“The Collapse of a Wall [...] Starts with a Few Loose Bricks” –

Queering Space, Body and Time

QUEER FICTION – QUEER CONCEPTS

Sarah Waters’ *The Night Watch* (2006) self-reflectively questions its own investment in the past and challenges a straightforward reading of time. In “Disrupting the Continuum: Collapsing Space and Time in Sarah Waters’s [sic] *The Night Watch*”, Adele Jones nicely pinpoints the outlook of Waters’ novel by stating:

> In collapsing the certainty of linearity, reinforced by the subversive narrative, Waters undermines the primacy of time and, faced with the possibility of no future at all, each character escapes the relentless forward movement into the future and thus the heteronormative ‘paradigmatic markers’ which define that future – birth, marriage, reproduction, and death [...].[1]

Kay Mitchell similarly observes that Waters

> thwarts the identification of lesbianism as backwardness through the adoption of a backwards structure that is, thus, rendered truly queer – as it deploys moments of romantic optimism, suggests new possibilities of relationality and initiates affective ‘touches across

1 Adele Jones, “Disrupting the Continuum: Collapsing Space and Time in Sarah Waters’s *The Night Watch*” in *Journal of Gender Studies* Vol. 23, No. 1 (2014), p. 34.

time', while exploring the *longue durée* of melancholy and refusing the consolation of too facile a futurity.[2]

Both critics emphasise that Waters' narrative structure deconstructs heteronormative time, as *The Night Watch* refuses "the consolation of too facile a futurity" and destabilises the "relentless forward movement into the future". The characters repeatedly express relief over the needlessness of thinking about what comes after the war, since the presence allows for variations of heteronormative life that cannot be conceptualised in peacetime. Adam Fitzroy's *Make Do and Mend* (2012) takes a similar approach to the atrocities of wartime when the farm labourer Jim Brynawel realises that "[y]ou're a long time dead" – now is the time to "*carpe diem*" (188) [emphasis original]. The constant threat of war and death prompts Jim to find the courage to admit to his feelings for the protagonist Harry Lyon. In *The Night Watch* Helen's lesbian relationship with Kay is also only imaginable because "so many impossible things were becoming ordinary, just then" (274). Yet, because these "impossible things" are fixed to the war, their endurance is equally linked to it, which makes it not only "pointless" (275) to think of a time after the war, but, paradoxically, also uncanny. It seems almost consequential that *The Night Watch* has to move back in time and swiftly abandons the bleakness of 1947 to nostalgically recall the past.

Whereas Jones and Mitchell focus on queer time as the most significant marker in *The Night Watch*, I shall add(ress) the interlinking matters of "Queering Space, Body and Time". This chapter will critically analyse the body (particularly Kay's lesbian body) as a space for gender non-conformity in performances of (female) masculinity that call into question sex-gender coherence. At the same time as troubling heteronormative assumptions regarding the body, Kay's excessive performance of masculinist behaviour towards her girlfriend Helen aligns and equates her with the role of a traditional dominant male. My reading of Kay is therefore twofold: demonstrating that *The Night Watch* destabilises gender norms written on the body, whilst examining Kay's subsequent investment in unwittingly perpetuating patriarchal standards when she subordinates Helen and relegates her into the confined space of their home. Following Jones' and Mitchell's reading of *The Night Watch* as embodying queer time, I will push this 'queering' of traditionally normative concepts further and analyse the home as queer space; not only because the stereotypically heteronormative space of

2 Kate Mitchell, "'What Does it Feel like to be an Anachronism?': Time in *The Night Watch*" in Kaye Mitchell (ed.), *Sarah Waters: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 98.

'home' at times actively enables queer desire, but because it queerly defies any and all clear-cut definitions.

My approach to the conception of home will illustrate that it is a highly paradoxical, flexible and fluid space of controlling and manipulating desires to conform to a standard. The home is controversial because it denies movement and desires beyond heteronormative patterns whilst purposefully allowing for deviating pleasures in order to control them. To clarify this ambivalent and inconsistent structure, I wish to briefly turn to Wendy Brown's theory of tolerance, which pointedly explains the various and subconscious mechanisms that manage social life. The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that the common definition of "the action or practice of tolerating" comprises "freedom from bigotry or undue severity in judging the conduct of others"[3]. In *Regulating Aversions*, Brown convincingly questions this positive outlook and observes that

> [t]olerance regulates the presence of the Other both inside and outside the liberal democratic nation-state, and often it forms a circuit between them that legitimates the most illiberal actions of the State by means of a term consummately associated with liberalism.[4]

Tolerance is, according to Brown, not a liberalist notion to integrate deviating subjects, but a tactical manoeuvre to perpetuate a tacit hierarchy between those who tolerate and those who are being tolerated. Rather than striving to decrease differences, tolerance "is necessitated by something one would prefer did not exist"[5] and derives from a need to manage 'foreignness' in a way that suits the dominant order. "In this activity of management, tolerance does not offer resolution or transcendence, but only a strategy for coping."[6]

> The very invocation of tolerance [...] indicates that something contaminating or dangerous is at hand, or something foreign is at issue, and the limits of tolerance are determined by how much of this toxicity can be accommodated without destroying the object, value, claim or body. Tolerance appears, then, as a mode of incorporation and regulating the presence of the threatening Other within.[7]

3 "tolerance, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2017. Web. 28 August 2017.

4 Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversions: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 8.

5 Ibid., p. 25.

6 Ibid., p. 25.

7 Ibid., p. 27.

Brown argues that tolerance is deceptive when it disguises itself as a desirable and open-minded quality. Far from advocating equality, tolerance functions to *assimilate* the threatening element into dominant discourse in order to control it.

The home functions in remarkably similar ways: whereas the stereotypical home features the nuclear family that is connected to domestic labour, female oppression, reproduction and a sense of stasis, it may also contain deviating desires in order to keep the public street faultlessly heteronormative. Whereas tolerance works through assimilation to control deviating subjects, the home can perpetuate both hetero- and homosexual desires in a manageable parameter. The following analysis will demonstrate that even lesbian characters like Kay can come to project heteronormative ideals onto their home, which means that Kay's potential for queering space is similarly limited as the queering of her body.

Renault's *The Charioteer* also displays a curious attitude towards the home by repeatedly emphasising its relevance for the characters' psychic condition: without a home, Laurie feels lost and unsure where he belongs. When he observes that his disrespectful behaviour towards Andrew during an argument "came home to him" (240), Laurie alludes to the conceptual proximity of 'home' and 'self'. This chapter will examine the far-reaching connotation of his poetic language in order to illustrate that the 'self' is constrained by an 'inner home' that induces conformity onto characters similar to the physical home in order to enforce certain scripts of conduct. Only when "the wall" of stereotypical conventions collapses "start[ing] with a few loose bricks" (240), can the characters begin to negotiate their sexual identity without the restraining quality of the heteronormative home. The novels' emphasis on destruction of houses caused by the war further questions buildings as symbols of inevitable futurity grounded in their alleged physical endurance. In this way, wartime novels in general and those with a homosexual subject matter in particular enable a reading of queer time, body and space that reverses traditionally forward orientated culture based on homely belonging.

The home is stereotypically tightly linked to the family and perceived as a heteronormative space of reproduction – a notion that will be elaborated on in the course of this chapter.[8] In "The House as Symbol of the Self" Clare Cooper argues:

> The house both encloses space (the house interior) and excludes space (everything outside it). Thus, it has two very important and different comportments; its interior and its façade. The house therefore nicely reflects how man [and woman] sees himself[/herself], with

8 Doren B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

both an intimate interior, or self as viewed from within and revealed only to those intimates who are invited inside, and a public exterior [...] or the self that we choose to display to others.[9]

The "enclose[d] space" is most often inhabited by the nuclear family, whereas the "exclude[d] space" is comprised of those subjects without permission to cross the boundary. Cooper moves from the physical conditions of walls dividing between interior and exterior, to the incorporation of these boundaries within the self. The doubling of the self between what is made public and what remains private relates to the public/private dichotomy made possible through house and home. Consequently, the rules of conduct that govern the interaction of subjects within the home find rehearsal in the 'inner home' of the self.

Of equal importance are the physical house and its connection to the body. Anthony Vidler traces three moments in the history of architectural embodiment: "(1) the notion that building *is* a body of some kind; (2) the idea that the building embodies states of the body, or, more importantly, states of mind based on bodily sensation; and (3) the sense that the environment as a whole is endowed with bodily or at least organic characteristics."[10] His analysis shows the continuity of drawing links between physical buildings and embodiment to highlight their conceptual proximity. I am diverting from Vidler's critical evaluation of architectural embodiment and houses as diverse "corporeal metaphors" [11], when looking at the characters' psychological incorporation of homely standards. Instead of arguing for the body as a model for houses, I propose to look at the home as a mirror image for fabricating an 'inner home' that controls the self. In order to understand the complex meaning of 'the self', it is helpful to turn to Judith Butler's theory on gender performativity as it discloses the interlocking relationship between social norms, gender identity and the body.

Butler defines gender performativity as the repetitive and unconscious enactment of norms. She challenges the assumption that gender derives from a stable inner self that refers back to a biological body and its dual sex on two

9 Clare Cooper, "The House as Symbol of the Self" (Barkley: University of California, 1974), p. 131. For further information see also Clare Cooper, *House As a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home*, [1995], (Berwick and Maine: Nicolas-Hays, 2006).

10 Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 1992), p. 70.

11 Vidler, (1992), p. 69. Vidler elaborates on the connection of bodies and buildings by stating that "The body, its balance, standards of proportion, symmetry, and functioning, mingling elegance and strength, was the foundation myth of building." p. 71.

grounds: firstly, sex is as much a constructed fiction as gender based on the idea of opposing and dichotomous categories, given that hormonal and chromosomal abnormalities resulting in genital variability occurs frequently. Secondly, gender is the social expression of a fantasy that disguises itself as identity. "There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its result."[12] Consequently, "gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way", which signals the multiplicity of gender performances across sexed bodies.[13] There is no 'proper' gender because, according to Butler, "[w]here that notion of the 'proper' operates, it is always and only *improperly* installed as the effect of a compulsory system."[14] "[A]cts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause"[15]. Embodied action fabricates the impression of an inner core (a self) that is allegedly gendered in accordance with the body's sex. Butler claims that such an "interior essence" does not exist – that the gendered body "has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality"[16]. This does not deny the reality of lived experience expressed through the body but calls into question the assumption that corporality signifies gender identity. Cooper similarly asserts that "[t]he first and most consciously selected form to represent self is the body, for it appears to be both the outward manifestation, and the encloser, of self"[17]. Accordingly, the body becomes the primary object for monitoring social conformity, because it is assumed to represent and make visible an interior core abstractly called 'the self'.

Consequently, when Vidler is right that architecture has a tradition of modelling buildings after the human body, and when the body is assumed (however wrongly) to express the interior self that is gendered in accordance with the body's sex, it follows that specific gender norms become infiltrated into the home and pass as 'natural' due to their connection with the "locale of gender identity" [18] – the sexed body. In order to fully challenge the gender order, it is

12 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, [1990], (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), p. 34.

13 Ibid., p. 9.

14 Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" in Diana Fuss (ed.), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (New York: Psychology Press, 1991), p. 21.

15 Butler, (2006), p. 185.

16 Ibid., p. 185.

17 Cooper, (1974), p. 131.

18 Butler, (2006), p. 183.

necessary to disclose in what way house and home function as an echo chamber of that body. Iris Marion Young observes that ending exploitation based on gender, class, race and other modern signifiers of social inequality "requires rejecting entirely the project of supporting identity and subjectivity embodied in the patriarchal ideology of home"[19]. Young's argument reinforces the connection between body and home and the significance of deconstructing any assumption regarding the fixity of gender and its projection onto the heteronormative home.

I will argue for the interlinking of various spatial parameters (body, home, street etc.) in order to disclose their interdependency that reifies the structural perpetuation of heteronormative standards. Because the sexed body is thought to display a gendered self coherent with biological markers, the body becomes a sign for gender conformity. As a model for architectural buildings, the heteronormative body is not only situated within the home but also the ground on which society quite literally builds. Consequently, by challenging sex-gender coherence displayed on the body, the implicated norms of the home become equally disturbed. It follows that the formerly heteronormative home restricting desires and movement beyond known boundaries turns into a non-conforming space that facilitates homosexual pleasures. At the same time as liberating itself from dominant parameters, the homosexual home becomes a space of confinement as it keeps desires in the private in order to not disturb the public. The following analysis will demonstrate the complex interconnections between various spaces that correlate in controlling gender performances. In order to more fully conceptualise the potential of body spaces to challenge gender conformity, I wish to turn to Halberstam's theory of female masculinity.

Halberstam's influential study *Female Masculinity* elaborates on Butler's gender performativity by observing that "masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects"[20]. In this way, forms of hegemonic masculinity and masculine heroism examined in the previous chapter are not strictly fixed to the male body, but can also be performed by women like Waters' mannish lesbian character Kay. In consequence, "*man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one"[21]. This separation of masculinity from male bodies shows the constructedness and ambiguity of gender and its arbitrary relation to biological bodies. The division of sex and gender – of

19 Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like A Girl" and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 130.

20 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 1.

21 Butler, (2006), p. 9, [emphasis original].

male/female bodies and masculinity/femininity – is absolutely vital for understanding why Kay can obtain a form of masculine gender performance during the war. This does not imply that Kay perceives herself as a man, but that masculinities and masculine power prevail independently of male bodies. Halberstam calls this performance female masculinity – "*a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than simply a derivative of male masculinity*"[22]. Although conceding that "[s]ometimes female masculinity coincides with the excess of male supremacy", Halberstam's primary aim is to turn "a blind eye to conventional masculinities and refusing to engage"[23]. The spirit of *Female Masculinity* is therefore to distance itself from male masculinity and to embrace forms of masculinities performed by female bodies that have been unrecognised or abjected in traditional socio-historic contexts.

Kay's performance during the war discloses that Halberstam's ambitious aim to disregard masculine power in female masculinity is difficult – a flaw Halberstam is aware of when repeatedly justifying when and why a masculine woman exceeds a masculine power sought to be dismissed.[24] The claim for female masculinity to seek a different form of empowerment is problematic, because Kay repeatedly subordinates her girlfriend Helen, and is perceived as "more of a gentleman than any real man" (425) by others. This suggests that while female masculinity *might* be a way of staying ambivalent towards masculine power (which seems inherently paradoxical given the retention of the term 'masculine'), Kay fails in this attempt. Halberstam's theory is additionally problematic because the focus on a masculine singular indicates that there is only one version of masculinity and this seems to suggest that women need to embrace hegemonic masculinity in order to escape their traditional powerlessness. Carrie Paechter rightfully criticises Halberstam for this move when stating: "The dualistic relationship between masculinity and femininity, whether claimed by males or females, positions both extreme and normative femininity as without power, and, indeed, as pathological."[25] Paechter's critique is built on the premise that women such as Kay perform female masculinity in order to contrast themselves from more feminine women. This refurbishment of gender norms by female bodies is as oppressive as traditional gender performances based on a dichotomy of sexed bodies.

22 Halberstam, (1998), p. 77, [my emphasis].

23 Ibid., p. 9.

24 Ibid., p. 109.

25 Carrie Paechter, "Masculine Femininities/Feminine Masculinities: Power, Identities and Gender" in *Gender and Education* Vol. 18, No. 3 (2006), p. 257.

In order to indicate that Kay's gender performance is neither that of male nor female masculinity, I will be using brackets: (female) masculinity. By choosing to bracket the 'female', and not the 'masculinity' part of the term, I insinuate that Kay's performance is more informed by the traditional discourse of patriarchy, than by Halberstam's thesis, making Waters' character an image of female complicity in patriarchal power structures.

Wendy Brown explains why female complicity is a fundamental and material concept:

> The state can be masculinist without intentionally or overtly pursuing the 'interests' of men precisely because the multiple dimensions of socially constructed masculinity have historically shaped the multiple modes of power circulating through the domain called the state – this is what it means to talk about masculinist power rather than the power of men.[26]

This statement recalls that male bodies do not necessarily denote masculinity, but those bodies that participate in and distribute the power structure encompassing the construct of masculinity. The problem with gender performativity is then that "[m]asculinity maintains its position of superiority in relation to femininity and men maintain legitimate possession of those superior characteristics *regardless* of who is embodying femininity or masculinity."[27] An analysis following Butler, in which gender is deconstructed as performativity, therefore offers little room for conceiving the dynamics of masculinity and femininity in new terms, since the privileging of the masculine and subordination of the feminine continues to prevail. This structure is pointedly evident when Kay "got talking to a tipsy girl [in the cinema], and had finished by leading the girl into an empty lavatory and kissing her and feeling her up. The thing had been rather savagely done; she felt ashamed, thinking of it now." (106) In these instances when women like Kay either adopt masculine power, or when women like this girl leave their own subordination unchallenged, they unwittingly support the logics of patriarchy in their complicity.

This chapter will set out by examining Kay's performance of (female) masculinity and its effect on simultaneously the perception of her female body and her attitude towards her wartime girlfriend Helen. By destabilising the body as a space on which to project gender norms correlating with one's sex, Waters' de-

26 Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in late Modernity* (Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 177.

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

piction of Kay emphasises variances and gender fluidity. This queering of the body challenges not only the assumption of a heteronormative home, but also the battlefield as a masculine space where men negotiate their masculinity. Kay's (female) masculinity devastates the dominant gendered politics of space in diverse ways, but due to her female complicity, described by Brown, the effect is neither desirable nor lasting.

BODY SPACE – DESTABILISING GENDER

In her study "'Grisley [sic] 'L' business': Re-valuing Female Masculinity and Butch Subjectivity in *Tipping the Velvet* and *The Night Watch*" [28] Claire O'Callaghan argues that Kay "challenges prejudiced heterosexist and lesbian-feminist stereotypes of the butch lesbian that have contributed to her denigration"[29]. My reading of Kay in this section is vastly different and discloses the many ways in which Kay, rather than shattering, contributes to the stigmas that accompany butch subjectivity. Whilst the following analysis does not deny the appropriateness and importance of developing a concept for thinking gender which allows for fluidity, and indeed welcomes performances that break up the rigidity of the gender binary, Kay shows that the claim for female masculinity to *not* adopt and transfer traditional masculine power is too idealistic, and in Kay's case largely amiss. She adheres to stereotypical representations of 'being butch', in which the "mythic mannish lesbian", to borrow Esther Newton's term,[30] is often characterised as level-headed thus mimicking masculine rationality. Although I partially agree with O'Callaghan that "[b]y granting [Kay] heartache, Waters highlights the emotional vulnerability of the butch lesbian and invests her with dignity and feeling"[31], Kay's gender performance is pervaded with moments clearly distinguishable as masculinist, and she does therefore not perform a positive and counter-discursive form of female masculinity.

28 Claire O'Callaghan, "'Grisley [sic] 'L' business': Re-valuing Female Masculinity and Butch Subjectivity in *Tipping the Velvet* and *The Night Watch*" in Adele Jones and Claire O'Callaghan (eds.), *Sarah Waters and Contemporary Feminism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Nottingham, 2016).

29 Ibid., p. 196.

30 For an analysis of the 'mythic mannish lesbian' see Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman" in *Signs* Vol. 9, No. 4, The Lesbian Issue (1984), pp. 557-575.

31 O'Callaghan, (2016), p. 207.

By attempting to read Kay as a liberated butch subject, O'Callaghan additionally fails to differentiate between wartime and peace when she claims that "Kay's dress and masculine demeanour underline her identification with masculine sensibilities. The opening pages [of *The Night Watch*] include a lengthy description of Kay's wardrobe and dressing routine, [and] reinforce the importance of such aesthetics to her."[32] O'Callaghan rightly identifies that the emphasis on Kay's clothes occurs at the very beginning of the novel set in 1947. However, it seems misleading to read Kay's careful dress code at this point as a form of liberation when it stands in direct contradiction to her lack of emphasis on outward appearance during the war. O'Callaghan continues arguing that Kay's "employment in the London Auxiliary Ambulance Service exemplifies the changing dress code that broke with conventions of femininity (uniforms and trousers)"[33]. Shifting back to the war years, O'Callaghan's examination conflates two very distinct periods in women's and lesbians' lives that cannot serve as a continuous example for butch subjectivity in the 1940s. In order to clarify this further, I will initially examine Kay's failing performance of (female) masculinity with the establishment of peace grounded in the overarching re-inscription of gender norms, to then elaborate on her female complicity based on her patronising behaviour towards Helen during the war.

In the part set in 1947 Kay becomes obsessed with her own appearance as a way of compensation for her feelings of worthlessness when Helen has left her. Through her tailored style, her "men's shoes" (5), cuff links and greased short hair, Kay tries to re-claim a former power and autonomy that the establishment of peace took away from her. Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* argues that such display of "the masculine woman in the past has rarely been pictured as an interesting phenomenon – usually, she has been portrayed as the outcome of failed femininity, or as the result of pathetic and unsuccessful male mimicry"[34]. Halberstam asserts that attempts of dressing in a masculine style, as shown in Kay, are often disregarded or ignored in order to not raise attention to such failed gender identity. The narrative illustrates Halberstam's criticism when Kay's appearance, unnoticed during war, is now recognised but misread, because people call her "'young man', and even 'son'" (5). This misreading of Kay's body does not have the same empowering effect on her as the occupation as an ambulance driver during the war, because it indicates youth, immaturity and even pre-sexuality. Since Duncan is

32 O'Callaghan, (2016), p. 204.

33 Ibid., p. 204.

34 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005), p. 17.

also perceived as a boy who cannot manage his own life, the depiction of Kay as a son equally indicates helplessness and resignation. Instead of dissolving this mis-recognition by placing emphasis on her female body, the narrator clarifies her age – "she would be thirty-seven on her next birthday" (5) – in order to unhinge Kay from implications of immaturity. The emphasis on her age rather than her female body reinforces the significance of being noticed as a war participant and survivor. Despite emphasising that she will be "thirty-seven" soon, making her a conscious witness of the war, Kay's heroism of the past years is marginalised and her former confidence is destroyed. It therefore takes persuasion on her part not to stay at home – "she wouldn't turn back" (6) – but to face the world outside where she no longer feels welcome.

To further compensate for her lack of recognition, Kay "walk[s] with a swagger, make[s] a 'character' of [herself]", but immediately concedes that this gender performance is "tiring" "when you hadn't the energy for it" (100). Hearing the same jokes over her appearance "a thousand times" (100) makes Kay nostalgically glorify the past in comparison to the "creature" (208) she has become now. Her self-identification as a "creature" delineates that without the war to distribute masculine power to female bodies, Kay has lost her subjectivity and any ambition in life. I therefore agree with Stewart's argument that "[d]espite the horror [Kay] witnesses as an ambulance driver, during the war [she] feels a sense of purpose then that is lacking to her in the peacetime"[35]. Her situation after 1945 also partially demonstrates Plain's argument that women were "asked to assume *temporarily* the *semblance* of masculinity"[36]. Whereas I agree that women only "*temporarily*" found recognition and lost their autonomy with the emergence of peace, Kay illustrates that she obtains more than a "*semblance* of masculinity", because she deeply identifies with her masculine role. In order to more fully understand the dynamics that lead to Kay's desperate situation after the war, her failing relationship with Helen in 1944 needs to be taken into account. Although Kay is admittedly the betrayed lover which evokes sympathy for her, she actively contributes to her fate, which significantly changes the sub-text that leads to her peacetime suffering.

Ignoring Kay's female complicity in a patriarchal power structure, O'Callaghan criticises that "Helen and Julia's affair functions (troublingly) as a form of punishment to Kay for her apparent investment in heterosexual idealism" [37]. Arguing *against* Kay's re-enactment of heteronormative patterns,

35 Victoria Stewart, *The Second World War in Contemporary British Fiction: Secret Histories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p.155.

36 Plain, (1996), p, 28, [first emphasis added, second emphasis original].

37 O'Callaghan, (2016), p. 208.

O'Callaghan asserts that "Waters's [sic] representation of their [Helen and Julia's] developing romance serves only to align the reader's sympathies with Kay [...] because the novel's reverse chronological structure creates an affective discourse surrounding Kay"[38]. Whilst Helen and Julia's affair takes place, Kay is portrayed as heroically saving the city in her job as an ambulance driver. These contradictory storylines function, according to O'Callaghan, as the "affective discourse" that negates Helen's sense of confinement in her relationship in favour of creating a nimbus of sympathy for Kay's situation as the betrayed lover. O'Callaghan grounds her argument in a conversation between Helen and Julia, who perceive Kay's gentlemanly behaviour towards her girlfriend as a burden:

'Come and sit down, Helen.' [said Julia] [...]
She'd drawn up chairs, but looked dubiously from the dusty seats to Helen's smartish coat. [...]
'It's all right,' said Helen. 'Really.'
'Sure?' I'll take you at your word, you know. I won't be like Kay about it.' [...]
For Kay *would* have made a fuss about the dust, [Helen] thought; and she knew instinctively how tiresome that sort of thing would seem to Julia. (271) [emphasis original]

Moments later Helen continues pondering:

She wanted to ask how it had been for Julia, with Kay. She wanted to know if Julia had felt what she herself sometimes, guiltily, felt: that Kay's constant fussing, which had once been so appealing, so exciting, could also be rather like a burden; that Kay made an absurd kind of heroine of you; that Kay's passion was so great there was something unreal about it, it could never be matched ... (275)

Helen represents Kay as someone who displays an almost neurotic need to help, and in doing so infantilises her partner. She nevertheless reflects that Kay's gallant demeanour was part of the reason why she fell in love with her in the first place: "It did seem romantic. Kay's rather glamorous, isn't she? [...] She made such a – such a fuss of me. [...] It was hard to resist, anyway." (274) At the beginning of their romance, Kay's fussing over Helen constitutes the ground of her feelings, now it restrains Helen's autonomy. Julia, who pretends that she was never drawn to Kay's gallantry, wonders about Helen's ability to endure it, which, according to Julia, characterises Helen as balanced and level-headed: "You *are* well adjusted" (275) [emphasis original]. The truth is that Julia does not so much mind Kay's behaviour but cannot forgive Kay for rejecting her.

38 O'Callaghan, (2016), p. 208.

Julia's unrequited love has filled her with bitterness and leads her to seek emotional revenge by pursuing Kay's girlfriend for herself. In a confessional conversation with Helen, Julia delineates why she and Kay could never become lovers:

> Julia hesitated. Then, 'She was never in love with me,' she said. [...] 'I was the one. I was in love with Kay for years. She tried to love me back, but – it never took. I'm just not her type, I suppose. We're too similar; that's all it is.' [...] She wants a wife – someone good, I mean; someone kind, untarnished. Someone to keep things in order for her, hold things in place. I could never do that. I used to tell her she wouldn't be happy until she'd found herself some nice blue-eyed girl – some girl who'd need rescuing, or fussing over, or something like that...' (424-425)

Still hurt, Julia perceives Kay's rejection as an evaluation of her gender performance as insufficiently feminine for someone who "wants a wife". Several weeks before this conversation, Julia had used the exact same words: "Kay wants a wife. [...] That sounds like a children's game, doesn't it? Kay wants a wife. She always has. One must be the wife with Kay, or nothing." (353) This statement substantiates the impression that Julia and Kay's relationship did not work out because Julia was not prepared to take up the role of wife whilst Kay performs the role of husband. Like Kay, Julia's appearance and manner is mostly masculine, albeit combined with feminine markers such as red lips and make-up. One night, Julia asks Helen if she looks "like a male impersonator on stage" (355), which highlights her masculine style. Due to this similarity, neither character is willing to be "the wife". Julia's aversion towards traditional gender roles is obvious in her pejorative use of the phrase "Kay wants a wife", which she then modifies to "[o]ne must be the wife with Kay, or nothing." The impersonal pronoun "one" directs the focus away from Julia to include Helen and every future woman who might become Kay's partner. It implies that being with Kay entails living in a heteronormatively gendered relationship since "one" will always perform the feminine part – and this "one" is never Kay. Julia's additional observation that Kay's masculine performance and desire for a wife "sounds like a children's game" betrays not only Julia's hurt ego, but also dramatises how "female masculinity is generally received by hetero- and homo-normative cultures as a pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment"[39]. Halberstam's emphasis on "hetero- and *homo*-normative cultures" critically observes that gay and lesbian communities live as much in a normative discourse as heterosexual subjects. Kay's performance of (female) masculinity is thus not only abjected by heteronormative society, but also considered a "misidentification and malad-

39 Halberstam, (1998), p. 9.

justment" by people like Julia, which makes Kay doubly marginalised. Read in this way, Kay's performance of power towards Helen becomes easily obscured, which is evident in O'Callaghan's claims that the conversation between Julia and Helen "replay[s] criticisms of the butch lesbian"[40]. Accordingly, Julia and Helen "perceive [Kay's] affections as stifling because it limits their agency and, above all, they believe that Kay's 'gentlemanly' behaviours indicate that she wants to be a man"[41]. O'Callaghan's reading of Kay as the victim of 'butch bashing' overlooks scenes in which Kay actively contributes to the fabrication of such negative voices. Maite Escudero-Alías also asserts that "Kay's drained existence in the aftermath of the war trauma is drastically marked by the betrayal of her former lover"[42]. Even more sympathetic with Kay than O'Callaghan, Escudero-Alías claims that Kay "becomes the recipient of social injustice, shameful secrets and nameless suffering, in spite of her status as an upper-class lesbian"[43]. Recognising Kay for her privileged class status, Escudero-Alías leaves unmentioned her masculine gender performance, which pushes Helen into the arms of Julia where she can "confide in [her], almost as one wife to another" (275). The repeated and negative reference to being a "wife" indicates how deeply the characters feel and fear their entrapment into a feminine gender role, which makes it necessary to read Kay's (female) masculinity as an oppressive force that subordinates her girlfriend.

In order to enhance her masculine status during the war, a distinct lack of focus on Kay's outward appearance is evident, which contrasts her masculine dress code after the war. There are no mirror scenes in which she examines her naked body wishing it to be any different such as depicted in *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall (1928), where the gender deviant protagonist Stephen Gordon perceives her body as a "monstrous fetter" (*TW*, 187)[44]. Neither does Kay engage in any other kind of self-loathing, but instead relishes her lesbian lifestyle with her equally homosexual group of friends. I would therefore agree with Natasha Alden's observation that "although [Kay] dresses in men's clothes, can pass as a man, wishes to have the kind of active job traditionally restricted to men and sleeps with women, [she] does not view herself as inverted, and never alludes to

40 O'Callaghan, (2016), p. 205.

41 Ibid., p. 206.

42 Maite Escudero-Alías, "'There's that curtain come down' The Burden of Shame in Sarah Waters' *The Night Watch*" in Marita Nadal and Mónica Calvo (eds.), *Trauma in Contemporary Literature: Narrative and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 229.

43 Escudero-Alías, (2014), p. 228.

44 Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, [1928], (New York: Anchor Books, 1990).

such a model"[45]. Besides the knowledge of her wearing a uniform to work and trousers in her spare time, the reader is only once allowed to catch a short glimpse of how Kay cuts her hair in 1944: "I'd just started to cut my hair. I've dropped hair everywhere, now." (285) It remains unclear whether this cutting of hair was to keep it short for practical reasons, or a decision to abandon the symbolic long hair of femininity. Yet the briefness of this passage and the ease with which Kay talks about it, suggests that feminine symbols, such as long hair, lost their significance in wartime. This relaxation allowed women to experience a degree of liberation from the monitoring of their bodies.

Make Do and Mend (2012) similarly addresses this change in female appearance when the housemaids Kitty and Blanche make "small attempts to set one another's hair once a week" (77). This is often dismissed in favour of "sewing or knitting in an endeavour to produce new garments from old or to circumvent the coupon system for clothing in other ingenious ways" (77). The female characters in this novel are not deviating in their sexuality like Kay, but the fact that their sense of hairstyle has altered and given way to the production of clothes shows how 'ordinary' women, too, moved the norms of female appearance. Accordingly, Kay attracts little attention with her style during the war which makes it needless to foreground it as especially masculine. Moreover, by calling her 'Kay', the character's gender ambiguity is heightened because the name is unisex, and when her friends refrain from classifying her as Mr or Miss by just calling her 'Langrish', they deflect attention from her female body. However, female pronouns are continuously deployed throughout the novel, which paradoxically reinforces Kay's indifference towards sex and gender norms. She seems to appropriate a number of arbitrary standards and fashions a unique gender performance to suit her personality.

Kay's masculine demeanour controversially perpetuates gender roles within her relationship when she aspires to provide a heteronormative life for her partner Helen. In two scenes set in 1944 and 1941 respectively, Kay expresses her idealistic vision:

> Well, I'm sick of gazing into Helen's face and seeing it look more and more tired and worn. If I were her husband I'd be off fighting; there wouldn't be a thing I could do about it. But the fact is, I'm here – (255)

45 Natasha Alden, "'Possibility, Pleasure and Peril': *The Night Watch* as a Very Literary History" in Kaye Mitchell (ed.), *Sarah Waters: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 195.

It was one of the tragedies of her life, that she couldn't be *like* a man to Helen – make her a wife, give her children … (326) [my emphasis]

Kay clearly voices grief and anger over her position that prevents her from caring for Helen in the way she believes a man could by making her "a [legal] wife" and giving her "children". Kay's mournful musings regarding her inability to adopt an authentic male role might suggest that she is heading into transgender, possibly even transsexual terrain, where the subject feels "real and desperate desires for reembodiment"[46]. Indeed, both quotes end in silence; the dash ("–") and the ellipses ("…") at the end of the sentences indicate that Kay does not want to speak the inevitable: that however much she might wish to be a husband to Helen, her biological body is female and in the early 1940s this was a condition not modifiable by medicine.

However, Kay only ever wants to be "*like*" a man for Helen's sake, who is deeply dissatisfied with her relationship when saying: "If we could only be married, something like that." (326) Helen's emphasis on marriage as a fantasy that Kay cannot fulfil, feeds into Kay's pre-existing insecurity regarding *Helen's* happiness in their relationship, which increases Kay's fear of losing Helen to a man. That she does not believe Helen to be with another woman is revealed shortly afterwards when she suggests that Helen should "go to a pub and get canned, and pick up some boy, some soldier –'" (327). Kay's style of speaking ("get canned", "pick up") indicates that she effectively mimics male working-class parlance. This active disguising of her upper-class status by using bawdy slang complements Kay's understanding of what constitutes tough and autonomous subjecthood: a rational working-class masculinity that represses emotions and insecurities. Kay does consequentially not question her identity as a masculine woman, nor does she wish to be a man. Her lingering insecurities over Helen's sexual orientation instead cause her to believe that Helen secretly wishes for a male partner and for them to be in a conventional heterosexual relationship. Initially, Kay's fashioning of heterosexual roles is therefore a reaction to Helen's inability to cope with the disguising of their love from the public. However, Kay imitates masculinist conduct to the point where she actively subordinates Helen and restraints her to the role of "wife".

The use of stigmatising language as well as the objectification of the female body emphasise the unequal dynamics between Helen and Kay. Instead of focusing on her own appearance, it is Helen's body that is carefully dressed, undressed and lengthily described under Kay's voyeuristic masculine gaze: "she caught a glimpse, beyond the turned-up collar of Helen's coat, of the cream lapel

46 Halberstam, (1998), p. 143.

beneath it, and beneath that, the smooth, blemishless skin" (321). By staring at Helen, Kay tries to conquer these layers of clothing and in doing so, she almost undresses Helen with her eyes. Like a lustful man, Kay remembers Helen in her new silk pyjamas, and how she had buttoned up the dress Helen is wearing underneath her coat. The silk pyjamas, "the colour of pearls" (256), have a symbolic meaning in the narrative. As a luxurious birthday present to Helen, Kay not only draws attention to her higher class and financial background, thus challenging the authenticity of her working-class parlance. She also substantiates her lesbian desire for Helen and fixates her in the role of girlfriend/wife. Adele Jones rightly concludes that "although challenging gendered norms, [Kay] attempts to recreate a lesbian version of those norms in her relationship with Helen"[47] and the pearl coloured pyjamas substantiate these efforts. *The Night Watch* situates the symbol of pearls simultaneously in lesbian feminism and in queer theory, because pearls are, according to O'Callaghan, "avowedly 'feminine' via their historic association with women", but they also "denote a multifarious, suggestive range of meanings" reminiscent of queer theory's diversity and reluctance to essentialise.[48] O'Callaghan concludes that "Waters's [sic] novels convey a queer conception of identity while privileging the specificity of women and female same-sex desire."[49] Kay's gift therefore obtains several meanings: indicating class and higher status because pearls are associated with wealth, highlighting her own identity as queer, and distinguishing her relationship in lesbian terms assigning the role of woman and wife to Helen.

Kay's affectionate enthusiasm upon showing the pyjamas to her friends is sexualised by Binkie who jokes: "She won't be putting up any resistance once she's in this." (256) The term "resistance" was brought up in the context of the war: because the pyjamas are French, Helen will "be doing her bit for the Re-

47 Jones, "Disrupting the Continuum", (2014), p. 41.

48 Claire O'Callaghan, "The Equivocal Symbolism of Pearls in the Novels of Sarah Waters" in *Contemporary Women's Writing* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2012), p. 21. Waters' usage of the pearl metaphor in *The Night Watch* and in her other novels situates the author in a lesbian tradition where pearls have often symbolised love between women. O'Callaghan shows that writers such as Radclyffe Hall, Janette Winterson or Sarah Schulman repeatedly rely on the implied meaning of pearls/oysters to encode lesbian desires. She argues that "pearls provide a 'language' in which to encode same-sex orientation in a period (albeit a fictional one) in which such terminology was unavailable to women." O'Callaghan, (2012), p. 27. For Waters pearls/oysters do not only highlight a lesbian tradition, they also provide a language to pronounce lesbian desire in tandem with earlier narratives.

49 O'Callaghan, (2012), p. 21.

sistance" (256) by wearing them. Translating Resistance into resistance, Binkie fixes the symbolic meaning of pearls exclusively to the "categories *woman* and *lesbian*"[50] due to the implication of sexual intercourse and Helen's role as woman dressing up, or rather undressing, for her husband Kay. The essentialism resonating in Binkie's words is substantiated when Kay holds the pyjamas against herself saying: "They look absurd on me, of course, but you get the idea." (256) Clearly not identifying with the feminine part of the pearl trope, Kay denies association with it. However, her reluctance highlights O'Callaghan's theory that "pearls are [also] a queer symbol"[51] beyond the category of women and its implied femininity: because Kay identifies as queer, the twofold meaning of the pyjamas is established. Moreover, when giving the pyjamas to Helen at her birthday, Kay recalls the moment they have first met and says: "I held your face in my hand. You were smooth, like a pearl." (313) Kay's memory emphasises that pearls represent the "shifting, provisional nature of identity"[52] since Helen travels from heterosexuality to homosexuality upon meeting Kay. Waters' usage of pearls is thus not unilateral but contains hidden meanings for the reader to ponder.

The pearl metaphor is finally abandoned when Helen receives her birthday present. Recognising that the gift must have been expensive, Helen feels uncomfortable: "I don't deserve it" she says, and when putting on the pyjamas, their glamour and pearl-like colour vanishes and it transforms into an ill-fitting item:

> The sleeves were long: she buttoned the cuffs and folded them back, but they slid out of the folds at once and fell almost to her fingertips. She stood, as if shyly, for Kay to look her over. [...] She didn't look glamorous really, however; she looked young, and small, and rather solemn. (312)

The text highlights every negative aspect of the oversized pyjamas and repeats Helen's fretful attempt of rolling up the sleeves. When catching her reflection in the mirror, Helen "quickly [turns] away" (312) as if refusing to encounter the image of her body wearing a token of Kay's love and desire whilst remembering her own disloyalty when seeing Julia behind Kay's back. O'Callaghan argues that the wearing of pearl-coloured pyjamas "inscribes lesbian desire on the body"[53]. In this way, Helen's body becomes significant as a lesbian and feminine body belonging to Kay. Unable to identify with this projection, Helen avoids

50 O'Callaghan, (2012), p. 21.

51 Ibid., p. 21.

52 Ibid., p. 24.

53 Ibid., p. 29.

both her own gaze reflected in the mirror and Kay's, who continues marvelling at Helen. The characters' contradictory perspectives clash and create a twofold meaning for the reader who knows of Helen's emerging feelings for another woman and Kay's undying love for her 'wife'. The sympathy for Kay disguises her patriarchal attitude towards Helen, who becomes sexually objectified by her 'husband': Kay "remembered standing in the bedroom, fastening up the handsome dress; she remembered the sliding of the silk pyjamas, the feel of the weight of Helen's hot, suspended breasts." (321) That Kay is female does not lessen the objectifying character of her fantasy evoked when staring at Helen but suggests that female bodies are prone to objectification by both men *and* women. The meaning behind gazes becomes clearer when comparing and contrasting Kay's voyeurism with Kent and Anson's hidden gazes in *Look Down in Mercy*.

Kent displays an almost compulsive need to switch off the lights before having a sexual encounter with Anson as well as with his mistress Helen. That he does not adjust this behaviour according to his partner's sex demonstrates that a person's desire for recognition is bound to social conventions which, in this case, is the avoidance of *any* objectifying gaze for a man, who understands himself as straight and white, thus obtaining the social position of the active and privileged. In *Masculinity, Psychoanalysis, straight Queer Theory*, Calvin Thomas draws a connection between gender stereotypes and gazing. He argues that the stereotypically assigned positions of active masculinity and passive femininity are tightly interwoven with the power-powerless dichotomy intrinsic to the concept of the objectifying gaze. The one actively looking (conventionally male) and the other passively being looked at (conventionally female) claim very different social positions: "it is […] the *straight* male figure, perhaps the straight *white* male figure, who cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification, the straight white man who is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like"[54]. This reluctance to meet a person's gaze is similarly noted by Silvan Tomkins in *Shame and Its Sisters*, where he reflects that "[t]o the extent to which mutual looking maximizes shared intimacy, whatever taboos there may be on intimacy as such are immediately enforced on interocular exchange, just as they are enforced on sexuality."[55] Tomkins' argument unfolds along the narrative of learned shame as a mechanism to control and adjust a subject's way of conduct before negative, integrity threatening, sanctions such as abjection take place. For him, learned shame is a

54 Calvin Thomas, Masculinity, Psychoanalysis, Straight Queer Theory: Essays on Abjection in Literature, Mass Culture, and Film (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 7.

55 Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (eds.), (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 144.

vehicle for the transmission and preservation of social norms from generation to generation. It also provides a mechanism for the preservation of social norms among adult members of the community, inasmuch as the evocation of the shame of the other and its evocation of the shame of the self provide powerful negative sanctions against the transgression of shared social norms.[56]

Kent's behaviour is not only an unconscious adjustment of heteronormative ways of conduct, but also intrinsic to a learned shame complex monitoring society that transforms intimacy between two subjects into various levels of shame, depending on the stigma assigned to the sexual act preceding the gaze.

After Kent's first intimate moment with Anson, he is more troubled about facing Anson the next morning than regretting what has just happened: "all that he was certain of before he fell asleep was that he dreaded the morning, when sooner or later he would have to look at Anson and be looked at in return" (153). The objectifying gaze of which Kent will be the initiator as well as the receiver, both in non-heteronormative ways, functions as a kind of manifestation of what can be tolerated and even overlooked only when, quite literally, kept in the dark. With the light of the day, however, "[h]e and Anson opened their eyes at the same moment and drew apart as swiftly as though they had been awake" (154). Through their movement they attempt to re-establish the heteronormatively required distance between their male bodies. Thus, the sight of the homosexually caressed white, male body violates its and its observer's masculinity and privileged position as a recognisable subject. This paradigm is challenged when Kent and Anson become increasingly more comfortable in each other's company:

> [Kent] stopped to allow the platoon to close up, and while he waited glanced quickly at Anson, who had taken off his hat and stood where a patch of moonlight fell on his face. He was watching Kent and when their eyes met he smiled and Kent's blood stirred and he smiled back, surprised to find that it was so easy. (155)

Kent's reaction to Anson's unexpected gaze illustrates what Tomkins argues is the twofold character of shame: Kent is "caught between the shame of looking and the shame of being ashamed to do so" [57]. He has to endure Anson's gaze, even when it makes his "blood stir[...]" in order to not encounter double shame,

56 Tomkins, (1995), p. 156.

57 Ibid., p. 146.

which Gail Kern Paster calls the "redundancy of shame [:] social shame of *feeling ashamed*"[58].

In twisting the implied norms of the objectifying gaze, this scene demonstrates that the shamefulness of looking and being looked at is dependent on two conditions: the *clarity* of the vision and the *reception* of the gaze. Only when both moments irrevocably occur together, does the gaze challenge the social position of the stereotypically active male. Hence why it can be argued that when Kent seeks out an unnoticed moment to look at Anson he shows no visible sign of remorse or discomfort, because he is in the position of performing the active, masculine role which, although in a non-heteronormative context, can still be tolerated. When in the next instance Anson returns his gaze, Kent manages to endure it "and he [even] smiled back", because the emerging night impairs his own vision as well as the image he is looking at. Altered by the moonlight, the clarity of the morning's daylight, when both had found it impossible to look at each other with the still fresh memory of the night in their minds, is no longer observable in their gazes and faces. It follows that the objectifying gaze is bound to other moments in order to operate normatively: clarity of vision, lighting conditions and reciprocity. When one element is impaired or rendered insignificant, the regulatory force of the gaze fades.

Moreover, gazes are only threatening when a subject's desire for recognition is still at work, binding it to heteronormative conduct. Throughout the novel, Kent steadily departs from social conventions, and he experiences his own and Anson's gaze as increasingly less distressing: "As they talked they looked each other straight in the face; it became difficult to disengage their eyes even when a silence fell, and the silences began to fall more frequently and last longer." (206) This clearly shows Kent's changing attitude towards his relationship with Anson and exemplifies that desiring gazes can change in quality. No longer objectifying, their mutual looking is pleasurable for *both* characters.

In *The Night Watch*, Kay obtains a much more traditional role when she distracts from her own body by objectifying Helen's. While Kent and Anson learn the pleasure of mutual looking, Kay remains fixed in her position as the objectifier, whereas Helen, not looking and unaware of being looked at, becomes objectified. Kay thus illustrates Halberstam's critique that "[a]s long as masculinity is annexed in our society to power and violence and oppression, we will find some masculine women whose gender expression becomes partially wedded to the worst aspects of a culturally mandated masculinity"[59]. O'Callaghan strongly dis-

58 Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 36.

59 Halberstam, (1998), p. 109.

agrees with a reading that criticises Kay because she claims that *The Night Watch* "challenge[s] such damaging views of butch subjectivity" [60], since Kay is depicted as emotional and passionate. To strengthen her argument, O'Callaghan compares Kay's use of the term "glamour girl" to Reggie's and asserts that "because Reggie and Viv's heterosexual relationship [...] is empty and contains none of the love that Kay displays, Waters re-values and reinforces Kay's ardent love for Helen, and in doing so, exalts the figure of the butch lesbian"[61]. While I generally agree that Viv and Reggie's illicit relationship is damaging rather than elevating, Viv is extremely excited to meet her lover in 1944: "It was so wonderful to stand in his arms, she felt suddenly almost light-hearted. She even thought, for an awful moment, that she might cry." (182) This display of passion, and the cards Reggie sends Viv "after one of their Saturdays" to tell her that "he was all right" (244), might not reveal the same kind of "ardent love" Kay feels for Helen, but to argue that Viv and Reggie's relationship is from the outset thoroughly "empty" seems reductive.

Furthermore, the comparison between Reggie and Viv's relationship to Kay and Helen's does not alter Kay's masculinist implications when using the phrase 'glamour girl'. O'Callaghan seems to refute her own argument when she concedes that "[t]he term 'glamour girl' equates femininity with heteronormative stereotypes of women from the period in which the ideology of 'beauty as duty' reinforced heteronormative ideals of gender"[62]. Her supplement that "the repetition between Kay and Reggie's use of the phrase undermines the notion that Kay is attempting to feminise Helen in line with heterosexual ideals" is not only unconvincing because it solely rests on Kay's display of passionate love for Helen. It is also essentializing, as O'Callaghan's argument is built on Kay's female body and lesbianism that apparently 'naturally' contrast her from Reggie and his heterosexist language. It seems unfounded to presume that because Kay and Reggie differ in terms of gender and sexuality, their use of the term 'glamour girl' connotes vastly different implications.

The shortcomings of O'Callaghan's analysis become more obvious with regard to Reggie's and Kay's use of the phrase "Good girl" – another correlation between the characters that is conveniently overlooked by O'Callaghan, because it more compulsively reveals Kay's proclivity of resorting to masculinist phrases. Reggie utters the words "Good girl" whenever Viv behaves in a way that pleases him. This is evident at the beginning of the novel, when they make a trip to the countryside. No longer enchanted by his 'charm', Viv begins to eman-

60 O'Callaghan, (2016), p. 206.

61 Ibid., p. 207.

62 Ibid., p. 207.

cipate herself from Reggie when she does not want to have sex with him in public. Yet, she assists him in masturbating. When Reggie is done, he commands Viv to be careful not to let the semen stain his trousers. Content with her efforts, he rewards Viv by calling her a "Good girl" (71). The same pattern is evident at the beginning of their relationship. During one of their clandestine meetings in a remote hotel room, Reggie kisses Viv. His beard pricks her skin:

'You need a shave.'
'I know,' he answered, rubbing his chin against her forehead. 'Does it hurt?'
'Yes.'
'Do you mind?'
'No.'
'Good girl. [...]' (182)

This scene is patronising in several ways. Not only does Reggie call Viv a "Good girl" to reward her behaviour as seen before, he also tests Viv's level of discomfort when he deliberately repeats what feels uncomfortable by "rubbing his chin against her forehead." Viv does not simply have to agree that Reggie does not need to shave, she has to endure *and not mind* the uncomfortable feeling of his beard in order to earn a "Good girl". Reggie's masculinity is substantiated by displaying his beard as a sign for high testosterone and in relation to a woman, who places her desires after his. In doing so, Viv fixes herself in a traditional and passive feminine role against which Reggie's masculinity becomes active and dominant. Placed in such highly stereotypical positions, Viv replies only when directly spoken to and only in one-word sentences, which underlines her total dependency on Reggie. Throughout the novel, Reggie's "Good girl" repeatedly functions to maintain these gender stereotypes, which signals Kay's use of it towards Helen during a telephone call as similarly patronising:

'I'll see you later. You're coming straight home? Come quickly, won't you?'
'Yes, of course.'
'Good girl... Goodbye, Miss Giniver.'
'Goodbye, Kay.' (284)

The dynamics in this conversation are reminiscent of those between Viv and Reggie. Kay calls Helen a "Good girl" to reward her agreement that she will be "coming straight home". The way Kay pressures Helen to "come quickly" does not mark longing and love for Helen as much as Kay's desire to dominate and control her girlfriend. Helen's short responses reflect Viv's one-word answers,

signalling the women's shared obedience and submissiveness. In calling her *Miss* Giniver Kay highlights Helen's female role in their relationship. However, since Miss denotes an unmarried woman it also emphasises their extramarital status. Kay's attempt of claiming possession over her girlfriend fails further when Helen uses Kay's first name. This difference in address emasculates Kay and subordinates her to Helen who questions Kay's superiority in their relationship by using her first name. Kay's (female) masculinity is therefore built on shaky legs and in constant danger of being revealed as a performance lacking bodily substance. Nevertheless, the use of masculinist phrases substantiates Kay as a character which partakes in the patriarchal power system and reveals O'Callaghan's reading as an activist approach into refurbishing a butch subjectivity, which, although generally desirable, misinterprets significant details of how Kay is represented in the novel.

QUEERING THE BATTLEFIELD

Whilst establishing heteronormative roles in her relationship with Helen, Kay's active job as an ambulance driver at the home front challenges the stereotypical definition of the 'battlefield', which according to Angela K. Smith, is "the ultimate location for 'being a man'" – for displaying masculinity.[63] *The Night Watch* shows that the spatiality and definition of 'battlefield' as a signifier for masculinity is more complex than Smith perceives. With the exception of Walter Baxter's *Look Down in Mercy*, none of the novels actually depict the traditional battlefield of the Second World War as locus to negotiate masculinity. Life at the home front is much more determining, and *The Night Watch*, in particular, shows that the battlefield of London is comparable to Burma, Dunkirk and elsewhere in brutality, danger and bleakness, only made bearable by the courage of those who protect their city. Kay's efforts demonstrate that "the contribution of the Home Front was as significant as that of the military"[64], and Kay's commitment allows her to claim part of the masculinity Smith so narrowly ascribes to the battlefield

63 Angela K. Smith, "Introduction" in Angela K. Smith (ed.), *Gender and Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Textual Representations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 2.

64 Corinna M. Peniston-Bird, "The People's War in Personal Testimony and Bronze: Sorority and the Memorial to the Women of World War II" in Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (eds.), *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 67.

for herself. I wish to examine how *The Night Watch* pointedly dramatises this role of the 'fighting woman' at home, and thus reverses Gill Plain's argument that women working at the home front remained decidedly feminine, as they only obtained "the *semblance* of masculinity"[65]. Instead, Waters' Kay performs a much more 'phallic version' of masculinity than Plain's "semblance" suggests. Kay therefore challenges both the streets of London and the battlefield as heteronormative spaces. However, she can cope with the horrors she sees during her shifts in the comfort of her own home, whereas soldiers at the front are deprived of such privacy. I will argue that the comforts Kay claims for herself at home enable her to buttress her masculine performance in the public, whereas the lack of homes influences military operations in negative ways because soldiers become careless in their pursuit of homeliness. Kent's growing insecurity and the soldiers' recklessness during missions in *Look down in Mercy* further questions the traditionally masculine connotation of the battlefield.

The theorisation of masculine heroism discussed previously, argues that men need to perform heroic acts in order to strengthen and underline the adequacy of their masculine gender performance. It was shown that this enactment is littered with moments of fear, force and failure when subjects are compelled to risk their lives for their country. Kay, in contrast, is represented as much more courageous than Kent when she feels "awake, alert, alive in all her limbs" (192), despite the fact that she will be sent off on another night's ambulance run. Instead of feeling the threat of war, it fills her with life and purpose. These dynamics are represented in a card game with her colleague Hughes. In clothes, age, posture and complexion Hughes is described as resembling the image of the Reaper – the metaphoric embodiment of death. Kay consciously observes that it feels "like gaming with Death" (189) – a sensation that is increased by Hughes' gesturing: he "pointed a finger, then turned and crooked it. '*Tonight*,' he whispered in horror-film tones." (189-190) Despite feeling spooked, Kay wards off his threat by throwing a coin at him – a reference to the Charon in Greek mythology – indicating Kay's reluctance to consider her own death and her symbolic refusal to pay for passage to the world of the dead. Later, Hughes performs the same act in front of the mirror. "[L]ooking quite unnerved", he admits uneasily that he "had a whiff of [his] own grave" (190). Juxtaposing the reaction of Kay and Hughes it can be argued that in wartime Kay faces danger without fear because the proximity of death heightens her alertness and initiative. Paradoxically, the possibility of her own death fills Kay with life, which is substantiated when she volunteers to do a "mortuary run" (211) in order to protect a seventeen-year-old girl from

65 Gill Plain, *Women's Fiction of the Second World War: Gender, Power and Resistance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 28, [emphasis original].

witnessing such a horrible sight. Kay's altruism has a troubling effect: at once highlighting her as a noble character who takes care of others, whilst substantiating her masculinist subject position when she assumes her young female colleague to be unprepared for the job.

Together with another colleague named Cole, Kay arrives at the scene where a bomb had detonated in a backyard.

A man led Kay and Cole around it, to show them what had been recovered: a woman's body, clothed and slippered but minus its head; and the naked, sexless torso of an oldish child, still tied round with its dressing-gown cord. These lay under a blanket. Wrapped in an oilcloth sheet beside them were various body-parts: little legs; a jaw; and a chubby jointed limb that might have been a knee or an elbow. [...]
Kay nodded. She turned, and went back to the van. It was better to be moving, doing something, after sights like that. [...] The worst thing to handle was the jaw, with its little milk-teeth. Cole picked it up, then almost threw it into the box – overcome, in the end, not with sadness, but simply with the horror of the thing.
'All right?' asked Kay, touching her shoulder.
'Yes. I'm all right.'
'Walk about over there. I'll see to this.'
'I said I'm all right, didn't I?' (212-213)

The war neither spares women from witnessing death, nor children from dying, and the bluntness with which the scene is narrated signals that despite the horrible sight, Kay and Cole have almost grown used to carrying not only the dead but also the dispersed. Being an ambulance driver at the home front during the Second World War was obviously challenging, and Kay and Cole need to be tough in order to deal with what they witness. The rapid transition from describing how Kay and Cole move towards the blanket, to detailing what they find on it, plunges the reader into a state of horror as if themselves witnessing what the characters see. Although prepared that the woman is dead, the sober display of her body lying there "minus its head" is deeply unsettling and captures the atrocity of war.

The depiction of how Cole has to take care of the child's jaw is especially moving and indicates the character's struggle to handle the situation. In contrast to Cole's "horror of the thing", Kay remains calm and busies herself in order to cope with the task of transporting the body parts to the place where they are stored. When she tells Cole to leave the rest to her, she unconsciously puts herself above her colleague who feels patronised and reacts accordingly: "I said I'm all right, didn't I?" Kay's offer is perceived as a challenge to Cole's abilities and

greeted with hostility – a reaction to Kay's 'gentlemanly behaviour'. Kay's instinct to save the young colleague from encountering such atrocities in addition to her patronising behaviour towards Cole evidence that her performance is more heroic and masculine than Kent's in *Look Down in Mercy*, who already begins shaking at the sight of burnt men without having to deal with their transportation. Consequently, Kay's behaviour as a fighting woman at the front is more convincing according to traditional masculine standards than Kent's commanding skills on the battlefield. This difference challenges any assumption regarding the automatic attribution of masculinity to soldiers, whilst women obtain nothing more than what Plain calls a "*semblance* of masculinity".[66] In fact, Kay's (female) masculinity makes her "*more* of a gentleman than any real man" (425) [my emphasis], according to Helen and Julia.

Moreover, Kay's subconscious trauma caused by the sight of dispersed body parts is only displayed when she is in the privacy of her apartment, which adds to the narrative of tough masculinity that hides its qualms from the outside world:

> She was fine, for a moment or two. But then the whisky began to shiver in the glass as she raised it to her mouth, and the cigarette to shed ash over her knuckles. She'd started to shake. Sometimes it happened. Soon she was shaking so hard she could barely keep her cigarette in her mouth or sip from her drink. It was like the passing through her of a ghost express-train; there was nothing to be done, she knew, but let the train rattle on. Through all its boxes and cars ... (216)

O'Callaghan argues that this and other scenes highlights the "the emotional vulnerability of the butch lesbian"[67], despite the fact that Kay drinks "whisky" – a stereotypically male drink that confirms her glorification of masculine conduct. However, it is significant that this scene happens inside her flat, whilst Helen is fast asleep: Kay is not being watched and only the reader glimpses this emotional reaction towards the "ghost[s]" that haunt Kay after her shift. She meticulously follows the scripts of masculinity that allow for emotions only in the private in order to retain an outside performance of sturdiness. Kay's behaviour illustrates Genevieve Lloyd's polemic argument that

> Woman's task is to preserve the sphere of the intermingling of mind and body, to which the Man of Reason will repair for solace, warmth and relaxation. If he is to exercise the

66 Plain, (1996), p. 28, [emphasis original].

67 O'Callaghan, (2016), p. 207.

most exalted form of Reason, he must leave soft emotions and sensuousness behind; woman will keep them intact for him. [68]

Lloyd's "sphere of the intermingling of mind and body" denotes the home where women stereotypically take care of the "Man of Reason", who "must leave soft emotions and sensuousness behind". Kay's behaviour after her shift partakes of these characteristics when she displays outward toughness. However, as soon as she leaves the public and stops "exercise[ing] the most exalted form of Reason" (in this case driving an ambulance), she returns to the home for "warmth and relaxation". In Lloyd's thesis, men are dependent on women to mirror the homely and emotional sphere: "women will keep [soft emotions and sensuousness] intact for him". Kay shows an interesting variation of this paradigm when she, independent of her partner Helen, allows the comforting atmosphere of the home to gradually relax her because she combines the distinct spheres of masculinity and femininity in her body and gender performance.

In the all-male environment of the military, men like Kent in *Look Down in Mercy* cannot find similar comforts because their male bodies exclude them from savouring "soft emotions and sensuousness" without women to "keep them intact for them". The characters' growing sense of homelessness challenges Young's argument that "he has a home at the expense of her homelessness, as she serves as the ground on which he builds"[69]. While it might be coherent to argue that women nurture men at home whilst themselves becoming disengaged with their workplace, Baxter's novel consistently shows that efforts of providing homeliness are failing for men, too. Brown disputes Young's claim for similar reason when arguing that "*If* he is 'at home' anywhere, it is in the sphere of civil society insofar as his nature is expressed there and he performs all of his significant activities there."[70] Striking is her implied questioning *if* men *ever* feel at home, which further challenges male homeliness "at the expense of her homelessness". In accordance with earlier evaluations of Kent's failing masculinity, the officer's homelessness calls to attention the social pressure on men to perform gender stereotypes of toughness and indifference to homely comfort, which not only disengages them from their emotions, but also keeps them from embracing the home. Interestingly, the only male character to find a home is Thomas in Adam Fitzroy's *Make Do and Mend*, since he is staying "at home" (144) not as a

68 Genevieve Lloyd, The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 51.

69 Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like A Girl" and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 128.

70 Brown, (1995), p. 149, [my emphasis].

consciousness objector, but because his occupation as a lawyer is considered too valuable for him to do war work. By establishing a home with a family, Thomas is ironically cast out of the dominant paradigm of male homelessness during war, which reinforces his position as a stranger within the nation as has been elaborated on in the previous chapter. Other characters like Kent who are far from home, begin to long for the comfortable space that scripts of masculine conduct deny them to embrace.

In order to "put aside the slowly accumulating burden of [Kent's] responsibilities" (53), Anson brings him tea and other small pleasantries. Unlike Kay, whose occupation as an ambulance driver takes her into the public space of London's street, Anson's domestic tasks are those traditionally connected to the home. Massey argues that the "place called home is frequently personified by, and partakes of the same characteristics as those assigned to Woman/Mother/lover"[71]. *Look Down in Mercy* destabilises this categorical assumption of encountering female bodies at home when Kent is teased by a fellow officer about wanting to leave the club early: "I suppose your girl friend's [sic] sitting at home doing a bit of sewing and waiting for you, eh?" (213). This statement deploys every stereotype of women and home in order to underscore the masculine atmosphere of the military by evoking the image of the passive woman staying at home doing domestic work, whilst awaiting her active and public man to return. Yet, Kent's blushing upon these words deconstructs the scene's implied meaning: he and the reader know that it is not a woman awaiting him at home, but Anson who had asked to stay at Kent's bungalow because "[s]ome of the new shirts want pips sewing on, and those new socks could do with another wash through" (212). By using the exact same word and grammar – "sewing" – the officer's imagined woman is connected to Kent's batman, which challenges the stereotype of female domesticity. However, since Anson violates traditional masculinity by being homosexual and performing feminine tasks, he does not alter the female home but opens its definition to include male bodies that become emasculated through domestication. The alignment of the home as feminine emphasises how "traditionally [it has] been subject to the patriarchal authority of the husband and father"[72]. Kent's social and military superiority over Anson substantiates this claim albeit indicating that "patriarchal authority" is not only practised over biologically female bodies, but over everyone who fulfils the female gender role, for example by sewing. Consequently, while the narrative decon-

71 Massey, (1994), p. 10.

72 Nancy Duncan, "Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces" in Nancy Duncan (ed.), *BodySpace: Destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 131.

structs the home as inhabiting solely female bodies through representing a male body awaiting Kent, it does not deny that homeliness is connected to domesticity, femininity and patriarchy.

Despite Anson's efforts to ease Kent's discomforts at the front, he never achieves for Kent to feel homely, because both characters suffer from "the void caused by the barren years of being a private soldier, of having no home" (4). The term "void" merges experiences of physical homelessness with a disturbed feeling of belonging. The primary meaning of "void" is "emptiness, vacancy, vacuity, vacuum" denominating spaces that are cleared off objects or inhabitants. Living in provisional barracks, the soldiers' lives are void of both personality and luxurious objects.[73] This physical emptiness of the military camp enters and reflects the soldiers' psyche and transforms the "void" into a psychological meaning: an "unsatisfied feeling or desire"[74]. The soldiers experience a growing sense of dissatisfaction when suffering homelessness, which manifests in "an impalpable atmosphere of chaos" (4) despite constant cleaning and tidying. In the course of the novel, this chaos increasingly impairs military action, and Kent reflects that "[b]y now everything was in utter confusion, no one seemed to know whether there was still any organised resistance to the Japanese nor how far away they were" (233). The chaos of the barracks has penetrated the body of the military noticeable in a lack of information and order.[75] A conversation between Kent and the Sergeant Major illustrates Kent's exhaustion caused by the constant movement: "I'm so anxious to get settled in a position we intend holding on to for a bit […] that I'm frightened to ask too many questions in case I give myself away." (140) Not only is the repeating theme of Kent's professional insufficiency obvious in this scene, his homelessness has additionally aggravated a feeling of anxiety. He is scared to display his desire "to get settled in a position we intend holding on to for a bit", because such a confession would substantiate his inability to endure discomfort. Additionally, his hesitance seems to be a sign of embarrassment to seek homely belonging, because the home is traditionally connected to female bodies whereas to be a man means "*not* to be 'feminine', *not* to be 'gay', *not* to be tainted with any marks of 'inferiority' – ethnic or oth-

73 "Void, adj. and n.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2016. Web. 8 June 2016.

74 "Void, adj. and n.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2016. Web. 8 June 2016.

75 In *The Charioteer* Laurie similarly comments on the disorganisation of the hospital: "the whole place was in a chronic muddle" (36). Mary Renault, *The Charioteer*, [1953], (New York: Vintage Books, 2003),

erwise"[76]. Man must display indifference to the home, which explains why Kent cannot admit to his need for homely comfort.

Moreover, the home is not only unreachable but also treacherous in *Look Down in Mercy*, when a group of British soldiers stops at a bungalow to bury a dead comrade and to make tea for the rest of their battalion following on foot in flight of the Japanese:

> The driver had managed to unscrew the padlock on the front door and wandered about the gloomy rooms lit by chinks of mote-flecked sun that slipped through the shutters. The place was bare except for a few rickety pieces of furniture, but he found a tattered copy of *Blackwood's* dated July 1926; he dragged an arm-chair to the veranda and sat drinking his tea and reading odd paragraphs that caught his eye, his lips forming the words. (73)

The padlock assures the driver that the house is empty even though there is no solid proof for this assumption. Without concern, he moves into the "gloomy rooms". Whilst the driver's behaviour is highly unusual for a military personal trained to fully secure a building before entering it, and staying alert throughout the mission, it is characteristic of a private person, who has not felt the comfort of home for several years. The image of a solid house, contrasting the provisional barracks which the soldiers are used to, has swept away any concerns regarding the enemy and leads the driver to be careless and unalert. When entering the bungalow regardless of his impaired vision, the concept of house and home is revealed as connoting a sense of safety. The driver's surprising ease is evident in his movements: he is "wander[ing]" inside this unoccupied house, unconcerned and leisurely, without considering the possibility of danger. Through his movement he claims the deserted house for himself and compensates for his debilitating homelessness. This possessive attitude is additionally demonstrated in his approach towards the furniture. Instead of cautiously leaving it where he found it, the driver arranges the arm-chair, takes up the July 1926 issue of the *Blackwood's Magazine* and makes himself comfortable to enjoy his tea. In doing this, he re-enacts a form of domesticity usually absent from military discourse. Even when he hears noises, he remains calm, only "casually look[ing] across to his lorry" (73) to then continue with his reading. His behaviour shows how great the need for feeling homely figures – greater than the instinct of staying attentive in case danger emerges. Unsurprisingly, the driver's sense of safety is punished when the Japanese appear and burn the whole group alive. In his pursuit of a home, the driver did not act rationally as it is required of him. It follows that de-

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

spite demonstrating a masculine appearance, the battlefield is occupied by humans whose need for comfort superimposes rational thinking. The novel insinuates that the home is simultaneously safe and dangerous because it provides an ideological space that is assumed safe to live in, whilst restraining critical though.

Harry similarly addresses the seductive safety of homes in *Make Do and Mend* when during a dance sirens sound alarm and the entire village hurries under cover. The jollity of the dance is interrupted to remind the reader of the always present threat of war.[77] Harry reflects that

> The church [where the people take cover] may well have stood for a thousand years before tonight, but it would be no proof against a direct hit; if that happened, there would be a thousand years of solid masonry and carved oak down around the ears of the shelterers in an instant. (97)

While the rest of the village feels relatively secure in the shelter, Harry is aware that their sense of safety is illusionary and the age of the building nothing but a false promise of protection. Harry's repeated use of the phrase "a thousand years" is striking because it indicates the old age of the church, but more importantly the ability of the war to destroy it with one "direct hit". In Harry's worst case scenario, the building which should save the people, will bury and kill them.

Equally ironic is Harry's recollection of a case in Cardiff where a whole family was killed because "a bomb fell through their house and exploded in the cellar where they were sheltering; only the horse, in the stable next door, had survived" (147). Harry's comparison between the stable and the supposedly safe shelter reinforces the impression that houses are conveying a kind of security that is nothing but a fabrication built on human fantasies. It is therefore not surprising that in all novels shelters are regarded with suspicion. Neither Helen and Julia in *The Night Watch*, nor Harry in *Make Do and Mend*, agree to be kept locked up, and choose movement over apparent safety. Laurie in *The Charioteer* even violates his aversion towards homosexual company like Sandy's when accepting his invitation to a party in order to avoid the communal shelter after his treatment in the city hospital. Kent is the wariest of the deceptive safety of build-

77 All novels use the sound of sirens to cut through any narration of tranquillity and happiness, which disrupts a progressive narration and is a constant reminder of the threatening events in continental Europe in the 1940s. The deployment of a sound as a signal for imminent danger disrupts language and alludes to the uncontrollability of wartime and its threat to humanity.

ings. When he and Anson pass through a village on their flight out of Burma, he expects the houses to "burst into flames and betray him" (174). Despite his physical discomforts in the wilderness, Kent avoids the threatening cities "full of sickness" (250). To him, city life is the epitome of abjection, pervaded with "cases of cholera" (226), Indians hastily leaving their homes at the falling of "a few bombs" (100) and anti-aircraft fire never to return. Consequently, Kent avoids anything that represents domesticity and prefers battling nature – a forceful but less manipulative power in his view.

CHALLENGING THE PARENTAL HOME

Kent perceives the home as a construction that limits its inhabitants through monitoring desire and perpetuating heteronormativity: he saw "charred furniture [standing] in front of the heaps of ash that represented homes" (217) in a village deeply effect by the war. By distinguishing the "heaps of ash" as "represent[ing] homes", Kent not only observes that the physical houses are gone and have been reduced to piles of ash, but, more importantly, that whatever constitutes a home is only a representation of what *should* be a home.[78] Implicitly, Kent questions if there is anything such as a home detached from what has socio-historically forged understandings of homeliness. This section will demonstrate that the far-reaching connotations of home are mostly marked by paradoxes: simultaneously protecting a 'norm' whilst keeping 'difference' from infiltrating the public. Nancy Duncan argues that "[t]he public/private dichotomy (both the political and spatial dimensions) is frequently employed to construct, control, discipline, confine, exclude and suppress gender and sexual difference preserving traditional patriarchal and heterosexist power structures."[79] The private home does all of these things, but Duncan conflates two lines of argument: the home "construct[s], control[s] [and] discipline[s]" heterosexuality and gender conformity to guarantee heteronormative standards in the public, but it also "confine[s], exclude[s] and suppress[es]" deviating desires in order to eliminate them from society. This shows the twofold function of home as *monitoring* or *controlling* heterosexual desires and *confining* homosexual preferences. In this way, the concept of home illustrates Brown's argument that when the hegemonic order fails

78 Kent's emphasis does not lie on the physical building but on the psychological implication of it since he uses the word "home" instead of "house".

79 Duncan, (1996), p. 128.

to successfully abject something (such as homosexual desire), it then assimilates and submerges it under the dominant order.[80]

At the same time as controlling and confining various forms of desires, the home has a powerful impact on the self because the 'norms' learned at home become internalised and create an understanding of 'proper' conduct. Judith Butler observes a similar phenomenon with view to gender:

> Although being a certain gender does not imply that one will desire a certain way, there is nevertheless a desire that is constitutive of gender itself and, as a result, no quick or easy way to separate the life of gender from the life of desire. […] To speak in this way may seem strange, but it becomes less so when we realize that the social norms that constitute our existence carry desires that do not originate with our individual personhood.[81]

Butler convincingly argues that desires do not originate from one's personhood but are influenced by social norms. Subjects adhere to heteronormativity and its strict regulations despite its potentially destructive effects. Since social norms develop within patriarchal and heteronormative settings, masculinity or femininity are artificial *constructs* one desires to achieve, which consequently makes one's *desire* concerning gender identity constituted and constructed by heterosexual norms as well. Because of the force with which heteronormativiy is assigned to sexed bodies, individuals usually do not question their desires, but instead believe them to purely and autonomously originate from themselves. Masculinity for men and femininity for women is therefore a powerful act of performance that the performer does not want to break. This reluctance to violate standards partly results from the threat of being abjected, but also because alternative performances necessitate an investigation of why gender norms are insufficient for one's personality, and how to improve this insufficiency. It is the combination of these two factors – knowledge of gender being performative followed by a willingness to risk abjection for a potentially 'incorrect' gender performance – that is needed for accidental slippages in order to transform discourses. Gender performances outside heterosexual norms are 'abjected' because their presence threatens heteronormativity and therefore patriarchy. Julia Kristeva's example of death in *Powers of Horror* helps to understand the paradoxical position of the abject: "as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live"[82]. Kristeva asserts here that acknowledging what is abjected can give normative life new value

80 Brown, (2006), p. 27.

81 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp.1-2.

82 Kristeva, (1982), p. 3.

and room for change. However, since society sees regulating discourses of power relations seldom as a threat but mostly as a guide – not consciously noticeable but always existing – a disturbance of these discourses is not desirable, for they imply transformation and forced adjustment. Consequently, instead of acknowledging trauma and abjection, or even desires beyond the control of heteronormative discourse, we learn to largely deny the existence of difference.

The home works in very similar ways because the self becomes conditioned to follow a certain set of rules that stands in close proximity to the heteronormative home. Before a person perceives deviating desires that need to be confined in the private space, that very space regulates, controls and manipulates desires according to heteronormative parameters. The self is therefore conditioned in heteronormative terms because "the social norms that constitute our existence carry desires that do not originate with our individual personhood"[83]. A formulation in Mary Renault's *The Charioteer* calls to attention the meaning of self and its implication for the conceptualisation of 'home' and feeling 'homely', when the protagonist Laurie becomes conscious of his impulsive reaction towards his friend Andrew during an argument. Their dispute occurs on account of a fellow hospital patient named Charlot, who has a fatal relapse after witnessing explosions that recall his traumatic experiences at Dunkirk. Laurie suggests that Andrew should pretend to be a priest and fulfil Charlot's last wish to confess his sins. Their argument over whether or not it is morally acceptable to deceive a dying man ends with Laurie's pointed accusation that Andrew would not understand a war victim's sorrows anyway, because he is a conscientious objector and has not witnessed the horrors of combat. Immediately after saying "Charlot and I understand each other" (240), Laurie ruefully reflects: "What he had said came home to him only gradually, like the collapse of a wall which starts with a few loose bricks." (240) Laurie's remorse originates from his realisation that Andrew's Quaker beliefs are incompatible with Laurie's romantic feelings towards him. He also understands that, sub-consciously, his friend's pacifism unsettles Laurie more than he is prepared to admit. These paradigm shifting comprehensions regarding their relationship are illustrated in the image of a "home" and "a wall" eroded by a "few loose bricks". The phrase "[w]hat he had said came home to him" is particularly interesting, as it deploys the "home" as a metaphorical synonym for Laurie's self. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* 'to come home to oneself' means to come "to one's senses", "to a state of self-

83 Butler, (2004), pp.1-2.

control" or "self-awareness"[84]. This definition denotes a direct focus on the interior self in control of a subject's behaviour and desire. Laurie's idiomatic expression additionally connects home and self to akin theoretical concepts and calls to attention their similar semantic function. In this section I will flesh out how 'the self' is metaphorically restrained by an 'inner home' that monitors desire and inhibits movement. Ahmed argues that the traditional home "becomes associated with stasis, boundaries, identity and fixity"[85]. "To be at home is the absence of desire, and the absence of an engagement with others through which desire engenders movement across boundaries."[86] What Ahmed calls the "absence of desire" is more clearly characterised as a lack of exploring and exploiting abjected desires theorised by Butler and Kristeva. My analysis will show that beyond denying desires, the home can be overly filled with a range of forbidden pleasures.

In Renault's *The Charioteer* and Fitzroy's *Make Do and Mend*, the characters Laurie and Harry are conditioned to accept certain social standards, fashioned by parental authority *at home*. In this way, the parental home becomes identified as a space of control rather than of comfort, which restrains the characters' excess to non-normative desires. However, Laurie's and Harry's increasing reluctance to follow such norms liberates "the closed 'bound' self"[87] to experience new kinds of passions that are subsequently suppressed and confined in the home. The connotation of home and feeling homely is therefore complex: the heteronormative home monitors desires to stay within known borders, whereas the homosexual home is overly filled with abjected desires that are relegated into the private in order to not disturb the heterosexual public. The home therefore functions as a counterpart to the street that needs to remain untarnished by non-conforming subject.

When Laurie receives a letter from his mother regarding her upcoming marriage to Mr. Straike, the allegory between home and self is recalled with a slight twist: "Now for the first time it started coming home to him: the Best Man, the reception, the archaic vestiges of sacrifice, of capture, and of sale." (257) Whereas Laurie's outburst towards Andrew for refusing to pretend being a priest

84 "home, adv.". OED Online. March 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.OED.com/view/Entry/87872?redirectedFrom=come+home+to+oneself [last accessed: 02/06/2016].

85 Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 87.

86 Ibid., p. 87.

87 Jenny Hartley, *Millions like Us: British Women's Fiction of the Second World War* (London: Virago, 1997), p. 60.

was resolved by Laurie's self reclaiming control over his emotions, his self is now invaded by negative feelings, which have been seething in his subconscious for some time. At this point, "self-control" becomes "self-awareness" – the letter disables Laurie's protective 'inner home' and begins to penetrate his psyche with emotions and desires beyond his control.

A comparison between Laurie's approach to the home and Philip's in *Make Do and Mend* illustrates the different resolution for stabilising a shaken self. Harry and the vicar, Philip, talk about Jim Brynawel, who withdraws from village life and keeps his past private. Philip concludes that "[i]t would be a shame to disturb Jim just when he's beginning to be comfortable within himself." (65) Philip's evasive formulation is incomprehensible for both Harry and the reader, especially because neither knows that the reason for Jim's "wounds" (65) is the suicide of a man who was madly in love with him, and whom Jim rejected. Assuming that Jim 'has come home to himself' – that his self has re-taken control over his emotions after a moment of uncertainty over his sexuality – he is now beginning to feel homely. However, homeliness is rightly criticised by Ahmed "as too familiar, safe and comfortable to allow for critical thought"[88]. "Beginning to be comfortable within himself" does then not denote critical reflection and self-evaluation but the very opposite: Jim's temporarily shaken self returns to stability and conformity by denying himself deviating desires and autonomous movement. This demonstrates that traditional homely comfort is not a sign for satisfaction but for conformity.

In contrast to Jim, who denies himself discerning self-evaluation and returns to a place of stasis, Laurie begins to question his failing sense of homeliness upon receiving the message that his mother is going to re-marry: "I've often had a feeling that there's nowhere I really belong." (291)[89] In consequence of Laurie's diminishing sense of homeliness, he begins to liberate himself from his relationship of dependence with his mother, which has been shakily built on the secret of Laurie's homosexuality and Mrs. Odell's wish to stay oblivious to it. Until this revelation of non-belonging, the reader had the impression that by keeping his bedroom in his mother's house throughout the war, Laurie is holding onto his

88 Ahmed, (2000), p. 87.

89 This passage may also be read with regard to Freud's evaluation of 'un-heimlich', which is reproduced by Vidler when he states: "For Freud, 'unhomeliness' was more than a simple sense of not belonging; it was the fundamental propensity of the familiar to turn on its owners, suddenly to become defamiliarized, derealized, as if in a dream." Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1992), p. 7. Laurie's formerly familiar home turns into unhomeliness because his relationship with his mother falters.

childhood-feelings of comfort. However, it is not the material house that satisfies Laurie; he cannot even conceptualise what to do with it after his mother's marriage to Mr. Straike: "Mrs. Trevor had written again about the house, and –" (257). Laurie's sentence is interrupted by the emergence of a nurse and the reader never finds out what will happen to this "seventeenth-century cottage" (84), which is the only description ever given of the building. Laurie's past is a subconscious memory that cannot be re-materialised by making a home of the inherited house "even if war regulations had allowed him to keep it as a weekend place" (272). Consequently, homeliness is not related to the house in Laurie's understanding, but to his mother. He admits that "[w]omen still stood to him for background and stability, as they do to children, because they had never stood for anything more" (248). Laurie perceives women as nothing more than caretakers of homes and homes become embodied through female bodies because Laurie has never related to them in any other form or context. When his mother has re-married, Laurie's past sense of homeliness collapses and he realises that he has never really belonged anywhere. In consequence, he begins to liberate himself from his relationship of dependence with his mother.

Baxter's representation of Harry at the Hendra farm in *Make Do and Mend* is strikingly similar to Renault's dramatisation of Laurie's failing sense of homeliness in the matriarchal home. Harry at the same time loves and hates the Hendra house because it represents both the building he grew up in, and the conservative father he despises. Harry explains that "[l]ack of interest in the day-to-day operation of the estate had been one of the reasons he had opted for the Navy in the first place" (9). Even as a child, Harry used to seek ways of hiding, but "[u]ntil Harry had left to join the Navy, running away from Hendra had never involved running very far" (16). Instead of trying to understand his son's reluctance to stay at the farm, Harry's father Sir Charles "had always chosen to see [Harry's running away] as evasion on his responsibilities, but Harry had simply wanted some excitement in his life" (9). Harry's reflection demonstrates a distance to his father and a lingering disidentification with the daily routine on the farm. Even when returning to Hendra to recover from his lung injury caused by his submarine running aground, his feelings continue to be ambivalent despite establishing "his private quarters in his [father's old room]" (71) – an attempt of shaking off the authoritative memory of Sir Charles.[90] Home is here not connected to the

90 That Harry's brother Jack equally felt neglected by his father is evident in Jack's sarcastic statement that their father's perpetual shortage of money could have been prevented by "selling us [the children] and keeping the books" (17). Jack's critical evaluation of their childhood shows that Harry's and Jack's childhood home was lacking

mother monitoring her child's sexuality as in *The Charioteer*, but to the father rendering visible the home as a space of patriarchal control.

Harry begins to approach his childhood house, which he has inherited after his father's death, by describing it as "home-*like*" (7) [my emphasis], instantly revealing his damaged identification with it. The vicarage, in contrast, is represented as his *chosen* "second home" (16), indicating a more positive testimony. While Hendra symbolises conservative standards through the figure of the late father whose ideologies have been 'inherited' by his son Thomas, Harry perceives the vicarage, inhabited by a homosexual pastor, as a place for difference and liberation. Philip's "quiet room" (64), where Harry feels most satisfied, reveals that the concept of home is not fixed to one's family or ancestry. Nevertheless, Harry's need to qualify home in terms of "like" or "second" illustrates that he has nowhere to easily identify as home. In this way, the novel demonstrates Ahmed's approach to the home as a "lived experience" detached from "fantasies of belonging"[91], by which she denotes the phantasmic assumption that ancestry determines homeliness. Instead of perpetuating family structures through staying where one 'belongs by birth', Ahmed approaches the home in terms of satisfaction and dis-satisfaction: the question to ask is not only "*how one feels*" about that which is meant to be a home but "*how one might fail to feel*"[92]. Through failing to feel at home at Hendra, Harry rebels against subconscious standards of heteronormativity at the Hendra estate. Both *The Charioteer* and *Make Do and Mend* demonstrate the continuous and constructed interconnection between home and family, and how the choice to leave family bonds behind influences the characters' feeling of homeliness.

At the beginning of *Make Do and Mend*, Harry is about to enter his father's chambers for the first time since he has left his family several years before the outbreak of the war: "It was like the ceremonial opening of a tomb." (18) Calling the rooms a "tomb" has several implications: it foremost indicates that family members rarely entered Sir Charles' chambers. Harry therefore describes his entrance as "ceremonial", which enhances the scene's significance. Juxtaposing Harry's reference to the "tomb" with Laurie's reaction in *The Charioteer* upon entering Alec and Sandy's (friends of Ralph's) home, the term "tomb" obtains another quality. As Laurie is invited to join a homosexual party, he describes Alec and Sandy's house as a "mausoleum" (114). The party turns out to feature those homosexual individuals Laurie has come to disdain for their promiscuity,

warmth and love, and that this was not only felt by Harry but by at least one of his brothers, too.

91 Ahmed, (2000), p. 89.

92 Ibid., p. 89, [emphasis original].

flamboyancy and cattiness. Consequently, Laurie "could recall few doors which he had felt such reluctance to enter" (114). This uneasy feeling becomes substantiated when Laurie realises that homosexuals like himself cannot escape socialising, however reluctantly, with these "advanced psychopaths", since they are *all* "driven underground together" (199). The description of the hosts' house as a "mausoleum" symbolises society's many layers and the force with which homosexuals are made to share the abjected space at its bottom. Consequently, the tomb in *Make do and Mend* becomes more than the chambers of Sir Charles and a symbol of his death or the decay of the house, because it may also indicate a space of/for homosexuality.

This becomes more traction considering that *Make do and Mend* develops a latent feeling of secrecy regarding Sir Charles' sexuality when his best friend Philip talks about their friendship and his own sexual deviance. These suspicions regarding Sir Charles' sexuality are manifesting, when Philip straightforwardly claims in front of Harry and his brother Jack: "Oh, he'd realised [my sexual preferences] all right [...] How could he not?" (241) The narrator clarifies the significance of Philip's words:

> The tone of voice was such as to divert the attention of both brothers [Harry and Jack], for a moment, from their immediate concerns; there was a wealth of sadness concealed behind the ordinary words. Philip, however, seemed disinclined to elaborate [...]. (241)

The text leaves the possibility as to whether or not Sir Charles was homosexual distinctly open, but Philip implies that he and Sir Charles have shared some kind of secret. Philip's interrogation "How could he not", combined with the "wealth of sadness" resonating in his words, strongly suggests that they were on intimate terms and potentially shared more than confidentialities. Harry and Jack realise that Philip knows more than he is prepared to admit, but they do not pressure him to elaborate. Considering Philip's career as a vicar which demands a lifetime of celibacy, and his explanation that in his time "it was safest to deny one's urges altogether" (63), it seems plausible that Harry's father, too, felt less sure about his heterosexuality than he let people to believe. The metaphoric bridge between *Make Do and Mend's* "tomb" and the "mausoleum" in *The Charioteer* has thus been built: both narratives use the symbolism of death to demonstrate how homosexuals are abjected from society that does not accepts outlawed desires. The repeated emphasis on death metaphors highlights the medical discourse surrounding homosexuality where subjects were regarded as sexually deviat – an 'illnesses' that threatened heteronormative and reproductive society.

In order to not be persecuted, homosexuals had to keep their desires private and in the home, which shows the paradoxical function of the home: at once navigating desires into heteronormativity, and when this process fails, containing non-conforming pleasure in order to keep them away from the heteronormative public. Whereas Sir Charles had to conceal his homosexual desires in order to fashion an appearance of heteronormativity, Harry flees his childhood-home because of its representation of conservative ideologies. The novel, therefore, displays not only the conflicting functions of home – policing and containing desires – but also a generational distance between father and son. Ultimately, Harry is able to live a less suppressed life because he manages to liberate himself from the negative connotation of heteronormative homeliness, whereas his father remains trapped inside a restraining home fashioned after conservative social scripts regarding gender and sexuality.

Upon his return to the Hendra house after years of serving in the Navy, Harry begins to re-claim his childhood home by entering his father's chambers:

> Cautiously he opened the door to the bedroom as if half-expecting to find his father lurking behind it, an emaciated and malevolent prisoner. What he found instead was an old iron bedstead with its thick horsehair mattress still in place, a washstand complete with basin, ewer and slop bucket, a chest of drawers with a mirror on top and a few of his father's ebony-backed hairbrushes lined up neatly as if awaiting his return. There was also a tall and forbidden mahogany wardrobe smothered in elaborate carving. In the grate lay a cone of fallen soot the counterpart of the one in the adjoining room. (22)

Harry is uncertain what might be waiting behind the door: Harry's father? His ghost? Or possibly a third, as yet unknown, "prisoner"? The use of the term "prisoner" to characterise Harry's father, reinforces my reading of Sir Charles being imprisoned in a heteronormative home due to his potential homosexuality. The "old iron bedstead" "still in place" contributes to the uncanny scene and betrays the impression of the father "awaiting his [son's] return". Harry, as the new owner of the house, is reminded of his present mediocrity by his very own furniture, especially by the "forbidden mahogany wardrobe", which seems to recollect a time where Harry was a child and not allowed to look inside it. The word "forbidden" recalls a memory that infantilizes the adult Harry and demonstrates the father's authority over his children when he was still alive. It also suggests a semantic representation of 'being in the closet' to add to previous arguments regarding Sir Charles' disguised homosexuality.

Harry has to constantly remind himself that he "divorced himself from his family" (148) by serving in the Navy, and that consequently his father has long

lost any power over his son. His choice of words – "divorced himself from his family" – substantiates Harry's self-understanding as a homosexual, whose "divorce" not only expresses a split with his family but also with the heteronormative lifestyle symbolised by the Hendra house. Reassuring himself of his independence, Harry wards off the threat of the ghostly "prisoner" that is the memory of his father. The fallen soot from the chimney convinces Harry that the room is absolutely empty and that it has not been in use for a long time. Subsequently, Harry begins repairs on the house in order to claim authority over his father's ghostly soul by moving into his chambers and using his furniture.

However, Harry's latent feeling of unhomeliness at Hendra carries through the whole narrative despite his increasing control over the estate. This becomes particularly obvious after a relapse of pleurisy during which Harry stays at Jim's remote farm hut, where their mutual affection becomes apparent for the first time. After his recovery, Harry reluctantly states that he must "return to Hendra, to his home and family" (134). Despite indicating slightly more identification with Hendra when no longer qualifying it as "home-like" but as "home and family", the resentment of going back to a place where his desires still need to be closeted is clear. The narrator clarifies that the imminent separation of Jim and Harry did not "fill either man with enthusiasm, and a shadow fell across them at the mentioning of it" (134).

Even when 'coming out' to his brother Jack, who accepts Harry's relationship with Jim, homosexual desire is still cast out of the Hendra house because Jim and Harry's love works as a storyline subordinated to Jack's heterosexual marriage and becomes relegated to the remote farm hut in order to not disturb the heterosexual public. Moreover, since the father's convictions live on in Harry's second brother Thomas, heteronormative standards continue to dominate within the family. Consequently, Harry's endeavour to engender a new home is only partially successful when he finds a lover but fails to completely claim Hendra as a non-normative home.

In *The Charioteer*, Laurie's parental bond is similarly difficult to sever. Despite realising and accepting his homosexuality early on as a teenager, Laurie continues to be conditioned within the bounds of his mother's home and finds relief only after having been intimate with Ralph. Laurie's realisation that he "[got] what he must long have been desiring" (291) evidences that before the sexual shattering of his heteronormatively conditioned self, 'abnormal' physical desires were prevented from penetrating his psyche in order to maintain an "orthodox" (58) lifestyle – meaning his staying away from homosexual conduct and conforming to gender norms of masculinity. His statement can be read as a confession that his mother's home has never fully satisfied Laurie, who failed to be

open and comfortable as a result of his closetedness. Laurie's sudden realisation that something was missing from his life demonstrates that the conventional concept of home not only keeps the self from desiring outside of heterosexual norms, but also that it regulates experiences of social belonging. Through becoming conscious of his situation, Laurie begins to liberate himself from his dependence on his mother, and his sense of homely belonging grounded in the denial of his homosexual desires is shattered when he sleeps with Ralph.

Responding to his and Laurie's sexual encounter, Ralph announces: "You belong with me [, Laurie]. As long as we're both alive, this will always be your place before anyone else's." (291) Since Ralph believes that Laurie's non-belonging was a result of his dishonest bond with his mother, he concludes that a relationship with him, in which Laurie does not need to hide his sexuality, would fulfil his deepest desires. Momentarily, Laurie is tempted by this proposal and he admits that "[t]here had not been time to discover, till now, the sensation of coming home again which is one of the more stable by-products of physical love" (310). The recurring formulation of "coming home" as an emotional experience, restates the interconnection between home and self. Henri Lefebvre argues that "[t]he relationship between Home and Ego, meanwhile, borders on identity"[93]. Identity thus stands in a reciprocal connection with home and self, which is substantiated by Ahmed's understanding of feeling homely: "subject and space leak into each other, *inhabit each other*"[94]. However, whereas the phrase "to come home to him" illustrates the self's re-taking control in monitoring desires, the kind of identity envisioned in Ralph's "coming home" does not perpetuate fixity and monogamy, and thus defies heteronormative markers of home and self. Whilst Laurie's self and his inherited house have controlled his desires and prevented him from negotiating a homosexual identity, the "coming home" to a male body opens a new horizon of possibilities. Instead of narrowly envisioning home as a heteronormative identity, Laurie and Ralph broaden it to implicate belonging without stasis or gender conformity. Ralph even proposes an open relationship in which Laurie is free to see Andrew whenever he wants to, without implying that this endangers their shared feeling of belonging together. Ralph's negotiation of the meaning of "coming home" reveals that feeling homely can be detached from conventional understandings of identity whilst retaining its quality of evoking safety. He subverts Ahmed's understanding of home "associated with stasis, boundaries, identity and fixity" because "[t]o be at home is the absence of desire"[95], when insinuating that home is a space of *forbidden* desires.

93 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, [1974], (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), p. 121.

94 Ahmed, (2000), p. 89, [emphasis original].

95 Ibid., p. 87.

Once more the contradictory discourse of home becomes clear: whereas Ahmed characterises the heteronormative home as a space without desire to "engender[...] movement across boundaries"[96], Ralph's metaphoric image of two male bodies 'coming home' argues for the concealment of unsavoury desires inside the home. In his perception, the home is no longer a space for heteronormativity and the family but designed to disguise homosexual desires.

Kay's home in *The Night Watch* is also meant to be a space for difference when she describes its rooms as "L-shaped" (314) to denote their resident as Lesbian. The apartment has quite literally grounded Kay throughout her chaotic life before the war when "[s]he'd had too much money; she'd drunk too much; she'd careered from one unhappy love-affair to another" (314). It was the only constant in her life for "seven years" (314) since it had been given to her by a prostitute "she'd once been lovers with" (314). Because it does not resemble family ties but various outlawed desires, Kay's home is initially introduced as a non-heteronormative place. It thus queers both time and space – time when surviving the war for seven years, and space by being non-reproductive, non-familial but filled with lesbian desire. Kay describes how much she likes living in the flat with its "funny little mews or yard that the flat overlooked" (314), repeatedly using the word 'like' for emphasis. However, Kay confines Helen to this home when she says that "[s]he felt about the flat rather as she felt about Helen: that it was secret, special, hers" (314). Kay's comment highlights her male role in their relationship, and by comparing her feelings for Helen to her sense of homeliness, Kay unconsciously reduces Helen to a thing that can be possessed. The explanation that both were "secret, special, hers" confines Helen further and removes her autonomy and the possibility for Helen to move because Kay claims possession over her.

Whereas Kay's attitude towards her flat demonstrates Ahmed's theorisation that "subject and space leak into each other", Helen, who feels uncomfortable in Kay's home, cannot identify with it in the same way her partner does.[97] Consequently, Helen does not 'like' the flat but uses the term 'silent' to describe her feelings: "The flat seemed very silent after [switching off the radio]: it was always especially silent in the evenings and at weekends […]. The silence and the stillness sometimes got on Helen's nerves." (343) Silence is here not an expression of peace of mind and inner quietness – feelings which might rather compare to Kay's sense of homely identity – but the very opposite: an uncertainty and unhomeliness signalling Helen's growing defamiliarisation with Kay. Moments later, this silence transforms into restlessness and a devastation over "wasting

96 Ahmed, (2000), p. 87.

97 Ibid., p. 89.

time" (344): "Now she became aware of the minutes as they passed: she felt them, suddenly, for what they were, as fragments of her life, her youth, that were rushing away like so many drops of water, never to return." (344) Despite wartime's uncertainty over the future, Helen realises that she is aging nonetheless. Kay's flat has turned into the figure of stasis and lack of movement for Helen just like the stereotypical heterosexual home. Because Kay represents the ideologies of heteronormative structures, and restricts Helen's initiative by patronising her, her home loses the unique lesbian qualities of anti-establishment and subsumes into the broad discourse of heteronormative homes.

The Charioteer develops a similar resolution between Laurie and Ralph when the former realises that the latter's proposition of an open relationship is not sincere but derives from Ralph's distance from the homosexual subculture: "scenes of jealousy were relegated in Ralph's mind to a special category, along with bracelets and eye-shadow" (319). Ralph is desperate to prove that he does not belong to the group of effeminate homosexuals, who wear "bracelets and eye-shadow" and throw jealous tantrums. In order to demonstrates his transcendence of such jealousy, Ralph "never discussed the future; he never mentioned Andrew; he never tried to make Laurie admit any change of heart" (319). The repeated pattern of saying "he never" is indicative of Laurie and Ralph's repetitive and monotonous relationship. It also signals undiscussed issues that prevent the characters from being truly honest with each other.

Only at home, where privacy and blackout conceal their homosexuality, can Laurie and Ralph be a couple, and their intimacy, which needs concealment in the open street, can reign. It seems hardly surprising that Laurie and Ralph's relationship becomes dreary rather quickly. Laurie comes to feel as restless in Ralph's home as Helen does in Kay's, and to him "[t]he next few evenings all merged [...] into a common memory and he thought of them almost as one" (318). Laurie's comment demonstrates his boredom with the couple's routine that alternates between bars and Ralph's home: "Sometimes Laurie would feel himself almost forgotten; but in the middle of it Ralph would look at his watch; the blackout would reseal itself behind them; in the dim street he would smile and say, Let's go home." (318) Ralph's differentiation between "the dim street" and the "home" relegates the focus towards a public space that stands in oppositional relationship to the home. It follows that the home does not rigorously deny desires as Ahmed argues[98], but purposefully permits them in order to keep deviance away from the public street.

The 'coming home of two male bodies' is thus accompanied by a new kind of encagement – privacy. Laurie's sense of belonging, initially recognised as a

98 Ahmed, (2000), p. 87.

liberation from the matriarchal home, has turned him into a still closeted and additionally abjected subject, who needs to conceal his desires from the public gaze. After a fight with Ralph, Laurie comes to the conclusion that "[a]s little as three weeks ago, his life had been full of strings: a home, three people he had been tied to. Now he was as free as air, he could go anywhere, it made no difference to anyone." (336) Laurie's construction of a homely bond with Ralph has failed and Laurie has become dissatisfied with the strings in his life once more. He remains incapable of forging a relationship with either Ralph or Andrew, and thus questions the possibility of finding love when his aspired form of love continues to be abjected from the public and confined within the private home.

THE PUBLIC HOME – THE PRIVATE STREET: INVERSION OF CONCEPTS

Laurie's and Helen's experiences illustrate that even non-heteronormative homes can come to be constraining because the realm of movement is restricted to a limited space. It follows that the queering of homely spaces through non-conforming bodies does not have the desired effect of shattering a constrained self. I wish to move from the re-negotiation of homely spaces to the deconstruction of physical buildings in order to examine the effect of wartime demolition on the characters, and to investigate whether the disintegration of public and private is a more fruitful attempt for queering space. Although wartime necessitates different scripts of conduct as seen in Kay's occupation as an ambulance driver, certain norms like the perpetuation of privacy seem to linger. The acceptance and protection of standards even when mirror images such as houses are destroyed, signifies the enduring power of heteronormative discourse. However, this section will also show that the street may offer more space for privacy than the home in wartime, and that this inversion of concepts demonstrates the arbitrariness of spatial connotations.

Whilst working as an ambulance driver, Kay frequently witnesses the disintegration of public and private spaces when countless houses collapse. At one point she thoughtfully reflects:

> 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. (195)

The "piles of dirt and rubble" reflect the morbidity of the 1940s where normative concepts of house and home collapse. Kay's observation that "houses, after all – like the lives that were lived in them – were mostly made of space" is ironic given that she tries to confine Helen in a little apartment. Her understanding of lives as space instead of time (birth to death), challenges futurity, which refers not only to Kay's deviating sexuality that will never result in pregnancy, but also to peoples' reluctance to make plans for a future that they might not live to see. Since time (future) is no longer within the realm of the imaginable, as has been argued by Jones and Mitchell[99], spatiality has become the determining factor in peoples' lives – indicated in the narrative's preoccupation with ruins. Kay's amazement over the small size of collapsed houses illustrates that the materiality of buildings is much more secondary than the physical impression suggests, and that this condition is concealed as long as normative discourse (linearity of peacetime) prevails. Only when threatened by the war, do people realise and perceive houses with regard to their materiality and fragility.

Julia nuances this observation when she says that houses, that have been bombed but are not fully collapsed, appear to be "more miserable, somehow, than if a house has been blasted to bits: it's like a life with a cancer in it" (225). Julia, too, lays emphasis on lives that are determined by space. When a house is only partially broken, the life that comes to strive in it has neither passed away completely. It is this partial death of the self, gradually spreading like a cancer growing inside, which makes the image of a half-broken house worse to bear than one which is undeniably destroyed. Not only does Julia's statement exemplify the connection between self and home, she suggests that the destruction of houses has an effect on the self. Warfare and its disintegration of heteronormative spaces bear consequences for subjective and coherent life since the self is constantly threatened from the outside.

Throughout the war Julia helps her father to survey the extent of damage to London's housing. At one point, she is struggling to open a door and is mistaken for an intruder. On account of her apparently 'foreign looks', a woman calls the police believing Julia to be "a Nazi or a vagrant refugee", who is "trying to force her way into a house" (267-268). Afterwards, Julia muses that her appearance is too dark to make her look doubtlessly British, whereas Helen possesses "English flower looks" (268) that will always identify her as an "Ally" (268). The woman's suspicion when calling the police is grounded in Julia's appearance and shows that the distinction between friend and stranger, as was exemplified in the analysis of Fitzroy's Jim Brynawel, is decisive and determines how a subject is perceived during war. Moreover, the sacredness of property and private space,

99 Jones, (2014), p. 34, Mitchell, (2013), p. 98.

even when numerous houses are fully or partially destroyed through bombs, continues to prevail. The woman calling the police therefore fears that Julia might be conquering someone else's private space.

In contrast to Julia, who enjoys her peculiar role and proudly reflects that "Marylebone has no more secrets from me" (267), Helen's instinct of respecting other people's property remains strong, despite the raging of the war. Her reluctance is highlighted when she and Julia enter a critically damaged, yet not collapsed, house. In this scene the former home has lost its homeliness in the shadow of the war, but Helen remains aware of her status as an intruder – a feeling that is reinforced when encountering the uncanny display of furniture:

> The bedrooms still had their beds and wardrobes in them, and the wardrobes were damp, because of the broken windows the ancient clothes inside them eaten through by moths or growing mouldy. (276)

Unlike Baxter's driver in *Look Down in Mercy*, Helen feels uncomfortable in the presence of the furniture, the clothes and the moths, and she cannot shake off the uneasy feeling that the flat may still be inhabited despite its destruction. To Helen, the house has not ceased to resemble what is left of a home, which is reinforced by a broken mirror "hung on the wall with a weird, blank face: its glass had shattered and fallen, and filled the basin beneath it in a hundred silvery shards" (276). The mirror's bleak blackness no longer reflects people, but the overall condition of the damaged house, thus contributing to the destructive theme of war. While the soul of the home (the people) is destroyed, the mirror's unbroken frame uncannily reminds of the house's past as an inhabited and functional space. When Helen and Julia have finished their cigarettes, Helen's concerns become more obvious:

> She took the cigarette to the fireplace, to crush it out there; and she did the same with Julia's, when Julia had finished. But then she didn't want to leave the two stubs behind in the empty grate: she waved them about to cool them down, and put them back, with the fresh ones, in her packet. […] 'You don't think [the owners would] be a shade more troubled by the rainwater, the broken windows, the bomb in the bed?' [, said Julia.]
> 'Rain and bombs and windows are just things,' said Helen. 'They're impersonal, not like people …' (278)

Julia's reaction to Helen's peculiar behaviour shows a technique of coping with the war and its extraordinary circumstances that all characters share at various points: sarcasm. The dry humour in Julia's words contrasting Helen's serious-

ness curiously enforces both positions. Only by reminding the reader that the two women are in a house in which nothing is still functional, in which a bomb is in the bed, and rain has ruined everything, does Helen's approach to the smoked cigarettes seem completely alien. Yet, when explaining that "[r]ain and bombs and windows are just things", Helen's intentions appear noble and less exaggerated. In her concern for the people who used to live in the house and who, according to Julia, will not come back to collect their belongings, Helen feels awkward and does not want to leave a trace of herself or of Julia behind. Helen ranks the interference of humans with abandoned houses a greater threat than the house's possible collapse, just like the woman had done when calling the police about Julia. While Julia and her father's work is necessary in order to keep people from moving back into unsafe houses, Helen finds this interference and her own part in it tolerable only as long as she takes any evidence of her presence back outside with her, in order to protect an imaginary privacy.

Another scene in *The Night Watch* illustrates that whilst the war might take away privacy, personal matters still need to be discussed in private. Viv lives with other typists in the John Allen House where she and her colleagues develop ingenious ways of communicating in order to circumvent the lack of privacy that accompanies shared living. Victoria Stewart remarks that the John Allen House "becomes 'claustrophobic' rather than nurturing", which reveals the house as an "anti-home"[100]. The telephone even warns its users not to mistake it for a private communication device with a label saying "*Think before You Speak*" (378) [emphasis original].

When Viv calls Reggie to tell him about their unwanted pregnancy, she explicitly distinguishes the apartment from her childhood house where her family lives: "I'm in a cupboard, she whispered, at home. I mean, at John Allen House." (381) Nothing inside this house engenders homeliness and the relatively private place from where Viv calls is contrasted with the "horribly public" (378) alcove where the telephone was originally positioned before the "girls had unpicked the staples which attached the wire to the wall" (378) to be able to drag it in the "darkness" (378) of the cupboard. The dualism of public/private is emphasised by another binary, that of light/darkness. Although wartime regulations kept all rooms dark, the staircase is "lit very badly with one blue bulb" (376-377), which contrasts it to the complete darkness of the cupboard and adds to the impression that the house has lost its primary quality of keeping privacy.

Rachel Wood asserts that "[w]artime opened up new spaces and offered new opportunities for sexual encounter; the blackout in particular offered a sense of

100 Stewart, (2011), p. 131 and p. 144.

privacy in public spaces."[101] Not only sexuality was elevated in the blackout, secrets, too, found confidential acknowledgements. Consequently, when Viv decides to tell her friend about her pregnancy, she does so on a public bench and not at 'home'. Again, darkness conceals Viv's secret, which she directly contrasts to the "lights blazing" at "John Allen House at this time of night" (292). The novel thus shows that in wartime the physical demolition of buildings is not necessary for deconstructing the public/private divide. The need of sharing spaces functions in similar ways, as people seek other and often public places for communicating private matters.

Stewart similarly claims that the war "acts to disturb the separation between public and private"[102], which is aptly demonstrated in *The Charioteer*: "the streets were almost empty, till [Laurie and Ralph] came to one where a house lay half across the road with a rescue squad working, and they had to go another way" (204). The street Ralph and Laurie encounter is "almost empty", which rehearses the wartime paradigm of keeping people in shelters at night to protect them from air raids. Moreover, the image of the house laying "half across the road" symbolises the physical inseparability of public/private.[103] Conflating that which has been divided analytically reveals public/private as a constructed dichotomy. Reading the "rescue squad" through the lens of *The Night Watch* shows that this scene not only deconstructs conceptions of private domesticity but challenges the stereotypical role of women at home more sweepingly: since Waters constructs wartime work as predominantly performed by women, it stands to reason that Renault's rescue squad equally features females rather than males. In this way, women are taken out of the private space of the British hearth and home and transcended into the public sphere as active participants of war. The stereotypic construction of home as female is challenged when women participate in the war effort and when house and home turn into piles of ash. When the private becomes public and the public becomes private, a total inversion of ideological concepts takes place. The war thus destroys not only the heteronor-

101 Rachel Wood, "'Walking and Watching' in Queer London: Sarah Waters' *Tipping the Velvet* and *The Night Watch*" in *Journal of Lesbian Studies* Vol. 17, No. 3-4 (2013), p. 308.

102 Stewart, (2011), p. 10.

103 For an overview over the debate on unpaid housework and the intersections between Second Wave Feminism and Marxism see among others: Mary O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction*, [1983], (New York and London: Routledge, 1983). Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose*, [1986], (New York: Norton and Company, 1994). Michèle Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today: The Marxist/feminist Encounter* (London: New Left Books, 1980).

mative home by challenging the durability of buildings, but also reveals female domesticity as shattered when men like Anson take care of officers and women like Kay become heroes.

In consequence of the increasing devastation of heteronormative discourse through the power of war, Helen, who previously kept the public/private divide faultless by taking the cigarettes out of the bombed-out house, eventually leaves Kay's home to confide in Julia, who is becoming Helen's secret lover in the following scene:

> Then, 'In here!' said Julia, tugging Helen's hand. She had seen, lit up by the second flash, a sort of baffle-wall that had been built across the entrance to an office or a bank. The space it made was deep, jute-scented, impossibly dark: she moved into it, as if passing through a curtain of ink, and drew Helen in after her.
> They stood without speaking, catching their breaths; their breath sounded louder, in that muffled space, than all the sounds of the chaos in the street. Only when they heard footsteps did they look out: they saw the warden they had spoken to, still running, but running back in the opposite direction. He went straight past and didn't see them. (374)

Helen and Julia's erotically filled space is distinguished from the street in which the "chaos" (374) of the raid is raging. Stewart concludes that Helen and Julia's first sexual encounter "occurs in these inauspicious circumstances [where] sexuality is thus constructed as a response to the danger that they are experiencing, with the blackout facilitating their intimate contact by providing a cloak of secrecy"[104]. Stewart's 'make love not war' analysis does not do much to liberate Helen and Julia from the stigma of sexual deviance when she states that it is the "blackout [which] facilitat[es] their intimate contact by providing a cloak of secrecy". Her reading remains within the realm of the public/private divide addressed by Gill Valentine in "(Re)Negotiating the 'Heterosexual Street'":

> Whilst the space of the centre – the street – is produced as heterosexual, the production of 'authentic' lesbian and gay space is relegated to the margins of the 'ghetto' and the back street bar and preferably, the closeted or private space of the 'home' [...].[105]

Following this argument, sexually deviating subjects are forever hidden from the public. Stewart allows for variation of this concept only due to the mercy of

104 Stewart, (2011), p.157.

105 Gill Valentine, "(Re)Negotiating the 'Heterosexual Street': Lesbian Productions of Space" in Nancy Duncan (ed.), *BodySpace: Destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 146-147.

darkness which conceals Helen and Julia and protects the heteronormative gaze from encountering difference. Although the "muffled space" (374) "impossibly dark" (374) in which Julia and Helen become "invisible" (375) substantiates Valentine's and Stewart's analysis that homosexual couples are cast out of the street and into its margins, Julia and Helen's shared sexual experience simultaneously shatters the concepts of home as containing homosexuality and of the public as denying it. Rachel Wood similarly argues that "[t]he destruction of the city lifts many of the restrictions upon who has access to space. Waters represents same-sex desire as a direct product of the disrupted landscape of wartime London."[106] Indeed, because the street is empty except for Helen and Julia as well as a disorientated warden, it enables the lesbian couple to inscribe it with deviating desires.

Helen and Julia's refusal to go into a shelter significantly changes the perception of the street: while usually occupied by heterosexual couples, it is now emptied of any scrutinising gazes policing their desires. The focus of the warden, as the only other person mentioned, does not lie on Helen and Julia's sexuality, but on his duty to take all remaining people down into the shelters: but "[h]e went straight past and didn't see them". Helen and Julia's hiding place is therefore not a disguise of their lesbianism, but reflects their rebellious unwillingness to relinquish their mobility by going into a shelter. As the only subjects left in the street, they reclaim it by their mere presence. Rightly Adele Jones argues that "the queering of public space undermines the dominant narrative of that space"[107]. Julia and Helen actively challenge the heterosexual street and deconstruct its implied normativity through their non-conforming sexuality.

They additionally disturb conceptions of home as a private space where sexuality is concealed, because they *chose* to be in the street instead of the home where the "intimate light" (354) had unsettled Helen. This "intimate light" which in other romantic encounters such as between Kent and Helen in *Look Down in Mercy* is meant to create a relaxed atmosphere, sheds too much light on Helen's feelings for Julia. She is more comfortable in the dark street where her body is in focus to distract from her deceiving of Kay. Instead of reading the "impossibly dark" space as a metaphor for the couple's sexual deviance, it can denote muting of the 'moral self'. Julia and Helen's choice to leave the home and to enter the street culminating in intercourse questions Valentine's pessimistic observation that public spaces can only be challenged subliminally and occasionally through disguised gazes between non-conforming subjects.[108] Unlike Laurie and Ralph

106 Wood, (2013), p. 314.

107 Jones, "Disrupting the Continuum", (2014), p. 36.

108 Valentine, (1996), pp. 146-147.

who leave the heterosexual implication of the street unchallenged when going home, Waters' characters deconstruct it with their sexually active lesbian bodies.

When Helen and Julia engage in lesbian love, Kay's home is destroyed in two ways: not only has her girlfriend betrayed her, "a side and part of the roof of Palmer's had fallen and flattened" (451) her apartment as well. The word "flattened" indicates the nothingness that is left of Kay's former home. Since the flat represents Kay's identity as a lesbian, the image of it being gone shatters Kay to the core: "The knowledge undid her." (451) When Helen and Julia emerge, Kay's worst fear that Helen is buried underneath the rubble is relieved. However, tragedy strikes even harder because Kay is slow to realise why Helen and Julia are together and unhurt. The last words of the part set in 1944 read: "Julia. Oh, Julia! Thank God! I thought I'd lost her" (454). The reader, of course, knows that Helen has long been lost, but Kay is as yet unaware of her own fate. The destroyed building underlines the finality of her broken relationship. In losing her home and her lover, Kay has lost part of herself making her a restless body that cannot settle after the war. Helen, in turn, finds liberation from Kay's home when the physical building is turned to dust.

"PLUCKED FROM TIME": KILLING THE CHILD AS A TOKEN OF FUTURITY

The frequent association of home and female bodies has been revealed as an unstable system designed to perpetuate patriarchy. The child is another indication for female restriction to the home as implied in Massey's assertion that the "place called home is frequently personified by, and partakes of the same characteristics as those assigned to Woman/*Mother*/lover"[109]. This definition reveals the child as a significant token of the heteronormative and reproductive home. In *The Night Watch*, Waters depicts a gruesome abortion of Viv's unwanted child with Reggie and illustrates that the killing of the foetus has a vengeful reversal on the mother, who defies her traditional role of mother. The abortion demonstrates Lee Edelman's critique on "reproductive futurism" – a concept which

109 Massey, (1994), p. 10, [my emphasis].

impose[s] an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable […] the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations[110].

Edelman criticises the dominance of the nuclear family and the perpetuation of heterosexual reproduction to ensure the family's superior position within society. In consequence of this, other forms of being, what he terms "queer resistance", come to be neglected if not abjected in the organisation of society. His concept of "reproductive futurism" denotes this social convention of looking ahead with a specifically heterosexual gaze that guarantees the future to be no different from its present and past. In this version of heterosexual endurance "the Child [becomes] the obligatory token of futurity"[111] and consequently of the home. By initiating the abortion, Viv releases herself from the burden of the family that often dominates women's life choices. The following analysis will investigate Viv's abortion as a form of resistance to imposed codes of conduct. Despite Viv's objectification during the process, the exposure of her body, the bloody aftermath in which she almost dies, she troubles heteronormative assumptions of progressivity and the dominance of the family by claiming a right over her reproductive body. This is substantiated when during the "procedure" (390) – one of several euphemisms to not speak the word 'abortion' – Viv feels like she has been "plucked from time" (393) which is not simply a description for her lost sense of time due to the narcotics but insinuates her abortion as a moment of defeating reproductive futurism – possibly, although the narrative leaves this open, leaving her reproductively challenged in the future as well.

Stewart comments that "[i]n line with present-day attitudes, authors such as Waters attempt to construct abortion as a choice, and to shear away its association with guilt, irresponsibility and promiscuity"[112]. While this assessment is doubtlessly desirable and ascribes great educational value to *The Night Watch*, I believe the narrative deploys a more complicated approach to abortion: although Viv is punished for killing her unborn child indicated by the great blood loss in its aftermath, her initiative in seeking the abortion strongly votes for a contemporary thinking in which women have the right to choose the fate over their own body. Yet again it is Viv's dependency on Reggie to find a doctor willing to perform the operation, which questions the autonomy of her decision. Her initiative is thus constantly challenged to illustrate a woman's complicated situation dur-

110 Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 2.

111 Edelman, (2004), p. 12.

112 Stewart, (2011), p. 139.

ing an unwanted pregnancy in the 1940s. Notwithstanding these conflicts, Viv takes control when she rings the doorbell to Mr Imrie's house, who will conduct the abortion, whereas Reggie is left motionless out of fear of doctors.

Before entering the doctor's home, the surroundings are described as queerly unreal: "Everything looked depthless, the fronts of houses flat as scenery on stage, the trees like trees of papier mâché touched up with glitter and silver paint." (386) Illuminated by the full moon, the street with its houses and trees looks artificial. This resembles Viv and Reggie's insubstantial relationship in which Reggie fails to support Viv in any meaningful way and leaves her alone when she is not recovering from the operation. Covered in "glitter" and "silver paint" to soften the blow of truth, Viv does not see Reggie for who he really is – a narcissistic, misogynist and cold-hearted man interested in nothing but his own well-being. Even her knowledge that "he wished she had come with Betty, her sister – anyone but him" (386), does not 'unglitter' her perception of him. This highly symbolic prelude to the abortion locates Viv as a constrained woman at the mercy of two men – Reggie and the doctor, Mr Imrie – who try to fix her 'unruly female body'.

Inside his questionable practice, Mr Imrie (suspiciously never referred to as 'Dr. Imrie') treats Viv "in a mild and matter-of-fact kind of way" (391), resembling the attitude of medicals towards the female body as a hindrance. Young aptly explains how "[p]regnancy does not belong to the woman herself", since it always also involves the 'expertise' of doctors, midwives, husband and father.[113] The same is true for abortions, which are even more stringently controlled by everyone but the woman herself. The symbolic significance of Viv's abortion is enhanced by setting it in Mr Imrie's private home to substantiate a traditional dominance over female bodies executed within private spaces. This reading is strengthened when Viv has to take off her clothes and feels exposed to Mr Imrie's gaze with "her bottom half bare" (390). When beginning with "the, er, treatment" (388) – linguistically highlighting that everybody feels uncomfortable with the situation – Viv is experiencing it as a dream evoked by the narcotics in which she replaces Mr Imrie's terrifying "instruments" and "queer machines" (390) with "*The German Bull*": "a new and very terrifying kind of weapon" (392). In her dream, this bull spears Viv in her stomach leaving her with the horrible feeling of knowing where the "horn had run right through her…" (392). By doing so, the narrative creates an allegory in which the German Bull replaces the white man's hand that fixes the female body. When Viv awakens, she recalls her dream to Reggie and realises that "all the time I suppose it was Mr Imrie" (400),

113 Young, (2005), p. 46.

thus adding to the atmosphere of objectification.[114] Although claiming her right over whether or not to have a child, Viv is severely punished for her decision – first by being exposed to Mr Imrie and later when suffering from severe blood loss that almost kills her.

Viv recovers from the operation in a show-flat designed "to show you what your place would be like, if you bought one" (398-399). Everything in there is false – the putative brandy is coloured water, the telephone is not attached to a line and the cigarettes are merely made of pasteboard. The objects of domesticity are artificial and in the case of the telephone even life threatening when Viv desperately needs an ambulance, which is denied to her by the non-functional phone. Viv observes that "[i]t was like someone's idea of a film-star's bedroom; or as though prostitutes or playboys lived here" (398). Not only does this comment sustain the impression of falsity, the comparison to a film-star's flat is equally telling: during the conversation preceding the operation, Mr Imrie had constantly repeated Viv's made-up name, Mrs Margaret Harrison, which made her feel like the name "sounded so false and made-up, it might have been an actress's name, or the name of a character in a film" (387). By becoming Mrs Margaret Harrison, Viv is becoming the actress who might live in this soulless flat. Moreover, her impression of the flat possibly belonging to a prostitute or playboy reveals Viv's feelings regarding her relationship with Reggie who, as a married man, can never be more than an illicit affair to her. Viv seems to feel that by being Reggie's mistress, she is no better than a prostitute and deserves to suffer in this "anti-home"[115].

Like Viv's unborn child, the flat is a token of reproductive futurism to signal that after the war there will be 'normal times' again. Viv realises that "flats, like this, [are scattered] on every side" (401) of the street to ensure the endurance of heteronormative standards. Startled, Viv asks if really "Nobody lives here?", which implies the waste of space whilst the whole city is desperately trying to find replacement for destroyed homes. Viv's remark highlights the hypocrisy of Helen's job as a re-housing agent that is made impossible through the disorganisation of wartime and the redundancy of bureaucratic processes that devastate clients as well as Helen herself: "people we rehoused three years ago are coming back; they've been bombed out all over again." (229) Helen's job seems to be a constant effort of maintaining peace-time standards of homeliness doomed to fail due to the concrete erasure of homes in wartime. During a conversation with

114 For more information on the role of medicine in feminism see: Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books New York, 2000).

115 Stewart, (2011), p. 144.

Julia who pretends to have lost her house "and everything in it" (228), Helen sarcastically states:

'Everything?' Helen thought it over. 'That's about six separate departments, I'm afraid. I could only help you with a grant for light repairs. You'd have to see someone over at the War Damage Commission about rebuilding work; they're just as likely, however, to send you back to us. […] What's that? You've lost the chit [we gave you]? Oh, dear. You must get another, and start all over again … It's like snakes and ladders, you see. And this is always assuming, of course, that we've found time to see you in the first place. (228-229)

Helen's sarcastic outburst hides her deeply felt distress over her inability to offer actual help. The institutionalised disorganisation described by Helen broadens the discourse of military chaos and substantiates the impression that with regard to house and home, the Government remains unable to cope. Jenny Hartley argues that "[t]he open house is the emblem of the nation's adaptation to war: the values it exemplifies are those of hospitality, tolerance and community"[116]. In light of Helen's evaluation, Hartley's statement becomes unconvincing: although Helen tries to be hospitable, tolerant and communal and even used to give her own money away, the institution keeps her from being truly helpful. Helen reflects that "the war made you careless. […] You ended up thinking only of yourself" (282), which emphasises the exact opposite of Hartley's claim. Instead of showing the nation's ability to cope with the damage caused by the war, Helen's sarcasm illustrates helplessness and despair.

Viv, on the other hand, realises that the Government is knowingly and willingly sacrificing its people in order to hold onto a concept of home from the past in an effort of protecting it for the future. Extravagantly outlandish, the flat in which Viv recovers from the abortion is a means of guaranteeing the return of heteronormativity. "[E]verything was chill to the touch and dusty; and here and there were piles of powder: paint and plaster, that must have been shaken down in raids. The rooms smelt damp, unlived-in." (398) Interestingly, this soulless flat has sustained the threat of air raids, which guarantees the reproduction of homely concepts when people are willing and able to contemplate renting flats like that again. However, when Viv stains the flat with her blood, its image of perfection is devastated: "the blood came faster than ever" (404). "Then she saw a little blood on the carpet" (405). Viv's blood is closely related to the abortion of her child and staining the "anti-home"[117], where everything is meant to be clean and in order ultimately challenges the untarnished reproductive space of

116 Hartley, (1997), p. 54.

117 Stewart, (2011), p. 144.

the home. Although Viv's female body is supposed to represent stereotypical codes of gender including maternal feelings, Viv defies reproductive futurism and infiltrates deviance into the show flat. No longer flawless and impeccable, the stains of blood render the symbolic meaning of the flat futile and Viv's body a site of resistance. Paradoxically, Viv's heterosexual body can more powerfully oppose regulations than Kay's queer body. This seemingly contradictory resolution of destabilising gender norms derives from Kay's complicity in the patriarchal structure and renders visible the complex mechanisms that influence (non-) heteronormative bodies.

Examining the dynamics between various spaces in connection to the body helps to more fully understand the determining mechanisms that perpetuate social conformity. The roles of 'man' and 'woman' seem to be of little importance compared to the overarching power of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. It is therefore not simply a conservative and patriarchal power structure that relegates female bodies into the domestic private and male bodies into the political public, but a much more entrenched and interconnected ideology where gender norms become simultaneously projected onto the body and induced into the home to mutually influencing effect. By gender norms I do not mean sex-gender coherence but the qualities that are assigned to masculinity and femininity: as long as 'masculinity' is associated with 'public', 'active', 'rational', 'disembodied', however subliminally or reluctantly, 'femininity' becomes 'private', 'passive', 'emotional' and 'embodied'. This dichotomy seems to prevail irrespective of the performer's sex, which makes gender performativity a desirable but ultimately compromised form of resistance when subjects like Kay consciously perform masculinity in order to escape a passive femininity accompanied by the burden of private domesticity.

This chapter set out to broaden discussion on *The Night Watch* beyond current research regarding its narrative structure that defies progressivity. Not only the deconstruction of time is at the centre of Waters' novel, space is every bit as much represented and devastated in the fictionalisation of demolition and chaos. In addressing and evaluating various spaces from body to home, my analysis demonstrates that the gendered politics of space are grounded in a complex system of gender norms that are not only marked on the body, but also stringently projected into the home in order to protect a heteronormative public. Whilst some bodies like Kay's may escape this rigid monitoring during the war, the privileging of masculinity over femininity and the inscription of such ideologies onto spaces seems to endure. Only when the house as a symbolic echo chamber of the body is destroyed or tarnished by blood, can we perceive the extent of gender monitoring beyond corporal reference points.