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*West's **The Return of The Soldier** and Mason's **The Winter Soldier**: A New Historicist Reading*

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To my mother Fatiha AMEDDAH

To my father Razi

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## **Abstract**

The present research paper has examined two war novels, Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918) and Daniel Mason's *The Winter Soldier* (2018). Which focus on the experiences of soldiers and the horrors they faced during wartime. These novels also delve into the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of war on both combatants and civilians. Our dissertation explores common and distinct themes within these works such as War Trauma, Women Involvement in WWI, Social and Military Hierarchy during the War and The Role of Medicine during the War. In order to reach our goal, we have relied on two theoretical concepts: Stephen Greenblatt's "New Historicism" in order to understand the historical context that effects the work and Sigmund Freud's "Psychoanalysis" to explore the interpretation of dreams within our research. The former enabled us to understand how history and literary works are interconnected while the latter made us deduce that World War One affected the psychological state of people. The discussion Part of our research is divided into two major chapters, the first chapter is entitled Themes in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918); it has analyzed the main themes in the novel, including War Trauma, Social and Military Hierarchy during the War, and Women Involvement during WWI. It has attempted to show the effect of the First World War on individuals and society Concerning the second Chapter which is entitled Themes in Daniel Mason's *The Winter Soldier* (2018) it also dealt with the main themes of the novel such as War Trauma, Women Involvement in WWI and The Role of Medicine during the War. Similar to the first chapter, this chapter also deals on illustrating the war's influence on both society and individuals, as well as on the evolution of medical practices during this era. Finally, we have come to the conclusion that historical events have an impact not only on the individuals and society but also of human culture.

**Key Words:** First World War, Historical Context, New Historicism, Psychoanalysis, Interpretation of Dreams.



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## **I. Introduction**

Humanity was stuck by the start of the twentieth century, it was marked by the most devastating event called the First World War, or, as it is known today, the Great War. It was a conflict between the Allies (France, the United Kingdom, Russia and the United States of America) and the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire) that started in 1914 and ended in 1918. During this dark period, people experienced destruction and fear; they lost everything they owned, including their families, homes, and even their jobs. Moreover, it left deep impact in practically all fields such as socio- politics, religious, cultural, history and literature as well.

In fact, the First World War resulted in a literary production, which included books (novels), diaries and poems. In addition, it gave rise to fresh literary subjects such as the idealization of war versus the reality of war, which is a recent theme in the post-war period. Inspired by this tragic event, many authors began to express their sorrow and pain through art like music, painting as well as writing like war novel and war poetry. Among the writer of war fiction, we may cite Rebecca West and Daniel Mason.

The following research paper focuses on two war novels that marked the literary works of the First World War. Our dissertation is entitled West's *The Return of the Soldier* and Mason's *The Winter Soldier: A New Historicist Reading*. The two novels under study were written at different times as their publication dates indicate. Even, there is a century of difference between them; the two books have a common point that connects them. Our research paper will be a thematic study of the two novels which will help us to distinguish the similarities and the differences between them. Moreover, we noticed that there is not as much writing on this event (WWI) as on the Second World War, which is extensively studied and described in many literary works and even cinema. The reason for choosing these two novels is above all to highlight the impact of the First World War on literature and writers.

## Review of the Literature

Relying on some critical works that we have read about Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* and Daniel Mason's *The Winter Soldier*, observed that many scholars from different angles and perspectives, among them feminism and psychoanalysis, have analyzed both novels. They emerged as significant perspectives; they were also interpreted in different ways.

First, the scholar Alice Borrego studied West's novel as a feminist novel. In her journal article entitled *Against the Norm: Exception as a Disruptive Force in Rebecca West's The Return of the Soldier (1918)*, she argues that in her novel *The Return of the Soldier*, Rebecca West represents women's rights through the characters. Indeed, at that time West was a supporter of the women's suffrage movement and used her writing as a means of advocating women's rights and denounced the oppression of women by society. Borrego asserts: "*The Return of the Soldier* is testament to Rebecca West's commitment to feminist and socialist issues. When the novel was published, she was already an acclaimed journalist for *The Freewoman* and *The Clarion*" (Borrego, 2020, p.2). In fact, West supported the movement by writing articles for both newspapers. In addition, Alice Borrego also analyzed *The Return of the Soldier (1918)* under Freudian theory, she argues that Peter Childs contends that West can be seen as not just an early writer on war but also among the first English novelists to employ psychoanalytical theory as a method. (Borrego, 2020).

In her article entitled *Rebecca West's The Return of the Soldier; Analyzing the Interrelationship of Male and Female Traumas*, Emily R. Hershman writes that World War I caused both psychological trauma and social problems. Indeed, she examined the impacts of the Great War and the relationship between the novel's male and female characters in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*, Chris Baldry and his wife, Kitty Baldry. She claims that:

“Rebecca West's 1918 novel *The Return of the Soldier* dissects the socio-economic and psychological tensions caused by the upheavals of World War I” (Hershman, 2011, p.1). She also explains how Chris Baldry's trauma affected the woman who turned his life upside down. In addition, Hershman analyzes West's novel from the same perspective as Alice Borrego. She adds that ‘the post-traumatic stress disorder’ from which Chris suffers also affects his wife Kitty and his cousin Jenny (Hershman, 2011).

Furthermore, Elizabeth Covington declares in a journal article entitled *The Return of the Soldier and Re-Appropriated Memories published in 2014*, that although Rebecca West's novel *The Return of the Soldier* is considered an illustration of the Freudian theory. Certain literary and historical studies prove the contrary and that the novel is in no way related to this theory. She argues that "Yet as West herself points out, psychoanalysis was new to England when she planned and drafted the book in 1915-16, and other kinds of scientific approaches to memory lapses were much more common" (Covington, 2014, p.56). Clearly, West's novel begins even before ‘Freudian theory’ was developed in England. Her book describes how soldiers suffered in wartime and that the most serious injuries they had were those shell-shock and amnesia. However, the novel is considered a medical study as Covington claims; she also adds that in the novel, Rebecca West defends the patient's right to privacy by claiming the case history, especially the history related to memory (Covington, 2014).

Moreover, in *The North American Review*, Lawrence Gilman comments on *The Book of the Month: Jeweled Melodrama, The Judge by Rebecca West* that the latter is “an authentic masterpiece, a one-act drama of [war] with music.” (Gilman, 1923, p.123). He also adds that Rebecca West remains mysterious. Indeed, he claims that it is hard to get anything out of her from her or her editor. Additionally, Gilman asserts that he appreciates West's literary skills mainly to mix romance with reality by including, in her story, both of love and real life situations especially (Gilman, 1923).

As for the second novel, we have selected *The Winter Soldier* by Daniel Mason, which has been only published recently, there are only few reviews, (contrary to *The Return of the Soldier* (1918) by Rebecca West which has received more extensive attention). *The Winter Soldier* is written by Daniel Mason published in 2018 has emerged as a significant work in modern literature, capturing the attention of the readers. The objective of this literature review is to examine the principal themes. It is a war novel is set in the outbreak of World War I, the novel makes the readers into an enigmatic journey that explores the profound impact of war on individuals of that era. The novel's success is rooted in the intricate its characters. the protagonist Lucius, undergoes from an in experimented doctor to an accomplished one. The novel also delves into the evolution of the medical field during this period. "The Winter Soldier" makes a significant contribution to the realm of historical war fiction. Existing scholarly inquiries underscore the novel's prominence in contemporary literature, underscoring its essential status for further scrutiny within the field of literary studies.

### **Issue and Working Hypotheses**

After reviewing some of the literary studies on both novels, we noticed that both books *The Return of the Soldier* and *The Winter Soldier* have been thoroughly researched and analyzed from different perspectives, mainly the former. To our best knowledge no study has already put the two works in a comparative way. This is why we thought it convenient to write a dissertation in where we will show the similarities and the differences between the two novels, mainly at the level of the themes.

Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to carry out a new study that consists of and analyzing in depth the two works and also reveal the links that unite them despite a century of difference, by highlighting the themes of Rebecca West's *The Return of The Soldier* (1918), mainly war trauma, social and military hierarchy during the war, and women involvement in

WWI, as well as those of Daniel Mason's *The Winter Soldier* (2018), such as war trauma, women involvement in WWI, the role of medicine in the war, and how the first world war impacted both novels.

To achieve our aim, the thematic study will be conducted by using two theoretical frameworks: "New Historicism" and "Psychoanalysis". First, Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism is an approach that illustrates any literary work is related to another work that has already preceded it, while being influenced by the historical context. Second, Sigmund Freud develops the Freudian theory, or Psychoanalysis, which is the study of the human behavior and emotions. According to him, everyone has unconscious feelings, desires, and memories that are expressed through dreams. In fact, both Rebecca West and Daniel Mason focus on the impact of World War I especially the psychological troubles that affect the characters.

### **Methodological Outline**

At the methodological level, we will use the IMRAD method. This organisation facilitates to readers to get a clear constructed understanding of the dissertation. Therefore, it consists of four parts, including the introduction, method and materials, results and discussion and finally a conclusion. The first section of our dissertation consists of a general introduction where we expose the subject of the study; it includes a review of the literature written on both Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* and Daniel Mason's *The Winter Soldier*. In addition, issue and working hypotheses that shows the aim of this thematic study.

As for the methods and materials part, it is divided into two sections. The first section is a study of key concepts of the two theoretical frameworks, which are Stephen Greenblatt's "New Historicism" and Sigmund Freud's "Psychoanalysis" that will be applied in our study. The second section is also divided into two subsections; the first contains some biographical

information about the two authors, Rebecca West and Daniel Mason, while the second contains Synopses of the two novels. Concerning the Results part of our work, it exposes the findings which will be analysed in the upcoming Discussion. The last part of our work is a conclusion which is a recapitulation of our findings.

The largest part of our research paper is Discussion; it is divided into two chapters. The First Chapter is a study which represents the themes in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918) while Daniel Mason's themes in his novel *The Winter Soldier* (2018) are then discussed in the Second Chapter. Thus, the focus is put on the same aspect (themes). Finally, we end with a General Conclusion as a recapitulation of our thematic study.

## II. Methods and Materials

This part of our research explores the two theoretical bases of our study provided by Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism and Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis. Indeed, both of *The Return of the Soldier (1918)* and *The Winter Soldier (2018)* are war novels. They reflect the impact of World War I on history and literature, so our aim is to use these two theoretical elements in order to study and analyse the common and different themes of the two authors' books, as well as to demonstrate how the writers' time influenced their writings.

### Method

#### Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism

New Historicism is a literary approach and a set of thoughts developed between 1980 and 1990. It provides a link between history, context, and literature. In other words, this approach emphasizes the idea that literature and culture are related to historical contexts. To our best knowledge, Stephen Greenblatt is considered as being the father of New Historicism; he is known for his writings on Shakespeare and the Renaissance. In fact, New Historicism is developed after the publication of Greenblatt's *The Power of Forms and The Forms of Power in the English Renaissance (1982)*, and *Renaissance self-fashioning from more to Shakespeare (1980)*.

Moreover, New Historicism, also known as 'cultural poetics', is a reaction to both Formalist school, which is an approach based on the study of a text by focusing on its style, language, and structure rather than its historical context, and Structuralism, which is focused on the study of human behavior and culture. According to Greenblatt and New Historicists, literature is always historical, and literary work should be analyzed in relation to its place and time. In other words, history is a part of literature, which, as a result, cannot be separated.

In fact, Stephen Greenblatt's work has been influenced by several intellectuals including Marxism, cultural Anthropology, and Post-Structuralism. First, Greenblatt was inspired by the ideas of "Althusserian theory," which was coined by the Marxist Louis Althusser who focused on the study of ideology and power dynamics within society. According to Althusser, ideology is not only a set of values; it is embedded in the construction of society, and New Historicism aimed to examine the historical context and how power is reflected in literature. 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 supplies the method to interpret the texts for New Historicism"(Lyu, 2021, p.1076).

Second, the anthropological studies of Clifford Geertz also impacted the development of New Historicism. While Geertz focused on the study of human behavior, symbols, and meaning and how they are represented through culture; New Historicism relies on exploring the ways in which literature reflects culture. In other words, this refers to the cultural context, its interpretations, and the role of human behavior within literature.

As already mentioned, the growth of New Historicism is also due to Post-Structuralism. Indeed, the French philosopher and poststructuralist Michel Foucault and his ideas about power and knowledge inspired Greenblatt's theory to analyze literature. According to him, history is influenced by power, which means that political and economic forces are able to determine the development of knowledge to their own benefit. For Foucault, discourse analysis is the best way for historians to understand the past (DeWolf, 2018). New historicists are inspired by Foucault's ideas and analyze how power is used in literature.

Importantly, New Historicism uses two elements to demonstrate the relationship between the text and the context. In his book entitled *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, John Brannigan claims that according to 'Textuality of History' literary works are not provided in a vacuum, whereas 'Historicity of Texts' means that history is integrated into the context in which it is produced and understood (time and place). To be more specific, New Historicism deals with these two features in order to understand a literary work through its historical context and history (Brannigan, 1998).

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 recognise 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 recognise the textuality of history is to assume that nothing exists outside language, outside representations (Brannigan, 1998, p.204)

According to Louis Montrose New Historicism recognize that historians could no longer view the past separated from the present. Instead, it emphasized the relationship between past and present, and the role of cultural and historical differences. It also highlighted that literary works are products of their historical context. Montrose argued that New Historicism recognized the textuality of history, recognizing how language, culture, and the contemporary context influence the comprehension of the past, and how historical and literary texts are interconnected.

Additionally, New Historicism is not only limited on the study of the past, but also on the study of both past and present. New historicists believe that the past is interconnected with the present, and that is important to analyze and understand the historical context in any literary, in order to control the future and Aram Veaser explains in his book entitled *The New Historicism Reader (1994)*, the past is a tool to understand the present.

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 usable past only when it seems as a prefiguration of the present (Veese, 1994, p.4).

As stated by Veese, New Historicism is not only the idea that history is meant past events but it is also used to understand the present and to influence future outcomes. In other words, it recognizes the influence of historical narratives and interpretations in shaping our understanding of the world.

To conclude, thanks to New Historicism, New Historicists can analyze how historical, social, and cultural factors affect literature. This theory balances the aim of understanding the importance of context and how it influences literary work with the time and place of its production. Indeed, before the emergence of New Historicism, people tended to study the text itself, but New Historicism changed their view by considering the circumstances that inspired the writer's work.

## **Psychoanalysis**

As far as our second theoretical framework is concerned, the Freudian theory or Psychoanalysis is flourished by Sigmund Freud in 1890. It is based on the study of the human mind, or human unconscious, and how it works. According to the theory, the human mind is generally referred to as an 'iceberg' and it is divided into three parts: The Id, the Ego, and the Super-Ego. Indeed, the "Id" is the source of different desires like sexual and impulsive ones, while the "Ego" creates a balance that mediates between the Id and reality. However, the "Super-Ego" represents the morality principle, or the rules that are dictated by family, teacher or society.

Freud proposed three structures of the psyche or personality Id, Ego, Ego and Super-Ego. Id refers a selfish, primitive, childish pleasure – oriented part of the personality with no ability to delay gratification.

SuperEgo refers internalized societal and parental standards of 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour'. Ego refers the moderator between the Id and Super-Ego which seeks compromises to pacify both. It can be viewed as our 'sense of time and place' (Houssain, 2017).

According to Houssain, Freud's structural model of the psyche is fundamental to psychoanalytic theory and has been influential in understanding human behavior and personality development. It illustrates the struggle between the immediate desires (Id), the moral and societal values (Super-Ego), and the rational, problem-solving aspect of the psyche (Ego).

In fact, Sigmund Freud explains that when a desire is not satisfied, it does not disappear but is repressed in the unconscious, which is then interpreted by dreams. Additionally, he states that unconscious impulses and memories influence human behavior. Psychoanalysis is used to treat nervous and psychological illnesses such as 'Hysteria' and in order to treat his patients and bring out their repressed unconscious; Freud uses a therapeutic technique called 'Hypnosis'.

Moreover, childhood holds an important phase in the theory of Sigmund Freud. Notably, psychosexual development begins in this stage and passes through various phases: the oral, the anal, the phallic, the latency, and the genital. Freud elaborates on these stages in his work *The Interpretation of Dreams (1988)*, referring to them as the 'Oedipus complex' and the 'Electra complex.' According to Freud, these complexes manifest during the third phallic stage when children begin to discover their genital parts, marking the recognition of the distinctions between the male and the female. Indeed, during this phase, they have a desire to have sex with their parents (the opposite sex), and they see their same-sex parents as rivals. In other words, it is an enmity between girl and mother, son and father.

To be more explicit, the ‘Oedipus complex’ is when a boy views his father as his rival; his only desire is to possess his mother only for him and replace his father, but he knows that the father will punish him, so fear is born inside the boy, which is called by Freud ‘Castration Anxiety.’ Second, the ‘Electra complex’ occurs when a girl has feelings for her father and desires to possess him while viewing her mother as hurdle. Further, as explained by Sigmund Freud, a girl is frustrated because she does not have the same genital part as a boy, and this frustration is called "penis envy."

Finally, Psychoanalysis is a theory that serves to understand the human mind; how people think and feel by trying to bring out their unconscious to the conscious, it is intended to release them from their mental suffering, make their lives easier, which will make their relationships better, and their emotions more controllable. But it is also a way to understand literature. In his journal article entitled *Psychoanalytic Theory used in English Literature: A Descriptive Study* the assistant Professor at Z.H Sikder University of Science & Technology, Md. Mahroof Hossain claims: "Psychoanalysis is not simply a branch of medicine or psychology; it helps understand philosophy, culture, religion, and first and foremost literature" (Houssain, 2017).

## **Materials**

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

Rebecca West, was born on December 21, 1892, in London, is both a novelist and journalist. Raised in a family of intellectuals, she grew up in an environment related to literature, theater, art, and music; thus, her talent as a writer was born thanks to the influence of her family. Her mother was a pianist, and her father was an army officer, war correspondent, and journalist. Following her father’s profession, she became a journalist for the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals (1945–1946).

As an author, West wrote several travelogues 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). In fact, the first novel by Rebecca West is *The return of the soldier* (1918). In 1949, West became a Commander of the Order of the British Empire, and in 1959, she was promoted to the rank of Dame Commander (DBE). On March 15, 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 Return of the Soldier* (1918)**

*The Return of the Soldier* is the debut novel of Rebecca West, it is considered a remarkable work in early 20th-century literature, exploring themes of war trauma and the effects of conflict on individuals and relationships. It also deals with the impact of the First World War. The novel is essentially about war, but it also examines many other issues such as women's rights, marriage, and social class. The narrative is narrated by Jenny, the narrator, who tells the story of her shell-shocked cousin named Captain Chris Baldry, the main character, who is dealing with the effects of a tragic injury (a shell sock) that has caused him amnesia. Jenny and his wife Kitty hear the news by his childhood sweetheart, Margaret Allington (Mr. Grey's wife). Indeed, Kitty is perplexed, and she wonders why Chris would have informed Margaret rather than her. Then Kitty learns that her husband Chris has lost his memory and cannot remember the last fifteen years, but Captain Baldry still believes he is in love with Margaret. When Chris returns to Baldry Court, he no longer remembers his wife or his son Oliver, who had died a few years earlier. The captain finds himself confronted not only with his past and reality but also with the three women who upset his life.

Indeed, Jenny and Kitty try to help the captain regain his memory. But for Chris, his only wish is to see his childhood love again. So, Jenny goes to bring her back to Baldry Court, and when Chris meets her again, it is as if nothing has changed between them. Meanwhile, Kitty asks a doctor named Dr. Gilbert Anderson to try a new remedy to restore her husband's memories. At first, Jenny and Margaret do not want to because they notice that Chris is happy in his past life, but at the end of the story, Margaret reveals the truth to him by telling him about the death of his son Oliver. Devastated by the truth he has heard; Chris regains his memory. He returns home with sadness and a blank stare, while his wife rejoices to see him once again healed.

### **Life and times of Daniel Mason**

The American author Daniel Mason was born in 1976 in California. He is a physician with a degree in biology from Harvard University and the UCSF School of Medicine at the University of California. He is also a novelist; his first novel *The Piano Tuner*, was released in 2002 and won the Roman Evasion Prize. Five years later, he published a book entitled *A Far Country* (2007). The following year, he published *Death of the Pugilist or The Famous Battle of Jacob Burke & Blindman McGraw* (2008).

In 2018, after ten years of absence, he published a war novel entitled *The Winter Soldier*, a novel that took him almost 14 years to complete. In this novel, Mason not only portrays the impact of the First World War but also focuses on the psychology of soldiers in wartime, and how medicine was like at that time, and how it developed. His last book, *A Registry of My Passage upon the Earth*, was published in 2020. Daniel Mason is a Stanford medical psychiatrist who also teaches literature at Stanford University. He currently lives in San Francisco.

## **Synopsis of *The Winter Soldier* (2018)**

*The Winter Soldier* is the fifth novel by Daniel Mason, in which he depicts how society and conditions were during wartime. It also describes how medicine was developed during this time. Indeed, the novel highlights the impact of the First World War and how soldiers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder through the story of a young student in medicine named Lucius Krzelewski, who enlists as a doctor when World War I breaks out to help wounded soldiers at the front. He is sent to a church turned into a field hospital in Lemnowice, situated in the Carapates Mountains, where he meets Sister Margaret, with whom he falls in love over time. Therefore, Lucius and Margaret cannot love each other freely because she is a sister who has pronounced vows, so they hide their love from the soldiers and try to see each other in secret. And during the day, they take care of the wounded soldiers by offering them the necessary care.

At the beginning, Lucius is depicted as being an incompetent doctor; he has no experience. Over time, he learns from Margaret how to do amputations and how to treat wounded soldiers. But on a winter day, the arrival of a soldier disrupts the life of the young doctor. The soldier is called Jozèf Horvàth; he is dressed in a strange uniform, suffers from psychological troubles, and is unable to speak. For Lucius, this situation is new; indeed, he had never come across a case like Horvàth before. He is sure that he can help him heal, so he decides to keep him despite Horvàth's wanting to return to the front. Thus, this decision creates some kind of conflict because Margaret wants to let him go but not Lucius. One day, the leader of the army, called Horst, comes and sees that Horvàth has no injuries. He asks why he has not come back to the front, but Lucius replies that his illness is psychological, but the lieutenant does not want to understand; he punishes the soldier. After a few weeks, the soldier goes back to the war.

Day by day, Margaret and Lucius love each other more, and when he asks her to marry him, the young woman runs away, and they lose sight of each other for a long time. When he gets back home, he starts to have nightmares; he is haunted by the memory of Horvath, and he wants to find Margaret. After the war, he marries Natasza Borszowski, but he cannot tell her about his nightmares, so he decides to go looking for her. After many years, he finds her, and she tells him that she is already married to Jozef Horvath.

### III. Results

This part of our dissertation contains and illustrates the main results that we have reached throughout our thematic study. After examining both of Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* and Daniel Mason's *The Winter Soldier* in the light of the two theoretical concepts "New Historicism" and "Psychoanalysis", the analysis revealed that even if there is a century's difference between the publication dates of the two authors' books, both have a common point which is the themes. To get to our findings, we divided our discussion into two chapters where we discuss the common and different themes in both of the two novels.

The first chapter, entitled *Themes in Rebecca West's The Return of the Soldier (1918)*, consists of the study of the impact of World War I on the writing of West's novel. The latter depicts the disastrous consequences of this dark period through themes, including War Trauma, Social and Military Hierarchy during the War, and Women Involvement in WWI which are well-demonstrated through the characters. The main character is Chris Baldry, who has been traumatized by the war; he has shell shock, which has caused him amnesia, which has disrupted his and his family's lives.

As for our second chapter, entitled *Themes in Daniel Mason's The Winter Soldier (2018)*, it is similar to the first in the sense that it is also the study of how World War I inspired the work of Daniel Mason, in addition to how the author describes the Medical Practices of that time. Indeed, Mason's novel treats the same themes as West's, namely, War Trauma and Women Involvement in WWI, in which Mason shows through characters such as Lucius Krzelewski. However, he also includes a different theme, which is The Role of Medicine during the War.

To conclude, we have analyzed in both chapters the major themes of both books and have come to the conclusion that the two works are similar to a certain extent and that both

writers, Rebecca West and Daniel Mason, are inspired by the First World War happenings. Although West is British and Mason is American (which leads to two different contexts) and despite a century's difference in the publication of the two works, they still have something in common. This leads us to believe that Daniel Mason is influenced by Rebecca West's novel.

## **IV. Discussion**

In this section of our study, we will start on the analysis of two distinct novels, *The Return of the Soldier* (1918) and *The Winter Soldier* (2018). Our objective is to explore the shared common dominant themes in both works, mainly centred around the influence of the First World War. Our intention is to not only identify commonalities but also to determine the differences even the distinct dates of their publication. As explained earlier in our introduction, we will rely on both Stephen Greenblatt's "New Historicism" and Sigmund Freud's "Psychoanalysis" included their key concepts of historical context and the interpretation of dreams. The former theory focuses more on history and highlights the events of the Great War and its impact on society, particularly the soldiers' lives, how war affects the social classes, women's role as nurses and the development of the medical techniques. As for the second theory, delves into the examination of characters' psychological sides and their suffering from war trauma, especially 'the post-traumatic stress disorder', it includes the study of the emotional and mental suffering of individuals, such as depression, anxiety, and nightmares.

### **Chapter One: Themes in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918)**

In this first chapter, we discuss the main themes of the first novel that we have selected, *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), by Rebecca West. we explore into a detailed examination of the predominant themes found within our selected novel, the focus will be put on three of them: War Trauma, Social and Military Hierarchy during the War, and Women Involvement in WWI. The first theme, War Trauma, provides a description of the mental suffering the psychological traumas that have left a mark on the characters during the great war, our exploration extends to the second theme, Social and Military Hierarchy during the war which studies the division of society along social classes during the wartime period. Lastly, the third

theme, Women's Involvement in WWI highlights women's role in the war and how women were essential at that time. Indeed, Rebecca West's novel is a series of psychological traumas that affected the lives of Chris Baldry, a captain in the British Army who was serving at the front in France during World War I, and the women around him.

## **War Trauma**

*The Return of the Soldier* is Rebecca West's first book. The author was influenced by the terrible events and tragedies that occurred in the war, which led her to write her war novel, in which she depicts the impact of the First World War, especially the war trauma. In fact, the Great War was a conflict between the Triple Entente (France, the United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States) and the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire), which started after an incident in the Balkans known as the Sarajevo Assassination, which led Austria-Hungary to declare war on Serbia. The war lasted from July 28, 1914, to November 11, 1918, and caused huge destruction namely in cities and towns, of France and Belgium especially during the Battle of the Somme and the Battle of Verdun. The war resulted in 21 million soldiers and civilians being injured and killed, as well as the collapse of several empires in the Treaty of Versailles, such as the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire.

As expressed in the novel *The Return of the Soldier (1918)*, the war resulted in many consequences, such as the psychological and mental problems from which the characters suffer. For instance, it left many scars, notably on Captain Chris Baldry who suffers from amnesia caused by shell shock. At the beginning of the novel, Rebecca West evokes the horrors of war through the dream of Jenny, the narrator, who wishes for the return of her cousin Chris Baldry, who fights on the front in France. In her dream, she sees the destruction and soldiers injured by bombs.

Of late I had had bad dreams about him. By nights I saw Chris running across the brown rottenness of No-Man's-Land, starting back here because he trod upon a hand, not even looking there because of the awfulness of an unburied head, and not till my dream was packed full of horror did I see him pitch forward on his knees as he reached safety, if it was that (West, 1998, p.2).

In this passage from Rebecca West's novel, the narrator describes recurring nightmares about a man named Chris, who appears to be a soldier in World War I. The dreams depict Chris navigating the horrors of No-Man's-Land, encountering disturbing scenes of death and suffering. The dream's climax leaves uncertainty about Chris's safety, highlighting the psychological trauma and lasting impact of war on individuals.

According to the author, war is a series of cruel incidents that affect the lives of both civilians and soldiers. After the war, many participants suffered from psychological trauma including shell-shock, flashbacks, nightmares, anxiety, and depressions. As previously mentioned, in the book, Captain Baldry is the character who embodies the mental impact of war. Indeed, Rebecca West describes Christopher Baldry as suffering from shell shock caused by the Great War. To illustrate, he is injured in France while he is fighting at the front, resulting in amnesia and memory loss. He travels back fifteen years, remembering his first love Margaret Grey (the wife of Mr. Allington) and their love story on Monkey Island while forgetting his wife Kitty and his dead son Oliver.

In fact, during the First World War, many soldiers fought against the enemy on the Western Front, which was characterized by "trench warfare". In order to protect themselves from enemy attacks and weapons, they dug ditches called "trenches". This is a tactic that both parties (the Allies and the Central Powers) have employed. In addition, the space between the opposing trenches was called "No Man's Land"; enemies were not allowed to cross the boundaries, and if a soldier from the opposite troops crossed the border, he was considered a

threat or an attack. Indeed, the "No Man's Land" was a deadly zone, surrounded by corpses, obstacles and barbed wire.

On the other hand, life on the Western Front was miserable. At that time, the soldiers lived in ruthless and extremely difficult conditions and their lives were threatened by danger; the enemy could attack at any time with different weapons such as artillery, tanks, machine guns, bayonets, and different types of poison gas, like 'Mustard gas', 'Phosgene gas', 'Chlorine gas', the most used during World War I, they also used aerial warfare such as aircrafts for the purpose of throwing bombs. In addition to this, they suffered from the cold and dampness of the trenches; they slept badly because of the discomfort and the insects around them; they were dirty and smelly; they did not even have water to wash or shave. A soldier named Guy Chapman affirms that: "No washing or shaving here, and the demands of nature answered as quickly as possible on the handiest and deepest shell-hole" (Ellis, 1989, p.52). In addition to all the diseases and viruses transmitted by rats that feed on dead soldiers; there is also 'Typhus' (a disease transmitted by lice). The Corporal Henry Gregory of 119th Machine Gun Company was interviewed after the war about how was life in trenches, and he claims that "The other soldiers in the hut took their shift off after tea. They were watching lice they had never seen a louse before, but they were here in droves. The men were killing them between their nails" (Simkin, 2020). All of these harsh conditions of living and fighting in the trenches during World War I created psychological trauma in soldiers and that is what happened with Captain Baldry, the main character in Rebecca West's novel.

As previously mentioned, *The Return of the Soldier* depicts the effects of World War I through the character of Captain Baldry, who suffers from war trauma resulting from shell shock, which causes him amnesia. Indeed, Henry Straughan affirms in his article entitled *Trauma, Innocence and Freud in The Return of the Soldier* that Christopher Baldry suffers from many kinds of traumas. As he claims: "The soldier has suffered three traumas: he has

lost the woman he loved, he has lost his son, and in the 'flooded trench in Flanders' he suffered the trauma of war" (Straughan, 2019). First, war trauma, also known as 'post-traumatic stress disorder', is a type of anxiety and depression that soldiers experienced after war, as a result of terror of different battles like misery, death, and sexual violence. All of these terrible events and emotions created psychological damage in their victim's minds or psyche, and in the novel, Chris is haunted by the disturbing experiences he witnessed while he was in the front line. When the captain has lost his memory, he does not remember his present life but still remembers anything about his past life. This memory loss is for him a way to flee the trauma of war. To be more explicit, Rebecca West creates a sort of evasion within the novel through the main character Chris Baldry. The latter cannot go out or face this painful reality, he prefers to hide in the past than to face the present moment and remembers what he has seen and experienced in times of war. For instance, he dives back into his memories of his love story with Margaret Allington and recalls his adventure with her when they were together and the beautiful time they spent together in Monkey Island. He recounts fondly these memories from his past to his cousin Jenny, remembering every detail as if the captain is still living that romance. This example shows that Chris is happier in his past life.

Moreover, Chris feels a kind of imbalance between the present and the past. According to Straughan, Chris is unable to recall his present or his time spent with Kitty or his dead son Oliver since he is stuck in the unconscious (in the past). He also asserts, "His unconscious self is refusing to let him resume his normal life relationships" (Straughan, 2019). But he is also forced to face his present by always looking at his wife's kitty. The fact of finding himself under the same roof destabilizes Chris; for him, the present is a heavy weight, and facing reality is even harder.

Furthermore, Chris Baldry experiences a second form of trauma related to love. His amnesia has resulted in the complete erasure of memories associated with his wife, Kitty,

including the fact that they are married. Instead, he believes he is still in a romantic relationship with Margaret Allington. This confusion gives rise to a conflicted of emotions toward both ladies. For instance, when Chris sees Kitty, he is shocked since, for him, their marriage never happened and she cannot be his wife. He feels stuck because he wants to ask her who she is to make sure, but he is scared it might upset her. As a result, he decides to stay away from her, thinking that he does not recognize her anymore and wanting to prevent causing any trouble

The face that looked out of the dimness to him was very white, and her upper lip was lifted over her teeth in a distressed grimace. It was immediately as plain as though he had shouted it that this sad mask meant nothing to him. He knew not because memory had given him any insight into her heart, but because there is an instinctive kindness in him which makes him wise about all suffering, that it would hurt her if he asked if this was his wife; but his body involuntarily began a gesture of inquiry before he realized that that, too, would hurt her, and he checked it half-way. So, through a silence, he stood before her slightly bent, as though he had been maimed (West, 1998, p.16).

Beside, Mr. Baldry suffered from an 'Oedipus Complex' in his childhood. As explained by Straughan in his work entitled *Trauma, Innocence, and Freud in The Return of the Soldier*, Chris' childhood was difficult; he had a bad relationship with his father, and his mother had no maternal instinct for him. This is why, when Chris loves Margaret, it is a sincere love. In the novel, the psychoanalyst, Dr. Gilbert Anderson, affirms that when Captain Baldry slept with her, he felt the emotion and sensation that Margaret has a maternal instinct. In other words, he desires to fill the void that is left by his mother with the softness of Margaret. (Straughan, 2019). Therefore, it seems that Chris has a strong and lasting emotional connection with Margaret, and he feels comfortable; for instance, when Chris meets Margaret at Baldry Court, he laughs and feels like nothing has changed since fifteen years ago. However, his relationship with his wife Kitty appears to be strained and unhappy. In fact, he always looks sad when he sees her. Jenny, the narrator, notices that her cousin is happier

when he meets Margaret, and she immediately notices the affinity and complicity between them.

The last kind of trauma from which Chris Baldry suffers is the trauma of loss identity. In fact, the first loss of Chris is related to the shell shock, which caused him amnesia and, in turn, resulted in his loss of memory. The fact that he has lost his memory makes him lose the notion of time and all the memories of his present life, including those of his beloved wife Kitty and his late son Oliver.

As a result of this sense of loss, when Chris returns to Baldry Court, nothing is familiar to him, neither the house nor the people who live there; his amnesia made him forget everything. For example, when Chris sat with Jenny and Kitty around the table, they were talking until his cousin noticed that he is looking around at the woodwork, furniture, and walls and touching all the things that were once very 'familiar' to him; Jenny says:

He looks at the things that were familiar to him. Dipping his head, he glances sideways at the old oak paneling, and things he figures as though sight is not intimate enough a contact. His hand caressed the arm of his chair, because he remembered the black gleam of it stole out and touched the recollected salt-cellar"(West, 1998, p.19).

We can deduct from the previous passage that Christopher's memory of Baldry Court and the people who worked there has faded over time. For example; He no longer recognizes the house or the staff, and he even mistakes the new butler for someone else. When the new butler came up to him, the Captain does not recognize him, so he asks "Where is Mr. Griffiths, the old butler of the house?" Kitty tells him that the latter died seven years ago.

Griffiths will know," Chris said cheerily, and swung round on his seat to ask the butler, and found him osseous, where Griffiths was rotund; dark, where Griffiths had been merrily mottled; strange, where Griffiths had been a part of home, a condition of life. He sat back in his chair as though his heart had stopped. When the butler who is not Griffiths had left the room he spoke gruffly. "Stupid of me, I know; but where is Griffiths?" "Dead seven years ago," said Kitty, her eyes

on her plate. He sighed deeply in a shuddering horror. "I'm sorry. He was a good man (West, 1998, p.20).

As a result, Chris suffers from alienation and isolation of his different traumas, which affect his life including his marriage, and loss of identity. To be more explicit, the captain is marginalized by society and even by his wife; no one regards him as a First World War hero; instead, they treat him as an "ordinary" soldier. Indeed, Kitty ignores her husband and sees him as vulnerable, despite the fact that she is aware that he is suffering from psychological disturbance. In his work entitled *Living in the Past: The Importance of Memory in the Return of the Soldier and to the Lighthouse*, Dever claims that Chris loses his manliness and is stuck between three women who change the course of his entire existence (Dever, 2019).

However, another aspect of the novel shows that the trauma of war can be healed. In his work entitled *Trauma and Cure in Rebecca West's "The Return of the Soldier"*, Steve Pinkerton affirms that West reveals the psychological state of each soldier after the war, and she reflects its effects through the psychological problems of Captain Baldry. By the end of the novel, Chris is healed, so *The Return of the Soldier (1918)* is a proof that trauma can be healed, unlike many novels (such as *Mrs. Dalloway*) that show that trauma is incurable.

"Is he coming back?" "He's coming back." "Jenny! Jenny! How does he look?" "Oh,"—how could I say it,—"every inch a soldier." She crept behind me to the window, peered over my shoulder and saw. I heard her suck in her breath with satisfaction. "He's cured!" she whispered slowly. "He's cured!" (West, 1998, p.68).

The preceding quotation indicates that Chris is well healed; when Margaret tells the news to him and explains that he has a son named Oliver and that he is dead, Chris is shocked but regains his memory and recovers. Hearing such news brought back all the memories he had forgotten, and the moment he goes back home, he feels empty and lost; he feels nothing just sadness.

As a result of her husband's participation in World War I, Kitty Baldry also suffers psychologically. Jenny and Chris do not try to understand her pain and disregarding her experiences. Indeed, Jenny, the narrator ignores Kitty's suffering and loneliness after mocking it. Even if Kitty is lonely and distraught after the death of her son Oliver; she still returns to his nursery because the thought of her child never being in it again is unimaginable to her; Chris' refusal to let her change it again makes her feel even more depressed and anxious; he denies her grief and he does not care if the nursery recovers back the memories to Kitty about Oliver, this is an evidence that Chris has a dominating power over his wife (Theme of Trauma in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*, 2023).

As a reaction to their treatment, Kitty feels insulted and upset; she ignores Chris and treats him like a 'stranger'. Here, we can notice that Kitty Baldry is hurt by her husband's behavior. The fact that Chris cannot remember her but still remembers his first love Margaret makes Kitty angry and she is not able to accept that Chris has forgotten her, and this is what led her to be jealous and selfish, so she starts to behave differently and aggressively toward the housemaids.

So Kitty, whose beauty was as changed in grief from its ordinary seeming as a rose in moonlight is different from a rose by day[...] Then Kitty went into the drawing-room and filled the house with the desolate merriment of an inattentively played pianola, while I sat in the hall and wrote letters and noticed how sad dance-music has sounded ever since the war began. After that she started a savage raid of domestic efficiency, and made the housemaids cry because the brass handles of the tall-boys were not bright enough and because there was only tento-one instead of a hundred-to-one risk of breaking a leg on the parquet. (West, 1998, p.15).

To sum up, through her novel *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), Rebecca West explores the massive effect of war trauma and the post-traumatic stress disorder that every soldier suffers from during the war. She describes it through the characters, especially Captain Baldry, and how it affects their lives and their relationships with his beloved Margaret. In

addition, she also shows how the characters suffer differently from their war trauma depending on the complexity of their experiences.

### **Social and Military Hierarchy during the War**

The First World War was a military conflict but also a socio-economic one, and during this period, the industrial era was in full expansion, and for the most part, the most dominant social class was the working class, who worked in the manufacturing plants, the mines, and also in the fields. It was also the era of capitalism, and it is thanks to this that the different social classes were created. Indeed, English society was divided into two social classes: the upper class, which is made up of aristocratic, wealthy, and important people including captains, colonels, businesspersons..., and the lower class, which consists of simple and poor people such as manual laborers, factory workers, farmers, and servants that are marginalised by society.

As we have said earlier, society is divided into two social categories: the upper and the lower classes. Social status had an impact on the rank of front-line soldiers during the Great War. In fact, the upper class consisted of people who belonged to noble families and the aristocracy and had a high intellectual level; they were promoted to command posts as lieutenants, officers, and captains, while other people who belonged to the working class were enrolled as being simple soldiers, who endured harsh conditions on the front line and did the heaviest and painful tasks. For instance, working-class soldiers were often mistreated and poorly fed; they also lacked equipment, especially in the trenches, while officers of the aristocracy enjoyed special treatment like high quality food, comfortable beds. This is what led to conflicts between the different classes within the military.

During the war, the hierarchy of the British army was divided into two ranks according to their social status: the first is the upper class which consisted of officers and colonels, while

the second rank consisted of simple soldiers. In fact, each one of the ranks had a role and a regiment. According to the historian Dr. Jonathan Boff, who claims in a web article entitled *Military Structures and ranks* that: " In 1914, the British army went to war men strong. The infantry and cavalry were divided into regiments, such as the Grenadier Guards, the 11th Hussars, or the Lancashire Fusiliers." (Boff, 2014). Officers and captains were responsible for leading and commanding their troops, and enlisted soldiers were to carry out the orders of their officers, often under difficult and dangerous conditions. Moreover, in the novel *The Return of the Soldier (1918)*, Chris Baldry is described as an important element during the war, coming from a wealthy family and being a handsome and charming man. Chris was a captain in the British Army during World War I, and he fought on the front line in France.

In West's novel, there is also a kind of rivalry between the characters who belong to different social classes. On the one hand, the upper class, to which Chris Baldry, Kitty Baldry, and Jenny belong, and on the other hand, the lower class, to which Margaret Allington belongs. From the viewpoint of Jenny, the return of Chris Baldry revealed the difference between the rich and the beautiful Kitty and Margaret who is poor and ugly; Margaret's lower-class home environment is repugnant in comparison to Kitty's polite, refined life at Baldry Court. In the beginning of the story, when Kitty and Jenny see Margaret in Baldry Court for the first time, they are astonished how Chris could know a lady like her. In fact, she is ugly and physically exhausted from all of the hardship and hard labor. (Social Class, Beauty, and Humanity Themes in *The Return of the Soldier*, 2023.)

Well, she was not so bad. Her body was long and round and shapely, and with a noble squareness of the shoulders; her fair hair curled diffidently about a good brow; her gray eyes, though they were remote, as if anything worth looking at in her life had kept a long way off, were full of tenderness; and though she was slender, there was something about her of the wholesome, endearing heaviness of the ox or the trusted big dog. Yet she was bad enough. She was repulsively furred with neglect and poverty, as even a good glove that has dropped down behind a bed in a hotel and has lain undisturbed for a day or two is

repulsive when the chambermaid retrieves it from the dust and fluff (West, 1998, p.6.)

The previous passage shows us that the characters in the novel are judged according to their physical appearances and their social class distinction. For instance, 'beauty' is an important aspect in the book. On the one hand, Kitty Baldry is charming and attractive; she is a pretty, elegant, and cultured woman who has an important place in society; on the other hand, Margaret is a poor, unattractive, and physically weary woman who has neither high social class nor elegance. Besides, the narrator shows that Kitty cannot bear to speak to or even see Margaret; she thinks that being in a high-level social class means that people of the lower class are worthless.

In her novel, Rebecca West describes Baldry Court and Margaret Allington's house as two distinct locations. Indeed, Baldry Court represents the image of the wealthy, with its luxurious spaces, maids, servants, and personal gardener who take care of everything for them whereas Margaret's home is small, dark, and unremarkable, with no servant, which forces Margaret to do everything herself including cooking, cleaning, gardening.... We notice that there is a distinction between the characters and their way of life; the environment where Kitty and Jenny come from is different from that of Margaret.

The house lies on the crest of Harrowweald [...] Margaret lived in a long road of red-brick boxes [...]she was sitting on a sofa, upholstered in velveteen of a sickish green, which was so low that her knees stuck up in front of her, and she had to clasp them with her seamed, floury hands. I could see that the skin of her face was damp. And my voice failed me as I looked round the room [...]There was the enlarged photograph of Margaret's mother over the mantelpiece, on the walls were the views of Tintern Abbey framed in red plush, between the rickety legs of the china cupboard was the sewingmachine, and tucked into the corner between my chair and the fender were a pair of carpet slippers. All her life long Margaret, who in her time had partaken of the supreme dignity of a requited love, had lived with men who wore carpet slippers in the house (West, 1998, p.2.31.32.).

In fact, Jenny's perception of Margaret changes over the course of the story. At first, Jenny feels disgust and annoyance when she first meets Margaret at Baldry Court. When Margaret came to tell them the news of Captain Baldry, Jenny notices her ugliness and her tiredness, which makes her feel a kind of discomfort, and she finds her repulsive; she expresses a kind of hatred towards her. Jenny affirms: "I pushed the purse away from me with my toe, and hated her as the rich hate the poor as insect things that will struggle out of the crannies which are their decent home and introduce ugliness to the light of day" (West, 1998, p.9.)

From West's novel, we deduce that every person in poverty experiences life more sensitively because he just has a middle life contrary to a rich person who believes only in wealth and power and lives a sophisticated life like Kitty Baldry. To emphasize her point, the author uses the poor and sensitive Margaret Allington to illustrate how sensitivity, beauty, and humanity are portrayed in the novel. To be more explicit When Margaret learns that Chris has amnesia, she is sensitive and sympathetic and tries to help him to get back his memory; her only desire is to see him happy, whereas Kitty refuses to accept the fact that her husband has become amnesiac; she becomes selfish and behaves like a woman who does not care, becoming more insensitive to Chris's plight.

In summary, the novel *The Return of the Soldier* also reflects on how social class was divided during times of war and how rivalry existed between the upper and lower classes and the conflicts between them. Indeed, at the front, people were divided according to their social status; the aristocrats were promoted to post-grade positions, unlike the workers, who served as being ordinary soldiers.

### **a. Women Involvement in WWI**

Women are considered an essential element whether at home or in society. In fact, they play a very important role at home, in their marriage, and even in the lives of their families (husband and children), particularly in times of war, because that is where they are dedicated to doing several tasks at once and invested in dealing with multiple responsibilities in order to ensure happiness in their lives.

Throughout the war, women had a vital function in society; some of them took over by replacing the roles of men who enlisted at the front; they worked in the hospitals and factories, while others took care of their homes and children. Indeed, *The Return of the Soldier* is a novel that reflects the story of an amnesic captain. However, the novel also centers on the portrayal of the English women during the Great War, depicted through the perspectives of three women: Jenny, who is both the captain's cousin and the narrator; his wife Kitty and; and Margaret Allington, his first love, who profoundly impacts the life of this man suffering from amnesia. In the novel, West demonstrates how women are inseparable from men's lives: even though men are stronger than women, they still need women in their lives. Moreover, they bear heavy responsibilities and work hard to provide comfort for their men by supporting them; their children by taking care of them and their education; but also their homes by cleaning, cooking, doing laundry, and many other tasks. In addition to all this, they ease their sufferings and worries by awaiting the return of their men from the war and by praying for them. For example, in the following passage, Jenny and Kitty represent the English women during the war, awaiting Chris Baldry's return from the front.

Although there are two socioeconomic categories (upper and lower classes), all women act the same when it comes to defending and safe guarding their families. Despite the fact that they belong to the upper class and have servants, Kitty and Jenny have the

responsibility to ensure that everything is well done and that there is harmony and peace at Baldry Court while Chris is in the front. However, Margaret belongs to the lower class, which means she has neither servant to do everything nor money. She is obliged to do everything herself such as household chores. In addition to that, she must ensure a harmonious and happy life in her home with her family and give all the love and comfort to her daughter and her sickly husband, Mr. William Gray, who is unsuccessful in his life. To rephrase it, despite their social position, Kitty, Jenny, and Margaret have the same main objective as women: to remedy the sadness in a man's life by providing the happiest climate possible within the home (Social, Beauty and Humanity Theme in *The Return of the Soldier*, 2023).

In the novel, Jenny, Kitty, and Margaret have the role of bringing Captain Chris back to reality and helping him recall his current existence. They sacrifice themselves in order to help the soldier, who is lost between his past and his present. First of all, his cousin Jenny brings Margaret Allington back to Baldry Court, despite the fact that she does not like her, and for her cousin, she does everything possible to make him happy. Kitty brings Dr. Anderson back to her and makes sure he treats her husband the best he can, and on her side, Margaret plays the role of two people at the same time. On the one hand, she makes sure not to destabilize the lives of his family and ensures serenity within her husband, Mr. Grey. On the other hand, she comforts Captain Baldry and takes care of him. Despite her great love for him, she also tells him the whole truth about Oliver's death. Jenny claims: "My spirit was asleep in horror out there Margaret was breaking his heart and hers, using words like a hammer, looking wise" [...] (West, 1998, p.67.).

Indeed, West emphasizes that it is up to the ladies to decide the fate of Chris and how he should be protected in the end. Although Jenny and Margaret initially want to leave him in his whirlwind of the past convinced that such a decision would ultimately benefit him, they decide to tell him the whole truth after Dr. Anderson's visit; they realize that the best way to

save Chris is to let him know. Rather than abandoning Chris in a delusion that might lead to childish behavior, they choose to preserve his dignity by grounding him in the present (Women's Roles Theme in *The Return of the Soldier*, 2023).

To conclude, *The Return of the Soldier (1918)* is full of emotions, memories, and traumas. It is a book that not only depicts the Great War but also the role of women in society; moreover, it shows how society was divided at that time. In short, this chapter contains the main themes that covered in the novel, for instance the effects of war on characters, especially Captain Baldry. In addition, the differentiation and the conflicts that existed between social classes. Furthermore, we have highlighted the importance of women and their role in society, their contribution in making a pleasant familial environment and a happier life around their husbands and children.

## **Chapter Two: Themes in Daniel Mason's *The Winter Soldier* (2018)**

In this second chapter, we explore the major themes of the second novel of our selection, *The Winter Soldier* (2018) by Daniel Mason, a physician and author who wrote this novel, which was released in 2018. The book includes many literary aspects, such as romance. Similarly, to Rebecca West's novel *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), *The Winter Soldier* focuses on how life was in times of war by portraying the social and cultural context of the time in which it is set.

### **War Trauma**

There are several themes in the book that echo Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), namely 'War Trauma' (the main topic of Daniel Mason's book is World War I) and 'Women Involvement in WWI'. Another theme is included in the novel: 'The Role of Medicine during the War', in which Mason describes how medicine developed in wartime. As already mentioned, the First World War is a four-year event that had an impact on society, the economy and human existence in general. Many soldiers were actually physically and mentally devastated by the conflict and were only hoping to survive. During this time, owing to the collapse of the economy and the dissolution of social relations, people were unable to find work. Women were raped and battered, and families and children endured starvation and violence. The soldiers fighting on the front lines further experienced trauma, injury, and cruelty.

In fact, there were both remote and immediate causes that contributed to the outbreak of World War I. The remote causes consist of military motives such as territorial expansion, competition for weaponry, and the formation of alliances. The immediate cause of the conflict is the 'Sarajevo Assassination' which refers to the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife, Sophie Chotek von Chotvoka,

Duchess of Hohenberg. Thus, on June 28, 1914, while the Archduke and his wife were in Sarajevo, a Serbian nationalist named Gavrilo Princip, a member of the Black Hand society, shot him. At first, Serbia received an ultimatum from Austria-Hungary, which it rejected. A month later, on July 28, 1914, the Empire declared war on Serbia, and the conflict officially broke out (Did Franz Ferdinand's Assassination Cause World War I?, 2022).

Like Rebecca West's novel, Daniel Mason's *The Winter Soldier* (2018) is set during one of the bloodiest periods of World War I and tells the story of Lucius Krzelewski, a young medical student who travels in the midst of the war to help soldiers and care for them; he also witnesses the horrors of war through the soldiers' wounds. During his journey in Lemnowice, he learns a lot about his career as a doctor mainly how to treat wounded soldiers. He meets a soldier named József Horvath who marks his life and who changes it forever, and falls in love with a nurse named Sister Margaret.

Importantly, Mason depicts both the physical and psychological suffering as a result of the Great War. The traumas that soldiers faced were a result of living mainly in the trenches. As previously mentioned in Chapter one, during World War I, soldiers experienced many atrocities, including torture, as well as the bad life conditions in the trenches. Spending too much time in the trenches was terribly unbearable, with soldiers living in restricted zones often knee-deep in mud and water. To illustrate, Private Bert Pollard wrote an essay about trench life, he claims: " The trench, when we reached it, was half full of mud and water. We set to work to try and drain it..." (Waterlogged Trenches, 2020). They also suffered from diseases such as trench foot and trench fever. Sergeant Harry Roberts was a British veteran in World War I (Lancashire Fusilier); he was interviewed after the war, and he describes the trench foot and how soldiers suffer from it, he asserts:

If you have never had trench foot described to you, I will explain. Your feet swell to two to three times their normal size and go

completely dead. You can stick a bayonet into them and not feel a thing. If you are lucky enough not to lose your feet and the swelling starts to go down, it is then that the most indescribable agony begins. I have heard men cry and scream with pain and many have had to have their feet and legs amputated (Trench foot, 2020).

The passage depicts the suffering endured by soldiers on the front lines, particularly highlighting the painful condition of trench foot. This condition is typically caused by the exposure to cold and wet conditions, which were common in the trenches during wartime.

In addition, 'Malnutrition' and 'starvation' were common problems that soldiers suffered from in the trenches. Indeed, soldiers had restricted and poor quality of the food; they never had fresh vegetables and fruits. Their only food were potatoes, onions, biscuits and salt meat which resulted to infections and viruses. In 1993, Richard Beasley was interviewed about his experience in the trenches; he claims that: "All we lived on was tea and dog biscuits. If we got meal once a week we were lucky, but imagine trying to eat standing in a trench full of water with the smell of dead bodies nearby" (Trench Food, 2020). In addition to the physical hardships, soldiers also had to deal with the constant threat of enemy attack and the psychological stress of living in a war zone. All of these factors contributed to what is known as 'post-traumatic stress disorder', which Mason illustrates through two major characters, Lucius Krzelewski and József Horvath, who suffer from it in different ways.

The first character to suffer from war trauma is József Horvath a soldier in the front line. When he is there, he experiences several shell shocks at the same time. Indeed, he is fighting against the enemy and witnessing horrors such as deaths, and bombings at the same time. All these shocks result in a psychological problem that prevents him from expressing himself (speaking), or even knowing where he is. He experiences flashbacks and nightmares and he is always anxious. When he arrives in Lemnowice, near Sister Margaret and Doctor Lucius, they try to help him, but the soldier refrained from both eating and speaking. Instead, he stares vacantly into space when addressed by others.

The questions yielded nothing. Sometimes the man watched them with his wide eyes, his gaze shifting from one person to another, before settling on something hovering in the air beyond. Other times he squeezed his eyes shut and pursed his lips tight beneath his nose, almost cutting off his breath (Mason, 2018, p.89.)

As a result of this situation, Horvath attempts to communicate and send messages through drawings, Lucius and the others Medical staff in the hospital notice that he is not like the other soldiers; he does not have an obvious physical injury but rather a mental injury. In other words, Horvath is suffering from 'post-traumatic stress disorder'. It is through his drawings that the doctor understands him, so in his novel Daniel Mason explores how soldiers are affected by traumatic war events which result in soldiers becoming weak and depressed.

Besides, the second character who suffers from war trauma within the novel is Lucius Krzelewski. He has experienced similar horrors as Chris Baldry in West's novel *The Return of the Soldier*. In fact, like Captain Baldry, Lucius' mental health is negatively affected by the different war events, which are full of disgusting and unbearable feelings and emotions. His war trauma starts after he joins the army for Lemnowice. His intention is to pursue a career as a doctor and become more competent, yet once there, Lucius' life changes in unexpected ways. He arrives at a church that has been transformed into a field hospital, where he meets soldiers with injuries and even psychiatric problems. Consequently, Lucius' miserable circumstances in Lemnowice caused him to experience war trauma and return to his dissolution. In the novel, Lucius comes from a wealthy family, so all the life facilities were at his disposal (good food, a comfortable bed, money, etc.). In Lemnowice, things are very different for him. He is not used to this place. For example, there is no water, so he has to go to the river by the church to get some. It is also very cold because the church has holes in the ceiling from war bombs. There are lice and rats in the church, which make it smelly and can

make people sick, like with Typhus. The soldiers there talk about how tough and cruel life was during the war. All of these factors resulted in making him distraught.

He felt frightened by everything, the bomb-hole in the church ceiling, the rats like something from a nursemaid's tale. Was this what his parents had tried to protect him from? Was it too late to ask them to help him to transfer? Oh, but this brought its own worries. If his father had his way, Lucius might find himself a lancer, joining a cavalry charge against a line of howitzers and mortar fire, while he tried to steer an unfamiliar horse (Mason, 2018, p.52.).

The previous quote shows that Lucius is shocked by the gravity of the situation and the lack of comfort; he has no idea what to do or how to do it; he becomes disoriented; moreover, as soon as he arrives at the hospital, he immediately regrets having come there; he just wants to go home and forget what he saw. But thanks to Sister Margaret, he quickly learns how to treat and amputate wounded soldiers. He also learns to face the horrors of war while remaining strong.

Like Chris Baldry in West's novel, Lucius suffers from diverse traumas. In fact, the second trauma which the trauma of love leads to a third trauma which is the trauma of loss. These two traumas are interconnected because, on the one hand, Lucius suffers from a forbidden love (his love story with Sister Margaret); what he feels for the nurse creates a sense of tension and conflict within him as he is unable to control these feelings. When he does eventually express his love to her by proposing marriage, he loses everything he has in Lemnowice: his patients, his sense of purpose as a doctor. This loss causes him to become isolated and lonely.

She broke away. "They'll suspect something." [...] For the next week, they found each other in moments stolen from the day's responsibilities. In the darkness of the narthex, the shadows behind the church, the edge of the garden, amid the jubilating crickets in the arbor of the pears. Never long: a kiss, a brief caress. And then her whisper, Enough now, Lucius, Let me go, They'll find us. Lucius, I must...(Mason, 2018, p.127.).

According to the preceding passage, the young couple is terrified that the soldiers will discover their love, and it is because of this that Lucius experiences the pain of loss (the third trauma). As an example, in Lemnowice, Lucius loses a patient named Horvath, who accuses him of being responsible for what General Horst did to him. He also loses Margaret and all his patients. When he realizes he has lost everything, Lucius is devastated and enters in a deep despair. He does not eat, sleep, or do anything else; he spends the entire day dreaming about Lemnowice. The fact that Lucius is unable to tell anyone (not even his wife) about his pain makes him more anxious and nervous. Moreover, Lucius completely loses confidence in himself and those around him, and the fact that he is unable to tell his wife about his secret makes her more distant from him.

In fact, Lucius love trauma concerns not only his suffering from his love story with Nurse Margaret but also his marriage with Natasza Borszowska; he is not happy with her; he cannot trust her. In other words, he considers her as a ‘stranger’: “She was his wife but still a stranger. He could not burden her so quickly. To speak of dreams meant speaking of Horvath and the beech tree, of what he’d done and what he’d failed to do. With time, they would grow closer, as he had with Margarete” (Mason, 2018, p. 205.). In this quotation, we notice that the trauma of loss is not only the fact that he lost his patients and Margaret, but also the fact that he lost confidence in himself and those around him including his wife.

As a matter of fact, Mason's book *The Winter Soldier* highlights ‘alienation’ as an important part of the book. Indeed, both characters (Lucius and Horvath) suffer from it. Firstly, the alienation of József Horvath is caused by a shell shock, and creates in him a trauma of war, it makes him different of other soldiers. For example, when he arrives in Lemnowice, he is unable to speak with the other soldiers. Besides, no one tries to talk to him or start a conversation with him; on the contrary, they avoid him and do not hesitate to yell at him when he bothers them, it makes him isolated of the others. Secondly, Lucius Krzelewski

suffers from 'post-traumatic stress disorder', which creates a kind of alienation from society. To be more explicit, Lucius went through hard times when he was in Lemnowice, and the fact of having lost Horvath, Margaret, and all the others makes him anxious. Because of the terrible ordeal he has endured, he has nightmares that he is unable to talk about, and the fact that he does not talk and stays alone has resulted on isolation. Lucius remains stuck in an illusion that marginalizes him from society, his parents, and even his own wife.

In conclusion, through *The Winter Soldier (2018)*, Mason views war as an act of violence that harms families and affects social and economic progress. Moreover, it causes both physical injury and psychological trauma to its victims, leaving scars etched in their minds. In his novel, the author provides his readers with the feeling and emotion of living through the First World War. In addition, he describes the terrible incidents, suffering, destruction, and circumstances brought on by the war. In his narration, many events including the start of the war, are described in detail and in an exciting way to the reader; this is why we think that the novel is interesting and worthy reading to the end.

### **Women Involvement in WWI**

Even though Daniel Mason's novel is mainly about a young medical student named Lucius Krzelewski who enlists in the war, and similarly to Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier (1918)*, *The Winter Soldier (2018)* examines the role of women during the war and their contribution to their countries. Despite the common belief that women are weak and submissive; men see them only as housewives who can satisfy their sexual desires. Mason portrays them as being strong and highlights their role during times of war. To be more explicit, throughout the war, women worked hard in many fields including industry and the medical field. Indeed, some of them have even received prizes and medals namely Jane I.

Rignel who was a nurse in the United States Army nurse, and Linnie E. Lecknore, Irene Robel.

During the First World War, women who worked in munitions factories were nicknamed as ‘the Munitionettes, or Canary Girls.’ They provided materials and equipments that soldiers needed in the war, such as weapons and explosives. In her work entitled *Women Munitions Workers in Britain during the Great War*, Deborah A. K. Brobst affirms that women were behind the production of different chemical materials and arms such as guns, shells, explosives, airplanes, and grenades (Brobst, 2006). And some other women worked in the medical fields, joined organizations including the ‘Red Cross and the Salvation Army’, and worked as doctors, ambulance drivers, and nurses, such as Edith Cavell, Alice Ross-King, Anna Caroline Maxwell, Mairi Chisholm, and Flora Sandes. In fact, they gave the injured soldiers all the medical care they needed. Besides, the majority of the nurses were religious and came from convents where they had made vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty. These nurses were commonly known as ‘nursing sisters’ or ‘bluebirds’. In her web article entitled *Canada’s Nursing Sisters of the First World War*, Sharon Adams claims: “The troops nicknamed the nurses “bluebirds” because of their blue uniforms, which were topped by a white veil.” (Adams, 2022).

During the Great War, nurses gained experience in the medical field; they treated and cared for injured soldiers; they also made medical visits; and they even played the role of the doctor in amputating and operating soldiers at times. But they faced awful conditions, notably on the western front where life was not easy for them. For instance, the nurses could not afford to keep warm, so they wore a lot of clothes and always kept their boots on. They were also not eating well because food was hard to find. According to Megan L. Schmedake, milk and eggs were not available but potatoes and lentils were in abundance. She also adds: “Middle-class women who had not previously suffered from a lack of food also challenged

the gendered experience of war by showing that they were capable of surviving.” (Schmedake, 2014). They also suffered psychologically being affected by the horrors of the war. To be more explicit, because of the wounded and dead soldiers they had seen in the war, they became emotionally destroyed. As mentioned by Schmedake, “Nurses faced a shortage of supplies and a surplus of death, and many of them did not get over what they saw for a long time after the war” (Schmedake, 2014).

To start with, in *The Winter Soldier (2018)*, Daniel Mason describes women’s role in WWI through the character of Sister Margaret, one of the women who contributes to the war effort by helping wounded men at the front. During the First World War, the nurses were all sisters and pronounced vows before enlisting in the war; this is the case for Sister Margaret, a nurse who belongs to Saint Catherine, which means that she is not allowed to have a romantic relationship neither with the soldiers nor with the hospital staff. Despite this prohibition, she falls in love with Lucius Krzelewski, the young medical who enlists in the war as a doctor and violates her vows.

As already mentioned, Margaret is a nurse who treats patients in a field hospital in Lemnowice. In fact, after the departure of Doctor Szökefalvi, she replaces him and takes care of amputations and fractures; she practices everything she learned while the previous doctor was doing the amputations. She also provides the wounded soldiers with everything they need, and she performs medical examinations on all the patients every day. As an example, Margaret meets Lucius when he arrives in Lemnowice and introduces him to everyone in the field hospital, including the staff and the patients who are suffering from multiple injuries. She explains to him how they work in the hospital and assures him that she is in charge of every operation and amputations.

She had amputated his leg above the knee and reset a wrist fracture, and kneeling, she inspected the wounds quickly, showing them to Lucius. She was clearly proud of her stitches, and Lucius, who had never seen a healing amputation site, and certainly not by lantern light, pretended to appraise it with a studious air (Mason, 2018, p.44.).

Undoubtedly, Margaret is an essential component in the field hospital; she plays several roles at once, being not only a nurse but also a doctor when necessary and even sometimes a kind of mother for the soldiers. In other words, she not only treats their physical injuries but also provides emotional support. Indeed, she comforts the soldiers by giving them tenderness and gentleness. For example, she stays by the side of Jozèf Horvàth, the traumatized soldier, and takes care of him as if she were a mother taking care of her child. To be more explicit, she gives him a kind of maternal protection; she feeds him; she comforts him by always listening to him (she is the first to have understood what Horvàth wanted to say when the others try to calm him down with morphine).

In conclusion, Daniel Mason's character Sister Margaret serves as a powerful example of the important accomplishments that women did during World War One. Indeed, women's contribution to the war effort helped soldiers and their countries in general. He also highlights the bravery, wisdom and courage that women had during the times of the war.

### **The Role of Medicine during the War**

Before the beginning of the First World War, medicine was not very advanced, but during the war, there was an extensive use of medical techniques, which resulted in the evolution of the medical field. When the conflict broke out in 1914, it was extremely violent; the two parties (the allies and the central powers) confronted each other with machine guns, artillery, and bombardment, which caused enormous destruction, injury, and death. As a consequence, soldiers who fought at the front required immediate medical treatment because

they suffered from various injuries such as broken jaws, fractures, amputations, burn scars, and many other types of injuries. In the trenches they also suffered from a variety of diseases and infections because of the unsanitary conditions there which led to the spread of diseases like influenza caused by cold and humidity of the trenches, trench fever or 'Typhus' contagious infection caused by lice, and 'Typhoida' deadly virus caused by a bacterium that soldiers catch by eating unclean food.

As a matter of fact, the suffering of soldiers from different illnesses and injuries led to the accelerated growth of medicine; doctors adopted several techniques, which resulted in the development of new treatments for those injuries and contagious diseases, including the use of vaccines, antibiotics, and antiseptics. They also developed X-ray technology to detect gunshots and shrapnel when they treated soldiers. Many physicists supported the idea and contributed to the development of the machine; for example, Marie Curie was the first to get involved. In the operating rooms, the aseptic method was applied. There was access to general anesthesia, and it was also possible to heal intestinal lesions. In addition, blood transfusions, and intravenous fluids were both administrated to soldiers (Practice of Medicine in WW1 Military Medicine in World War I, 2021).

In addition to this, medical staff was providing urgent care and treatment to injured soldiers. The use of morphine injections was a common practice for managing pain in cases of severe injury, and the priority of medical personnel was to stabilize the injured soldiers before transporting them to hospitals or infirmaries for further treatment. So they had filled with them bags with small syringes of morphine, which they injected into seriously injured soldiers.

In Daniel Mason's novel *The Winter Soldier* (2018), 'medical practice' is a theme that is extensively developed. The author refers to his field as a doctor while reflecting on the First

World War, and he narrates about the enlistment of young medical students in the war and imagines what the situation was and the feelings of these students, who did not have the experience, the skills, and the means required to provide care. In fact, they had no time to practice medicine before starting to treat patients during the war; they barely had time to finish the fifth semester when they were already doctors. In one of his interviews, Mason affirms:

Meanwhile, during this period, I kept going back to that historical moment when the Austro-Hungarian army, completely unprepared for war, conscripted students in medicine with virtually no clinical experience in positions of extraordinary responsibility (An interview of Daniel Mason, n.d).

First, Mason describes the young student Lucius as a doctor; in the beginning, he is not ready enough to enlist in the war. When he joins the field hospital, he has no experience, and as soon as he finishes his fifth semester, he begins to experiment with radios and X-rays. But when the war breaks out, he becomes a doctor and leaves for Lemnowice, where his lack of experience is immediately apparent, even though he tries to hide it. When he arrives, he realizes that everything is different from what he expected; seeing a soldier hurt and dying scares him. Most of what he learned in his field is through medical books and manuals. When he meets Sister Margaret for the first time, he does not dare to tell her that he does not even know how to hold a scalpel or even ready to be a doctor.

It was only a matter of explaining: he was not a true doctor yet, the Medical Service had made an error, perhaps with other doctors, he could return and help. But alone? No...he couldn't. Certainly, she would understand. Certainly, she was well aware of the incompetence of the High Command, of the growing debacle of a war; certainly she had heard of the entire Third Army sent against the wrong front; certainly she had seen the shoes made of cardboard, the summer coats given to alpine patrols. And if he didn't tell her now, his inexperience would soon become apparent, she would realize it the moment he touched a scalpel... (Mason, 2018, p.41).

However, Lucius is only one among many young medical students and other medical professionals who have found themselves in similar wartime situations, where they must adapt quickly to new and difficult circumstances in order to provide care to those in need. The novel highlights the importance of preparation in the medical profession.

On other hand, Sister Margaret is an important character in Lucius's development as a doctor and in his ability to provide effective care to wounded soldiers during the war. As an experienced nurse, Lucius learns from her how to treat soldiers like how to amputate and how to operate which resulted in his evolution as a doctor. Over the years, he has acquired a certain amount of knowledge and continues to treat soldiers.

In his novel *The Winter Soldier* (2018), Mason also explains about how doctors and nurses treat soldiers; indeed, when war breaks out, it devastates everything in its path. At first, the doctors and nurses are only at the evacuation station; their slogan is 'treat, evacuate' which means that the priority is to get wounded soldiers the care they need as quickly as possible, with the ultimate goal of getting them back to the front lines. But over time, dozens of soldiers are injured every day. The need to quickly establish field hospitals in unconventional locations such as churches, schools, and abandoned houses highlight the urgency of the situation and the need to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. Moreover, in this type of hospitals, the soldiers are treated and evacuated so that they can return to the front. In addition to using the X-ray machine, which allows them to treat soldiers and detect shells, they also have bacteriological laboratories.

We were but a simple casualty clearing station then. Patch up and send along, as they say. It wasn't until September that the High Command appreciated our sheltered position in the valley and upgraded us to the status of a regimental hospital, receiving the wounded from the battlefield and caring for them until they were ready to be evacuated to the rear. We had an X-ray machine and a bacteriological laboratory, and with daily prayer and sharp knives and carbolic acid for antiseptics

of the wound, we performed a great service for the brave young men serving this smaller, terrestrial king (Mason, 2018, p.37.).

In addition, Mason's novel explores the creativity of medical professionals during wartime; to illustrate, the transformation of trains into evacuation hospitals shows the lack of medical materials. For instance, the use of train wagons as consultation rooms; the train stops to pick up wounded soldiers for treatment, and when someone is dead, he is left in stations or buried in the railway tracks. The novel also depicts the limitations of medical technology during wartime; for example, the lack of electricity and other essential resources. In fact, nurses and doctors find themselves in the dark; so they have to light with oil lamps. In the novel, for instance, Lucius works for a while on a train while he is looking for Margaret.

There were no windows; half the doors were missing. Were it not for the giant red crosses painted on the siding, he would have thought she was destined for scrap. In the hollowed-out carriages, the “wards” consisted of rows of double-bunked litters hanging on springs from the ceiling. The supplies, in dented metal cabinets, were as scant as in Lemnowice; rat droppings littered the floors of the latrine. His bunk, behind the engine, consisted of a horsehair mattress that had begun to spill its stuffing. There was a ceramic basin, no mirror, and an abandoned shaving razor that the district medical officer pocketed with embarrassment. The closet opened only with a kick. In the beginning, they were based out of Kraków, leaving weekly (Mason, 2018, p.155).

Moreover, at that time, the doctors used suturing material such as the scalpels, the wires, and many other things in order to suture the wounds or the fractures of the soldiers. In addition to all of this, morphine, cocaine, alcohol, and other drugs were essential during the war period. In fact, alcohol, morphine, and opium are sedative medications that let soldiers calm down and forget about the horrors of war while also reducing their mental and physical agony. Cocaine and alcohol allowed the men to continue and function in daily life at the front. Doctors administered these drugs to injured soldiers suffering excruciating pain. There are

two ways to administer them: either orally or by injection. In his web article entitled *Drugs* Łukasz Kamiński explains the diverse drugs used in World War One; he asserts:

Throughout history, intoxicants were an important part of the war experience. The First World War was by no means an exception in that respect: its main “war drugs” were alcohol (mostly beer, brandy, rum, schnapps, wine, and vodka), morphine, and cocaine. These were both “prescribed” by military authorities and “self-prescribed” by soldiers. As in the past, the reasons for using drugs varied: from purely medical (killing the pain, anesthetizing, and energizing) to performance enhancement, from raising the fighting spirit to alleviating combat trauma, from strengthening bonds between companions to mitigating the fear of battle (Kamiński, 2019).

To illustrate, in *The Winter Soldier (2018)*, Daniel Mason depicts the use of drugs like morphine and cocaine to reduce pain and suffering among wounded soldiers during World War I. When Lucius Krzelewski is injured, he finds morphine, which he later injects using a syringe to diminish his pain; as medical personnel often used these drugs to help soldiers with their injuries and trauma. However, as mentioned earlier, the overuse of these drugs had severe consequences on many soldiers. Mason affirms: “Lucius’ arm began to throb again. Again he called to the hussar to stop, uncapped the old needle, broke the morphine ampoule, and injected it into his arm” (Mason, 2018, p.30.).

In times of war, medical resources could be limited, and doctors and nurses had to make with what they had. In some cases, medical material may need to be reused, sometimes doctors run out of their drugs despite trying to use them for extreme emergencies or excruciating pain. For example, the suture material, when the doctors have no more threads, they use the threads of their clothes to sew up the wounds. Daniel Mason asserts: “Please tell him that I saw him playing cards. This is fine. But he is not to use that arm unless he wants to tear the wound open again. We are short of suture material. Next time I will have to use thread from his coat” (Mason, 2018, p.57.).

To conclude, *The Winter Soldier* (2018) is a fascinating novel that portrays the realistic events and aftermath of the Great War, going through the experiences of soldiers and the physical and emotional effects of war on them. It also highlights the important contributions of nurses and doctors who worked hard to save lives during this tumultuous period. By exploring the struggles of different individuals involved in the conflict, the novel provides a deep and comprehensive depiction of the war's impact. Overall, *The Winter Soldier* offers a deep exploration of the Great War, emphasizing the interconnectedness of various individuals and painting a vivid picture of the era.

## IV. Conclusion

The primary objective of this research paper entitled West's *The Return of The Soldier* and Mason's *The Winter Soldier: A New Historicist Reading* aimed at analyzing of the common themes found into the two war novels, with a specific focus on illustrating the impact of the First World War. To achieve this, we have relied the lenses of New Historicism and Psychoanalytic theories. which helped in providing insights into the profound influence of the war on the characters within the novels and how it shaped their interactions and connections within their societies.

In both chapters of the discussion part, we have studied the common and different issues that both novels treat; our analysis has shown that despite the differences in the novels' contexts, they have common themes and inspirations. It is clear that both writers were impacted by the First World War and sought to explore the consequences of this dark period on individuals and society. Using some concepts of New Historicism, we found that the war had an impact on both the social and military sides of the time, leading to changes in attitudes towards women. *The Return of the Soldier* emphasizes the impact of the war on the aristocratic class and how the lower class was treated, while *The Winter Soldier* focuses on the development of medical techniques in war. Also, the Psychoanalytic theory revealed the psychological impact of the war on the characters in the novels. The trauma of war caused the characters to experience various psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and 'post-traumatic stress disorder'. We also analyzed the role of memory in the novels and how the characters' past experiences influenced their behavior and relationships.

In light of our findings, it has become evident that the use of various theoretical frameworks in literary analysis may considerably improve the deep impact that historical

events have on both individuals and society as a whole. By closely examining the novels under consideration, we have gained invaluable insights into the unique experiences and perspectives of individuals during the period of the First World War. Additionally, our analysis has led us to suggest that Daniel Mason drew inspiration from the literary contributions of Rebecca West in shaping his own work.

However, it is important to recognize the limitations of our research paper in fully exploring the complex themes present in both novels. Although we have made significant progress in uncovering meaningful information, there is still much to explore for further research and investigation. Therefore, we invite scholars and researchers to undertake additional studies to comprehensively develop the themes and nuances that were beyond the scope of our current research. It is why we suggest for future researchers to analyze both novel under Marxism and feminism perspectives.

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