

I. Introduction

This project focuses on Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), a story of three women and the homecoming of the shell-shocked soldier. One of the women is his wife Kitty; another is his cousin Jenny, the first person narrator who has lived with Kitty and an old love by the name of Margaret whom Chris has not seen for fifteen years. The soldier whose return is awaited is Captain Chris Baldry. When Chris returns he suffers from amnesia and does not recall his most recent life with Kitty and Jenny but, does recall his time with Margaret, his former sweet-heart which he presents to Jenny as his true and first love in his account to her. So, Chris does return but not as a soldier. Instead he believes himself still to be the naive young man of 1901, when he and the woman Margaret were lovers. He has been writing to her from the hospital as if the intervening fifteen years never happened. Remembering nothing of his life and wife he longs to Margaret, who is already married.

Throughout the novel the narrator depicts the depression, hardships and nostalgia faced by these characters especially Kitty, during the hero's recovery. The novel is about the difficult relationship caused by memory lapse. This suggests that there is the issue of trauma within the domestic sphere too. The novelist attempts to show Kitty's life no less traumatic than her shell-shocked husband attempting to cure her husband. She endeavors to answer how an individual faces domestic war like situation when there appears threat to one's life and marriage.

Drawing on Cathy Caruth's notion of traumatic survival, this research puts critical lens on Chris' amnesia and claims that Chris' amnesia becomes not only the

form of absence but also a call to survival under the guise of therapy. This project claims that Chris' amnesia can be seen as a safe passage to run away from his unhappy family life. Expressing pain and loss in the wake of traumatic experience becomes a part of working through. This study opens new lines of inquiry of experiences during and after war time many people faced today bringing forth the effect of soldier's return at home.

As this study dramatizes the contemporary response to war trauma posed by Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* is not only an enactment of Freud's theory of the Death drive but part of a particular experience of survival. West employs what at the time was original device amnesia from war trauma along with unusual perspective on war-that of those who waited at home. West poses the solution neither in hypnotism nor in Freud's free association theories but in 'love'. The study critically examines the characters, dialogue, activities and their relation to each other. Analyzing these we can notice traumatic experience not only closes the possibility but also opens up in a new hope. The crisis in their relationship and struggle over survival after traumatic events will be analyzed under the theoretical framework of trauma recovery.

The primary objective of the study is to explore the series of the experiences characters in home-front undergo at the arrival of their dear one having shell-shocked as war trauma. The study aims to unveil that a call for survival amidst the traumatic experiences. Highlighting on severe traumatic experiences within domestic sphere this study tries to explore the traumatic factors and effects in the novel.

This research aims to explore how the novelist captures the soldier's return in which non-combatant characters repeatedly suffer from traumatic experience. It seeks to find out why the condition of soldier being traumatized by war is seen as curable. An examination of recovery in the novel places the spotlight on the important ways in which the characters handle trauma on the home front amidst uneasy atmosphere and mood of nostalgia, their struggle and sacrifices.

This research assumes that Chris's trauma is only a wound and his amnesia becomes a safe passage to Margaret because man forgets what he wants to forget. The novelist captures the pain and desolation characters faced during Chris' recovery. Their wrenching experiences pontificate on what it means to an awaiting wife when her husband returns having been shell-shocked and forgets the most recent life with her.

Although this study deals with the trauma theory as its theoretical perspective, it confines itself to the theoretical strands of recovery. This project revolves around the traumatic survival of the characters since the major objective of the study is to demonstrate a call for survival. The heart of this project is the effect of the soldier's return on the woman at home.

West herself made a point of distancing her novel from psychoanalysis, vehemently denying that Freud's theories had inspired her story (qtd in "West on the Return..": 68). In denying the connection to psychoanalysis, West may have been attempting to turn critics away from what had most distracted them, psychoanalysis,

and toward what they had been most blind to the heart of the story, the effect of the soldier's return on the woman at home.

However, the representation of the shell-shocked soldier having redemption from trauma through their coping compels us to reveal the inclination to that issue. By representing the story of shell-shocked soldier, their hardships after the return of amnesiac soldier on their home front and the way they cope with trauma West is trying to convey the need of transference in the novel.

Since the publication, critical attention paid to Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* has received little of attention though her works have seen a significant revival in the last twenty years. The two critical trends dismissal of content and general neglect of female traumatic experiences fail to recognize the central issue of trauma.

Rebecca West is a well-known woman novelist of early twentieth century period. In her early works she portrayed the contemporary social, political and economic conditions which were affected by the Great War. In the awareness of the conditions of modernity and rural life and the consequences of family structure and individual characters, West plays vital role in modern literary field. Most of West's early novels are based on the social, political and domestic backgrounds where she has raised the issue of gender, class, politics and others as well as the consequences of World War I.

The Return of the Soldier is Rebecca West's first novel published in 1918, just after the World War I and it is the novel about social life affected by the World

War I. It focuses on the complex and unusual aspects of socio-cultural conditions as it does in the family life as well as the individual life. *The Return of the Soldier* is West's most oppressive novel in its dominant emotional atmosphere which induces certain rendering pictures evident in rock-like society and also the true and hopeless illusiveness of the world. It is a canon of great literary masterpieces which concerns with the reversal of great authority of contradictory patriarchal ideology and picturing of war menaces in a crystal clear vision. *The Return of the Soldier* is one of the best examples of modernist literary text especially focusing on the issues of traumatic experiences in its various levels. It dramatizes and threatens upon the dominant existing ideologies like hegemonic patriarchy, conventional notion of thought, so-called sophisticated and highly fashionable life and most importantly it advocates for the hope out of the war through family and the individual lives representing them as devastated and psychologically disordered. West is attacking on asocial and immoral structure of the time and the consequences of war through this novel. Such unusual aspects create instability through characters' different activities like sophisticated manner and hypocritical behavior of Kitty Baldry and Jenny and the stereotypical attitude towards Margaret Allington. The depiction of the mental trauma of war through Chris Baldry, who returns home to Baldry Court from the War Front as a victim of shell-shock, unable to recall the past fifteen years of his life, shows his as well as West's nostalgia for the pre-war life and family.

Rebecca West uses the character's longing to prewar lives to depict the instability, complexity, ambiguity, virtues and vices and of the contemporary British family and also to resist those unusual aspects of war in the British society. In surface

level *The Return of the Soldier* does not seem to have the call to survival but in deeper level this novel is not untouched by this issue. This novel depicts possibility of survival in various ways. The characters are not only haunted by the traumatic experiences but they are also trying their best to cope with the situation. Recovery as a call to survival functions here as a discursive strategy which adds the said and unsaid meaning of certain context. The intended meaning of the author equally matches with the readers' intention. In this respect, one of the famous critics Marina Mackay in *The Lunacy of Men, Idiocy of Women: Woolf, West and War* argues that West illuminates the centrality of feminist consciousness in an understanding of public violence: "A comparable effect is attained by the partial, if not obviously unreliable, narration of West's novel. The devastating epiphany for Kitty and Jenny is that Chris's fugue shows there are bits of him we don't know."(39). Yet they are able to deny his interiority by making him simply "a soldier" once again, enacting in the plot(the "return") and the narration(his experience is never told from his own point of view) Chris's entrapment in the conventional masculine role.

West's traumatic narrative shows the failure of so-called traditional and conservative ideology that is the moral failure of patriarchy and her exposition of war trauma exposes war and its consequences in negative respect as condemnable one. The connection of the war front and the home front in *The Return of the Soldier* also shows that World War I not only changed the soldiers who go to the war front – their psyche, taste and their sense of reality- but also the women who indirectly participate in it. Chris's recovery process parallels with Jenny's transformation process. As Chris psychologically returns to the reality of 1916, Jenny is able to better locate herself in

the social structure that is undergoing changes due to the impact of World War I. The idea of call to survival recurs when Jenny describes Chris as “an every inch a soldier” It is West’s inclination to her motive to show the need of working through in the novel.

All through this short novel, Jenny’s narration builds up a mood of loss, missed opportunities and nostalgia to previous life. Her initial account of their perfect pre-war life begins to break apart, and what surfaces in its stead is a world of suppressed feelings and unacknowledged problems hiding behind the seemingly perfect Baldry Court life. *The Return of the Soldier* is a mediation on the then unacknowledged psychological effects of the great war on memory and identity, on social class, and on the concepts of sanity, adulthood, responsibility and truth. In this regard Karl Rollinson argues: “*The Return of the Soldier* is inspired by a medical journal article that describes the case of an older factory employee who fell down a staircase on his head and revived thinking he was a twenty-year-old. Due to the loss of memory, he rejected his wife and sought out a woman he was in love with when he was twenty” (69). In order to present the destructions of World War I on public and domestic order and the consequent transformation of women’s roles, West borrows the plot places it in the background of World War I Britain.

In the hands of West not only the characters in the novel but also West herself seems to be longing to the pre-war British society which is embedded in their attempts of recovery. The pre-war idyll that Chris takes refuge in represents a past world though that cannot outlast the terrible consequences of the war. So, all of the

characters try to regain their glorious past to the pre-war life. Not only this, as Chris is in the hospital, he writes a letter to his former beloved Margaret Allington in spite of his wife Kitty Baldry. In his amnesiac condition, he does not have the memory of past fifteen years along with the year he spent in war. He only remembers those days, which he spent happily with his love on Monkey Island. Jenny and Kitty's nostalgia turns out to be traumatic when their impassionate awaiting of Chris goes in vain as he forgets Kitty as his wife. Margaret, his only solace both as a mother figure and a lover, can "cure" Chris by reminding him of his dead son. In this context, Chris is "unmanned" or given the qualities like "unmasculine" and vulnerability and a woman is displayed with strength and protectiveness. So, here, Margaret is associated with nature, nurture and primitive strength and Chris's "unmasculine" and vulnerable qualities represent the unsettled nature of society during and after the Great War. Not only this Margaret is so intent on curing Chris that she even becomes ready to sacrifice her happiness to cure Chris. In this connection, Kristen Renzi in an article "*Prophetic Madness, or Being "Madly" Human: A Reading of Social Dimensions of Cure and Sanity in Rebecca West's The Return of the Soldier (1918)*" writes: "What might be simple nostalgia on Margaret's part for a romance that ended in her youth is, for Chris, depicted as a state of madness strangely akin to youth, in which he is allowed as Susan Varney writes, to "return...to a time of innocence...before any disappointments in love"(261).

The attempts to redemption of Chris are the true representation of the post-war British society. West sets her views for domestic to broad political activities, which become sufficient in exposing the consequences of war and redemption from it.

How traumatic recovery and call to survival is interconnected can best be justified through the single word from novel's title "return". The word "return" signifies different kinds of returns in the novel like that of physical return of Chris to his home, psychological return of Chris to fifteen years back- 1901 being amnesiac and the return to the war front when his amnesia is cured. Hence, the return of the soldiers that most British women are waiting for turns out to be their ultimate return to the war front. So all the characters in the novel are awaiting for hope of survival. James Harper Strom in his thesis "*Modernist Aesthetics of "Home" in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway and Rebecca West's The Return of the Soldier*" argues: "The unstable mental address to which Chris assigns his notion of home becomes the world in which Jenny and Kitty find themselves. They exist in a state of strained nostalgia, pining halfheartedly for a life that existed either in the far-removed past or not at all. Even before Chris's return, Jenny finds herself regressing into a childhood where her cousin Chris was her playmate and confidant and where her infatuation with him could be considered innocent and entirely platonic"(38).

The Return of the Soldier is enormously complicated though short novel, even by the standards of Rebecca West who creates characters and situations of unusual complexity. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable and so obedient at others, so bewildered and so weak and so tyrannical and beyond control. The novelist has the intention to avoid such complexities and create comfortable environment. In this response, Ann V. Norton in *Paradoxical Feminism, The Novels of Rebecca West* remarks: "As a feminist...she blamed men and the patriarchal

structure of society- or fathers- for human unhappiness. As a Freudian...West looked to mothers and fathers as the key to human soul” (80).

Rebecca West questions the contemporary unusual norms and values through *The Return of the Soldier*. She upside downs such established traditional and conservative structures. Her advocacy of liberal and revolutionary mind questions the rigidness of ideologies of socio-political phenomena. In this regard, talking about her approach Peggy D. Pence in her thesis *Irreconcilable Differences in the Early Work of Rebecca West* quotes: “West has not explored the political and economic revolution and celebrated the release of female desire and powers which the revolution made possible”(36). She further more writes: "A failure of the book certainly is...her imagination that failed to supply a just and shapely finale... The narrative glorifies militaristic and materialistic models of masculinity and that it renders women complicit in male violence” (34-35). Here, Woolfe stressed the failure of the novel. She describes:

The continual coverage made by the media of the war during its occurrence and the infectiousness it had on those back home is portrayed through the eyes of her narrator, Jenny. The use of a female narrator wasn't uncommon nor new but the way West includes her feminist values into Jenny without making it central to the story is fascinating. Up to this point in history, coverage of a war had never been read about as it was during this period. (38)

According to her, because of the advancement in getting news out had improved drastically from the last war, people back home were more aware of what was occurring from reading a newspaper without having to wait for letters from their loved ones out on the front lines. West took this information in full stride and wrote about the emotional turmoil it causes the women back home waiting for their men to come back. She makes mention by focusing and bringing to attention the elements of class, exile from being deployed and the trauma that war causes on the soldier.

The Return of the Soldier is not only the story of a soldier whose return is awaited but it is also a story which questions upon the established so many so-called civilized norms and values of the post-war period as represented by Kitty and Jenny's perspective towards Margaret. It uses recovery to question those so-called civilized norms and values as well as the virtues and vices of that period. Most importantly, it comes vehemently upon war menaces. Thus, to explicate the meaning and effects of war, West uses recovery as solution. Another critic Wyatt Bonikowski, in this regard asserts: "In West's novel the soldier brings home a revelation about the war and the effects of war on the domestic scene, but the experience of war in general and Baldry's experience of his own trauma is absent from the novel. Chris's trauma has no origin and content" (514). This review means that West has wiped out not only all memories of war, the event that caused his shell-shock but also of his marriage.

Since this dissertation explores traumatic issues like traumatic survival, working through and recovery in *The Return of the Soldier*, it will be necessary to discuss the theoretical modality briefly. The basic theoretical modality of this

dissertation is traumatic survival with its connection to recovery. While analyzing working through as theoretical modality of this dissertation, *The Return of the Soldier* is found to be embodying it.

Likewise, Bonnie Kime Scott writes that “The constructive cycle is gendered Feminine; the disruptive/violent incident is typically masculine” (172). In this account of a binary of male/female, destructive regenerative, Scott tries to avoid apparent essentialism about gender roles.

All these critics either focused on the significant role of women, loss of memory, Chris’ madness, modernist aesthetics or they tried to dismiss the novel as failure. In this regard, it is clear that the text has not been analyzed from the perspective of recovery as a tool for a call to survival: another important issue raised by the novelist. This thesis highlights the traumatic experiences of characters after the return of the shell-shocked soldiers at home revolving around the soldier’s cure and the implicit meaning of recovery in the novel.

II. Trauma Theory and Recovery

The term 'trauma' is a medical term of Greek denoting a severe wound or injury and resulting after effects. When the results of the effects become repetitive, then it becomes problematic that is trauma. In the early definitions of Oxford English Dictionary the entry for trauma define it as a wound, or external bodily injury in general. However, trauma theory is a category in which diverse fields such as physical, psychological, philosophical, ethical and aesthetic questions of traumatic events are included. The term trauma dates its first use to medical pathology in the seventeenth century. Trauma has now crossed the boundaries of psychiatry and medicinal and has shown an increasing instance on the direct effects of external violence in psychic disorder.

To understand trauma we have to understand what it is. Lenore Terr who did the first longitudinal study writes, "psychic trauma occurs when a sudden unexpected overwhelming intense emotional blow or a series of blows assaults the person from outside, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind" (Terr 8). This means men are traumatized whenever they fear for their lives or for the lives of someone they love. A traumatic experience impacts the entire person the way we think, learn, feel and the way we make the sense of the world are all profoundly altered by traumatic experiences.

The effect of an event may be seen in many forms not obviously associated with the events. It approves for as interpretation of cultural symptoms of growths, wound scars on a social body and its compulsive repeated actions. It is the modern

perspective of the trauma theory is that trauma shows the abnormality in reaction of any event. The abnormality is mostly psychic but is manifested in the physicality which becomes more stressful.

The transfer of the meaning of trauma from the physical to the psychical wound took place in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The terms like 'traumatic shock' and 'traumatic events' were coined in the 1980s. The trauma acquired new psychical meaning when two young psychologists from Austria, Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, published the essay *On the Psychical Mechanism of Historical Phenomena* in 1893. *Beyond the Pleasure Principles* and *Moses and Monotheism* by Sigmund Freud laid the foundation for the development of trauma theories. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* originated in his treatment of World War I combat veterans, who suffered from their war time experience. Trauma theory provides a real model to interpret literary works. It provided more accurate, more authentic and realistic mode of interpretation. According to his analysis, "memory of traumatic event can be lost over time but then regained in a symptomatic form when triggered by some similar events (Berger 570)." Here, he used the term latency, which, for him is the return of the after the period of delay. Freud forwarded that as overpowering event unacceptable to consciousness can be forgotten and yet seen in the form of semantic behaviors, studying the trauma theory related with Freud, James Berger writes:

Freud when he concluded the neurotic symptoms were more often the result of repressed drives and desires than of traumatic events Freud returned to the theory of trauma in *Beyond the pleasure principles*,

work which originated in his treatment of World War I combat veterans who suffer from repeated nightmares and other symptoms of their war time experiences. (569)

Here, the central idea for psychoanalysis is the traumatic event and its aftermath at the same time. But Freud again changes his focus from biological urge toward equilibrium which he then theorized as the 'death drive'. Freud's psychoanalysis provided a model of traumatic subjectivity and the various accounts about the effect of the trauma on memory. His theory of psychoanalysis has become treatment of people who were physically and mentally wounded in the World War I. Most of the trauma theorists are influenced by him and have redirected their attention to the problem of trauma. Freud develops the concepts like 'working-through' and 'acting-out'. Both are the two forms of remembering trauma.

The world 'trauma' is not only the world for disaster. The idea of catastrophe as trauma "provides a method of interpretation, for it posits that the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the event" (570). That is to say in traumatization both internal and external resources become inadequate to cope with. The wide area covers the time so that the impact of the experience of event is produced only years later. "A traumatic analysis is both constructivist and empirical" (570). In trauma theory unrepresentable of the object that "destabilizes language and demands a vocabulary and syntax in some sense incommensurable with what went before" (571).

Trauma theory emerged as a part of a wider realignment of cultural and literary theory in the early 1980s. Trauma theory is not a surprise in the field of literary studies. It emerged originally as a fragmented (psychiatric, psychological and social) discourse on reactions to catastrophes in the wake of the Vietnam War. It emerged as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association. PTSD associates trauma with its intolerable presence in the psyche. Trauma theory can be understood as a place where many different approaches converge. It includes many fields, focusing on psychological, philosophical, ethical and aesthetic questions about the nature and representation of traumatic events.

The literature of trauma refers to the literature which refers to certain past events which have the power of disrupting identity in the present. The literature of trauma does overlap with marginalized voices and those voices result from psychoanalytical perspectives. The concept of trauma oscillates between victim hood and protest and can be linked with or articulated to either. "When there is mismatch between expectation and event we have what is experienced as traumatic" (186). Trauma is not simply another word for disaster. Trauma as an idea of catastrophe provides a mode of interpretation. The trauma posits that the effects of the event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms but not obviously associated with the event. Memorization of past events, sleeplessness, disorder irritation, frustrated situation, anxiety are the general characteristics of trauma. Those activities affect the daily activities of an individual. Moreover, trauma symptoms are not only nonlinguistic phenomena, they occur also in language. In general, trauma theory is psychological. It results in mental and social disorder.

To have more knowledge about trauma and its surroundings we have to get the ideas of Cathy Caruth, James Berger, Dominick LaCapra, Geoffrey Hartman, Kate Schick, Nigel C. Hunt and so on. These theorists, basing their theory of trauma on Freud's psychoanalysis speak and argue about the need of 'acting –out.' and 'working –through' of the trauma. Those theorists have turned to concepts of trauma as tools of literary and cultural analysis. Traumatic analysis is both constructive and analytical. Traumatic analysis pays the closest attention to the representational means through which an event is remembered.

When we talk about the trauma from psychoanalytic approach, the ideas of Cathy Caruth, one of the leading figures of trauma theory appears to be worth mentioning. She is very much famous for her essay "Parting Words: Trauma, Silence and Survival". In this essay she examines Freud's work on trauma. She analyses the just a position in Freud's founding of work on trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principles*. Her interest was in exploring trauma in more general sense, and it's relation to history and literature. She suggests that he has avoided the mistake of defining or anticipating the differences between experience and trauma. For her history "is the inextricability of the story of one's life from the story of a death" (8). She says the act of experience can become a thing in a word, like an object. She says experience can be claimed or left unclaimed like a lost glove. She claims the notion of transmissible trauma – trauma that can be passed unknowingly from one generation to another. Focusing on historical trauma, she opines that we can't experiment traumatic event at the moment of its occurrence. She says that the history of trauma, in its

belatedness, can only take place through the listening of other. While talking about history of trauma and how it comprehends she writes:

[...] to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not perceived as it occurs, or to put it some what differently that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence. (Caruth 87)

Cathy Caruth's 1996 *Unclaimed Experience* represents the most influential, perhaps the foundational text of deconstructive trauma studies. All the key elements of the new trauma discourse are for the first time fully developed in this volume. Like many other scholars, Caruth defines trauma as an experience consisting of two components that the trauma victim never manages to reconcile with each other. A severe mental and may be also physical injury which the victim seems to overcome remarkably well is followed by a belated onset of symptoms that sometimes appear to bear no casual relationship to the injury. At first, Caruth thus appears to define trauma in ways that are quite compatible with psychological research on trauma and post traumatic stress. However, Caruth goes on to celebrate the experience and the concept of trauma as providing unprecedented insight into the human condition. Applying on interpretive strategy borrowed from Paul de Man, Caruth emphasizes that the failure of the trauma Victim to “come to terms with the origins and symptoms of his/her mental illness represents a rare and valuable moment of authenticity because human beings only get a chance to perceive reality directly whenever our cultural systems of signification temporarily disintegrate under their own weight”(89-90). In this way trauma is

conceived as a revelation that teaches us about the limits and possibilities of human culture, however, at that moment of cultural disintegration and exceptional wisdom we are unable to fully understand, let alone successfully represent our insights. For Caruth, this principal failure of representation constitutes "the truth and force of reality that trauma survivors face and quite often try to transmit to us." (trauma vii)

Giving a general definition of trauma in her essay *Unclaimed Experience : Trauma the Possibility of History*, Caruth says:

[...] trauma describes on overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the event occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations the intrusive phenomena. The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example who suffers this sight in a numbered state, only to relieve it later on in reported night matches, in a central and recurring image of trauma in our country (181).

This definition wants to say that trauma is described as the response to an unexpected, sudden catastrophic events, which occur belatedly. Those events appear later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares. These lines are based on the theory of trauma attempted by Freud in *Moses and Monotheism*. She is very much famous for her ideas of latency as formulated by Freud and argues that trauma as it first takes place is uncertain but that "the survivors uncertainly is not a simple amnesia; for the event returns as Freud points out insistently and against their will" (6). Through these words she points out that trauma can't be forgotten and events occur later in traumatic way.

She develops her ideas about trauma from psychoanalytical approach. Her psychological trauma depends on the idea of latency as developed by Freud. She argues that latency can't be forgotten. She writes, "The experience of trauma, the face of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can never be fully known but in as inherent latency, within the experience itself" (*Traumatic Awakenings*, 8). Caruth brings us back to the surprising fact that "trauma is not merely experienced as a mere repression or define, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment" (10). Through these lines she clarifies that trauma appears belatedly. The impact of traumatic event "lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located" (8). Caruth in *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, is concerned primarily with questions of reference and representation: how trauma becomes text or how wound becomes voice.

In her introductory essay to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Cathy Caruth provides a clear and coherent description of trauma as well as a compelling explanation of why its impact presents specific conceptual challenge. By showing that the onset of traumatic pathology (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) cannot be fully determined by or located in, a given traumatic event, Caruth proposes that trauma compels to imagine that traumatic events do not simply occur in time. Rather they fracture the very experience of time for the person to whom they 'happen':

The pathology cannot be defined either by the event itself –which may or may not be catastrophic and may not traumatize everyone equally nor can it be defined in terms of a distortion of the event, achieving its

haunting power as a result of distorting personal significances attached to it. the pathology consists, rather, solely in the structure of experience or reception: The pathology consists, rather, solely in the structure of experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it, to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. (4-5)

The true power of trauma, as Caruth herself powerfully explains here, is due to the fact that the person who falls victim to traumatic pathology does so precisely to the extent that he or she fails to be present to the event in the moment of its occurrence. Caruth points out that because the event was not assimilated as it occurred, it only comes into being "belatedly". She writes: "[T]he impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (9). A traumatic event is, therefore, a strong sort of an event because once it is understood as a belated consequence of a "missed encounter", trauma itself must be understood in terms of 'absence' the absence of something that failed to become located in time or place rather than as a 'positive' presence. And because of this absence, people who have suffered traumatic experiences can become so 'possessed' by them that they frequently describe themselves as living 'ghosts'.

But as paradoxical as it may appear, this "absence" does not necessarily produce purely negative consequences. Indeed, one of Caruth's most brilliant and

occasionally misunderstood insights about trauma is that to the extent that trauma opens up a breach in experience and understanding, it also opens up new possibilities for experience and new model of understanding. For Caruth, "traumatic belatedness" compels the traumatized person to survive the trauma by finding ways of bearing witness to it. Towards the end of introduction to *Trauma: Explorations of Memory* Caruth explains why and how trauma is not only a form of absence or "departure" but also a call to survival through new forms of contact with others. The very act of surviving trauma entails discovering new ways of relating and being related to others.

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth turns to literature and literary forms of interpretation to further her exploration into the structure of traumatic events and experience. Literature, she argues, enables us to bear witness to events that can not be completely known and opens our ears to experiences that might have otherwise remained unspoken and unheard. Through a series of close contextual readings of literary, psychoanalytic, philosophical and film texts, Caruth powerfully and persuasively shows that despite the fact that certain kinds of event can not be fully known or understood, these events become meaningful in different ways by being told to others and heard by them. In the opening chapter *Unclaimed Experience*, "The wound and the voice", Caruth analyzes why and how Freud makes use of literary text a story from Tasso – in order to explain the concept of traumatic repetition in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. She concludes:

What the parable of the wound ... or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses

us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, can not be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and language. (4)

While the notion of "belatedness" constitutes the guiding thread of Cathy Caruth's work on trauma, the focus of Shoshana Felmen centers on what she calls "testimony" in her 1992 book *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. According to Felmen, testimony as the act of bearing witness to traumatic events is necessary and vital response to the ongoing consequences of traumatic history. In the introduction to *Testimony*, Felmen and Laub give the following powerful description of their project that allows us to begin to appreciate the daring scope and path breaking importance of their book:

The major texts, films and documents submitted to the scrutiny of this book were all written and produced subsequent to the historic trauma of the Second World War, a trauma we consider as the watershed of our times and which the book will come to view not as an event encapsulated in the past, but as a history which is essentially not over, a history which is essentially not over, a history is not simply omnipresent in all our cultural activities, but whose traumatic consequences are still *evolving* ... in today's political, historical cultural and artistic scene. (xiv)

As Felmen and Laub point out here, although the traumatic past remains radically unfinished and unknown, it continues to act on, in and through our conscious understanding. We do not recover from our traumatic past, nor can we "cure" it, "overcome" it, or even fully understand it, we can and we must listen to it and survive it by listening to its effects as they are transmitted to us through the voices of its witnesses and survivors.

Trauma, the silenced aftermath of violence, has been largely neglected in global politics, where the traditional focus on managing observable collective violence precludes attention to its hidden antecedents and effects. Trauma is perceived as personal rather than political, as being irrelevant to the operation of world politics. However, trauma profoundly influences global security and must be taken seriously. Unless traumatic loss is worked through, it poses political dangers that operate not only in the immediate aftermath of trauma, but also decade and generation later. In order to reach towards a deeper understanding of the cycles of violence and suffering, social and political analyses must also consider the emotional and psychological undercurrents operating in the lives of communities and the ways in which their histories influence their current realities.

‘Working through’ takes trauma seriously. It involves a work of mourning for past and present suffering whilst also insisting on a struggle to understand and challenge the social and political arrangements that facilitated that suffering. Working through stands in stark contrast to acting out: it is a politically engaged response that refuses to be seduced by simple stories about trauma, with their easily identifiable

villains and victims, but that takes time to understand an inevitably more complex reality. Further more it recognizes the political dangers of unmourned loss:

The impotence and suffering arising from unmourned loss do not lead to a passion for objectivity and justice. They lead to resentment, hatred, inability to trust, and then the doubled burden of fear of those negative emotions [...] It is the abused who become the abusers, whether politically as well as psychically may depend on contingencies of social and political histories. (Rose 51)

A failure to work through traumatic loss can end up reproducing insecurity is explored in this article by an examination of political and communal responses to historical trauma. Working through encourages individuals and communities to mourn past and present suffering and that political work of mourning leads actors to consider how things might be different and to take the risk of acting to challenge the status quo.

In the line of discussion of 'acting out' and 'working through', the memories of the violence, one of the leading figures of the trauma theory is Dominick LaCapra. He focuses on three psychoanalytical topics: the return of the repressed, acting out versus working through, and the dynamics of transference. Out of these three topics his discussion lies mostly on the distinction between working through and acting out. According to LaCapra, "in broader concepts melancholia is a mode of acting out and mourning is a mode of working through" (LaCapra 81). He emphasizes the role of

working through and acting out traumatic situations. LaCapra concerns much with transference. In this regard Berger writes:

Transference in psychoanalysis is itself a return of the repressed, or rather a more conscious summarizing of the repressed, transference repeats or acts out a past event in new, therapeutic setting that allows for critical evaluation and change. Transference is occasion for working through the traumatic situation. (Berger 98)

He is mostly concerned with the return of the repressed as discourse rather than with physical returns. If trauma is taken as loss it is modernist notion and if it is taken as absence it is postmodernist notion. This is the modernist and postmodernist version of trauma. He says loss is the consequence of particular events but not all consequences are traumatic.

Trauma also has social and political dimensions. Cathy Caruth describes trauma as broadly encompassing "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth 181). She points to the paradoxical and unknowable nature of trauma, where by an event is not assimilated at the time of its occurrence, but later returns to bear delayed and repeated witness to wound, "The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares" (181). It defies our witness in that it is never able to be fully known or understood; memory does not and

cannot record the event in full. Alongside this defiance, however, is a demand: “the suffering that attends trauma cries out to be acknowledged and give voice” (Kate Schick 138).

Trauma also affects larger social groups. Kai Erikson's study of survivors of the Buffalo Creek disaster in the US points to the social dimensions of trauma. He observes that trauma simultaneously creates and destroys community. He writes, "estrangement becomes the basis for community" as those marked by trauma seek out others who have had similar experience and thus understand one another's numbness and pain. Erikson refers to this as 'a gathering of the wounded.' Erikson notes "traumatized people calculate life's chances differently [. . .] they can be said to have experienced not only a changed sense of self and changed way of relating to others but a changed worldview" (Erikson 194). They expect danger, feeling out of control and at the mercy of an uncertain world.

Trauma is not only experienced in the aftermath of single, dramatic events; it can also be ongoing and structurally induced as, for example, in the case of extreme poverty or ongoing civil war, where day to day life is a struggle for security and survival. Martha Cabrera, in "Living and Surviving in a Multiply Wounded Country" describes her country as a multiply wounded, multiply traumatized, multiply mourning country. This 'multiple wounds phenomenon' has consequences on a variety of levels: individual, social and political. Another form of trauma includes Secondary trauma, where people in a helping or observational role experience secondhand

trauma because of what they see and hear, participation induced trauma, where the perpetrators or trauma suffer in the wake of harming others.

Alongside the individual and social dimensions of trauma has a political dimension too. Karin Fierke argues that we cannot isolate psychological and political considerations in the aftermath of war. Fierke in her "Trauma, Political Solipsism and War", maintains that "political trauma is larger than the sum of traumatized individuals in a context" and as such it must be considered separately. She illustrates this with reference to the trauma that followed World War I (487). Indeed, wide spread trauma takes on a life of its own that is greater than individual suffering and can profoundly influence the global politics.

Dominick LaCapra states that acting out occurs where sufferers become 'stuck' in the past and live a restricted life characterized by hypervigilance and a desire for security. It is normal and adaptive in the immediate aftermath of trauma; however prolonged acting out becomes pathological and prevents a healthy working through of trauma. Such behavior is seen not only in individuals, but also in larger social groups. Working through is much more difficult response to trauma; it doesn't paint the world in stark black and white or good and evil, as acting out tends to do, and it requires work. It doesn't prescribe easy answers or a linear progression through pain, but instead involves self-examination, struggle, and critical engagement.

Acting out involves a compulsive and repetitive re-living of the trauma individuals who act out have difficulty distinguishing between the past and the present and struggle with notions of future. They are haunted by their experience and trapped

in the past that wounded them. This is unavoidable following trauma; however, in order for traumatized individuals to negotiate their way through the constriction that characterizes their lives and to re-engage with life in here and now. They must give voice to their trauma if they are to move beyond its most debilitating symptoms; where the traumatized individual experiences flashbacks and nightmares and withdraws from normal social engagement.

Just as whole communities experience trauma, so too do whole communities fail to work through trauma. People search desperately leads to the construction of meaning making narratives in order to explain what happened and to bring comfort. People often search meaning in the losses they suffer in an attempt to attenuate the pain and bring comfort. Jay winter examines the loss that attended World War I and its aftermath and how the vast number of those affected by the war dealt with their grief.

Jenny Edkins argues, "the medicalisation and normalization of traumatized individuals from armed forces results in de-politicalisation and the preservation of the status quo. They are returned to service as soon as possible or, if they are unable to be reintegrated into the armed forces, they are labeled as suffering from post –traumatic stress disorder" (Edkins 9).

In a situation of ongoing trauma, each new loss triggers past losses and old wounds are reopened. One of the dangers of prolonged acting out after traumatic events is that a failure to work through the traumatic experience often perpetuates further violence. This happens not only in the immediate aftermath of trauma, but also

decades and even generations later, person having traumatic experience can not just a take off his experiences and dispose of them; they are the part of him. Imre Kertesz recounts, "I couldn't give orders to new life, I ventured, if I were to be reborn or if. Some affliction, disease, or something of the sort was to affect my mind, which they surely didn't wish on me, I hoped" (Kertesz 256). He would only be able to move forward by taking 'steps' he could neither start a new life with a blank slate, nor continue his previous existence as if nothing had changed. He needed to work through his experience, to attempt to make sense of what had happened. "I now needed to start doing something with that fate, needed to connect it to some where or something [...]" (259). This process of 'doing something' with the experience of suffering is the process of working through. However, LaCapra describes working through as an 'articulatory practice', that gradually enables one to make distinctions between past, present and future:

Working through requires going back to problems, working there over, and perhaps transforming the understanding of them. Even when they are worked through, this does not mean that they may not recur and require renewed and perhaps changed ways of working through them again. In this sense working through is itself a process that may never entirely transcend acting out and that, even in the best of circumstances, is never achieved once and for all. (LaCapra 148)

Central to the notion of working through is a form of mourning which takes many different forms and is expressed differently by people from different cultures

part of mourning is expressing grief at the pain and loss that one has suffered. This can be enormously difficult for traumatized individuals and groups; part of the experience trauma is that one's feeling become difficult to access: individuals feel wooden and severed from reality. At this stage creative, often non-verbal expression can be helpful. Yoder points to a variety of modes that may help to express grief in the wake of trauma, including: art, music, dance, drama, writing, prayer, meditation and cultural ceremonies. Body-work such as movement and dance can also be helpful. Richard Mollica says, 'the embrace of beauty by the survivor and healer restores a sense of interconnectedness, well-being and meaning (Mollica 25). That part of process of recovery reconnects with that which was lost. Expressing pain and loss in the wake of traumatic experience is an important part of working through, it is also difficult. Telling the story of trauma is central to the mourning process. Psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman describes story telling as a 'work of reconstruction' that transforms the traumatic memory and enables it to be incorporated into the traumatized individual's life story. Yoder maintains that story telling helps with the healing process because it counteracts the isolation, silence, fear, shame, or "unspeakable" horror' (Yoder 53).

Mollica argues that for a trauma story to aid recovery and healing, it should comprise "four elements" (Mollica 34-38). First, the story recounts factually what happened, communicating the series of events that triggered their trauma. Second, the story communicates broader socio-cultural elements, portraying the history, tradition, and values that underlie the narrative. Third, the story involves looking behind the curtain of daily life and reflecting on the deeper implications of their suffering. This

may involve rejecting beliefs once held to be true. Lastly, the trauma story involves building a relationship with a listener - public testimony is healing not only for those who share their stories, but also for those who listen. Listening to trauma survivors reminds us of our own vulnerability as well as the vulnerability of others. Listening to other's pain challenges our own firmly held preconceptions about the way the world works, it points to the limitations and indicates the lack of an easy way. However, it also points to hope: a fragile, painful hope, but a hope nonetheless.

Nigel C. Hunt defining victims of war says, "Casualties are not just those who are killed or wounded, or civilians who are caught up in the fighting or just happened to get in the way of marching troops; they are ordinary people who cannot bear their memories of what has happened-the traumatized" (Hunt 2).

Low perceived social support is seen as a predictor of traumatic stress, if a person experiences a traumatic event and they do not perceive that they have good social support, and then they are more likely to be traumatized than if they perceive that they have good social support.

Traumatic response can recur in different ways. For some people the memories of the event are overwhelming and continuous, and they are traumatized. They find it difficult to cope with ordinary living, because their memories are emotionally unbearable. In response to this they may withdraw emotionally to help them cope, and so find themselves withdrawing from their family and friends their key social support. Other people manage to suppress their memories; they are able to avoid thinking about them. War trauma is concerned with the responses of people to

their war experiences; not only with those for whom the experiences are genuinely traumatic, but also those who live through these events and are not traumatized in extreme sense.

However, we cannot take for granted what kinds of events could be traumatic. An event is traumatic if it traumatizes the person. What is traumatic for one person may not be for another. The point is that the event, to be traumatic, must cause changes in bodily coping mechanisms that effect possibly permanent changes to the individual. War trauma is not the same as PTSD, as the range of symptoms is much broader in the former.

War experiences can fundamentally change one's self or identity. Our identity consists of the beliefs we hold about ourselves, the world and the future. A person may grow up thinking that on the whole people are good, that the world is a safe place and that one is safe in the world. War can change that witnessing and taking part in battle, being involved in killing, being captured and perhaps subjected to torture, taking part in being a victim of or witnessing atrocities against other soldiers or against all civilians of these can lead to a breakdown in one's belief systems and have an impact on one's identity. The traumatized soldier's positive beliefs about the world break down, and with those beliefs can go everything which the soldier considers important-love of family and friends, concern about the future, concern about protecting one's life. This is war trauma. The other names applied for the same condition are shellshock, battle neurosis, battle fatigue and combat fatigue specifically

to soldiers rather than to all people traumatized by war. Indeed the traumatic response is linked to the degree of control one has over a situation.

Soldiers leaving the armed forces always have problems. They have to learn to adapt to civilian life, and they leave the 'family' they may have known for many years. For some, this may be the only family they have, one which has provided them with effective support. Whatever the circumstances, the ex-soldier has to adapt to a new identity. For some, this is a difficult time, which may lead to them experiencing a form of war trauma, resulting not necessarily from particular combat experiences, but from the novel experience of being a civilian and being unable to adapt. "When a soldier's identity is destroyed they can't cope in the world. There is often a whole series of psychological symptoms of anxiety and depression" (11). However, it is not just the traumatized soldier but also civilians are caught up in the trauma of war.

Civilians experience war differently to soldiers. With significant exceptions, they do not have guns; they are not trained to kill. They are often women, children or older people, and there are many psychological issues specific to these people that can affect the rest of their lives.

III. Recovery from Trauma in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*

Rebecca West's 1918 novel *The Return of the Soldier* dissects the socioeconomic and psychological tensions brought by the upheaval of the First World War I. Christopher Baldry is sent off to home from the Western front when apparent amnesia has trapped his mind fifteen years in the past. This shell-shock and the state of being completely covered in the past indirectly expresses the novel's larger motifs in the language of the trauma narrative, as Christopher struggles to reconcile his idealization of a past love with the impending demands of warfare and the modern world.

Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* does not only account in soldier's mental breakdown and cure, but it also portrays Chris's post traumatic stress in its impact on the women he left behind, particularly his wife and his cousin. His shell-shock literalizes traumatic strain they are placed upon by the war. Female characters of the novel are a part of central principles of trauma theory. The trauma that they face is the forced reconstruction of their social identities precipitated by the economic and cultural shifts of the war. The description of Oliver's nursery, the Baldry's late son with its "tall arched windows", flowered curtains, "soft rugs patterned with strange beasts" (West 2) is a crucial instance that reveals the women's strategies for coping with trauma. Though Kitty has preserved Oliver's nursery and is clearly still within the cycle of traumatic recall, Jenny's meticulous cataloguing of the room's contents is an indicator of the solace of materialism. This feature of the novel's early pages, as Jenny describes the rooms and grounds of the estate. Much as Christopher is trapped

in the prewar past through his amnesia, the women of Baldry court enclose themselves within a seemingly harmless prewar past.

Cathy Caruth, a scholar of the interrelationship between literary narrative and the traumatized psyche, defines trauma as the “singular possession by the past...while the images of traumatic reenactment remain absolutely accurate and precise, they are largely inaccessible to conscious recall and control. It was this curious phenomenon that challenged Freud in his confrontation with the ‘war neuroses’ stemming from the First World War” (Caruth 151). Christopher Baldry, suffering from a selective amnesia that has caused him to forget his marriage and to remember only the events of fifteen years previous, embodies what Caruth describes as “the traumatic nightmare, undistorted by repression or unconscious wish...[that] occupies a space to which willed access is denied” (West 35). But when applied to Kitty and Jenny, the parameters of traumatic memory are more difficult to determine.

Jenny the narrator deliberately heightens the language in the novel. She asserts that "I could send my mind creeping from roil to room like a purring cat, rubbing itself against all the brittle beautiful things that we had either recovered from antiquity or dug from the obscure pits of modern craftsmanship . . . I was sure that we were reserved from the reproach of luxury because we had made a fine place for Chris, our little part of the world" (2-3). Her continual efforts to justify the luxuries of surroundings for the sake of Chris's turns hollow, he felt angry about his female relatives who spend money irresponsibly and viewed the house as a reminder of his left son. Jenny's obsessed admiration of the Baldry court represents a distinct form of

traumatic recall that is parallel to Christopher's attempt to reconstruct the past in order to escape from the present which is full of troubling realities. In this sense there is repression of trauma in the novel.

The trauma that they face is the forced reconstruction of their social identities precipitated by the economic and cultural shifts of the war, which they fight against.

Aside from the socioeconomic aspects of *The Return of the Soldier*, Jenny's narrative use of wartime imagery is a more conventional aspect of the trauma narrative, but also addresses the tension between the war and home fronts. The distinctions between male and female spaces of war have been blurred by the war-films and newspapers, allowing knowledge of trench warfare to pervade the text. Though Jenny has not experienced the warfare directly, these forms of simulation provide her with knowledge of combat scenes that act as a catalyst for her own traumatic experience. From the early pages of the novel, this phenomenon becomes apparent in the form of recurrent nightmares, as Jenny admits that "of late I have had bad dreams about him [Christopher]" (5). The dream itself is an almost cinematically vivid depiction of a war scene: "By night I saw Chris running across the brown rottenness of No Man's Land, starting back there because of the awfulness of an unburied head...For on the war-films I had 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" (2). Here the disturbingly precise battle scene possesses the haunted bitterness. But for all its focus on Christopher's struggle for survival, this aspect of Jenny's narrative also illuminates her own traumatic dilemma. Kitty, much like her shell-shocked husband,

Chris (the novel's central protagonist and the focus of most literary criticism), also experiences severe trauma and in turn suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Yet, because her war is a private, feminine battle, Kitty's trauma is not recognized easily.

The dismissal of news brought by Margaret illustrates the reaction to trauma. Jenny's narrative use of wartime imagery is a more conventional trauma narrative but the way she provides the narration addresses the tension between the war and home fronts. Male and female spaces of war have been blurred by the war films and newspapers. Jenny has the knowledge of combat scenes (her own traumatic experience in metaphorical sense) though she has not experienced trench warfare, 'a deep ditch'. Recounting the horrors of the war front allows her to become the voice which translates his experience in a way that he cannot. In her essay "Trauma and Testimony," Dori Laub analyzes a similar dynamic between interviewers and Holocaust survivors: "The listener (or the interviewer) becomes the Holocaust witness *before* the narrator does to a certain extent, the interviewer-listener takes on the responsibility for bearing witness that previously the narrator felt he bore alone, and therefore could not carry out. It is the encounter and the coming together between the survivor and the listener, which makes possible something like a repossession of the act of witnessing" (Caruth 69). Yet, Chris cannot remember his experience of the past, so it is left to Jenny to reconstruct them from her knowledge through newsreels and newspapers. Once Chris returns to baldly court she describes his confusion as that of war prisoner asserting all the inhabitants of this new tract of time were his enemies, all its circumstances his prison bars. Despite Chris's distrust towards her in his

amnesiac state she prefers to ally Chris regain his memory and self as his "trusted nurse" (West 8). From the early pages of the novel traumatic experience becomes apparent in the form of recurrent nightmares, as Jenny admits that "of late I have had bad dreams about him . . ." (7). The dream itself is a vivid depiction of war scene. The battle scene possesses the haunted bitterness. Jenny's narrative of Christopher's struggle for survival also illuminates her own traumatic dilemma.

Chris turns to Margaret, his former love paying no attention to Kitty and Jenny as well. Chris has sought refuge with a Margaret and has all forgotten her. Much as she tries to sympathize with his happy immersion in the past, this touching scene parallels her nightmare. "There he was running across the lawn across No-man's-Land . . . I assumed at Margaret's feet lay safety" (16).

An examination of West's depiction of trauma, though narrative focus is ostensibly on the man returning home, in fact explicates the ways in which women handle trauma on the home front. West's selection to conclude the novel with a psychologist's agenda for curing Christopher's shell-shock produces ambivalence towards the advantages and limitations of the psychoanalytic method. The arrival of Dr. Anderson for the women in *The Return of the Soldier* is in many ways both a blaming and curse. Once he is invited into the drawing room, he verbally attacks Kitty when he suggests that Christopher could cure himself if he would make an effort only. His response is that there is a deep self in Chris suppressed that takes its revenge. But Jenny understands this as diluted truth. This blame placed on Kitty for Chris's amnesia hardly a fair assessment of wife who has waited loyally for his return, and has

suffered her own trauma through the death of their only son and now through her husband's shell-shock. Now she is doubly traumatized. The insensitive probing of Dr. Anderson into the death of Oliver and Margaret's previous sexual relationship with Chris only serves to traumatize her further while appearing to cure her husband.

Dr. Anderson, during his process to cure Chris, uses the knowledge to castigate Kitty once more for her omission, then urges Margaret to "take him something the boy wore, some toy they used to play with" (40). As he sees it, his job is to return Chris to a stable psychological state and to the war front; the stress and shame this attempt will place on the women in his life is immaterial. His bumbling method and awkward confusing behavior, however, proves effective for when Chris returns to the house after seeing Oliver's Jersey and ball, he looks "every inch a soldier" and is declared "cured" by his wife (44). Though the psychoanalyst succeeds in reviving Chris from his amnesia, the treatment method seems short-sighted, ignoring any post-traumatic stress that might have been caused by his time on the frontlines. While recalling him to the present, psychoanalysis is hardly the source of happy ending since Chris has been treated and estimated to be returned to service, reinitiating the traumatic cycles through which he and the women who wait for him have repeatedly suffered.

If one is to examine the psychological state of Kitty throughout *The Return of the Soldier* requires a return to the description of Oliver's nursery on the first page of the novel. In its initial lines, Jenny has happened on Kitty just as she "slips the key into the lock" of the nursery door. The room has been "kept in all respects as though

there was still a child in the house" (1). His rocking house, "Teddy Bear", and "Woolly White dog" are all there, with the exception of their owner (2). Here, Kitty is revisiting her dead. The description of this scene, Oliver's former toys have been kept in place, indicates that Kitty has not mourned the loss of her son in a successful and working way. In Freud's words, this "melancholia" [. . .] is on the one hand, like mourning, a reaction to the real loss of loved object: but over and above this, it is marked by a determinant that is absent in normal mourning or which, if it is present, transforms the latter into pathological mourning.

On the surface Kitty is an unlikable character, seemingly unsympathetic towards her husband. However, the second glance reveals many of the characteristics of the melancholic personality. Her obsessive attempts to surround herself with expensive decor is a method of seeking comfort for creating a fantasy in which she doesn't have to face the untimely death of her son or the possibility of dangers on her husband on the frontlines. Kitty's melancholia has resulted from an inability to address traumatic strain or injure, as she suppresses it through the construction of a fantasy in which it does not exist. Fantasy for her is a way to cope trauma. Gendered analysis of *The Return of the Soldier* is significant for opening new lines of inquiry in terms of women's agency during wartime, the limits of trauma theory and the larger socio-cultural anxieties that pervade the text. The majority of culturally accepted World War I texts utilize the first-person account of a soldier who is struggling to survive or to come to terms with his injuries in the war.

When we examine the importance of female characters in West's depiction of trauma re-affirms her subversion of male-centered literary tradition. Here, the narrative focus on the man returning home explicates the ways in which women handle trauma on the home front. Jenny struggles to reclaim her relationship with Chris by becoming his testimonial voice; Kitty tries to deny the double traumas of her son's death and her husband's amnesia through the illusory reconstruction of the prewar aristocracy; Margaret sacrifices her own happiness in suggesting the way to treat Chris's shell-shock. During the First World War women could access the horrors of the front through film, newspapers, and recorded interviews. The resultant trauma caused by this knowledge is a largely forgotten history acknowledged by West. Another insight that can be drawn from paralleling trauma theory and *The Return of the Soldier* is the field's relative silence on the subject of the First World War. The works of trauma scholars have primarily discussed the Second World War, particularly in terms of the mass destruction caused by the Holocaust and Hiroshima and their manifestations in literature and film.

Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* has caused a lot of discussion and disagreement in the literature of Great War. No scholar can object that this novel has brought forward the story of war that has evolved and has come to be accepted as true. West's shell-shocked Chris Baldry in *The Return of the Soldier* tends to provide contradiction between the ideas of amends and peace that had been time and again linked with the home coming tale. The narrative of West further places war trauma as the dominant literary construction. In fact it is physically and mentally wounded

soldier that appears to be the most symbolic visual reminder of the Great War inflicted on human kind.

Most of the war narratives posed the critical issue that of the soldier's impossibility of bearing witness to war trauma suggesting death as the only reality after war, being placed between life and death. However, the arrival of the returned soldier as narrated in the first person by Chris's Cousin tells that story of Chris Baldry, an army officer sent home from the western front suffering from shell- shock lacks the experience of war. That is to say, despite the fact that the story revolves around the shell-shocked Chris, his own trauma is in the state of being absent from the novel. So, shell- shock, here, becomes only a wound that the audiences are able to perceive the immediate visible effect of trauma. The characters in the novel use the word 'wounded' to refer Chris's mental disorder, “‘ How is he wounded?’ She asked. The caller traced a pattern on the carpet with her blunt toe. I don't know how to put it; he is not exactly wounded. A shell burst” (6).

In this context, by not specifying the origin of the wound, West draws our attention to the soldier's emotional response rather than to the traumatic event itself. The only allusion to trauma is the amnesia that has wiped out the last fifteen years of the character's life. Chris has been made to forget the death of his only son, Oliver, and his marriage with Kitty that he considers selfish. Instead, he has regressed to the time of his young manhood in Monkey Island in which he was in love with Margaret who was a daughter of an inn keeper. West brings death home as a haunting presence but making it the forgotten memory. Shell- shock indeed becomes an effective literary

device to bring attention to the mental wound and to portray Chris as an inactive victim who is incompetent to cope with trauma. Amnesia acts as an escape from unhappy life. It also becomes safe passage to Margaret for Chris. Here, both amnesia and Margaret are path to survival and unfulfilled desire respectively.

Taking all these into account, Rebecca West's novel can be regarded as a fictional elaboration of Freud's theories on trauma. The story in *The Return of the Soldier* revolves around shell-shock, psychotherapy and cure as its main themes. In fact, Chris' magical cure may seem upsetting. The ultimate cure of the soldier seems or is the matter of surprise whilst the character of Margaret has been the subject to play an essential role in the process of Chris' recovery.

West's representation of War trauma, of Chris' struggle for survival puts forward a need in trauma theory to formulate Freud's idea that depict the problem of trauma solely as a problem of destruction and compulsive repetition of the nightmares of war. A close analysis of *The Return of the Soldier* suggests the soldier's post-traumatic desire to live and love which is a move beyond Freudian models that reassesses also the meaningful act of survival by bearing witness along with the importance of the traumatic experience. The character of Margaret is co owner of the traumatic event in this sense. Thus, West's novel is a narrative where she puts forward the theme and need of survival.

The most important link between *The Return of the Soldier* and trauma is an essential element of human experience that can be symbolized but cannot be confronted. West uses the returning soldier as a symbol, Chris Baldry, a figure who

disrupts the lives of Jenny, Kitty and Margaret is an representative and typical representation of the shell-shocked soldiers in many respects. Chris Baldry disrupted their lives just as veteran soldiers disrupted a society uncomfortable with trauma and death: "Indeed, I never realized the horror of warfare until I saw my cousin..." claims Frank Baldry (10). In fact, Chris is presented as someone who has realized death and whose realization shapes the life of himself and of those around him. Along with the return of Chris, death also enters their domestic sphere in the form of wound which cannot be healed properly and fully. The impact is such that even Kitty seems to notice that this was no pretense and that something as impassable as death lay between them" (29).

The return of the shell-shocked soldier discloses an internal principle of death that upsets the very foundations upon which each individual creates his or her sense of the self. The soldier, Chris in West's novel is very much alive. So, he doesn't bring death home nor even he brings any evidence of war with him. He has no physical wound and no memory of the war. Still to our surprise his presence in the novel is no less traumatic what the soldier brings home in this context is the death drive. Most surprising aspect in the novel is that not being able to consciously retrieve any image of death, West's soldier seems as if he is grieving at the loss of the other and his own as well. The deep melancholic state of Chris after his return to Baldry court suggests the escape from a death affecting endlessly on life. Indeed, the first encounter with the narrator, Jenny and with "the little globe of ease" (3) - illustrates the complexity and confusion of his feelings representing his pre-war existence:

Chris, I went on, ' it's so wonderful to have you safe'. 'Safe', he repeated. He sighed very deeply and continued to hold my hands.

There was a rustle in the shadows, and he dropped my hands. The face that looked out of the dimness to him was very white, and her teeth in a distressed grimace. (11)

The soldiers living experience of trauma seems to reduce his existence so that the women in his life are left into incomprehensible wonder suggesting a never ending crisis of life and death whether he is mentally unstable " either is means he is mad, our Chris, our splendid sane, all broken and queer, not knowing us ..." (8), or whether " This is all a blind....he is pretending " (15). This indefinable quality not only leads to the incomprehension of Chris' behavior but also Jenny's imagination:

By nights I saw Chris running across the brown rottenness of No-man's - land, starting back here because he trod upon a hand, hot 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 I have seen men slip down as softly from the trench- parapet. (2)

Nightmarish images bring death far beyond the time and space of the actual fighting and speak of its illusive quality.

Despite the fact that shell- shocked can be seen as the explicit symbol of the soldier's encounter with death, considering Chris' amnesia as the cause of single happening would simply be mistake to ignore the experiences of Chris' life which are

previously present when he is made to go to war. In spite of constant blame made by Jenny regarding her cousin's sickness, West clearly provides us the presence of death that has been spread all over the Baldry Court long before Chris' going to war. The reference to the death of Chris' father at an early age suffocates youth hungry for romantic adventure and forces him to handle the Baldry Court: "First 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 " (4), that also reveals the enough backgrounds of the distress felt by Chris. Likewise, the death of his son Oliver is another traumatic factor in the novel whose presence is still preserved in the room as if untouched:

Now that the child was dead; but I had come suddenly on Kitty as she slipped the key into the lock, and I had lingered to look in at the high room, so full of whiteness and clear colors, so unendurably gay and familiar, which is kept in all respects as though there were still a child in the house. It was the first lavish day of spring and the sunlight...fell on the rocking horse, which had been Chris' idea of an appropriate present for his year old son. (1-2)

These lines suggest the impacts of the emotions due to earlier loss which has been functioning as alchemy to merge the past and present trauma disturbing the experience of time in West's novel.

Trauma in its real sense can't be located in certain time it is the experience which can be interpreted in terms of absence rather than that of presence. The absence is of something that could not be pinpointed in any certain time and space. Chris is the

soldier in the novel who is made to go to war being previously possessed by the absence of this kind. Jenny, the narrator of the novel tries to console herself:

We had nourished that surpassing amiability which was so habitual that one took it as one of his physical characteristics, and regarded any lapse into bad temper as a calamity as startling as the breaking of a leg; here we had made happiness inevitable for him. I could shut my eyes and think of innumerable proofs of how well we had succeeded, for there never was so visibly contented a man. (3)

However, "It was his (Chris') hopeless hope that sometime he would have an experience that would act on his life like alchemy, turning to gold all the dark metals of events" suggests quite different than that of Jenny's attempt of convince supporting a sort of sense of emptiness because of which he is made to escape (2-3). Later in the novel, Jenny herself acknowledges that the pre-war pretended happiness of Chris as absurd, "nothing and everything was wrong, I said at last. I've always felt it" (39).

Chris' inability with coping with trauma and the quality of wounds he finds is at the heart of trauma. Amnesia is indeed Chris' way of performing that is untellable. Chris' life revolves around the traumatic significance. He is possessed by the loss that he is living like a living ghost in the eye of Jenny: "I heard, amazed, his step ring strong upon the stone, for I had felt his absence as a kind of death from which he would emerge ghost like, impalpable " (11). Chris Baldry is made to "felt the old wood", "humming through his teeth", move silently through the Baldry Court remaining "in the shadows" (11), not only troubled by the forgotten dead but also by

no longer recognizable family as his own: "it was his furtiveness that was heartrending, it was as though he were an outcast, and we loved him stout policemen. Was Baldry Court so sleek a place that the unhappy felt offenders there? Then we had all living wickedly, and he too" (13). What West meet unexpectedly in the soldier's shell- shock is not only the negative consequences of past traumatic events but rather, a strange and puzzling experience of survival. In this regard trauma produces a break between life and death to some extent, it also uncovers the quality that can be developed for the ability to perceive or understanding. It means there is the possibility of the emergence of the drive to life from within the theory of the death drive. Then there is the possibility of the emergence of hope amidst the absence and loss. The difficulty to deal with trauma is not only the difficulty of destruction but also, basically the mystery of survival. In the novel, West establishes the new relationship between consciousness and life. Chris, being unable to term with the past, is drowned in the act of surviving that is not able to be understood. The soldier's unsuccessful effort permeates the story with dream like moments that affects the development of the character and also the way time is perceived, "strangers had come into the house, and everything was appalled by it, even time" (12).

So far as the effect of the novel is observed, this novel aims at the future but not the actual one, as suggested in the novel by the soldier's firm decision not to know: "resolution not to know" (32). Since west requires to make the soldier remember to make him forget in order to relate disturbing past - memories of war to earlier domestic trauma and her soldier is unable to remember consciously, West takes help of Margaret, an ideal past that connects Chris to life. Jenny shows her

approval for soldier's choosing Margaret over death with implicit sadness due to the growing distance that separates her from her Chris:

I felt, indeed, a cold intellectual pride in his refusal to remember his prosperous maturity and his determined dwelling in the time of his first love, for it showed him so much saner than the rest of us, who take life as it comes, loaded with the unessential and the irritating. I was even willing to amidst that this choice of what was to him reality out of all the appearances so copiously presented by the world, this adroit recovery of the dropped pearl of beauty, was the act of genius I had always expected from him. But that didn't make less agonizing this exclusion from his life. (31)

Chris' dream of happiness and peace seem to be recovered when the writer begins towards a narrative of survival. It is curious that death not only appears as the sign under which Chris continue to love but also determines how he comes to love. The soldier can look forward by going back to the years in the past that is, in the Monkey Island which indeed is his desired and loved place. It is obvious that Monkey Island can be considered as healing place:

It was strange how both Chris and she spoke of it as though it were not a place, but a magic state which largely explained the actions performed it. Strange, too that both of them should describe meticulously the one white hawthorn that stood among the poplars by

the ferry side. I suppose a thing that one has looked at with some are one loves acquires forever after a special significance. (24)

Yet, this is not the total recovery; this is only the beginning of the soldier's recovery, not the end. West takes the two characters - Chris and Margaret - back to their ideal past and through this idyllic relationship provides the context for healing. Chris realizes his potential for survival that depends on his act of giving testimony. Margaret's willingness to listen is used to help Chris realize this.

West's soldier is overwhelmingly exposed to painful isolation. It is assumed that trauma survivors have a story to be spoken aloud. Traumatic survival can have a healing value. In the novel West explores Chris's process of working through trauma and giving testimony that is made possible by the relationship with Margaret. Though Chris does not seem to know what he knows as such he appears to remain in the condition of speechlessness, Margaret presence becomes fruitful and offers that protected holding space necessary to face the traumatic event.

Desire to life is an important presence in the novel. West portrays a veteran who needs romance to be restored as a man and to develop desire within him again. Chris cousin recounts his first meeting with the shell- shocked soldier and refers to what he interprets as a state of emotional instability in a letter addressed to Jenny. In plain language his interpretation of the soldier's state is nothing more than Chris' sexual interest for Margaret to the extent that he can't find solace without her:

He said very fractiously: " I don't like little woman and I hate anybody, male or female, who sings. O God, I don't like this Kitty. Take her

away! And then he began to rave again about this woman. He said that he was consumed with desire for her and that he would never rest until he once more held her in arms. In had no suspicion that Chris had this side to his nature, and it was almost a relief when he fainted again. (10)

This is to say, the problem that the writer poses in the novel is not only Chris's fear of death but also of desiring to live intensely and extremely so far as possible. But desire is not only erotic it also connotes wish as well.

Chris longing to reach out to Margaret expresses his special concern for one whom he might regard as his future self. Thus, desire is given focus as the motivating life forces needed to relieve the pain and fill the void as such the soldier's imperative to live emerge from traumatic events and near death experiences. In fact desire emerges as the last memory that survives amidst the ravages of war and Amnesia:

His love was changeless. Lifting her down from the niche, he told her so....The columns that had stood so hard and black against the quivering tide of moonlight and starlight seemed to totter and dissolve. He was lying in a hateful world....full of blooming noise and splashes of fire and wails for water, and his back was hurting intolerably. (20)

Chris Baldry is made to survive because Margaret is a person who justifies his living. Margaret has strong appeal in soldier's life which in the novel is revealed in his anxiety to see her again after he returns from war: "If I do not see Margaret Allington I shall die" (15) and her thought intrudes on the soldier's mind which also causes anxiety in the lives of other two women of the family: "But as he spoke his gaze

shifted to the shadows in the corners of the room, and the blood ran hot under his skin. "He was thinking of another woman, of another beauty" (13).

Trauma seems to blur the boundaries between whether Chris's desire is more compelling than his need or vice-versa. In fact Chris's desire for Margaret originates where the borders between one's needs and wants vanish. Margaret represents the soldier's desire to love and be loved. She is also his search for meaning and purpose in a moment of crisis and opportunity as well. This becomes clear when Chris seems to have found the peace of mind following their first encounter. His mind now shows peace to make sense of what surrounds him: "I want to tell you that I know it is all right. Margaret has explained to me" (29). Margaret becomes the most required companion to Chris. She possesses the quality of explorer and guide in Chris 'journey' without whom he cannot traverse or return home alone:

Indeed, Margaret is the only character who has the potential for restoring Chris to health. The narrator says, "As though her embrace fed him" (29). Her willingness to listen Chris, her committed presence allows Chris's memory to flow again. At this point though Margaret seems to be only passive listener, her active role also deserves recognition. It is because of Margaret's presence as listener, Chris becomes a reality beyond himself. Margaret is portrayed far from playing the traditional passive role of woman figure used to be drawn after the Great War. She comes to look for record the Chris' story of trauma, to experience trauma in herself. Margaret respects Chris's silence, "sitting by him, just watching" (33) for the reason that she is aware of the fact that Chris has lost prior knowledge of what has happened,

that being afraid of the knowledge he may prefer not to talk and to protect himself from the fear of being listened and listening to. Silence, for Margaret, seems to be sacred bondage for them so that they no longer feel alone:

So it was not until now, when it happened to my friends, when it was my dear Chris and my dear Margaret who sat thus englobed in peace as in a crystal sphere that I knew it was the most significant, as it was the loveliest, attitude in the world. It 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 and that is the great thing for a woman to do. (33)

Implication is that silence here becomes therapeutic communication. For this reason silence means respect and knowing how to wait.

Margaret's resolution and independence thought make her presence in the household race and guiding: " Indeed she had been generous to us all, for at her touch our lives had at last fallen into a pattern; she was the sober thread the interweaving" (33-34), exclaims the surprised Jenny. Even Dr. Anderson addresses "he faced Margaret as though she were the nurse in charge of the case and gave her a brisk little nod" (35). Moreover, she becomes the voice of science when she offers final trick "Remind him of the boy" to bring Chris to redemption of trauma (40).

Such powerful agency buttresses a vigorous effect on the character of Margaret. According to Jenny: "She was very different now, she was listening to a familiar air played far away" (30). On the other hand Chris's narrative of suffering

transforms Margaret's world and deepens her sense of dignity and increases her relatedness to the soldier. Feeling herself emotionally overpowered she takes the role of the rescuer and experiences the despair same as the soldier. Not only this, she is compelled to discover that she has also been affected:

She was standing up and in her hand she held the photograph of Oliver that I keep on my dressing table. It is his last photograph, the one taken just a week before he died.

'Who is this?' She asked.

'The only child Chris ever had. He died five years ago.'

'Five years ago?' Why did it matter so?

'yes', I said.

'He died Five Years ago, my Dick.' Her eyes grew great. 'How old was he?'

'Just two'

'My Dick was two'. We both were breathing hard. (37)

Margaret and Jenny- both are teller and witness here. Margaret can experience her own loss and she can also share it as well. Margaret as a distinct human being has also undergone trauma but, nevertheless she carries out her function of witness. Although her pain is related to Chris's, she nonetheless doesn't become the victim rather she preserves her position as healer. However, the destiny affects the soldier more harshly

than it affects the others. Margaret needs to address Chris's confusion. She needs to eliminate his fear as she is made to carry out her role as listener. So, she takes part in Chris's struggle with the memories and his and her own traumatic past. These all supports desire as the framework of healing and role of Margaret.

In the narrative of trauma as depicted by West, neither writer nor reader can fully understand the horror of the event or the full meaning of its narrative form. The problem West possesses in her novel is that the need to tell is prevented by the impossibility of telling, "There are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough and right listening to articulate the story that can't be fully captured in thought, memory and speech" (Laub: 78).

The text makes great efforts to construct the truth from the encounter of the witnessing in spite of difficulty to access a reality that seems beyond representation. Margaret relieves trauma even before Jenny, the narrator: "Margaret took the jersey and the ball, and clasped them as though they are a child. When she got to the door she stopped and leaned against the lintel. Her head fell back; her eyes closed; her mouth was contorted as though she swallowed bitter drink" (43). West does not represent the scene directly to stress the therapeutic power of silence and "mementos" (Caruth: 14) of the lost ones.

Margaret takes on the responsibility of witness that Jenny seems to bear on her own. Jenny therefore cannot carry out the function of bearing witness. Jenny only seems to move closer but withdraws her herself from the experience itself, she is sure that there is a truth that she should reach out but words do not seem to be adequate

enough to express it in words: "I lay face downward on the ottoman and presently heard her poor boots go creaking down the corridors. Though the feeling of doom that filled the room as tangibly as a scent I stretched out to the thought of Chris" (West 44). Trauma in such has been hidden and the horror of the past is caused to continue as an elusive memory so doesn't seem reality. Yet, there is the need for the writer to put on redemption of trauma that leaves no margin of doubt. This is possible only when the truth comes out: "the truth is the truth, and he must know it" (43).

In this manner, the soldier is made to know the truth in final scene and readers are also indirectly accessed to it: "Out there Margaret was breaking his heart and hers, using words like a hammer, looking wise, doing it so well" (44). It is assumed that acknowledging the truth happens to become a form of going back to life. In this sense it is not survivors who survive to tell the story but it is to tell the story they need to survive. Chris is capable to return to sanity through the process of testimony. Ironically, the redemption of the shell-shocked soldier also means going back to war. The soldier who returns or recovers from trauma has to go to war:

It recalled to me that bad as we were we were yet not the worst circumstance of his return. When we had lifted the yoke of our embraces from his shoulders 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. (44)

Chris is led to a rethinking of the essential role of protection of truth in the process of survival and his ability to continue life after trauma. Chris is brought to the realization that the lost ones are never coming back, that there will not be healing reunion among those who are missing, that life is all hopes and dreams unsatisfied.

Chris is the soldier who returns home with the "hard tread upon the novel heal" (44). Although Chris recaptures the lost memory, the truth the soldier finds is not what he expects in his heart. "With his back turned on this fading unhappiness Chris walked across the lawn. He was looking up under his brows at the over-arching house as though it were a hated place to which, against all his hopes, business had forced him to return" (44). For Chris testimony not only stands as an act of facing loss, but also as a means for reconciliation of the two worlds: one is the world that he has to return to. However, this reconciliation of the two worlds cannot bring back the dead, it cannot undo the horror and terror neither it can reestablish the safety and the harmony of the home. This also implies the repetition of the experience of loss. It is not certain that testimony can change the past neither it can create illusion. It means to say that Chris's evidence permeates for a passage through the past to the future and in some aspects for a repossession of the two.

Jenny refers to the necessity to "safeguard the dignity of the beloved" (43) and claims that if Chris doesn't know the truth it would completely destroy Chris as a man: "He who was a flag flying from our tower would become a queer-shaped patch of eccentricity on the country-side, the full-mannered music of his being would become a witless piping in the bushes. He would not be quite a man" (43). Indeed,

West restores Chris's integrity as a person by setting the stage for a traumatic event to reoccur or happen again. The most crucial thing is that even in the extreme situations and circumstances the soldier's testimony emphasizes his will to live and his will to know as knowing the truth means going back to war.

West, however, doesn't merely imply that the truth makes the soldier worthy of respect; what West suggests is also that Chris's ties to life are so strong that his will to live will not be broken, even if he has to return to the front. Jenny expresses, "there was a physical gallantry about him which would still, even when the worst had happened, leap sometimes to the joy of life" (44). Acknowledging the truth is costly causing loss as the regaining of past memories brings the soldier near to death than to life. This is the time when he gets awareness that he is not alone and there is somebody else he can trust or have faith in. West allows soldier to reconcile with life, which acts as a crucial safeguard against the dangers of death despite of its sorrows.

Indeed, West reproduces some of the patterns and tropes of the soldier as a traumatized victim which are characteristics of the literature of the Great War; the writer makes a clear and crystal move beyond the prevailed contemporary beliefs: she allows for the possibility of survival. *The Return of the Soldier* not only makes great efforts to get free from or to break the sequence of compulsive repetition of trauma but also delineates an experience of survival beyond death which stresses the significance of desire as life-affirming and the need for the truth in the reconciliation with the past. The character of Margaret whereby both desire and truth are firmly rooted is elevated from the role of passive nurse and given the agency to become a

protagonist of the traumatic event. West's response to war trauma is part of a peculiar experience of survival. She uses desire as the frame work of healing and the reunion of Chris and Margaret-the lost love is made essential for the soldier to bear witness to trauma.

Of course it is well known fact that war leads to trauma. This fact is well understood by society and is historically well documented. War causes trauma to several people in all the warring countries. Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* portrays man who has returned home from fighting physically, but not mentally. Chris Baldry suffers from shell shock, a recent new idea at that time. Women are special victims though they have not directly participated in the war. The soldier Chris Baldry suffers from shell-shock, he is seen by various doctors but ultimately these professionals have no satisfactory effects and are almost unable to cure him. The amnesiac soldier in the story experiences the feminine version of grief and trauma while the women surrounding him are left to respond in a masculine sense seeking comfort for creating a fantasy or proving the traumatic survival can have a healing value.

IV. Conclusion: A Call to Survival in *The Return of the Soldier*

Trauma is defined as a severe emotional shocking having a deep effect upon the personality. The word trauma, deriving from the Greek word for wound, represents a concept of great complexity. Originally used to describe an external injury, over time the use shifted to include the kind of injuries that remain unseen: wounds of the internal kind, wounds sustained by the psyche. As such, psychological wounding became defined as both caused by a trauma and as being trauma itself. The naming of the wound that is trauma has therefore been a contested area throughout human history. The definition of trauma experience has been driven by the central question of how an internal wound becomes both localized and externalized.

Characters' beautiful and decorated life is ruined by their emotional shock. The whole novel is furnished with the effect of shell-shock on a soldier and the attempt of his nearest and dearest ones to handle the situation. Trauma can never be purely individual event, in the same way there cannot be a private language because it always involves the community or the cultural setting in which characters are placed. The shell-shock as war trauma not only troubles the soldier but also other characters are victimized by it and are dealing with their own episodes of trauma.

The novel centers on the family life of an injured soldier coming home from the war front. At the beginning of the story, his wife Kitty Ellis and his cousin Jenny, who lives with them in their property Baldry Court, are anxiously awaiting Chris's return. After many days' futile waiting for his letter, a Mrs. Grey visits them. She informs them that Chris is injured and hospitalized. As his injuries are mostly

psychological, he believes himself to be fifteen years younger when he was in love with Margaret Arlington, the now Mrs. Grey. He emotionally returns to her instead of his real home. Jenny takes Chris back home and invites Margaret to visit them in Baldry Court and help them cure Chris's amnesia. Jenny admires Margaret's example in helping Chris in every possible way and finds an inspiration for her own life in that. When Margaret discovers that Chris and Kitty's son, Oliver, died at an early age and it traumatized Chris so much that he keeps his room intact, she tries to use the child's jersey and ball to awaken his memory. Chris's amnesia is cured and he comes back to the reality-1916, his family life and business, and the Great War-from the lost innocence.

Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* the very first World War I novel, tells the story of Christopher Baldry, a captain who, as the result of a war injury, loses his memory of the past fifteen years of his life. Baldry is sent to hospital, where instead of asking for his wife Kitty, he says he wants nothing more than to see Margaret Allington, the woman he was in love with fifteen years before. Only Margaret is now married to another man, and to complicate matters further, she belongs to a different social class. *The Return of the Soldier* is narrated by Chris' cousin Jenny, who is staying with his wife Kitty at Baldry Court when the two receive the news of his injury. The news comes from none other than Margaret Allington herself, who discovers what had happened before they did due to Chris' amnesia. Going up to a genteel house and telling a lady that she knows more of her husband than she herself does is intensely painful to her – Jenny realizes this, of course, but Kitty shows Margaret no mercy. The initial chapters were actually somewhat

uncomfortable to read, because West portrays the full force of the upper class' contempt for Margaret with no restraint whatsoever. Kitty and Jenny hate Margaret "like the rich hate the poor"; she's portrayed as grotesque by virtue of being plain and having no money; her mere existence is an unforgivable intrusion on the perfection of Baldry Court. But of course, Rebecca West does this for a reason, and as the story progresses this picture begins to alter. Through Chris' eyes, and eventually through Jenny's as well, we begin to see this woman's humanity, and all that lies beyond the reach of money or social stance. The facts of the story speak for themselves.

All through this short novel, Jenny's narration builds up a mood of loss, missed opportunities and nostalgia. Her initial account of their perfect pre-war life begins to break apart, and what surfaces in its stead is a world of suppressed feelings and unacknowledged problems lurking behind the seemingly perfect Baldry Court life. *The Return of the Soldier* is a mediation on the then unacknowledged psychological effects of the Great War, on memory and identity, on social class, and on the concepts of sanity, adulthood, responsibility and truth.

In the novel, the soldier brings home the revelation about the war and the effects of war on the domestic scene, but Chris' own trauma is absent from the novel because what West exposes in this novel is the possibility of survival through recovery rather than the traumatic experience itself. Jenny's repressed passion for Chris drives her towards the necessity of his cure.

After Margaret hands Chris his dead son's belongings to remind him of his son's death, it shocks him out of his amnesia. He acquires a visible transformation.

This research analyses the traumatic experiences and the recovery of the soldier and his relatives whose lives are triggered by the traumatic environment and its consequence through out their lives. Though they have faced with traumatic experiences their efforts lead them to new survival through the redemption. At the end of the novel Chris is apparently 'cured', he returns to the reality of his own emotional vacuum. After this seemingly purifying experience he is reinstalled as English gentleman: 'Every inch a soldier' (44) giving us a paradoxical lesson that it is essential to resuscitate the past only when it is worthwhile to remember, else better buried forever. West proposes love as a solution to dignify human behavior. Margaret always chooses duty and what is morally right suggesting every individual has to accept his or her reality. One must rise to one's lips with the wine of truth regardless of whether it is sweet or not.

Talking in a broader sense, I find reconciliation between innocence and experience. Chris desperately clings to that innocence but is finally compelled with no choice but to survive with all his experiences. The novel leads to conclusions on: how to confront reality, how to defend truth versus falsity or evil. The novel provides deep, serious, psychological study of its main characters not forgetting that human behavior is also influenced by social context, rules and institutions.

The novel leads us to a kind of philosophy that we must drink a draught to be fully human. This philosophy expresses the knowledge of the traumatic real that will not allow the denial of pain. Chris mustn't only face the pain; he must become a soldier again. West challenges the notion of purely external cause of trauma; it's very

difficult to determine exactly where the cause of trauma lies. This is the novel emerged from the War; an exceptional kind of warfare and its effect on those fighting it. The story laments the wholesale change that had destroyed the pre-War way of life hoping to retrieve the best of what has been lost. Here, Margaret is 'eros' to which Chris returns after the 'thanatos' of World War I.

Thus, Rebecca West's response to war trauma is a peculiar experience of survival where desire is used as the framework for healing. Through out the novel the characters struggle to redeem to come out of trauma they are undergoing with, which occur also in their language. What West depicts in the novel is that trauma is not only the form of absence but also a call to survival through new forms of contact with others the act of surviving trauma discovers new ways. The characters in the novel are made to survive through the voices of its witness and survivors. At the end, they gain security; traumatic loss ends up since they are able to work through. Transference becomes occasion for working through the traumatic situation and it is all because their trauma is given voice in the novel. Expressing pain and loss in the wake of traumatic experience becomes a part of working through that transforms their traumatic memory. That is to say traumatic experience not only closes the possibility but also opens up in a new hope.