"No one weeps for this shattering of our world...": Wartime Gender Roles and Modernist Narrative Strategies as the Ambiguous Anti-War Sentiment of the Home Front in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*

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Pro gradu -tutkielmassani tarkastelen Rebecca Westin romaania *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), joka sijoittuu ensimmäisen maailmansodan aikaiseen Isoon-Britanniaan ja kuvaa sotaa kotirintaman näkökulmasta. Tutkin, kuinka romaani kritisoi sotaa aikana, jolloin sodan julkinen arvostelu oli kiellettyä. Keskityn teoksen kuvaamiin ihanteellisiin sukupuolirooleihin sota-ajan yhteiskunnassa ja modernistisiin elementteihin, joiden väitän heijastavan epäsuoraa ja monimerkityksellistä sodan vastaista kritiikkiä. Korostan myös kontekstin merkitystä, jonka näen vaikuttavan teoksen sodan vastaiseen sanomaan.

Romaanin sukupuoliroolit luovat kuvan sodasta loppumattomana tuhona ja kärsimyksenä, jota yhteiskunnan ihanteelliset roolit vain ylläpitävät. Yläluokkaisen kotirouvan sekä äidin ja hoitajan roolit kuvataan osana julmaa sotakoneistoa, jotka varmistavat sotilaan paluun rintamalle ja näin sodan jatkumisen. Teos ilmentää, kuinka sota aiheuttaa pelkoa ja traumoja niin sotilaille taistelukentillä kuin naisille kotirintamalla. Toisaalta, teos korostaa äidin ja hoitajan roolien kautta rakkauden ja huolenpidon sekä rauhan merkitystä. Nämä arvot yhdistetään naiseuteen ja voidaan nähdä kontrastina väkivallalle ja sodalle, jotka liitetään maskuliinisuuteen ja patriarkaattiseen yhteiskuntaan. Westin teoksen voidaankin nähdä heijastavan sota-ajan feminististä pasifismia. Modernistinen kerrontatekniikka vahvistaa teoksen sodan vastaista sanomaa. Syklinen aikakäsitys ja avoimeksi jäävä loppu luovat kuvan sodan loppumattomuudesta ja heijastavat epätoivoa ja epävarmuutta kotirintamalla. Myös romaanille keskeinen epäluotettava naiskertoja ilmentää tätä kotirintaman ilmapiiriä sodan keskellä. Kertojan käsitys sodasta ja sen pakotteista muodostuu hänen marginaalisen roolinsa kautta sotakoneiston ulkopuolella.

Tutkielma jakautuu teoria- ja analyysilukuihin, joissa on molemmissa kaksi alalukua. Teorialuvussa käsittelen ensin teoksen historiallista kontekstia sekä naisten ja miesten ihanteellisia sukupuolirooleja sota-ajan Isossa-Britanniassa, joka muodostaa ensimmäisen alaluvun. Toisessa alaluvussa tarkastelen Westin teosta osana ensimmäistä maailmansotaa käsittelevää kirjallisuutta Britanniassa. Lisäksi käsittelen sodan suhdetta kirjalliseen modernismiin ja sen kerronnallisiin elementteihin. Analyysiosion ensimmäisessä alaluvussa tarkastelen sukupuoliroolien kuvausta Westin teoksessa ja toisessa alaluvussa keskityn modernistisiin elementteihin teoksen kerronnassa. Tutkimukseni pohjautuu erityisesti anglo-amerikkalaiseen feministiseen tutkimukseen ensimmäisen maailmansodan ajan kirjallisuudesta, modernismista ja sukupuolirooleista. Lisäksi tätä aikaa käsittelevä kulttuurin- ja historiantutkimus on tärkeä osa teoreettista viitekehystä.

Avainsanat: ensimmäinen maailmansota, modernismi, sukupuoliroolit, Rebecca West, kotirintama

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The war which started in 1914 and lasted for four years has many names by now, including the Great War, the First World War or simply the War, as, according to Tylee, the contemporaries often called it at the time in Britain (1990, xv). The last two are most often used in this thesis; the latter without the capital letter simply for brevity, and the former for the fact that the war was first in its kind in many ways. The First World War can be regarded as the first totally mechanized war which caused unprecedented destruction, and affected the lives of millions of people around the world who experienced the war in diverse circumstances. In this thesis, I will explore the way the First World War was experienced on the British home front, as depicted by Rebecca West, who offers a woman's home front perspective on the war, more widely known from the vantage point of the trenches and the war narratives of soldiers. West's novel, *The Return of the Soldier*, first published in 1918, tells the story of Captain Christopher Baldry who has suffered a "shell shock" on the Western Front and now returns home to his grand estate in the English countryside without any memory of the last fifteen years of his life. However, it is the women in the soldier's life on whom the novel focuses; his wife Kitty, former lover Margaret and cousin Jenny, who is the narrator. The unexpected return of the soldier changes the roles and order of his family of women, Kitty and Jenny, whose lives revolve around him, and whose cherished image of the perfect head of the family is now broken. Suffering from amnesia, Chris imagines himself as a young unmarried man, full of zeal only for his former sweetheart Margaret, a lower-class woman, who begins to nurse and mother him. In the end, the women have no choice but to heal the soldier and bring him back into his role, and everything remains as it was, but with the realization that it also means the return of their soldier to the war.

My intention is to examine how West's *The Return of the Soldier* represents wartime anti-war sentiment in the context of the First World War: how the novel's focus on gender and use of modernist narrative strategies may be considered to form a critical picture of the war and imply a

specific preference for peace during a time when open criticism of the war was criminalized. The novel portrays ideal gender roles of wartime as duties which cannot be escaped in the home front society, and therefore it seemingly conforms to the dominant values of the war system; I will firstly argue, however, that the novel conveys how these roles only feed the war system, and so support the maintenance of the war, death and destruction. Consequently, the madness of the war system is exposed and the war is questioned in the portrayal of what is demanded of people in wartime, who suffer and are traumatized as a result. On the other hand, West's anti-war sentiment can be found in the depiction of some of the pivotal roles of women in the war effort, in which the power and significance of female love and care are emphasized: this reveals a feminine preference for peace, as opposed to masculine violence and war in the novel. Secondly, anti-war sentiment is visible in the narrative strategies of the novel, in elements which can be associated with British literary Modernism, a field influenced by the war. The unreliable narrator, a central modernist element in West's novel, offers the viewpoint of a female outsider on the war through which the madness of the war effort is realized, and a desire for peace is implied. Furthermore, the lack of a proper closure, connected to non-linearity in the narrative and another important modernist element in the novel, draws attention to the endless, cyclical notion of wartime, which reflects an atmosphere of despair and uncertainty on the home front, and underlines the novel's critical view of the war as an endless catastrophe, which cannot offer any conclusion. The story is situated in the middle part of the war, in the year 1916, when a common feeling indeed was, according to historical accounts of the time, that the war will go on forever. Two different areas of research, gender studies and British literary Modernism, are thus combined in this thesis in order to examine West's subtle and often ambiguous anti-war sentiment, published when the war was still going on, and moreover, when it was strictly forbidden to criticize the war effort.

Since central to this thesis are West's depiction of the ideal notions of gender on the British home front and the focus on a woman's viewpoint on the war, I find the work of Anglo-

American feminist scholarship on the literature of the First World War and on the interface between war, gender and Modernism particularly useful for the purposes of this study. In addition, historical and cultural studies concerned with the war are important here. In my discussion of the ideal gender roles of women in the war, I will use the works of such major scholars as Sharon Ouditt (1994) and Susan R. Grayzel (1999; 2002), and in reference to the male role, Eric J. Leed (1979) and Elaine Showalter (1985), for example. Moreover, in order to examine West's novel in the wider context of the literature of the First World War, the major works of widely-known scholars in the field, such as those of Claire M. Tylee (1990) and Samuel Hynes (1992) will be used in this study. As my intention is also to analyze modernist elements in reference to the war, studies concerned especially with British literary Modernism and the way this movement is connected to the war are important to this thesis, such as Allyson Booth's pivotal study (1996). Due to my focus on West's gendered critique of the war, special attention is given here to the study of modernist women writers, in which Angela K. Smith's (2000) work in this field, for example, is particularly useful.

Although, as Bonikowski (2005, 513) has observed, there has been a revived interest in West's work in recent years, *The Return of the Soldier* has not been studied extensively. Indeed, according to Schweizer and Thorne, the novel did not receive much attention among scholars until the 1980s (2010b, 30), when West's work was rediscovered particularly in feminist scholarship. Since then, West has also been increasingly studied as a modernist writer, whose novels especially in the 1920s, according to Scott, show modernist tendencies (2010, 26). However, as is often noted, it is common that the study of West's work draws on biographical facts about her life and relationships (Cohen 2012), and *The Return of the Soldier* has not often been the main focus of studies regarding her writing. The novel has often been dismissed by critics for being, for example, "*merely* a woman's novel" (Hynes 1983, xi, emphasis in the original) with little "wartime detail" (Cohen 2002, 65) and "a pat ending" (Bonikowski 2005, 513), regarding the soldier's rapid cure. Furthermore, the anti-war sentiment in the novel has not been widely studied, although it has been

recognized recently, for example, by Cohen, who mentions the novel's "accessible anti-war message" (2012). My aim is thus to tackle this often only briefly identified, but central question of the novel in this thesis, and argue against the claims made by Tylee (1990, 144-145), for example, who insists in her influential study that West in fact presents support of the war effort; her claim, as is often found in the criticism of the novel, simplifies the novel's ambiguities, which will be further explored in the analysis. By analyzing the depiction of gender in reference to the roles of both men and women in wartime, and the employment of modernist strategies in the narrative, this thesis attempts to offer a more comprehensive and in-depth approach to the study of West's wartime novel than is often found elsewhere. In addition, emphasis on the context of the novel in the middle part of the war is central to this study of West's anti-war sentiment, not often the case in other studies of the novel, which seldom pay enough attention to what can be considered an exceptional time in history,[1] reflected in the plot and techniques of the novel.

The Return of the Soldier is the first novel of Rebecca West,[2] born as Cicely Isabel Fairfield (1892-1983) in London, England. The novel was received well when it was published (Schweizer and Thorne 2010b, 29-30), first as a magazine serial in the United States in February and March 1918, and soon after, in May, as a novel in Britain (Schweizer and Thorne 2010c, 35). West was already a known "essayist, reviewer, and journalist" at the time (Schweizer and Thorne 2010b, 29), and she had published a critical study of Henry James (*Henry James*) in 1916 (Schweizer and Thorne 2010c, 35). The pen-name Rebecca West came from a character in the play *Rosmersholm* by Ibsen (ibid.). During her life-long writing career, West became a prolific author, experimenting in various different genres. Her other novels include *The Judge* (1922), *Harriet Hume* (1929) which Scott regards as "West's last modernist novel" (2010, 26), *The Fountain*

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[1] Cohen (2002; 2012) offers a welcome exception to this tendency to ignore the influence of the exceptional wartime context on the novel.

[2] She became "Dame" Rebecca West after receiving the title of "a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire" in 1959 (Schweizer and Thorne 2010c, 37).

Overflows (1956) and *The Birds Fall Down* (1966), although her most widely known and acclaimed work is often considered to be *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* (1941), written in the form of travel writing. This novel, according to Hynes, is "a supreme effort . . . to understand the catastrophe of the Second World War as it came on" (1983, xv). In addition to *The Return of the Soldier*, West commented on the First World War in various articles and essays, and as Smith (2000, 179) maintains, she anonymously authored a novel called *War Nurse: The True Story of a Woman Who Lived, Loved and Suffered on the Western Front*, published in 1930. *The Return of the Soldier* is West's most well-known work about the First World War, and as a sign of the novel's popularity, a film based on it was released in 1981, as Schweizer and Thorne confirm (2010c, 38). The book has also been published in various editions, sometimes with alterations made to the text. According to Schweizer and Thorne, the basic difference is between the British and American editions, with the first British edition altered by West herself before it was published (2010a, 39-42). This version of the novel is preferred by Schweizer and Thorne, because, according to their view, it "represents West's final intentions" (2010a, 43) and thus does not include the changes made to the text in later editions, possibly without West's consent. Due to the fact that Schweizer and Thorne have recognized and addressed this problem of different textual variants of the novel, I will use their printed version of the story for the same purposes. Before discussing the novel further, however, it is important to first contextualize it, and give light to the circumstances in which the novel was written, and where the soldier in the story returned.

2. War to End Wars or a Catastrophe? British Experience of the First World War in History, Theory and Literature

The First World War has had a lasting impact on the popular mind in many countries, as it was the first modern fully industrialized war, unprecedented in its effects, and so something that most people had never experienced before. In this section, I will firstly introduce this unprecedented war of 1914-1918 from a British perspective, and concentrate on those historical facts of wartime which can be related to West's *The Return of the Soldier*. This provides a historical background for my analysis of the novel, in which the mid-war context is in a significant role. In addition to the brief account of the relevant historical situation, I will discuss the war from the perspective of gender, and the ideal gender roles of the war system, which will form the first part of the theory for the analysis of the anti-war sentiment in West's novel. I will examine the ideal roles of both men and women in Britain during the war, with an emphasis on the soldier ideal and the roles of upper-class women, mothers and nurses in wartime, the depiction of which can be considered to reflect a critical view of the war in the novel. I will then move on to the second part of the theoretical section, and discuss the wartime from the viewpoint of literature. Some of the aspects of the literature of the First World War and literary Modernism in Britain will be examined in order to fully contextualize West's novel and briefly examine and compare how some of the other writers of the time pictured and viewed the war, especially when it was still going on. I will therefore especially focus on wartime fiction and prose writing of the war by women writers, which West's novel represents. Moreover, I will examine the connection between Modernism and the war, and finally explore some of the modernist narrative strategies which can be linked to the war and are found in West's novel. This will provide the theoretical background for the study of the modernist elements in the second part of the analysis. First, however, I will examine the war and its close connection to gender.

2.1 From Battlefield to Blighty

I will first briefly introduce the First World War around which this thesis is centred; how the war came to be and what it became, with an emphasis on the British wartime society and the common feelings associated with the war, which are relevant to my analysis of West's novel. The anti-war sentiment of the novel is strongly connected to the historical situation of the middle part of the war, and thus it is important to illuminate this context here. After the brief discussion of history, I will move on to examine the gender roles of wartime especially from the viewpoint of the British home front, or Blighty, as it was sometimes called by soldiers at the time. First, however, it is important to briefly trace the development of relevant areas of study, from the emergence of women's studies and an interest in women's war writing to studies concerned with gender and Modernism from the viewpoint of Anglo-American feminist scholarship. This is followed by theory regarding the connection between war and gender and the ideal roles of men and women in the First World War, which are central to the depiction of the war in West's novel. Here, I will examine the soldier ideal and the condition of "shell shock", which shatters the ideal in the novel and acts as a protest against the war and its demands. In addition, I will discuss the expected part of women during the war, focusing especially on upper-class women and the role of a housewife, which is depicted critically as the ignorant and bellicose society behind the war in the novel. Finally, I will focus on the supportive roles of mothers and nurses, whose duty it was to nurture and heal but also to send the soldier to the war. The ambiguous nature of their roles, and other theory related to the novel's depiction of gender and the historical context, will thus be examined below.

What came later to be known as the First World War[3] was instigated by a local crisis in Austria-Hungary in which Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo by a Serbian nationalist on 28 June, 1914 (Keegan 2000, 48-49). Threatened by this act, Austria-

[3] The term was coined in September 1918 (Smith 1995, 168).

Hungary asked the support of Germany, and declared war on Serbia a month later (Keegan 2000, 52, 60). This alliance of the "Central Powers" changed the local crisis into a European one (Keegan 2000, 52), and Germany soon waged war on Russia and France (Marwick 1965, 31). Britain, in ententes with both of these countries (Bond 2002, 3), which initially formed the "Allies", declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914 due to the German violation of Belgian territory, as Marwick maintains (1965, 31). However, according to Bond, the main reason for Britain to fight the war was "to preserve its independence and status as a great imperial power" (2002, 6). Although the war was expected in Britain "as an eventual probability" (Marwick 1965, 29), people were generally surprised when it actually started, and it was greeted by many with patriotic feelings and excitement (Braybon and Summerfield 1987, 3). It was to be "'The War That Will End War,'"[4] at least according to its supporters (Marwick 1965, 48), and the conflict was thought to be short-lived, "'over by Christmas'", as Braybon and Summerfield point out (1987, 3, 115). The previous nineteenth-century wars in which Britain had participated were "fought thousands of miles away by a small, professional army, largely ignored at home" (Smith 1995, 169), and thus, as Keegan notes, "war came, out of a cloudless sky, to populations which knew almost nothing of it" (2000, 9).

It became a war unlike anything seen previously, "the first prolonged conflict between modern industrial nations" (Constantine, Kirby and Rose 1995, 1), during the four years of which over 700 000 British soldiers were killed and over a million wounded (Braybon 1995, 165); altogether millions of people were injured or lost their lives. The war was marked by static trench warfare (Braybon and Summerfield 1987, 3). The British fought mainly on the Western Front (ibid.), in "the Ypres Salient in Flanders and the Somme area in Picardy" (Fussell 1975, 37) where the line of trenches went for miles and miles, a typical trench being "[i]n wet or stony ground . . . shallow, with a higher parapet to the front, built of earth, usually sandbagged" (Keegan 2000, 176).

[4] A book with this title was written by H.G. Wells in 1914 which, according to Hynes, became "the war's greatest cliché and then its bitterest irony" (1992, 20). See also Bergonzi (1980, 33-34).

No man's land separated the opposing sides, "usually two to three hundred yards wide, often less" (ibid.). Fussell (1975, 49) describes the conditions of the frontline as follows:

> The stench of rotten flesh was over everything. . . . Dead horses and dead men – and parts of both – were sometimes not buried for months and often simply became an element of parapets and trench walls. You could smell the front line miles before you could see it.

These conditions and the new type of warfare caused mental problems for soldiers, including what came to be known as shell shock, which, as will be discussed later, is the condition of the soldier in West's novel.

In contrast to the horrors of the battlefront, civilians remained mostly safe during the First World War (Braybon and Summerfield 1987, 3). Nevertheless, air raids killed or injured thousands of people (Braybon and Summerfield 1987, 97). The war was thus brought home in a new way. As Hynes observes, now "everyone was in the war, everyone was a potential casualty" (1992, 100), which is reflected in the depiction of the feelings of fear and anxiety caused by the war on the home front in West's novel. On the other hand, despite the damage caused by the raids, the number of casualties remained small, and life at home could continue almost as usual (Marwick 1965, 44).

However, the war was brought to the lives of British civilians also in other ways, although not always completely truthfully. In addition to dreading the arrival of telegrams which reported the fate of a relative on the battlefront (Keegan 2000, 317), mail between home and the trenches was usually quickly delivered, although letters from the front were censored (Fussell 1975, 65, 87). This was the first war in which media was used as a "channel . . . for government propaganda" (Ferguson 1999, 212) to influence, for example, the home front morale. Images of the war in the media play an important part in the way the war is pictured on the home front in West's novel. The press was under censorship and supported the war effort (Bond 2002, 11), and photographs of the front depicted "the official line" of the war (Smith 1995, 170). Numerous films

about the war for propaganda use were also made in Britain (Ferguson 1999, 226), the effect of which is conveyed in the novel. Moreover, those who had actually been at the battlefront and returned home were often unwilling or unable to describe their experiences (Potter 2005, 100-101). As again is witnessed in the novel, people at home were thus often ignorant of the true nature of the war, which, as Fussel notes, created a gap between civilians and soldiers (1975, 87); Britain was divided into "Two Nations", a common metaphor about the incomprehension resulting from the different realities of the two fronts (Tylee 1990, 54).

By 1916, as the war had continued with no end in sight, people began to doubt the likelihood of peace, and see "endless war as an inevitable condition of modern life" (Fussell 1975, 71-74). This atmosphere of endless war is reflected in the portrayal of the war in West's novel, the main events of which are situated in the spring of 1916. Conscription was introduced at the beginning of 1916 in Britain (Fussell 1975, 11), as the previous year had been catastrophic for the Allies, "much blood spilt for little gain", as Keegan describes it (2000, 203). One of the most infamous battles of the war, the Battle of the Somme, was fought in July 1916, a massive attack against the Germans which failed, and became a true catastrophe, "the greatest loss of life in British military history" (Keegan 2000, 294-295), to which the soldier possibly returns in the novel. The experience of the Somme undoubtedly affected people's attitudes to the on-going war. Indeed, Hynes notes that by 1916 many began to lose the idealism regarding the war (1992, 145) and see it differently from the pictures painted by propaganda. However, it is important to remember, as Buck (2005, 88) points out, that the war effort was both supported and criticized throughout the war years. This is witnessed in war writing, discussed in the next section, but first, however, I will look at the gender roles of wartime which were so crucial to the war effort in Britain. I will begin with a brief account of the development of the relevant academic fields.

According to Tylee, the growth of the Women's Movement in the late 1960s may be considered the starting point for the rising interest in the parts women play in war (1990, 250).

Second wave feminism of the 1960s and 70s revived women's activism in the West, and this renewed vigour in feminist thought was also reflected in the emergence of women's studies "as a specialised area of academic interest", first in the United States in the late 1960s and soon after, during the 1970s, in the UK (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, ix-x). This new field of study, "resolutely multi- and inter-disciplinary" (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, xii), concentrated on issues specific to women,[5] and analyzed not only the public, but also the private domain of life (Maynard 2005, 29-30). In the 1970s, scholars in the field began to study the forgotten works of women writers and examine women's writing as a distinct tradition (Scott 1990, 2). In the field of war writing, the purpose of this was, as Buck observes, to "relocate . . . women's writing against the assumption that war is an exclusively male experience" (2005, 87). Indeed, the First World War has traditionally been regarded as "an arena of male dominance", partly at least due to the well-known representations of the war as a trench experience by Sassoon and other male writers (Smith 2000, 3). Based on these widely studied texts of war, war writing was long regarded as a "masculine genre" with Vera Brittain as a possible exception (Quinn and Trout 2001, 1). War writing today, however, is recognized to be a wider field including "the creative expressions . . . of anyone, soldier or civilian, man or woman", thanks to the "essentially anti-canonical, 'decentring' critical orientations", such as feminist theory (Quinn and Trout 2001, 1-2). Feminist scholars argue that women's war writing offers different viewpoints on war and an important insight into how women regard militarism (Buck 2005, 87-88). Major, early studies in the field are, for example, Claire M. Tylee's *The Great War and Women's Consciousness* (1990) and *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (Higonnet et al. 1987). As these studies suggest, attention was now drawn to the role of gender in war.

[5] In the 1990s, the debate about the "difference" and diversity among women became prominent in Women's Studies (Maynard 2005, 31), as it is important to recognize that women are not a unified group of people, which is what the early Women's Studies may be considered to suggest.

Indeed, the relation between war and gender began to be studied in the 1980s (Buck 2005, 87), when scholars in women's studies turned their attention "to the concept of gender" (Scott 1990, 2). Today, in fact, gender studies may be regarded to complement women's studies (Davis, Evans and Lorber 2006, 1-2), "to further open up the field . . . beyond its beginnings" (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, xi). Furthermore, in the 1980s the term "'gender studies'" began to be used instead of "'women's studies'", due to the development of "understandings of gender . . . as a complex, multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary area" (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, xii, 178). Nevertheless, feminism is still the main viewpoint for studying gender relations (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, xii-xiii). In reference to studies concerned with women, gender and war, whereas the first emphasis was specifically on women and war, it became more common in later studies to analyze masculinities and femininities and how they are represented in war writing (Zarkov 2006, 223-224). This is a line followed in this study, since, as Tosh notes, "[n]either masculinity nor femininity is a meaningful construct without the other; each defines, and is in turn defined by, the other" (2005, 104).[6]

Moreover, the concept of gender has been emphasized in the more recent studies regarding Modernism, as in Bonnie Kime Scott's pivotal study *The Gender of Modernism* (1990) and her more recent and comprehensive *Gender in Modernism* (2007), both of which give attention to marginalized women writers. Until the 1980s and the institutionalization of feminist criticism, women's contribution to Modernism was considered to be of minor importance in contrast to the more well-known male modernists (Linett 2010, 3), and according to Scott, Modernism was "unconsciously gendered masculine" (1990, 2). During the 1980s and 1990s feminist criticism therefore concentrated first and foremost on female modernists, and how they are different from their male counterparts, whereas a more recent viewpoint is to "recognize the common historical, literary, and political contexts surrounding both male and female modernist work" and study

[6] "[S]tudies of men and masculinities" further complement the field of women's/gender studies today (Davis, Evans and Lorber 2006, 1-2). This area of study began to develop also in the 1980s (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, xi).

women writers as participants in the creation of literary Modernism (Linett 2010, 3-4). Mao and Walkowitz have defined this more recent interest as "new modernist studies or new modernisms" which "reconsiders the definitions, locations, and producers of 'modernism'" and "has extended the designation 'modernist' beyond such familiar figures as Eliot, Pound, Joyce, and Woolf" (2006, 1). With this new outlook on Modernism, there has been a rising scholarly interest in West's earlier works, including *The Return of the Soldier*, which draws attention to the interface between modernist experimentation and the First World War. According to Smith, the works of female modernists have not been widely studied in reference to this link (2000, 3). The connection between modernism, gender and the war will be discussed later, but first, however, it is important to examine the major role of gender in the workings of the war system.

Although the use of the term 'gender' and its relation to 'sex' are debated questions in the field of feminist scholarship,[7] the term is here used, for the purposes of this study and its scope, to refer to "the many and complex ways in which social differences between the sexes acquire a meaning and become structural factors in the organization of social life" (Braidotti 2002, 286-287). Gender is thus culturally and historically determined, not based on "the physical differences between the sexes" (ibid.), and it is connected to other features of identity such as "racial categorization, ethnic grouping, economic class, age, religion, and sexual orientation – which interact to produce a complex hierarchical system of dominance and subordination" (Davis, Evans and Lorber 2006, 2). This gender system in turn includes "a set of social roles" and "a discourse that gives meaning" to these roles (Higonnet et al. 1987, 4). The term 'roles' emphasizes that the "nature of gender" is "assigned rather than determined" (Scott 1990, 2).

To study war from the perspective of gender means, as Higonnet et al. point out, that war is "understood as a *gendering* activity" which "marks the gender of all members of a society,

[7] See Wendy Cealey Harrison, "The Shadow and the Substance: The Sex/Gender Debate," *Handbook of Gender and Women's Studies*, ed. Kathy Davis, Mary Evans and Judith Lorber (London: Sage, 2006), 35-52.

whether or not they are combatants" (1987, 4, emphasis in the original). In wartime, "the discourse of militarism" reaches all levels of society and all people, relying on "preexisting definitions of gender", but also reforming gender relations (ibid.). A major form of this wartime discourse is government propaganda, the values and ideals of which are transmitted in the popular media (ibid.). According to Goldstein, the discourse regarding the role of gender in war has been remarkably consistent in history: in most cases there are established links between masculinity and the role of the combatant, and femininity and the so-called supportive roles in war (2001, 9, 57).[8] Men have therefore traditionally defined war, and women have been "'affected'" by it (Elshtain 1995, 164); as Elshtain explains, women are "the collective 'other' to the male warrior" (1995, 3-4). This division and polarization in the gender roles of wartime exist, as Higonnet et al. argue, to maintain social stability (1987, 1). Moreover, these assumed roles and divisions between men and women may be considered to uphold the war system itself, and make it possible for war to occur. As Goldstein maintains, "[c]ultures use gender in constructing social roles that enable war" (2001, 251).

The First World War as a war system, which is defined, according to Goldstein, as the interconnected ways a society is organized for war (2001, 3), was no different in terms of ideal gender roles in Britain: distinct roles for men and women were emphasized in the war (Higonnet and Higonnet 1987, 41), and "an essential difference" between these roles, according to Tylee, was that "[w]omen were not combatants" (1990, 253). This division between the roles of men and women was related to the "Victorian ideal of war" about chivalrous young men fighting to save their women and motherland, which was very much alive those days and promoted in official propaganda (Tylee 1990, 252). Furthermore, the Victorian "culture of separate spheres" in the background dictated a "sharp divide" between the feminine and masculine realms of life (Tosh 2005, 109). Consequently, as Grayzel notes, "some of the most traditional elements of the gender

[8] It is important to recognize that today the binary of masculinity and femininity is less often used to alone define 'sex' or 'gender' (Scott 2007, 1-2). I will nevertheless examine only this binary because of its relevance to my analysis of the ideal gender roles of wartime in West's novel.

system became implicated in the maintenance of the war from the beginning" (1999, 6). The message from the state promoted in images of propaganda was that the home, with mainly women and children, and its defence was "the essence of the war", and women became a symbol of the nation (Grayzel 2002, 9-12). They were therefore expected to "'stay out of the way' while men fought" (Braybon and Summerfield 1987, 32-34), and to keep the home fires burning, a popular image in official propaganda. The image of women as weak, vulnerable and in need of protection by strong, heroic men was thus evoked (Tylee 1990, 254).

Men were expected to act for the defence and survival of the nation (Mackay and Thane 1986, 192), and as becomes apparent in *The Return of the Soldier*, "war makes a man" was clearly an idea of the time. Military activity was generally regarded as natural and beneficial for men (Wilkinson 2001, 27), and there was great pressure in society for men to enlist when the war started (Gullace 2002, 37), as it was felt to be their duty. Soldiers were regarded as the heroes of the day (Wilkinson 2001, 26), and the soldier ideal, "Tommy Atkins," as he was called, was considered to be the symbol of fairness, bravery and cheerfulness (Gullace 2002, 36).[9] According to the ideal, he had "the ability to tolerate the appalling filth and stink of the trenches, the relentless noise, and the constant threat of death with stoic good humor, and to allude to it in phlegmatic understatement" (Showalter 1985, 169). Men were expected to repress their emotions (ibid.); they were not supposed to show affection, since that was considered to characterize women (Tosh 2005, 110). In family life, as is also depicted in *The Return of the Soldier*, the man acted as the authority figure to his "inferior[s]", based on "sex, age or class" (Tosh 2005, 107). Acting as head of his family according to the laws of patriarchy, it was also a man's task to protect it in wartime.

What the government and the military saw as ideal type of work for women in wartime was, according to Braybon and Summerfield, "knitting for the troops, or possibly nursing

[9] The image of Tommy Atkins, "the ideal-typical British soldier" was used in war propaganda in order to boost enlistment, and its origins can be found, for example, in Rudyard Kipling's imperial poetry, although the image was further glorified during the First World War (Gullace 2002, 36-37).

them" (1987, 34), which shows the official view on women's roles in war, meant to be supportive and also passive in many cases. Nevertheless, it needs to be recognized that a great number of British women did participate in different types of war work.[10] The term 'home front' was coined during the war to represent the great number of civilians involved in the war effort, which had never happened on such a scale before (Cohen 2002, 3). It is important to point out, however, that industrial war work was not very popular among the upper- and middle-class women (Braybon 1995, 149) which is reflected in West's depiction of women's wartime life in *The Return of the Soldier*, centred on the home and its master. Britain at the time of the war was still "a very rigid class society" (Marwick 1965, 19), and the concept of class greatly influenced how people defined themselves in terms of the war effort (Watson 2004, 4). It was not considered "suitable" for an upper-class woman to do paid work, as the centre of her life was to be marriage (Thompson 1975, 75-76). The ideal role associated with this image was the role of a housewife, which is also portrayed in West's novel, and it derives from "the Victorian ideal of femininity", explained by Dyhouse as an image of women considered to be economically and intellectually dependent, willing to serve and make sacrifices (1981, 2). Women's primary task was to create "an environment . . . in which *men* could live and work" (Dyhouse 1981, 26, emphasis in the original), and so to dedicate their lives to pleasing the male head of the household; to act as "the angel in the house", as in the notorious poem by Coventry Patmore (1854). Indeed, according to Mackay and Thane, "[d]omestic harmony, created and sustained by women, was presented as desirable, even essential, for the defence of Britain", and so "[i]t was a role demanded of women of all classes" (1986, 193).

On the battlefronts, the reality of war turned out to be very different from the ideal images left behind in the homeland. As Leed observes, the First World War showed the might of technology over human beings to all those on the battlefront in the most brutal way (1979, 96-105).

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[10] On women's war work, see Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (London: Croom Helm,1981); Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars* (London: Pandora Press, 1987); Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000).

Trench warfare meant an end to traditional conceptions of war, and thus a redefinition of the soldier's role in this new, immobile environment (Leed 1979, 19, 101). According to Leed, the concepts of "'[c]ourage,' 'honor,' 'self-sacrifice,' [and] 'heroism' now belonged to those distant, 'unreal' worlds outside of the trench system" (1979, 110-111). Soldiers on the battlefronts became victims of technology, enemies turned into fellow sufferers and survival was the key word of the day (Leed 1979, 107). The role of a soldier became thus in Leed's words a "silent sufferer of the will of material" (1979, 111). It is therefore hardly a surprise that mental problems began to appear among soldiers; in fact, Showalter claims that neurotic symptoms resulting from war experiences soon became epidemic in the war (1985, 168).

In *The Return of the Soldier*, the soldier returns home due to "shell shock",[11] which is one of the many names given to war trauma; "the emotional disturbance produced by warfare itself, by chronic conditions of fear, tension, horror, disgust, and grief" (Showalter 1985, 170).[12] Leed finds that it was a way for a soldier to try to reject or refuse his self-destructive role, "a flight from an intolerable, destructive reality through illness" (1979, 112, 164).[13] Contrasted with the masculine ideal discussed earlier, Showalter views shell shock as a sign of rebellion against the war and the ideals of society, an example of male hysteria; "a disguised male protest not only against the war but against the concept of 'manliness' itself" (1985, 172). Before the war, hysteria had been associated with women, and thus Showalter argues that shell shock victims could be viewed as effeminate (1985, 172). The men who suffered from shell shock were in the position normally

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[11] A term coined in 1915 for an article in *The Lancet* by Dr. Charles S. Myers in order to describe the nervous disorders of men at the front, which were first thought to be the symptoms of "a shell bursting at close range" (Showalter 1985, 167). Dr. Myers soon discovered, however, that shells were not the sole cause of the epidemic condition (Showalter 1985, 168).

[12] Other terms for the condition are, for example, "'anxiety neurosis,' 'war strain,' and 'soldier's heart'" (Showalter 1985, 168), "combat neurosis" and "PTSD", i.e. "post-traumatic stress disorder" (Goldstein 2001, 259), a more recent term. Despite being controversial and somewhat misleading, the term "shell shock" nevertheless stuck and became well-known (Showalter 1985, 168). I will use the term in reference to the condition of the soldier in West's novel, as it is used by West, and it is a contemporary term in the context of the novel.

[13] Although war trauma is only discussed by Leed (1979) in reference to male soldiers, it should be noted that such condition is not, in Goldstein's words, "innately gendered", and thus women may similarly suffer from it (2001, 262-263).

assigned to women at the time, as they suffered from weakness and dependency, and showed emotions that were not regarded as masculine in society (Showalter 1985, 169-170, 175). As Watson maintains, what happened on the battlefields was "a theater where definitions of manhood were constantly being enacted", and a soldier who did not succeed in performing well was not only considered a failure to his country, but also to his manliness (2004, 47-48), constructed according to the soldier ideal of the time.

There are different views in studies concerning the way shell shock was generally presented and regarded in British society; for example, Showalter claims that it "elicited angry responses because men were not supposed to show weakness" (1985, 178). However, the military suffered from shortages in manpower, and all soldiers were needed in the ongoing war. It was thus a social obligation to return to the front, undoubtedly supported by the ideals and notions about masculinity and men's proper place in society. As was stated earlier, it was the duty of women to support these military aims set for men, which is a clear theme in *The Return of the Soldier*. The novel represents two interwoven roles of a mother and a nurse in this task. Motherhood was regarded as the most important role for women in wartime, corresponding to the masculine role of a soldier in the war system, and it was the feminine ideal of the time (Grayzel 1999, 2-3, 228).[14] Similarly to what soldiering represented for men, wartime motherhood signified "a gender-specific experience meant to provide social unity and stability during a time of unprecedented upheaval" (Grayzel 1999, 87). Like soldiers in war, mothers had to make sacrifices, since they gave birth to sons, the future defenders of the motherland, which could easily turn out to be fatal at the time, as Gullace maintains (2002, 57). Mothers therefore put their own lives at risk, producing, as Grayzel calls it, "the raw ammunition of war" (1999, 86). In addition, mothers, and women in general, were expected to be willing to send their sons and men to war (ibid.), which was another sacrifice on

[14] Significantly, Mother's Day was first celebrated in Britain during the First World War (Gullace 2002, 63), which can be considered to reflect the major importance of mothers in the war effort.

their part. Women were urged to encourage men to go and fight for their country (Cohen 2002, 5), so that both men and women would embrace their expected roles for the maintenance of the war system. This role of the Spartan mother, "urging men to behave like men, praising the heroes and condemning the cowardly", as Elshtain observes (1995, 121), is hence very different from the image of motherhood associated with pacifism, according to which mothers are the ones to value and preserve life, since they create it, as Ouditt notes (1994, 131, 140). Wartime feminist pacifism and women's dissent linked femininity, and motherhood, with peacefulness, and the opposite, "male or masculine power" with war (Grayzel 1999, 157-158). However, Grayzel observes that the peaceful image of femininity was increasingly challenged by the state forces during the war (1999, 157), as women's roles were felt to be crucial to the war effort.

According to Gullace, the nurturing of soldiers was regarded as "a comparable duty to soldiering" (2002, 63), since taking part in combat was denied from British women during the First World War. In addition to mothers being the nurturers of soldiers, a similar role belonged to nurses, who, as Ouditt notes, were often seen as the "nearest equivalent" to soldiers (1994, 9).[15] Nursing was regarded as a suitable task for a young woman of the middle classes in wartime, as this role did not, in the end, challenge the gender hierarchy of the war system (Watson 2004, 86-87). Similarly to mothering, nursing was thought to be "exclusively and 'naturally'" the type of work that belonged to women (Watson 2004, 60). In fact, VADs[16] in their nursing work were taught to act as Mothers who obey the Father, in other words "the patriarchal nation state" (Ouditt 1994, 9). As Thébaud maintains, the nurse acted as the symbol of devotion, "at once angel of mercy and mother" (1994, 41), and Goldstein too views nurses as "surrogate mothers" (2001, 312). Motherhood is thus clearly associated with the role of the nurse, which becomes clear in the portrayal of Margaret in *The*

[15] Unlike soldiers, however, nurses did not enjoy an official status in the military hierarchy during the First World War (Watson 2004, 71, 76). Trained or untrained, nurse's role was therefore, despite the near correspondence, clearly unequal to the role of the soldier, as Watson maintains in reference to VADs (2004, 87).
[16] VAD nurses worked as volunteers with no professional training in nursing, and they usually came from well-to-do families (Watson 2004, 7).

Return of the Soldier, who may be viewed to both mother and nurse the traumatized soldier. Significantly, nurses were associated with the Holy Mother in propaganda in order to encourage women in the task (Ouditt 1994, 19-20). This offers evidence for the empowerment associated with the role; indeed, the nurse is responsible for, and thus has authority over her patient, who is dependent on her care. Thébaud thus argues that many soldiers in the First World War "felt humiliated and infantilized by the rather aloof women who cared for them like children, saw all their weaknesses, and in the end sent them back to the front" (1994, 41-42). This illustrates the ambiguous nature of the roles of both mothers and nurses in wartime: in addition to life-giving in their role as nurturers, they had to take part in life-taking, as their care led the soldier-patient back into the war. Indeed, Higonnet observes the irony in a woman's life-giving role in wartime, naming it death-dealing (1993, 196), which is indeed what this role is shown to lead into in West's novel, as will be explored in the analysis. West, however, was not the only writer to offer an ambiguous picture of the war and its roles, and so the various perspectives to the war, found in literature, will be discussed next.

2.2 Two Fronts in Literature

I will now turn to the vast field of the British literature of the First World War and its connection to British literary Modernism, and examine the literary context of West's novel. This offers significant insights into how the novel may be placed in these fields, and more importantly, how it reflects some of the ideas of its time but also contrasts with many of them, and thus provides the important literary background for understanding the novel's ambiguous views. Due to my focus on West's novel, I will especially discuss wartime writing which reflects the conditions and restrictions of the British home front. However, I will begin by briefly discussing the wider literary context of the novel, and explore the diversity of the literature of the First World War, often mentioned only in reference to the writing of soldiers. This reveals the diverse viewpoints of those who experienced

the war on or near the battlefronts and at home, and demonstrates how the war was both supported and criticized. Firstly, I will introduce some of the more well-known works of prominent British male war writers with an emphasis on wartime fiction and canonical texts. This is followed by a more detailed discussion of similar war writing by women, moving from memoirs and wartime fiction often regarded as more supportive of the war to those novels of wartime that had a more critical view of it, including, as I will argue, West's *The Return of the Soldier*. This discussion will be then linked with British literary Modernism and the war, and modernist war writers, in order to locate West among them. Finally, I will examine some of the narrative strategies of modernist writing which are used in West's novel, and which form the theoretical background for the second part of the analysis. The seeming endlessness of the war and an uncertain, feminine viewpoint will be in focus in the analysis, and thus I will here discuss unreliable narration and the absence of linearity and a proper closure as modernist narrative strategies which can be linked to the experience of the war. As will be argued in the analysis, these elements underline the ambiguous anti-war sentiment in West's novel, and reflect its wartime context, which will now be examined from the viewpoint of literature.

In contrast to the critical picture of the war in *The Return of the Soldier*, most of what was published during the war years supported the war or regarded it as necessary, as Potter maintains (2005, 3). Many well-known writers wrote pro-war propaganda, including H.G. Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle, Thomas Hardy (Hynes 1992, 26) and Mary Ward, known as Mrs Humphry Ward, whom Tylee identifies as the most well-known female propaganda writer (1990, 67). Yet, opposition to the war occurred throughout the war years, although emergency legislation in the form of the Defence of the Realm Act, or DORA, as it was often called, was introduced at the beginning of the war in 1914, as Hynes confirms (1992, 78), to enforce strict political censorship (Tylee 1990, 252). The act was developed throughout the war, and by 1916 "any expression of

opposition to, or criticism of, the war in any art form . . . had become a criminal offence" (Hynes 1992, 78-80).

From early 1915 onward, war novels began to be published in increasing numbers, and many of them were adventure stories for boys, also read by adults, which usually followed the same pattern of battles between heroes and villains, won by the British (Hynes 1992, 43-44). Warfare had to be shown in a positive light to encourage both soldiers and civilians in the war effort, a good example of which is *The First Hundred Thousand* (1915) by Ian Hay (Ian Hay Beith), a partly fictitious novel about a battalion in Kitchener's volunteer army (Fussell 1975, 28). Other such early popular male war writers of the time were John Buchan, and Herman Cyril McNeile who wrote under the pseudonym Sapper (Potter 2005, 58). During the war, trench experiences, and so a first-hand account of the war, came to be privileged in war writing (Buck 2005, 87). Yet, novels about non-combatant experiences by male authors also appeared in the war years, such as H.G. Well's *Mr Britling Sees It Through* (1916), which tells the story of the protagonist's growing disillusionment on the home front (Hynes 1992, 130-131), and Arnold Bennet's *The Pretty Lady* (1918), which also deals with the home front experiences of British civilians (Hynes 1992, 229).

However, the real "war-books 'boom'" came long after the war, defined by Tylee as the years between 1928 and 1933 (1990, 189). This was the heyday for war memoirs (Tylee 1990, 187), a major war genre together with autobiography, well-known examples of which are Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1928), Robert Graves's *Good-bye to All That* (1929) and Siegfried Sassoon's trilogy, *The Memoirs of George Sherston* (1928, 1930 and 1936). As Tylee elaborates, "[t]hey were memoirs written by young men with experience of the front-line, to correct the official military histories written by the old men, either generals well behind the lines, or elderly civilians at home" (1990, 15). These became canonized, major works of the literature of the First World War, along with post-war novels, such as Frederic Manning's *Her Privates We* (1929), Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* (1929), and Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End* (1924-1928) which,

according to Bergonzi, shows some of the central themes of the literature of the First World War (1980, 176), at least in terms of war writing by male writers: nostalgia for rural England, connected to an anguish over the loss of English tradition, the rejection of the traditional hero image, and a sense of alienation between the soldier and the civilian (ibid.). The last two themes can be found in West's novel, written much earlier than these widely acclaimed works of war literature.

Much of the post-war prose was published by those who had been war poets and survived the war (Bergonzi 1980, 146), including Graves, Blunden and Sassoon. Other well-known war poets, generally regarded as "representative[s] of the war experience in popular belief", as MacCallum-Stewart defines them (2006, 78), are Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg, all of whom did not survive the war (Bergonzi 1980, 37, 65), and Ivor Gurney, who survived, but suffered from mental problems the rest of his life (Bergonzi 1980, 88-89).[17] A common aim of the war poets was to "'tell the truth about war'" (Bergonzi 1980, 199), which, since then, has become the dominating view. The official "story of the First World War in England" has therefore become the trench experience of a disillusioned infantry soldier, an image of the war which has lasted to this day, as Watson maintains (2004, 1-2). It has to be recognized, nevertheless, that the horrors of the trenches represent the war experiences of those who were at the battlefront, not all people, and so the works of the war poets and the post-war prose mentioned earlier offer in Smith's words "an unrepresentative record of the impact of the war" (2000, 3), ignoring a large part of the population who also experienced the war, although in a different way.

Despite being less well-known, women contributed to war writing extensively, and offered different viewpoints on the war. Narratives based on actual war experiences were written also by women, and, as Potter maintains, many women's war-memoirs were published in the war

[17] As Buck notes, "the preeminent genre" in women's writing during the war was poetry (2005, 88-89). Among the numerous, but less widely-known British female war poets are, for example, May Wedderburn Cannan, Alice Meynell and Jessie Pope. For more on women's war poetry of the First World War, see Nosheen Khan, *Women's Poetry of the First World War* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988).

years and shortly after (2005, 153-154). They recount, for example, nursing experiences, such as Kate Finzi's *Eighteen Months in the War Zone* (1916) and Olive Dent's *A V.A.D. in France* (1917), early war-memoirs which represent the values of the national culture at the time, and treat the war as a horrific, but liberating adventure (Buck 2005, 100-101). Indeed, Tylee notes that women who had been previously confined to the private sphere of life could feel the war as liberation from such limitations and saw the opportunity of war work as an adventure (1990, 253). This was not, however, a view of the war shared by all women in war work; for example, Enid Bagnold's more well-known memoir of 1918, *A Diary Without Dates: Thoughts and Impressions of a V.A.D.*, does not portray such excitement of the war (Tylee 1990, 190). Nevertheless, according to Tylee, the late 1920s and early 1930s may be considered as "the milestone for women's autobiographies and fictionalized war-memoirs" (Tylee 1990, 188), coinciding with, and contributing to, the "war-books boom" mentioned earlier. One of the most well-know autobiographies of the time is Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* (1933), often regarded as "the icon text of women's involvement in the Great War" (Smith 1995, 177), in which she recounts her experiences of the war years as a VAD nurse. Brittain presents a woman's account of the war years as an alternative to the more commonly known combatant experience (Buck 2005, 105). Similar responses to male war writing are, for example, *The Forbidden Zone* (1929) by English-American writer Mary Borden and *Not So Quiet. . :Stepdaughters of War* (1930) by Helen Zenna Smith (a pen-name of Evadne Price), both of which also focus on the woman war worker (Buck 2005, 105). Potter nevertheless claims that Brittain symbolizes the "'woman's voice'" of the war years to "the general reader" (2005, 1), belonging to the group of canonical post-war writers whose texts in MacCallum-Stewart's view are "recognized as the definitive representation of war, forcing out other texts with a different tale to tell" (2006, 83).

Although powerful, Brittain's voice is not the only one, as there are numerous other female writers who wrote about the First World War from various perspectives, also during the war.

Among early wartime writers who may be regarded to convey patriotic sentiment, May Sinclair was a prolific novelist (Buck 2005, 102); her memoir, *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium* (1915) depicts, according to Hynes, a woman's role in war as humiliating (1992, 93-94). Hynes claims that such feelings of inferiority, and even guilt for being alive, can be found in the texts of many female war writers (1992, 379). Tylee identifies clear patriotism in one of Sinclair's war novels, *The Tree of Heaven* (1917), which was successful in wartime, but forgotten after the war ended (1990, 131). The same fate faced another popular war novel, Cicely Hamilton's *William – an Englishman* (1919), in which the non-combatant male protagonist becomes a true patriot (Tylee 1990, 134, 141), and the war strengthens him; according to MacCallum-Stewart, this is a common theme in early war fiction (2006, 81), which contrasts with the critical view of the war as a cause of trauma and despair in West's wartime novel. What reached the biggest readership in wartime were nevertheless "romantic tales and detective thrillers that may or may not have had war as a backdrop", as Potter notes, written by both men and women (2005, 89-90). Among the numerous examples of what Potter terms "'light fiction'" (2005, 90) published during the war, a label which can also be used to characterize West's *The Return of the Soldier*,[18] Berta Ruck's *Khaki and Kisses* (1915), for example, represents "a series of delightful love stories closely associated with the Great War", as is stated on the novel's cover (Potter 2005, 101-103). Similarly patriotic, Ruby M. Ayres's *Richard Chatterton, V.C.* (1915) deals with English masculinity, associated with "virility and heroism" (Potter 2005, 112). According to Potter, such wartime romantic novels were "vehicles for the dissemination of patriotic ideals and models of appropriate wartime behaviour", and furthermore, they answered "to a need in the reading public for reassurance" (Potter 2005, 91, 148). This may be seen as a general aim of all works of pro-war propaganda, in which wartime fiction played a great part, as is witnessed here. West's novel, however, may be considered to contradict those conventions.

[18] West's novel tells a wartime love-story, and thus it may be considered to represent this genre.

Although women came to symbolize enthusiasm for the war in the British wartime society (Buck 2005, 87), there were women who opposed the war, and who also wrote about it. Whereas the anti-war view became dominant after the war (Khan 1988, 5), witnessed in many post-war memoirs and novels mentioned earlier, many women writers challenged the dominant, favourable views about the war from early on even with the threat of DORA against them. Mary Agnes Hamilton's *Dead Yesterday* (1916) and Rose Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916) are often mentioned in this context. Hamilton's *Dead Yesterday* tells the story of a wartime couple whose engagement is challenged by their different reactions to the war effort. The novel portrays the enthusiasm that greeted the war at its beginning, and the feelings of realization of the war's horrors from a woman's viewpoint on the home front. Hamilton's novel may be regarded as pacifist, similarly to Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and Others*, which also concentrates on the female protagonist's awakening to the horrors of war, linked, like in Hamilton's novel, with elements of romance and feelings of grief and loss. In Tylee's view, both writers attempted to twist the conventions of romance novels for the use of "serious cultural comment" to oppose "both political complacency and jingoism" (1990, 108). Although perhaps less discussed in this context, West's *The Return of the Soldier* may also be considered to protest against the war in the form of a romantic story, which similarly focuses on the narrator's realization of the war's horrors, but arguably West's anti-war sentiment is more oblique than in the novels of Hamilton and Macaulay. Moreover, Hynes observes that Macaulay's novel is situated in the middle of the war, and depicts it as "meaningless, destructive, and apparently endless" (1992, 127), which is also how wartime is portrayed in West's *The Return of the Soldier*, published later, in 1918, but the events of which are situated in 1916.[19] An ending to the war is not envisioned in Hamilton's novel either, but despite their critique of the war effort, none of these writers were accused of violating the DORA, as Buck maintains (2005, 102).

[19] West herself has noted that the novel was more or less complete already in 1915 (quoted in Smith 2000, 171).

Similarly to Hamilton and Macaulay, West portrays the war from the perspective of the British home front in *The Return of the Soldier*; as Tylee points out, "[t]he battlefront is not the only theatre of war", and the war was greatly impacted by what happened on the home front (1990, 188). Indeed, the novel may be regarded as an example of home front fiction of wartime, a category in which women's war writings dominate, as Cohen (2002, 2) points out. According to Cohen, this subgenre enabled women "in the throes of crisis to create new paradigms for war writing", defying the limitations of genre "to write new kinds of war stories, ones that labels cannot so easily summarize" (2002, 2-3).Whereas many home front novels conformed to the "dominant ideologies" of the time (Cohen 2002, 5), and thus did not question the war, other authors, such as Macaulay, West, and I would add Hamilton, challenged these ideas and raised questions, as Cohen notes, "about how the war should be viewed from the particular position of women" (2002, 9). This question is also relevant in regard to modernist writing, which is closely connected to the First World War, as will be illustrated below.

The experience of the war had an influence on the styles and strategies of writing (Smith 2000, 2), contributing to the further development of "Modernism", which is, according to Childs, "variously argued to be a period, style, genre, or combination of these" (2000, 12). Due to the scope and focus of this thesis, the term is here used to refer to a movement in literature, although present also in other forms of art, known especially "for its experimentation, its complexity, its formalism, and for its attempt to create a 'tradition of the new'", which developed roughly during the period of 1890-1930 (Childs 2000, 14, 18).[20] Reacting against the dominance of realism, modernist writers developed new ways of depicting "reality and the world", and Modernism may be regarded as a response to various upheavals, including the First World War,

[20] It has to be noted that "Modernism" is a debated term, and the definition of its beginning and end is also problematic (Childs 2000, 4, 14). Since the 1960s it has in fact become more common to refer to "Modernisms" to indicate that it is more than the "white, male, heterosexist, Euroamerican middle-class" tradition (Childs 2000, 12), often associated with the term.

representing "a literature of not just change but crisis" (Childs 2000, 3, 14, 20). Hence, Linett observes that the First World War "was one important factor in the larger atmosphere of change that marked the modernist period" (2010, 6). Tylee claims that whereas some modernist writers did not seem to deal with war in their works, war experiences influenced others, including Rose Macaulay, Virginia Woolf, and I would add Rebecca West, to develop "modernist strategies", and treat war as their principal subject matter (2007, 519). Hynes finds that war writing and Modernism are in fact closely related, and this is witnessed, in his view, especially in the modernist writing of the late 1920s (1992, 458). Booth, on the other hand, studies "how what soldiers said of the Great War has become part of what modernism is" (1996, 17). Indeed, Smith suggests that "[f]ormal and stylistic experimentation turns up in unexpected places, and not only in the publications which were *self-consciously* avant-garde" (2000, 6, emphasis in the original). She further observes that a great deal of war writing, even that which deals directly with war experiences, shows "elements of stylistic change", as it was difficult to convey these experiences in "conventional language" (2000, 5-6).

Furthermore, Smith finds that women writers were "metaphoric foreigners in the male-dominated literary landscape" of the time, and so they often explored "new ways to express their experience and identity" by creating modernisms of their own, "connected with, yet different from, those of Eliot, Pound, Joyce and Lawrence" (2000, 161). In Smith's view, West is among those who represent "female modernisms", "a modernism from a female perspective" (2000, 179). Similarly, DeKoven emphasizes "the centrality of femininity [sic]" in Modernism due to the advances of feminism at the time (1999, 174-175),[21] witnessed in the depiction of war in *The Return of the Soldier*, and in other modernist works dealing with war such as in Katherine Mansfield's short

[21] DeKoven refers to "the first wave of feminism" (1999, 174), a central issue of which was women's suffrage. As Hynes maintains, Rebecca West was also "an active Suffragist", and he further notes that West's work during the first stages of her career "shows the feminist spirit of that time very clearly" (1983, x), also witnessed in *The Return of the Soldier*. For West's early journalism, see *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebeccca West 1911-1917*, ed. Jane Marcus (London: Virago Press, 1983).

story "An Indiscreet Journey" (1915) and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922) and *Mrs Dalloway* (1926) (Buck 2005, 103).

West's novel, in fact, may be considered to give a critical picture of the war by studying some of its narrative conventions, and more specifically the modernist narrative strategies employed in the novel. According to Hynes, "a new, wartime, opposing art" developed during the war which "put the innovations of pre-war Modern movements to new uses" in order to express the war accurately, and to protest against it and the society behind the war (1992, 166). As Tylee observes, many writers opposed the official rhetoric of the war, and Modernism in essence was against it, as the movement was internationalist, and thus "in direct conflict with the close-minded nationalism promoted by wartime governments" (2007, 519-520).[22] Tylee suggests that women writers challenged the war system with their "feminist modernist aesthetics", and used "modernist strategies, such as irony, obliquity, and ambiguity" in order to avoid censorship (2007, 520). Moreover, modernist writers rejected such realist conventions as linear and omniscient narration and in Childs's words, "the tying up of all narrative strands, or 'closure'" (2000, 22), which can be found in West's novel, and will now be examined as examples of modernist narrative technique influenced by the war and questions of gender.

As reality seemed, in the words of Stevenson, "increasingly shapeless and fragmentary" in the early 20th century, styles and structures of writing were reshaped, since the world "lacked the kind of substance on which the order and significance of fiction had conventionally been founded" (1992, 163). One such conventional structure was the linear depiction of time, typical of realism, which reflected, according to Booth, "the notion of progress" of the 19th century, "time that moves steadily forward and morally upward" (1996, 104). History progressed

[22] During the war Modernism was in fact attacked as a foreign, German influence, and viewed in a negative light in politics and the media in Britain (Hynes 1992, 58-59).

with linear movement in Victorian thought (Murphy 2001, 17),[23] which was reflected in the writing of the time. However, modernists opposed linear, chronologically moving narratives (Stevenson 1992, 87), since in their view "linear chronologies were false representations of the way in which life was actually experienced" (Booth 1996, 111). Moreover, the war had a profound impact on the notion of time: Stevenson claims that "[t]he war not only destroyed ideas of progress, but almost the idea of history itself, certainly as a coherent 'course'" (1992, 142). As was noted earlier, the First World War turned out to be an immobile war, deadlocked and seemingly endless, and therefore, as Booth maintains, it challenged the idea of moving forward (1996, 105). In West's novel, wartime is portrayed as cyclical, and this notion of time became, in fact, "a frequent Modernist stylistic device"[24] (Childs 2000, 59), regarded as a more satisfying representation of reality by many modernist writers (Williams 2002, 2).

In Victorian fiction, uncertainties in the story were resolved with a clear closure, which was often marriage or death (Stevenson 1992, 152). However, as a part of their quest for more life-like narratives, which convey reality more truthfully, modernist writers often left endings open and uncertain, as Stevenson maintains (1992, 152). The war in fact posed "a narrative problem" to many writers (Hynes 1992, 126). As Hynes explains, "[f]iction conventionally moves through time and through problems to resolutions; but how could one represent the war in such terms when one was in the middle of it, at a point of lost momentum and lost conviction, with no end in sight?" (ibid.). Moreover, Booth observes that war defies closure; this was witnessed in the armistice, which was thought and meant to be the closure to the First World War, although in reality war deaths and trauma did not cease to occur after it; "war's psychological repercussions" have no

[23] This idea of the linear movement of time derives from a Christian belief, according to which events "follow a one-way progression through time" from a "definitive beginning" to the final conclusion, the Last Judgement (Murphy 2001, 17).

[24] Childs mentions that such notion of time is found in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939), and in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* (1938) (2000, 8, 60). According to Childs, repetition was in fact one of Beckett's favourite techniques he used in his writing (2000, 8). Williams, on the other hand, studies the cyclical notion of history in the writing of Ford, D. H. Lawrence, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound and T.E. Hulme (2002, 3).

clear ending (1996, 109-110). *The Return of the Soldier* does not offer a proper closure and conveys how the destructive cycle of war repeats itself endlessly. This "middle-of-the-war ending", as Hynes calls it (1992, 204), reflects the feeling of uncertainty, typically found in modernist writing, as Childs notes (2000, 147-148), which also marks wartime experience, when the war's end was nowhere to be seen.

According to Booth, modernists also favoured nonlinear narratives in order to interpret "the contents of consciousness rather than the flow of external events" (1996, 119). Distanced from the actual battles, especially civilian modernist writers focused on "the *internal* by inventing narrative structures that could mimick the particles of which they imagined consciousness to be composed" (ibid., emphasis in the original). Narrative omniscience was a key feature of 19th-century realism (Childs 2000, 74), "an authorial voice which speaks from a position aloof from the events it reports", as Stevenson notes (1992, 21); modernists, on the other hand, drew attention to the "inner consciousness, intense perception and the nature of individual vision" (ibid.), and as Booth observes, blurred the line between fact and fiction (1996, 81). Childs mentions Henry James[25] who further developed James Joyce's technique of "chanelling the narrative through the perceptions of one character", which precedes "the stream-of-consciousness technique" of later modernist works (2000, 75). Such is the narration in *The Return of the Soldier*, in which Jenny offers her clearly limited viewpoint on wartime and the events in the novel. Furthermore, the narration in West's novel resembles Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915), the narrator of which is in Stevenson's view "[s]elf-contradictory, frequently biased and jealous, and often ruled by unconscious desires he seeks to ignore . . . an excellent example of an unreliable narrator" (1992, 26). Childs defines this type of a narrator as "a narrator who does not properly comprehend the world and whose judgements the reader mistrusts" (2000, 212), and as Stevenson notes, who

[25] Childs claims that West was among the first writers to fully employ James's psychological realism in her work (2000, 178), whereas Wachman finds a "Jamesian narrative technique" (2001, 123) central to the *The Return of the Soldier*.

"enforce[s] a sceptical scrutiny of the means through which a story is told, as much as of what is told within it" (1992, 26). Stevenson further points out that such a narrator is often considered a distinctive feature of modern fiction, and it reveals "an epistemological doubt, an uncertainty about how completely or truthfully the world can be known or communicated through any individual's idiosyncratic vision of it" (1992, 26-27).

Unreliable narration may hence be regarded to reflect what Stevenson describes as "a sense of increased unreliability and uncertainty in the means by which reality is apprehended in thought" which characterizes early 20th century (1992, 11). A major "shock to religious and moral certainty" was the war, which was reflected in narrative omniscience, not often used in the fiction of the early years of the 20th century (Stevenson 1992, 68-69). This lack of omniscience mirrored, in Stevenson's view, that the belief in "an omniscient deity" was disappearing, and individual life was determined more and more by "subjective vision" (1992, 69).[26] Booth notes that the war in its unprecedented magnitude and catastrophic effects, the chaos, confusion and the stress it created, made it impossible to provide "the kind of objective certainty we demand of ordinary fact-finding every single day" (1996, 87). From the perspective of the home front, the war also blurred the categories of objective truth and certainty, as wartime propaganda was used to impose the official ideas and ideals of the war system on people, and hence what was "real" was obscured. Thus, as Stevenson observes, "[i]n an age of destroyed beliefs and dismantled certainties . . . modernism inevitably examined more deeply the contents and consciousness of individual souls as the only remaining 'clue to the universe'" (1992, 71).

In *The Return of the Soldier*, the consciousness through which the madness of the war is revealed belongs to a female narrator whose viewpoint of "the other" in wartime is presented to

[26] According to Stevenson, scientific development at least partly replaced the need for religious faith as a provider of order and authority in the late Victorian era; in the early twentieth century, however, even science emphasized "its own limitations and ultimate uncertainties" (1992, 70), and the war with mass death and destruction surely contributed to a loss of faith in scientific advances as well. Consequently, authority began to be transferred to the individual.

expose the harsh demands of the war system. Modernist writing often depicts reality as "alienating and oppressing" (Childs 2000, 7-8) in which the modern protagonists are often "isolated . . . outsiders in a confusing world" (Stevenson 1992, 146), which applies to the central character, the narrator and focalizer Jenny, in West's novel. The state of exile of women in a male-dominated society was recognized by Virginia Woolf (Stevenson 1992,187) who regarded the outsider's position as empowering for the refusal of "male society and its values", such as militarism (DuPlessis 1985, 40). As Stevenson points out, "[b]eing partly outside a culture, alien and critical[27] . . . can encourage productive re-examination and reconstruction of that culture's conventional forms and styles" (1992, 188), and in the case of West's novel, dominant cultural ideals. Indeed, Linett notes that many modernist writers searched for ways to "view themselves outside the parameters of patriarchy" (2010, 3), which was reflected in their writing. For example, Childs notes that Dorothy Richardson considered realism to be masculine, which she wished to oppose by creating a distinctively feminine form of prose (2000, 78). Her counterpart Woolf, a female writer "most commonly associated with modernist experimentation in English fiction in the early twentieth century" alongside Richardson, had similar views; both of these modernists wanted to "rethink the world" with their feminine forms of writing (Pykett 1995, 75). In addition, Hynes notes that Woolf's literary circle Bloomsbury was ardent in its opposition to the war (1992, 84): Woolf saw a link between feminism and anti-militarism, and regarded the war as "an outrageous display of masculine pomposity" (Ouditt 1994, 171). Likewise, war-making is depicted as masculine and connected to patriarchy in West's narrative, which uses the awakening of the female narrator to "rethink the world" and expose and question the tragic demands of the man-made war. This will be more thoroughly explored in the second part of the analysis, but first, however, I will concentrate on the novel's treatment of the ideal gender roles of wartime, which will form the first part of my analysis of West's ambiguous anti-war sentiment.

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[27] Stevenson borrows here the words of Virginia Woolf from *A Room of One's Own* (1929) (1992, 187).

3. Endless Catastrophe and the Desire for Peace: Roles of Gender and Modernism on the Home Front

I will now turn to analyze West's *The Return of the Soldier*, and focus on the anti-war sentiment in the context of the First World War which may be found in the novel. I will argue that ambiguous criticism of the war and a preference for peace becomes visible firstly in the novel's depiction of the ideal gender roles of wartime, and secondly, in the modernist narrative techniques used in the novel. The ideal gender roles are portrayed as cruel, inescapable duties of the war system which cause trauma and suffering, as they only help to maintain the death and destruction of the war. Moreover, I will argue that the portrayal of the supportive female roles implies pacifist values of love and peace, which are contrasted with the dominant values of violence and bellicosity of the war system. The modernist narrative techniques, in turn, may be viewed to present anti-war sentiment firstly by reflecting the apparent endlessness of the war and the resulting despair with the absence of a proper conclusion and linearity in the story; the cyclical depiction of time forms a destructive cycle of war to mirror the seemingly endless, catastrophic nature of the war. Secondly, the novel focuses on the mind and viewpoint of an unreliable female narrator: she conveys the tragedies, uncertainty and trauma created by the man-made disaster, which the war has become in her mind. Moreover, the narrator views the war from the perspective of a female outsider, whose developing view of the war implies a preference for peace. As these two sections will aim to demonstrate, even if *The Return of the Soldier* may not be regarded as an evident example of the anti-war novel, possibly due to the restrictions of the DORA at the time, oblique and ambiguous anti-war sentiment can be found in the novel. This is witnessed in both gender depiction and modernist techniques, as will be discussed below. For the sake of brevity and clarity, I will refer to the novel with the abbreviation RS in the following analysis.

3.1 Doomed Duties to King and Country

I will begin my analysis of West's novel by examining how the portrayal of the ideal gender roles of wartime may be argued to form a critical picture of the war and the society which is organized behind it, that is, the war system. I will argue that the roles of a housewife, soldier, mother and nurse in the home front context of the novel are portrayed as duties which only lead to sorrow, trauma and suffering, since the destructive war is enabled to continue. The war is thus depicted as an endless catastrophe, fed by the society's gender ideals, which gives evidence of the critical picture of the war in West's novel. As opposed to this disastrous world of the war, the values of love and peace are implied and indirectly supported in the depiction of women in nurturing and life-giving roles. This reflects pacifist values in the novel and further demonstrates its anti-war view. First, I will discuss how the role of the housewife represents the society behind the war which West criticizes in the novel, depicted as bellicose and ignorant bourgeois culture which mindlessly supports the disaster of the war. Related to this traditional female role is the part assigned to men as heads and protectors of the family, and thus I will next analyze the soldier in the story, who wishes to escape his expected duties and reject the reality of war. I find this to criticize the ideal role of a man in society, and in this way also the war system, which demands this role and enforces men to the deathly battlefronts. Finally, the roles of the mother and the nurse are shown to represent, on one hand, the power of a woman's life-giving role and its connection to peace, which implies feminist pacifist ideas; on the other, these female roles are viewed critically as parts of the war system, which only support the continuance of the war by sending the soldier back into the world of suffering and a possible death.

The Return of the Soldier begins and ends with the words of Kitty Baldry, first and foremost the wife of Christopher Baldry, the soldier-figure in the story, which reflects her significant role in the novel. Kitty may be read to epitomize the highly class-conscious, bourgeois society of the early 20th-century Britain. She represents what MacKay describes as "complacent and

class-bound *belle époque* gentility" (2003, 131, emphasis in the original), which is portrayed in the novel as a society of pretence, and more significantly, as a society behind the war. Kitty's part in life follows the Victorian ideal of femininity as the "sweet and obedient and alert" (RS, 69) housewife, the angel in "the magnificence of Baldry Court" (RS, 90). Indeed, she has been "'[a]ll that a wife should be'" (RS, 71) to her husband during the ten years of their marriage according to Jenny, her husband's cousin who lives with them. Jenny describes their life at Baldry Court as "our performance" which has always been "so brilliantly adequate" (RS, 52), and later on in the novel she calls it "our pretence" (RS, 90). This gives a picture of this society as pretentious, focused on maintaining the established order and ideals. Accordingly, Kitty's husband Chris is the centre of her life, a shared duty with Jenny, as Jenny notes how "nothing could ever really become a part of our life until it had been referred to Chris's attention" (RS, 52). As was stated earlier, according to the norms of the time, women were expected to regard the interests of men above their own, and to serve and sacrifice for the well-being of men in the family (Dyhouse 1981, 26); both Kitty and Jenny are shown to fulfill this role as "the servants of his desire" (RS, 90). In addition, Kitty represents the bourgeois mentality with her lavish lifestyle and materialism, her "costly clothes and . . . a costly life" (RS, 90), and Jenny even thinks that "[t]he whole truth about us lies in our material seeming" (RS, 98). Thompson notes that in contrast to the poverty of the lower classes, "the open display of wealth" was typical of the upper-class lifestyle during the Edwardian era (1975, 11), and as an embodiment of this, Kitty "looked so like a girl on a magazine cover that one expected to find a large '7d.' somewhere attached to her person" (RS, 47-48). This illustrates that she serves as the ideal woman according to the standards of the society, suitable to appear on the cover of a magazine as an example and an object of admiration to others. Therefore, she may be considered to represent the society itself from the perspective of its ideals. To further illustrate this, her face is described to look "like a mirror hung opposite a window" (RS, 105), reflecting the world outside. It is the wartime Britain of 1916 that the mirror reflects, and thus Kitty may be associated with the ideal

values of the British home front, and so the war system; in other words, the British society organized for the war effort, which is a target of West's criticism in the novel.

Edmundson observes that Kitty may be viewed "as Rebecca West's home front equivalent to British militarism during the First World War and the unforgiving, masculinist mindset that led England into war" (2008, 493). Indeed, Kitty's words with which the novel begins reveal much about the values she prefers which are in accordance with the official line of the war system. This is how she replies to Jenny's desire for news from Chris:

> "Ah, don't begin to fuss!' wailed Kitty. "If a woman began to worry in these days because her husband hadn't written to her for a fortnight—! Besides, if he'd been anywhere interesting, anywhere where the fighting was really hot, he'd have found some way of telling me instead of just leaving it as 'Somewhere in France.' He'll be alright." (RS, 47)

While Kitty commands Jenny not to worry about Chris, and so the war, she also suggests that this is expected of all women "these days", referring to wartime. She implies that the war is the business of men, and it is the task of women to stay out of the way and not to be troubled, as was officially considered to be the part of women in the war, mentioned earlier. As she again almost commands that Chris will cope on the battlefront, she implies that Chris is where he is supposed to be, dictated by the rules of society, the rules guarded by Kitty. She thus confirms the society's ideals regarding men and women's roles in wartime. These were, as was stated in section 2.1, that women were seen as "the collective 'other' to the male warrior" (Elshtain 1995, 3-4) in the war system, meant to keep the home fires burning while the men as soldier-heroes were fighting to protect them and the motherland. This ensured the stability of the patriarchal order of society, clearly favoured by Kitty, and therefore the maintenance of the war. This is further illustrated in the fact that "a little globe of ease" (RS, 49) is described to always surround Kitty; she is presented to be content with the contemporary ways of the world, dependent on her husband now gone to war, as is expected of both of them. Moreover, Kitty's words above reflect her image of the war in which a fierce battle is "interesting", a positive experience, instead of being associated with more negative characteristics.

This highlights the fact, noted earlier, that people on the home front did not necessarily realize the horrors of the war, often due to pro-war propaganda, which also meant that the war effort was more readily supported.

Kitty's strict sense of order in the house may be considered to further illustrate her bellicose character, which is even "despotic" in Edmundson's view (2008, 492), exemplified by the quotation above where she orders Jenny to stop being sentimental about Chris's absence. Moreover, Kitty organizes "a savage raid of domestic efficiency" (RS, 63) in the house before Chris returns from the front, which "made the housemaids cry because the brass handles of the tallboys were not bright enough and because there was only a ten to one instead of a hundred to one risk of breaking a leg on the parquet" (ibid.). In addition to her possible nervousness due to Chris's altered condition, her ruthless sense of order becomes apparent here, which reflects the novel's critical view of the order of the war system. The word "raid" is significant, being a term also used in military contexts, here associated with her strict actions in the house. Moreover, Edmundson observes that Kitty's voice is depicted to sound like "an artillery shell" (2008, 492) in the scene where she confronts Margaret, Chris's former sweetheart, for the first time: "[s]he shrilled a little before she came to the end" (RS, 57). Jenny thus remarks, "I hoped that Kitty would let her go without *scarring* her too much with words" (RS, 56, emphasis added) which is another reference to her violent, war-related character, also observed by Edmundson (2008, 493). Likewise, when Chris returns from the front, he is described to stand before Kitty "slightly bent, as though he had been maimed" (RS, 64), as if Kitty's presence makes him physically wounded, although just before seeing her he had "stood humming happily through his teeth" (ibid.) without any sign of physical injury. This wounding effect of Kitty on her husband implies her role in his return to the war, which she is eager to see, as it is the role he is expected to take in the war system. The role ensures that the war and the current order in society, which Kitty supports, will prevail. As Gullace notes, "sexual hierarchy", that is,

patriarchal order, could only be maintained in the minds of patriotic women by "men willing to volunteer for the front" (2002, 44).

The ideal role of a man was to act as the "sustainer and protector of family dependants" (Tosh 2005, 132), and so of society: Chris is told to have been this quintessential Englishman, the typical "English husband " (RS, 98) in his life before the war. To Kitty and Jenny, he is "our splendid Chris" (RS, 110), "a flag flying from our tower" (RS, 116), and thus clearly the perfect husband and man in their eyes, and so in the eyes of the society. His possessions are the two women in his family and their home Baldry Court, "the impregnable fortress of a gracious life" (RS, 92) in which everything is in order. Ouditt finds Baldry Court a "bastion of class and social values" (1994, 110) – values that Kitty epitomizes, and indeed, it mostly "bore the marks of Kitty's genius" (RS, 79). In Jenny's view, "[t]his house, this life with us, was the core of his heart" (RS, 51), referring to Chris, which reflects the Victorian ideal of masculinity, associated with domesticity. In fact, Chris's past is presented as a life mainly dedicated to fulfilling this ideal: "[f]irst of all, at his father's death he had been obliged to take over a business that was weighted by the needs of a mob of female relatives. . . . Then Kitty had come along and picked up his conception of normal expenditure and carelessly stretched it" (RS, 51-52). Whereas this shows that Chris has thus acted as the breadwinner and patriarch providing for his family, the passivity of upper-class female life is also insinuated; the women of the family are dependent on the man as a provider, a sign of the patriarchal order of society. In addition to these duties, Chris's typically stern Victorian father had left their family business in a troubled state, and so Chris had to step in "to keep the firm's head above water and Baldry Court sleek and hospitable, to keep everything bright and splendid save only his youth, which after that was dulled by care" (RS, 87). Chris has therefore dutifully fulfilled all expectations, saved his family's Victorian "fortress" from ruin, and so lived according to the masculine ideal of his time. His role as the saviour and protector of the feminized sphere of home is

repeated in his role as a soldier in the novel, which is another duty to be fulfilled, and regarded as the most important one in the war system.

According to Mosse, the model of idealized masculinity acted as a symbol of the whole society and nation (1996, 23, 109). As was stated in section 2.1, manliness was strongly associated with soldiering, or as Mosse calls it, "the warrior image" (1996, 115). Idealized traits were "quiet strength and self-control", toughness, endurance and determination (Mosse 1996, 109-111). Captain Christopher Baldry appears to fulfill this role, as he is on duty on the Western Front at the beginning of the novel. Jenny calls him "our soldier" (RS, 49) with pride, which signals that Chris serves in this role in the eyes of the society. Jenny remembers his "stiff-lipped smile" (RS, 117), a sign of the "'stiff upper lip'" mentality of the upper- and middle-class men at the time which can be related to "emotional repression", as Tosh notes (2005, 110); she also makes a reference to Chris's "harsh and diffident masculinity" and "a physical gallantry about him" (RS, 117) which fit to the warrior ideal. Chris's resolve to fulfill the role he is expected to have in the war system is well illustrated in the scene where he leaves for the war: "[t]hen he got into the car, put on his Tommy air, and said, 'So long! I'll write you from Berlin!' and as he spoke his head dropped back and he set a hard stare on the overarching house" (RS, 50-51).[28] There is no emotion present, or it is skillfully hidden behind his sense of duty and determination, which is conveyed in his "Tommy air", referring to the ideal image of a British soldier who bravely faces his service for King and Country. He "puts on" this appearance, which implies that he realizes that this is what he is supposed to be. In addition, Chris is depicted to be hopeful, or possibly certain, of a swift defeat of the Kaiser, and thus the success of his duty, as he promises to write from Berlin. Significantly, the last thing he does is look at the house, as if he is gazing at the reason behind his participation in the war. His duty is to protect it; the house represents the order of the society for which he has to fight.

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[28] A further piece of evidence of Chris's sense of duty is the fact that the time of the events in the novel is March 1916 (RS, 54, 61), and Jenny notes how Chris left for the front “just a year ago” (RS, 50); therefore, he left as a volunteer, since conscription started in 1916.

Unlike the popular pro-war romances and many other wartime novels which affirmed the society's ideals regarding the appropriate gender roles and conduct in wartime, discussed earlier, West's novel does not cherish the fulfilment of the soldier ideal, but tells the story of the shattering of the "Tommy"; how this ideal is abandoned by Chris as an act of protest against the war and the society which demands it. The damaged soldier ideal is first witnessed in a letter from Chris's cousin Frank who has met Chris in a hospital in France. Frank writes: "I have never before seen a strong man weep and it is indeed a terrible sight. He moaned a lot and began to call for this Margaret" (RS, 62). As was pointed out earlier, men were not supposed be emotional; instead, "[p]assions had to be kept under control" (Mosse 1996, 111), which is reflected in Frank's view of Chris's emotions as "a terrible sight", never witnessed before. Chris is tearful because he is reminded of the contemporary reality which he has forgot as a symptom of his shell shock; Frank tells him that it is the year 1916, not 1901 and peacetime as he now thinks, and that he is thirty-six years old and married to Kitty, and his father has died. This reminds him of his expected place and duties in society, and moreover, of the on-going war. Significantly, Frank writes that Chris has entirely forgot Kitty, and when reminded of her, remarks irritably, "'O God, I don't like this Kitty. Take her away'" (RS, 62). This implies his complete oblivion of, and resentment towards, the society and its ideals which Kitty represents. This is also evident in Kitty's reaction to his husband's altered condition, since what matters the most to her is that "'he isn't ours any longer'" (RS, 59), which may be regarded as a reference to his abandonment of the values and ideals of Baldry Court, and thus the society. Consequently, West's novel presents shell shock as a rejection of the warrior ideal and the values of the bourgeois society behind the war, in other words, the world of Kitty, which, as Mosse maintains, "had adopted the masculine ideal" (1996, 94-95). As a result, Kitty "retreat[s] into the shadows as though she were a symbol of this new life by which he was baffled and oppressed" (RS, 64). This "new life" is a reference to Chris's old self and life, which is now discovered to be an oppressive burden to him, and which significantly moves away to symbolize his

rejection. The narrator Jenny thus notes: "[n]othing could mitigate the harshness of our rejection. . . . But by the blankness of those eyes which saw me only as a disregarded playmate and Kitty not all save as a stranger who had somehow become a decorative presence in his home and the orderer of his meals he let us know completely where we were" (RS, 96-97), that is, in the current reality of war rejected by him.

Chris does not remember the war's existence at all, which further illustrates his rejection of the role of a soldier, and significantly, his abandonment of the on-going war. This is implied when he pulls up a blind meant to protect their home from attacks from the air, and goes to walk under the windows without any knowledge of the war. This is contrasted with the view from the open window, giving a picture of the wartime reality which he ignores: "[b]ehind Chris's head, as he halted at the open window, a searchlight turned all ways in the night like a sword brandished among the stars" (RS, 69). Significantly, he does not face the searchlight, and so the war in the sky is out of his sight, which implies his unwillingness to acknowledge the war and to draw the symbolic sword to participate in the fighting. He is also described to be "a blind man waiting for his darkness to lift" (RS, 93) which gives further evidence of his oblivious state. Goldstein notes that blindness is an actual symptom of war neurosis (2001, 269), but West uses it as a metaphor in the novel to convey the soldier's rejection of the war, as if waiting for it to end. Moreover, when Chris actually comes into contact with the war, his reaction conveys his complete oblivion: "he . . . raised an appalled face from the pages of a history of the war. 'Jenny, it can't be true–that they did *that*–to Belgium? Those funny, quiet, stingy, people....' And his soldierly knowledge was as deeply buried as this memory of that awful August"[29] (RS, 102). Chris's disbelief even at the beginning of the war

[29] This is a reference to August 4 in 1914 when Britain entered the war. The German occupation of Belgium was pictured as a rape in British wartime propaganda (Gullace 2002, 24), and the alleged atrocities made by Germans there may be the reason behind Chris's astonishment.

clearly illustrates his abandonment of the wartime reality, and the role he is expected to have in the on-going war effort.

Chris's damaged condition is depicted to stem from his unhappiness in the roles of his life, which Showalter lists as the "suffocating" roles of "Tory landowner, dutiful husband, brave officer" (1985, 191). Firstly, this may be viewed as West's irony with regard to the supposed "happiness" at Baldry Court which Kitty and Jenny allegedly "had made . . . inevitable for him" (RS, 50), and so casts a critical light over the society represented by Kitty in the novel. Although in the eyes of Jenny "there never was so visibly contented a man" (ibid.) and according to Kitty "'[h]e could not have been happier'" (RS, 51), Chris's shell shock is described to be an "unconscious . . . resolution not to know" (RS, 98), that is, a wish to be ignorant of the reality and his role in it. This is further illustrated when Dr. Anderson, shown to understand Chris's condition at the end of the novel, concludes that "'[q]uite obviously he has forgotten his life here because he is discontented with it'" (RS, 109). Therefore, the reason behind Chris's shell shock, in other words, what he refuses to know, is shown to be the ideal masculine role and the duties expected of him in the contemporary wartime society, symbolized by Baldry Court and his life there.

As Showalter notes, West thus relates war trauma to "a whole range of male social obligations" (1985, 191). Consequently, West's portrayal of shell shock may be read in reference to Showalter's view of it as "male hysteria" (1985, 167); rebellion against the masculine ideal, and thus "a protest against the politicians, generals, and psychiatrists", in other words "a form of resistance to the war" (Showalter 1985, 170-172) and the society in which these ideals, and thus the war effort, are maintained. According to Showalter, "[t]he Great War was a crisis of masculinity and a trial of the Victorian masculine ideal. In a sense, the long term repression of signs of fear that led to shell shock in war was only an exaggeration of the male sex-role expectations, the self-control and emotional disguise of civilian life" (1985, 171). As captain, an officer of high rank in the army, Chris is expected to act as an example to others, to "overcome the soldiers' paralysis of fear by

demonstrating leadership" (Goldstein 2001, 254) in the frightening conditions of the battlefront.[30] However, this ideal role is completely reversed in the novel, and the soldier becomes a victim of the destructive war and the expectations of the wartime society; an opposite of the ideal role he is bound to have. As Leed notes, soldiers of the First World War became "victims of material" (1979, 107), and this victimization is clear in the portrayal of the soldier in West's novel, as Hynes has also observed (1992, 213). West's soldier-figure thus represents one of "the *damaged* men" which Hynes finds especially in the literature of the latter years of the war, "men who lose their nerve, men who inflict wounds on their own bodies, suicides, cowards, mental cases, and hysterics" (1992, 208). The portrayal of the damaged soldier reflects the critical view of the war and its demands in West's novel.

Moreover, West associates the role of a soldier with imprisonment, which further illustrates the novel's critical view of the war and its pivotal masculine ideal, and reflects the victimized image of the male protagonist. The wartime reality, represented by the home of Kitty and Jenny, seems like a prison to Chris: "[a]ll the inhabitants of this new tract of time were his enemies, all its circumstances his prison bars" (RS, 68), and even more so, according to Jenny, because of "the heavy blue blinds, which shroud the nine windows because a lost Zeppelin sometimes clanks like a skeleton across the sky above us" (RS, 66). The home of the women which has become the home front with the blinds shut reminds Chris of the war, and thus it is his new enemy, trying to imprison him into the role of a soldier. This also illustrates the gap between the soldier and the home, mentioned earlier in reference to the fact that it was common for soldiers to feel estranged from home after experiencing the battlefront. Leed explains that coming home could feel like "a return to a strange land", into a drastically different reality which demanded violence (1979, 110). West portrays this strangeness of the society at war into which Chris returns; his home

[30] Goldstein notes that since "officers faced greater pressures to uphold a masculine ideal, in order to motivate their men", they were in fact more prone to suffer from shell shock than ordinary soldiers (2001, 269). Showalter in fact claims that the number of cases of shell shock "was four times higher among officers than among the men" (1985, 174).

has become another form of No Man's Land, the land of the women, which he wishes to escape and abandon, as they remind him of his obligations in that life. Consequently, Chris is now "an outcast" in Jenny's eyes, being in the company of "stout policemen" (RS, 67), the women at Baldry Court who symbolize the current order of the world.

Whereas Chris has completely forgot the world of the war, what he is significantly able to remember is Margaret Allington, who was briefly his sweetheart in his innocent youth, and has now become Mrs. Grey, implying the hard and colourless life of this lower-class woman during the ten years which have passed since their last encounter. Although in Jenny and Kitty's eyes, and so in the eyes of the contemporary society, Margaret is "repulsively furred with neglect and poverty" (RS, 53), "'seamed and scored and ravaged by squalid circumstances'" (RS, 79), to Chris she is nothing but "'charity and love itself'" (RS, 73). Margaret is therefore the complete opposite of Kitty's "polished" (RS, 105), ideally bourgeois appearance, bellicosity and ruthlessness, discussed earlier. In Chris's life, Margaret represents "a world uncontaminated by the war, by his business projects and by his marriage, a world which predates his own life-altering decisions and loss of innocence and in which Kitty has had no part", as Ouditt observes (1994, 112). While Kitty represents the reality of the war and the duties related to the war effort, Margaret may in fact be viewed to epitomize the opposite; a peaceful world of love and care in which class and gender hierarchies collapse. Margaret's association with these values becomes apparent when Chris is described to have met "with love" (RS, 72) when he met Margaret in his youth, and who significantly wore "a white dress" (RS, 73) in this meeting, implying a white flag of peace, and moreover, the colour of a nurse's uniform, a clue to her role in the novel. A peaceful, loving and almost other-worldly image of her is evoked when she is compared to "the saints and the prophets . . . in flowing white robes", "lifting her eyes and her hands to the benediction of love" (RS, 82-83). She is a saintly protector, "a serene comforter" (RS, 83) in Chris's life, one whose "serenity" is described to be "as steady as the earth and as all-enveloping as the sky" (RS, 107). Margaret is thus

portrayed in opposition to violence and war, "like a beautiful voice singing in a darkened room" (RS, 82); an angelic figure who brings her message of peace and love to the dark times of the war, and to Chris's darkened mind.

The description of Margaret as a peace-loving, angelic comforter relates to her role as a mother-nurse figure in the novel. As was pointed out earlier, motherhood was linked to the nurse's role in wartime, which is well illustrated in Margaret's character. The nurse acted as the "angel of mercy and mother" (Thébaud 1994, 41), although part of the nurse's role was also to hide her sexuality (Watson 2004, 74). As Ouditt observes, Margaret's "maternal qualities rather than her sexuality" are emphasized in the novel (1994, 112), which becomes clear in Jenny's remark "it was so apparent that she was a mother", after which she compares her to "pictures of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, which do indeed show women who could bring God into the world by the passion of their motherhood. 'Let there be life, ' their suspended bodies seem to cry out to the universe about them" (RS, 112). Margaret's is thus associated with virginal motherhood in the novel; she wishes to preserve life, not to destroy it. This comparison to Virgin Mary links Margaret to pacifist values, against killing, and so against the war. Furthermore, as was observed earlier, the image of the Holy Mother was associated with nursing during the First World War (Ouditt 1994, 23), and so Margaret's role as a nurse is also implied here. She is described as "the nurse in charge of the case" (RS, 103) in the novel, confirmed by her soldier-patient Chris who, after his return from the war, feels that "'if I do not see Margaret Allington I shall die"' (RS, 69). This illustrates her role as a life-giver who tries to save Chris from the war. This powerful act is viewed by Jenny when the former sweethearts encounter in the garden of Baldry Court for the first time after Chris's return home:

> How her near presence had been known by Chris I do not understand, but there he was, running across the lawn as night after night I had seen him in my dreams running across No Man's Land. I knew that so he would close his eyes as he ran; I knew that so he would pitch on his knees when he reached safety. I assumed that at Margaret's feet lay safety, even before I saw her arms brace him under the armpits with a gesture that was not passionate, but rather the movement of one carrying a wounded man from

> under fire. . . . It was as though her embrace fed him, he looked so strong as he broke away. (RS, 92)

As becomes apparent here, Margaret represents "safety" in the form of a symbolic mother-nurse figure who saves the desperate soldier from the perils of the war and the duty he is expected to fulfil. She is not portrayed as a passionate lover, but as a life-giver and healer, carrying a wounded man as if he is a child in her arms. Her love thus equals maternal care. Moreover, Margaret's effect on Chris is compared to feeding, which strengthens him as if he were a baby, which implies her ability to heal him and her great power over him. Indeed, Jenny notes that "[w]hile her spell endured they could not send him back into the hell of war. This wonderful kind of woman held his body as safely as she held his soul" (RS, 102). It is thus Margaret who keeps Chris out of the war, which may be linked to ideas of wartime feminist pacifism. Although Cohen claims that West cannot be called a pacifist (2002, 9), the novel connects the female nurturing role with peace, which is in accordance with the ideas of wartime feminist pacifism and women's dissent; as noted earlier, feminist pacifists associated femininity, especially maternity, with peacefulness (Grayzel 1999, 157). In fact, Ouditt claims that despite "its conservatism, . . . [the] image of women as mothers who were politically uncorrupted, generated an ideological stance that was deeply radical and critical of the social and political strategies that led to and governed the war" (1994, 89). The portrayal of Margaret's peaceful motherhood may be considered to imply this critical view of the war and the war system in West's novel.

Margaret's association with pacifist values is further illustrated when she creates what Smith defines as "a classless utopian future" (2000, 176); a utopia of peace in the midst of wartime in the novel. As Ouditt notes, "[u]nder her influence . . . boundaries of class, gender and history temporarily melt: she symbolises a land of no differentiation; a 'magic state'" (1994, 113). The reality of living in a highly class-conscious, patriarchal society at war is shown to disappear in her maternally peaceful presence. Margaret is described to lead Chris "into this quiet magic circle out of our life" (RS, 101), referring to his escape from the life of Jenny and Kitty without hellish war,

military duty or other social obligations. Moreover, together they are "englobed in peace as in a crystal sphere" (RS, 100). The "crystal sphere" may be read as a metaphor of their utopia, being outside the real world in their own little globe of safety and love, or as Hynes regards it, "paradise regained, an Eden of love and peace" (1992, 212). To further exemplify this, Margaret and Chris are always portrayed to spend time together outside Baldry Court, signifying their escape from its influence. Margaret realizes this as she pauses on her way to the garden to meet Chris, "to smile to herself, as if in her heart she turned over the precious thought, 'He is here. This garden holds him'" (RS, 96). Here, their utopia is possible, Chris is safe and the bars of Baldry Court and its imprisoning duties disappear.

Moreover, it is significant that Kitty "withhold[s] her presence" (ibid.) while Margaret is able to keep Chris out of the war. Kitty has become "a faceless figure" (RS, 82), a sign that there is no place for her or her values in this utopia. Jenny sees how "[t]here were only two real people in the world" (ibid.), referring to Chris and Margaret, but this world is the one created by them, not the reality of the war in which Jenny and Kitty exist. Ouditt observes that "romantic love" in West's novel presents "a pathway to a vision of an alternative value system *preferable* to that dominated by the war" (1994, 90, emphasis added). This globe of peace is indeed treated as a preferable order of the world in the novel, which becomes evident when Jenny experiences an epiphany about Chris's shell shock, portrayed as "the discovery of . . . truth" (RS, 97). She perceives his amnesia not as "madness" (RS, 96), as his condition is implied to be in the eyes of the contemporary society, but as "something saner than sanity" (ibid.), an "act of genius" (RS, 97). Chris's escape from the life filled with duties is thus presented as a wise choice, an "adroit recovery of the dropped pearl of beauty" (ibid.), referring to the utopia of happiness and peace in the middle of a destructive war, resembling the peaceful world of his youth. Moreover, a reference to this preferred world of peace is found in what can be considered one of the most important scenes in the novel, in which Jenny imagines how Chris has chosen his utopian existence without the war. This is a choice between "two crystal balls"

(RS, 98) held by a godlike figure, "an old man" (RS, 97) who appears as "the soul of the universe" (RS, 97-98). In one ball there is Margaret and in the other Jenny and Kitty:

> He sighs a deep sigh of delight and puts out his hand to the ball where Margaret shines. His sleeve catches the other one and sends it down to crash in a thousand pieces on the floor. . . . Chris is wholly enclosed in his intentness on his chosen crystal. *No one weeps for this shattering of our world....*[31] (RS, 98, emphasis added)

In addition to the fact that Jenny here implies Chris's wilful choice to abandon the wartime reality represented by the crystal ball of Kitty and Jenny, which is smashed to pieces to signify his rejection, Chris's embrace of the shining, delightful utopia of peace offered by Margaret becomes evident. More importantly, however, nobody "weeps" for Chris's rejection of the world of war, which I find to be a subtle, but significant implication of a preference for a peaceful world in the novel. The world of war, "our world", which may be regarded as a reference to the contemporary wartime reality with its demands and obligations, is broken to pieces in favour of the peaceful world of Chris and Margaret. Although Jenny seems to lament Chris's choice and the end of his part in their wartime reality, she realizes that no one is sad about the end of this world. This implies that the reality in which Kitty and Jenny exist is not in fact the one preferred; a world of peace is a better choice, which is the crystal that is chosen in the novel. A peaceful world of happiness and love is thus presented as "the best way forward", as Smith puts it (2000, 176), which gives evidence of the anti-war sentiment in the novel. Moreover, Ouditt finds that Margaret represents "the repository of genuine values" (1994, 110), which is in stark contrast to the pretense and falseness of Kitty's world. As Jenny notes, "she was wise . . . the angels would of a certainty be on her side" (RS, 90), which indicates that Margaret's values represent wisdom in the novel.

Margaret's empowerment temporarily dismantles the patriarchal order in the novel, and draws attention to the link between femininity and peace. Watson observes that "women were

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[31] The dots here do not refer to ellipsis, but are a feature of the text, and represent that this is a thought in Jenny's mind, further discussed in the next section.

the defended, not the defenders" (2004, 302) according to the gender ideals in society; however, it is Margaret in the story who is described to assume "majesty" (RS, 107) in her defence of the soldier's life.[32] As noted earlier, the nurse's role was associated with empowerment, since their soldier-patients were reduced to a child-like status and were dependent on their powerful care. Soldiers in turn could feel feminized and emasculated due to their helpless condition, as they experienced anxiety and a loss of their sense of control, as Showalter notes (1985, 172-173). Jenny's remark "[h]e would not be quite a man" (RS, 116) in reference to Chris's continued life under Margaret's wing illustrates the feminization of the soldier-figure in West's novel. This is further witnessed when Margaret and Chris are portrayed together outside the gates of Baldry Court: "[h]e lay there in the confiding relaxation of a sleeping child, his hands unclenched and his head thrown back so that the bare throat showed defencelessly. . . . and she, her mournfully vigilant face pinkened by the cold river of air sent by the advancing evening . . . was sitting beside him, just watching" (RS, 100). Margaret is thus shown to have authority as the symbolic mother-nurse figure watching over the child-like man who is depicted as defenceless, implying his feminization in contrast to her empowerment as the vigilant protector of the man. In this state Chris does not have to return to the war, which again links feminine qualities with peace in the novel.

The significance of this link is further exemplified in Margaret's role as the "serene comforter" (RS, 83) of the soldier which is considered "the most significant as it was the loveliest attitude in the world. . . . a great thing for a woman to do" (RS, 100-101). Jenny explains this as follows: "[i]t means that the woman has gathered the soul of the man into her soul and is keeping it warm in love and peace so that his body can rest quiet for a little time" (RS, 100-101). Although as Ouditt claims, "[t]his image of spiritualised maternal love on one level reduces the woman to a

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[32] This reflects the fact, noted, for example, by Gilbert (1987, 200), that the war also had an empowering effect on women, who had access to new, more powerful roles, which therefore challenged the traditional gender hierarchy.

healing womb" (1994, 113), this traditional role of women in West's novel can also be viewed in reference to feminist pacifism; the love and care of a woman are presented as the supreme forces of life without which the world is believed to have no future.[33] Indeed, Jenny realizes that "'[i]f humanity forgets these attitudes there is an end to the world'" (RS, 100), referring to Margaret's role. This implies the power of feminine values as a way to end violence and warfare, and the link between femininity and peace in contrast to masculinity and war is again witnessed in the novel, giving more evidence of its anti-war sentiment. Moreover, the desire to dismantle patriarchal rule is indicated in the novel's opposition to masculine war-making, which is also found elsewhere in the story.

Whereas motherhood is a significant theme in West's novel, it should be recognized that none of the female characters in the story act as biological mothers. Oliver Baldry has died as an infant and Margaret's only son has met a similar fate. Grayzel notes that it was "one paramount duty of women" to provide "sons as future soldiers" (1999, 164), which is thus negated in West's novel. The deaths of only sons suggest that there is no one to continue as the head of the family, and no one to continue the war. The novel thus denies patrilineal succession which Gilbert names "the founding law of patriarchal society" (1987, 207), also witnessed in Chris's choice to reject his ideal role. This provides more evidence of the ambiguous anti-war sentiment in West's novel; not producing the "human ammunition" could function, as Grayzel notes, as a "form of women's potential resistance to war" (1999, 164). This indirect resistance is further illustrated when Kitty makes an oblique reference to her inability to have another child in her deceased son's nursery: "'I always come in here when Emery has washed my hair. It's the sunniest room in the house. I wish Chris wouldn't have it kept as a nursery when there's no chance–'" (RS, 48). Although only subtly implied, this suggests that Kitty is unable to fulfil her "one paramount duty" for the maintenance of

[33] Such ideas of feminist pacifism in the context of the First World War are presented elsewhere by women writers such as Mary Agnes Hamilton in *Dead Yesterday* (1916) and Rose Macaulay in *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916). Both novels portray powerful pacifist mother-figures who are outspokenly critical of the war.

the war effort. Margaret, on the other hand, is portrayed to long for a child, and her "awful agony" (RS, 107) due to the loss of her son is mentioned; this can be regarded as another reference against the war, since the loss of a son may be related to her message of peace. Jenny refers to "her martyrdom" (RS, 106) resulting from Margaret's poverty and suffering in life, but this can also signal her suffering because of her beliefs; she has to suffer childless in order to make her contribution to a world without war. However, her duty as the mother-nurse figure to the soldier means sacrifice for the benefit of the war system, which exposes the ambiguous nature of the roles of both mothers and nurses during the war.

As noted earlier, the important part of mothers and nurses, and all women, in the war system was to ensure that men returned to the war; it was their sacrifice for the war effort and a "feminine duty" (Gullace 2002, 54). This duty is Margaret's final sacrifice in the novel; she is depicted to have no choice, but to end the blissful utopia of peace and send the soldier back into the battlefront and to his possible death. This is portrayed as an inner battle for her, not an easy solution which her duty demands: "'I can't do it. Go out and put an end to the poor love's happiness! After the time he's had, the war and all. And then he'll have to go back there! I can't! I can't!'" (RS, 115). Margaret argues "with the whole hostile reasonable world" (RS, 114) which suggests that she is fighting the duty she is expected to fulfill in the war system, a duty which "would end all her happiness" (RS, 111). West thus draws attention to the cruelty and tragedy of the expected role of women in the war system, who act in Higonnet's words as "death dealers" (1993, 196) in returning the soldier to the battlefront. However, Jenny concludes that "that is the kind of thing one has to do in *this* life" (RS, 111, emphasis added), referring to the contemporary reality of wartime and the demands of the war system which have to be faced. As was noted earlier, conscription was introduced at the beginning of 1916, which thus looms in the life Jenny refers to, compelling Chris to return to the front. This is "the cruelty of the order of things" (RS, 107) in Jenny's mind, which implies the order of the world in which men are expected to return to the front even if it possibly

means a disastrous end, and women's part to assist in this task. Jenny understands that "[s]uch a world will not suffer magic circles to endure" (ibid.), which refers to the impossibility of peace, the utopia of Chris and Margaret, in this reality. West thus portrays human powerlessness against the demands of the war system which cannot be escaped.

Leed explains that the treatment of war neurosis was "an attempt to reimpose officially sponsored conceptions of the offensive, aggressive self, by reinforcing the moral universe in which that self was at home" (1979, 112). In the novel, this imposition of the soldier's role takes place with the help of the powerful Dr. Anderson, described to be Margaret's "intellectual equal" (RS, 110), which suggests their great authority in the healing process and in the final events of the novel. Margaret is shown to understand the true meaning of the cure when she remarks to the doctor, "'[y]ou can't cure him'. . . 'Make him happy, I mean. All you can do is to make him ordinary'" (RS, 110). She suggests that happiness is not a possibility in the wartime reality of the novel, and Dr. Anderson confirms this in reference to Chris's return to his expected part: "'[t]here seems to be a general feeling it's the place where they ought to be. Sometimes I don't see the urgency myself'" (ibid.). However, the war system cannot be resisted: Margaret concludes that "'[t]he truth's the truth,' smiling sadly at the strange order of this earth" (RS, 116), which implies her sad realization of the order of the world, as opposed to the utopian bliss she shared with Chris. This truth is linked to Chris's deceased son, which acts as "'[a] memory so strong that it would recall everything else–in spite of his discontent'" (RS, 110). Despite her anguish, and his, Margaret in other words reminds Chris of his tragic experience with death and loss, which relate to his expected role in the reality of the war; his duty to continue as the head and protector of the family, even during a deathly war. As Cohen notes, Chris returns to "the patriarchal cycle of duty" (2002, 81), since there is no one else to fulfill this role.

The truth which Margaret mentions, referring to the cruel reality of the war in the novel, is further explored by Jenny, who explains that one must drink "the wine of the truth,

heedless that it is not sweet like milk but draws the mouth with its strength, and celebrate communion with reality, or else walk for ever queer and small like a dwarf" (RS, 115-116).[34] This can be read as a reference to the demands of the war system, which have to be fulfilled; the soldier has to return to the war or he is condemned in society. Jenny realizes that in the eyes of the society, Chris "would not be quite a man" (RS, 116), if he failed to return to his ideal role. This thus seemingly affirms the dominant values of the war system, to which the novel returns at the end. Therefore, Tylee claims that "the book finally appears to endorse Jenny's views", which she associates with the bourgeois values of "snobbery and vanity" here discussed in reference to Kitty, and argues that the war remains unquestioned (1990, 144-145). Similarly, Linett (2013) claims that the return of the soldier to the war is endorsed at the end of West's novel. However, I would argue that this seeming affirmation of the dominant values of the war system only appears on the surface of the novel, perhaps due to the regulations of the DORA: the claims above simplify the novel's complexities and ambiguities and ignore its wartime context. The return of the soldier at the end of the novel is not endorsed and celebrated by West, but depicted as a "bitter drink" (RS, 116) which is enforced in society. I suggest that Jenny's view of the truth conveys a critical view of the war from the perspective of the home front: the cruel demands of the war system and the condemnation in society, if these demands are not fulfilled, and the soldier cannot return to the war.

Furthermore, the novel ends in a feeling of enforced doom and unhappiness, which highlights the novel's critical view of the war and its obligations, and proves that it does not approve of the dominant values of the war system; after Margaret has fulfilled her duty and healed her soldier-patient, Chris looks "'[e]very inch a soldier'" (RS, 118), and with "a dreadful decent smile" (RS, 117) on his face turns his back on the "fading happiness" (ibid.) which Margaret represents, and faces the house as "a hated place to which, against all his hopes, business had forced him to

[34] Telling the truth about the war is a common feature of the literature of the First World War, mentioned earlier in reference to the male war poets.

return" (RS, 117). This is Kitty's world of obligations, patriarchy and the war which prevails at the end, and the novel ends with Kitty's satisfied whisper, "'He's cured!'" (RS, 118). This reflects the fact that the demands of the war system have been fulfilled again. However, Kitty's comment may be regarded as ironic, since she is the only one among the characters who fails to understand, or chooses to be blind to, the end result of the cure. She mirrors the ignorant, or foolish, society behind the war in West's novel. As Hynes observes, Chris "has been cured of happiness and peace . . . against his will" (1992, 213). Moreover, Jenny realizes how "he would go back to that flooded trench in Flanders under that sky more full of flying death than clouds, to that No Man's Land where bullets fall like rain on the rotting faces of the dead..." (RS, 118). This is the "disaster" (RS, 103) which Jenny has envisioned beforehand, signifying the fulfilment of the duties of both Chris and the women, and thus his return to the war.

As Showalter aptly notes, "[t]he return of the soldier . . . is the return of the male automaton" (1985, 191), which Ouditt maintains as she concludes, "he will robotically perform his duty until he dies" (1994, 115). Indeed, West's novel depicts the war as a mindless system in which men, and women too, are expected to robotically fulfil their parts, despite the trauma and tragedy it creates. In MacKay's view, the novel conveys "[t]he inescapability of a will towards destruction in which both men and women are complicit" (2003, 134). I would argue that above all, the novel exposes the cruel demands of the war system in which both men and women are obliged to fulfil certain roles; these roles are shown to result in a tragedy, since they only help to maintain the death and destruction of the war with nothing but suffering to gain. West thus questions the sanity of the war effort by depicting its cruel demands on the home front from the perspective of gender ideals, crucial to the maintenance of the war. This gendered critique of the home front is also found in the narrative strategies of the novel, which will be examined next in reference to Modernism's close connection to the war.

3.2 View from the Margins of the Man-Made Cycle

In this second part of the analysis I will examine how some of the narrative strategies in West's novel contribute to the critical view of the war as a never-ending catastrophe, discussed in the previous section, and underline the subtle ideas of feminist pacifism found in the novel. As I indicated earlier, the novel may be associated with British literary Modernism and modernist narrative techniques, which thus offers a framework for the study of the narrative strategies. First, I will return to what was lastly discussed in the previous section, the ending of the novel, which lacks a proper closure: the story ends in the same situation which was described at the beginning of the novel. I find this firstly to draw attention to the characteristically modernist, cyclical notion of time in the novel, which can be related to a pessimistic view of history, commonly found in modernist writing. I will argue that cyclical time in the novel creates a picture of the war as an endless, destructive cycle, which reflects a sense of modernist despair and pessimism over possible change or progress towards the better in the future. This can be linked to the novel's resistance to closure, which is next discussed as a modernist open and uncertain ending. I find this to convey the impossibility of picturing a conclusion or any certainty in the midst of the war on the home front, and thus reflect a specific mid-war atmosphere. In relation to this atmosphere of endless uncertainty, I will finally discuss the novel's narrator, whose female perspective on the events greatly affects the novel's critical view of the war. I will examine how this unreliable narrator, a major modernist feature in the novel, begins to view the war as a man-made disaster from the perspective of an outsider. Her developing viewpoint enables West to expose and question the man-governed war system's endless demands, and imply a specifically female preference for a peaceful world in the novel.

As noted in the previous section, the ending of *The Return of the Soldier* suggests that the soldier returns to the front, and the novel ends in the situation with which it began: the women continue to keep the home fires burning while their soldier-hero goes back to perform his doomed

duty in the war. Time in West's novel is therefore presented as cyclical, and it creates, as MacKay has also briefly mentioned (2003, 134), a picture of the war as a destructive cycle[35] in which both women and men have their parts to play to keep the war machine working. As mentioned earlier, this "emphasis on not linear but cyclical time" is a characteristically modernist technique (Childs 2000, 59),[36] and even the title of the novel expresses this. The soldier's return signifies coming home to recover, the return to his role, and the demand to go back to "the hell of war" (RS, 102), which, as MacKay notes, "underlines the novel's cyclical mode" (2003, 134). This depiction of time as a destructive cycle, I would argue, conveys that the war is endless and creates a mood of despair in West's portrayal of wartime. As Smith observes, the war had an impact on the development of the "psychology of despair" which is often regarded to characterize Modernism (2000, 198). Moreover, with the cyclical depiction of time, modernists rejected the realist notion of linear time; this can be connected to a wider modernist questioning of the Victorian notion of history as linear progress. The rejection of linear progress is witnessed at the end of the novel when no real change occurs, the soldier is prepared to return to the battlefront, and the cycle of war is thus shown to repeat itself again.

The view of the war as a destructive cycle in West's novel may hence be read in relation to a modernist view of historical development, and so the movement of time, as cyclical. According to this view, history is to repeat itself, since human traditions stay fundamentally the same, and hence "there is no possibility of anything new resulting" (Williams 2002, 12).[37] Indeed,

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[35] Scott has identified the depiction of masculine "repetitive, destructive cycles" in West's two other modernist novels, *The Judge* (1922) and *Harriet Hume* (1929) (1991, 172-173, 186).

[36] Murphy notes how the cyclical notion of time has in fact long roots, prevalent already in "[c]lassical pagan civilizations" (2002, 17), whereas Childs mentions this notion of time in reference to African culture[s] (2000, 59). In the late 19th and the early 20th century, the idea of cyclical time gained ground, for example, through Nietzsche's "Eternal Recurrence" (Williams 2002, 10), according to which "the individual *should* live each moment as though it were to be eternally repeated" (Childs 2000, 59, emphasis in the original). Nietzsche's conception of time was close to that of another major philosopher, Henri Bergson, who saw time "as a continuous, durational evolution of consciousness and experience", and whose ideas, like Nietzsche's, for example, were highly relevant to modernists in the early 20th century (Stevenson 1992, 105-109).

[37] The view of history of the modernist writers which Williams discusses in fact regards two sets of opposite traditions or principles to alternate in history, and thus nothing "fundamentally different results" (2002, 10-11).

Childs finds that the technique of cyclical time used by Beckett later in *Murphy* (1938) conveys that there is "nothing new for the sun to shine on" (2000, 8). This reflects how this notion of time can be, as Williams notes, "deeply pessimistic", since it presents "no freedom to enact fundamental change, no hope of permanent improvement, no ultimate expulsion of evil or disorder, no resolution of conflict, and no promise of an earthly paradise" (2002, 13). West's depiction of the cycle of war conveys such a pessimistic view: it reflects the feeling of hopelessness in the middle of a destructive war to which no change or conclusion can be envisioned, and thus no progress occurs at the end of the story. The war posed a challenge to the Victorian idea of progress (Stevenson 1992, 142) with its deadlocked and seemingly endless nature, which the cyclical notion of wartime in the novel may be considered to reflect. However, in modernist writing, the employment of cyclical time was also, among other possible purposes, a way of providing order into the "chaos and confusion" of the modern industrial world (Williams 2002, 3, 13-14).[38] The arrangement of the chaos of the war into a cyclical pattern may thus be regarded to enable West to create a more coherent picture of wartime and the workings of the war system. However, it is not a positive pattern which occurs in the novel, but it conveys a pessimistic view of a time which offers no hope.

In fact, the possibility that the war might end some day is not even implied in the novel. On the contrary, in Jenny's mind, "a finality . . . usually belongs only to loss and calamity" (RS, 115), which signals that she imagines the destruction of the war to last. Moreover, her premonition "we were not to be victorious" (RS, 108) regarding the hope of keeping Chris out of the war reflects a larger atmosphere of despair at the end of the novel, which may be associated with her lost hope of seeing an end to the war. This mood of despair and the endless nature of the cycle of war is further demonstrated, when the novel begins with sunlight in the nursery of Baldry

[38] Williams claims that the techniques of modernist writers did not just reflect the chaos of the modern world but presented "a new way to incorporate it into a meaningful pattern", for example, with a cyclical notion of time: [b]y providing order while accepting the inevitability of disorder, cyclic theories seemed a perfectly reasonable way to ensure meaning and stability in a confusing period of change" (2002, 13).

Court on "the first lavish day of spring" (RS, 47), as Jenny hopes "for the return of our soldier" (RS, 49) in the traditional home front setting, and ends in the same nursery at dusk, when the setting is once again complete, the cycle progresses, and darkness begins to descend on the returning soldier and his nurse, who disappears into the night. The twilight as a symbol of "a wistfulness of the earth" (RS, 117) suggests that this cycle of war cannot be broken or reversed; in other words, there is no way out of the war, even if one wants to escape it. Significantly the novel ends in darkness, which signals a gloomy, uncertain future without much hope for the soldier, or the women, left to wait yet again for the return of their soldier.

Hynes finds that there was a "dark time in the middle of the war" (1992, 138) which was reflected in literature, although he fails to see West's novel in this context.[39] As noted earlier, by 1916 the idealism that greeted the war at its beginning was fading in Britain (Hynes 1992, 145). According to Fussell, "[o]ne did not have to be a lunatic or a particularly despondent visionary to conceive quite seriously that the war . . . would become the permanent condition of mankind. . . . The stalemate and the attrition would go on infinitely, becoming . . . a part of the accepted atmosphere of the modern experience" (1975, 71). Situated in the spring of 1916, the middle part of the war, just before the infamous Battle of the Somme, West's novel may be considered to reflect this dark time of the war. The "absence of the end to the larger story", as Cohen notes (2002, 84), is visible in the ending of the novel. In his discussion of Macaulay and Wells, Hynes observes that their wartime novels "end inconclusively . . . in a condition of *middleness*, the war still controlling and destroying lives, the individual still powerless to check it" (1992, 135, emphasis in the original). This "middle-of-the-war ending" (Hynes 1992, 204) is also found in West's novel: the characters are left in the midst of the disaster, unable to resist the cycle of war and uncertain of the future, which is

[39] Hynes discusses Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1921), Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916) and Wells's *Mr Britling Sees It Through* (1916), for example, in this context (1992, 137-138).

marked by "the feeling of doom" (RS, 117) in the room in which Jenny and Kitty are waiting for the outcome of Margaret's sacrificial duty.

The open and uncertain ending of the novel follows, in Cohen's words, "the logic of the war itself" in which "the 'sense of an ending' or an ending that makes sense" is denied (2002, 84); moreover, I would argue that it reflects the sense of uncertainty created by the war on the home front. This is also conveyed when the soldier's death is repeatedly insinuated, but the novel cannot provide any certainty of it, which contrasts with the typically stable Victorian conclusion in death, mentioned earlier. Indeed, Booth observes that life and death are never far from each other in modernist writing: "[o]nly rarely does either . . . appear fully in control, its opposite fully repressed, enough under wraps to be safely ignored. Most of the time, each looms over the other" (1996, 53). Furthermore, the uncertainty about the soldier's fate reflects the fact that even death did not offer a proper conclusion on the home front: fallen soldiers were not brought back home, and therefore, as Booth notes, "the civilian bereaved would never have anything to bury" (1996, 21). As noted earlier, the emotional and psychological effects of the war did not permit a clear closure. The modernist open and uncertain ending of West's novel thus reflects the endless nature of the war which denies the possibility of a conclusion; the novel ends in a mood of endless uncertainty of the war.

The ever-present uncertainty which marks wartime experience on the home front in West's novel may also be related to a larger atmosphere of "destroyed beliefs and dismantled certainties" (Stevenson 1992, 71), which was prevalent in the early 20th century, and was reflected in modernist writing. Childs lists "uncertainty in a Godless universe" (2000, 6) as one of the most typical attributes of Modernism, and it is an evident part of West's portrayal of wartime. Jenny, the narrator and a central character in the novel is a case in point: her ambivalent, self-contradictory narration conveys this modernist uncertainty and unreliability in the home front context of the novel. Smith finds that "Jenny's extreme emotional involvement in the events of the story . . . makes

her a somewhat precarious narrator. She allows the reader to see her own development" (2000, 173). Indeed, she grows from the world and values of Kitty, which she first embraces, to an adoration of Margaret's love and wisdom which promote peace.[40] However, at the same time she often feels envy "as ugly and unmental [sic] as sickness" (RS, 96) of Margaret's power over Chris and of their love, which signals her divided opinion of Margaret. In addition, this implies her hopeless love for Chris, which she never directly admits. Although Jenny associates herself with Margaret at the end of the novel, noting how "women like us . . . care for the future" (RS, 101), she nevertheless ends up with Kitty in the nursery of Baldry Court. Here, as is fitting to their passive roles as upper-class women in the war system, they wait together for the return of their soldier, and Jenny finds consolation in thinking "'[w]e must ride a lot'" (RS, 117). This suggests that she never manages to fully reject Kitty's world and values, and so she acts and thinks accordingly, although she realizes, as a sign of her ambivalence, that "'[n]othing and everything was wrong'" (RS, 109) in that world. Consequently, as Cohen maintains (2002, 10; 2012), Jenny may be regarded as an unreliable narrator, a significant part of West's modernist experimentation in the novel; she is undecided about the values she agrees with, she contradicts herself and is often mistaken. The latter is well illustrated in her conviction that to Chris, the life with Kitty and herself at Baldry Court "was the core of his heart" (RS, 51), shown to be far from the truth later in the novel.

The unreliable nature of the narrator becomes most evident, however, when Jenny recounts the beginnings of the romance between Chris and Margaret, and remarks: "I have lived so long with the story which he told me that I cannot now remember his shy phrases. But this is how I have visualized his meeting with love on his secret island. *I think it is the truth*" (RS, 72, emphasis added). This draws attention to the centrality of Jenny's viewpoint in the novel, which is shown not

[40]As Smith (2000, 172) has also noted, the focus on Jenny's development in West's novel bears a resemblance to a 19th-century Bildungsroman, which follows the growth of the protagonist to maturity. However, this development is complicated in the novel due to Jenny's ambivalence about the values she stands for, which thus reflects her unreliable character and the modernist form of West's novel.

to be omniscient, not necessarily the complete truth, and hence possibly unreliable. The distinction between fact and fiction is therefore complicated in the novel, which contrasts with the narrative conventions of realism, the "secure omniscience and the relative stability of Victorian fiction" (Stevenson 1992, 26). As Smith notes, the question that arises is "whose 'truth' does she tell?" (2000, 173). I would argue that the novel expresses typically modernist uncertainty, the formerly mentioned "epistemological doubt" which Stevenson (1992, 26) associates with the unreliable narrator, about the whole existence of an objective truth; the impossibility of such a truth about war on which there are diverse viewpoints from different spheres of experience, none which can therefore function as the omniscient "voice of truth". Indeed, Jenny begs Chris to "'[t]ell me what seems real to you'" (RS, 71) which further supports this argument; what is real and true is shown to be different from Chris's viewpoint. This highlights the absence of factuality in the novel which characterises modernist writing. Moreover, the absence of certainty in the novel reflects the impossibility of factuality and certainty in the midst of the war due to the disorder and confusion which the war created, with the propaganda machine giving an official version of "the truth" on the home front. Jenny's narration thus mirrors the uncertainty created by the war on the home front, and questions whether there is only one "official" truth about the war, as her own individual perspective on the events develops in the novel.

Since the outside world was infected with chaos and uncertainty, modernists turned "'to look within' and place 'everything in the mind'" (Stevenson 1992, 72). What was real existed in "the individual mind" when "'[t]he outer universe' seemed drained of meaning and order" and the war shocked previous certainties with unprecedented destruction (Stevenson 1992, 72, 81). The focus on Jenny's consciousness, through which all the events in the novel are filtered, reflects this modernist "turn within" amidst the confusion of wartime. Jenny's recurring dreams and visions of

the war illustrate the novel's attention to the war's effect on the mind.[41] For example, Jenny's recollection of the love-story between Chris and Margaret ends in an image of the war into which the romantic scene suddenly changes: "as he spoke her warm body melted to nothingness in his arms. . . . He was lying in a hateful world where barbed-wire entanglements showed impish knots against a livid sky full of booming noise and splashes of fire and wails for water, and the stretcher bearers were hurting his back intolerably" (RS, 78). This sudden image of the war is possibly the scene immediately after Chris's shell shock, but it is not explained in any way, and thus it may be considered to underline the workings of Jenny's mind: how she is haunted by the horrors of the war, trying to form a coherent picture of the chaos and confusion in the outside world, from which she is barred.

The recurring images of the war in Jenny's mind are depicted in reference to films and stories, which reflects her attempts to grasp what is happening from a distanced position which she occupies as a woman on the margins of the war:

> By night I saw Chris running across the brown rottenness of No Man's Land, starting back here because he trod upon a hand, not even looking there because of the awfulness of an unburied head, and not till my dream was packed full of horror did I see him pitch forward on his knees as he reached safety–if it was that. For on the war-films[42] I have seen men slip down as softly from the trench parapet, and none but the grimmer philosophers would say that they had reached safety by their fall. (RS, 48-49)

These films and the "stories . . . of the modern subaltern" (RS, 49) about mutilated soldiers which affect Jenny in the novel demonstrate her distance from the war, since this is the only way she is

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[41] This is also witnessed in the depiction of the soldier's traumatized mind in the novel.

[42] As Cohen (2012) and Hynes (1992, 212), for example, have noted, Jenny's dream resembles a scene in *Battle of the Somme*, a popular war film of 1916, as Hynes maintains (1992, 122-123). Although appearing to be authentic, this scene, according to Hynes, was "staged in a safe rear area" (1992, 125), which gives evidence of the possible difficulties in knowing what was really happening in the war on the home front, conveyed in West's novel. However, this scene and the film in general had a lasting impact on British civilians, presenting "what the Somme was like" and what the war had become (Hynes 1992, 125), although the mass death of soldiers there, as a result of official censorship, was left out. It has to be recognized, nevertheless, that the novel is situated in spring 1916, and the first time this film was shown was, according to Hynes, in August that same year (1992, 122-123); Jenny thus cannot have seen this particular film, and the novel may therefore be considered to make a general reference to wartime films and their power on the home front.

able to picture it, based on the perceptions of others and the images presented in the media, which, as noted earlier, were censored. According to Hynes, the moving pictures served as "a uniquely powerful instrument of propaganda" (1992, 121) which greatly affected views of the war on the home front. Actual attacks were not usually shown in war films (ibid.), which is witnessed in Jenny's dream where no real battle occurs, although she can imagine horrific sights of mutilation nevertheless. Again, West's novel thus depicts the absence of absolute facts and certainty about the war on the home front. Indeed, in Jenny's view, "such are the dreams of Englishwomen to-day" (RS, 49), drawing attention to the collective experience of women on the home front, affected by these state-controlled images of the war, and uncertain of what is really taking place on the battlefronts.

Furthermore, this common wartime dream, or nightmare, of women reveals great anxiety over personal safety. As Cohen notes, Chris' safety is directly related to that of Jenny (2002, 69), and thus, in addition to her anxiety over Chris, the dream conveys Jenny's fear of her own safety from the horrors of the war in her helpless position. The novel therefore portrays not only the war trauma of soldiers, but also how the war traumatizes Jenny, and women in general, causing great fear and anxiety. Pulsifer (2013, 38) has also recognized this, although she focuses on the depiction of Kitty's possible trauma and fails to identify the centrality of Jenny's traumatized mind in the novel. The soldier who is supposed to protect his motherland runs for cover in the dream, and has thus become a victim, like the women for whom he should be fighting. However, in Cohen's view, Jenny, "[l]ike so many women in wartime . . . strains to experience battle vicariously, imaginatively projecting herself into Chris's experience" (2002, 71), since imagination is her only pathway to such a scene. However, more than wishing to actually experience battle, which she clearly fears and cannot fully imagine, Jenny may be viewed to desire more knowledge of the war, as she processes the war scenes and the stories in her mind, signaling her unease about the seclusion and the resulting ignorance in which she is expected to live as an upper-class woman in the war system. She is entrapped in "a form of moral imprisonment in inactivity", as Higonnet aptly

describes the passive role of many women during the war, depicted in war writing (1993, 196). At the same time as Jenny expresses her fear that "I might begin to think" (RS, 94), referring to Chris's condition and the meaning of it, she notes how "thoughts prick one through sleep like mosquitoes..." (ibid.), which conveys her constant need to understand, despite her deep fear and anxiety, or perhaps because of them, the meaning of the events; her own standpoint to the on-going war.

As Higonnet notes, women's place in the war was understood to be "'behind the lines'" (1993, 193); the battlefront was strictly a male zone in the First World War, forbidden from women, who, like Jenny in the novel, often viewed the war from a distance. This distance is further illustrated in the significant war scene in which Jenny also imagines herself. The scene is situated "somewhere behind the front" (RS, 97), which suggests that this is the furthest she can go in the war zone; she must remain behind the lines. Here, in a town ravaged by warfare, Jenny imagines how Chris's spirit chooses between the two crystal balls, discussed in the previous section. The town where the imagined events take place can be read to symbolize Jenny's mental landscape plagued by the war, but at a distance from the firing lines. Critics have largely ignored the significance of the particularities of this scene, which nevertheless may be considered to illuminate the novel's attention to women's position in the war system. Jenny imagines that "[a] slut sits at the door of a filthy cottage, counting some dirty linen and waving her bare arms at some passing soldiers" (ibid.). However, this is not the place where Chris makes his choice between the two crystal balls, which happens "at another house" (RS, 97). The female figure is hence portrayed as a part of a secondary, neglected area, performing domestic tasks of secondary importance, and being dependent on the main actors of the war, the soldiers, whose attention she is trying to engage. This symbolizes Jenny's own passive, dependent single woman's position in the war, not being able to fulfil the alternative role of a mother which, as Thébaud confirms, were "the sexual options" for women in the war system (1994, 49). Consequently, this vision inside Jenny's mind may be regarded as a

reference to women's secondary status in a society of patriarchal order at war, in which women are meant to be helpless without, and dependent on, men, and moreover, powerless to resist the war system which assigns this role to women. As Smith notes, women were "excluded from government" (2000, 9) at the time, and did not enjoy the right to vote until the beginning of 1918.[43] Jenny, like all women, waits as passively as the "slut" for the arrival of a soldier from the battlefront, unable to have any effect on what happens in the war. The critical view of this position in the novel is illustrated in the fact that West uses a disapproving term to name this role. Furthermore, the godlike figure, "the soul of the universe" (RS, 97-98) who presents the crystal balls to Chris with the pictures of the women in them, is "an old man" (RS, 97), offering another man, Chris, the possibility of choice. This again draws attention to a woman's position in a man-governed world, dependent on the decisions of men in society.

Whereas Margaret tries to defy patriarchal order and the demands of the war system, and as discussed earlier, is empowered in the story, Jenny fulfils the role of the passive female "other" in wartime, and attempts nothing else. Distanced from the war, Baldry Court classifies her as a similar outsider, the unmarried female cousin, and so she is "a peripheral member of the household" (Smith 2000, 172), which she recognizes by noting how she leads "a lonely life" (RS, 99). Moreover, Cohen observes that the novel portrays Jenny "on the margins looking in or looking out" (2002, 69) which may be regarded to emphasize, above all, her seclusion at Baldry Court and in society, always observing but never at the centre of the action, or attention. This is well illustrated in the final episode of the novel, in which Jenny narrates the central event of Chris's cure by looking out of the nursery window to see what happens; as is fitting to her distanced position in the family and society of her time, she is excluded from the main event of the story, which can be

[43] The "Representation of the People Bill" which included a clause on women's suffrage was approved in Parliament in January 1918 in Britain (Gullace 2002, 168). However, this only concerned those women who were over thirty years old and fulfilled certain requirements, which were, for example, that one was counted as a householder (Gullace 2002, 184). Franchise which was equal to that of men was granted to British women in 1928 (Gullace 2002, 197).

related to the events in the outside world of war. She remains within the private sphere of Baldry Court. It is thus the focus on the insides of Jenny's mind which may be considered to empower her, which enable her to transcend the gendered limitations of her position, and form her own, individual view of the war through her developing perceptions in the novel.

As noted earlier, to modernists, nothing was "sure or convincingly real beyond the individual mind" (Stevenson 1992, 72), which became the centre of attention in modernist writing. This focus on the mind offered "a sense of significance" to individuals, "regardless of how diminished . . . their actual lives in the modern industrial world may be" (Stevenson 1992, 77). The centrality of Jenny's mind and viewpoint may thus be linked with this modernist aim to give her significance and place her in a major role in the story, in contrast to her marginalization in the war system. Smith argues that this emphasis on "the perception of the woman" makes West's narrative not only modernist, but "female modernist": "[b]y acknowledging that this perspective is as valid as that of the male, West is able to offer a feminist alternative to more masculine modernisms" (2000, 174). Similarly how Woolf saw the position of women in a male-dominated society, which in her view encouraged them "to split off in consciousness from the external world" and "seek a room of their own . . . in the private domain of the mind " (Stevenson 1992, 42), Jenny is able to gain power and significance with the focus on her mind in the novel. This focus may in fact be regarded as a part of the anti-war sentiment in West's novel; in the context of lost individuality, when women were regarded as subordinate to men and people were reduced to mere parts of the war system with certain duties to fulfil, West emphasizes an individual viewpoint, placing a female perspective of the home front to the heart of a war story. The centrality given to Jenny's mind and viewpoint therefore obliquely defies the conventions of the war system and patriarchal order, in which masses of men are placed on the centre stage, and women below them, supposed to mindlessly support this hierarchy and the resulting war.

West's novel thus gives significance to a female outsider's developing view of the war, a position which enables Jenny to assess the war from a distance, not integrated with the war system and not blinded by its demands. Indeed, in her view, "a lonely life gives one opportunities of thinking these things out" (RS, 99). Similarly how Woolf stood outside the realms of the war, not "[t]rapped within its internal logic. . . . to reveal it as madness" (Ouditt 1994, 176), West depicts Jenny, who is able to form her own "discovery of . . . truth" (RS, 97) by having a "solitary" (RS, 95) view on the margins of the war system. Her individual view of the war develops by grasping the significance, or the lack of it, of her own position both inside and outside the gates of Baldry Court. As Smith has also observed (2000, 172-173), Jenny explores her identity in the novel, which makes her realize her own place in life: in addition to her early awakening to the fact that Chris has never really paid much attention to her, her "deep, old suspicion" (RS, 110) of Kitty's hatred for her is confirmed, and she begins to think of Chris "with the passion of exile" (RS, 96). This signals her gradual realization of her own status as an outsider in the family, which is related to her marginalization in the war system. The latter is well illustrated in the imagined war scene, discussed earlier, in which Jenny places herself behind the frontlines, alongside Kitty. She is thus depicted to understand her place in the war system in the passive role as an upper-class woman which she shares with Kitty. However, what is also significant in the scene is that their bourgeois world of war is crashed to pieces in Jenny's mind. This relates to her formerly discussed epiphany that this world of war should be no more, since nobody grieves if the cycle of war is demolished, and a world of peace is embraced instead. However, this also reflects the shattering of her old views and values inside her mind, which enables her to form her own, individual "truth" about the war, as opposed to the dominant values and views of the war system and its propaganda machine. Her remark "I had of late been underestimating the cruelty of the order of things" (RS, 107) near the end of the novel conveys the growth of her understanding of the cruel order and demands of the modern, patriarchal world. To further prove the development of Jenny's view, her perception of Chris's condition

develops from merely being "'ill'" (RS, 59) to being "so much saner than the rest of us" (RS, 97). Moreover, despite her unaltered position in life at the end of the story, Jenny calls the world which Kitty epitomizes a "cup of lies about life" (RS, 116), which implies her critical view of Kitty and the obligations and values of the war system. The "lies" can be read as a reference to pro-war propaganda, used to maintain support for the war on the home front.

Dekoven argues that modernist writing is characterized by "a fascination and strong identification with the empowered feminine" (1999, 174), which is witnessed in the focus on Jenny's viewpoint, and more generally, on the actions of the female characters in West's novel. Similarly how Woolf opposed the dominance of modern masculine culture by focusing "on the social and subjective circumstances of women's lives" (Pykett 1995, 100), the patriarchal values of the war system are challenged with the specific focus on women in West's novel, who, like in Woolf's writing, are, as Pykett notes, turned "from being the objects of the masculine gaze" into "speaking subjects" (1995, 108). Although the soldier is the centre of the lives of the female characters, he acts as a mere puppet[44] to the women who ponder over his fate. Jenny battles with the different views offered by Margaret and Kitty regarding Chris's cure: Margaret tries to convince Jenny, and herself, that Chris should be left in his oblivious happiness, whereas Kitty supports his return to the war, according to the rules of the society. At the end of the novel, it is Kitty's presence which reminds the other women that the soldier's departure is not in fact in their hands, but imposed by the war system: Kitty reappears into the story and Jenny wonders why her presence "somehow remind us of reality?" (RS, 115). As discussed in the previous section, this reality of imposed roles and values of wartime society becomes Jenny's version of "the truth" (RS, 115) about wartime. Her position on the margins of the war enables her to form this "truth", but it also makes her powerless to change the course of the events in her marginal position. Consequently, at the same time as

[44] Similarly how the position of women is portrayed, the soldier is thus clearly victimized in West's novel, which reflects the novel's focus on both men and women's powerlessness to resist the demands of the war system.

female characters are empowered in West's novel with the focus on their actions, this is contrasted with their subordinated position in the war system, and the constraints which it brings.

Jenny forms a picture of both men and women as victims of the war system, helpless to do nothing else but to maintain the destructive cycle of the war. This never-ending cycle is pictured as man-made, governed by men, which contrasts with the critical female perception of the narrator through which this patriarchal world is evaluated. This becomes apparent when Jenny laments the contemporary order of the world in the novel, the "normal life dissolved to tears" (RS, 68) because of the war:

> Why had modern life brought forth these horrors that make the old tragedies seem no more than nursery shows? Perhaps it is that adventurous men have too greatly changed the outward world which is life's engenderment. There are towns now, and even the trees and flowers are not as they were. . . . And the sky also is different. . . . a searchlight turned all ways in the night like a sword brandished among the stars. (RS, 69)

In Jenny's view here, "adventurous men", the ones who have authority in the contemporary society, are behind the rapid industrialization and the resulting change of the outside world, the development of towns and the concentration of masses of people, which are connected to the horrors of the war in her mind, with the searchlight as the symbol of the war on the home front. Jenny questions this man-made modern world and the catastrophe which it has caused, which signals a typically modernist, critical attitude towards the modern world and the war in the novel. According to Stevenson, scepticism about the developments of the early 20th century, "the new technologies, speeds and stresses of modern life", is often found in modernist fiction, particularly in the works published after the First World War (1992, 14).[45] The developments of the modern world were considered to threaten "the integrity of life and the individual", and thus modernists were "more likely to react against than to accept what Nietzsche calls the conclusions of 'the machine age'" (ibid.). Jenny's lamentation may be read as relating to this modernist opposition to the developments

[45] Especially before the war, the developments of the modern age were often celebrated in modern art: Futurism, for example, praised "machinery, noise, speed, and violence" and glorified war (Hynes 1992, 7).

of the outside world, which gives evidence of the critical view of the modern reality of war in the novel; of the men who brandish their swords despite the horror and suffering it causes. As a contrast to the more undeveloped, peaceful society with unspoiled nature which Jenny implies above, she paints a gloomy picture of the contemporary man-made reality in her imagination: the natural world has turned into "the brown rottenness of No Man's Land" (RS, 48) with unburied heads and hands; the sky is "livid . . . full of booming noise and splashes of fire and wails for water" (RS, 78) and "of flying death" (RS, 118), as "bullets fall like rain" (ibid.) and searchlights penetrate darkness. This is in fact the "impending ruin" (RS, 87) which old Mr. Baldry insinuates when he requires his son to save his family business; he may be regarded as one of those "adventurous men" in authority, implied to be responsible for the development which has led to the catastrophe of the war in Jenny's mind. The female narrator's awakening to the horrors of the war in West's novel therefore clearly conveys a connection between warfare and patriarchy.

As is typical of modernist writing, the modern, man-made reality is thus, to use Childs's words, "alienating and oppressing" (2000, 8) in Jenny's mind. Even the Deity of this world, who appears as the "old man" (RS, 97) in Jenny's imagination, is pictured not to care about the horrors of modern life, representing just another careless old man[46] among the "adventurous men" behind the war who merely witnesses the destruction "equally cognisant and disregardful of every living thing" (RS, 97-98). Jenny imagines him as a scarred, dirty man with "foul strong hands" and "a smile at once lewd and benevolent", only "magnificent" because of "the Olympian structure of his body" (RS, 97-98). This may be considered to reflect the typically modernist "uncertainty in a Godless universe" (Childs 2000, 6), related to the decline of religious faith in the early 20th century,

[46] Hynes in fact discusses "the concept of the Old Men" who are defined "as makers of the war and enemies of the young" (1992, 26): "those men beyond service age who had the power to send young men to their deaths" (Hynes 1992, 248). In reference to West's novel, this concept most evidently applies to Chris's father who is depicted as merciless and demanding to his son. Antagonism towards these men was widely expressed during and after the war (Hynes 1992, 246). In addition to West's novel in the field of women's First World War writing in Britain, Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly" (1923), for example, may be read to manifest such feelings.

in which the horrors of the war played a role. The man's opposing characteristics symbolize Jenny's ambivalence about this figure, and thus her gradual loss of faith in this deity, the image of whom is scarred and therefore shattering in her mind. Moreover, this can be connected to a wider loss of faith in the rule of men and the man-governed world, which is viewed to be responsible for the war in the novel. As noted earlier, the god-like figure belongs to the imagined war scene behind the lines in Jenny's mind, and therefore Jenny's loss of faith can be linked to her realization of the horrors of the modern, man-made world.

What can be read as a final, ambiguous act of opposition to Kitty's patriarchal world of endless violence which prevails at the end of the novel, Jenny and Margaret "kissed, not as women, but as lovers do . . . we each embraced that part of Chris the other had absorbed by her love" (RS, 116). This takes place just before Margaret leaves to fulfil her duty in the war system, and thus it relates to the final outcome of the story, the return of the soldier and hence, patriarchal order. I suggest that this scene takes part in the oblique opposition to patriarchal rule and the man-made war with the contrast of female love and care in the novel: the prospect of the departure of their beloved soldier leaves the women to comfort each other, since they must stay behind, but the kiss symbolizes a deeper devotion, an alliance of love between Jenny and Margaret against masculine violence and war-making. Likewise, Ouditt finds that this embrace "has implications for a female solidarity which offers hope for the deconstruction of the male order" (1994, 116), an order which has brought the war in the novel. The female embrace at the end of the novel may therefore be regarded as another reference to wartime feminist pacifism, since it implies a women's collective power to resist the man-made war, "a 'moral force' in contrast to a world ruled by 'physical force'" in Grayzel's words (1999, 158), and a form of society of outsiders which Woolf later proposed for women as an act of resistance against militaristic rule (Dekoven 1999, 188). According to feminist pacifist thought of the time, women as a subordinated group "outside nationalism . . . had more in common with each other than with men of their nationality or class"

(Grayzel 1999, 158). Jenny envisions this possible unity of women on the home front: in addition to her alliance with Margaret at the end, and her formerly mentioned dreams which she sees to be shared by all women, she connects her passive outsider's position to "most Englishwomen of my time" who, like Jenny, "wish . . . for the return of a soldier" (RS, 48). This is the setting with which the novel begins and ends. Resistance to the war is implied and desired in the novel, but it cannot be fulfilled, since such actions were criminalized during the war. The novel conveys the atmosphere of despair and strict constraints and restrictions of wartime society. However, the workings of the endless cycle of death and destruction are nevertheless exposed and questioned in the novel from the perspective of a female outsider. West leaves it to the unrestricted minds of readers to decipher the ambiguous anti-war sentiment in the portrayal of the gender ideals of the war system and in the formal experiments of the narrative. By considering these two aspects of the novel together, it becomes possible to fully uncover the novel's hidden desire to end the war and embrace peace.

4. Conclusion

West novel seems to suggest that the only possible way to resist the man-made cycle of war in the early 20th-century British society is to rebel inside one's mind. Indeed, the restrictions of the DORA, as discussed in section 2.2, meant that open criticism of the war was criminalized, and thus West's novel, written and situated in wartime, is clearly a product of its time. What can be viewed as a relatively simple research question of how an anti-war view is presented in the novel becomes a more complicated task because of the tactics of evasion, the modernist obliquity and ambiguity in the novel, which both reflect the restricted atmosphere of wartime, and are offered as a way to escape these restrictions. The anti-war sentiment of the novel can be identified only when the two aspects of it, what is told and how it is told are combined; when the seeming conformity to the ideal values and aims of the war system at the end of the novel is considered only to appear on the surface to expose and question the madness of the war and hide a feminine wish to achieve peace. Moreover, in order to fully decode the novel's anti-war message, the critical picture of the war and the desire for peace have to be connected to the modernist strategies in the novel, which already in essence oppose the war and rebel against the dominant discourse in society.

Wartime constraints and restrictions are also witnessed in the depiction of the roles of gender in West's novel. As I have tried to emphasize in this study, gender has as crucial a role in West's novel as it has in the war system, and the former may be regarded to reflect the latter. I argue that the novel portrays the ideal gender roles of a housewife, soldier, mother and nurse as inescapable duties of the war system which only maintain the death and destruction of the war and cause trauma and suffering. In this way, West questions the sanity of the war effort, depicting it as an endless catastrophe. The demands and ideals of the war system are portrayed as mindless and cruel, forcing people into moulds which lead to unhappiness and tragedy. However, through the depiction of the nurturing roles of women in the war system, it becomes possible to emphasize not

only the traumatizing part in death-dealing of these roles but also the power and significance of love and care, and subtly imply a preference for a peaceful world from a female perspective. This reflects pacifist values, and therefore the novel may be regarded to present ideas of wartime feminist pacifism as a part of its anti-war sentiment.

The catastrophe of the war and the oblique desire for peace are conveyed through the use of modernist narrative strategies, in which the viewpoint and consciousness of an unreliable female narrator is in a key role. She underlines the centrality of the questions of gender in the story and in the war effort more generally. The narrator's gradual realization of her subordinated position in her family and in the war system, in the private and public spheres of the wartime society, enable her to view the constraints and demands of the time critically from the margins of the war. By forming her own truth about the war, she is able to counter the official truth and propaganda of the war system, used to maintain support for the war effort. The female viewpoint on the war in the novel also enables West to comment on the part assigned to women as outsiders in the war system, who can be similarly traumatized and victimized by the war in their helpless position as soldiers on the battlefront, without any power to affect the course of the events in a man-governed society. The narrator's belief in the patriarchal order of the society, which has led to the war in the novel, shatters in favour of a peaceful world in which class and gender hierarchies collapse. However, this can only appear as a utopia in the restricted wartime society of the novel, the demands of which are imposed on both men and women, and thus cannot be escaped. Through the eyes of the narrator the novel paints a critical picture of the war as a man-made disaster, endlessly fed by the society's values and ideals which only support further death and destruction.

As the unreliable narrator demonstrates, experimental, modernist techniques contribute significantly to the novel's anti-war sentiment. The modernist emphasis on the mind is found in the novel's attention to the mind of the narrator, haunted and traumatized by the war, as she strives to form her own individual view of the chaos and confusion of the outside world in her own,

restricted sphere of life. The centrality of the female mind and view of the war, and the focus on the female characters in general, contrasts with the secondary, marginal position assigned to women in the war system. In this way, the novel can be regarded to defy the dominant values and ideals of wartime, which gives more evidence of West's anti-war sentiment. In addition, the attention given to the home front perspective of a woman challenges the pre-eminence often granted to soldiers' first-hand accounts of the war. The narrator creates a critical picture of the war as a man-made disaster, which may be connected to a wider modernist resistance to the developments of the machine age which have resulted in the war. The novel depicts modernist despair and anxiety about the modern world in which people are turned into parts of a machine, expected to robotically perform their duties. The narrator conveys a loss of faith in the rule of men which has led to this modern reality. This is linked to a loss of religious faith in the novel, which is also a common theme in modernist writing.

The atmosphere of despair about the modern way of life in the midst of a seemingly endless war is reflected in the modernist, cyclical depiction of time in West's novel, which creates a picture of the war as a destructive, deathly cycle. West's novel may be considered to depict the dark time in the middle of a destructive war to which no end can be envisioned, a mood which can also be found elsewhere in the writing of the First World War. Everything is left open and uncertain at the end of the novel, which mirrors the uncertainty and lack of factuality created by the war on the home front. The narrator's unreliable, uncertain nature also reflects this. She conveys the fear and uncertainty which mark the war experience of women at home in the novel, helplessly waiting for the return of the soldier, with a constant fear of his death and ignorant of what is really taking place on the battlefronts. However, the soldier is also depicted as helpless and victimized, compelled to return to the horrors of the No Man's Land and his duty against his will. Like the female characters who wish to resist the soldier's return but are unable to do so, he is presented as a victim of the society's demands. The broken soldier-ideal acts as a protest against the war and its demands, which

highlights the anti-war view of the novel. With her account of the war as despair and suffering for both men and women, West thus twists and challenges the conventions of the typical romantic novels of wartime which aimed to assure readers of the importance of the war effort. *The Return of the Soldier* reveals a completely opposite wartime aim of criticizing the war by exposing the mindlessness of the ideal roles and values of the home front society which only support further death, destruction and suffering. The novel indirectly defies the official views of pro-war propaganda, widespread in society during the war, and suggests, in an ambiguous way in order to avoid the censors, that there are other truths about the war and other viewpoints which should be recognized.

This study about the anti-war sentiment in the gender depiction and modernist narrative strategies of West's novel aims to contribute to the growing interest in West's work and in her first, seemingly simple and often dismissed novel about the war on the home front, the different aspects of which have not yet been widely studied. Recently the main focus has been on the novel's depiction of trauma. As Pulsifer has also observed (2013, 37), much of the criticism of the novel has thus mainly revolved around the most noticeably traumatized figure, the soldier in the story, although West nevertheless depicts female characters in a more central role; Jenny's great significance in the novel, and her trauma, for example, are not often recognized. Pinkerton, on the other hand, identifies and redresses the lack of importance given by critics to the role of Margaret in the story (2008, 2), while Pulsifer's article (2013) has more recently drawn attention to Kitty's significance. I find it important to stress the significance of the categories and depiction of gender in the novel, the attention to both male and female characters, and the centrality of the female viewpoint in the novel. Above all, I argue that the novel focuses on commenting on the contemporary wartime society, its obligations and restrictions, in which questions of gender are pivotal.

Moreover, the need for further research is great in regard to the modernist techniques used in the novel and their connection to the war, the study of which I found most challenging due to the lack of finding relevant academic research in this area. The interface between Modernism and the First World War is evident, but not yet widely studied, at least in reference to West and women's war writing. As is witnessed in MacKay's article (2003), there are significant similarities between the depictions of the war by West and Woolf; this was useful for my study of West's modernist strategies in reference to the war, and it could be studied further. It would also be interesting to compare West's wartime novel, like Cohen (2012) has done, for example, to other novels written during the war by both men and women. With hindsight, I find that my analysis of the novel would have perhaps benefited from a wider focus on wartime feminist pacifism, the account of which is brief here, since it demonstrates one part of my wider focus on West's anti-war view. In addition, while analyzing the novel, I constantly found ideas which may be related to socialist feminist thought of the time, such as the frequent references to questions of social class and class hierarchy in society; this perspective could have been useful for the purposes of this study and an interesting framework for the analysis of West's critique of the war and the wartime society.

However, especially now when the centennial of the beginning of the First World War is approaching, and the war receives increasing attention, I consider it important to draw attention to and examine war writing and wartime writing by women, and women's experiences of the war alongside the more widely studied and well-known war writing and war experiences of men, as this thesis aims to do. Similarly to war writing by men, and possibly with new insights, the field of women's war writing of the First World War can offer diverse viewpoints on war and gender, and various, interesting strategies to be connected to the field of modernist writing, as Smith's study (2000) demonstrates. Moreover, those who wrote about the war in the middle of it faced exceptional societal control which often affected the writing process. Still, both pro-war and anti-war writing appeared during the war, which is well illustrated in the home front fiction of wartime, an area to

which my growing interest in war writing is especially directed. As this thesis illustrates, it is as important to study "what" is written as "how" it is written in wartime, which should be combined with the "when" and contextualized to the specific, exceptional time of war, in order to read between the lines and consider which version of the truth really appears at the forefront. At least, this is how the restricted, often neglected wartime voice of dissent in *The Return of the Soldier* is able to resurface.

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