that settled in London's suburban areas.[26] Lastly, the architecture changes into the prefabricated

25 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 62. Emphasis in original.

26 See chapter 4 in Stedman Jones' *Languages of Class* and Clapson's "Destruction and Dispersal: The Blitz and the 'Break-Up' of Working-Class London" in Clapson and Larkham (eds.) *The Blitz and its Legacy*, p. 100. Interestingly, Waters' most recent novel *The Paying Guests* (2014) depicts the inter-war period and the decline of the Victorian upper-classes and the rise of the 'clerk class'. Frances and her mother, Mrs. Wray, must start taking lodgers into their home in suburban Camberwell (South-East London) to complement their income, as both sons died in the Great War and the father of the family leaves a stack of debts after his death. Leonard and Lilian Barber, the couple who move in, belong to the clerk class, as Leonard works in the City and Lilian is a housewife, both originally from a working-class background.

houses and bungalows that characterize the post-war attempt to rapidly rebuild London and to provide housing for over a million people who lost their homes.[27]

Although Waters' spatial construction of the cityscape chronologically suggests the idea of progress, Viv has the sensation of going back in time at high speed to arrive in open green fields, the countryside. Instead of the countryside being conveyed as a point of *origin*, a landscape of the past that can be read as tradition or even recall the lives of rural workers, the fields take her to a sensation of there being a void of time, especially when she closes her eyes and cannot see the objects that characterize the 1940s (i.e., telegraph poles and planes). Moving into space and driving past a linear history of London's architecture is what transforms Viv's temporal experience. Focalized on Viv's perceptions of the city in a moving car, the narrator captures the fusion of a multi-temporal space in the character's imagination, thereby creating a queer chronotope that disrupts notions of a linear historical time that will lead to progress, and that allows Viv's subjective sense of time to prevail over 'industrial' time.

In this passage, the linear presentation of London's architectural history functions as a means to disorientate Viv's sense of time; this can be interpreted in light of Sara Ahmed's discussions about phenomenology. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed approaches Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's theories to reflect on the ways in which bodies and objects orientate themselves across space and time, and how our thoughts and selves are always directed, consciously or unconsciously, towards specific ways of living and being. The notion of orientation is pivotal in the development of her reflections, as she argues that orientations shape the ways in which we inhabit space and also "how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well 'who' or 'what' we direct our energy and attention toward".[28] In this sense, Ahmed takes up Butler's arguments about bodily repetition as a process of materializing the body to argue that gender, race, and sexuality are also ways to direct ourselves across space, as we tend to perform the acts that will warrant our identity stability and intelligibility. "The work of repetitions", Ahmed argues, "is not neutral work; *it orients the body in some ways rather than others*".[29] For instance, being heterosexual would be the 'natural' or 'right' direction to follow, whereas being queer would imply deviation from the 'straight' course of heterosexual reproduction and kinship.

Ahmed shows the importance of moments of disorientation and of redirection by considering notions of phenomenological orientations from a queer perspective, and she points to the importance of deviating from the apparent 'naturalness' of social relations and identity impositions. She contends that making "things queer is certainly to disturb the order of things", whereby the consequences of disturbance are unpredictable and unequal, "given that the world is already organized around certain forms of living – certain times, spaces and directions".[30] In the passage mentioned

27 Cowan, "The People's Peace: The Myth of Wartime Unity and Public Consent for Town Planning", in Clapson and Larkham (eds.) *The Blitz and its Legacy*, p. 74.

28 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 3.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 57. Emphasis in original.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

above, Viv becomes disoriented by the linearity of space, which disrupts the ways she thinks about her relationship with Reggie. If the uncertainty of war and the destruction of the city seemed like a possibility of transformation and of freedom in 1944, something which enabled her relationship with Reggie, the reconstruction of London and the 'normality' of peacetime destabilizes Viv's decision to continue her affair in 1947. Viv's sensation of experiencing "no time at all" indicates the impossibility of staying with Reggie within the framework of 'familial' and 'reproductive' time; this makes her realize that there is no more room for her relationship with a married man in the time-space constellation of the post-war period.

The notion of disrupting the order of things can be especially fruitful in literature, as I have discussed concerning Kilian's conceptualization of literary heterotopias. In this sense, queer chronotopes can be regarded as a literary artifact that breaks with normative spatial and temporal relations. Like Kilian's literary heterotopias, queer chronotopes are construed in terms of the relationship between real and literary worlds and they enable the construction of different orders of space and time because they are linguistically constructed. However, it is important to stress that it is the relationship between time and space that is disrupted when dealing with queer chronotopes, having Massey's premise of time and space presenting equal importance as categories in mind. In Foucault's notions of heterotopias, the notion of time is read as a secondary aspect of space, which relates to how heterotopias are able to juxtapose multiple temporalities and "break with their traditional time".[31] He cites cemeteries, museums, and libraries as examples of this kind of heterotopia, suggesting that this break with time is not necessarily a subversion of the norm.

Although Kilian's reading of Foucault's concept concentrates primarily on spatiality, she does emphasize that time should not be dismissed as a category. In this sense, it seems that the concept of literary heterotopia can be discussed along the lines of queer chronotopes, especially in the reading that Kilian proposes of heterotopias as necessary 'abnormal' spaces that can establish their own norms, and can even transgress the very norms that they produce.[32] Following Ahmed's claim that the act of queering implies a disruption with the order of things and, hence, is also a gesture of *disorientation*, I want to suggest that queer chronotopes always infer a break with normative orders of time and space as a means to yield disorientation and chaos that might later be recollected in some kind of order that does not necessarily correspond to the normative.

The gesture of self-reflexivity can emerge as a reaction of disorientation from the process of the norm's re-orientation. Nevertheless, it is possible that, once chaos has been ordered into certain norms, these norms can surface again as a resilient version of the normative. Thus, the main difference between literary heterotopias and queer chronotopes lies in their potential for subversion. On the one hand, literary heterotopias refer to the elements of self-reflexivity and disruption that Kilian attributes to literature as a form of art that can subvert, denaturalize, and question social norms that are present in the lifeworld; queer chronotopes, on the other hand, operate on

31 Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", p. 26.

32 Kilian, "Literarische Heterotopien", p. 42.

heterotopic spaces in literature, in which a literary work can contain multi-layered and non-normative temporal and spatial orders that are contingent: they can be disrupted at several points in the narrative, only to be rearranged later according to dominating norms that have constituted those orders beforehand. In literary heterotopias, subversion is devised in the text as a whole, whereas, in queer chronotopes, we find spatial and temporal disorders that do not necessarily lead to the disruption of social norms within the literary text.

In *The Night Watch*, war is the disruptive factor of London's temporal and spatial orders, creating a series of queer chronotopes. That notwithstanding, they do not always produce subversion. In fact, Waters' novel begins with the post-war period to remind us that the war's aftermath did not correspond to the expectations of great social transformations in England. In 1947, the characters are stuck in the space-time that they inhabited during the war in 1944 and 1941, but are caught in the preceding period's moral concerns regarding gender, sexuality, and class that formed them. In the following section, I will discuss Waters' articulation of wartime ideology and its effects on the characters, showing how the disruption of space and time during the war (queer chronotopes) did not necessarily transform the post-war period's gender, sexuality, and class norms.

Wartime Ideology and Social Transformation

In a compelling book about the effects of populist and jingoist propaganda in Britain during the Second World War, Rose argues that governmental constructions of national identity and citizenship during the war yielded a feeling that a new Britain would arise in the post-war period. For Rose, the power of these discourses consisted in the ways in which they created hope and a desire for a new Britain that was to emerge, although "they did not delineate in very precise ways what this would entail and how it would be accomplished and who in particular would benefit from it".[33] She does recognize that there were many left-leaning and progressive political projects that gained visibility during the war, but they were never fully articulated in strong policies that extended into peacetime. What Rose emphasizes in her work is that the creation of hope, desire and, more importantly, of nationhood was crucial to keeping people engaged with the war effort.

According to Rose, the war imposed paradoxical senses about Britain's future upon the population. On the one hand, governmental propaganda endorsing the war effort and national unity conveyed the message that people should be selfless and succumb to 'war solidarity', especially at times in which Britain was under attack. Complying with these selfless acts would lead the population to the social transformation that was to come after the war. On the other hand, the war itself and, once again in the times of the Blitz in specific, created the sense of a "futureless present",[34] as Feigel describes it, since there was a constant feeling of imminent death and no certainties

33 Rose, *Which People's War?*, p. 25.

34 Feigel, *The Love-Charm of Bombs*, p. 4.

of a tomorrow. In resolutely promoting the idea that the war effort was necessary for the greater good, the government could ideologically inculcate a feeling of belonging and, moreover, that there was indeed something to be lived and fought for. As Thorpe puts it, morale consisted in "a belief in justice of and necessity for the war effort, reflected in a willingness to undertake and continue the fight until victory is won, even in the face of great hardship".[35] In this statement, victory could be read beyond the war itself and could be reflected upon as the hope that great social transformations would ensue.

Waters' choices of the years in which the novel is set (1947, 1944, and 1941) indicate a concern with depicting war morale, possibilities of social transformation, and the ways in which individuals reacted and experienced wartime ideology. In 1947, the characters' lives are similar to how Feigel narrates post-war experience for the writers Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, Henry Green, Rose Macaulay, and Hilde Spiel. Having spent their war years in London, all of the writers, like Waters' characters, "were disappointed by London", as the "post-war period seemed grey and slow" and time "was measured once again in years and decades rather than in days and weeks".[36] What we notice in Waters' depiction of 1947 is that, while time has gone back to its normative measurement, the characters are still living in a queer temporality; they exist in the same way that London is being rebuilt, and the characters are still experiencing the past's spatial experience.

Duncan, for instance, is still caught up in the space of the prison, although he was eventually released from jail. Now working at a candle factory, he lives with Mr. Mundy, who is a retired prison officer with whom Duncan became acquainted when he was imprisoned. He has a strange relationship with Mr. Mundy, whom he calls by the name Uncle Horace when in public. In his routine outside of prison, Duncan obediently follows the norms of 'industrial time' by working at the factory and then going straight home under the premise of 'family time', since he tells his acquaintances that he takes care of his elderly Uncle Horace. Learned in prison, Duncan's discipline of tracking time can also be perceived in Viv's visits to his home: they have a regular and steady periodicity, given that she comes to visit Duncan at Mr. Mundy's once a week, always after work on Tuesdays. Viv's thoughts about Mr. Mundy's home in White City are fretful, and it "gave her the creeps"; the house is fully decorated with dark furniture, jammed with odd objects and "exhausted photographs" of the Victorian past. Duncan, however, feels at home there, although "it was all dead, dead, dead"[37] in Viv's eyes. Duncan leaves prison in the same year as the war ends and that Mr. Mundy retires, in 1945. Not knowing what to do with his life, and too ashamed to go back to his father's house, Duncan chooses to move in with Mr. Mundy, keeping a tight relationship with the past and showing a categorical refusal to move on and to mature.

For Duncan, being stuck conveys his way of following the direction that going to prison set out for him. In refusing to move on with his life, he rejects the possibility

35 Thorpe, "Britain", in Noakes (ed.) *The Civilian in War*, p. 15.

36 Feigel, *The Love-Charm of Bombs*, p. 291.

37 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 27.

of re-orientation and holds on to the punishment that had been given to him in 1941. As his former cell-mate Robert Fraser explains, it is a way "of punishing himself, for all that happened, years ago, all that he did and didn't do".[38] In 1947, we do not know why Duncan has spent time in jail, but his implicit same-sex desire towards Fraser and Mr. Mundy suggests that homosexuality could have been his crime. However, as we find out in the third part of the novel, Duncan's crimes could also be a suicide attempt and an objection to serving in the war, since he and his best friend Alec wrote a letter against Britain's participation in the war and decided to commit suicide to get around military conscription. What was supposed to be a heroic act resulted in a tragedy, since Alec did kill himself, while Duncan did not go through with it and ended up in prison. Although all crimes are suggested in the novel (homosexuality, attempts at suicide, and conscientious objection), we do not clearly know the crime Duncan for which was actually convicted.

It is Duncan's working-class background as well as his traumatizing experience with Alec that differentiate him from Fraser, who achieves a much better social position in the post-war period. Fraser's privilege of an upper-class education provides the means for him to become a journalist upon leaving prison, where he spent the war years for being a conscientious objector. As a journalist, he visits the candle factory in Shepherd's Bush where he meets Duncan for the first time outside of prison. Once he sees Fraser, Duncan feels "plunged right back into the world of their old hall: the smells of it, the muddled, echoey sounds of it, the grinding misery and fear and boredom".[39] It is Fraser who triggers the sensation of life behind bars, not Mr. Mundy. The latter, with his devotion to Christian Science[40] and his role of authority as an officer, seems to be a soothing presence for Duncan as an authoritative father figure that nurtures a queer relationship of closeted homoerotic desire.

It is with Mr. Mundy that Duncan maintains his metaphorical imprisonment, although he mostly does not feel that he is doing so. While Mr. Mundy gives Duncan a feeling of protection, as Duncan is with Fraser, he constantly feels like he is being watched, which indicates his fear of being recognized as a homosexual, keeping in mind, as we later find out, that there were sexual feelings between him and Fraser when they shared a cell. As Duncan accompanies Mr. Mundy to his appointment with Mr. Leonard, a Christian Science doctor, he watches Kay Langrish, and thinks to himself that she must be "one of those women […] who'd charged about so happily during the war, and then got left over".[41] In emphasizing Duncan's gaze towards Kay, the narrator asserts Duncan as the observer, and not as the person being watched, as it often happens when he thinks about leaving his life with Mr. Mundy.

Fraser and Duncan see more of each other in 1947 and the former even looks for Viv to express his concern about his friend. Duncan wants to meet Fraser more frequently, but the relationship with Mr. Mundy prevents him from breaking free from

38 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

40 Developed by Mary Baker Eddy in the nineteenth century, Christian Science consisted in a religion based in the beliefs that illness is an illusion.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

the prison that he has built for himself. Fraser and Duncan are supposed to go on a date, but Fraser stands him up and leaves Duncan very disappointed. He thinks that if he were a different kind of boy, he would go after Fraser and that Mr. Mundy "could go to hell". He wants to leave the house, but he does not want to use the front door, so he takes the back door instead:

> […] because he knows that Mr. Mundy's bedroom overlooked the street, and he wanted to go more secretly. […] even after having said to himself that Mr. Mundy, for all he cared, could go to hell! […] he thought it would be horrible to look back and see Mr. Mundy at the window, watching him go.
>
> So he went the back way, through to the kitchen and out, past the lavatory, to the end of the yard; and only when he got to the yard door did he remember that it was kept shut with a padlock. […] he couldn't bear to go back now, not even as far as the scullery drawer. He dragged over a couple of crates and clambered up them, like a thief, to the top of the wall; he dropped to the other side, landing heavily, hurting his foot, hopping about.
>
> But the feeling, suddenly, of having a locked door behind him, was wonderful.[42]

Despite his freedom, Duncan still feels that he must sneak out the back door, like a criminal, in order to fulfill his desire to see Fraser. This escape suggests Duncan's attempt to break free from the perpetuation of the punishment that began in prison, and also to break free from his closeted sexuality. In confronting the obstacles of escape (finding a way to push himself up and then jumping over the gate), he also confronts his own fear of enacting his sexuality by going after Fraser, with whom he has already exchanged sexually charged caresses in prison during an air raid. This queer chronotope, which encompasses living in the present and escaping Mr. Mundy's home, momentarily breaks with Duncan's already established orientation of living in punishment (prison) and in the past (1944 and 1941), since it is the act of looking back at the locked padlock that prompts the attempt to move forward (to the future) and to renounce heterosexual norms.[43]

Thinking of Ahmed's discussions about queer phenomenology, we can argue that Duncan tries to disrupt his familiarity with the world, as Ahmed contends that familiarity is the way that the body feels more comfortable with following one direction, instead of another. If the familiar is, in Ahmed's words, "an effect of inhabitance" that "is shaped by actions that reach out toward objects that are already within reach",[44] then we can say that leaving Mr. Mundy's house like a thief in the night presents the possibility of reaching out to another object (Fraser) and another way of living that allows for the enactment of his sexuality. Duncan is reluctant to go back to Streatham,

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42 *Ibid.*, p. 164.

43 Mitchell also reads Duncan's escape through the back door as an attempt to enter the possibilities of the future; however, her analysis focuses exclusively on the character's queer temporality and on the ways in which he remains infantile. See "'What does it feel to be an anachronism?'", pp. 91–92.

44 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 7.

where his father lives, fearing the neighbors' judgmental glances and encounters with Alec's parents. The release from prison, in 1945, cannot bring him back to the life that had been familiar to him previously. Rather, it is prison life that becomes the familiar, thereby conveying Ahmed's idea that bodies orientate themselves as a response to their experiences in the world.

In arriving at Fraser's home, Duncan watches him dozing in an armchair from outside the window and taps on the glass for him to open the window. As Duncan asks why he never came to see him, Fraser replies, to Duncan's disappointment, that he had been out with Viv in a pub. In going out with Viv, Fraser deflects the possibilities of having feelings for Duncan, reminding the latter that Fraser is "*the sort of person who gets madly pleased over little things, for a minute, and then forgets all about them*".[45] Not knowing how to react to Duncan's visit, Fraser asks him to come in "before a policeman or somebody spots us".[46]

Fraser's concern is certainly reasonable, given that the metropolitan police's control over gay men was at its highest rates in the post-war period. According to Houlbrook, the number of arrests registered by the police tripled between 1942 and 1947, resulting in 637 cases in 1947.[47] He explains that the post-war period is considered a "witch hunt" against gay men for many historians and social commentators, since there was intense "concern at queer men's increasing visibility",[48] particularly in the West End. Although surveillance over male homosexuality diminished in the beginning of the war, because policemen had to concentrate on war duties, the blackouts and the Blitz caused anxiety about sexual disorder to such an extent that the metropolitan police had a special group known as the 'vice squad'. Functioning with a reduced number of policemen, the 'vice squads' were especially designated to control "sexual disorder", since "surveillance was […] hindered by the peculiar conditions of the Blitz";[49] this, according to the Public Moral Council, "led to an increase in street importuning in the West End".[50] Thus, it is possible to notice that, in spite of the momentary sexual freedom that the raids created, there was a governmental concern with upholding sexual and gender morality.

In the post-war period, it became clear that the government and part of the population wished to maintain class, gender, racial, and sexual mores that had characterized the pre-war period. It is true that the Second World War brought problems of social inequality in Britain to the fore, as the Beveridge Report displayed when it was published in 1942. As Rose explains, if wartime ideology aimed to concoct a ubiquitous feeling of nationhood, it was clear that this nation was formed by "a people who saw themselves […] differentiated by social class"[51] and that changes had to be made after the war. Indeed, the post-war period was marked by the population's

45 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 46. Emphasis in original.
46 *Ibid.*, p. 168.
47 Houlbrook, *Queer London*, p. 34.
48 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
49 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
50 Qtd. in Houlbrook, *Queer London*, p. 34.
51 Rose, *Which People's War?*, p. 67.

expectations that the government would act on the Beveridge Report's recommendations, which revolved around social benefits for families and children, the creation of the National Health Service, and unemployment benefits.[52] Though changes were actually made, and social insurance was created, social commentators, such as Rose and Smith, consider these changes to have been moderate and insufficient for the population.[53]

In her representation of the war, Waters depicts how there was an expectation of a better future, although this could not be fully achieved. In 1944, Viv and Helen, the two working-class women in the novel, work at the Ministry of Food and at the Town Hall respectively and their conviviality with upper-class women shows that class differences are quite evident during the war effort. Viv has completed a secretary course in a college in Balham, and an instructor encourages her to apply for secretary jobs, claiming that a girl with her background now had equal opportunities as "a girl from a better sort of family". However, the instructor advises Viv to take elocution classes in order to be able to *perform* an upper-class accent, and not "use words like *dad* and *toilet* and horrors like that".[54] Viv then spends half an hour a week for three months repeating poetry by Walter de la Mare to an elderly actress in Kennington in order to sound like an upper-class girl.

Helen's class relations are intertwined with her love affairs with Julia and with Kay, who come from upper-class backgrounds. In 1944, Helen lives with Kay and they seem to be in a relationship that is falling apart, in which Kay performs the role of the devoted husband who works obsessively, is passionate and romantic, and who gives Helen expensive gifts to make up for her regular absence due to her job as an ambulance driver. Performing a wife who is bored with marital life, Helen meets Julia, Kay's ex-girlfriend, and they begin an affair. Like Kay, Julia enjoys impressing Helen with expensive gifts and surprises. Julia, who is a writer and a journalist, assists her father in surveying damaged and bombed buildings and houses in London and, due to her upper-class background, she has access to foreign ingredients and foods that were not commonly found in London during the war. As Julia invites Helen for lunch in a Victorian house, which Julia and her father are assessing, Julia brings rabbit sandwiches with garlic, a foreign taste that Helen recognizes but to which she is not quite accustomed. Julia tells her she has relatives in Chicago who send her family parcels of food, which displays her own privilege in the rationing system in Britain during the war.

Julia asks Helen if there are any relatives of hers living abroad who could do the same, but Helen tells her that her entire family lives in Worthing, where she grew up. In the course of their conversation, it becomes clear that there are class differences between them. The signs that indicate these differences relate to the meal that Julia prepares, which contains meat and garlic, which was imported from Italy. While food rationing was a necessary measure during the war, middle- and upper-class people had more access to food supplies from the black market because they could afford to pay

52 Calder, *The People's War*, p. 528.

53 Cf. Rose, *Which People's War?*, pp. 292–294 and Smith, *Britain in the Second World War*, pp. 19–21.

54 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 247.

for it.[55] Moreover, Waters describes class differences through Julia's family property owning and the different employment positions Julia and Helen occupy during and after the war. In 1944, Julia mentions that her family owned a house in Arundel, near Worthing, where Julia had spent many summers[56] and, during the war, she lived in her aunt's flat in London, so the flat is not requisitioned by the government.[57] After the war, Julia becomes a well-known writer of detective novels, while Helen gets a job at a dating agency where Viv works as well. During the war, Helen worked in an administrative position in the Town Hall. In contrast to Julia's father, who is an architect engaged with public surveys during the war; Helen's father is an optician, and her brother makes lenses for the RAF.[58]

When Julia asks Helen about growing up in Worthing, Helen does not have much to say and just replies that her family is "very ordinary […] They're not like Kay's", thinking that they were not like Julia's family either. Julia realizes that Helen looks embarrassed because of her working-class background and tells her that "nothing like that matters any more […] Not these days. Not now that we all dress like scarecrows, and talk like Americans – or else, like chars".[59] Although she is trying to soothe Helen's embarrassment, Julia's analogies stem from pervasive wartime class ideals, as they suggest, firstly, that all people, including the more affluent ones, are embracing working-class manners in dressing like a 'scarecrow' or a cleaning lady. In speaking like Americans, there is also a reference to British tradition becoming destabilized by foreign presence and, in this case, America's presence consisted of many African Americans. Moreover, Julia's statement reinforces the notion that class no longer matters, an ideal that was greatly promoted by governmental propaganda, and that assumes that there is a national cross-class unity.

As Calder has elucidated, the 'People's War' rhetoric began to be propagated in the press, radio, and films after the defeat in the Dunkirk battle as a necessity to mitigate class and political confrontations in Britain, in which "we" and "us" meant very different social groups, separated by class in particular.[60] After all, the situation in Britain in the 1930s was quite precarious, given that the lower-classes lived in poverty due to high unemployment rates, low social benefits, and job insecurity. According to Rose, the rhetoric of 'equality of sacrifice', which required that people leave their old social antagonisms behind in order to do their bit in the war, actually augmented class conflicts in many ways.[61] Firstly, it had become clear that the division of private and public shelters left lower-classes in more vulnerable conditions during air raids. This was also the case for food rationing, as we see in Julia's character, for the wealthy could circumvent rationing and had access to better meals, while the lower-classes had to content themselves with the diets imposed upon them by the government, which

55 Smith, *Britain in the Second World War*, pp. 9–10.
56 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 273.
57 *Ibid.*, p. 349.
58 *Ibid.*, p. 273.
59 *Ibid.*, pp. 272–273.
60 Calder, *The People's War*, p. 138.
61 Rose, *Which People's War?*, pp. 34–35.

were not calculated according to the occupations that people had, thereby affecting workers' performance in factories and manual jobs.

The Myth of the Blitz and the Limits of Sexual Freedom

In Waters' depictions of 1941 and 1944, she takes up the already established myth of the Blitz, which according to Calder, harnesses a nationalist sense of heroism, bravery, and loyalty to Britain.[62] In the novel, it is possible to notice that the women characters engage with the war as a means to achieve emancipation, while the male characters show objection and refusal to participate in the war. This does not mean, however, that the women in the novel are completely resigned to the war effort and that they comply with the norms that ideally construct the woman's role during wartime, for they engage in non-normative sexual affairs that were not tolerated, even during the war. Although Waters shows how characters such as Kay, Mickey, Viv, and Helen gain autonomy during the war, she makes sure to explore the differences in their perceptions of the war in order to challenge the idea that the war yielded a feeling of national unity. In Duncan's, Fraser's, and Alec's characters, we see the open refusal to participate in the war, which subsequently undermines their loyalty to their nation and, moreover, their own image of manhood, since objectors were perceived as cowards and traitors.

In 1941, Alec is called up to serve the army in the war and leaves his home in the middle of an air raid to talk to Duncan. In an outburst of ideas about how to escape war service, Alec suggests that he and Duncan kill themselves as a heroic act against the war, thinking that it would be in the papers everywhere in Britain and that it could even stop the war itself. Written on the back of the recruitment letter, their suicide note states that they should take their own lives "*on behalf of the Youth of England, and in the name of Liberty, Honesty and Truth*". The date of their suicide, Alec claims, "will become like the ones we learned in school" that will be remembered in a hundred years' time.[63]

Where the female characters experience the air raids in the city, either working or as a spectator, Fraser and Duncan must undergo the raids from their cells, while the prison officers go into the shelter. As conscientious objectors, they "are castigated as emasculated cowards".[64] As Rose has elucidated, conscientious objectors were frequently shamed in public and labeled through terms that "denot[ed] effeminacy and hint[ed] that their sexuality was suspect".[65] Isolated from war, Duncan and Fraser depict those who did not accept the national duty imposed on male subjects in Britain. In contrast to Duncan and Fraser, the female protagonists experience the war as an opportunity to enter a realm of social, political, and citizenship participation that they could not completely access previously. Although women already had the same formal political rights as men in Britain, they were still at a disadvantage in terms

62 Cf. Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*.

63 Waters, *The Night Watch*, pp. 485–486. Emphasis in original.

64 Rose, *Which People's War?*, p. 180

65 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

of wage, social, and civil rights.[66] In 1941, under the National Service Act, women were officially called into duty on the home front to take up jobs in women's services, munitions factories, and civil defense.[67] It is under this public call for women that Viv decides to move to London to attend secretary college in Balham and she begins to work at the Ministry of Food as a typist.

The third part of the novel, set in 1941, begins with Viv's train journey to London, where she meets Reggie. Travelling from Taunton, where her sister is living to escape the air raids, Viv's journey to London is a significant one, as it suggests the shift from a traditional woman's role as a caregiver to that of an independent woman, who begins a love affair with a married soldier. When they meet, Reggie does not hide the fact that he is married and has children, and Viv cannot think "that the train was speeding him towards [his family]. They might have been dreams to her, or ghosts".[68] For Viv, the train's acceleration is the journey to the future; a future in which families are uncanny and somehow invisible. While in 1947 travelling by car with Reggie meant travelling backwards in time and to a notion of no time, in 1941 Viv's feelings are directed towards the future and the thrill of London during wartime.

It is in 1941 that the novel's women characters commence their lives in an alleged world of sexual freedom provided by blackouts, air raids, and a laxity of surveillance over women's sexual behavior. Kay's encounter with Helen is also meaningful, given that it takes place after an air raid during which Helen's home is completely destroyed. Kay is the one who finds Helen under beams and bricks, and she stays with her to calm her down until the doctor arrives. The scene is described in detail and the men who are working with Kay and Mickey are never the protagonists of the action. For Kay and Mickey, the men moved in "maddening slowness; for there was something queer [...] about the way the house had fallen".[69] The queerness about the "fallen house" relates both to the complete destruction of it and also to what is constructed afterwards. Waters narrates the scene by describing the house as ruins to subsequently recount that "[t]he wall was raised eerily upright for a moment"[70] by using ropes. As they excavate the rubble and dust, Kay begins a conversation with Helen: from the ruins of the house, their relationship emerges as a hopeful form of affection created among destruction. Like the 'fallen woman', the 'fallen house' is the allegorical site that allows for new models of femininity and sexuality to emerge, since it is under this fallen house that Kay and Helen fall in love.

Kay continues to talk to Helen, who tells her that she is very brave to work during the raids. Kay replies that it is easier to be "out in the fuss" than to listen about it at home. The doctor, who is also a woman, arrives and Kay asks Helen to keep it a secret "about it being easier to be out".[71] In Kay's statements, coming out to take part in the war can be read as coming out as a lesbian, implying that it is better

66 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

67 Smith, *Britain in the Second World War*, p. 12.

68 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 474.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 498.

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Ibid.*, p. 500

to live the experience of homosexuality with other women than to hear about it and not to act it out. Following a thorough description of the raid's damage to Helen's house and in London, their conversation leads to the topic of love and the scene ends with Kay brushing the dust off from Helen's face, feeling her skin and caressing her jaw in an amorous way, "unable to believe that something so fresh and so unmarked could have emerged from so much chaos".[72] What rises from the rubble and the city's destruction is their love and, moreover, a metropolitan lesbian culture that comes into being during the Second World War.

It is possible to read Helen's rise from the city's ashes as analogous to the development of lesbian bars and nightlife in twentieth century metropolitan spaces. While male homosexual culture can be traced back to the eighteenth century, lesbian subculture only came to be representative in metropolitan life in the 1920s and 1930s.[73] Lesbian bar and club culture became more vibrant during the Second World War, in London in particular, as many women were living away from home and were involved in professional occupations that provided an income. Apart from this, as Jennings explains, the war prompted shifts in the ways women enjoyed themselves in the city, as, for instance, they increasingly began to take part in nightlife without a male chaperone.[74] The Gateways Club in Chelsea was opened up in this period and it was considered to be one of the main lesbian venues in London up until the 1960s.

Jennings argues that the increase in pubs, bars, and clubs was crucial for "lesbian community building and identity formation",[75] and enabled lesbian visibility in a metropolitan setting in many ways. However, visibility also entailed public regulation of sexuality by the police, since, although surveillance was not as efficient as it had been in the pre-war years, the concern with women expressing their sexuality was still a matter of keeping morality under control during wartime. As Jennings points out, from the 1940s onwards police accounts described the presence of lesbian women in the West End among male homosexuals and prostitutes,[76] thereby placing them as sexually immoral and as an undesired presence in public space.

The myth created around the Blitz often portrays the notion of a ubiquitous sexual freedom in London during wartime because of the shifts in control and regulation over gender and sexuality and of women's more active participation in social and political spheres. As Jivani puts it, "the idea that death might be imminent […] led to a devil-may-care attitude", in which people indulged in sexual adventures that they would probably not dare try in normal circumstances.[77] The environment of sexual freedom that Jivani conveys can be considered true to the extent that the risk of death did indeed trigger situations in which people felt free enough to unleash their most intimate sexual desires. However, this freedom was definitely not a general feeling, and non-normative sexualities or gender presentations were definitely not condoned

72 *Ibid.*, p. 503.
73 Jennings, *A Lesbian History of Britain*, p. 131.
74 *Ibid.*, p. 131.
75 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
76 *Idem*, *Tomboys and Bachelor Girls*, p. 111.
77 Jivani, *It's Not Unusual*, p. 55.

by authorities or even by more conventional citizens. On the one hand, the leniency in surveillance did provide more favorable circumstances for non-normative sexual relationships; on the other hand, Mass Observation reports displayed great concern over male homosexuality and women's sexual behavior due to the 'excessive' freedom that they enjoyed during the war.

In her representation of the 'Little Blitz' in 1944, Waters portrays the blackout and air raid to engage with the possibilities and limitations of the sexual freedom triggered by the bombings. After a long lull, from January until March 1944 Londoners experienced a total of thirteen major attacks stronger than the ones from the Blitz in 1940 and 1941.[78] Waters' accounts in the second part of the novel take place in February 1944, exactly when London suffered the worst attacks, in which nearly a thousand people lost their lives. Julia and Helen kiss for the first time in one of these raids, which displays Waters' interest in exploring the 'Little Blitz' both as a sexual and an aesthetic event. As soon as the blackout begins, they decide to go out for a walk around the city and, once they are spotted by a warden, Julia suggests that they look for a place to hide so that they can become invisible. Becoming invisible, in this scene, relates to them showing affection away from official surveillance and, instead of going to the Underground shelter, they walk towards quieter streets where they can be alone.

Suddenly, they feel the transformation of the city "for it could not be seen, so much as felt", given that there is a sense of "unnatural spaces".[79] They kiss in the darkness of the blackout and, as they do it, the sirens go off "like the bells of London", whose voices cry out "*Take cover!* [...] *Run and hide! Here comes the chopper to chop off your head!*".[80] In this moment, Julia and Helen are reminded that they are not alone and that they must look for a shelter. Slowly, other people materialize, they see a car that disappears into the darkness, and they hear voices, "men's voices, like the voices of ghosts from the blitz, floating about, echoing queerly".[81] In their minds, the two firemen are nothing but ghosts, immaterial beings, who are dead like those who did not survive the raids. These male voices are reminders of a past, in which women could not feature as protagonists of war action. In the London in which Julia and Helen are walking, it is the voices of men that are remote and unheard, not those of women, and they are the women who are in charge of their own paths.

As a queer chronotope, the blackout followed by the sirens enables a temporal and spatial disruption with the city, as Julia and Helen become invisible and kiss during the blackout, without being seen by public surveillance. Their slow return to the realm of visibility happens with the ghostly male voices that timidly surface as haunting memories from the past, as male control over women, a dominant relation from which Julia and Helen can temporarily keep distance. However, once they encounter

78 Calder, *The People's War*, p. 555. These attacks were far more damaging because the Germans were now using bigger and more destructive bombs, which were called 'pilotless bombs' or V1s. See also Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, p. 41.

79 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 359.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 370. Emphasis in original.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 372.

the second warden, his male authority prevails at first, only to then be overcome by the hierarchical superiority of Julia's class position. The warden sees the two women wandering, and he immediately tells them to look for shelter. To his demand, Julia replies: "'What does it look like we're trying to do? Where's the nearest shelter?' The man caught her tone – or what was more likely, Helen thought, took note of her accent – and his manner slightly changed".[82]

The blackout enables the creation of a queer chronotope that destabilizes sexuality and gender norms, rendering invisibility and an environment free from masculine regulation, but it does not prompt the same effect on class relations. Julia's class privilege, expressed by her accent, is what makes the ward tone down his authoritative voice. The fact that the narrator focuses on Helen's perspective in this scene also marks her own class difference in relation to Julia, since the passage implies that, in Helen's thoughts, had she said something so bold to the officer, he would not have lowered his voice. Yet, Julia's superiority over the officer gives Helen the feeling of safety and protection, as she puts her arm in Julia's and they begin to walk to the underground station for shelter. Once they get there, Helen's sense of protection grows into a crisis of consciousness, as she realizes that they are visible again and that she must share Julia with other people in the shelter. Here, the explosions begin and they start running and laughing; they find another place to hide and see the warden that they had encountered earlier pass by without seeing them. Julia then says, "[n]ow we're invisible again".[83] In this passage, the construction of a queer chronotope provides the means for a literary heterotopia to emerge, in which Julia and Helen can walk around as a couple without being noticed by heteronormative gazes.

The use of the raids' blackouts as possibilities to destabilize gender and sexual norms also features in earlier literary texts set during the Second World War. As Alden has elucidated, Henry Green and Elizabeth Bowen are Waters' main intertextual references in *The Night Watch*. As well as the use of reverse chronology, Waters, like Green, takes up the blackout as "opportunities for illicit eroticism".[84] From Bowen, Waters employs the literary devices of contrasting light and darkness and also the ways in which Bowen represents the collapse of London as an opening of "possibilities in people's emotional lives".[85]

Based in London during the war, Bowen and Green experienced the thrill and perils of the Blitz, having served as a warden for the Air Raid Protection (ARP) and as a fireman in the Auxiliary Fire Service respectively. Their luxurious excitement in wartime, Feigel explains, was facilitated by their class privileges. As writers from an affluent background, they were able to experience the blitz as moments of freedom and excitement "in part because they could switch off from the danger and enjoy the raids as aesthetic events",[86] as both Bowen and Green had access to private shelters and to more food than rationing permitted. Feigel argues that wartime Londoners

82 *Ibid.*

83 *Ibid.*, p. 374.

84 Alden, "'Possibility, Pleasure and Peril'" in Mitchell (ed.), *Sarah Waters*, p. 74.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

86 Feigel, *The Love-Charm of Bombs*, p. 5.

felt "liberated by the atmosphere of unmarriedness", having lived through the Blitz as an ultimate experience to fall in love, as the imminence of death "brought with it an intense consciousness of being alive that was conducive to sexual passion".[87]

Waters engages with this literary tradition of the Blitz as a series of moments that are erotically charged and that feed into the myth of the bombings as heroic, thrilling, and aesthetic events. However, they cannot be mistaken as simple accounts of sexual liberation, as it becomes clear in 1947 that sexual freedom hinged on the waning of moral surveillance: as soon as the war was over, it was expected that the population would comply with the norms of marriage and familial obligations. If the raids in 1941 and in 1944 propelled the beginning of new romantic relationships, such as Kay's with Helen and later Helen's with Julia, 'normality' imposed more conventional routines for the couples who survived the excitements of the Blitz in 1947. Helen and Julia, for instance, are stuck in a domestic life, in which Helen seems unhappy and utterly dependent upon Julia; Viv and Reggie's relationship begins to fall apart, since the normative temporal and spatial frames of the post-war period do not conform to their secretive and illicit relationship. In her turn, Kay's life is fastened to the memories of the war and of the excitement that she was able to enjoy as an ambulance driver and as Helen's partner.

For Viv, the 1944 blackout does not provide an environment of invisibility, but that of exposure. On the night she and Reggie go to Mr. Imrie's dental clinic for the abortion, the moon is so bright that they do not need a torch. London seems to her like a fictional set, as "everything looked depthless, the fronts of houses flat as scenery on a stage, the trees like trees of papier mâché touched up with glitter and silver paint. Nobody liked it. It made you feel vulnerable, exposed".[88] In spite of the blackout, the moonlight gives her the sensation that she is under surveillance and, to some extent, that it jeopardizes her performance with Reggie as a married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison. The sexual adventure for Viv and Reggie during the blackout is to perform a married couple, a performance that proves to be implausible in the circumstances of the Little Blitz. Viv is using a fake wedding ring that is too big for her finger, a ring that Reggie has bought her and that symbolically displays how their relationship does not fit the ideal of heterosexual marriage.

Not only are the city and the married couple fake, but so is the dentist who performs the abortion. Running a dental clinic during the day, Mr. Imrie asks Viv to hold a handkerchief to her mouth on her way out after the abortion in order to pretend that she has undergone dental treatment. The dentist explains that he is thinking of his neighbors, since "the war gives people such suspicious ideas".[89] Viv's experience of illegal abortion during the period of air raids is constructed upon a great mismatch between space and subject. It is the danger and fear of having an abortion in a dentist's clinic that inhibits Viv's performance as Reggie's wife. This disparity continues after the abortion, as they go to a flat that Reggie has booked for Viv's

87 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

88 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 386.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 395.

recovery, for their role as a couple cannot be staged in the oddity of the environments in which they circulate.

After Viv and Reggie leave the clinic, they go to the flat that he has rented in Belgravia. The place was "done up outlandishly. There was a tiger-skin rug on top of a carpet, and satin cushions on the bed. It was like someone's idea of a film-star's bedroom; or as though prostitutes or playboys lived there".[90] While Viv is in the need of a warm bath and medical attendance in a proper hospital, she is stuck in an apartment that looks like either a filmset or a brothel. Everything in the apartment was devised for showing: there were pasteboard cigarettes, bottles of colored water, and even a pearly white telephone, which Reggie finds out does not work when he finally decides to call for a doctor.

The oddness of the space in which Viv resides during the recovery of the abortion forms a queer chronotope that yields a sensation of being completely out of place. The scene can be read in terms of the paradox of heteronormative rules: on the one hand, their heterosexual relationship is the norm, and it can supposedly be acted out in public with no further suspicion or moral judgment; on the other hand, the fact that Reggie is married to another woman that is not Viv makes their relationship illicit and immoral. Yet, it is Viv who is damaged most in this situation, since she is the one who can go to jail because of the abortion and can have her reputation compromised, both for rejecting motherhood and for having sexual relations with a married man. In the flat, Viv often thinks about a feeling of timelessness, as the pain grows and she feels more alone than ever, given that Reggie only thinks about how the situation might result in a scandal and about the extra costs that he might have to deal with. Increasingly neglecting Viv's pain, Reggie decides to call the lady who let him the room. It is only when this woman arrives that Viv begins to calm down, since she takes care of her by laying her down and by putting towels between her legs to contain the bleeding. The landlady is also the one who insists that Reggie call an ambulance.

In spite of the queerness of the room and of the timelessness of Viv's pain, what emerges in this episode is female solidarity. While the landlady helps Viv, and so do Kay and Mickey, albeit later, Reggie decides to take off and leave Viv in their care. As well as the landlady's help by calling an ambulance, which is crucial for Viv's survival, Kay and Mickey help Viv hide that she has had an illicit abortion. Kay and Mickey arrive in the ambulance to rescue Viv, who at that moment stops her performance as Mrs. Harrison, Reggie's wife, in order to tell them her real name and to tell them that she is bleeding because she had got an abortion and is afraid of getting caught by the authorities; after all, abortion was illegal in the 1940s. Showing empathy towards Viv's situation, Kay tells the nurse that 'Mrs. Harrison' has had a miscarriage after falling. In the ambulance, Kay damages Viv's coat to support the story of a bad fall and slips her own ring into Viv's hand, so that she can pretend it is her own. The ring fits perfectly, "it was like magic",[91] and the moment that Viv is carried into the hospital's lobby, the warning siren goes off.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 398.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 416.

None of the spaces and objects match Viv's condition and state of mind in the beginning of the scene, as Viv is accompanied by Reggie: the ring Reggie gives her is too big; the abortion clinic is completely inappropriate and dangerous; and the apartment that Reggie rents looks like a strange motel room or brothel. Once the landlady appears to help Viv, followed by Kay and Mickey, Viv is able to settle into the situation with greater confidence and comfort: the landlady calls an ambulance; Kay and Mickey decide to help her out by saying that the abortion had been a miscarriage; and, like magic, Kay's ring fits her better than the one given by Reggie. In this scene, the potential of solidarity and bonding between women is what leads to Viv's settlement in a space-time that can give her comfort, safety, and proper medical treatment.

As we can see, the characters' experiences during the Little Blitz not only convey the possibilities of great sexual freedom, as it were, but also the limitations that this freedom entails. The proximity of death is a shared sentiment among all of the characters during the raids; however, they are not exclusively conveyed by the possibility of death by the bombings, as we can see in Viv's case, as her fear of death stems from the abortion. In their turn, Julia and Helen turn the possibility of death into the beginning of their relationship, which struggles to survive in the dullness of peacetime in 1947. For Duncan and Fraser, the raids are felt as a terrifying experience, since they need to stay put in their bunks until the explosions are over. Fraser's fear becomes a way to liberate his homoerotic feelings, and he begs Duncan to lie in bed with him. In doing so, their bodies enjoy the heat and protection they could not get elsewhere: "they settled back into an embrace […] as if they weren't two boys, in a prison, in a city being blown and shot to bits; as if it were the most natural thing in the world".[92]

In the novel, male homosexuality is always suggested but is never thoroughly enacted, as opposed to the explicit lesbian relationships. Shedding light on the lesbian experience is, of course, part of Waters' literary project and *The Night Watch* depicts a spatialized account of history that focuses on how the war and its social consequences relate to lesbian historiography. While Alden associates the novel's wartime contrasts of light and darkness with notions of women's and lesbian's cultural invisibility,[93] Boehm contends that *The Night Watch* "represents the ghostly atmosphere of London's war ruins as a space in which both coercive social norms and 'official' modes of defining and stabilizing historical knowledge are suspended".[94] The suspension of these norms allowed women to gain greater autonomy in society, an opportunity that was curtailed in many ways in the post-war period, as women had to content themselves with marriage, family, and underpaid jobs.

The portrayal of wartime ideology and urban destruction in tandem with the emergence of lesbian metropolitan culture and community cannot simply be read, as Cavalié argues, as the "rewriting [of] history from the point of view of lesbians and

92 *Ibid.*, pp. 440–441.

93 Cf. Alden, "'Accompanied by Ghosts': The Changing Uses of the Past in Sarah Waters's Lesbian Fiction" in Jones and O'Callaghan (eds.) *Sarah Waters and Contemporary Feminisms*, pp. 72–73.

94 Boehm, "Historiography and Material Imagination in the Novels of Sarah Waters", p. 243.

gay men".[95] Rather, it shows how the 'People's War' rhetoric created the possibility of change in the relations of gender and sexuality, which that was never completely re-assured after the war. In this sense, Waters does not seek to re-write history, as Cavalié notes. Instead, her novel draws attention to the ways in which the 'People's War' narrative made promises of social transformations that were never thoroughly enacted in the post-war period.

As Rose explains, the Second World War opened up possibilities for broad feminist discussions, such as equal pay, equal opportunities in the war effort, in political decisions, and in equal compensation in case of injury by enemy action. Moreover, it raised questions about the women's role in society and, though many female members of Parliament voiced more moderate opinions about the emancipation of women, many feminist movements denounced women's participation in society exclusively through marriage and motherhood, bringing up discussions, in fact, about the role of class in 'femininity'.[96] In the novel, Waters portrays how the feeling of sexual freedom was only momentary and limited to certain spaces in the city; they were moments of pleasure that derived from the fear of death, but they definitely could not be read as general sexual liberation, as we find out with Viv's, Duncan's, and Kay's characters.

War, Identity and Queer Futures

Instead of reading Waters' novel as a historical account that focuses on gay and lesbian experience, it seems more productive to read it in light of Rose's discussions, which show how the governmental rhetoric of national unity actually emphasized that such unity never existed. She contends that, ironically, the cultural images and propaganda that claimed a collective identity of a nation yielded "the possibility for the kinds of conflicts that in the last third of the twentieth century came to be known as 'identity politics'".[97] What Rose's research emphasizes is that the more propaganda that was produced to conceive of a notion of nationhood, the more contestations came to the fore to claim that there were sectors of the British population that had rejected the war as a whole or could not *equally* take part in this national war effort, among them workers, people of color, women, and men, like Duncan and Fraser, who simply refused to participate. For Rose, such protests that claimed inequality paved the way to understanding identity politics, as they defied the pervasive ideal that all British citizens have equal participation in society.

In Waters' novel, the female characters are aware that, in 1944, their limited freedom is dated. "'Thank God for the war'", says Binkie, "[t]he thought of peace starting up again, I don't mind telling you, fills me with horror".[98] Binkie, an officer at the ARP, has an attachment to the war that is not that of sexual freedom, but of the possibility

95 Cavalié, "'It's like gold leaf, and now it's rising, peeling away': Britishness and Exoticism in Sarah Waters' *The Night Watch*", p. 97.

96 Rose, *Which People's War?*, pp. 113–122.

97 *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

98 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 259.

to work at the station. In Binkie's experience, being a lesbian is quite depressing. At first, she thought girls were very exciting, "all that flying into rages over bits of nonsense; threatening to slash their wrists in lavatories at parties", while "men were like shadows, like paper puppets, like little boys!"[99] Feeling rather tired of this, Binkie says that she thinks about "finding some nice little chap to settle down with – some quiet little Liberal MP […] it would be so restful".[100] Although this remark is rather ironic, the women, in this scene, show fear of the war's end because they know that they will not be able to hold on to the jobs they currently have. What is interesting here is that the three women, all of them queer, Mickey, Kay, and Binkie, look forward to the future in terms of marriage. Binkie's complaint is that, like Mickey, they will be left alone and will not be able to find someone to settle down with. As for Kay, being with Helen gives her the "deep, deep peace of the marital bed",[101] which is what she has sought for a long time.

In this sense, I will dispute Mitchell's argument that the lesbian characters, Kay in particular, refuse to take part in a heterosexual futurity of familial time.[102] Instead, I argue that the aspect of marriage is precisely the factor that gives them a perspective of futurity. This suggests that placing marriage as a primary prospect of kinship seems like the most feasible path to obtain sexual recognition, an issue that has been quite relevant in political debates in gay and lesbian movements in the late twentieth century. In 1944, Helen tells Kay that she wishes that the world was different and that they could be married. For Kay, this "was one of the tragedies of her life, that she couldn't be a man to Helen – make her a wife, give her children".[103] The only perspective that she foresees for their relationship is that of a nuclear family, in which Kay fulfills the male role and Helen, the role of a wife. In 1947, Kay is left to her anguish as a person who does not fit into the ideal of a feminine woman and who is adrift in London, without the job as an ambulance driver and without the lover to whom she was devoted. At the same time, Helen and Julia try to live as a married couple and, in doing so, also experience constraints of same-sex marriage: the necessity to pretend they are just friends to protect Julia's image as a writer, and the boredom of the marital bed, which implicitly leads Julia to an affair with a journalist named Ursula.

Rose comments that love and marriage were recurrent themes in wartime and post-war propaganda that aimed to direct the anxiety about possible transformations in gender roles and in sexuality. The idea was mainly that women should heroically perform their duties in the war efforts, but under the premise that they would remain feminine and continue to desire marriage and motherhood. As Rose puts it, "they should participate, yes, but not become transformed by that participation".[104] Women's duties during the war often led to contradictory and ambiguous ideals about the nature of their citizenship and of their war duties. For instance, it was preferable

99 *Ibid.*, p. 258.
100 *Ibid.*, p. 259.
101 *Ibid.*
102 Mitchell, "'What does it feel like to be an anachronism?'", pp. 97–98.
103 Waters, *The Night Watch*, p. 326.
104 Rose, *Which People's War?*, p. 123.

that women worked in office jobs or as nurses, rather than engaging with activities in demolition squads, fire guard, or rescue teams.[105] These duties, especially those that included night shifts, could put women at risk of being accused of sexual immorality or of them being labelled as 'too masculine', which could seriously compromise the judgment of 'good citizenship' and lead to the idea that they were acting *against* the war effort. Thus, regardless of her wartime occupation, a woman could not be a 'good citizen' if she was sexually 'promiscuous'.[106] Rose, therefore, suggests that the ideal of nationhood could conceive neither of women who were sexually active, nor of men and women who nurtured same-sex relationships, given that these attitudes were immoral and went against the promise of Britain as a powerful and victorious nation.

Thinking of the notion of citizenship in relation to morality, as Rose suggests, we perceive that all of the protagonists in the novel cannot pertain to the national ideal of citizenship. In reading the novel, we are able to realize how, in spite of governmental propaganda, the war effort did prompt transformations of gender roles – however limited they were – that went against the ideal of femininity and heterosexuality. The lesbian characters go against the logics of heterosexuality as a norm, even though the characters dream of marriage as a future possibility; Kay and Mickey do not comply with traditional femininity, and could be ascribed to the butch identity that already circulated at the time and Kay's relationship with Helen conveys the notion of the butch/femme relationship. Embodying the newly independent woman, Viv's affair with a married man and her refusal of motherhood undermines the premise that all heterosexual women desire the roles of wife and mother. As for Duncan, apart from being a conscientious objector, his sensitivity, feminine features, and his homosexuality resist the ideal of 1940s masculinity as heroic and dominant.

In *The Night Watch*, Waters seems to be interested in showing the paradox of wartime ideology: on the one hand, it promised great social transformations after the war; on the other hand, it regulated the agency of minority subjects, such as women, so that they came to know that their relative autonomy and emancipation did not completely change their roles, which were constricted to domesticity and marriage. If governmental measures called for women to take part in the war effort, then it made sure that they had lower wages than men. In the novel, the female characters live the war as an opportunity to gain more agency and, to some extent, financial independence. However, after the war, these opportunities wane and they have difficulties enjoying the same kind of freedom they had during the war. For Duncan, the refusal to take part in the war becomes a damaging and traumatizing factor, since Alec's suicide and his imprisonment compromise all of the opportunities he might have had otherwise as a man.

Waters' representations of a blitzed London relay the destruction of the city under the contradictions produced by a unitary national rhetoric. Governmental propaganda promoted the idea of a new Britain that was to emerge from the rubble; this was a promise that would be possible under the premise of unity across class, race, and

105 Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109; 123–124.

106 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

gender – it was a unity, however, that could only be performed by appeasing antagonisms and not by warranting equality. Conversely, the circumstances of destruction, of imminent death, and the emergence of discussions about social inequality grounded historical conditions for (contingent) shifts in identity practices and in recognition, especially in terms of gender and sexuality. While the female characters seem to have critically reflected on their social positions as women and lesbians, Duncan's character is developed as someone who is incapable of reflectively engaging with his social environment. Duncan's agency is completely curtailed in the post-war period, as he lives with Mr. Mundy and completely depends upon his wage as a former prison agent.

Where the novel highlights the possibility of shifts in terms of gender and sexuality, it suggests that class relations were much less disrupted by London's massive destruction. Waters' portrayal of the war implies that it provided means for interclass relations and for class mobility (i.e., Viv's attendance in secretary college), especially in terms of the moderate social welfare measures adopted during and after the war, but they did not provide significant turnovers in those class antagonisms that have historically characterized British society. All of the novel's protagonists display personal transformations in 1947, but none of them have climbed the social ladder. Kay and Julia, who come from upper-class backgrounds, continue to benefit from their class positions; Kay is able to stop working and live off her family's money and Julia pursues a promising career as a writer. In contrast, Viv, and Helen, who come from working-class backgrounds, continue to work in underpaid jobs, as both of them take up secretary positions at a dating agency.

However, it is relevant to stress that, in this novel, Waters' depiction of class relations is much more complex than in *Tipping the Velvet*, as she explores how class inequality in London was a central factor in the way in which a citizen engaged with the war and its aftermath. While class mobility is not taken up as a subject in *The Night Watch*, it does become a more relevant topic in Waters' subsequent novel, *The Little Stranger*. Published in 2009, the novel tells the story of a decaying country house, Hundreds Hall, in the post-war period and it deals with the lack of opportunities for women and the possibility of class mobility after the war. While Carolyn Ayres lives in the estate and confronts her family's and their house's social and financial decay, Dr. Faraday, who stems from a working-class background, manages to become a doctor after the Second World War. Even though I will not be analyzing that novel in this book, I will mention it briefly in chapter 8, commenting on Waters' methodological approach to history in her 1940s novels and by contrasting the image of the country house in this novel with Hollinghurst's use of the estate in *The Stranger's Child*.