



To

My parents Ali and Dehbia, may God bless them with good health and a long life.

My husband Fawzi.

My two brothers Karim and Arezki.

My sisters ferroudja, farida, djedjega, zahia, karima, Naima.

My grandmother Sadia may God grant her highest paradise.

My friends Chahinaz and Zakia.

Lamia

To

My dear grandfather Madjid who is no longer with us.

My beloved parents: Mahmoud and Djamila Who shaped me into who I am today.

My dear brothers and sisters: Hakim, Ilyes, Samira, Siham, Diya, Lamia.

My nephews: Iles and Aylan My nieces: Alysia, Maysen, sofines.

My brothers in law: Khaled and Mouloud and all my family and friends.

Thinhinane

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## Abstract

This research paper deals with Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966). For its theoretical association, we have applied Stephen Greenblatt's theory of New Historicism (1980-1990). The main aim of this dissertation is to analyze West's portrayal of the Russian Revolution of 1917 by relying it to the most relevant ideas of New Historicism, like power. To achieve our purpose, we borrowed from New Historicism Stephen Greenblatt's concepts. Our work is divided into two major chapters, the first one explores the Contextualizing of the Narrative: Historical influences on Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966). In this chapter we interested to show how historical events are closely connected to story and how the novel reflects the broader political and social unrest of the time. The second chapter exposes the concept of political activism and Revolutionary Commitment shading light to how it is exercised by Women's Involvement to the Russian Revolution through Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966). Finally, we have come to the conclusion that demonstrate the important influence of historical events on human culture, feminist concern in society, and individual lives.

**Key words:** First World War, Russian Revolution, New Historicism, Political Activism, Bolshevik Revolution.

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## General Introduction

Russia's involvement in World War I was characterized by a significant political turmoil, military difficulties, and profound social changes. From the war's beginning in 1914 until the fall of the Tsarist government in 1917, the country experienced a series of crises that eventually provoked a revolution and led to the rise of a new political system. All over history, literature has been a great way for writers to share their personal stories and their own experiences, talk about important social problems, and create a picture of what life was like in their time.

The author Rebecca West used her book untitled *The Birds Fall Down* (1966) to create a right picture of the uncertain social and political situation in Russia before the revolution, focusing especially on how women's political involvement helped bring about important changes and how their actions were important in changing the country's social system.

The novel focuses on how Russia joined the First World War, after that the Bolshevik revolution. The present dissertation aims to study *The Birds Fall Down* (1966) from Rebecca West relying it to a New Historicism perspectives for understanding the Russian historical context of that time. We examine the novel *The Birds Fall Down* through this critical approach New Historicism makes the novel to reveal how the narrative depicts real historical events of its time and involves in a complex discourse with the culture and principles of that period.

the study of *The Birds Fall down* (1966) from a New Historicist perspective which highlights the relation between literature and history saying that texts are products of their

historical context. And this is an original theme which had never been dealt with, and this makes us inquisitive to go deeper and discover what West keeps inside.

### **Review of the Literature**

Relying on some critical works that we have read about Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966), we observed that many scholars including, Gilbert Sandra M, Harriet Devine Jump and Bernard Schweizer have studied the work from different perspectives, among them, feminist and political. They have analyzed the novel and interpreted it in different ways. Many of these scholars, highlight how West portrayed historical events by using personal narratives and creating a rich and complex portrayal of the Russian Revolution.

First, the scholar Gilbert Sandra M, in her essay entitled *Feminist Reading in Rebecca West's today The Birds Fall Down* (1966), studied West's work as a feminist novel. She assured that West's novel explored gender roles and experiences at the time of the Russian Revolution, and also argued that the novel draws how this gender evolved to challenge traditional expectations and the struggles of women for freedom in order to show their positions within society. This is depicted through the main character Laura Rowan who defeated the agreements through her trip to Russia and her contribution to the Revolution, even though Laura was influenced by traditional beliefs about women. Gilbert notes that the novel explored two opposite sides, new freedoms and old restrictions for women then she defined also the meaning of the title *the Birds Fall Down*; Rebecca West used "the Birds" as a symbol referring to women's struggle for freedom and self-independence from the generalizations against them. Therefore, Gilbert interpreted "the Birds" as a metaphor for the restrictions and challenges faced by women in society. (Gilbert, 2006.p, 17-32).

Second, Harriet Devine Jump is another critic who wrote an essay entitled *Rebecca West The Birds Fall Down (1966): A political Novel*. She focuses on the novel as a portrayal of political and social issues, particularly its critique of imperialism and colonialism. In addition, Harriet believed that the novel reflects West's personal beliefs and her loyalty to achieving social justice and opposition to imperialism. (Jump, 1997. p, 97-110).

The last critic in our review of the literature is named Bernard Schweizer who wrote a work entitled *Rebecca West Today Contemporary Critical Approaches*. In it, Schweizer examined *The Birds Fall Down (1966)* as a complex novel according to its language and writing style, in addition to its thematic elements. He emphasized the poetic realism that captured descriptive imagery and profound attention to details; Bernard Schweizer also delved into West's narrative structure by arguing about the complexity of the narrative impacts memory and identity. According to Schweizer, the novel's use of several narrators and perspectives allows West's to explore the ways in which individual and collective identities are shaped by historical events and cultural contexts. (Schweizer, 2006.p, 1-16).

### **Issue and Working Hypothesis**

From the above review of the literature, we can notice that Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* published in 1966 has been subject to much criticism. However, most of these critics limited themselves to evaluating the work's, while others have focused on its feminism perspectives. To our knowledge, no study has been undertaken so far to deal with *The Birds Fall Down* from a New- Historicist perspective. This is why we found it relevant to write a dissertation in which we will provide a thematic study of the selected novel from a new historicist approach.

The aim of the present research paper is to show that *The Birds Fall Down* reflects the historical context of the Russian Revolution and Political turmoil of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. To

achieve our purpose, we will employ some concepts of “New Historicism”, a critical method that emphasizes understanding literature through its historical context and examining how literary texts reflected the era of their creation. The main objective explores how Rebecca West represented the Russian Revolution (1917) as a background to explore power dynamics and social change in the novel. Based on this exploration, our working hypothesis is that west’s depiction of the Revolution reveals significant insights into the ideological struggles and personal consequences faced by individuals during this tumultuous period.

Finally, this research paper will provide a New Historicist reading of *The Birds Fall Down* by Rebecca West, exploring how the Russian Revolution of 1917 is portrayed in the novel. The focus will be on how West captures the historical context, the power dynamics, and the societal changes brought by the Revolution. By examining the novel through a New historicist lens, we can gain a deeper understanding of how West’s depiction of the Revolution reflects the larger historical and Social forces at play during that time.

As already mentioned in the issue, our dissertation will be a thematic study which will be conducted using some notions from Stephen Greenblatt’s theory of “New Historicism” (1980). His works, including *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980) and his introduction to *the Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance* (1982), will enable us to discuss and analyze the themes present in Rebecca west’s novel.

## **Methodological Outline**

At the methodological level, our research paper is undertaken following the IMRAD system. It is composed of four sections. It starts with an Introduction that states our main purpose. It includes a review of some of the literature written on Rebecca West ‘s *The Birds Fall Down*. Then, it raises our issue and working hypothesis. The Methods and Materials

section provides Stephen Greenblatt's theory New Historicism (1980-1990), as well as an overall synopsis of West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966) mentioned above. The Result section contains the findings of our research. The discussion section is composed of two chapters. The first chapter deals with the contextualizing the narrative. Its aim is to depict historical influences of Russian Revolution on Rebecca West's novel. The Second Chapter is concerned with women's contribution to the Russian Revolution 1917. It is presented through women's political activism and Revolutionary commitment. This involvement appears through female characters Laura, Tania and Sofia who played a major role during the Russian Revolution. Our dissertation ends with a general conclusion that restates the main issues undertaken within this piece of research.

## **II. Method and Materials**

This part of our research explores the theoretical basis of our study, provided by Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism to analyze Rebecca West's *The Bird's Fall Down* (1966). Our aim is to use the theory of New Historicism in order to study and analyze New Historicist and feminist reading of Rebecca West's novel, as well as to demonstrate how the writer's time influenced her writing.

### **Method**

#### **Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism**

Stephen Greenblatt was born in 1943 in Cambridge Massachusetts, he studied and graduated at Yale University and he taught at the University of California at Berkely, his first journal is untitled *Representation*, New Historicism is a way of looking at literature that became popular in the 1980s and 1990s. Stephen Greenblatt is considered the first scholar who started New Historicism theory and he became a very important figure in literary and cultural studies in American universities during those years. His ideas were influenced by some historical and theoretical works of Michel Foucault on how power works in society (*Stephen Greenblatt: Introduction to the power of form*, 2001, p. 2250).

New Historicism is a literary approach which became popular during the 1980s and 1990s. It was developed by Stephen Greenblatt who became an important figure in cultural poetics in US English Departments in 1980s and 1990s. Inspired by Michael Foucault's historical and theoretical understanding of power, New Historicists see that literary work as something created within a society full of conflicting ideas and opposing beliefs, this means that a literary text is a product of different values, traditions and circumstances.

Moreover, New Historicists often use important concepts including Textuality of History and Historicity of the Text.

Moreover, there are many scholars and thinkers who influenced and inspired the ideas of New Historicism, for instance the theory which is developed by the Marxist thinker named Louis Althusser, it is an approach that studies philosophy and the idea is about a person's values and beliefs, as well as their role in society, Althusser argues that history can be formed by those in power, and he did not consider literature as just a simple work, because he believed that any literary work influenced by the time and place it was produced.

According to New Historicism, literature should be studied how it depicts the historical and social context in which it was produced. In her work entitled *an Introduction to New Historicism*, Xiaotang Lyu asserts: "Louis Althusser's symptomatic reading inspires the new historicists to explore the deep meaning between the lines from different perspectives, and it adds the method to interpret the texts for New Historicism" (Lyu, 2021, p.1076). In addition, New Historicism uses two important things in order to show how the text is related to its context, John Brannigan in his book entitled *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, he states that according to "Textuality of History", literary works cannot be written in isolation with their time and place, it means that history is full of textuality and is the reason to the creation of any literary differs from 'Historicity of Texts' which means that history is a part of the context, literature impacts and depicts history and culture of its time of creation and historical background and the life experiences of the writer play a major role in the creation of literature. So New Historicism applied these two ideas to more understand literature by considering its historical background and how history influences literary texts. (Brannigan, 1998, p.204).

Louis Montrose certainly believed that new historicism was part of post-history, part of the recognition that historians could no longer look upon the

past as if they were not looking at the image of the present, as if they were dealing with an objective reality outside their own representations of it. Montrose explains that to recognize the historicity of texts is to specify the cultural and historical differences at work in both the literary text and the critical text, and that to recognize the textuality of history is to assume that nothing exists outside language, outside representations (Brannigan,1998, p.204)

According to Louis Montrose, New Historicism sees the past and the present as linked. It studies how the past and present are related and how different cultures and histories play a major role in the production of literary texts and it shows that literature is formed by the time and context it was written. Montrose claims that New Historicism understands that language, culture, and the present time influence how we realize the past which means that all these elements are related to literature.

Also, Harold Aram Vesser is known for his work in the field of cultural studies and his contribution to the development of new historicism. Harold Aram Veesser's work has helped people understand how literature is influenced and effects history, society, and politics. Additionally, according to New historicists the past and present cannot be separated, and understanding history helps us to better understand the present and Aram Veesser explains in his book entitled *The New Historicism Reader (1994)*, that the past is a way to understand the present and literature plays a major role in shaping history, society, and politics. (Veesser, 1994, p.4).

New historicism would also accept the pragmatic view that history is not merely a chronicle of the past but rather a pragmatic weapon for explaining the present and controlling the future. The past becomes a useable past only when it seems as a prefiguration of the present (Veesser, 1994, p.4).

According to Veesser's idea, the past becomes so important when we can notice how it connects to our lives. This approach suggests that history is not about remembering what happened in the past, but also for using that knowledge to understand the present and the future. In short, this theory highlights the importance of understanding the context in which a literary work was created, the time and place are included. Before the popularity of New

Historicism, people mainly focused on the text itself. However, New Historicism replaced this perspective to also reflect the conditions that inspired the author's writing.

## **Materials**

### **Life and times of Rebecca West**

Rebecca West, whose real name was Cicely Isabel Fairfield, was born on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1892, in London. She is a British writer of Scottish and Irish origins, raised in a family of intellectuals. Her mother was a pianist, and her father was an army officer, war columnist, and journalist. Following her father's profession, she became a journalist for the Nuremberg trials of Nazi War Criminals (1945-1946). West received her education at various schools, including George Watson's Ladies College in Edinburgh. Also when she took acting classes, she approved the name Rebecca West, inspired by the character from Henrik Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. Her earliest known work, a piece titled "*Two Poems*", was published in a native newspaper while she was still a teenager.

Rebecca West is mainly known as a journalist, novelist, and literary critic. Her form of work includes not only novels but also an enormous collection of essays, and articles on various topics like politics, feminism, history; and literature. Throughout her life, West traveled extensively, visiting countries including Yugoslavia, The United States, and South Africa. These travels deeply influenced her writing, allowing her to gain a richer, more global perspective on the social and political issues of her time, and gave her a broader understanding of the world.<sup>2</sup>

As an author, West wrote several travel narratives and novels such as *The Judge* (1922), *Harriet Hume* (1929), *The Harsh Voice* (1935), *The Thinking Reed* (1936), *The Fountain Overflows* (1956), and *The Birds Fall Down* (1966). However, her first great novel

is *The Return of the Soldier* (1918). In 1949, West became a Leader of the Order of the British Empire, and in 1959, she was promoted to the rank of Dame Commander (DBE). On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1983, when she died, she left many unfinished works such as *Cousin Rosemund* (1985), *The Real Night* (1984), *Sunflower* (1986), and *The Sentinel* (2002), in addition to two other nonfiction works, *family memories and survivors in Mexico* (1987).

### **Synopsis of *the Birds Fall Down* (1966)**

The novel entitled *The Birds Fall Down* is written by the famous author and journalist named Rebecca West. It was published in 1966 in London by Viking press in the early 20th century. This literary work mainly explored several themes among them exile, gender, identity, culture, religion, the tradition and the struggle for change. So the narrative is mainly around the protagonist named Laura Rowan, a young girl of eighteen years old. The story is about her journey to visit her exiled grandfather in Paris, named Nicolai Diakonov. Rebecca West portrays the real events of the revolution of 1917 through many characters like Laura Rowan, her grandfather, her father named Edward Rowan, her mother Tania, her grandmother Sofia and Chovinov known as a Revolutionary figure and Kimnesky is the administrator of her grandfather Nickolai, West depicts the Russian Revolution of 1917 because of her life experiences and influence, she uses characters each one differs from another. Sofia the grandmother struggles with tradition and change, Nicolai aims to fight the tsarist system and rebuild the new government. Moreover, the narrative is full of the revolutionary actions even by women because West portrays them exactly as Russian women who participate in politics, they sacrifice their lives, they resist for the welfare of the country, they challenge societal norms and Tsarist system. and about Nickolai who plays a major role in fighting the corrupt system though he is accused by The Tsar that he betrayed the nation and the Revolution. In

short, West writes a story with characters and a rich historical setting by making readers aware of the real events of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

### III. Results

This part of our dissertation presents the key findings that we have reached throughout our thematic study, after examining Rebecca West's novel *The Birds Fall Down* (1966) using some relevant theoretical concepts from "New Historicism". Despite West's portrays somewhat, faithfully the political and social upheavals of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which led to ideological battles, our study shows significant thematic connections within the text. To get our findings, we divided our discussion into two main chapters, in which we concentrated on the central themes in West's novel.

The first chapter entitled Contextualizing the Narrative: Historical influences on Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966), examines Russia before the First World War, and explores the portrayal of the Bolshevik Revolution within the novel. We provide an overview of the historical context, including the origins and ideology of the Bolshevik movement, and analyzed how the Revolution's triumph and its lasting legacy are reflected in the narrative. Our analysis focuses on how these historical events influence the characters like Count Nikolai Diakonov and Chubinov, demonstrating the profound impact of the Revolution on both the individual and societal levels as depicted in the novel.

As for our second chapter, entitled women's Contribution to the Russian Revolution through Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966), it focuses on the position of female characters in the novel particularly, Laura the main character, along with her mother Tania and grandmother Sofia Andreievna, who played a role in the novel. We also explore women's political activism and Revolutionary commitment during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We have discussed Laura's revolutionary actions, supported by her mother's quiet resistance, and her grandmother's influential presence which reflects the complex functions played by women during this time. The chapter illustrates how women, often underrepresented in historical

accounts, were key participants in both political and social movements, influencing the revolutionary effort in ways that resonated throughout their personal lives.

In our research, we have analyzed in both chapters and noticed that Rebecca West is impacted by historical influences by portraying historical events through the novel which reflects the historical context of the First World War and the Russian Revolution. Moreover, our analysis has reached the idea that *The Birds Fall Down* is an embodied text which deals with political, historical and political issues, and portrays the events happened in Russia. Additionally, it deals with essential issues such as gender, exile and power.

#### **IV. Discussion**

In this part of our study, we will explore Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966) using some notions from Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicist theory. Our study will focus on the way some important historical events related to the Russian Revolution are reflected in the selected novel. In the following first chapter, we will discuss Russia before the First World War. Then, we will examine the Eruption of the Bolshevik Revolution, focusing on its origins, ideology, and lasting impact, particularly in terms of the revolution's Triumph and the significant Legacy it left behind in reshaping Russian society and governance. In the second chapter, we will turn to the contribution made by women during the Russian Revolution, as portrayed in *The Birds Fall Down*. The characters Laura, her mother, and her grandmother will be examined in terms of their political activism and Revolutionary Commitment. Laura's revolutionary actions will be included, along with her mother's silent support and resistance, as well as the grandmother's influence on both of them. Through these characters, we will explore the broader struggle of women in the Revolution time and how West portrays their involvement in political and social changes.

##### **Chapter One: Contextualizing the Narrative: Historical Influences on Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966)**

As already mentioned in this first chapter, we explore Russia's political situation in the years leading up to the outbreak of the First World War through Rebecca West's novel that we have selected *The Birds Fall down* (1966). The chapter is structured to provide a clear analysis of the historical background, focusing on the tense atmosphere in Russia before the war. First, we delve into the social, economic and political conditions of Russia during this period. Then, we look at the role of Nicholas II and his autocratic rule, exploring how his decisions and the oppressive nature of the tsarist regime contributed to pervasive disorder.

The geopolitical considerations of this time also played a crucial role in the rise of revolutionary movements. We examine the reasons that motivated some Russians to start the Bolshevik Revolution. We explore the factors that led to this decision, including internal political turmoil, social unrest, and the rise of revolutionary movements. In the last part, we explore the Bolshevik Revolution itself, focusing on the triumph of the October Revolution, and how the Bolsheviks managed to secure power, and the lasting legacy of these events shaped not only Russia but also had lasting effects around the world. Indeed, this chapter aims to give a detailed and insightful look into the complex aspects of Russia before the Outbreak of the First World War, drawing from the rich narrative of Rebecca West novel to illuminate the historical realities and their profound impact on the empire's journey. (West, 1966, p.2).

### **1. Russia before the Outbreak of the First World War (1914-1919)**

The period before Russia's participation in the First World War was marked by turbulent political events, military challenges, and the major social transformation was fueled by growing unrest among workers and peasants. Industrialization led poor working condition and strikes, while the rural population struggled with poverty and inequality. These pressures, along with new revolutionary ideas, created a society ready for change. Before the beginning of the war in the summer of 1914 until the collapse of the Tsarist regime in 1917, Russia faced a series of crises that ultimately led to a revolution and the emergence of a new political order. This section will examine in detail Russia's role in the period preceding the First World War, highlighting key aspects, significant figures, and long-term consequences of this era.

Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966) is set in the period leading up to the Russian Revolution of 1917, and West uses the characters Laura, her grandfather Nicholas and her mother Tania to capture the ideological battles of the time. Through a New Historicist perspective, we can see how west reflects the broader political and social upheavals of the

early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russia within the personal conflicts of these characters. Nicholas, an exiled Russian aristocrat, represents the old world struggling to maintain relevance in the face of revolutionary change. His relationship with Laura shows the conflict between his loyalty to the monarchy and Laura's growing interest in revolutionary ideas. Through their interactions, West highlights the clash between the old and new generations. This shows how personal beliefs and political views are connected, influencing both individual lives and larger social changes. The latter also known as a conflict between the triple Entente (France, The United Kingdom, and The United States) and the triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and The Ottoman Empire).

In fact, Russia before the First World War made many agreements and alliances with other countries, to protect and reach its strategic ambitions. Many Russians believed it was their responsibility to protect and assist other Slavic nations, like Serbia, because of their common traditions, religions, and history. Later on, this feeling of responsibility led them to get involved when Serbia was in danger. Strategically, Russia aimed to increase its influence and control over more territory, particularly in Europe and the Balkans, in order to protect important trade routes. These traditional ideas and ambitions explain why Russia decided to enter the war and how it connects with the larger picture of what was happening in the world at the time.

These geopolitical aspirations in Eastern Europe explain Russia's motivations for entering the First World War. To be more explicit, Russia was the largest and most populated country in the region, so she wanted to influence its surrounding states and maintain control over important areas. This included territories in Poland, Ukraine, and the Baltic states, which were perceived as integral to Russia's security and regional dominance.

Certainly, the historical context in general and alliances in particular were key factors in the years preceding the First World War in Europe; Russia's historical ties to the Balkans and the Black Sea region dated back centuries. The Russian Empire had long viewed itself as the protector of the Slavic people in the Balkans, particularly the Serbs. This sentiment was fueled by cultural and religious affinities, as well as geopolitical calculation aimed at countering the influence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the region. The alliance with Serbia, forged through shared cultural and religious bonds, further solidified Russia's commitment to supporting its Balkan ally against the Austro-Hungarian advance. (Lieven, 1983, pp.34,55).

Moreover, the Triple Entente, a diplomatic understanding between France, Britain, and Russia aimed at countering the growing power of Germany, provided Russia with crucial support in the years leading up to the war. The alliance with France and the United Kingdom was driven by a shared interest in containing the imperialist ambitions of Germany and Austria-Hungary. For Russia, aligning with these western powers, served to balance against the Central Powers and defend its interests in Eastern Europe.

So we've been sending small groups to Glasgow, never less than two or more than four, to travel on false passports to Paris or Brussels, where our local branches gave them a new set of false passports, made out in names they had invented, till then unknown even to the travelers themselves, and instructions from the Glasgow sailors as to the place and time of the meetings, couched in a code unknown to the French or German or Belgian members who transmitted them... (West, 1966, p.121).

In this quotation from *The Birds Fall Down* (1966), Rebecca West describes in her novel how revolutionaries secretly traveled between different countries to avoid being detected by authorities. They moved in small groups, using imitation passports, and went to cities like Paris, Berlin, or Brussels. When they arrived, people who supported them gave them new fabricated identities and secret instructions about where and when to meet. These orders were written in a special code so that only the revolutionaries understood them. This passage shows

how important secret alliances between different countries were during the Russian revolution, helping the revolutionaries stay invisible and continue their work without being detected.

Furthermore, Nicholas II and Tsarist Autocracy was also a strong reason for the rise of Revolutionary spirit among some Russians. Nicholas II was the Tsar of Russia, and ruled with absolute power. He made decisions without needing approval from anyone else. This period was called the Tsarist Autocracy, during the era which people thought that his power came directly from God; this idea was a major portion of this time. The Tsarist Autocracy was a system of government in which the Tsar had total control; he used secret police to make sure people followed the rules and did not question the Tsar's authority.

At the heart of the Tsarist Autocracy was the ideology of Autocracy and orthodoxy, which the Romanov dynasty actively promoted across the empire. The Tsar was viewed as a divinely chosen leader, governing with spiritual authority believed to come directly from God. This concept, referred to as "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality", supported the tsar absolute power and ruled out any form of constitutional or democratic government, to maintain control and silence opposition. The Monarchy depended on a large bureaucracy and a secret police organization, however, Nicholas II was unprepared for the responsibilities of governing such a vast and different empire. He did not possess the charisma and diplomatic expertise of those who came before him, complicating his capacity to address the challenges confronting Russia at the turn of the century. As shown by the quote from our selected novel:

It was my duty; continued Nikolai, 'to see and hear for my master the Tsar. I fear now that my ears and eyes were already, even then, past such service, and had let me stray into a world of folly and suspicion in which I may now be a prisoner. (West, 1966, P.43).

The preceding quotation indicates that Nikolai, who is a Russian Revolutionary and a key figure in the political intrigue that the novel explored, reflects on his duty to serve Tsar

Nicholas II, showing the challenges of being part of the Tsarist Autocracy. He explains that his job is to observe and report back to the Tsar, a task that he now feels has led him to a confusing and suspicious situation. This illustrates how the Tsarist system demanded absolute loyalty from its employees, often putting them in difficult and risky situations. In fact, Nicholas II as the Tsar had absolute control and made all important decisions; this created a system in which those who served him like Nikolai, were deeply involved in a world of political manipulation. Nikolai's regret shows how the Tsar's Autocratic rule could involve people in complex and difficult situations. Serving such a powerful leader meant that personal dilemmas and suspicion were often part of the job, highlighting the personal sacrifices and challenges faced by those who were part of the Tsarist regime.

Consequently, Russia's strategic position in the Black Sea was a key factor in its decision making. It had access to warm- water ports such as Sevastopol and Odessa that was essential from business and military capabilities. The Ottoman Empire, a significant adversary in the black sea region, made it even more important for Russia to keep a strong presence in this strategic waterway. In addition, control of the Black Sea was essential for Russia's trade routes and maritime power, along with providing access to warm-water docks. These ports supported Russia to engage in trade more easily with other nations, particularly in the winter when northern harbors were frozen. Controlling the Black Sea ensured Russia had access to the Mediterranean, which were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. This increased the region's strategic significance, as domination of these sea routes meant control over essential industry and military routes. Russia's struggle against the Ottoman Empire intensified its interest on the Black Sea. Both empires aimed to expand their dominance in the region, resulting in different conflicts. Therefore, securing its position in the Black Sea was important for Russia not only for economic reasons, but also to establish power against European

nations and maintain a strong military presence in the strategically important territory. As it is depicted in the following lines:

The Latin countries, where the food of the children is given to the dogs. Latins wallow among the full plenty of the Mediterranean and defile it. We Russian's stand in the south only up to our ankles down by the Black Sea. But we do well with it. There we too make wine. Leon Galitzin has great vineyards on the stony coast between Yalta and Theodosia. His cellars run far out under the sea. (West, 1966, p.234).

The previous passage shows that Rebecca West in her novel *The Birds Fall Down* (1966), highlights Russia's strategic position in the Black Sea by contrasting it with the Latin countries, which are depicted as wasteful despite their profusion. The character Vassili who is a Russian émigré notes that Russia's influence in the south is limited "stand in the south only up to our ankles down by the black sea", indicating that Russians still manage to succeed in this territory. The mention of Leon Galitzin had great vineyards on the stony coast between Yalta and Theodosia illustrates how Russia capitalizes on its southern resources, demonstrating economic energy and cultural richness. By illustrating the significance of the Black Sea for trade and prosperity, the passage supports Russia's ability to make the most of its limited presence while reinforcing the strategic importance of this area in the face of competition from other nations.

Subsequently, internal political turmoil in Russia played a significant role before 1914; Russia was ruled by the Romanov dynasty, with the Tsar Nicholas II who had almost absolute power. This autocratic rule caused many Russians to feel unhappy because they had no political representation and the government was immoral. By 1917, this dissatisfaction led to the February Revolution. Tricks one would not expect from even the most hard pressed of gentry fallen on evil days, and God knows we are poor lot when we're overtaken by adversity. Tricks one would never expect from an Emperor, lord of half a continent of abundance. - Chubinov (West, 1966, p.96).

During this time, Tsar Nicholas II Was forced to give up his position because people were protesting against him. This ended the era of Romanov family rule. After the Tsar moved down, a temporary government took charge, but struggled to solve Russia's problems.

On our side we weren't receiving the information which we'd really have liked, which would have enabled us to uproot the terrorist organization[...] you lost your leaders of five or ten years ahead, and the survivors were left in a state of mutual distrust, without the old hands to steady them.(West, 1966, p.117).

The passage shows the turmoil in Russia, highlighting Nikolai Nikolayevich's concerns about the problems in Russia. He says the government didn't have enough information to completely stop the revolutionaries. Many leaders, like Vesnin, Patopenko, and Komissaroff, were captured, but their absence left the remaining revolutionaries confused and skeptical of each other. This reflects the deep political turmoil and instability in the country.

In addition, before the Outbreak of the First World War, Russia had social disturbances as a result of inequality, harsh working condition, and a growing divide between the rich and poor. The authoritarian regime of the Tsar, combined with the suffering of peasants and industrial workers, created an ideal environment for revolutionary ideas. Dissatisfaction with the authorities which led to the 1905 Revolution indicated the present unrest within the society. Many people began to see that change was necessary, and Revolutionary ideas gained influence among various social groups. In Russia 1917, the situation had become even more distressed, the war only intensified the problems, however, the foundation of Revolution was laid much earlier. Many people were unhappy with their lives and considered themselves mistreated. They wanted more money, land, and rights. This made them very angry, and all these problems led to a big revolution.

All these issues, the economic hardship, the social inequality, and the political control created a series of events that ultimately contributed to major Revolution. The dissatisfaction

had been growing for years, and the inability to meet people's needs only intensified the Revolutionary spirit throughout Russia.

Just that,' he said and drank the last drops from his glass and wiped his mouth. 'Why, everybody knows that's wrong ', she said. 'If you asked a child, quite a little child, or a navy working on the road who couldn't read or write, they'd tell you that was wrong.' 'But we're superior to little children, and still more are we superior to men, who, debased by society, work on the road'. (West, 1966, p.303).

In this passage, Rebecca West shows a conflict between ordinary people's sense of right and wrong and the pride of the educated upper class. The woman argues that what the man is saying is clearly wrong, so obvious that even a small child or an uneducated road worker would understand it. She believes that basic human instincts, not education or class; help people know what is right. But the man replies with a proud attitude. He considers himself superior not only to children, and even more than ordinary working class, who he feels have been morally and socially weakened by the effects of society. He believes that because they are more educated or belong to higher class, their moral views are more correct even if those views seem wrong to ordinary people.<sup>2</sup>

To sum up, through her novel *The Birds Fall Down* (1966), Rebecca West explores through the characters namely. Laura and Kamensky are discussing the idea of supporting two opposing causes at the same time. Laura argues that such a contradiction is incorrect and points out that even a child or a laborer would understand this simple truth. Kamensky, who seems to be defending however, relating this to social unrest, Laura's points illustrate how conflicting actions or beliefs can lead to confusion and discontent. Just as she believes that even simple people would recognize the problem with supporting contradictory causes, those experiencing social unrest often grapple with the contradictions and failures within their societies. This passage shows how clear, fundamental disagreements can become a source of large social problems when they are not addressed or resolved.

Even though, Russia is the largest country in the world, its military faced many problems. The soldiers were mostly peasants who had little formal training, and the army lacked strong leadership. However, many of generals were inexperienced or promoted because of their social status not their abilities. The Russian army also had old equipment, poor communication systems, and limited arms.

Additionally, Russia suffered behind other European powers in term of technological innovation and Industrial capacity, particularly in the production of modern weaponry to keep with the demands of war. These problems left the Russian army unprepared when World War One began, and they struggled to battle against stronger forces and more experienced military from other European powers like Germany.

He said also that he was certain that the plot against his life accidentally uncovered by the arrest of a revolutionary group at Kharkov, had not been formed as a result of any indiscretion of yours, however much of the evidence seemed to suggest that it had. (West, 1966, p. 99).

According to the preceding passage, in Rebecca West's novel *The Birds Fall Down*, there is a plot discovered in Kharkov to assassinate the Tsar. This shows how Russia is always in danger and unpredictable. These problems make it hard for Russia to manage military and political issues. Characters like Nikolai feel the stress of these problems, indicating how life is difficult in Russia during this troubled period.

Finally, the rise of revolutionary movements in Russia was important factors leading up to significant changes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the later of 19<sup>th</sup> century, many people began to explore new idea about society and politics. Many people, including workers and intellectuals, became attracted to Marxist beliefs, which called for the overthrow of capitalist systems and the establishment of a socialist state. One of the key organizations that emerged during this time was the Russian social democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), formed in 1898. This party became the main stage for expending Revolutionary ideas without

the country. Within the (RSDLP), two major factors developed such as the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, and the Mensheviks 2struggled for influence. While both groups shared a common objective of promoting socialism, they have different strategies and beliefs about how to achieve this. By 1917, this revolutionary movement had secured major support by promising to address the people's needs and end Russia's involvement in the war.

We revolutionaries open letters, not in the post, but before they are posted or afterwards, in order to inaugurate the social system in which we believe. There's no moral difference between us. (West, 1966, p. 97).

This quotation indicates that the two characters Nikolai and Chubinov discuss the rise of revolutionary movements. Chubinov, a revolutionary, argues that opening letters is justified to bring about a new social system. He compares this to how the Tsar's supporters, like Nikolai, open letters to maintain control. Chubinov's words reflect the revolutionary spirit and determ2ination to challenge the existing order, emphasizing the conflict between the old regime and those searching for change.

To sum up, Russia before entering into the First World War was driven by a complex interaction of historical, geopolitical, domestic factors. The nations enduring commitment to protect Slavic regions particularly Serbia alongside its strategic ambitions in Eastern Europe, shaped its motivation. The alliances forged through the Triple Entente provided Russia with a structure to oppose the dangers posed by central powers. However, internal political turmoil, characterized by the dissatisfaction with Tsarist Autocracy, Social unrest and Revolutionary movement ultimately disrupted its war efforts. The combination of these factors not only led Russia into conflict but also prepared the way for major changes in the country, resulting in 1917 Revolution and the fall of the Romanov Dynasty.

## **2. The Bolshevik Revolution**

The Bolshevik Revolution, also known as the October Revolution, was led by Vladimir Lenin. It played a major role in Russian Revolution, changing the course of Russian history in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This part will explore two main aspects: Their origins and ideology, discussing their formation in 1903 and their main beliefs. Following this, it will investigate their rise to power and consolidation, particularly focusing on significant events such as the October Revolution of 1917 and maintained their power in the turbulent years that followed. By understanding these aspects, we can better comprehend how the Bolshevik influenced Russia during this transformative period.

### **a) Origins and Ideology of the Bolshevik Revolution**

The Bolsheviks emerged in 1903 when the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) divided into two groups. At their second meeting, the differences between the Bolsheviks meaning (majority), led by Vladimir Lenin, who advocated for a revolutionary lead party composed of professional revolutionaries and the Mensheviks means (minority), led by Julius Martov, that favored a more gradualist approach and broader alliance of socialists. This division laid the foundation for the emergence of the Bolsheviks as a distinct revolutionary force. (Harding, 2003).

The Bolshevik ideology was based on Lenin's interpretation of Marxism. Lenin published what is to be done Dogmatism and freedom of criticism (1902), where he argued that Russia, despite being mostly agrarian, was ready for a socialist revolution. He emphasized the need for a disciplined, centralized party to lead the working class in Bringing down the ruling class and creating a dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin father elaborated on these ideas in 1917 with "State and Revolution".

Yet his gentle voice range quite loud with pride, when he leaned forward and said, 'But, Miss Laura, the matter will not end there. We of the

revolutionary movement will make the truth known. In our own way. On our own terms. Russia will be aflame. (West, 1966, P. 414).

The preceding quotation from Rebecca West novel, the narrator describes Chubinov's satisfaction in setting Russia "aflame" a mirrors of the Bolshevik ideology. His aim to expose the truth "on our own terms" aligns with Lenin's idea of a structured, revolutionary group leading the working class to overthrow the ruling class. This showed their strong commitment to their cause, just like Lenin and his followers, who believed they could change Russia despite its mostly agrarian society. The novel used Chubinov to show the same idea and determined position that defined the Bolsheviks.

To achieve their Rise to Power, the Bolsheviks put in signification effort consolidate control. Although they faced difficult times like being punished, sent away from their country and treated badly by the government, they remained committed to their cause and continued to fight for their beliefs. They maintained trying to get workers, soldiers, and farmers to support them. Then, in 1917 everything changed with the February Revolution. People were really unhappy with the government and the war that never ending. This gave the Bolsheviks a chance to take control. In April 1917, Lenin came back to Russia after being in exile. Switzerland with Lenin leading them, the Bolsheviks shared a clear and strong message of "Peace, Land, and Bread" that really connected with everyday people.

Though, mind you, this Lenin is a clever man. He knows how to get people on the committees and off them against the will of the organisation, indeed without any-body in the organisation realising what is happening till it is too later. But a courageous deed, the sublime defiance of authority, these things mean nothing to Lenin. (West, 1966, P. 419).

This previous quote from Rebecca West's novel *The Birds Fall Down* Chubinov is talking about his distrust of Lenin and his revolutionary group. He admits that Lenin is very smart and knows how getting people in to committees or removing them, without anyone realizing what he is doing until it's too late. However, Chubinov criticizes Lenin for lacking emotion

and idealism. He believes Lenin is too focused on organization and techniques, without the courage or confidence that Chubinov thinks are necessary for a real revolution. During this time, Chubinov's feels that his own revolutionary group, unlike Lenin's is made up of idealist's people who actually want to change the world for the better. But Laura, who is listening, feels the opposite, she thinks these revolutionaries are lost and not making any real difference. In her mind, they are not really helping anyone. Instead, they are involved in secretive strategies, espionage and small political games. This makes Laura feel empty, as she realizes they are not really helping anyone or bringing significant change.

To conclude, the Bolsheviks went from being a small group with big ideas to leading a whole country. They worked hard and immobilized to their beliefs, which led to them taking change in 1917, this changed Russia a lot and set the scene for big changes to come.

#### **b) The Triumph and legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution**

The Bolshevik Triumph detailed the rise of the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, took control of Russia in the October Revolution of 1917, after that, they worked hard to keep their power during a civil war and conflicts with other countries. In the end, they made Russia into the Soviet Union, a socialist nation. But people still argue about whether their way of governing was right or wrong.

First, the Bolsheviks rise to power began with the October Revolution of 1917. They overthrew the provisional government in Petrograd under Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky seized key point (modern-day Saint Petersburg). With the support of the Petrograd Soviet and the Red Guard they established Soviet Power, marking the start of Bolshevik rule in Russia then, consolidation of Bolshevik rule, following the October Revolution; the Bolsheviks faced numerous challenges, including internal dissent and external intervention and the emergence of civil war. However, through a combination of political strategy, military force, and

revolutionary commitment, the movement was able to overthrow the government and establish a new regime, fundamentally reshaping the political landscape and sparking widespread social and economic reforms. These changes, though initially met with resistance, eventually laid the foundation for a more centralized and authoritarian state, altering the course of the nation's history for decades to come. Lenin's pragmatic severe leadership was a key in navigating the turbulent civil war and foreign intervention. By 1922, the communists emerged victorious, having defeated their white opponents and established the Soviet Union as a one party socialist state.

Atypical historical event; said Chubinov pedantically. 'Itself definite enough, yet surrounded by confusion apparently not connected with it. It is as if a drop of the extraordinary added to the ordinary produces a chemical explosion. (West, 1966, p. 389).

The quotation indicates how Chubinov's refer to a "typical historical event" reflects how the October Revolution created disorder and major changes in Russia. The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, overthrew the provisional government in 1917, causing a lot of disturbance. Chubinov's comparison to a "chemical explosion" means that adding something extraordinary (like revolution), and shows how this big event led to unpredictable changes, similar to how the communists had to solidify their power through political and military means, ultimately establishing a new socialist state.

Lastly, the impact of the Bolsheviks is complex and open to interpretation. While establishing the framework for the world's first socialist state and motivated revolutionary movements worldwide, their authoritarian regime led to blood domination, violence, and human suffering. The discussion over their impact reflects the differing views on their revolutionary project, which combined aspirations for social justice with methods that led to caused great difficulties for many individuals.

We still have programs, but we know whose fault that is. Everybody who isn't old or mad is against the persecution of the Jews, the next Tsar will put an end to it [...] but we all those horrors are done with and over. It's true they lingered longer with us than in other countries, but we got rid of them more quickly, in less than a lifetime. (West, 1966, p. 427).

The quote from novel of Rebecca West discusses about, how life in Russia has improved under Bolshevik rule, acknowledging the horrors of the past such as programs and police corruption. However, Tania expresses optimism for a better future, which is a significant aspect of the Bolshevik legacy, and believes that the communists are addressing these issues and making positive changes for the country.

In summary, the Marxists advance to power during the October Revolution of 1917 led to establishment of the Soviet Union's is one party socialist state. Despite facing challenges, their consolidation of power under Lenin's leadership structured the course of history. However, their authoritarian rule and the resulting repression and suffering have left a controversial legacy, initiating debates about the balance between revolutionary ideas and aspects of governments.

To conclude, Russia before the First World War, as depicted in Rebecca West *The Birds Fall Down* (1966), was marked by a turbulent series of events that ultimately led to the downfall of the Tsarist regime and the rise of Bolshevik power. However, the novel reflects the country's problems through its individuals. (West, 1966, p.10). Russia joined the war because of its strategic interests and historical alliances, but shortly the nation entered the conflict only to be surrounded by internal turmoil and external challenges, similar to the struggles faced by the personalities in the novel. The February Revolution of 1917 resulted in increased confusion and eventually to the Bolshevik Revolution. Other countries got involved and made extended the war fare, but the Red Army succeeded in the end. This victory allowed the Bolsheviks to take control and change Russian history, just as Laura's journey changed their lives in the novel.

## **Chapter two: Women's contribution to the Russian Revolution through Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966)**

The present chapter of our dissertation deals with women's experiences and contributions to the Russian Revolution through examination of Rebecca West's historically significant literary work entitled *The Birds Fall Down*, published in 1966. Initially, the emphasis is placed on women and how the Russian historical context influenced the narrative as well as her historical and cultural background in which Rebecca West applies the idea that history and literature as one part, each one influences another. Next, female commitment in the novel will be analyzed so as to portray how the female characters; mainly Laura, the protagonist, her mother Tania and her grandmother Sofia have depicted the revolutionary spirit of the Russian Revolution background and how their participations shaped the events which led to the previously indicated revolt of 1917. All that had been identified will be followed by an analysis of their strong political attitude and involvement in the novel which eventually had led them to challenge societal rules besides their fight for sociopolitical existence.

### **I. Women's Political Activism and Revolutionary Commitment**

#### **1. Laura**

Female struggle is one of the main thematic concern in Rebecca West's novel *The Birds Fall Down*, this literary work is a central example of the complicated nature of women's participations and roles throughout the 1917 Russian Revolution in which West, as well as their complex characters whose individuality provide a deep narrative. The last is common in the contextual field of the book as well as through the main female characters. The author Rebecca West was influenced by the wars and the events that occurred before, which pushed her to write about The Revolt, in which she portrayed The Russian Revolution, especially

about women's involvement to the war since West has a personal experience as it is stated in New Historicism that authors 'lives and experiences influence their writings.

Rebecca West has created Laura's character as a strong, socially conscious character whose revolutionary ideals related to those of the author and the Russian nationalists in pre-revolutionary Russia, as well as to her mother Tania has a lot of different things characterized by her silent resistance and being the strongest link that relates her family members. So, West depicts female struggle through Laura's grandmother Sofia whose presence portrays the old system of Russia and its social customs as well as the creation of a new one which is exemplified through her opposite attitude since she is against the old imperial system. Despite her respect to some traditions as important, she accepted the doubt of others in her internal monologue.

Rebecca West in her historical novel shows that Laura has a strong spirit toward the Revolution and she is a nationalist, she always wants to change the rules about men and women, and her asking for the government and society all show that she is becoming a revolutionary. West has made Laura's character perfect to represent the women who wanted to change Russia in 1917. Since women have a central role in wars' involvement and West highlights women characters as an essential part in The Revolution's acts because of her life influence and experiences.

In spite of being a young woman, the protagonist Laura presents her strong sense of nationalism. This is identified at the beginning of the novel by her mother, when Tania talks about her three children to her husband Edward, she insists that Laura is the most attached to her Russian culture and thus takes her to visit her exiled Russian grandparents in Paris. The last is apparent when she says to her English husband: "They don't like being half-Russian. They are wholly your children," she said bitterly. "But Laura can sail through anything"

(West,1966,p.) Her mother's declaration displays how Laura's mother is dissatisfied about her other children do not feel as close to their Russian origins unlike Laura is nationalist. So She appreciates Laura's ability to fit in with both Russian and Western cultures and this is exemplified when the young woman says "It's no penance to see Grandfather and Grandmother. They're awfully grand. And it's no penance to go to Paris." (West,1966,p.11). accordingly, this desire to meet them suggests her future participation in the Russian political background of the time, this is depicted by Laura's confidence both of her grandparents throughout the story and when they fell sick, she took care of them beside her mother Tania.

In addition to that, the revolutionary side of her character is presented by how she has a strong attitude and personality even at her young age, like women who lead the 1917 February and October revolutions clearly challenged the gender-based denominators which characterized the pre-revolution era. Her struggle is determined when she challenges the authority of her grandfather and criticizes his determined behavior by saying "Grandfather is being ridiculous... I can't think why nobody ever stands up to him." (West,1966,p. 39).

Moreover, Laura challenges how women were depicted as submissive during her conversation with Chubinov a nationalist spy who works for her grandfather when he was expressing how unhappy he was by saying: "One would think that the bourgeois system of bringing up girls without discipline or education, solely for the marriage market, would at least produce a certain sensibility. But it doesn't seem to have struck home to you that I'm laboring under intense emotion" (West,1966,p.2.87), thus imagining her to sympathize with and be interested to his emotional needs, as was the example of the traditional Russian woman, but she goes against those social beliefs by opposing replying to him : "If you're so keen on being rational," she said, "surely you must see that I can't care whether you're unhappy"

The protagonist's strong social position is marked by her resistance and her revolt against the traditional gender role which women in pre-revolutionary Russia were meant to defy as simple wives that are limited to home. Instead, she prefers to be joined by compatible women and considers men as not so mentally interesting, the previous is marked when she characterized herself as being disordered, or in her words, "an albino" (West, 1966,p.80) which shows her secularity from the patriarchal social limits, on the other hand she shows her failure of married life and male concern by saying: "I can't imagine myself doing all sorts of things other people want to do. I don't want to get married... I don't want a husband. Men talk about interesting things, but they are not interesting in themselves." She shuddered with an apprehension of the disagreeable. "Only women," she thought, "are nice to look at and worth imagining things about." (1966, P. 80)

Finally, Laura's strange ideas and independent thinking helps her become politically aware and develop her own viewpoint. This is clear when she talks about the revolution with Chubinov, where she fully supports the idea of rebellion, but disagrees with the violent methods he uses to gain freedom for their country, "Her spine stiffened, she sat up and stared at Chubinov with the total anger of a cat. She said to him, "You're mixed up with all these murders?" to which he replied by stating that it was the only way to rid Russia of the corrupted Tsarist regime, what he referred to as "the cancer which devours our Russia", However She continued to stand strong in her purpose and faith in achieving the country's goal through peaceful means, showing her doubts about the beliefs of the actions being taken, it is shown by how it is said: "She hissed with hatred. She could not bear to think of a man with such meagre hair, such weak eyes, being responsible for the stopping of life. But he ignored her" (p.101).

## **2.Tania**

Another character that is portrayed by Rebecca West in her literary work to deal with female struggle and revolutionary spirit is Laura's mother Tania just as women in real events at that time of the revolution to support the complexity of female fight and activist acts that depict the attitude adapted by the new Bolshevik woman in 1917, the incipiently indicated action can be direct as in the case of Laura or secret as in her mother Tania who assumes an entirely different form of resistance, strength and nationalist pride. In the novel Laura expresses her mother's high opinion about her father and husband, but she believes that they both have faults such as irrationality and irresponsibility when making decisions, she says:

Were men perhaps no good? even when things were still going well at home, she had disbelieved that though her mother loved her father she did not respect him. Often Tania talked of her husband and her father as if they were magnificent horses, probably marred, though she was not yet certain, by some incurable fault, like a tendency to take off too soon before a fence. (West, 1966, p. 166).

This passage suggests that Tania criticises men that they might not be as "good" or honest as they look. She remembers her mother loving her father but not fully valuing him, inferring at some essential issue. Tania This passage shows that Tania thinks men might not be as good or trustworthy as they look. She remembers that her mother loved her father but didn't really respect him. Tania compares her husband and father to beautiful horses that might have hidden problems. This means that men can seem impressive but also have faults that might reveal later.

Tania's act of defiance is shown by asking the abilities of men. This is clear in the novel when she observes the study of a murdered man. The male police officers ignore her when she tries to share her thoughts about the case; This reflects how men in Russia viewed women as less capable of participating in intellectual discussions, leading to their exclusion. However, this does not stop her desire to learn, as shown by the dismissive remarks made by

the police officer: "If we need more help, we'll call on you again. But I hope we'll not need to intrude on you." He spoke, as men often did ... When Tania had thanked him she did not rise and leave. She asked gravely, "Who was the man who was killed?" (p.348)

In the same sequence of thoughts, while Laura adopts the main role within the narrative, Tania shapes her daughter's beliefs, especially through her connection to her Russian culture and strong nationalism. And she is against her other children because they are not nationalist enough. This is illustrated by her struggle to adapt English culture, which causes her defeat and highlights her wish to keep her Russian identity rather than being lost between her English and Russian backgrounds. In the story, she expresses this feeling by saying.:

"It isn't fair on us Continentals that there are Americans at all. There's this English language and one learns it, and there's this English literature and one reads that, and one learns English customs... acquaints one with the fact that there's also an American English language and a literature written in it." "Well, Mark Twain's lovely," said Laura. "I know, but there's William Dean Howells," said Tania" (West,1966,pp. 33-34) recognizing while Twain's writing has a certain appeal, Howells' however is less attractive.

In this passage, Tania argues that Americans have their own version of English and their own writers. It complicates things for non-Americans who learn English. Laura offers Mark Twain as an example of an American writer she likes, but Tania stands with William Dean Howells, suggesting that not all American literature is equally enjoyable.

Tania's character is well described as a quiet strong and stable for her family during the national turmoil and insecurity. She provides them with a great support and spirit. Tania's commitment to her Russian culture is described by her duty towards her family; mainly her exiled Russian parents. In spite of her husband's refusals for visiting them, her strong resolution demonstrates her quiet resistance which is shown by her telling him: "My father

and mother are old and exiled and unhappy. I wish to go and stay with them for a fortnight and I wish to take my daughter with me.” “How soon can we go?” (p. 10).

Even when Tania faced her own difficulties, she always supporting her mother Sofia. This is exemplified in the letter she wrote to her mother, saying “I shouldn’t have written to you about my troubles, I see that now, Mamma,” (West,1966,p. 52) thus, not wanting to burden her mother with her feelings, in addition to that, Laura recognizes Tania's calm character in hard situations. When Laura faces a challenge, she thinks about her mother's knowledge, it is shown by when Laura thought “that her grandmother or her mother would have found some means to help her and this shows obviously women’s union and support similar to Bolshevik women.

In addition to her being a nationalist non-conformal intelligent woman, Tania is also politically aware about the feature she gave to her daughter, rather than being a silent character in the story, she is actively questioning the moral effects of the violence which caused the 1917 Revolution. Akin to Laura, her mother rejects the bloody measures which are taken, preferring a rational understanding, for according to her some people’s motives did not stem from a liberation position but rather a violent one, she names them as blinded and “misguided men” (West,1966,p 349) with a moral ambiguity.

Like many women during the February and October revolutions of 1917, Tania believed in using peaceful actions to inform about the disordered situation in the country until armed conflict became necessary. She thought the Tsarist system was corrupt, mainly the Tsar himself, but she also believed that some leaders, like her father, were not corrupt, she says: “My father, like all Tsarist Ministers, was persecuted by the terrorists. I was afraid that one of the friends who came to mourn my father, a general, perhaps, or a high official, had been shot down by one of these misguided men” (p.361) to which Chovinov; a revolutionist replied by

saying: “We are making a Revolution. Therefore, we do not, I freely admit it, act always with perfect Candor.” thus giving more authority to her political perspective. It means that chovinov supports his political perspective during political changes even though some other people might not be fully honest toward them.

### **3.Sofia**

Always in the scope of female engagement with revolutionary idea, Rebecca West, close to her important historical presentation of the female characters in a way that mirrors the female experience during the Russian revolution in her novel *the Birds Fall Down*, supported on that tradition in creating the character of Laura’s Grandmother Sofia in a historically representative manner. Sofia’s presence within the narrative serves as a depiction of the old traditional Russian values and the grandeur of the Russian Empire, while presenting disbelief about their success and sometimes leaning the new progressive dynamics.

Accordingly, the loyalty to the traditional Russian values is mostly apparent in Sofia’s religious attachment and commitment, it is dominant throughout the novel, for instance when she engages in related conversations exemplified by her saying “It appears there is a vigil service in their Church—in your Church—this evening, it’s one of your saint’s days.” (West,1966,p 20), in addition to that, she disapproves of her daughter Tania’s husband due to the fact that he is a protestant, to illustrate the latter, she says: “I knew then that if my daughter married Edward Rowan, she was not marrying a mere English Protestant but a man who had transcended all the limitations imposed on him by that unfortunate situation.” (We2st,1966,p. 62)

Although Laura’s Grandmother Sofia has reliability to the traditional values, she also shows sights of defiance that characterized the female revolutionaries of 1917 such as

searching the status and criticizing the patriarchal social plan, thus, she serves as a depiction of preserving a tradition, while also adapting to change. The latter is clear how Sofia submitted with the socially norms, she is however questioning their value and isolation this, it is evident in the narrative when the author says: “As for her grandmother, conflicting ideas about men were always passing through her head. Her manner to Nikolai was submissive, it proclaimed her readiness to obey him in all circumstances, but hardly concealed her lack of conviction that this would serve any useful purpose” (West,1966,pp 166-167)

In addition to that even when she is in a position of power, like when she tells her male servant what to do, she understands that socially, he still has the improvement. This isn't because of any abilities or success, but just because of their gender. And the writer says:

: “She ordered them about imperiously, but always with a reservation, as if admitting that though here on earth she had the upper hand, there was another world of immaterial values, where superiority would be accorded to them simply because they were male” (West,1966,pp166-167) adding that while transfer important tasks that include attention, she trusted her female assistants rather than the male ones “she always entrusted any task demanding conscientiousness and reticence to her women servants, and not to the men ... She did not approve of that other world which accorded men a supreme value, but evidently she thought it might exist”. (West,1966,pp166-167).

In this passage, it is stated that when it comes to really important jobs that need careful attention and confidentiality, she trusts her female servants more than the men. Even though she does not agree with the idea that men are habitually superior, she caring about acts like that idea to be in the real world.

Moreover, Sofia's influence exposes through the narrative, mainly reflected in her influence on Laura. Although the latter believes that her grandmother's world and reality are old-fashioned and completely opposing to her advanced one in her declaration about her grandparent's house “She had the feeling that the bric-à-brac in this apartment were getting old in the same way as its occupants, they were tedious...” (West,1966,p39), she stated her

grandmother's intelligence while opposed with challenges, exemplified by her using the medical lotion with Tansy made by Sofia so as to heal the Inflammations. (West,1966,p.27)

Last but not least, Laura's grandmother Sofia depicted as the old order, she is also a strong female leader in the narrative who gains respect by some male authority members, stated by Chubinov who speaks greatly of Sofia to Laura by saying: "for I think him one of the most marvelous people who has ever lived, and some of his genius might well have rubbed off on to her. But now ... I know she brought her own genius with her." (West,1966,p25) his indication, beside Laura's respect for her grandmother's good area of her being family worrying "about the poor all the time" (West,1966,p.172) make her resistant of the complex nature of the Russian female loyalists and revolts and their varied roles, perspectives and social participation.

The previous analysis of Laura's revolutionary soul and political consciousness, beside to her mother's knowledge and loyalty to nationalism, and her grandmother Sofia's considerate non-conformity despite her loyalty toward traditional Russian values, she is introduced for a profounder analysis of their political involvement and personal sacrifices during the 1917 revolt in Russia. Each of their individual experiences creates a complex picture of the different roles and contributions of Russian women in this important event, all of which had a personal sacrifice.

The stories of those revolutionary women are created through the characters of Laura, Tania and Sofia had sure their personal aims with the disordered political situation in the country. In Rebecca West's novel, each woman struggles her own moral challenges during the revolution. Laura is loyal to the national cause and plays a main role in making the revolution, while Tania criticizes the old order and supports change. Sofia represents the old royal Russia, and her pride and values influence her modern granddaughter, Laura. All three women are

protective of their loved ones and their country, even in difficult times. Together, they create a detailed and historically important portrayal of women's experiences during the 1917 revolution in Russia.

Laura's opposition to past discriminations and the Tsarist rule, which supported the oppressed system, clearly shows her defiant attitude against what she calls "the old testament." (West,1966,p.182) and she contrasts it with the new one, which in her opinion, has an ethical revolutionary spirit rather than an armed one. The latter is evident in her dialogue with the revolutionist Chubinov who says that he would support the violent actions so as to protect her family and the movement, she however replies by saying: "People in the Old Testament are as silly as you, but absolutely nobody in the New Testament. But of course you can't help being silly. But what I can't stand is something you could help, ...You haven't spent your life in all this plotting and blowing up people because of the supreme good but because you like doing it" (West,1966,p.18

In addition to that, Laura's revolutionary actions of her being involved in the 1917 revolt bring serious effects on her as well as her loved ones' safety, this connection between personal relations and national desires was one of the most major problems which the Bolshevik women faced, they all sacrificed and this is a clear depiction of their whole commitment to their cause because they wanted to keep this relationship. The latter is meant by Vasilis when he said: "Many of our women comrades keep good homes, but they wouldn't keep on talking about the dust, it isn't the sort of thing that really distresses them. Also there was no trace of the anxiety which is the hall-mark of our kind" (West,1966,p.146), his statement indicates how he thought that in spite of women being mindful about their limited duties, the revolt was their main worry, besides the fact that he considered women friends than men.

Rebeca West's character Laura honours and respects all Russian women by showing some of their important contributions and advanced serious thinking in the main character, Laura, who joins the revolution even though she knows it puts her in danger; shown by her saying: "If I couldn't prevent it, then I'd been defeated by the universe as I wouldn't be defeated by my own death." (West,1966,p.151), even in the face of death, she assumes a key role in organizing the revolution, she said "Therefore the sailors begged our committee to send to Glasgow some of our members who were properly trained in terrorist methods, so that arrangements could be made to smuggle aboard one or two activists at the proper time" (West,1966,p.110), the former statement clearly represents her strongest related political activism.

Continually, even though Laura is aware of the consequences she will pay, she followed her political activism and this is evident when she sees her beloved ones being oppressed under the Tsarist rule. The latter is evident by her speaking of Nikolai a person she deeply cared about, she said: "I was preoccupied by my anger at the abuse of Beer's innocence... I couldn't bear that to happen to you, and I couldn't bear the Tsar to have the satisfaction of a victory which was so peculiarly to his disgusting taste." (West,1966,p. 151) This shows not only her political awareness but also her courage in criticizing the Tsarist rule.

Though, Laura throughout the whole of this historical narrative judge's authoritarian numbers for their loyalties to the corrupt Tsarist rule starting from her exiled Russian grandfather whom in spite of being incorrectly indicted by Tsar Nicholas, quiet supports his loyalty to him. The last idea is illustrated by him saying: "My duty dictates that step... If the Tsar wishes me to return to Russia in order to humiliate me and accuse me of a crime I have not committed, and insult me by pardoning my innocence, then to Russia I must go." "No,"

said Laura” (West,1966,p.164), which highly marks her strong revolutionary character and non-conformity. The latter is praised by Chubinov who says to her: “Oh, Miss Laura, you are like my wife” (West,1966,p. 181).

While Laura’s political involvement was evident and characterized by direct political action, her mother Tania however, has a secret role and her influence reveals the value of behind-the-scenes efforts made by her in revolutionary actions. Her familial support and sacrifices for her loved ones, resistance and opposing her English husband’s acts of failure the Russian tradition, as well as knowing the Tsar’s failure and celebrate the new Bolshevik government beside to its advanced changes, showed that she was part of a group of important Bolshevik women.

Primarily, although Tania is well aware that her father’s promise to the Tsar is unreasonable illustrated by her saying: “my father doesn’t want to be considered innocent if the Tsar thinks him guilty. You don’t allow for that, Edward. My father can’t quarrel with what the Tsar has done any more than he could quarrel with God.” (pp. 9), she continues to insist on supporting him within the national condition of the time, evident by her saying: “I think it my duty to visit my father and mother. After all, they’re lonely and unhappy.” You don’t appreciate their position. How should you?”.

Additionally, her indirect resistance and differs with the point of view of her husband, about the Russian culture and believing its power as religious propaganda advanced by the church, she however sees the Russian settlement as an essential in the shared identity and wishes in order to introduce it to her children, the last is shown by him saying: “I can’t believe all this stuff about Holy Russia... I go to church every Sunday and say, ‘All we like sheep,’ and so do all the rest of us, but I don’t believe any of us really thinks that we closely resemble four-legged animals covered with wool.” (West,1966, pp. 9) to which Tania replies:

“Well, you can’t find it easy to instill into our children wisdom not honored by the community in which they live, such as the true doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost.” (West,1966, pp.9) "She showed that she was proud of her Western background by standing up to her husband, who didn't respect her culture and beliefs."

Moreover, the role of Tania as the family’s keeping force comes with high consequences; mainly she failed to have an important role in the revolution, because of her duties and tradition, Laura’s mother has an indirect and quiet form of resistance characterized by her support and resistance, and it is evident when Tania talks to her daughter Laura and says to her: “Now, because he was exiled by our most pious, autocrat, and puissant Tsar of All the Russians, as the Prayer Book calls him” to which Laura replies: “Feeling like that about the Tsar, could you join the revolutionaries?” and then Tania replies by saying: “Of course not...it’s not possible for people like you and me to become revolutionaries. Tyrants have to be deposed by subjects who have broken, whose nerves snap under tyranny, who are seized by frenzy. But people like us don’t break. It’s not specially to our credit. Indeed, it’s a form of misfortune” (West,1966,p325), as clear through her statement, she thinks it a disaster not being able to have a more manifest role in the revolution, unlike her daughter Laura and by the end of their conversation, directly starts to think about the revolution, “Laura went slowly down the corridor to the room where the coffin lay, noting that her mother was out of date. She was thinking of the French Revolution” (West, 1966,p 325)

In spite of Tania’s method towards direct political action, she faced difficulties, so at the end of the narrative, she rejects the old Tsarist order and the disorder it left. The political, social and economic of the nation exemplified by the big corruption, illegal system, and lack of knowledge while talking medical issues, and supporting the new reforms of the Bolshevik regime, her strong attitude reveals her commitment to her nation. The latter is illustrated by

her saying: “Look at Russia. It’s coming out into the light... stories of what Russia used to be like ... The serfs so ignorant that when there were cholera epidemics they thought the doctors who came to save them had given them the disease by poisoning the wells, and they killed the poor blessed saints. And the police went round the markets squeezing bribes out of the poor stallholders... The prisons stank and the prisoners were sent there without proper trials ... But all those horrors are done with and over... nobody’ll be poor, nobody will be oppressed. And all over the world the old stupidities are going to die” (West,1966,p.369).

Similarly, and with the agreement with the previously analyzed female characters within the novel, Laura’s grandmother Sofia was created in a way that analyzed on another part of women’s contributions in the Russian Revolution, mainly it includes the older generation and their influence on the newer one, besides to the struggle they left to the next generations, which definite the strength of the Russian status in the future. Mainly, the importance Laura’s grandmother Sofia’s, and her undivided religious loyalty, nationalism and influence on her granddaughter’s principles linked with the revolutionized notions are the basis played a major role in building modern Russia.

Then, Sofia and women like her played an important role in the 1917 reformation; that is for governing another generation of Bolsheviks by providing them with the important resource which can help them to create a united nation and took success to the Russian revolution. So, its supporters who may help it to be a unified sociopolitical movement, in this case, the belief is the Russian faith. Importantly, throughout Rebecca West’s narrative, Laura’s grandmother Sofia is characterized by her strong critique of the English religious practices, taking her own divine religious connection and as a result influencing other characters around her and her environment. In this section Rebecca West clearly shows the depiction of the real events through the discussion about themes like religion. This

exemplified when Sofia is discussing about her daughter's husband Edward who is a protestant, she talks to her daughter and granddaughter about how the English detached from their religion, and how they are replacing political power instead, which provide to her is not the right basis for building a strong nation, she says: "the English is a mockery. They want a prescription for social order, and union with God means nothing to them.

In addition to that, although Sofia lived through the fall of old royal Russia and the rise of the new Bolshevik era, she still felt connected to the greatness of the old Russian Empire. The author describes her as "grand" and "still flexible like a young animal," but also shows that time had changed her by saying, "Her neck had been round and white, but now the flesh had disappeared away under her chin" (West, 1966, p. 23). This means that although times changed, Sofia's values and beliefs stayed important and continued to have meaning.

Continually, it is true that Russia's power was appeared with its purpose as well as its imperialist system, according to the grandmother Sofia, in spite of the national political disorder; she believes state growth as a central support to be defended for the future being and prosperity of the nation, declaring not only national, but also international influence and authority, otherwise, the state will be weakened.

To describe the latter, Sofia says to Laura: "whereas we of the Orthodox faith represent the imperial spirit" Laura, do you pray regularly that your mother's people may be given possession of Constantinople and restore it to its true place as our New Jerusalem?" Laura's statement however the absence of the belief which Sofia has, she answers by saying: "Well, no," admitted Laura ... "Not so often as I should, I mean. There are," she said, to amuse Tania, though she would deny afterwards that she had been amused, "so many other things to pray for. even though she doesn't do as her grandmother says, she internally knows that she should do, to which Nikolai replies by saying: "but never neglect for long this most

urgent prayer, Laura, and never let yourself be misled into lack of warmth regarding this act... The violence of Byzantium, and of Byzantium's child, Holy Russia, is the disguise of a healthy natural process" (West, 1966, p. 55), sharing the opinion of the grandmother. Laura respects a lot her grandmother's character which is definite, and this is exemplified when she says;

"She'll know exactly what to do. She's very clever." "No, what she has is not cleverness," said Nikolai. "It's a womanly quality. Ah, how troublesome it is that she's not here. She could tell me at once something I need to know" (West, 1966, p. 203).

this passage from Rebecca West's novel, clearly shows that the grandmother Sofia influences the protagonist Laura since Laura uses her grandmother's knowledge when she faces difficulties and obstacles and seeking truths in everything she does and of course, education of her mother Tania of biblical books, they use it to find the truths.

In short, Rebecca West was influenced during The Revolution of Russia in 1917, which helped her to show the important role of women who participated in the Revolution in order to achieve the rescue of their country. Thus, the author has underlined the radical struggle of female characters in her historical novel, despite the difficulties they faced during the Tsarist rule and times of national conflict, the women assumed major roles through several forms among them, resistance and participation in politics.

Rebecca West has written a detailed, precise, and complex story that almost portrayed the revolutionary women, Laura, Tania, and Sofia, who are a strong nationalist, have revolutionary spirits, and intelligence, all playing a role in the period of turmoil. Although, they used unique methods and forms of resistance, they were revolutionary and loyal to their country, portrayed the Bolshevik and the Russian radical women.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The primary aim of this research paper, focused on Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966), we have analyzed the novel through the perspective of Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicist theory. Our analysis aimed to emphasize the historical context of The Russian Revolution. We also aimed to explore the role of women during this period, as portrayed through the characters in the novel.

Throughout the discussion of the two chapters, in the first chapter, 'Contextualizing the Narrative: Historical Influences on Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966)', we examine key historical events, such as Russia before World War one, and the Outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution. In which we explored the Revolution's Origins, Ideology, and its eventual Achievement and Legacy. Our study showed that the *Birds Fall Down* not only portrays larger historical events of the time, but also focusing on main aspects such as the political and ideological struggles surrounding the Russian Revolution. The novel effectively captures the relation between political movements and societal changes, showing major events influence the direction of the narrative and the actions of the characters.

Additionally, in the second chapter we focused on Women's Contribution to the Russia Revolution through Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down* (1966). In the novel we analyzed Women's Political Activism and Revolutionary Commitment of the characters Laura, her mother Tania, and her grandmother Sofia. However, the women character's actions emphasize the fact that women, though often neglected in conventional historical narrative, they were considered the social and the political change of the era.

To conclude, this research shows that *The Birds Fall Down* is a powerful story about Russia before the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution. Relying to New Historicism theory which helped us to understand how the novel connects to real historical events, while

also looking at the character's personal experiences. However, our study is a simple starting point, there are more to explore, especially by applying other theoretical approaches such as Marxism or Feminism. Therefore, we encourage scholars and researchers to take on additional studies to emphasize the details that were beyond the limits of our contemporary study, the future researchers could delve deeper into these areas in greater details to discover additional outstanding in Rebecca West's work.

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