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**Faculty of Arts and Philosophy**

**Women's roles in the Second World War and its depiction in Sarah  
Waters's *The Night Watch***

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## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Práce se zaměří na román *The Night Watch* od současné britské spisovatelky Sarah Waters a na zobrazení role žen v období 2. světové války. S využitím relevantní sekundární literatury se studentka v úvodní části zamyslí nad postavením žen v průběhu 2. světové války a bude se též zabývat rolí žen v letech 50. V hlavní části práce bude autorka analyzovat vybraný text a bude se věnovat nejen zobrazení role žen v tomto románu, ale rovněž otázce zklamání, ztráty a zrady. Práci zakončí přehledné shrnutí daných zjištění.

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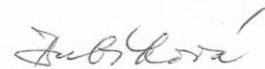
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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

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## **ANNOTATION**

The aim of this paper is to analyse the roles of women between years 1900-1950 in Great Britain, with focus on the Second World War. It also analyses their fictional representations in the novel by Sarah Waters, *The Night Watch*, analysing not only their roles related to the war situation, but also their disappointments, secrets, losses and love affairs.

## **KEY WORDS**

*women, Second World War, Sarah Waters, The Night Watch, war services*

## **ANOTACE**

Cílem této práce je analyzovat role žen mezi lety 1900 až 1950 ve Velké Británii, se zaměřením na druhou světovou válku. Tato práce také analyzuje fiktivní postavy druhé světové války v románu od Sarah Waters, *The Night Watch*, nejen z hlediska jejich rolí týkající se války, ale také z hlediska zklamání, tajemství a milostných afér.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

*ženy, druhá světová válka, Sarah Waters, The Night Watch, válečné služby*

## **NÁZEV**

Role žen za druhé světové války a jejich zobrazení v *The Night Watch* od Sarah Waters.

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## Introduction

The Second World War was notable for many reasons, not only was it one of the most catastrophic wars that ever happened, but it also was the war in which women were fully engaged for the first time in their existence. The war, lasting for six years, gave women a range of choices, where to apply their talents, from working in entertainment to occupations such as secret agents.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the situation of real women before, during and after the WWII in Great Britain and similarly their fictional representations in the novel by Sarah Waters, *The Night Watch*, analysing not only their roles related to the war situation, but also their disappointments, secrets, losses and love affairs.

Women's war effort was widely known, but as Frankova says, women have not received their memorial monument to show them some recognition for their war work until 2005. The monument was thereafter inaugurated in Whitehall, in London, but the women depicted are faceless and nameless. It was Sarah Waters that gave them fictional faces and names for the first time, and in her own way showed them the desired recognition. (Frankova, 66) She is also the one, who dared to put the gay characters into the war environment, as the story includes three lesbian characters and a gay character. Because the Second World War was not only beneficial for heterosexual women, but it was even more beneficial for the homosexual women as they gained more opportunities for socialising. Moreover, they could work on male positions, which meant that it was no more ridiculous to dress like a man. For the first time, they gained the temporary sex freedom.

This paper is divided into two main parts – theoretical and practical part. The first chapter of the theoretical part of this thesis presents women before the Second World War, dealing only with the events that fall into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly the achievements of women in those early decades, policy on women's employment, and last but not least, the education. The second chapter introduces the Second World War and women's roles within the war organizations, their recruitment and the quotidian concerns. The last chapter of this part deals with women after the Second World War, work situation, improvements in their lives, and position in the society. The practical part analyses the piece of work written by British novelist, Sarah Waters, called *the Night Watch*. This novel depicts four women and one man in a span of seven years, in 1940s London. Since this thesis is about women, it has been

decided not to include details about the men characters in the book. The parts about the book are written in chronological order, even though the book is written in reverse order. The practical part is further divided into two subchapters; both of them are analysing connections between the female characters. The first subchapter is analysing in terms of connection between time (1940s) and place (London); this is a key connection, otherwise the heroines would not meet each other, therefore, they would not be connected in terms of secret, disappointment and loss, with which deals the second subchapter. That part should also deal with the connection of betrayal, but I have decided to omit this connection as the other connections are very similar. In the conclusion, there are summarised the main findings of this thesis. Conclusion is followed by resume, which is written in the Czech language and gives the summary of the whole thesis in four pages. The last part is bibliography, with which I have worked to support the statements given in this paper.



# 1. Women from 1900s to 1950s

## Chapter 1 Women before the Second World War

Women started to have a voice in the beginning of the twentieth century. Later, in the First World War they even had a pivotal role in the war services. Overall, that war marked a significant milestone for women in the society. In this chapter, their position will be analysed in terms of their occupations and social roles from the beginning of the century to the outbreak of the Second World War.

To start with, gender roles ensured women to be housewives and men moneymakers from time immemorial, but women slowly but surely worked their way to be authorized to perform male jobs as well. Their first significant task was connected with military services. It happened long before they completed their journey to military as official members, but they were, as Noakes states, “nonetheless essential to the successful function of the military, the range of services they provided being necessary to the maintenance of the fighting men.” For they acted as cooks, nursemaids or sexual partners. Interesting is also the fact that women even disguised themselves as men to get into the British Army, when they were not entitled to do so as female representatives. (Noakes, 20) Noakes adds, that women’s legitimate participation in the army started after an Army Training school for military nurses was established, in 1860. (Noakes, 24) However, according to Summers, it still did not number more than a dozen female nurses until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Summers, 2)

The first substantial conflict that women had a chance to be an integral part of was certainly the First World War. According to Crang, there were various organizations that assisted armed forces during that war including The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, serving as an ambulance service, and the Women’s legion, deploying cookery and motor transport sections. However, these organizations were independent ones. Sooner, the official auxiliary services had to be established as well, because of the large number of men’s casualties and deficiency of their successors on the front; hence the non-combatant servicemen had to be freed and replaced by women. The first auxiliary service was established in March 1917, called The Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps, followed by The Women’s Royal Naval Service in November 1917 and The Women’s Royal Air Force in April 1918. Although, these were just inferior services to the one’s which men did, with women performing just ‘feminine’ roles, such as cooks, nurses or typists, but no one could expect a bigger change in terms of

employment immediately. However, women proved to be extraordinarily brave and adaptable to these new situations. These services numbered about 95,000 women overall. (Crang, 343) As Crang further informs, in the aftermath of the war, there was a decision to make, whether to retain women’s services as a permanent part of the armed forces or not. There were various opinions, but it was finally agreed to disband those women’s organizations as they were considered undesirable, because women’s primary place was at home. Although, it lasted less than two decades, as in 1939 they had to be re-established because of the Second World War. (Crang, 344)

Considering women’s employment, according to Purvis, the law, the so-called marriage bar, was introduced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, defining that women “were required to leave work when they married”. It was not repealed until 1950s. Although, it admitted unmarried women into the professional and white collar workforce, it excluded married women from those occupations as shows the table below.

Percentage of employed women in years 1901 and 1931:

	1901	1931
Married women	6.3	4.8
Unmarried women	29.1	29.7

(Purvis, 74)

It is clear from this table that it was not ordinary for women to work, especially the married women. Moreover, after the introduction of the marriage bar, the numbers of married women which were employed further decreased. On the other hand, because of married women were excluded from the work, there was a chance for more unmarried women to be employed as shows the increase of 0.6 per cent. This politics was introduced especially to ensure women’s place at home taking care of their children and husband. It can be assumed even from this description that women were not equal with men at all. This statement can be easily transferred to women’s wages, which were, according to Clements, about half and somewhere even about a third lower than men’s. The only exception with higher wages was in textiles with 56.1 per cent of an average male wage in 1924. Moreover, opportunities for career advancement were often next to none. (Clements, 65) Still women were doing better than ever before. This statement can be supported by Clements, who says that twenty laws concerning women were passed between the years 1918 and 1925, compared to six between the years 1898 and 1918. (Clements, 58) It indicates that the state started to take care about women

more than ever before. As Clements says, women were not only able to sit as MPs, but they also had right to enter the professions and right to get divorced more easily. Nevertheless, compared to men's position, they were still considered something of a sub-class. (Clements, 59)

The typical women's situation is aptly summarized by Harris:

In the 1930s, social roles were clearly defined. A woman's place was in the home, a man's place was out at work. It was acceptable for women to work outside the home if they had no family to look after, but they were paid less than men were - even when doing the same jobs. Before the war, nearly five million women in the United Kingdom had paid employment, but most would have expected to leave as soon as they married, or when they had their first child. (Harris, 2011)

Employment was not the only field, where women were oppressed by men. The second case in a point was education, which was later related to their permanent work. British girls were educated, as Purvis states, mostly in the home until the First World War. However, it much depended on their social class. Nonetheless, women were expected to adapt to the ideology of domesticity, which manifested disagreement with working women and demanded women in "domestic and familial setting". Therefore, the school curriculum was prepared in accordance with this policy, teaching girls apart from reading, writing and arithmetic also needlework, domestic economy or housewifery. Naturally, there were different demands on middle-class girls in comparison with working-class girls. Moreover, the latter did not have a chance to get a secondary education until the Education Act, in 1944. (Purvis, 107-108) To get higher education was impossible for all women until the second half of the nineteenth century. What is more, even after the university education for women was allowed, there were few incomprehensible restrictions. For example, as Batson states, at Cambridge and Oxford, women did not receive degrees even if they passed the examinations. For the first time, women could receive degrees at Oxford in 1920 and Cambridge in 1948. (Batson, 183,185) The other sources of knowledge, which girls and women at that time could access, except the school, began to emerge in the 1920s – the women's magazines. As Clements says, it instructed women on housework, clothing, cookery and childcare. Among those belonged *Woman's Own*, *Good Housekeeping* or *Woman*. (Clements, 68) All mentioned are still issued in the UK.

To conclude this chapter, women before the Second World War gained more freedom for their life choices. Employment was easier to access than ever before, but married women had a disadvantage as the marriage-bar prohibited them to work after they entered into marriage in the beginning of the century. Both, married and unmarried women could participate in the First World War services. They were essential for the course of the war as they replaced most of the men in their work, who consequently could go fight to the front. As women's main priority should have been taking care of their children and home, the war services were after the victory in the First World War disbanded. Inequalities between men and women were still present in many spheres of their lives including employment and education. Those inequalities and lack of opportunities further changed during and after the Second World War, as written in next chapters.

## Chapter 2 Women's experience with the Second World War

The next war brought other significant changes than the previous one. As Anderson informs, "British women were closer to and more active on the front lines than they had ever been previously." (Anderson, 37) In this chapter, one can learn about women's roles they had to perform on the front, how their position further developed within the society and what novelties war brought.

With war starting on August 1939, by December 1939, 43,000 women had volunteered for the women's auxiliary services, which were revived after their disbandment in 1920s. As Summerfield states, "wartime recruitment campaigns emphasised that women's patriotic duty was to release men from industry, and from military offices and workshops, to fight." (Summerfield, 86) But before the actual fight, people (and mainly women) were struck by other elements of war. As Clements declares "the practicalities of war hit women early as rationing was introduced in January 1940 [...]" (Clements, 163) There were different types of rationing – rations of food, clothes and petrol. Another novelty, according to Nationalarchives.gov.uk, was blackout, which was introduced in September 1939 "to stop lights on the ground showing enemy aircraft where to drop their bombs". (Nationalarchives.gov.uk, *Preparations for war: Blackout*, [online]) The female representative of Heap family remembers blackout and rationing in this way:

The war brought great changes to all of our lives. We were issued with ration books and we had to work out how to make 2oz butter, 2oz marg and 1 egg last each us one week. The lights went out and we had no lamps at all in the streets, or buses, or stations, the lights just went out. The trains and buses continued to run on time during the day. We were allowed a small torch with a pin-point of light. We all had to buy black material to put up at our windows so that no light showed at all. (Civic Centre, Bedford [online])

It suggests that life itself was not easy at that time, even if there were no fights. As Nationalarchives.gov.uk adds, clothes rationing was introduced later, in May 1941. Ensuring everyone to have a fair share of what was available. The Ration book included sixty-six clothing coupons for a year, when, for example, one piece of clothing was worth eleven coupons plus price of the item, which was not included in the coupon at all. (Nationalarchives.gov.uk, *Everyday life: Why People have to make do and mend?*, [online]) Indeed, when there is a shortage of something, people are trying to replace it with something else. That is a natural feature. As Harris confirms, there emerged various schemes on

recycling or making clothes last longer. Among those belonged the 'Make do and Mend' and 'Sew and Save' campaigns. Therefore, knitting became a national female obsession. (Harris, [online]) BBC.co.uk adds other inventive methods of women such as "painting stockings onto their legs using gravy browning". BBC.co.uk also claims, "the 'Make do and Mend' became a way of life for British women, as every scrap of old clothing was recycled into something useful". Another campaign the 'Dig for Victory' concerned food rationing and encouraged people to produce their own food. (BBC.co.uk – *Fact file: Ration books introduced*, [online])

Precautions against war disasters were taken in the early beginning of the Second World War. As BBC.co.uk informs, first of them was the evacuation of three million people to rural areas. Although, it was the biggest evacuation in the history of Britain, it did not manage to evacuate all the children from large cities. Therefore, the children who stayed in the centre of the war had a disadvantage in the inaccessibility of education as the majority of schools have been closed. However, there were established schools for the children in the rural locations. (BBC.co.uk – *Fact file:Evacuation*, [online]) This could have consequences after the war as there were children (among them girls) who received proper education and those who did not, which could be an obstacle in their future careers. Fortunately, at least the universities were opened throughout the whole war. The next precaution that was taken was the construction of public shelters to secure the safety of many people. The shelters are mentioned also in the analysed novel, *The Night Watch*. Unfortunately, the shelters apart from protecting were sometimes lethal. It was when the bomb fell directly on it. The same case is depicted in the novel.

Precautions were taken in early 1939, but the real war started for women in 1941. As Harris states, "from spring 1941, every women in Britain aged 18-60 had to be registered, and their family occupations recorded. Each was interviewed, and required to choose from a range of jobs." (Harris, [online]) This was done according to the Registration for Employment order. Harris adds that towards the end of 1941, in December, the National Service Act (no. 2) was passed to call up into services single and childless women aged 20-30. Gradually married women were enabled to join the services, as well. Therefore, by mid-1943, 90 per cent of single women and 80 per cent of married women were employed in services essential for war. (Harris, [online]) As Clements indicates, one million women with children were regularly working outside the home, which meant that there had to be someone else to take care of them. Before the Second World War, women with children worked as well, but at that time,

other family members had helped with childcare, which was impossible in the Second World War as everybody had their own things to do. That is why 1500 state nurseries had been established by 1944. Another step to encourage women with children to go to work was done when part-time positions in factories were put into practice in 1943. It met with success as 900,000 women worked part-time by 1944. (Clements, 165) Moreover, Stanway primary school adds, “those women who could not work were encouraged to look after the children of those who could”. (Stanway primary school, *The New Role*, [online])

As Noakes states, until 1941 women has been assigned only to non-combatant works. (Noakes in Maddrell, 130) These included mainly clerical and domestic jobs, but as the war progressed women were given a chance to participate as the combatants, as well. Nationalarchives.gov.uk gives us examples:

As the war went on, women were given more dangerous work to do, such as crewing anti-aircraft guns and searchlights. Women also undertook top-secret work using radar or code-breaking enemy messages. Indeed, most of the 5,000 people working at Bletchley Park using early computers and captured enemy encoding machines to read German and Japanese messages were women. (Nationalarchives.gov.uk, *What did women in the services do?* [online])

This indicates, as Nationalarchives.gov.uk adds, that women proved to be highly adaptable to the new situations, as many of them had never worked before. Moreover, they were working long hours and night shifts, which was exhausting as many of them also had to commute to and from work many kilometres. Another issue they dealt with was men’s attitude to them at the workplace, because they did not like women’s presence, despite the fact that women were paid much less. (Nationalarchives.gov.uk, *What contribution did women workers make?*, [online]) The only thing they successfully claimed in the war times was equal compensation for war injuries, because as it happened even this compensation was different for male and female “warriors”. Smith informs that the equal compensation for war injuries was introduced in April 1943, becoming one of the most successful victories for women during the Second World War (Smith, 663)

The aim of the following paragraphs is to introduce the main services, which were productive during the war years. One of them was The Women’s Land Army (abbreviated as the WLA), revived in June 1939. According to Nationalarchives.gov.uk, the WLA was set up in order to grow more food on the farms as government wanted to free ships, which were initially used for importing food, for troop movements, because the war was on the horizon. The number of

memberships was 1,000 in September 1939, 20,000 by 1941 and 80,000 by 1943. The Land Army was typical for its diversity as the 'Land Girls' came from different cities and classes. Their jobs were diverse as well, including "hoeing, ploughing, hedging, turning hay, lifting potatoes, threshing, lambing and looking after poultry". Another activity – a rat catching was so spread that it needed about thousand women to do this job. Another plentiful group (25 per cent) was employed in milking and general farm work. All women participating in this service were accommodated right on farms or in hostels. (Nationalarchives.gov.uk – *Why did women joined the Land Army*, [online]) Historylearningsite.co.uk further informs that government was keen on making the work of Land Girls to seem glamorous, but the opposite was true. Conditions in which Land Girls lived were many times appalling without running water, electricity or gas. Nevertheless, there were positive things, too. One of the advantages was the sufficiency of food as in the countryside there was enough wild animals to hunt. (Historylearningsite.co.uk, [online]) It was extremely important because Land Girls needed a lot of energy, and in order to get most of the food in the city one had to buy it on the ration. According to BBC.co.uk, women had to perform hard work during the long shifts, which were mostly held outdoors in all weathers. Many women did not have experience with such a job, but despite that fact, there was almost no training for them and they had to deal with the new situations on the spot. Their earnings were not adequate to their achievements, but it was a common matter for all the services during the war. Their wage was "£1.85 for a minimum of 50 hours' work a week". In 1944, their situation improved about £1. Even though, they were not a military force, they had their own uniforms; however, they were not obliged to wear them. It consisted of green jumpers, brown breeches or dungarees, brown felt hats and khaki overcoats. They also had their own magazine and a song:

Back to the Land, we must all lend a hand, To the farms and the fields we must go,  
There's a job to be done, Though we can't fire a gun, We can still do our bit  
with the hoe. (BBC.co.uk, *Fact file: Women's Land Army*, [online])

This song represented the whole situation in every war service as every woman had a lot of work to be done and none of them was enabled to fire a gun; nevertheless they were immensely helpful. The Women's Land army existed until 1950.

Elder states that the sister section of the Women's Land Army was The Women's Timber Corps. This section was mainly interested in forestry. They were sent to various areas of woodland across the United Kingdom, where they had to "produce enough timber to supply



timber for pit props for the mines, telegraph poles, road blocks, ships masts, railway sleepers, gun mats, mobile tracking to support tanks, ladders, newsprint and even crosses for soldiers graves". Apart from this, they also performed "felling, shedding, loading, crosscutting, driving tractors, trucks, working with horses, measuring and operating sawmills". Considering their uniform, it was the same as for the WLA; the only difference was in the cap – a green beret. (Elder, [online]) They were disbanded in 1946.

Stanway primary school introduces another service, which was established in 1939, thanks to government. Because of the tough war times, there was a necessity for cheer as there was enough grief to be discouraged from continuous fight for victory and that is why the Entertainments national service association (abbreviated as ENSA) emerged. ENSA consisted of actors, actresses, singers, dancers and comedians. Their target groups were not only military audiences, but also civilians. They performed across the Britain and abroad, mostly in factories, halls and at the front lines. Women were an indispensable part of the entertainments. "For serviceman, far from home, the songs they sang reminded them of home and the loved ones they had left behind." The most popular singers were Gracie Fields and Vera Lynn. Cinemas were still active, as well. The most favourite movie of that time was 'Gone with the Wind'. The local dances and theatre with comedy genres were popular, as well. (Stanway Primary School, *Entertainment* [online]) Cleghorn informs, that members of ENSA had their own uniforms - standard pattern battle dress, any standard war theatre uniforms such as Jungle Green bush jackets or Airtex and standard ENSA shoulder titles. (Cleghorn, [online])

According to BBC.co.uk the next numerous groups were the Women's Volunteer Groups, the first of them was established in May 1938 "to assist in the event of possible future air attacks" – the Women's Voluntary Service for Air Raid Precautions (abbreviated as WVS). In 1939, WVS had 165,000 members. At first, they helped with the evacuation of mothers and children from cities to country. Another task was to provide refugees from Europe with food and clothing. As the war progressed, their main duty was to support the people whose houses had been bombed. Later, they ran Incident Inquiry Points – places where information about the dead and injured were given to family and friends. They also took part in "emergency services dealing with the effects of the bombing, running mobile canteens for firemen and rescue workers". What is more, they also helped the American troops to socialise with the British civilians through the "British Welcome clubs"; there was about two hundred clubs in 1942. Another WVS's responsibility was to run salvage drives "to generate raw materials for the

war effort, including the collection of aluminium saucepans and kitchen utensils, and the removal of iron railings from public buildings”. (BBC.co.uk, *Fact file: Women’s volunteer groups*, [online]) Their duties were varied; Stanway primary school also notes their contributions to other women:

When it was seen that working women were unable to do their own shopping as the shops were closed by the end of the working day, the WVS organised shopping parties to do the job. They would collect the lists of items required, along with the money and coupons from each person, do the shopping, very often by bike, and deliver it to the doorstep. They were also available to advise the housewife on how best to produce nutritious meals on wartime rations. In areas that had been heavily bomb damaged, the WVS would be seen setting up emergency outdoor cookers on which to prepare meals for the people who had lost their homes and all their possessions. (Stanway primary school, *WVS&WI*, [online])

For this reason, it is without doubt that WVS considerably simplified lives of many women. BBC.co.uk adds that the WVS had over million members, mostly older women as the younger ones were needed for the essential war work. Their work, though being exhausting, was unpaid. Moreover, they had to buy their own uniform, which consisted of green coats and dresses with burgundy cardigans, green and burgundy scarves, and felt hats. The WVS exists up to present time, mainly providing welfare services. Their work was recognized with the royal status in 1966, turning Women’s Voluntary service to Women’s Royal Voluntary service (WRVS).

The second volunteer group were the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (abbreviated as NAAFI). NAAFI was founded long before the Second World War, in 1921, “to sell goods to serviceman and their families, and to run recreational establishment for the armed forces”. During the Second World War they spread quickly, its peak numbered 10,000 outlets with 900 mobile shops. (BBC.co.uk, *Fact file: Women’s volunteer groups*, [online])

Trueman states that women took part in the war also as secret agents. Their umbrella organization was the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Their operations usually took place in occupied France, so they were parachuted there, or landed in special planes. Their work was necessary for the Allies as they had to find all information useful for the landings in Normandy in June 1944. (Trueman, [online]) Without their work, it would be more problematic to perform this operation.

BBC.co.uk says that the large military organization, where women took part was the Auxiliary Territorial Service. Re-founded in 1938, it incorporated members of the First Aid

Nursing Yeomanry. They were given full military status in 1941, but still were paid two-thirds of the man's wage of the same rank. The first members had no uniform and received rudimentary training. Initially they worked as cooks, clerks and storekeepers. After the incipient intake of volunteers, the sophisticated training was finally introduced. (BBC.co.uk, *Fact file: Auxiliary Territorial Service*, [online]) Stanway primary school adds that this training took place in army camps; therefore, the participants slept in huts and learned to march and obey orders. At the end of this training, they took "written and practical tests to find out which line of work they were best suited to". (Stanway primary school, *The Army*, [online]) BBC.co.uk points out that civilian life played a crucial part in the final choice of the working area. During the war, their roles were extended into other branches such as telephonist, drivers, butchers, bakers, postal workers, ammunition inspectors or military police. The ATS was also notable for the Anti-Aircraft Command of the Royal Artillery (known as ack-ack). They took over some of the duties of male representatives there, including finding enemy aircraft and controlling the direction of the gun (but they were not permitted to fire the guns). ATS members were either permanent at Anti-Aircraft camps or mobile. Royal family also took part in the services, namely Queen Elizabeth II served within the ATS as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Elizabeth Windsor. Another person connected to the high-ranked person of that time, was Mary Churchill, daughter of the Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Their uniform consisted of khaki jacket and skirt. The largest number of women serving with the ATS was 210,308; unfortunately, 335 of them became victims of the WW2. "In 1949 the ATS was absorbed in the Women's Royal Army Corps, which was itself disbanded in 1992." (BBC.co.uk, *Fact file: Auxiliary Territorial Services*, [online])

BBC.co.uk further informs about the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, formed in June 1939. The difference between this organization and the others is the one that the WAAF came under the administration of the RAF, so there were no individual female units, only individual members of RAF Commands. (BBC.co.uk, *Fact file: Women's Auxiliary Air Force*, [online]) As Narracot states, for WAAF women, there were two training depots, in which fortnight' disciplinary training took place. The age of women in this service was 18 to 43, with some exceptions. Some of the RAF doctors and nurses were also women, but they come under the Princess Mary's R.A.F Nursing service. (Narracot, 109-110) BBC.co.uk states that similarly to the ATS, at first the WAAF members were employed to ordinary jobs such as clerks or drivers. But that changed during the progress of time, when women in the WAAF were involved in telegraphy, telephony, the interception of codes and ciphers, mechanics,

engineers, electricians and fitters for aeroplanes. Moreover, they were engaged in the interpretation of aerial photographs and provided weather reports. They were also employed in the radar control system as reporters and plotters. They played the essential part in the Battle of Britain and later in guiding night-fighter aeroplanes against German bombers. What is more, they operated the balloons sites, which was one of the hardest job as it involved raising and lowering the barrage balloons, designed to discourage enemy bombers. Many people doubted that women would be capable of such a physically demanding job, but at the end they ran more than 1,000 barrage balloon sites throughout Britain. Some of their members were selected for the Special Operations Executive, to be trained as secret agents. Paradoxically, the only job that WAAF women could not do was to fly. However, the need of training more pilots in secondary roles to free front line pilots for active service was urgent; therefore, the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) was formed. Overall, 150 women eventually flew to deliver new planes to RAF units or in need of repair to shuttle planes back. WAAF members served not only in UK, but also in the US, Egypt and towards the end of the war in Europe. After the war, in 1949, the WAAF was re-formed into the WRAF and in 1994 fully integrated into the RAF. (BBC.co.uk, *Fact file: Women's Auxiliary Air Force*, [online]) According to Narracot, their uniform, in comparison with the ATS uniform, differed only in “a royal air force eagle embroidered in red on each shoulder of the khaki jacket”. (Narracot, 108) Narracot further states that the authorities wanted women to be able to return to their civilian life after the war, so they could take various educational courses without any cost, as many of them interrupted their careers to do this essential work (Narracot, 112)

Last but not least, BBC.co.uk adds one more service essential for the war work – the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS). It was re-founded in 1939, by December it had 3,000 personnel, who were nicknamed ‘Wrens’. ‘Join the Wrens today and free a man to join the fleet’ said a recruiting poster. At first, their occupations were the same as in other organizations – driving, cooking, or clerical work. Many Wrens were also a part of planning naval operations (including the crucial one – D-Day landings). Those Wrens, who were equipped with languages, were sent to the coast stations to intercept and translate enemy signals. However, just few of them served at sea. There was a separated part of nurses – The Queen Alexandra's Royal Navy Nursing Service. Wrens reached the largest size in 1944, when 74,000 women were doing over two hundred jobs, 303 of them died during the service. Then the WRNS became a permanent part of the Royal Navy, but it was not until 1990s,

when women could serve in Royal Navy ships. (BBC.co.uk, *Fact file: Women's Royal Naval Service*, [online])

Trueman concludes that war ended in May 1945, with 460,000 women still in the military services, and over 6.5 million in civilian war work. Britain took a wise step with employing women in war work. Hitler was against German women in factories from the beginning as he considered women's place at home. Despite this fact, he used foreign women to do the work in the war factories, which was unhappy choice as they sabotaged their work and because of that in a way helped the Allies to win. (Trueman, [online]) Nonetheless, without British women it would not be possible to win at all as they worked in various essential fields and/or worked instead of men, who could subsequently fight on the front lines for the victory.

## **Chapter 3      Women's position after the Second World War**

The end of the war brought many changes for women. Not only in terms of employment, but also in other spheres of their lives, which they could handle easier than ever before. However, these changes were not necessarily forward, in many cases they were backward.

According to Harris, many British women were made redundant after the war as men were encouraged to continue in their pre-war occupations. If the women were kept in their war positions, it was mainly because of the fact that they were still a cheaper workforce than men. (Harris, [online]) Carruthers adds that not every woman was eager to take up the permanent job; that is why some of them welcomed their redundancy. By 1947, there were about two million women less engaged in work. (Carruthers, 233) Whether women wanted to keep on doing their work, depended immensely on the nature of work, states Lewis. Up to 75 per cent of professional women wanted to continue with their jobs, compared with women doing monotonous jobs who disliked it and had no “desire to stay”. (Lewis, 70) Ward informs that after the war, there was an effort to “re-establish domesticity as women’s primary occupation”, because there was an emphasis on family as a cornerstone of the new state. (Ward, 50) Moreover, as Clements adds, there was a fear about the future population as birth-rates were falling. The desired number of children per family at that time was three to four. However, there were obstacles in approach to marriage and the family as divorce rates were increasing – from 6,000 in 1938 to over 15,000 in 1945. (Clements, 168) Moreover, Clements states that this upward tendency continued also in the next decades, with about 25,000 divorces per year in the 1950s and that even doubled until 1969. (Clements, 236) On the other hand, Pierce states that “marriage has never been a more popular institution as during the 1950s; even those, whose first marriages break, through death or divorce, are remarrying increasingly”. (Pierce, 215) Bruley describes the typical pattern for a woman in the 1950s as she would marry in her early twenties and finish childbearing before the age of thirty. (Bruley, 131) Lewis adds that women’s only priority after the war, was to bear children. Therefore, “50 per cent of wartime nurseries were closed by 1955”. (Lewis, 71) It means that women had to secure other options of babysitting for children if they wanted to continue with their work. In fact, Clements provides the information that women were called into the work by government itself again, in 1947, due to the economic crisis. Even banks offered women special loans for realising their wartime dreams. Fields of newly employed women were clerical work and light industry. Although, women’s employment in other industries declined, still it was a larger number than in the pre-war situation, claims Gazeley. Gazeley is also the

one who provides a comparison of percentage of female labour in engineering before, during and after the war. It was 10 per cent in 1939, 34 per cent in 1943 and 21 per cent in 1950. (Gazeley: 670) The numbers clearly show the tendencies, as before the war it was atypical for women to work in such industry, during the war many women freed men from this industry for the war, so their numbers increased, and after the war there was a force for the women to go back home and take care of their hearth, which was displayed in the decrease of women labour force in such industries, but the number was still higher than before the war as some women managed to defend their place. As seen in Lewis, who provides statistics about married women in the workforce in years 1931 and 1951 by age group per 1000:

	18-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
<b>1931</b>	196	193	138	105	88	66	33	10
<b>1951</b>	n/a	377	252	267	246	221	33	12

(Lewis, 1984: 150)

Significant is the rise in employment of middle-aged women in 1950s, which was caused by the desire to gain more freedom. Lewis also points out that the post-war period was the one when women had, for the first time in their history, choice to contribute in various activities voluntarily, not necessarily as it was common the decades before. The possibilities to run several activities became higher also thanks to the decline of natality, better housing conditions and modern domestic technology. However, the time that women spent on housework remained almost the same; it was no longer difficult to combine their wife-mother duties with paid-work. (Lewis, 67) Moreover, the work offers for women considerably expanded. Thus, it was easy to realize that their time spent home was not effectively utilized, for this reason they became engaged in paid work. However, they were still not valued the same as men – the sexual segregation was still present. Women still had to manage to do everything, to take care of home and family, and earn money at the same time. (Lewis, 67-69) As survey shows, married women became increasingly frequent phenomenon in the workplace – from 10 per cent in 1931 to 21 per cent in 1951 and 32 per cent in 1961. (Westergaard and Ressler in Wilson, 41) Lewis adds that married women would leave work after their first pregnancy and returned there when their children left school. (Lewis, 67)

It was just a matter of time, for women to fight to the finish their battle over the equal pay, which has already begun during the war. However, it took a long time to taste the victory. There were some indications of equal pay in the 1950s; in fact, it was not until the 1970s, when the Equal Pay Act was passed, when women could say that they are at least a bit equal

to men. Lewis also claims that immediately after the war, there was a fear that men would be preferred if women wages were raised. (Lewis, 80) Another step towards equality in post-war years was when women were enabled to receive a degree from Cambridge University, which has been already mentioned in the first chapter.

To sum up this chapter, women were encouraged to leave their jobs and start to fulfil their roles of mothers and wives. On the other hand, divorce became exceedingly popular as women were more liberal. Moreover, many of them did not leave their job and focused on their careers. There was a visible increase in employment of married women. The new conveniences assured that women had more free time to cohere all their activities. In the post-war years, they were also on their way to finish their fight for the equality with men. The post-Second World War period secured women's position, which they gained during the foregoing war. Women were no longer dependent on men; they became the independent human beings.



## 2. Analysis of women in *The Night Watch*

### Chapter 4 Connections in Sarah Waters' *The Night Watch*

Any piece of work written by Sarah Waters, the British novelist, tends to contain lesbian issues. Her novel published in 2006, *The Night Watch*, though set in the Second World War period in Great Britain, specifically London, does not make an exception. Moreover, the story with five main characters, based on the intensive research of the Second World War reality, evolves even more common ground for them throughout the whole book. The aim of this part is to explain those connections between the four main women characters and the influences on them in terms of war, occupations, disappointment, loss, secrets, and love affairs.

#### 4.1 Connection of time and place

All women characters, Julia Standing, Helen Givener, Vivien Pearce and Kay Langrish, live in the period of 1941-1947, in London. At first, they do not have much in common, but the war brings them together. If it had not been for the war, they would not meet each other and their life destinies would have probably been entirely different. However, at the beginning of the novel we, the readers, can find ourselves at the end of the story, in 1947, specifically the third September after the war. Therefore, the story facts are revealed backwards, which makes the story more gripping. Moreover, the author does not depict the war reality transparently as Duncker explains: "All the constraints of daily survival are absorbed into the descriptive writing or the problems faced by the characters. Waters even teaches us the value of the pound in the 1940s without appearing to do so." (Duncker, [online]) There are just fragments of the daily constraints that we have to put together.

As many other women, also these heroines were involved in wartime work. Vivien, working as a typist at the Ministry of Food; Kay, serving as an ambulance driver for the London Auxiliary Ambulance Service; Helen, working for the War Damage Assistance department; and Julia, compiling a survey of bombed-damaged buildings with her father architect. Their jobs are multifarious, but their lives are similar.

Each of them is doing their work for different reasons. Viv is the typist because she was encouraged by her instructor of a secretarial course. For this reason, she is working with upper-class girls, despite the fact that she belongs to the middle-class. However, it is not as a wonderful job as others might think:

She was typing up a table, a list of foodstuffs and their calorific values – a fiddly job since you had to type the vertical columns first, with the right sort of space between them, and then you had to take the papers out and put them back in horizontally and type the lines. And you had to do it all, of course, without letting the papers slide about against each other, otherwise the top sheet would look all right, but the copies underneath would turn out crazy. What with the effort of getting it right, and the noisiness and stuffiness of the room, you might as well, Viv thought, be working in a factory, making precision parts for planes. You'd probably earn more in a factory. And yet people thought it glamorous, when you told them you were a typist at a Ministry. (Waters: 246)

The tone of her speech indicates that she is not satisfied with this job. Nonetheless, it was certainly much better than working in Women's Land Army or other war services, where one worked tremendously hard as remembers one of the former members of WLA:

I then [WWII] volunteered for the Land Army and I got sent to a farm near Cheddar Gorge. I had to work on a threshing machine with another girl from London. It was really primitive, we had to build these huge hay ricks. We had to work physically very hard, usually 7 days a week. We often had an officer coming round and checking on us. We both left after a year, we were exhausted. We were both city girls, we didn't really see anybody down there and found it pretty isolating. (BBC.co.uk)

Viv does not have difficulties of that kind. Despite that fact, she is experiencing war in a different way - through her brother Duncan, who is imprisoned for being an accomplice to the suicide of his boyfriend Alec, who did not want to join the army as well as Duncan himself. She is regularly visiting him, accompanied by their father. When war is over, Duncan is released and Vivien starts to work in a dating agency, trying to match two single individuals together, especially those who lost their beloved ones to war. However, this job does not make her fulfilled either. The only person that makes that job bearable is her colleague, Helen – another of the four main protagonists. They are spending most of the time outside, smoking cigarettes and talking about life. Once they talk about their previous life, when Helen asks Vivien if she would have gone back to her old job, supposing war would be on again, she reluctantly answers: "I don't know. Maybe. It felt – important. I liked that. Even though all I was doing was typing, really... If the war really started again I might go into one of the services." (Waters, 113) Such answer provides a proof for transiency of war repercussions on a human being as she spoke about her war occupation in more negative terms back in 1944. This fact is also supported by thoughts of Helen, who says:

"Isn't it odd, how everyone talks about the war as if it were a thing – oh, from years ago. It feels almost quaint. It's as though we all got together in private and

said to each other, ‘Now don’t for God’s sake, let’s mention *that!* When did that happen?’ I never would have thought we’d all forget it, though, so quickly. When it was on – Well, it was the only thing, wasn’t it? The only thing you talked about. The only thing that mattered. You tried to make other things matter, but it was always that, you always came back to that. “ (Waters, 113)

As it happens in life, people try to forget the unpleasant memories, and make the best of it as it was in the case of the Second World War; that is why Vivien speaks about her old job in a positive way after the war in comparison with the previous years.

On the other hand, for Helen, working in the dating agency is a cheerful activity in contrast to her old job. Helen is the woman, who brought light into many human’s lives during that destructive war as she has worked in a damage assistance department in Marylebone Town hall, trying to help people in need. Helen admits that at first she imagined herself as a heroine, she even helped people by giving them money from her own purse during the first Blitz, but gradually the war made her careless, and she started to focus just on herself. (Waters, 282) Moreover, it was a terribly frustrating job since they had helped people by rehousing them after the first Blitz, and after the second Blitz they have been bombed out again.

During the conversation with Vivien, Helen is given the same question about getting back to her old job as Viv before, and she answers in this way:

I suppose so, though I was glad enough to leave it. It was funny work – a bit like this, in a way: unhappy people all expecting impossible things. You tried to do your best for them, but you got tired; or you had things of your own to think about. (Waters, 114)

However, the proof that Helen cared about others, at least at the beginning of the war, can be tracked in her conversation with Julia, who was neglectful to the war victims from the beginning.

'I've given up reading the papers,' [claimed Julia] 'Since the world's so obviously bent on killing itself, I decided months ago to sit back and let it.'  
'I wish I could', said Helen. 'But I find I feel even worse, not knowing, than I do when I know it all.' (Waters, 229)

It is implied in that excerpt that during the war years, there were two groups of people - the ones who cared and the others who did not, but it should be said that nothing was black or white; therefore, the people’s attitudes towards the war could change and form throughout that period.

Julia, the upper-class woman and the professional novelist at the same time, is contributing her part in the war work by helping her father to compile a survey of the bombed-out buildings. The nature of this work indicates that the war society was a materialistic one because they have to had everything recorded. After the war, Julia dedicates herself to the full-time writing of detective novels, which are becoming successful.

War experiences of already mentioned characters are next to nothing compared with the last female protagonist in *The Night Watch*, Kay. Kay, though being the upper-class woman, is witnessing the war from one of the closest possible point – an ambulance van. Unlike other female characters, she can achieve visible results of her work on the spot as she is saving lives of wounded people. On the other hand, sometimes there is nobody to save since the ambulance drivers have to perform mortuary runs, as well.

Vivien, Helen and Julia, all are representing feminine roles in this book. Kay is the only one who represents the opposite sex. Furthermore, she is the lesbian, who hides her sexual orientation. Thus, war has a liberating effect on her as she becomes an ambulance driver, where she can indulge her need to dress in a butch style. For this reason, many patients often confuse her with a man. Usually, when they find out that they are dealing with the woman instead of the man, they start to lose confidence in Kay. Prejudices are more powerful than the reality they perceive. The following example, when Kay along with her colleague Mickey came to save Viv after her frightful abortion, well describes that reality from Viv's perception:

Then he and the boy said other things-spoke to each other, calling each other 'Kay' and 'Mickey'-and she understood, with a rush of dismay, that they were not men at all, but simply short-haired women... All the confidence she'd had in them, the sense of care and safety, disappeared. (Waters, 410)

It can be seen that she despises them. Nonetheless, it is needless to say, that Vivien cannot be judged for this opinion as it is the way women were perceived at that time.

At the first encounter between Kay and Helen (her future partner) in 1941, Helen admires Kay's great fortitude to do such a job. However, Kay opposes, because she thinks she is not brave at all and claims: "It's easier to be out in the fuss, that's all, than sitting home listening to it." (Waters, 500) After the war is over, Kay loses the purpose of her life as many other women at that period. As Palmer states:

With her partner having left her for another woman and the ambulance unit in which she worked disbanded, Kay feels herself, despite her upper-class status and financial affluence, reduced to the position of a 'non person'. (Palmer, 2008, 81)

That is why, she is stuck in the past, not able to move her life into the next level. Her normal day is described in this way: "She had nothing to do, and no one to visit, no one to see. Her day was a blank, like all of her days." (Waters, 6) Although the activity Kay does often, testify to the bad consequences of the war on her attitude to life:

'I go to the cinema,' said Kay; 'there's nothing funny about that. Sometimes I sit through the films twice over. Sometimes I go in half-way through, and watch the second half first. I almost prefer them that way-people's pasts, you know, being so much more interesting than their futures. (Waters, 105-106)

It suggests that she prefers her past. She acquired this stance on life because of the broken relationship with Helen. She would like to restore the moments shared with Helen, and also the moments of the night watch in the ambulance. Since her job was everything to her and it also served as a pretext for dressing like a man. This passage precisely describes her clothing after the war:

She changed her shirt to a cleaner one, a shirt with a soft white collar, she could leave open at the throat, as a woman might. But her shoes were men's shoes; she spent a minute polishing them up. And she put silver links in her cuffs, then combed her short brown hair with brushes, making it neat with a touch of grease. People seeing her pass in the street, not looking at her closely, often mistook her for a good-looking youth. She was regularly called "young man", and even "son", by elderly ladies. (Waters, 5)

This suggests that Kay does not want to comply with the image of a post-war woman; therefore, she has to deal with hinting at her dress and masculine hair-cut anywhere, where she is recognized. As Palmer states: "Whereas Kay's lack of role and social recognition reduce her to a position of invisibility, her resistance to post-war dress causes her to suffer paradoxically from an excess of visibility". (Palmer, 81) Once on visiting the shop she is greeted with a question: "Don't you know the war's over?" (Waters, 94) That question indicates that all women who had men's occupations and manners during the war, were supposed to return to their pre-war lives after the war. Like nothing has happened, because they served just like puppets to free men for the army. Similarly as Kay, her lesbian friend Mickey, who works as an attendant on the pumps, is dealing with the same problem: "She

was only at the garage, really, because it was one of the few places a woman could work and wear trousers.” (Waters, 104) As Palmer further clarifies:

During this period [WWII] they [Kay and Mickey] were treated as valued members of society and, in the camaraderie that the war engendered, had a positive role and identity. They also enjoyed the privilege, one which they perceive with hindsight was merely temporary, of doing ‘a man’s job’ and dressing in a butch style. By 1947, however, with peace declared, cultural attitudes to woman’s role in society and feminine dress conventions have undergone a dramatic shift. (Palmer, 81)

To sum it up, heroines of this novel, representing the ordinary people of that time, have the connection in 1941-1947 London, which means that they are supposed to perform the war job. To compare it with their occupations in the post-war years, they prefer the war occupations to the post-war jobs. For they feel more helpful at the war period and are allowed to assert their abilities in front of the whole world. For this reason, they are not satisfied with returning to their pre-war lives. Each of them is obviously familiar with the war reality, whether it is a blackout or rationing, but no one of them is experiencing the cruelty of war as much as Kay. Kay is also the one who is struck by the end of the war the most. Nonetheless, the story is full of independent women; moreover, it is celebrating women’s bravery during the war. As Duncker states: “The twist is that the boys don’t want to fight: it’s the women who are the heroes.” This is what Sarah Waters clearly intended to say, to honour the female fighters of the Second World War.

Links between the main characters in terms of wartime London do not have to be so obvious at first sight, but its impact on their connectedness will become apparent in the next subchapter.

## **4.2 Connection of secret, disappointment and loss**

*The Night Watch* characters are not only connected in terms of wartime London, but also in terms of secret, disappointment, loss and betrayal. As Hensher points out: “They all have ‘some queerness or scandal attached to [them].” (Hensher, [online]) These attributes result in that connectedness. Firstly, this part will deal with Viv’s secrets, losses and disappointments as she is the only heterosexual woman in the book, the lesbian characters will be analysed in later paragraphs.

Vivien’s biggest secret is undoubtedly her lover Reggie, who represents for her the disappointment at the same time. They met each other by chance on the train, while he was on

compassionate leave to see his family, primarily his newborn baby; Vivien was coming back from her sister and niece. Viv fell in love with him, notwithstanding his wife and children about whom she knew from the very beginning. On the other hand, as suggests the following excerpt, she did not intend to start an affair with him from the first moment: “When she tried to think of the wife, the son, the baby, the home, that the train was speeding him towards, she couldn’t do it. They might have been dreams to her, or ghosts; she was too young.” (Waters, 474) However, it is not expressly said when their love affair starts, but judging by the context it is most likely immediately after their first encounter, despite the Vivien’s statement. At the end of the story, their relationship persists in the teeth of Reggie’s commitments, which means six years of continuous hiding. Therefore, their rendezvous usually takes place in a remote area. Vivien also keeps that secret from family and friends, just her brother and best friend know who is behind her troubles. Towards the end, it is obvious that she is not satisfied with her relationship anymore, although it is not clear if she has strived for getting Reggie and his wife apart or not. However, it rather seems she is reluctant to change anything. It can be said that she keeps their relationship going because Reggie is the only certainty in her life and she is scared to be alone. The only thing she dares to do, after all these years, is to refuse the tins with meat, which Reggie brings to her regularly. On the other hand, it might represent a turning point for Vivien’s relationship towards him.

The theme of loss is present between Reggie and Vivien. The most salient connection that Reggie and Vivien shared together was their baby, which has been aborted. Reggie does not want to accept Vivien’s pregnancy at first, but subsequently they decide to go to “the dentist” to terminate the pregnancy. Since an abortion is not legal at that time, they have to go to that charlatan who bungles it. As Reggie and Vivien are just a couple of lovers, they have to pretend they are a married couple at the doctor, which means she has a fake wedding ring and uses a fake name. This suggests that it was unheard-of couples to have a child if they were not married. After the surgery, Vivien starts to haemorrhage, and the ambulance has to take care of her while Reggie in a cowardly fashion runs away from the place. However, with the people bustling around, Vivien loses her ring and blurts her real name to the ambulance drivers (Kay and Mickey). After realising it, she loses control, but fortunately Kay is so kind to lend her her own ring. The aborted child and loss of Vivien’s ring represent the losses in her life.

Even after these excesses Viv is faithful to Reggie, even if she could do much better. She realises that after giving back the ring to Kay as she meets her by chance in 1947. After that

action, she feels invincible. She starts to think about ending the relationship with Reggie as described in this quote: “She could call up Reggie! She could call him up and tell him – what? That she was through with him, for ever! That she forgave him; but that forgiving wasn’t enough.” (Waters: 140) This implies that she is disappointed in him. To intensify her words Clausen adds: “Vivien’s return of the orphaned object, underscores the failure of Vivien’s affair with a man who isn’t free to share his life with her.” (Clausen, [online]) That is why, Viven has every right to be disappointed.

Viven reminisces about the past, suggesting that she had different post-war expectations than was the reality:

It's funny, thinking back. It's only a couple of years but, you're right, it seems ages away. Some things were easier, then. There was a way of doing things, wasn't there? Someone else had decided it for you, said that was the best way to do it; and that's what you did. It got me down, at the time. I used to look forward to peace, to all the things I'd be able to do then. I don't know what I thought those things would be. I don't know what I thought would be different. You expect things to change, or people to change; but it's silly, isn't it? Because people and things don't change. Not really. You just have to get used to them...'  
(Waters, 115)

It is obvious that in this snatch, she is alluding to Reggie’s behaviour, and also to either moving their relationship further or her resolve to leave him, both of which failed. It also suggests that she is disappointed with people. What is more, the presence of Reggie in her life means not only the disappointment, but loss of ideals she had, but also the loss of her first baby and towards the end – loss of her love for him. That is also the reason for Helen’s thoughts she has about her: “There was something-something disappointed about her, Helen thought. A sort of greyness. A layer of grief, as fine as ash, just beneath the surface.” (Waters, 18) It is beyond doubt that without Reggie, Viv would be much happier in every aspect of her life.

The remaining characters, Kay, Helen and Julia form a lesbian love triangle. Being a lesbian at that time inevitably entailed hiding and secrets. On the other hand, it was a truly liberating time for them as they could do all the activities they had covertly enjoyed, which was caused by men substitution in their jobs with women. The only character in this book who grasped that opportunity to the full was Kay as described in subchapter 4.1. What is more, according to Tyler May, lesbianism compared to male homosexuality was easier to mask as there was greater social acceptance of female expressing fondness to each other. (Tyler May, 256)



Moreover, *The Night Watch* is the first book where destinies of the lesbian characters are developed on the background of the Second World War.

At the very beginning of the story, in 1941, there is Kay who rescues Helen from debris. Kay falls in love with her at first sight. After not wanting to move from her, the first day she met her during her shift, Mickey tries to hurry Kay with words: “She'll be yours for life,” (Waters: 502). The irony is that when war is closer to the end, Helen breaks up with Kay because of Julia, who loves Kay, about which Helen has no hunch. As the relationship of Kay and Helen evolves throughout the time, they both evince disapproval with lesbian constraints, as is obvious from this passage from Helen’s perspective:

I wish the world was different. Why can't it be different? I hate having to sneak and slink so grubbily about. If we could only be married, something like that.” Kay blinked and looked away. It was one of the tragedies of her life, that she couldn't be like a man to Helen – make her wife, give her children... (Waters: 326)

Kay is especially noteworthy for her gallantry as can be noticeable from that excerpt, but little by little Helen feels rather smothered by that behaviour. She wants to ask Julia about Kay’s wifely behaviour, in assumptions that Julia was the one who rejected Kay’s love, not vice versa as it was in reality.

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... (Waters, 275)

It is apparent that Kay is extremely fond of Helen. One day she tells her: “You’re the only thing that makes this bloody war bearable.” (Waters, 327) As it happens in life, nothing is the way we want it to be. Helen starts frequently seeing Julia, Kay’s friend, and she falls in love with her, leaving Kay unconscious of this new state. As Kay said at the beginning, pointing to unrequited love for Julia: “...isn't it funny – we never seem to love the people we ought to, I can't think why...” (Waters, 502) But at that time, she did not know how true it will be also in her relationship with Helen.

Paradoxically, Kay finds out about Helen’s affair in a singularly peculiar way; after their house is burnt down she thinks that Helen was in, while she was with Julia. They all meet at that moment, when Kay sees Helen, she expresses her relief:

“Julia,” she said, in a kind of bafflement – for she could understand nothing, at that moment, except that Helen had been taken, and now returned. “Julia. Oh, Julia! Thank God! I thought I’d lost her.” (Waters, 454)

At this moment, when she thinks she gained everything back, in fact, represents the three key losses in her life – the loss of home, love and a sense of life. Moreover, it suggests that Kay’s loan of the ring, which she had from Helen, to Viv, foreshadowed their subsequent break-up. What is more, Kay’s uneasiness deepens after the war as described in subchapter 4.1. It is extremely hard for her to get over it:

It's no more than happened to thousands of us. Who didn't lose someone, or something? I could walk on any street in London, stretch out my arm, touch a woman or a man who lost a lover, a child, a friend... But I- I can't get over it, Mickey. I can't get over it.' She laughed, unhappily. 'Get over it. What a funny phrase that is! As if one's grief is a fallen house, and one has to pick one's way over the rubble to the ground on the other side... I've got lost in my rubble, Mickey. I can't seem to find my way across it. I don't think I want to cross it, that's the thing. The rubble has all my life in it still. (Waters, 108)

It seems that she indulges in her own grief; that is why, she will not let go of the past so easily. She is too devoured by the past. It can be said that the losses represent for her the disappointment in life as a whole.

After the revelation of Helen’s affair, Julia starts to date her, but it suggests that it is rather because of vengeance on Kay than for love to Helen. Julia wants Kay to feel as miserable as she felt when she rejected her. At the beginning of her relationship with Helen, her interest in Kay is evident as she asks after her very often. However, Helen is so blinded that she does not see that. Ironically, Helen even indirectly thanks Kay for giving her opportunity to meet Julia: “But don't you see, how dreadfully tangled the whole thing is? If I'd never met Kay, I should never have met you, Julia.” (Waters, 369) In fact, the meeting of Julia and Helen is only contributing to the disappointments in their lives.

Palmer also points out Julia’s and Helen’s association of invisibility and secrets. To take one example, their first kiss happens in complete invisibility, in the shelter behind the wall where they hide before the explosion, at night. Julia herself says: “Now, we’re invisible.” (Waters: 349). Palmer comments on that statement: “The remark acts as a prelude to their first kiss, their physical invisibility symbolically representing their social invisibility as lesbian lovers.” (Palmer: 82-83) Secrets are present, when Julia is not truthful about Kay and later about her

friend Ursula and their meetings. It is the secrets that are precipice of their relationship, which at first sight seems flawless.

Moreover, after the war is over, their relationship becomes a bit more complicated than ever before as Julia is recognizable as a successful writer, as Palmer clarifies:

Julia's status as a successful novelist, rather than winning her a greater degree of freedom to dress and behave as she likes, in fact does the reverse. By placing her in the public eye, it forces her to conceal her sexuality even more closely. As Helen despondently comments, 'Now that Julia's books were doing so well, they had to be more careful than ever.' (Palmer, 82; Waters, 48)

Being invisible before her success is thus exchanged with the visibility. Julia's popularity entails not only attention in the public eye, but also wider circle of friends and acquaintances. Here starts the problem, because Helen grows insanely jealous of Julia and her female friends. After having one argument with Julia, she even hurts herself deliberately. She ruefully confesses to Julia, right after her excess: "You don't hate me as much as I hate myself." (Waters, 156) This quote is later supplemented with memory of pyjamas Helen once owned, about which is said:

She thought of a pair of pyjamas she'd once owned, when the war was on, and then had lost. They were satin pyjamas, the colour of pearls: the most beautiful pyjamas, it seemed to her now, as she lay alone and untouched in the darkness at Julia's side; the most beautiful pyjamas she'd ever seen. (Waters, 158)

In fact, the pyjamas were given to her by Kay. That is why, it evokes she is talking in a metaphor about Kay, that she hates herself because she betrayed her, even though Kay was always good to her. That is the thing she misses with Julia, because Julia does not care about Helen as much. Obviously, she would like to own the pyjamas (Kay, in a metaphorical sense) again, but after that betrayal of Kay it is not morally feasible.

Considering all characters together, it can be said that all of them experienced meeting during the war, which was crucial for them after the war. Vivien met Reggie, but after the war she realised that this relationship is holding her back. Kay met Helen, whose relationship came to an end shortly before the end of the war and left Kay broken in such a way that she is not able to fully integrate into the society again. On the other hand, there is Helen who met Julia in 1944 and by 1947 she has lost trust in her, which is the beginning of the end. It suggests that war was a point when everything and everybody seemed different.

To conclude this subchapter, heroines of the novel are connected in terms of time and place which results in connection of secret, disappointment and loss, because if it had not been for the war, they would not have such a life at all. The secret is present because Viv has to hide her relationship with Reggie, and Kay along with Julia and Helen have to hide their sexual orientation, furthermore Helen and Julia have to hide their relationship in front of Kay. The disappointment appears because Viv's relationship is not the way she wanted it to be, and because Kay, Helen and Julia love the wrong person, who will never love them back. The loss is palpable for Julia, who lost Kay, for Kay, who lost Helen, for Helen, who loses Julia and for Vivien, who lost her child and ideal of her lover.

## Conclusion

This paper was focused on women's roles in the Second World War and its depiction in the novel by Sarah Waters, *The Night Watch*. Firstly, the aim of this thesis was to examine the roles of women before, during and after the Second World War, more precisely, from the 1900s to 1950s. Secondly, to analyse the fictional representations of the war women in *The Night Watch*, not only in terms of their roles in the society, but also in terms of their secrets, disappointments and losses.

The findings of the theoretical part showed that women were not expected to work before the Second World War. There was even a law which prohibited married women to work in the 1920s to 1950s. Their first significant work opportunity came with the outbreak of the Second World War, in 1939. After that, they participated in the various war services and the essential war works to free men for the war or helped other women to manage their careers with their mother-wife duties. They managed to carve a temporary place between men, but it did not last a long time. After the war, men returned from the war and women were supposed to leave their jobs and get back to their previous lives. There were those who welcomed it, those who did not want to acquiesce and a few of those who defended their places. All along they earned much less than men did. It has not changed until the 1970s. At least, they utterly achieved equality in education already in 1948, when Cambridge University enabled women to receive degrees.

The second part of this thesis gave the theoretical background the fictional faces and names. The war, disappointments, losses, secrets and love affairs are present in the destinies of Vivien, Helen, Julia and Kay, the main characters of the analysed novel *The Night Watch*. The analysis examined the connections between them. All of them are participating in the war work. Kay is the only one who is participating in the war service as an ambulance driver. Overall their war work is fulfilling with the comparison to their post-war work. Apart from the war connection, there is a connection of disappointment. It is present at Vivien, when she starts to realise that her relationship does not have any direction and any sense, as she is the only one who is suffering from this love affair. Similarly, her colleague Helen is disappointed in her first and subsequently in her second relationship, because every time it is not mutual love but one-sided. It suggests that Kay is disappointed because of Helen's unrequited love, and Julia because of Kay's unrequited love. Another theme – the theme of secret appears at Helen, Julia and Kay, who try to hide their lesbian orientation, because at that time it was a

taboo to show or talk about these things. Therefore, it is impossible for them to show their affection towards another person at the public place, which can be rather stressful. Vivien has the similar problem as she has to hide with her lover, who is married and has two children. Later she also has to keep secret about their aborted child, which meant also the principal loss for her. Loss is also connected with each end of the relationships in the triangle of lesbian characters - Julia, Kay and Helen.

To conclude, women were undoubtedly one of the leading forces in every time period of their existence, but they gained the greatest respect for their contribution in the war work. Otherwise, it would be impossible to gain victory. On the other hand, their contribution was not recognized until 2005. Overall, the Second World War was a turning point for women's lives. Their after-war life was more liberal and society experienced a certain decline of morality, because of inequalities between men and women started to be erased slowly but surely. Nonetheless, equality between those two sexes is not hundred per cent even nowadays. However, the women's emancipation is still in progress.

## Resumé

Tato práce je zaměřena na roli žen v období druhé světové války ve Velké Británii. Práce se ovšem nezabývá jen válečnými lety, ale také lety předcházejícími a rovněž lety následujícími. Analytická část zkoumá ženy v románu *The Night Watch* od britské spisovatelky Sarah Waters. Ženy nejsou podrobeny analýze jen z hlediska jejich postavení v rámci společnosti, ale také z hlediska jejich zklamání, ztrát, milostných poměrů a tajemství, které v knize hrají důležitou roli.

Ženy, na rozdíl od mužů, si musely své právoplatné místo ve společnosti vydobýt. Tento letitý boj vyvrcholil v první polovině dvacátého století, kdy se ženám naskytlo nezměrné množství příležitostí, jak se ve společnosti uplatnit, což pro ně do té doby bylo nevídané. Pracovní zkušenosti ženy měly, kromě těch z vyšších vrstev, ale jen z takových povolání, jakými byly pradelny, švadleny, služebné a práce jim podobné. Od poloviny osmnáctého do devatenáctého století, tedy období industrializace, začaly chudé ženy hojně pracovat i v nově rozvinutých průmyslových odvětvích. Nicméně, práce byla podřadná a nebyla rozmanitá, lepší práce nebyla dosažitelná až do zmíněného dvacátého století.

Dvacáté století znamenalo řadu změn nejen v pracovní sféře, ale také ve sféře sociální a právní. Dokladem tohoto tvrzení je zvýšený počet zákonů týkající se žen, již v druhé dekádě dvacátého století. Mezi velké milníky patřilo získání volebního práva a možnost sedět v parlamentu. Další změnou, ale nikoliv přínosnou, byl zákon, který omezoval pracovní činnost vdaných žen. Přesněji řečeno, všechny ženy, se po svatbě měli své práce vzdát, aby se mohly naplno věnovat svým mateřským a manželským povinnostem. Mateřství bylo, mimo jiné, považováno za primární úkol žen, tím mužovým bylo zabezpečení rodiny po finanční stránce.

První světová válka byla dalším zlomovým bodem pro ženy. Po mužích, kteří byli povoláni na frontu, zbyly volná pracovní místa, kterých se neměl kdo ujmout, a tak přišli na řadu ženy. Do té doby bylo nemyslitelné, aby se ženy angažovaly v mužské práci. Nutno říci, že nebyly zaměstnávány na nějaké nebezpečné pozice, spíše se uplatňovaly v pracích jim blízkých, jako například kuchařky, sestřičky a pomocnice různého druhu. Po válce se však svých pozic musely zříci, především proto aby je opět mohli nahradit muži a ony se mohly opět naplno věnovat své rodině.

Druhá světová válka měla poněkud větší dopad na život žen než ta první. Síť válečných služeb byla širší a tím pádem bylo zaměstnáno i více žen. Nejprve byly povolány svobodné a bezdětné ženy ve věku 20-30 let, to se ale s přibývajícím potřebou pracovních sil změnilo, a pracovat začali i ženy vdané. To mělo za následek, že o děti pracujících žen se neměl kdo starat. Založilo se tedy několik školek, které ovšem byly následně v padesátých letech opět hromadně zrušeny. Ženy za druhé světové války byly zaměstnávány i v mnohem nebezpečnějších pracech, což mělo za následek, že několik z nich bylo i zabito. Ženy pracovaly jak na polích, v továrnách, tak i na letištích a ve školách. Každá z organizací, které tyto ženy zastřešovaly, zajišťovala něco jiného. The Women's Land Army sázela nové plodiny, orala a okopávala půdu, dohlížela na drůbež a jinou zvěř, kosila trávu, obracela seno a podobné. Sesterskou společností byly the Women's Timber Corps, které především zajišťovaly kácení stromů a následné zpracování dřeva pro různé účely. Dalším dobrovolným spolkem byly Women's Volunteer Groups. Tyto skupiny poskytovaly podporu těm, kteří byli vybombardováni, později podávaly informace rodinným příslušníkům a přátelům o mrtvých a zraněných. Mimo jiné, provozovali i pojezdové kantýny pro hasiče a záchranné pracovníky. Při příjezdu amerických vojsk do Británie, založili "Britské uvítací kluby", které měli pomoci překonat rozdíly mezi americkými vojsky a britskými obyvateli. Women's volunteer groups také pomáhaly pracujícím ženám, které si nemohly obstarat své vlastní nákupy. Další organizace – Special Operations Executive zaměstnávala tajné agentky, což byla jedna z nejnebezpečnějších prací, jelikož tyto ženy se snažili získat tajné informace, které by mohly napomoci především při plánovaných vyloděních v Normandii. Dalším početným sborem byla Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), jejíž ženy pracovaly jako pekařky, telefonní operátorky, řidičky nebo třeba pošťačky. Velkým přínosem byly také u protiletectvého útvaru královského dělostřelectva, kde například zjišťovaly polohu nepřátelských letadel a kontrolovaly směr zbraně, ze které ale nemohli vystřelit. Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) jako jediný ze všech sborů nezahrnoval oddělené ženské jednotky, ale spadaly přímo pod správu RAF (Královského letectva). Tyto ženy se zabývaly telefonii, telegrafií a odposlechem kódů a šifer. Pracovaly také jako mechaničky, inženýrky a elektrikářky. Podobně jako ATS nemohli vystřelit ze zbraně, tak WAAF neměly dovoleno létat. Létání bylo dovoleno další organizaci – Air Transport Auxiliary, jelikož bylo potřeba uvolnit piloty do aktivní služby. ATA měly na starost dopravu nových letadel z továren do jednotek RAF a převážet letadla zpět na opravy. S ATA za dobu války letělo celkem 150 žen. Poslední důležitou organizací byla Women's Royal Naval Service (Wrens). Mezi jejich zásluhy patřilo plánování námořních operací, jakou bylo například vylodění D-Day v červnu 1944, dále zachycení a přeložení nepřátelských



kódu. Jen několik málo z nich sloužilo na moři, ale některé alespoň řídily male přístavní čluny a remorkéry.

Osudy čtyř hlavních ženských hrdinek Kay, Julie, Vivien a Helen, z románu *The Night Watch*, nejsou se zmíněnými válečnými službami moc provázané. Nejblíž k nim má Kay, která pracuje jako řidička sanitky. Vivien pracuje jako písařka u Ministerstva potravin, Julia provádí průzkum budov, které byly zasaženy bombou, a Helen pracuje na oddělení, které poskytuje náhradu škody těm lidem, kteří byli nějak zasaženi válkou. Kay, ačkoliv patří k vyšší třídě, tak dělá svou práci proto, aby nemusela sedět doma a jen poslouchat, co se děje venku. Vivien je písařkou ze střední třídy, mezi děvčaty z vyšších tříd, protože ji k tomu navedl její instruktor sekretářského kurzu. Helen pomáhá lidem, protože si sama sebe představovala jako válečnou hrdinku, ale postupem času zjistila, že během války se z ní stala spíše lhostejná osoba. Julie provádí výzkum vybombardovaných budov, aby tím pomohla svému tatínkovi – architektovi. Provázanost osudů hrdinek je zajištěna právě jejich zasazením do válečného Londýna, bez tohoto klíčového spojení, by se nikdy nesetkali. Další spojitosti vyplývají již ze zmíněného, jmenovitě se jedná o spojitost v otázce zklamání, ztráty, zrady a tajemství. Pro všechny hrdinky jsou tyto spojitosti citelné. Vivien má poměr s ženatým mužem, což si přímo žádá o neštěstí. Svůj vztah musí udržovat tajně, aby je někdo neviděl, takže celý jejich vztah je propleten tajemstvím. Jelikož Vivien musí jít na potrat, tak její hlavní ztrátou je její nedonošené dítě. Nedlouho po válce přichází prozření v podobě ztráty ideálů o svém milenci, který zřejmě nikdy nehodlá opustit svou ženu a děti. Tímto zrazuje vztah k Vivien, která začíná přemýšlet o odchodu od něj. Všechny tyto události jsou spojené se zklamáním a zradou, kterými Vivien musí procházet. Julii, Helen a Kay také pojí ztráta, zklamání a zrada a ačkoliv je příběh zasazen do druhé světové války, tyto hrdinky mají rovněž spojitost v homosexuální orientaci, což pro ně v této době znamená neustálé skrývání se s partnerkou (což znamená tajemství vůči společnosti), ale má to i své výhody. Všechny výhody naplno využívá Kay, která ukojuje především svou potřebu oblékat se a stylizovat jako muž. Během válečného období také nachází svou druhou polovičku, Helen, kterou objevuje pod sutinami domu při výkonu své práce. S blížícím se koncem války je ale všemu štěstí konec, jelikož Helen se potají dává dohromady s Julií, jejíž neopětovanou láskou je právě Kay. Ovšem Helen si myslí přesný opak, tedy že Julie je neopětovanou láskou Kay. Z tohoto lze usoudit, že Julia je s Helen pouze z pomsty ke Kay. To je patrné již ze začátku jejich vztahu, kdy se Julia na Kay neustále vyptává. O Julii lze říci, že má před Helen spoustu tajemství. Po válce se vztah Helen a Julie potýká s chorobnými návaly žárlivosti, které jsou však z části

oprávněné, jelikož Julie, jakožto úspěšná spisovatelka, se začíná nápadně často scházet se svou kamarádkou z oboru, Ursulou. V tomto okamžiku nastává zklamání pro Helen, která si je vědoma toho, že další z jejích vztahů je v troskách. Zpětně si uvědomuje jakou bolest způsobila Kay, jak ji zradila, podobně jako Julia zradila teď ji. Nutno říci, že Kay se z jejich nevyvedeného vztahu nedaří dostat ven. Stále se utápí ve svých vzpomínkách, které jsou pro ni klíčové. Nejenže přišla o Helen, ale po válce, kdy byla většina válečných sborů zrušena, se také ocitá bez práce. Její práce pro ni znamenala sexuální svobodu, což se návratem starých tradic stává opět nedosažitelným. Od žen se očekávalo, že se opět navrátí do svých domovů, jako by se nic nestalo, jako by jejich emancipace během válečných let neměla žádný význam. Ovšem Kay tento fakt ignoruje, stále se obléká jako muž, a tím si přivozuje výsměch ostatních. Otázka ztráty je v případě postav Helen, Julie a Kay patrná – každá z nich ztratila svou milovanou osobu z tohoto milostného trojúhelníku. Co se týče válečné situace, tak stejně jako skutečné ženy, i hrdinkám tohoto románu se více zamlouvala jejich práce za války. Cítily se více užitečné a potřebné. Měly svůj směr a cíl, který se jim po válce rozplynul. Vivien začala pracovat s Helen pro seznamovací agenturu, která dává dohromady především lidi, kteří o někoho přišli ve válce. Julia se stala, již zmíněnou, spisovatelkou. A Kay, neschopna se naplno začlenit zpět do společnosti a nemajíc smysl svého života se jen potlouká po ulicích, přičemž občas si zajde do kina nebo navštívit svou starou známou ze sanitky, Mickey.

Bez žen by bylo nemožné vyhrát válku. Ženy měly důležité funkce, které k vítězství napomohly, i když mnohdy nepřímou. Po válce byly některé z nich nuceny opustit svá místa, jak již bylo řečeno. Některé si však své pozice udrželi, mimo jiné také proto, že ženy byly stále levnější pracovní silou než muži. O některé zrovnoprávnění s muži se ženy pokoušely již během války. Jediným úspěchem se staly náhrady válečných škod, které se ženám zvýšily na cenovou úroveň druhého pohlaví. Avšak, primárním místem ženy bylo stále doma u svých rodin, starajíc se o rodinný krb. Novým fenoménem se ale staly rozvody, které bylo snazší uskutečnit. Ženy se chtěly naplno osamostatnit. V padesátých letech, nové technologie a vymoženosti, jakými byli například polotovary a kuchyňské přístroje, umožnily ženám časově skloubit práci a rodinu. Rovnoprávnost na pracovní půdě byla však nedosažitelná až do sedmdesátých let dvacátého století. Tato rovnoprávnost ovšem není stoprocentní ani v dnešní době.

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