THE GREAT DIVORCE: LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN GREAT WAR LITERATURE

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ABSTRTACT

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The resurgence of Great War literature in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, sparked by Paul Fussell, looks to re-examine the historical and cultural paradigm shifts that permeate in the literature during and after the war.

The topic of this dissertation will look to a pool of human relationships relating to love and the institution of marriage across literary genres by a group of women writers—Rebecca West, Radclyffe Hall, Hilda Doolittle, Vera Brittain, and Virginia Woolf, with the Great War serving as the overarching enemy. Through their lenses, I will examine and probe how these women writers shape our historical ideas and conceptualizations about the war with their textual discourses. The power of the Great War's influence over cultural ideas and attitudes about love and marriage are evident in the patterns of textual discourse and historical data. The patterns emerge in the voices of these women writers and are transfixed by the power of war. Through these texts one will see, as Stephen Greenblatt points out, the "negotiation and exchange of social energy" (592) and the changing attitudes and beliefs toward Victorian ideas about love and marriage. Ultimately, this dissertation will explore the Great War's cataclysmic

effect that points to the negative disruptions imposed on love and marriage through the eyes of these women writers and their characters.

DEDICATION

With heart and mind unfettered, this dissertation is dedicated solely to my wife and children.

CONTENTS

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Chapter 1

LOOKING BACK

"The last old soldier or sailor has died and almost all of the witnesses have gone, but the war exerts a tenacious hold on our imagination"

- William Boyd, *The New York Times*, January 22, 2012

If all living humans are gone, people that can provide us with real human interaction and conveyed emotion about the Great War, then how are we to fathom it's consequences on the lives of those living through it. The challenge of such a task seems daunting. However, if we look to the warmth of literary voices and the cold hard facts of historical data, patterns begin to emerge and those patterns allow us a light into the darkness of a time past.

Love is believed to be the strongest human and emotional bond two human beings can share. Love can freeze time, if we allow that love to carry on in our hearts from one human being to another and from one generation to another generation. Relationships of love can provide us insight into the thoughts and minds of our predecessors and can provide us insight into the cultural attitudes and ideas about our past. This exploration begs to answer questions like: when love is challenged, how do lovers respond? How does love withstand the impediments of the Great War, and can it sustain during such turbulent times?

In examining the works of women writers of the early twentieth century particularly, Rebecca West's *Return of the Soldier*, Hilda Doolittle's *Bid Me to Love*, Radclyffe Hall's "Miss Olgilvy Finds Herself," and Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* we

are able to look through their historical lenses and see how these women were writing the history about love and marriage during a time in which they were being greatly challenged. In each of these Great War works of literature, we will look to a representative pool of human relationships and examine how each author and their characters deals with and responds to the overwhelming effect the Great War had on the institution of marriage and relationships of love. Each of these women writers struggles to unearth a spiritual connectedness that will help ease the pain of the dismantling and loss of the strongest bond two human beings can share—love. All of these women writers and their works respond to the psychological, social, and historical unrest of this surreal time and ultimately find that even the strongest spiritual beliefs cannot sustain during this time of instability.

The resurgence of Great War literature in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, sparked by Paul Fussell's book, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1972), looks to re-examine the historical and cultural paradigm shifts that permeate in the literature during and after the war. In *Women, Men and the Great War* (1995), Trudi Tate points out that "our knowledge of the events of the Great War often comes through literary works; indeed, literature is one of the key ways in which the war was written as history" (4).

That "literature was one of the keys ways in which the war was written as history" is an important observation. As historical data is explored and probed, we will look to literature's role, in both its writers and characters, to help define the historical

definitions of love and marriage as well as the significant role the Great War played in shaping the beliefs and attitudes toward those relationships. In a broad sense, the assumption that the Great War caused severe hardship is obvious. The idea that relationships and marital bonds suffered because of it may also be an apparent observation. Yet, how does a powerful human emotion such as love survive during such a cataclysmic period? How are human beings able to effectively withstand and operate within these war-time relationships of love and marriage, more specifically between home-front civilians and soldiers? The representation of the destruction of love and marriage in Great War literature has yet to be fully and comprehensively explored and would, once examined more closely, show to be more complicated than a surface explanation may suggest.

These women writers and their stories provide us with important historical insight into the understanding of the Great War and the effects it had on love and marriage. Modernist studies of the Great War have traditionally looked to poetry and the autobiographical memoir and have been the main focus of anthologized and canonical works. The literary and historical contributions and importance of these genres have proved to be significant in our understanding of this period. Pre-war Georgian poetry was idealistic and sang the praises of patriotism in Romantic fashion, ultimately proving it could not sustain the realities of war. War poets like Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, and Siegfried Sassoon struggled to find a literary voice to express the dark fears of the war and pushed forward the ideas and language of poetic expression. Autobiographical memoirs like Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That* and

Mary Borden's *The Forbidden Zone* show the disillusionment of the period and the strong personal effect the war had on them as human beings and artists.

There is still work to be done in the field of early twentieth-century British literature and the Great War. In discussing Claire Tylee's book *The Great War and Women's Consciousness: Images of Militarism and womanhood in Women's Writings, 1914-1964* (1990), Caroline Zilboorg infers that Tylee "makes clear throughout her book that … we are only beginning to become aware of the wealth of works by women about the Great War, and an understanding of them requires a new understanding of their context" (433). This study will provide a new and fresh perspective in the advance of this discussion. Its relevancy to the twenty-first century is certainly implicit as war pervades our culture today. Love and marriage are an essential part of any productive and thriving society. The remarkable connection human beings have in love typically brings human beings together even through the toughest of times, yet how did it play out in the hearts and minds of these Great War authors and their characters.

Chapter 2

LOVE AND MARIAGE BEFORE THE GREAT WAR

In discussing the Great War, its effects and its consequences on British individuals, customs, and ideas, an understanding and critiquing of the years leading up to the war are critical and essential. For this purpose, a historical and sociological examination of Britain's marital bonds and divorce laws are essential in understanding and evaluating the post-war sociological changes that took place because of it.

Married couples living in England had limited means for divorce prior to 1857. And the 1857 Divorce Act only changed that slightly. Although the Act provided married couples with a way out of their failed marriages, the Act still did not account for accessibility by all those living in England. For one, the Court was housed in London, therefore, making it difficult for those outside of London to travel such distances, especially the poor and working class. Second, the process itself was extremely restrictive, "recognizing only adultery as a ground for divorce" and restricting "access of wives to divorce by requiring them to prove their husbands guilty of both adultery and an additional crime (bigamy, incest, desertion for two years, physical cruelty, sodomy) in order to qualify for divorce" (Savage, 173).

Even though the costs for divorce and separation proceedings were reduced, now that the proceedings had been moved away from the House of Lords, the access to such proceedings was, in practice, suited for Britain's aristocracy. As Gail Savage makes clear:

> pioneering scholar of English divorce, Oliver R. McGregor, in his centenary study of the 1857 Act, describes the years up until 1910 as the "period when working-class people, were, in practice, denied access to the divorce court." Lawrence Stone's more recent comprehensive overview of the history of English divorce repeated and concurred with McGregor's view in seeing the poor excluded from access to divorce. (174)

However, even the aristocracy shied away from the court for fear of publication and sensationalism, along with fear of scrutiny and embarrassment. Yet, Gail points to the *Times'* coverage of these late nineteenth-century divorces as not representative of all social groups filing for divorce, as they typically reported on a higher percentage of aristocrats than any other socio-economic group of litigants. There were a fair amount of working class and poor that took advantage of the new Act.

In more recent scholarship, Adam Hochschild's book entitled *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918* (2011) spans the life, among other supporters and pacifists of the Great War, of Alfred Milner and Violet Cecil, both of whom lived among the elite in England. In the years leading up to the Great War, the two had grown fond of one another, often meeting on secret rendezvous', for Violet was not only married to her husband Edward, she was the prime minister's daughter-in-law. So, for Violet, divorce was out of the question. Violet often wished her husband to go into politics, allowing him to stay close to home, rather than choosing the army, which

meant spending long periods away from one another. Edward's decision to stay in the army distanced the relationship between him and Violet, not only in miles but in spirit as well. Violet's sister had even commented years later that their marriage had been "a fatal mistake … for never were two people more hopelessly unsuited" (51). Even rumblings about Edward's infidelities were not enough cause for divorce, for reasons previously discussed. As Hochschild points out, "with mores of the time making divorce out of the question, she [Violet] made one last attempt to breathe life into her marriage" (51). But it was only after Edward's death, and three years after the war had ended in 1921, that Violet and Alfred were able to finally marry. We can assume from Hochschild's account that the love both Edward and Violet had for one another was absolutely put to the test during this turbulent time. But as he has so eloquently showed us, their love was unable to sustain the pressures that war placed upon it.

Prior to the pressures that war placed on both love and marriage, there was nineteenth-century ground work being laid that would forever change the ideas that both men and women had about love and how those feelings translated into beliefs on marital bonds. These changes would be exacerbated by the war of course, but the beliefs about love and marriage that both men and women had during this time period were drastically different from their predecessors. Researcher and educator Stephanie Coontz even argues in *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (2005) that marriage was the "pivotal experience in people's lives and married love the principal focus of their emotions, obligations, and satisfactions" however "these hopes for love and intimacy were continually frustrated by the rigidity of nineteenth-century gender

roles" (177-78). Men still viewed themselves as superior mates in the marriage, while women sought more equal roles in the marriage. Yet men tended now to "exert their control through love and consent [rather than] by coercion" (Coontz, 181). Women, by law, were still legally subordinate to their husbands and this put a strain on individualistic characteristics within the marriage.

The restrictive nature of divorce, and the price tag that came along with it, were too much to pay for women like Violet. As we will see in *Return of the Soldier*, West's character, Kitty, is confronted by the same type of circumstances in which she struggles with nineteenth-century mores, during a twentieth-century war, while married to a Great War soldier. Although the war afforded Violet, and her husband, their indiscretions, it tore their relationship apart, circumstances seen in both H.D.'s characters Julia and Rafe in *Bid Me to Live*. Julia struggles with her nineteenth-century upbringing and the values that were instilled in her about married love as it is juxtaposed to her blossoming individualism during the changing early twentieth century.

From 1857 to 1913, marriages in England and Wales rose steadily each year from 159,000 in 1857 to 287, 000 in 1913. And in 1915, marriages reached an annual peak of 361,000. From 1916 to 1918, there was a marked decline in the number of marriages per year (280,000 in 1916, 259,000 in 1917, and 287,000 in 1918), and the divorce rate during that same period rose from 990 in 1916 to 1,111 in 1918 and jumping to a dramatic divorce figure of 3,522 in 1921 (Mitchell, 73-75). Coonz points out that "the

surge in divorce across Europe and North America during and after World War I was another troublesome sign" (202) that love and marriage was heading in a new direction.

What do these figures reveal to us? Strikingly, it shows during the most turbulent and violent years of the war, the number of marriages decreased and the number of divorces increased. It was at this time many feared there would be no end to the war. And in the years following the war, where the most significant number of divorces occurred, the increased instances of divorce would suggest a shift in sociological beliefs. It is a sociological fact that "between 1900 and the late 1920s the struggle for suffrage became a powerful international movement" but "perhaps most shocking was the emergence of a new generation of women more interested in pursuing their personal liberation" (Coontz, 197). In the want and desire for change, there must be an opportunity and motivating factor that drives this want and desire. So "divorce must represent opportunity as well as motivation" (508) Savage tells us in "Divorce and the Law in England and France Prior to the First World War". The motivation: the struggling human relationships that war put on loved ones. The opportunity: social change brought on by the war.

Patterns of male bonding and homoerotic behavior during wartime were pointed out by both Fussell, who dedicates an entire chapter entitled "Soldier Boys," and Erich Maria Remarque's in *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1982). Both writers talk about the comfort soldiers found in their comrades and the shared experiences of war without judgment or question—a characteristic often exhibited by soldiers, whose difficulty in

sharing war experiences with their spouse or loved one is evident. In the throes of war, Remarque's main character, Paul Baumer says:

> we are two men, two minute sparks of life; outside is the night and the circle of death … in our hearts we are close to one another, and the hour is like the room: flecked over with the lights and shadows of our feelings cast by a quiet fire. What does he know of me or I of him? Formerly we should not have had a single thought in common—now we sit with a goose between us and feel in unison, are so intimate that we do not even speak. (94)

He later remarks,

> at once a new warmth flows through me. These voices, these quiet words, these footsteps in the trench behind me recall me to a bound from the terrible loneliness and fear of death by which I had been almost destroyed. They are more to me than life, these voices, they are more than motherliness and more than fear; they are the strongest, most comforting thing there is anywhere; they are the voices of my comrades. (212)

The powerful feelings these men had toward one another cannot be put more eloquently. These bonds, these patterns of thought and behavior emerged during the war and had a profound social effect when coming home on leave and coming home after the war's end, if they found themselves lucky enough to have survived. How does

a soldier come back to a loved one, a civilian, who has not experienced such horror, and share the visions of death and dismemberment and share what it was like to hear the hours of bombshell bombardments? How can those visions and experiences be shared with someone who was not there on the battle field sitting side by side with a fellow soldier? Paul Fussell says that:

> Given [the] association between war and sex, and given the deprivation and loneliness and alienation characteristic of the soldier's experience—given, that is, his need for affection in a largely womanless world—we will not be surprised to find both the actuality and the recall of front-line experience replete with what we can call the homoerotic. (272)

These patterns and experiences inform and emerge in the works of women writers. The combination of these patterns and experiences was a lethal attack against relationships of love and the institution of marriage and we will see it played out through the characters in their stories. Claire Tylee tells us that "underlying patterns in social attitudes are reflected in the patterns of consciousness that reveal themselves in imaginative writing" (251). The struggle for unity, through love, is what becomes sought after. It is sought after through art, through spirituality, and through the human bond of love. And the emerging patterns reveal stories that make available a dim light that allows a glimpse into the harrowing past of these women writers and their characters.

Chapter 3

THE BID FOR EQUALITY

Art, or the act of writing, was a way out, an escape, for Hilda Doolittle. Writing served to repress all that was happening to her, all the chaos that was swirling around her, and all the battles waging war within her mind during the turbulent years leading up to and during the Great War.

Hilda dabbled in poetry in 1910. But it wasn't until 1912 that her career as an Imagist poet soared. And it wasn't until 1921 that she began the twenty-seven year-long process of writing her Madrigal series, a journey that would culminate with the last novel of the series: *Bid Me to Live.* This is a journey that would lead her to open up to the world about the years she was in love with and married to Richard Aldington. Janice S. Robinson in *H.D.: The Life and Work of an American Poet* (1982) says in her preface "thus she [H.D.] said of her novel *Bid Me to Live* not 'the Julia character is based upon myself' but rather 'I am Julia'" and "when asked by Lionel Durant if *Bid Me to Live* was autobiographical, she told him that is was completely so, 'word for word'" (xiv). And Hilda talking about the process by which this novel came about says:

> Madrigal, left simmering or fermenting, is run through a vintner's sieve, the dregs are thrown out … we began on that vineyard in 1921. It was a story. We grubbed up dead roots, trimmed and pruned. But the grapes were sour. We went on. It was a pity to let the field (1914-1918) lie utterly fallow. We returned to it (from time to time). At last, winter, 1949, we taste the 1939 gathering. Impossible, but true. The War I novel

> has been fermenting away during War II. This is intoxicating, the red grapes of – War? Love? (Robinson, 134)

Bid Me to Live was not published until 1960, but Hilda had a story to tell despite the sour grapes. Most significant about the above passage, is that she positions this story as a war novel, but more importantly a war novel about love. The sour, red grapes she mentions in the passage suggest an apprehension and struggle she still felt, the ambivalence of a scar revealed to the world. To understand Hilda's delicateness, even after this long period after the war, it is important to explore her life and the events within that life that led her to the writing of that novel.

Hilda was born and spent her early childhood years in the founding Moravian community of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, a community founded in 1741 on Christmas Eve. The patron of the Moravian brotherhood, Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf, and his daughter Benigna were present during the presentation of the first log home. The town's make up was mostly German, Bohemian, and Moravian who left Germany for England and then America, seeking religious toleration. Hilda's parents, Helen Eugenia Wolle Doolittle and Charles Leander Doolittle, had a wonderfully strong marriage. In addition to Hilda, the Doolittles had five boys, two that were half-brothers to Hilda from her father's previous marriage. She was also surrounded by three cousins, all boys. Hilda's maternal grandparents, Mamalie and Papalie as she referred to them, were neighbors and considered her second parents. Hilda shared a special bond with her father, as she was the only girl child and "Hilda was acutely aware of the special love she

enjoyed as her parent's girl child; she was the survivor" (Robinson, 5). Hilda's father had lost his first and second daughters one from his previous marriage and one with Helen. Hilda was close to both of her parents and she adored them both. Her parents were well informed and well educated. Her mother, before becoming married, "taught music and painting at the nearby Moravian seminary" (Robinson, 4) and her father was the professor of mathematics and astronomy at Lehigh University.

Hilda led a relatively sheltered childhood under a strict religious upbringing. And when the family uprooted and moved to Philadelphia in 1895, things changed. The central focus of the family became the University and not the Moravian upbringing she had been used to. But the household was full of imagination and creativity. William Carlos Williams, who met Hilda at Bryn Mawr College in 1905, a frequent visitor to the Doolittle household, recalls:

> the household was free, but there was nothing artsy about it and no talk of art unless it was brought there by friends of the older daughter, Hilda, through her romantic friends who made a haunt of the premises, drawn on by Hilda's loose limbed beauty … (Robinson, 9)

while also attesting to the fact that there was something about Hilda, as he witnessed

> in early spring there was frequently a crowd of young bucks led by Ezra of a Saturday afternoon or a Sunday for a walk across the beautiful countryside, rolling grassy hills crowded with violets, I remember especially the grape hyacinths that were to be found everywhere. Hilda

> was always at the head of the procession—I don't remember any other girls …
>
> I realized that Ezra was in love with the girl—or thought he was. Certainly he was paying her marked attention and she knew it. But there were others and she also knew it. Hilda was a careless dresser, her hair … would by flying about her head in the wind in abandon …
>
> I remember also a poem I wrote her, an acrostic on her birthday … it had cost me much sweat, laboring over the lines … She only laughed at me. You say you slaved over it! It should have burst from your lips as a song! (Robinson, 9)

As is subconsciously noted here by Williams, Hilda throughout her life, by no fault of her own, would find herself to be the object of obsession by many men. Was it her innocence, her vulnerability, her beauty or a combination of all three that attracted men to her? This *something* would become a source of ambivalence, for she would continually juxtapose her upbringing with that of modern ideas about art, love, and marriage, and this *something* would follow her from the time she met her first love, Ezra Pound, to the time she separates and then divorces her husband Richard Aldington.

The struggle of shredding past ideas about love, marriage, and art are evident when Julia [Hilda] says in the opening chapter that

> they were a mixed bag. Victims, victimised and victimising. Perhaps the victims came out, by a long shot, ahead of the steady self-determined victimisers. They escaped; the rowdy actual lost generation was not actually their generation. They had roots (being in their mid-twenties and their very early thirties) still with the past. They reacted against a sound-board, their words echoed, were not lost in the drawl of later sirens. (7)

Hilda was victimized by love, certainly by Pound, as is well-documented, early in her life, then by Richard, her eventual husband, and by D.H. Lawrence. Hilda's roots were strong and she had certain ideas about what love and the institution of marriage should be and the woman's role within that love and marriage relationship. Yet, she did not want to let herself fall prey to being the love object or the muse of a victimizer; she thirsted for a spiritual connectedness through love and art that she could share with a man. That someone, she thought, was Richard Aldington.

The failed relationship with Pound that had brought Hilda over to England in 1911 was the one that would eventually lead her to the meeting of Richard Aldington. The three would travel Europe and meet in tea rooms and discuss art at length. The courtship between Hilda and Richard was short and they were married in October 1913. Julia [Hilda] remarks that her marriage to Rafe [Richard] was "a blithe arrangement" (11). Indeed it was.

The two had much in common. In *Richard Aldington and H.D.: The Early Years in Letters (1992)*, Caroline Zilboorg says that their "early love was intimate, sexual, overwhelming as well as spiritual" (4). Part of their shared attraction to one another was their "shared ideas of poetry: its subjects, purposes, techniques, language, emotional effects" (16). Julia even says in the first chapter of the novel that "they both wanted to be free, they both wanted to escape, they both wanted a place where they could browse over their books …" (11). It was this shared vision and this shared spiritual connectedness that Hilda desired. She found it in Richard and she loved Richard and he loved her. According to Donna Krolik Hollenberg, John Cournos, a close and intimate friend of the Aldington's, remarked that they had been "an ideal couple whose love was based on respect and mutual inspiration" (126). And Cournos in his autobiography says, "here were two poets, man and woman, who were happy together and worked together" (Hollenberg, 126). And then August 1914 set upon them like a headstone being laid upon an unsuspecting grave and *Bid Me to Live* would rise up from the grave and provide one of the greatest struggles of lost love and spiritual annihilation during World War I.

Hilda and John corresponded with one another quite extensively between 1916 to 1919. Early in these correspondences, Hilda still professes how much she loves Richard, and in a letter dated September 5, 1916 says "I am ready to give my own life away to him, to give my soul and the peace of my spirit that he may have beauty, that he may see and feel beauty so that he may write, as this is the ultimate desire of all of us" (Hollenberg, 133). However, the irony is that Hilda is writing to John under the

assumption that Richard might have an affinity for his good friend's wife, Flo Fallas. Hilda yearned for equality in love but she also yearned for equality in Richard's artistic ability and she would go to great lengths to try and accomplish that. If having a little taste of Flo would allow Richard to flourish as an artist, Hilda was ready consciously, to allow this to happen. Yet, subconsciously, it ate at her spirit. The war, coupled with the loss of her daughter, was throwing her into a tailspin.

Neither Hilda nor Richard had strong political feelings about the war. But, Richard had strong feelings about the men of his generation. Like many men of his age, a forced sense of patriotism with forced-fed, guilt-ridden propaganda, Richard decided to enlist in the Army in 1916. In fact, in the novel, Julia tells us that this was not the man she married. Julia tells us that Rafe was not the "ordinary Englishman. She had married him when he was another person" (16). The war had instantly put a strain on their relationship, but it was his enlistment that weakened the "umbilical cord" that "bound them to their past" (24). Many of the ideas that the two shared about art and relationships started to become unraveled and irrelevant in the wake of the war. The loss of their child in 1915, the relentless bombardment of air-raids, the carnage, the fact that Richard was off fighting a war, and the infidelities of her husband would all lead Hilda to a deeper and deeper recession of her consciousness. Janice Robinson points out:

> Contemporary psychological theory teaches us that such suppressed or delayed consciousness is in part a protection of the integrity of the ego or

> the self. And there is a sense in which it promotes creative activity, because it allows for a kind of palimpsest quality in a work of art. One level of experience is expressed as the surface layer of the work, but levels of suppressed experience come through, as it were, from beneath the surface. In the act of writing … the artist recovers experience that has been buried in the unconscious. (38)

Bid Me to Live is a roman á clef that brings its readers into the trenches of both Hilda's and Julia's embattled mind, a psychological journey into her repressed consciousness, through which she sees the world around her. As noted previously, written after the war, the story guides us through her attempt to reconcile her repressed memory through art where "the excavation of her unconsciousness is her major preoccupation" (Riddel, 459). The novel is fully self-conscious, aware at all times, yet psychologically fragile, and full of loneliness and is Hilda's "spiritual autobiography" (Riddel, 459). According to Dianne Chisholm, the novel was undertaken at Freud's bidding[1] and "demonstrates or enacts a working through of her dangerously repressed and oppressively remembered experiences during the traumatic years of World War I" (Chisholm, 96).

The book opens with the epigram "To Anthea" by Robert Herrick:

> Bid me to live, and I will live
>
> Thy Protestant to be:

[1] Hilda's sessions with Freud are well-documented in *Tribute to Freud* (New York, 1956). I wish to only point out the possible influence of Freud on Hilda's writing of *Bid Me to Live.*

Or bid me love, and I will give

A loving heart to thee …

Bid me to weep, and I will weep,

While I have eyes to see:

And having none, yet I will keep

A heart to weep for thee.

The poem extends with two more stanzas, and according to Rachel Blau Duplessis in "Romantic Thralldom in H.D.," the poem is a "playful religion of love" (408) and "refers to the time in a relationship when adoration is mutual and commands are not burdensome" (409). The poem is an interesting choice as it will juxtapose this theme to the inability of Julia to maintain equality in either romantic love or comradeship particularly with Rafe, and with Rico (D.H. Lawrence) as well. The spiritual essence of the poem is one of unconditional love, the type of love Hilda found in the love her parents had for one another and the type of love she would seek throughout her life. Also significant is the choice of author. The fact that Herrick is an artistic man suggests that Hilda sought this type of unconditional love and artistry from the men in her life. It is a poem that speaks of finding ways, at all costs: "While I have eyes to see: / And having none, yet I will keep / A heart to weep for thee," to appreciate and love one another. It is a poem about oneness and the acceptance of that oneness unconditionally. It is a poem about equality.

Ultimately, it was equality that Hilda sought after, not only in love but in art. Yet, the men in her life wouldn't allow for it. The battle of wills would torment her and she would often turn inward. She was thrust into a quickly-changing world that was "associated with her own self-discovery of incompleteness: with the death of her child, the disintegration of her marriage, the blasting apart of an orderly world of value, the rude thrust into time and self-consciousness itself" (457). *Bid Me to Live* is ultimately a cry, a shout, a call from the depths of Hilda's most intimate and sacred place, the one place that encompassed love and equality in one unencumbered spiritual flight—the *gloire*.

Bid Me to Live opens in 1917 during the time at which Hilda is living in her rooms between 44 Mecklenburgh Square in London and Corfe Castle, where Richard is stationed and training to be an army officer. At the onset, we are immediately presented with the closed-in, frame-like, nature of the room in which Julia and Rafe are staying. The windows are covered with "thick double shutters" and "iron bolts" and those covered by three "double rows" of curtains, interestingly all hemmed by Julia, and at any point could be opened to the carnage at Queen's Square. We can already sense the war's intrusion into their married life being "superficially entrenched" in this room as Julia, subconsciously was hemming her way into seclusion.

We learn Rafe was traveling to and fro from France. The leaves were putting a strain on their relationship and Susan Friedman says "for Rafe … home is a refuge; love is a respite from battle. For his wife Julia … love exists in a post-lapsarian world

structured by violence" (149). Julia was holding on to the "small spark of fire" that once was alive in them, but now was becoming the "smoldering at the end of an incense stick, her cigarette" (21). Time was ticking away on their love. It was ticking away at them like a bomb, just waiting to explode at any moment. Rafe's absences were interludes of death for Julia. While he was away, it was as if he was dead and she free, and Julia's thoughts begin to change. Before leaving for France, Rafe gives Julia a watch. The watch is to signify a part of him for her to hold on to, a hope for his return. Yet, the watch becomes almost an albatross, weighing Julia down:

> now the watch weighed her wrist to her chest, weighed a weight on her chest. The watch was a stone weighing her there…the wrist-watch was a stone, scarab weighing her to this bed. (36)

And noticing how "firm" the watch was around her wrist, she "tugged at the strap of the wrist-watch" (38). A symbol of love was now a weighted reminder of the brittle thread holding them together. Even when trying to write a letter to Rafe, Julia starts the letter by saying "there's nothing to write about because you've only just gone" (42)—hardly the thoughts of someone who dearly misses a loved one who has just again left for war. The past that once held them together was now crumbling before them; a past they could once reference to remind them of their love for one another and their love for art, two things that had brought them together, that connected them spiritually, was now inaccessible and unsustainable. Julia continues in her letter "those Wordsworth

daffodils, they seem cold and non-conformist, they're not the daffodils we weep to see. Or daffodils that come before the swallow" (43).

Home from leave again, Julia noticed a very different Rafe, a stranger she calls him, characterized by violent mood swings. She recognizes and concedes that she cannot "minimize the thing he goes through" (46) but at the same time recognizes what the word love meant between them three years ago was not what it represented between them both at present. And Rafe's infidelities with Bella Carter (Dorothy "Arabella" York), an American girl of twenty-five who had occupied a room where Rafe and Julia were staying, were too much for Julia to handle, when all Rafe wanted was for her to allow him some space and would later say to her "I want Bella. Bella makes me forget. You make me remember" (71). Yet, Julia hung on, trying to salvage what little they may have had left.

It was during this time that Julia and Rico (D.H. Lawrence) were conversing by correspondence. Julia was sharing some of her writing with Rico. Rico however, wrote letters to Julia that "were burning in her head, blue-fire, the things he wrote and the things that he didn't write, the way the blue-flame licked out of the paper, whatever it was he wrote" (54). When Rafe came across one of the letters Rico had written (discussing her art), Julia could sense that Rafe "cared" and that it "mattered" to him that the two were corresponding over such things. The fact that Julia sensed this in Rafe sparked a burned out flame. She no longer had to fear the "over-sexed" man on leave, as Bella took "away the over-physical sensuality of

Rafe" (58) and allowed her to be with him without fear[2] and they talked of things that brought them together, poetry. Julia knew that Bella could not provide that type of cerebral fulfillment in her relationship with Rafe. There was something in Rico's letters that made Julia feel wanted and it was this "cerebral contact that renewed her" (58). So she turned to Rico "as the man who most resembled the idealistic Aldington of her memories" and who could "never betray her with his body" (Firchow, 56). Had she finally found the equality she sought after? Was this the spiritual connectivity she thirsted for? Could she remain in love and married to a man that only half-fulfilled her? Even though the discussion of poetry again sparked a flame between them, Julia's real burning flame was coming from another place, a place she did not share with Rafe. One has to question, how true love can survive under such circumstances.

Her inner being, her body, mind, and soul were being poisoned not only by the war but by Rafe himself. Their love was becoming toxic as we witness Julia describing a scene while Rafe was on home from leave:

> Herself, she could stay here but the cold lead of her forehead, the rather heavier lead of the back of her head, were filled with an aura of slight burning. Her mind had been snuffed out, for an hour; they had not really slept last night. This short sleep was one of those asbestos curtains that bangs down; it had not quite done its job. The blaze and flame of

[2] The loss of her first child had caused great hardship for H.D. Because of her near-death experience, she stayed three weeks in a poorly run nursing home. Upon leaving, one of the matrons told her not to have sex until the war was over. She became frigid toward her husband and was fearful of sexual encounters with him. She was fearful of going through such an experience again.

> chemicals was in the room, in the back of her head, her forehead was cooler. She might manage it somehow that the whole head calmed down and the muddle of the poisonous gas and flayed carcasses be dispersed somehow. It was actually a taste in her lungs, though while he was here, she had not recognized it, said it was some sort of vague idea, but she knew it was true. He had breathed a taint of poison-gas in her lungs, the first time he kissed her. (39)

The war had taken its physical toll on Julia, but it now had invaded her personal and spiritual being. Julia hints that she could handle the cold of the room and she might manage it all, but it was the taste in her lungs that she felt deeply about. The air of life and the air of love she felt for Rafe was now poisoned simultaneously by a kiss.

Vera Brittain in her landmark memoir *Testament of Youth* (1994), talks about the invading nature of the war on both her fiancé Roland and their feelings of love toward one another. While Roland was at home on leave, after five months of active service, Vera was concerned about the change she sensed in him and toward her. Roland "seemed to hold himself deliberately aloof" and "active service had intensified in him some ruthless, baffling quality" (185). Vera recalled her "desperate fear lest he should have changed, lest the War should come between us and thrust me out of his consciousness and his life" (185). Despite their continuing efforts to hold on to their love for one another, despite the distance, the fears, and the changed personal characteristics, the war had taken Roland's life in December 1915. Perhaps a

foreshadowing of events, Vera tells us "the War, I began to feel, was dividing us as I had long feared that it would, making real values seem unreal, and causing the qualities which mattered most to appear unimportant" (215). It is difficult to predict what the outcome of their love for one another in a post war relationship would have been, as theirs had been so abruptly dissolved, but one could assume, as we are witnessing the struggles of Rafe and Julia, that the war would have dissolved their engagement, or at least put a strain on it. Vera even says that "personally, after seeing some of the dreadful things I have to see here[3], I feel I shall never be the same person again" (215).

Rafe would continue to come and go. He was now a visitor and there was no "flame or pulse in her [Julia's] head" (131). She knew that "whatever he said would make no streak and spark, fireworks in this room. The fireworks had sizzled out, the show was over" (128). Yet even in the darkest of moments of her feelings toward Rafe, as he was kissing her hands before leaving, Julia says "she did not want, did not dare allow any of that flame, that fire … to get in her head again" (134). As bad as things had gotten, as much as the war had invaded their love for one another, some flicker of a flame burned within them, how could it not. Looking retrospectively as she is writing as narrator, Hilda tells us through Julia's thoughts that "given normal civilised peace-time conditions of course, all this could never of happened, or it would have happened in sections" (139). The war had flipped the world upside down and Julia admits early on in the story that "yes, she was old fashioned (her mother was old-fashioned)" (58) and she

[3] Vera Brittain was a V.A.D. nurse during most of the war after taking a leave from her studies as Oxford in 1915.

knew the cost of being unmarried. She realizes that all this letter writing with Rico, this "sex-emotion" was an escape and knew that all this "vaunted business of experience, of sex-emotion and understanding … might be all right for men, but for women , any woman, there was a biological catch and taken at any angle, danger. You dried up and were an old maid, danger" (136). Julia was not ready to live in this turbulent world and frankly did not want to. She loved the values instilled in her by her mother and father and they were torn, blown apart by the men of war and men of art. The fear of these values being removed from her inner being scared her and forced her to repress and internalize everything that was happening around her. Julia even tells Rico that "I could not be your mother" (182). All of these experiences were the "red grapes of war, of love" that Hilda spoke about years later when talking about the composition of this novel. And like Radclyffe Hall's Miss Ogilvy character, Julia had to escape from the cruelty of a changing world that she could not accept.

Julia's departure from London landed her in a place reminiscent of a Wordsworthian experience, Rosigran (Bosigran). Modern London, a place of war and death, weakened the mind and soul and demoralized the human spirit. The surroundings she found herself outside of London were truly Romantic. The natural elements sparked a renewed spirit within Julia and there was a feeling of strength and encouragement. The mist by the sea hid reality and healed. It was a place out of this world: a magical place. It was a place in another realm where Julia becomes a "see-er" and a priestess" (147). She "hugged her old coat tight, hugging herself tight, rejoicing in herself, butterfly in cocoon" (151). The experience is spiritually awakening and the

significance of Julia's "old" coat is important not to overlook. Julia is desperately trying to keep hold of a past that is becoming increasingly more distant, a pattern that emerges here and in both West's and Hall's stories: a pattern that attempts to recapture the past to heal modern wounds. Julia recognizes her instilled values from childhood and consciously recognizes that those values have been compromised, not only by the war, but by the men in her life, especially her husband Rafe. Julia realizes that self-awareness and self-discovery can and will only come from within, which is why she hugs herself tight and rejoices in herself, but at a cost. This loneliness leaves her in a cocoon-like state. She is alive, yet shrouded. Julia is telling us that this moment of clarity is unable to sustain itself amid the modern world surrounded by war. Quickly we are thrust back to reality when she begins to write Rico again, explaining to him why she never went up to his room. It was a necessary evil and it was Julia's declarative goodbye to Rico. She had to shed the past and dig out the shrapnel that had invaded her life.

Some scholars, like Sandra M. Gilbert in "*Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War*", view this transformation as "see-er" as H.D.'s artistic way of "mourning the devastation of the war", as other women writers had done, for example Virginia Woolf, as felt experience that "not only their society but also their art had been subtly strengthened, or at least strangely inspired, by the deaths and defeats of male contemporaries" (222). More important to Julia (Hilda) was her struggle for individual expression within the confines of her marriage. Rafe was unable and even incapable, as was Rico, to allow Julia to have that type of freedom, spiritually or artistically. And sadly, Julia struggled with these feelings and often fell back on a

romantic past she knew well to compensate for her inability to cope with the realities of her situation.

Some have argued that the novel is based upon that very refusal to go upstairs. Julia refuses to go upstairs because innately she knows that she is married to Rafe and that Rico is married to Elsa and she genuinely cares about those relationships. Regardless of the modern agreements Rafe and Julia may have had pertaining to their marriage, Julia (Hilda) knew that is was morally wrong. The pressures of open infidelity did not sit well with Julia's upbringing and her beliefs about how men and women should treat one another.

In the end, as Robinson tells us "what finally broke the H.D. – Aldington marriage was not only the marital infidelity but H.D.'s realization of Aldington's hypocrisy … she lost respect for him. He knew it, and he could not forgive her for it" (386). Rafe and Julia do not divorce by the novel's end. In fact, the real-life Hilda and Richard did not divorce officially until 1938, many years following the end of the war. Yet, there relationship was irreparably destroyed by the events, the experiences, and the nightmares of living a wartime life.

Chapter 4

A SHELL-SHOCKED VICTORIAN MARRIAGE

From the isolated mind of H.D. we enter into the isolated world of Rebecca West's Baldry Court. Baldry Court is home to characters Chris and Kitty Baldry and Jenny, Chris' cousin, and the setting for her novel *The Return of the Soldier (1918).* The story unfolds during 1916 when the Great War was at a deadlock. Battles abroad were, for the first time, being reported back in England, photographs were being published in local newspapers, and mail was being easily transported from the trenches to the home front. The war penetrated the home front entrenching itself in the minds of English civilians.

Jenny, the narrator of the novel, like Rebecca West, is experiencing the horrors of war for the first time. As Samuel Hynes points out in his "*Introduction*" to *The Return of the Soldier*, "such knowledge would not have been available to a sheltered woman like Jenny during any previous English war: this was the first war that women could imagine, and so it was the first that a woman could write into a novel" (ix). In writing this novel, West shows the psychological impact of the war on each of her characters, in particular Chris, Kitty, and Jenny. The novel represents the real and the immediate experience of war and the impact on relationships of love and marriage. Peter Wolfe, in *Rebecca West: Artist and Thinker (1971)*, says that West is writing, as Henry James wrote, a story about the "felt life" (31) and Gita May notes in "*Rebecca West*" that "rather than dealing with the war directly, West has preferred the more subtle approach

of showing its impact on individuals" (441). Further exploration in this chapter will show the devastating effects that this war had on both love and marriage as it comments on the historical struggles facing both civilians and soldiers as they try to spiritually navigate through these hardships of loss.

Rebecca West, born December 21, 1892 as Cicely Isabel, was the youngest of three sisters. Her parents, Charles and Isabella Fairfield, met upon a ship bound for Australia and married shortly after on December 17, 1883. "The first years of the marriage," according to Carl Rollyson in *Rebecca West: A Life (1996),* "were happy" (21). After Rebecca's birth, the family moved to south London at 21 Streatham Place. A place where Rebecca while "in her romantic moods" recalled the home "as graceful, with well-shaped rooms, a lawn ending in a grove of chestnut trees, and a garden" and where "the city floured during idyllic strolls along pathways strewn with pale pink petals the color of candy" (23). Then in 1898, when five, she moved with her family to Richmond-on-Thames. During her early years, she had a very fond view of her father, who would regal her and her sisters with stories and take them on walks. She "glowed when her father confided in her" (Rollyson, 24). And in 1901, her father abandoned the family and left for Africa. He would return to England a few years later but not to his family, and in 1906 in Liverpool he died. Rebecca was thirteen. At an early age, she was acutely aware of her father's ability to charm women. Rebecca later in life recalls with anger in *Family Memories (1988)* that her father was "continually and frenetically unfaithful" to her mother "who was in love with him" (203).

Years later, in and around 1911, Rebecca served in different capacities for *The Freewoman*, a feminist journal. It was during this time she would grab the attention of already established novelist H.G. Wells while making fun of his style in one of her reviews. It wasn't until 1912 that the two finally met at his home for the first time; Rebecca was nineteen. She "thought H.G. was the most interesting man she had ever met" (Rollyson, 40) and in 1913 "pursued a furtive love affair" (Rollyson, 50) knowing full well of his reputation as a man who promulgated his belief in free-love and who was married to his wife Jane. Interestingly, Rebecca hid the affair from both her mother and her sisters for fear of "defying her mother's standards of propriety" (Rollyson, 50). It wasn't until she became pregnant with H.G.'s child that she finally broke down and told both her mother and sisters.

Rebecca bore a son, a day after England declared war on Germany, whom she named Anthony. H.G. moved Rebecca around quite a bit, keeping her away from London and literary circles. Like Julia's Rafe, he would come in and out of both Rebecca's and Anthony's lives, only visiting and writing letters. In fact, Carly Rollyson tells us in *The Literary Legacy of Rebecca West (2007)* that "while tucked away out of London…she [West] felt harried by housekeepers who saw through the fiction of the married life she and Wells tried to maintain…" (23). Frustrated by the constant isolation, Rebecca grew agitated. And in 1917, she became angered at a recent trip Well's took to Russia amidst the "air raids" that had exacerbated their stretched nerves" (Glendinning, 67). In an effort to reconcile the soured feelings, he "tried to divert her with a trip to

their favorite hideaway, Monkey Island, a tiny spot on the Thames. It made no difference" (Rollyson, 66). Their relationship would continue like this for years to come.

Critical to the discussion here is the feeling of isolation Rebecca felt in her relationship of love with H.G. and the feeling of isolation growing up, particularly with her mother and sisters. Rebecca tells us "there was my mother and my sisters and I living the most terrible kind of isolated life—we knew nobody" (Glendinning, 12). Significantly, this was the time at which Rebecca constructed and wrote *The Return of the Soldier*. The novel is about isolation and the events that invade that isolation—particularly the war. The need for romantic escape and romantic fantasy are present both in West's real life and in the novel as well. West and H.G. would often escape to Monkey Island; it was a place of retreat for them, a place where they could go and love one another without disturbance or worry. It was, as Motley F. Deakin points out in *Rebecca West (1980),* a setting that had "memories of love associated with it" (133). As the novel will show us, West takes her soldier character to Monkey Island to recapture his feelings for a past time and a past love. And the fervent prose of her pastorals in the novel mirror her descriptions of how she felt as a child, a child filled with love and wonder, as she stayed in south London.

The patterns we have been discussing carry into the challenges that present themselves in Rebecca West's novel. First, women's representation in literature of the period in relation to how they historically responded to the First World War, specifically relating to love and marriage; Second, how, in the face of a changing British society, the

psychological impact of the war affected both the soldiers fighting in the war and British civilians; Third, how the trauma of the war caused mental illness, in this case shell-shock, which affected soldiers and their loved ones.

Granville Hicks comments in "*Literature and War*" that "it becomes clear that, whatever the direct effect of the war, its indirect effect has been immeasurable" and "women writers have been affected quite as much as the men" (793). Also commenting on the traumatic effects of the Great War, Arthur Marwick in "*The Impact of the First World War on British Society*" says that "it does seem that we have here a vast and important topic of study: the historian can collect the evidence, but again the help of the social psychologist is urgently needed" (63). And West's "portrayal of Chris on the grounds that the amnesia caused by shell-shock had never before served as a subject in British fiction" (Wolfe, 32).

It is indisputable that both soldiers and civilians were traumatically affected by the First World War. West, as artist and civilian, faced the same challenges as the main characters in her novel: that is, how modern women were confronted with the challenges of war and how they responded to such experiences. West explores the psychological impact on her characters as they struggle with their personal loss of love and marriage.

Unfamiliar to war literature, West decides to open her novel in spring where "the sunlight was pouring through the tall arched windows and flowered curtains so brightly" (3). Yet, this spring time is juxtaposed to our finding, just few sentences prior,

that the narrator is sitting in the nursery dedicated to Kitty's and Chris's dead child Oliver. So we are immediately confronted with the loss of a loved one; a loss from the past. Chris kept the room alive—a way of holding on to the past--, a tribute to his late son, and his wife Kitty at the onset of the novel is sitting in this nursery "revisiting her dead" (4). West instantly symbolizes Kitty as someone living in the present but who is associated with a deadened past. West portrays Kitty as a person concerned with physical appearance where "her golden hair was all about her shoulders and that she wore over her frock a little silken jacket trimmed with rosebuds" (4). Kitty's opening response to Jenny's concern that they had not heard from Chris is somewhat startling:

> Ah, don't begin to fuss! wailed Kitty; if a woman began to worry in these days because her husband hadn't written to her for a fortnight----! Besides, if he'd been anywhere interesting, anywhere where the fighting was really hot, he'd have found some way of telling me instead of just leaving it as 'Somewhere in France.' He'll be all right. (3)

Kitty's aloofness would not be a reaction one would expect from a wife who had not heard from her husband who was engaged in war on the front line. Kitty's behavior exhibits what Stephanie Coontz points out "the need for economic security and the desire for a home of her own" (186). It's what "tempered many a Victorian woman's romantic dreams and led her to settle for a marriage that promised less intimacy and mutual respect than she might have hoped for" (186).

In contrast to Kitty's feelings toward her husband Chris, Jenny sees things differently. Jenny is haunted by nightmares of her cousin Chris, nightmares we can assume she received from the war films she has seen and the "stories … heard in the boyish voice, that rings indomitable yet has the most of its gay notes flattened, of the modern subaltern" (5). The haunting nightmares invade her perfect isolated space and "by night I saw Chris running across the brown rottenness of No Man's Land, starting back here because he trod upon a hand, not even looking there because of the awfulness of an unburied head …" (5). Jenny is much more aware of her surroundings than Kitty seems to be, or consciously chooses to be.

We begin to see how the war awakens the novel's characters from their past romantic and isolated surroundings where now:

> the eye drops to miles of emerald pastureland lying wet and brilliant under a westward line of sleek hills blue with distance and distant woods, while nearer it ranges the suave decorum of the lawn and the Lebanon cedar whose branches are like darkness made palpable, and the minatory gauntnesses of the topmost pines in the wood that breaks downward, its bare boughs a close texture of browns and purples, form the pond on the hill's edge. (4, 5)

West's narrator so delicately compares and contrasts the subtle yet imminent changes that have penetrated the consciousness of civilians and invaded the home. The eyes now "drop" and the pines "break downward" whose boughs are "bare." Where there

was once vastness and openness there is now a “westward line” and a “hill’s edge” that have infiltrated and have caused a line of demarcation. Now there is a clear indication that something has changed, that there is a distinct difference between what once was and the reality of what is now. The comparison is a foreshadowing of the contrasts that will exist between the love of Chris’s wife Kitty and his former lover Margaret.

We first meet Chris through the eyes of his cousin Jenny. He is presented as a boyish figure full of imagination and wonder who at an early age “had always shown great faith in the imminence of the improbable” (7) and a “faith that persisted into his adult life” (8). But having been practically forced to take over the family business after his father’s death, Chris met Kitty. Jenny tells us “then Kitty had come along and picked up his conception of normal expenditure and carelessly stretched it as a woman stretches a new glove on her hand” (8). Not unlike Kitty, Chris too was a victim of Victorian societal pressures. Stephanie Coontz also points out “for men too, romantic love had to be moderated by practical calculations so long as their careers and credit depended upon how neighbors, kin, banks, employers, and the community at large assessed their respectability” (186). We can almost assume a marriage out of convenience for both Kitty and Chris had taken place and feelings of romance and love were to “develop slowly out of admiration, respect, and appreciation of someone’s good character” (Coontz, 184). West sets the stage to combat Victorian views of love and marriage.

The anticipated and welcomed return of their soldier is brought to a numbing halt when Margaret Grey, a past love of Chris', shows up at Baldry Court and presents both Jenny and Kitty with a telegram she had received from Chris while he was recovering from his injuries. The telegram essentially explains the injuries he incurred while fighting at the front. But even more damaging to Kitty is a personal letter Margaret has in hand written to her by Chris. The letter is addressed to Margaret Allington, her maiden name, and is sent to Monkey Island at Bray where she lived prior to marrying her husband Mr. Grey, and where her father still holds an inn. The letter confesses his love for Margaret and expresses an urgency that they meet at once. We find out that Margaret and Chris knew each other long before the war, but it has been fifteen years since they last had any intimate relationship. The shocking news of this revelation has put Kitty, and Jenny, into a tailspin. The war hadn't seriously touched Kitty until now. Her husband has forgotten her, has forgotten he was married, and it frightens her. The war was a personal affront to her marriage and her wellbeing and realizes that "if he [Chris] could send that telegram he isn't ours any longer" (17). We see the crushing effects that war places on the married couple, how it changes lives, and not only the married lives of the lower classes but even the elite and sheltered.

Chris remembers only a time prior to 1906, the year he officially married Kitty. His memory of marrying Kitty and living at Baldry Court is suppressed and suspended in time. The period at which Chris loses all memory is significant for two reasons. First, it places Chris in a historical period of pre-modern times with a woman he once loved both romantically and spiritually. Second, his mind no longer allows him to consciously

remember his modern, upper-class life at Baldry Court with his wife Kitty. West forces us to juxtapose two historical periods and puts into battle the two relationships of love, one with Margaret, who represents a past romantic and spiritual love for which he now craves, against the other love with Kitty, which represents the real and immediate.

Both women want to help cure Chris of his condition and help him to seek answers to the psychological conflict raging in his psyche. Pitted against the external battle of war he has been fighting is the internal battle, "the division within the soldier himself between his wish to live in the world of idyllic love and his need to return to his real world of social obligation and military duty" (Deakin, 132). Metaphorically speaking, if he chooses Margaret, he would not have to return to war because he would not be cured of his amnesia. However, if he chooses Kitty, he would essentially be cured of his amnesia but returned to war, risking further injury and possible death. Yet the complexity in the story lay in the fact that he is mentally unable to make that decision for himself and must rely on the two women that love him to make that decision for him, or at least provide the tools to assist him in making that decision.

The seemingly innocent and sheltered world of Baldry court is now infiltrated by the horrific realities of war, and I point to the previous passages to highlight how, from the very outset of the novel, West brilliantly pits two opposing historical periods, Romanticism and late Victorianism against Modernism. The understanding of this opposition will also be critical as we now begin to explore Chris' battle with amnesia and how that illness comes to affect his personal relationships of love and marriage.

The day Chris is to arrive home, Jenny tells us "from breakfast-time that day the house was pervaded with a day-before-the-funeral feeling" (22) and a "strangeness had come into the house" (25). She describes the house as hollow, devoid of emotion, changed, and dark. Upon Chris' arrival home, Jenny asks him if he remembers Kitty, his wife. His response is quite numbing:

> Oh, yes. In a sense. I know how she bows when you meet her in the street, how she dresses when she goes to church. I know her as one knows a woman staying in the same hotel. Just like that. (32)

His description is emotionless. He doesn't remember her; however, the description is purely physical and one that would seem to define social class. In essence, it describes the sheer sameness of all upper-class women in England at the time. Kitty becomes just a physical being and a superficial woman caring only for the jewelry she wears, the house she lives in, and the people with whom she socializes. Throughout the story, West continually associates Kitty as a character defined by such characteristics. Just before their first dinner together, after Chris' arrival home, Chris stumbles on the stairway before making his entrance into the dining hall. The narrator notices Kitty's reaction and comments that Kitty "hates gracelessness and a failure of physical adjustment is the worst indignity she can conceive" (26, 27). In an effort to have Chris remember her, Kitty flashes the jewels on her fingers and then places her fingers upon the necklace around her neck. Without reaction from Chris, Kitty says to him that "it seems so strange that you should not remember me … you gave me all of these" (27).

West portrays Kitty as one who equates love and identity with the possessions one owns. However, in Kitty's defense, as Sandra Gilbert points out in "*Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War*," "most late Victorian young girls were trained to see such passionlessness as a virtue rather than a failure" (423). West's portrayal of Kitty, as Carly Rollyson points out in *Rebecca West: A Life (1996),* "is one of those 'secondary women' that [H.G.] Wells defines … preoccupied with the material perfection of their lives, which are flawless but lifeless, and so cannot nourish love" (69-70). Although Chris cannot remember his life with Kitty, West makes sure that we continue to remember that this real and immediate truth remain in his subconscious, always haunting him. The life he is presented with upon his return home is a reminder of a life he cannot recall. It is a life he wishes not to recall. The love he feels for Margaret is the love he seeks, both consciously and subconsciously, and West doesn't let us forget. Is Kitty at fault? Is she just a product of her time and her upbringing? Has the war accentuated her outdated beliefs about love and marriage?

On the night of Chris' arrival, after Kitty has gone to bed frustrated by the day's events, Jenny begs for Chris to tell her what he feels is real to him. Willingly, Chris tells Jenny about old Monkey Island. At this juncture in the narrative, a transformation takes place. West's descriptiveness and visuals becomes more vivid and alive as the plot between Margaret and Chris unfolds. Margaret Diane Stetz in "*Rebecca West and the Visual Arts"* points out the powerful effect these visual scenes have in West's writing. She says "the hallmark of a Rebecca West novel is the scene, framed as if in the rectangle of the canvas, in which the moral understanding of an action becomes

coexistent with and inseparable from the visual impression made by that action" (8). Even Jenny tells us at the end of Chapter 2 how she "visualized his meeting with love on his secret Island" (33), while retelling Chris' story of his life with Margaret at Monkey Island before the war. Monkey Island had a "grace and silliness that belonged to the eighteenth century" (36) and Margaret was "charity and love itself" (36). The feelings that Chris describes are magical and romantic. Their love for one another surpassed the physical world. Chris describes his love for Margaret as "changeless." Up to this point, the lavish descriptions of Baldry Court were always an affront, representative of the sadness that surrounded it, and Kitty, being Chris's wife, had never been described as his wife, especially not in the manner in which Margaret is described. But this short chapter comes to a resounding halt when Chris, Jenny, and the reader are brought back to harsh reality:

> He was lying in a hateful world where barbed-wire entanglements showed impish knots against a livid sky full of booming noise and splashes of fire and wails of water, and the stretcher bearers were hurting his back intolerably…he brought down our conversation the finality of darkness. (42)

West leaves no question that the romantic love Chris felt for Margaret was always going to be challenged by the modern world of war, his wife Kitty, and his life at Baldry Court. The recall of his past love provides only a glimpse and momentary flash of relief, reminiscent of Isaac Rosenberg who searches for inner beauty in *Returning, We Hear*

the Larks, where invocations of the ultimate inner experience lead to "the conception of ideal beauty" (Johnston, 226). The paradox of Rosenberg's poem, just like the paradox in West's invocation of Chris' love for Margaret, is that the lark, like the love Chris feels for Margaret, is the invocation of that inner experience and search for beauty but in relationship to the horrors of war which cannot sustain itself.

Before Chris is to meet Margaret for the first time in fifteen years, Jenny tries to dissuade him by describing Margaret's change in physical appearance. She tells Chris that Margaret is "old…she isn't beautiful any more…she's drearily married…she's seamed and scored and ravaged by squalid circumstances" (43). She emphatically tells him "you can't love her when you see her" (43). But as true love will show us, those physical attributes hold no weight when two individuals see beyond those physical appearances that may define us. As Jenny continues to passively-aggressively persuade Margaret of his alteration, Margaret remains stout in telling her "oh, I shall know him" (57).

As Kitty sits in her dead child's nursery, looking out of the window over the gardens, the spring time that opened the novel now becomes an affront to her once isolated and beautiful life at Baldry Court:

> It was one of those draggled days, so common at the end of March, when a garden looks at its worst. The wind that was rolling up to check a show of sunshine had taken away the cedar's dignity of solid shade, had set the

> black firs beating their arms together and had filled the sky with glaring grey clouds that dimmed the brilliance of the crocus. (58)

Kitty weeps as she watches Chris and Margaret meet on the lawn. The impregnability of Baldry Court is shaken by the presence of Margaret. Kitty and Jenny watch as the two come together in love. Jenny admits, after witnessing their first meeting, "how entirely right Chris has been in his assertion that to lovers innumerable things do not matter" (59).

West continually has the meetings between the two lovers take place outdoors, in nature, surrounded by things that are not man-made. Even though they have been scarred by time—in looks and in well-being—their love goes beyond what is physical, and "theirs is such a union that they are no longer conscious of the division of their flesh" (68). Nature glows around them and they glow within nature. The importance of their relationship to one another and what it represents can be seen in Jenny's description when she witnesses Chris sleeping as Margaret sits beside him:

> So it was not until now, when it happened to my friends, when it was my dear Chris and my dear Margaret who sat thus englobed in peace as in a crystal sphere, that I knew that it was the most significant as it was the loveliest attitude in the world. It means that the woman has gathered the soul of the man into her soul and is keeping it warm in love and peace so that his body can rest quiet for a little time. (70)

Chris and Margaret are at peace, but only for a "little time." She has removed him from the overbearing duties at Baldry Court and the social calamity that enveloped his consciousness before the war. Ironically, it is the unfortunate event of war that allows their souls to become acquainted again, which has also allowed their love for each other to flourish. Jenny is deeply moved by this event, so much so that her nightmares of Chris and the war cease. She knows that in his current condition the army could not take him back. Yet, there remains a distant and absolute darkness that lingers in the shadows of not only Jenny's thoughts but in the pages of this novel —that of reality and truth. This powerful scene paints a picture framed by war. The scene infiltrates the subconscious and consciousness of all the novel's characters regardless of one's social, mental, or marital status and begs the question of how does any type of love survive—past or present.

Jenny seeks to understand the spiritual bonds between Margaret and Chris. In a mythical vision, Chris is presented with two crystal balls:

> In one he sees Margaret; not in her raincoat and her nodding plumes but as she is transfigured in the light of eternity. Long he looks there; then drops a glance to the other, just long enough to see that in its depths Kitty and I [Jenny] walk in bright dresses through our glowing gardens. We had suffered no transfiguration, for we are as we are and there is nothing more to us. The whole truth about us lies in our material seeming…he puts out his hand on the ball where Margaret shines. His

> sleeve catches the other one and sends it down to crash in a thousand pieces on the floor…Chris is wholly enclosed in his intentness on his chosen crystal. No one weeps for this shattering of our world…. (66-7).

Kitty and Jenny, through no fault of their own, are circumstance of the calamities of the Great War. Their lives transformed but ironically unable to transform themselves. They "are obscurely aware that this is their civilizing mission to flash the jewel of their beauty before all men, so that they shall desire it and work to get the wealth to buy it, and thus be seduced by a present appetite to a tilling of the earth that serves the future" (75). Sadly realizing that this is their place in the world and there is use for it, even though it is "peculiar." However, West asks her characters to reach deeper down than that, spiritually, looking to the past for answers, when she transforms Margaret into a spiritual love figure to which Chris can escape. Jenny is able to grasp the significance of what is happening between Margaret and Chris as she watches them lie together on the lawn explaining to us its meaning:

> the woman has gathered the soul of the man into her soul and is keeping it warm in love and peace so that his body can rest quiet for a little time. This is a great thing for a woman to do. I know there are things at least as great for those women whose independent spirits can ride fearlessly and with interest outside the home park of their personal relationships, but independence is not the occupation of most of us. What we desire is greatness such as this which had given sleep to the beloved. (70)

And, Jenny realizes that this was something neither she nor Kitty was able to do for Chris. If he regains back the love of his wife Kitty, it would mean that Chris has been cured of his condition and must return back to the war. Margaret keeps him safe and out of harm's way from going "back into the hell of war" (71). It is why Jenny feels "a cold hand close around [her] heart" when they return to the house to find Dr. Gilbert Anderson waiting for them.

Chris and Margaret return to Baldry Court to meet with Dr. Gilbert Anderson where Dr. Anderson is called to the house to help cure Chris of his amnesia. Jenny's attitude toward Margaret and her relationship to Chris has transformed itself. At one time disgusted by Margaret she now regrets letting the doctor into their home allowing him to "interpose his plumpness between Chris and Margaret, who since that afternoon seemed … a woman whom it was good to love" (77). She also recognizes in Margaret "knowledge of her own person which comes to women who have been loved" (76). We do not get these same feelings being expressed about Kitty. It has been said that West's portrayal of Kitty "is most like H.G. Well's wife, Jane, but not so much as she actually was as what she would have meant emotionally to Rebecca West, who could actually lay claim to Wells's love, but not to his social position or his home" (Deakin, 133). Like West's inability to lay claim to her lovers social position or home, Margaret can lay claim to Chris's love, if for only a short time, but would never be able to lay claim to his social status or his home.

As discussions commence between the doctor and Chris, we are made aware that the underlying condition is amnesia brought on by the symptom of shell-shock. The doctor's explanation is clearly Freudian:

> There is a deep self in one, the essential self, that has its wishes. And if those wishes are suppressed by the superficial self—the self that makes, as you say, efforts and usually makes them with the sole idea of putting up a good show before the neighbors—it takes its revenge …what's the suppressed wish of which it's the manifestation? (79).

The doctor clearly strikes a nerve as it becomes evident that Chris is truly unhappy in his life with Kitty and his life at Baldry Court. There was a reason he did not register his address with the War Office and his reason for doing so needed to be established.

Kitty remarks that Chris can remember when hypnotized, but the doctor claims that "hypnotism's a silly trick" (80) (something that Freud also tried first as cure) and assures the women that he would get "him [Chris] to tell his dreams" (80). Discussions ensued about Chris's relationship between Chris, his mother, and his father. Upon the discovery that Chris's mother wanted a "stupid son, who would have been satisfied with shooting" (81), the doctor mumbles "he turned, then, to sex with a peculiar need" (81). The doctor's insinuation is that Chris is truly not in love with Margaret, but sees her as a comfort zone, reverting back to a primal instinctual need and desire. By taking on the disabling effects of Chris's psychological state in relation to his surroundings, West draws the reader closer to the realities of mental illness brought on by the traumatic

experiences of war. She also brings the reader closer to understanding how these experiences affect the individuals in relation to love and marriage.

At the beginning of the century, Freud's publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) forged a new knowledge and changed the way individuals thought about the psychological makeup of the human mind. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, in "*Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis*" say, "his [Freud's] discovery was that the human mind contains a dimension that is only partially accessible to consciousness and then only through indirect means such as dreams or neurotic symptoms" (389). In this respect, West does something interesting with her narrative by using Jenny, the narrator, as Chris's subconscious. Chris's feelings for Margaret were suppressed, so much so, that it took a traumatic event to release them. Jenny, therefore, becomes his subconscious voice. The connection between West, Jenny, and Chris ultimately becomes multi-dimensional in design where West is emotionally invested in Jenny and Jenny emotionally invested in Chris. Just as Jenny lives vicariously through Chris in the novel, West writes vicariously through Jenny. However, notably, is the fact that Chris completely shuts out what is real and truthful and acts out by pursuing Margaret. Bessel A. van der Kolk and Alexander C. McFarlane in "*The Black Hole of Trauma*" say that:

> Freud (1911/1959) described how, in order to function properly, people need to be able to define their needs, anticipate how to meet them, and plan for appropriate action. In order to do this, they first need to be able

> to consider a range of options without resorting to action—a capacity Freud called 'thought as experimental action.' (496)

If it can be assumed that Chris suffers from what is now categorized as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), then it can be assumed that Chris displays behavior in which people who suffer from this disorder lose the capacity to exhibit such thought processes. Kolk and McFarlane also point out that people with PTSD "have problems ignoring what is unimportant and selecting only what is most relevant … they compensate by shutting down" (496). In reality, Chris' relationship with Margaret is truly unimportant; it remains there only as a blanket, keeping him warm and safe from what is outside of it. What is most relevant is his life with Kitty, their marriage, his condition, and his possible return to the war. Jenny helps the reader to understand Chris' subconscious feelings as they are acted out. It is West's way of exploring with Jenny the lost pre-war romanticism and idealism about both love and marriage. This becomes quite evident as we witness these women writers writing into history their experiences of loss of love. How can this effort to recapture and hold on to this ideal be faulted in such a time?

Ironically, and not unintentional on West's part, Dr. Gilbert is not the one who comes up with a solution for Chris's cure; it is Margaret. She suggests they remind Chris about his son who died as an infant. The idea is that another traumatic event may trigger his recovery from amnesia. The science of medicine in dealing with such war conditions was certainly new at the time. Margaret's suggestion for a cure may well be

West's feeling that even Freud's methods were outdated, though laid the groundwork for psychoanalytical discovery, but unable to find medical cures for such conditions of war induced neuroses. Dr. W.H.R. Rivers in his address on *The Repression of War Experience* delivered before the Section of Psychiatry, royal Society of Medicine, on December 4, 1917 even says that:

> the experience arising out of the War has shown conclusively that the term 'anxiety-neurosis; has hitherto been used by the followers of Freud in too narrow a sense. (20)

Dr. Anderson's remarks of "I don't know why" it matters "but it does" (82) shows the innovation of such methods of dealing with war neuroses but also the acceptance of such practices. Margaret's idea strikingly mirrors Dr. W.H.R. Rivers, a physician who worked with wounded soldiers at Craiglockhart War Hospital tells us in his address:

> everyone who has had to treat cases of war neurosis, and especially that form of neurosis dependent on anxiety, must have been faced by the problem of what advice to give concerning the attitude the patient should adopt towards his war experience.
>
> It is natural to thrust aside painful memories just as it is natural to avoid dangerous or horrible scenes in actuality, and this natural tendency to banish the distressing or the horrible is especially pronounced in those whose powers of resistance have been lowered by the long-continued

> strains of trench-life, the shock of shell-explosion, or other catastrophe of war, (3)

and in his treatment of one such case says:

> The problem before me in this case was to find some aspect of the painful experience which would allow the patient to dwell upon it in such a way as to relieve it horrible and terrifying character. The aspect to which I drew his attention was that the mangled state of the body of his friend was conclusive evidence that he had been killed outright and had been spared the long and lingering illness and suffering which is too often the fate of those who sustain mortal wounds. He brightened at once and said that this aspect of the case had never occurred to him, nor had it been suggested by any of those to whom he had previously related his story. He saw at once that this was an aspect of his experience upon which he could allow his thoughts to dwell. He said he would no longer attempt to banish thoughts and memories of his friend from his mind, but would think of the pain and suffering he had been spared. (6)

Margaret struggles with her decision to assist in such a process. She knows full well the hurt he must have felt in the loss of his son because she too lost an infant son, at the same time Chris and Kitty lost theirs. While speaking with Jenny in the Baldry's dead infant's nursery, Margaret wrestles with her religious beliefs as she seeks answers on how to handle the current situation. She says to Jenny, "you don't notice how little

there is in the Bible really till you go to it for help" (86). She realizes that decision making and often time self-redemption must come from within the individual in these modern times. Individuals living on earth must make the difficult decisions in life; God may only guide—the lack of religious belief was certainly evident during this time period as everyone questioned the role of God, soldiers and civilians, as religious explanation in the face of such cataclysmic events seemed meaningless. Ultimately Margaret's feelings and beliefs about love are what give her solace. She sees the two dead children as a symbol of their lost lives together—the children's souls are reunited in heaven to live and love as one, a union of love she and Chris were unable to attain on earth. The novel becomes "a story about salvation through unselfish love" (Glendinning, 66).

"Words" become "like a hammer" (89) as Jenny describes her thoughts in observing Margaret speaking to Chris, presenting him with the material possessions of his dead son, a trigger they decided, would help to cure him of his amnesia. Like the words of Margaret, the words of this novel are a reminder of the harsh realities of lost love and the harsh realities of a modern culture steeped in war. The story turns dark; there is "fallen twilight" and:

> under the cedar boughs I [Jenny] dimly saw a figure mothering something in her arms. Almost as she dissolved into the shadows; in another moment the night would have her. With his back turned on this fading happiness Chris walked across the lawn … lights in our house were worse than darkness, affection worse than hate elsewhere. (90)

Jenny is able to escape the realities of life at Baldry Court by spiritually living through the experiences of Chris and Margaret in their re-found romantic love. The war and the cure of Chris's illness crushed not only Margaret's romantic ideal but Jenny's as well. Lights now illuminate the reality of modern life and modern war and put into focus the crushing knowledge that spirituality even through romantic love was no longer strong enough to sustain the overarching power of war. There is such a strong desire for love that Jenny finds herself kissing Margaret "not as women do, but as lovers do" (88) as Margaret realizes she must give over to truth. This desire for love should not be mistaken for a lesbian reading of this text. As Stephanie Coontz so revealingly points out "many people felt much closer to their own sex than to what was seen as the literally 'opposite'—and alien—sex" (184). Jenny was certainly a product of that Victorian sensibility where so many impediments remained in the way of a man and woman reaching a satisfying relationship of romantic love, because of their inherently different natures. West's story is a comment on that failing love, especially in the face of the Great War.

The novel's end is a bitter one. The title of this novel is no longer one of anticipation, but one that forces the reader and the novel's characters back to truth and reality and into the hell of war. Samuel Hynes sums it up brilliantly by saying "it is a harsh moral lesson that this novel teaches. It says that Reality is the highest human value—higher than love, higher than happiness, and that not to accept and honor that high value is to be less than human" (xvi). Chris's suspension of reality, albeit not of his own doing, is a psychological state of mind that has been the subject of many writers

during this period. Rebecca West chose fiction as her outlet. She was able to capture real world experiences through indirect events that were, for her, powerful triggers. She created a work of art that painted the truth about how people's relationships of love were affected by the war. The novel, as Steve Pinkerton tells us in "*Trauma and Cure in Rebecca West's The Return of the Soldier,*" has "disappointed many of Rebecca West's readers" where "the ending fails the tests of both narrative and psychoanalytic plausibility" and yet "unsatisfying in its indeterminacy" (1). However, Carly Rollyson in *Rebecca West: A Life (1996)* tells us that "the book established Rebecca's reputation as a novelist; its elegant prose was much admired and the novel still compels admiration" (71) and in his later book *The Literary Legacy of Rebecca West (2007)* tells us the novel "sparked a reconsideration of where West stood esthetically and politically" (29). And "[Bernard] Shaw was quoted as saying that *The Return of the Soldier* was one of the best stories in the language" (Glendinning, 70). The debate goes about the novel's historical significance and if for any other reason this novel is a success, it portrays life as life can be, and as life was during the Great War—disappointing and unsatisfying. The bond of love was again crushed, fleetingly regained through a spiritual attempt at redemption, but again, as we see in *Bid Me to Live*, the bond cannot sustain in the face of war. The war had completely altered everyone's life at Baldry Court as it completely altered, just the same, the life of Radclyffe Hall's protagonist Miss Ogilvy.

Chapter 5

LOVE AT DEATH'S COST

"Miss Ogilvy stood on the quay at Calais and surveyed the disbanding of her Unit, the Unit that together with the coming of war had completely altered the complexion of her life, at all events for three years" (Tate, 125). This is how the story of "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself" begins—a powerful and resounding statement. It sets in motion the paradoxical relationship between the protagonists success in wartime, both professionally and personally, and the anxiety as she prepares to enter civilian life. Unlike the two texts we've explored up to this point, where the main characters were civilians at which time the war was infiltrating their lives, Hall places her main character at the onset of the story in the throes of war as her ambulance unit is disbanded. The opening scene is critical to the understanding of the entire story as it casts a shadow over the disbanding of Miss Ogilvy as a human being. "With the dispersal of the group, each person must assume a separate identity to function in the socioeconomic world of post-war Britain" (Kramp, 34). War created for Miss Ogilvy a place to flourish, to be herself, and to develop meaningful relationships with other women that civilian life would not allow or fully accept. "Hall had strong links with and drew on the same tradition of psychological fiction as May Sinclair … and Rebecca West … and she, like other novelists of the period, illustrated women's feelings of frustration in their emotional relationships with men" (Cline, 4). And, in the case of Hall's story, Miss Ogilvy wishes to be a man, living in a women's body, seeking a loving relationship with a

woman. So, in similar fashion to *Return of the Soldier*, Radclyffe Hall's short story is a portrayal of Hall's experiences in life where war becomes an important backdrop to the historical complications of relationships of love from where she allows us to view those experiences through her historical lens.

As we have already established, the turn of the century brought with it significant social change. In the case of "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself," Hall takes on the pervading ideas of sexuality and acceptance as an emergence brought on by societal changes perpetuated by the war. Sandra Gilbert in "*Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War*" says that a number of artists from Alice Meynell to Radclyffe Hall began to explore "covertly or overtly the release of female desires" (200). This is important to note for the fact that Hall avails Miss Ogilvy to explore her sexuality in a covertly, dream-like relationship of love. The fact that women were becoming liberated, paradoxically by the war, changed the landscape of relationships of love and marriage and the ideas about such relationships.

The discourse in queer studies on the topic of lesbianism and gender as it relates to Radclyffe Hall has been well documented. Michael Kramp argues persuasively in his essay "*The Resistant Social/Sexual Subjectivity of Hall's Ogilvy and Woolf's Rhoda*" the influence of Havelock Ellis on both her life and her work. Specifically noting Ellis's definition of what he termed "congenitally inverted."[4] "These women," Kramp tells us "occupied a female body but possessed male chromosomes and behaved like men" (30). Kramp believes that this conception of what Ellis describes as a "mannish woman" is the

[4] For a complete and comprehensive discussion see *Sexual Inversion* (1987).

discourse that "influenced the construction of Hall's fictional [character]" (31). Meg Albrinck argues that war changed ideas about gender roles, creating an anxiety in public spheres, because women took on more "masculine" roles as VADs appearing in military uniforms, working in factories, and taking on various other social roles normally held by men. This "masculine appearance and behavior were also worrisome to the civilian population in that they were linked to lesbianism. Clearly, this concern is related to heterosexual policies of repopulation" (Albrinck, 273). The fact that women were now perceived as lesbian or deviant begged the question of how would they procreate, a duty for which they were put on earth. How does this affect the institution of marriage? How does this affect the landscape of heterosexual hegemony of pre- and post-war England? Meg Albrinck places Hall's short story in the center of these societal attitudinal changes stating that "such works amplified concerns over sexual deviance in the women's service corps" (274). The war perpetuated the growing fervor of feminism. While men were fighting abroad, women were left at home to latch onto a changing society. Yet as we will see in the text and as Sandra Gilbert points out:

> the invigorating sense of revolution, release, reunion, and re-vision with which the war paradoxically imbued so many women eventually darkened into reactions of anxiety and self-doubt. (426).

However, the purpose of this dissertation is, not forget but, to branch from the discussion of a lesbian-centered informed text and focus on the character's development as it relates to relationships of love, and the inability to sustain such

relationships, regardless of a human being's heterosexual, homosexual, or crossgendered identity.

Sally Cline's biography *Radclyffe Hall: A Woman Called John* (1997) focuses on three phases of Hall's life. She defines them as one, "a published poet from 1906 to 1915 [where] she was Marguerite Radclyffe-Hall; … two, as a novelist from 1924 to 1943 [known as] Radclyffe Hall; … and three, to her friends, lovers and intimates from 1912 [known as] a woman called John" (11). Cline does well to place Hall "within the context of an accomplished and adventurous group of female artists, Sapphists, and femininsts" (xiii) according to Richard Dellamora in *Radclyffe Hall: A Life in the Writing* (2011), yet does very little critical analysis with Hall's collection of short stories *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself* (1934) where our self-entitled short story appears, mentioning it only a few times, mostly for points of reference. However, Cline does recognize that the short story is "not only her most significant story but one which would provide the impetus as well as some of the characterization and wartime descriptions for *Well of* Loneliness" (212).

The short story was drafted in 1926 and the book of short stories in which it appears was published in 1934, a timeline that frames the *Well of Loneliness* and could very well have been Hall's coming out story as an invert. In 1998, Michael Kramp even acknowledges that "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself" is "a short story that critics consistently neglect" (29). Diana Souhami's biography *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall* (1999) provides new insight into Hall's life, yet only dedicates about two pages (275-277) to the

discussion of “Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself.” Richard Dellamora’s biography dedicates an entire chapter to the discussion of “Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself” which has been the most poignant to date.

Radclyffe Hall’s upbringing and exposure to healthy, meaningful, loving relationships was certainly lacking, as we will see in Hall’s treatment of her main character Miss Ogilvy. Hall’s protagonist points out the negative verbal abuse exhibited by her mother growing up, saying to her that her “muscles looked so appalling in evening dress—a young girl ought not to have muscles” or “I can’t understand you … you’re a very odd creature—now when I was your age …” (Tate, 127).

Born in 1880 to parents Mary Jane and Radclyffe and christened Margueritte Radclyffe-Hall (a name she despised and would later change to Radclyffe Hall), Hall experienced an unfortunate childhood and upbringing. Only weeks after her birth, her father left, only to see her 12 times by the time she reached the age of 18 and at the time of his death that year in 1898. Sally Cline tells us that Hall’s mother was a mother “whose vicious temper left marks on her child’s body and bruised Marguerite’s spirit” (19). Cline points to correspondence of Hall’s in which she describes her mother:

> ‘My mother was a fool but a terribly cruel fool … a terribly crafty and cruel fool for whom life early had become a mirror in which she saw only her reflection … Her cruel influence so potent that it held my grandmother perpetually in chains.’ (19)

She goes on to say:

> ‘As an only child of seven I remember I envied American children … they seemed free and independent. I never felt free, I never felt independent. I felt chained.’ (19)

Cline further tells us that:

> the girl Marguerite, also beaten regularly, felt an alien and went her own way. In a childhood world chaotic and painful, she turned to servants and animals for consolation. (21)

Hall’s representation of her mother in the short story is kind in relation to the horrors of her real childhood experiences. Hall’s exposure to meaningful, loving relationships did not exist in her world. The lack of love by both parents and the constant abuse by her mother forced her to become a lonely human being seeking an inward calm for adjustment. One can begin to form an argument that Hall's absentee father and rejection by her mother may have contributed to her introverted personality and therefore the anxiety of the image of herself in relation to herself and her society.

Miss Ogilvy’s once admired stature and strength is now described as “tall,” “awkward,” and “queer” and her body’s “flat bosom and thick legs and ankles … moved uneasily” (Tate, 125). She is now unable to communicate and find “expression in words” and reverts back to her “method of checking emotion” (Tate, 126) when approached by an ambulance unit worker saddened by the unit’s disbandment. Miss Ogilvy, now presented with the horror of having to acclimate to an already unaccepting civilian life, fears for her “small future” where she must return to the “small homesteads, small

churches, small pastures, small lanes with small hedges; all small like England" (Tate, 126).

While on her way home from the war, she recollects her childhood and recognizes that at an early age she was different. Her thoughts no longer on the "glorious years at the Front and all that had gone to the making of her" but now on the upbringing that "marred" her (Tate, 126). Miss Ogilvy never really developed or experienced any meaningful loving relationships with the opposite sex or girls or women:

> Miss Ogilvy's relation to the opposite sex was unusual and at that time added much to her worries, for no less than three men has wished to propose … Miss Ogilvy's instinct made her like and trust men for whom she had a pronounced fellow-feeling; she would always have chosen them as her friends and companions in preference to girls or women … but men had not wanted her, except for the three who had found in her strangeness a definite attraction, and those would-be suitors she had actually feared, regarding them with aversion. Towards young girls and women she was shy and respectful, apologetic and sometimes admiring. But their fads and their foibles, none of which she could share … set her outside the sphere of their intimate lives, so that in the end she must blaze a lone trail through the difficulties of her nature. (Tate, 127)

The complexity of Hall's protagonist is forged here. Vera Brittain in *Radclyffe Hall: A Case of Obscenity (1969)* indicates that Hall's mother vehemently disliked Hall's innate taste in the same sex and references research that had been documented by Dr. Sawle Thomas, Principal of the Princess Alexandra Psychiatric Hospital at Harlow, Essex that may explain Hall's lesbianism, and therefore Miss Ogilvy's affinity for women rather than men, as a possible reaction to her relationship with her mother. Brittain taking from Thomas says, "The first, the simplest is the constitutional lesbian who has no use for the opposite sex…in which the expression of sexual desire provokes only terror and repulsion" (65). Brittain goes on further to state that "the third type of lesbian is the 'environmental'; her emotions spring from family circumstances such as bad experiences in childhood" (66). Hall's portrayal of Miss Ogilvy suggests that either of these points might be true. As we see, Miss Ogilvy "feared" the three men that showed interest in her, and her unpleasant childhood experiences are well documented. Miss Ogilvy's sisters were also never accepting of her differences growing up, which set her apart from the other girls, neither before the war nor after. Her sisters even looked upon her as a brother, or head of household, rather than a sister, leaving her to deal with estate business often saying things like "you've got such a good head for business" (Tate, 128). But again, it is not only the exhibited lesbian or inverted behavior that concerns the modern discourse of the story, it is the fact that she must "blaze a lone trail" leaving Miss Ogilvy to love whom and to receive love from whom? As Richard Dellamora points out "Ogilvy is both a beneficiary and casualty of modernity" (217). Yet, the benefit was an illusion, as the war allowed her to escape the harsh realities of a

provincial life only for a short period of time. The war allowed her "to forget the bad joke Nature seemed to have played her" (Tate, 129). Yet, Miss Ogilvy, just like Chris and Julia, eventually become casualties of war where "appalling reality lay on all sides" (Tate, 129) and the injection back into civilian life caused a "sudden and paralyzing change" (Tate, 125) to which she had to readjust.

War and culture fed a psychological and sexual binary inherent in Miss Ogilvy—the psychological battle of how she saw herself in relation to her surroundings and the sexual battle between her desire to be a man and the reality of her life as a woman. Miss Ogilvy wishes she were a man. In fact, Miss Ogilvy asks to be called William, and, in fact, Hall herself was referred to as John in her lifetime. When war was declared, Miss Ogilvy said "My God! If only I were a man! (Tate, 128). Michael Baker, in *Our Three Selves: The Life of Radclyffe Hall* (1985), notes that Hall never enlisted in the war even though she had great desire to do so. She did play a role in the war, however, by recruiting others to join. Not being a man was a source of frustration for Hall and for her protagonist Miss Ogilvy. In "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself," it is the war that allows Miss Ogilvy to escape the trepidations of her culture and allows her to live out her desires to be a man within the ambulance unit she forms in France. It is the war that allows Hall to suspend reality so that Miss Ogilvy can experience her true desire, her true self—living life as a man. The transcendence over traditional ideas of sexuality and femininity are present, as Gilbert points out, when "the aging Miss Ogilvy remembers, as she is being demobilized, that her ambulance was the 'merciful emblem that had set [her] free' and mourns the breaking up of the 'glorious' all-female unit she has led" (216).

Paradoxically, the war created a heightened sense of feminism that allowed women to exercise their sexual, social, political, and economical place in society, yet it was the same British society that was still not ready to accept Miss Ogilvy.

The war suspends Miss Ogilvy's reality for a short period of time. When she returns home after the war, the place that was not accepting of her before the war, she finds that she is still an outcast. Her inability to adjust to civilian life drives her further away emotionally and psychologically. The psychological battle within her rages on. The battle culminates when Miss Ogilvy's close friend, a woman she befriended in the old ambulance unit she ran during the course of the war, comes to visit her. There seems to be an unspoken uneasiness on the part of Miss Ogilvy's friend toward Miss Ogilvy. Miss Ogilvy undoubtedly was attracted to her friend from the ambulance unit, possibly more emotionally than physically. However, upon her friends visit, the friend says to Miss Ogilvy hesitantly "I'm not—I'm going to be married" (Tate, 131). Miss Ogilvy's friend's admission of "I'm not" seems to indicate that she does not have romantic feelings for Miss Ogilvy and, therefore, does not see herself in a romantic relationship with her. Her friend's admission shatters Miss Ogilvy's psyche. She thought she had found a true companion in her friend. She now felt a "sense of complete desolation" (Tate, 131). As Gilbert points out, the narrator tells the reader that Miss Ogilvy "became the prey of self-pity, and of other undesirable states in which the body will torment the mind, and the mind, in its turn, the body" (Tate, 131).

At this point in the story, we see a significant shift in Miss Ogilvy's behavior. She begins to "cry out in her sleep, living over in her dreams God knows what emotions" and she becomes very aware of her age noting that her "hair turned snow-white" and "fretted about it" saying things like "I'm growing old" and then "peering at her wrinkles" (Tate, 131). It is the first time in the story that Miss Ogilvy "hated being old" (Tate, 131). How does one deal with such rejection—both publically and privately—loneliness, and anxiety? And further, how does a modern wartime woman, who wishes she were man, effectively navigate meaningful, loving relationships at such a fragile time in her life? It is at this juncture that Miss Ogilvy sees no other option than to fully retreat from society.

Here, in the second part of the story, Hall grants Miss Ogilvy an escape from her torturous life—a retreat into isolation and into a primitive state of being. Present in both *Bid Me to Live* and *The Return of the Soldier,* as we will now witness in "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself," is the strong desire, as mentioned previously, to capture the past in order to heal modern wounds. Julia struggled with her Victorian upbringing and beliefs about marriage and relationships continually using them as a reference guide as she struggled through her modern relationships with Raffe as well as other men and women she had come in contact with during the war. Chris and Margaret must return to a primordial state of being, to a place where love goes beyond anything earthly, in order for her to cure the amnesic soldier. Hall also brings her protagonist to a place where two lovers "were conscious of a longing for something more vast than this earthly passion could compass" (Tate, 139). Ogilvy's escape is "framed with antimodernist

terms of return to a primitive, pastoral, indigenously 'English' existence" (Dellamora, 217). Julia's departure from London to the mystical Rosigran provides an escape for a possible spiritual renewal; Monkey Island takes Margaret and Chris on a journey to recapture a romantic love that is felt not to exist between Chris and Kitty; and the terms on which Hall grants Miss Ogilvy's escape is a similar relational space to that of Julia and Chris. Hall's "turn back in order to move forward resulted in odd temporal dislocations, with the result that what was new could be characterized as simultaneously both primitive and decadent insofar as the return to origins was taking place late in the history of civilization" (Dellamora, 217).

Miss Ogilvy visits a small island "that is still very little known to the world" which has only one structure upon it—a hotel. It was "scarcely more than a dot" (Tate, 132) on a map that she had chosen to explore. The dot, which represents the unknown island, is yet to be developed, defined by Miss Ogilvy, just as she is a dot in modern society, yet to be developed and defined, and her desire for a meaningful, loving relationship yet to be developed and defined. It's what makes her fill "with a sense of adventure she had not felt since the ending of the war" (Tate, 132). Miss Ogilvy felt a sense of freedom and limitlessness as she observes seagulls procreate "countless young," a freedom which allows her to live out her life as a man during the war. Michael Kramp points out that "the seagulls reveal Hall's critique of restrictive social constructions of individualized subjectivity" and allows Miss Ogilvy to enjoy and "admire the continuous variety of the birds, who consistently re-create life in various manifestations" (35). By creating such a limitless environment, Hall affords Miss Ogilvy

the opportunity to define herself and therefore have the opportunity to develop a loving relationship in an environment where Hall "grants her a dream of unleashed desire in which, transformed into a powerful primitive man, she makes love to a beautiful young woman, enthralled by the 'ripe red berry sweet to the taste' of the female body" (Gilbert, 217).

After Miss Ogilvy dines on the first night on the island, her hostess, Mrs. Nanceskivel, shows Miss Ogilvy some ancient bones, thousands of years old that had been found on the island. The skull bore a mark on it; the mark was reportedly made by the bronze axe that killed him. Miss Ogilvy traces her fingers over the mark and begins to cry. She becomes enraged, not only by the skull itself but by what it represents. She also becomes enraged with her hostess for showing it to her noting how the hostess gloats over the possession. It is here that Hall eloquently comments on modern society's inability to learn from its past and capacity to move forward with a new and accepting future of change. Dellamora points out that Mrs. Nanceskivel signifies for Miss Ogilvy the "typical married woman that Woolf describes in *Three Guineas* as the economic and ideological captives (and upholders) of the 'patriarchal' order" (224). Unable to reason any longer, Hall transfers Miss Ogilvy into a dream state, dying with the deceased Stone Aged Man. Lying in bed, "Miss Ogilvy knew that she was herself, that is to say she was conscious of her being, and yet she was not Miss Ogilvy at all, nor had she a memory of her (Tate, 135). She repressed her true self for such a long time that she could no longer identify with her conscious self. The suspension of reality

allows her the freedom to escape to a primeval experience in order to find happiness and acceptance.

The narrative now places Miss Ogilvy in a dream-like state where gender and sexual orientation becomes blurred. Hall describes Miss Ogilvy as a tribesman using descriptive pronouns like “she” and “her” to describe her now masculine qualities. She is tall, strong and boasts hairy arms and legs. Her little companion, who is unquestionably a woman, remarks “you are surely the strongest man in our tribe” (Tate, 135). The blurred lines of gender and sexual orientation are the only way in which Hall can afford Miss Ogilvy the chance at a meaningful loving relationship. Hall allows Miss Ogilvy the freedom to be who she/he wants to be. This is the only time we truly see that the ambiguous being that makes up Miss Ogilvy is in love and an active participant in a loving relationship. The character is still flawed however. He/she has a “clumsily made stone weapon” (Tate, 135) and he/she lacks the ability to effectively express in words “vital emotions” (Tate, 136), just as Miss Ogilvy was unable to express her emotions before embodying this new being. But the woman is able to understand the one word he/she was able to communicate that had multiple meanings because she loved him. “It meant: ‘Little spring of exceedingly pure water.’ It meant: ‘Hut of peace for a man after battle.’ It meant: ‘Ripe red berry sweet to taste.’ It meant: ‘Happy small home of future generations’” (Tate, 136). As Dellamora points out, “these meanings conflate in a single term the concepts of feminine and natural purity, sexual enjoyment and its naturalness, plus the values of home, family, and community. This combination coheres within the terms of the subjectivity of the former Miss Ogilvy, a capable woman

of conservative views, who happened to be sexually and emotionally drawn to other women. These values, however, can be experienced in unified fashion by Ogilvy only if she becomes completely other, a he" (225). Because Miss Ogilvy is unable to experience the true meaning of love, those meanings that are encompassed in the "one" word, she is never able to feel unification, with herself or with a lover. Now, love transcends the boundaries of earthly emotion and even earthly language, and in a ceremoniously religious way the little companion kneels in front of her lover and whispers "my master; blood of my body" (Tate, 136). The narrator goes on to tell us that "love had taught her love's speech, so that she might turn her heart into sounds that her primitive tongue could utter" (Tate, 136). The unified nature of their love combined with the unified being of Miss Ogilvy as both man and woman makes them one being.

The omnipotent love expressed, felt, and described between the two lovers is halted by the reality of their circumstances where a war-like environment invades. And the idea of love fades because of it. Images of World War I hover over even the dream-like world the two lovers are operating within. He/she feels oppressed by the German-like Roundheaded-ones. The he/she warrior describes the Roundheaded-ones' weapons which are made of a "dark, devilish substance," fear that "they lust after our lands," and "destroy my tribe" (Tate, 138). The war-like atmosphere creates a sense of angst and the woman begins to feel that her companion has forgotten about her wishing "him to think and talk only of love." He/she's thoughts consumed with war, she expresses her feelings that "thoughts of war always make me afraid … still wishing him to talk about love" (Tate, 138). Her timidity unleashes he/she's mind from thoughts of

war and “his blood caught fire from the flame in her blood” and the two realize the deep, innate desire they have for one another, a desire that needs only one word:

‘Love,’ she said, trembling, ‘this is love.’

And he answered: ‘Love.’

The two lovers retreat to a cave surrounded by “small, pink, thick-stemmed flowers that when they were crushed smelt of spices” and within the cave “a low liquid sound as a spring dripped through the crevice” (Tate, 139). It was here that the two lovers consummate their love, becoming one. As readers of this narrative, we are led to believe that love, above all things, can survive and rise above a war-like atmosphere. But like Miss Ogilvy who must return to civilian life, so must this illusion end, as we find Miss Ogilvy the next morning dead in a cave, “with her hands thrust deep into her pockets” (Tate, 140). Gilbert says that “Miss Ogilvy dies almost directly as a result of the sexual ‘dying’ that climaxes her dream of erotic fulfillment” (224).

The reason Hall has Miss Ogilvy’s hands “thrust deep into her pockets” suggest multiple meanings: one, it is suggestive of a highly intimate sexual experience with one’s self, signifying that Miss Ogilvy could only find sexual pleasure and sexual intimacy with herself; two, it suggests a sense of insecurity and a way for Miss Ogilvy to find comfort; and three, “indicates her inability ever to arrive at a moment when she would actually touch one of the women who she loved” (Dellamora, 226). Through the entire narrative, Hall describes Miss Ogilvy as always having her hands deep in her pockets, at different moments and at different experiences during her life. Only through illusion,

both in war time and on the island, was she afforded the temporary satisfaction of living the life she desired to live.

Gilbert argues that Miss Ogilvy represents a lesbian heroine. On a subconscious level the argument might be plausible, because subconsciously she is living out her desire to be a lesbian, and Hall allows her that experience. However, even then a problem continues to exist. Although Miss Ogilvy has taken on the persona of a male tribesman, and her sexual orientation has changed and has possibly transcended stereotypical sexual behavior, engendering both a female and male persona, she meets a woman who presents this primitive warrior with interesting challenges. They must meet in secret for fear of the girl's father. The male persona Miss Ogilvy embodies is described by the narrator as one "held between bars" and "whose mind is pitifully bewildered" (Tate, 137). The fear is based upon the fact that the girl's father believes the tribesman wants to take over as head-tribesman in his clan. This persona presents new challenges of male bravado and territorialism. No love seems to come without cost:

> Then their faces grew melancholy for a moment, because dimly, very dimly, in their dawning souls, they were conscious of a longing for something more vast than this earthly passion could compass. (Tate, 139)

As we witnessed in the suppressed love of Chris and Margaret, they too could not live out their love for each other in the real world. As reality and truth brought them back from their suspension of reality, so it does with Miss Ogilvy. Longing becomes the

operative word. Even though Miss Ogilvy was operating within in a primeval state of being, there was still something missing from her life—the ability to find true love and acceptance without judgment. At the end of the story, the tribesman is described as being defenseless and beaten down by the realities that existed. And further, recent studies have gone beyond the representation of Ogilvy as just lesbian, to suggest she represents something even more progressive—transsexual.

Dellamora suggest that there is something else that is operating in the story: "the love and guilt of author and character in face of the deaths of young soldiers" and that the intense mourning is a direct result of why "she is found dead the morning after" (226). He also suggests that "Ogilvy's crossgendered identification enables her to mourn both the loss of the possibility of her own sexual and emotional fulfillment and the losses sustained by the young men whose wounds she tended in wartime" (226). The intense mourning over the horrific sights and experiences that a Miss Ogilvy, working as a nurse on the front lines, would have had is well documented. Certainly, conflicted feelings about nursing men back to health in order to go back to war would have weighed heavily on the emotions of those women doing such work. However, feeling as if she were a man, Miss Ogilvy identified with these soldiers in different ways than women did in that she shares Hall's "passionate identification" (Dellamora, 226). Yet, Ogilvy was never able to fully explore the intimacy of both the male and female persona, without judgment, until Hall grants her the illusion in which to do so. The war allowed Ogilvy to operate under false pretenses which in turn fed the false illusion of

love. It is only in her "crossgendered" identity within the illusionary dream where she can find the true union of love.

We have to ask ourselves, if the war allowed Miss Ogilvy to explore her sexual freedom in search of true love in a society that frowned upon her so-called deviancy, was it worth the cost of her life? Miss Ogilvy yearned to be a man, living in a woman's body, in order to find the love of a woman. British society, during the years of the war, was in turmoil and ideals, beliefs, and emotions were in flux. Hall creates a psychological environment that allows Miss Ogilvy a participatory illusion through the war and her dream-like state living in isolation to live out her most desired passion—to be in a romantic relationship with a woman, but that illusion, both in reality and in the narrative, are invaded by war. Positively, through Ogilvy, Hall pushes forward the idea that love can exist in a meaningful way between other sexual unions other than male and female companions, but also more importantly the story pushes forward the idea of a new modern sexual woman whose gender identity does not have to be just female, but ironically war is the ultimate killer and "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself" another tragic war story.

Chapter 6

THE FABRIC COMES UNDONE

To the Lighthouse was published in 1927, nine years after the signing of the *Armistice of Compiègne* which officially ended the Great War in 1918. Virginia Woolf was forty-five years old. If we know anything about Virginia Woolf, we know that the spacing of this time frame was essential in the development of her felt memory. Woolf and many of her critics have pointed to her ability to subjectively look back, to recollect moments in a past time, and brilliantly shape her writing to reflect upon that past. Lyndall Gordon in her biography *Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Life* (1884) quotes Woolf saying "'the past is beautiful', she said, 'because one never realizes an emotion at the time. It expands later, & thus we don't have complete emotions about the present, only about the past'" (4). The act of writing, the act of creating art, for H.D. served as a way to repress the horrific memories of the war which led to the destruction of her marriage, where for Virginia Woolf the same acts were used as a method to "take up my pen & trace here whatever shapes I happen to have in my head. It is an exercise – training for eye & hand -" (Leaska, xix). Woolf had an uncanny ability to shape her writing, even at an early age, forming it in a way that was subjective yet extremely and powerfully rich with feeling with an "ability to remove herself from the world and see it in its cosmically comic proportions" that "can chill" (Minogue, 281). *To the Lighthouse* is the shaping of Woolf's memory, not only of her childhood but of her memory about love, marriage, death, and the Great War.

What many critics agree upon is that *To the Lighthouse* is filled with emptiness, nothingness, and darkness that paradoxically helps shape the very meaning of such a vast space of vacancy—"the vacancy created by death" (Minogue, 286). In a very short period of time, Virginia lost her mother Julia in 1895, her half-sister Stella in 1897, her father Leslie Stephen in 1904, and finally her beloved brother Thoby in 1906. The deaths "sealed off Virginia's youth and divided it sharply from the rest of her life" (Gordon, 4). Virginia, in diary entries, remarks of how the death of her mother haunted her even up until the publication of *To the Lighthouse.* In an essay entitled "*Embodies Form: Art and Life in Virginia Woolf's 'To the Lighthouse,'"* Randi Koppen quotes Woolf saying "I used to think of [my father] & mother daily, but writing The Lighthouse laid them in my mind…I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and then laid it to rest" (375). These memories would not only haunt but shape her life in a way that would develop her early ideas about love and marriage. The memories are exacerbated by the darkness, the loss, and the vacancies left by the Great War and Woolf, so brilliantly and subjectively, takes her readers through a passage of time to discover how the memory of that time shapes one's life but also how the impersonality of time itself affects one's life.

In looking at this novel as representational shapes, it has often been described as having three interconnected shapes: the first square representative of prewar Victorian life, the second square representative of the "postwar world that is perceivably different from that of 'The Window,'" (Mondi, 21) and the long , thin, constricting corridor that connects them both. For the purposes of this discussion, we will be focusing on the first

square or “The Window” and the long rectangle or “Time Passes” sections of the novel. These two sections/shapes seek to deal with and understand the changing ideologies of human nature and help to become “transformational rather than representational” (Koppen, 376). How the characters perceive themselves and how they perceive themselves in relation to loss and the missing objects around them, caused by death, are critical to seeing how the string of the shawl, the social fabric, becomes undone. However, before we begin that exploration, we must understand a little more about Virginia Woolf both as a person and an artist to fully appreciate the effectiveness of *To the Lighthouse* and what this novel meant in its representation of love, marriage, and the war.

In 1903 Virginia wrote “your husband may die and you can marry another—your child may die and others may be born to you, but if your father and mother die you have lost something that the longest life can never bring again” (Leaska, 19). This was written after her mother’s death in May 1895 and on the precipice of her father’s impending death. Virginia’s quote shows the powerful emotion and love she had for her parents, regardless of the influence they and the entire family had upon her, “eventually defining both her lack of self-confidence and her artistic ability” (Brackett, 13).

Both Leslie and Julia were previously married: Leslie to Minny Thackeray and Julia to Herbert Duckworth. Minny and Herbert passed away, eventually leading to the meeting and thereafter marriage of Leslie and Julia in March 1878. Their courtship, in documented letters to one another, was full of mental games, each taking advantage of

the other's insecurities. According to Mitchell Leaska "Julia was perfect foil for Leslie. He might be demanding, obstinate, disagreeable. But so was she … Julia could match her husband trick for trick, and was very far from the saintly portrait Leslie painted of her in the *Mausoleum Book" (35).* Leslie was clear from the beginning that he was "childish, helpless, reckless, and outrageously blunt" (Leaska, 35) and his petty behavior would carry on throughout the entire marriage. For Leslie, "being babied and petted was to his mind the same as being loved—something his little Virginia would learn from him and carry into her own adult and married life" (Leaska, 35). Yet, his undying need for attention and protection was the perfect situation for Julia, who felt this gave her power over him and their courtship, but "from its earliest stages, Julia and Leslie's relationship was freighted with discord. Both were determined, self-willed, fractious people" (Leaska, 47). While reading to her son James, Mrs. Ramsay and he are interrupted by Mr. Ramsay who demands immediate sympathy rambling that "he was a failure" (Woolf, 38). Mrs. Ramsay's reaction and felt emotions toward her husband are first of love, wanting to comfort her husband:

> Every throb of this pulse seemed, as he walked away, to enclose her and her husband, and to give to each that solace which two different notes, one high, one low, struck together, seem to give each other as they combine. (Woolf, 39)

The felt emotion of two different individuals coming together to share an experience is captured in this short felt feeling of love, yet it quickly turns when

> the resonance died, and she turned to the Fairy Tale again, Mrs. Ramsay felt not only exhausted in body (afterwards, not at the time, she always felt this) but also there tinged her physical fatigue some faintly disagreeable sensation with another origin (Woolf, 39)

The capitalization of "Fairy Tale" subtly suggests both Mrs. Ramsay's and Woolf's feeling that marriage is a fairy tale, that no other person could possible feel or understand the feelings of another representing that "disagreeable sensation." Undoubtedly Woolf grew up witnessing these interactions and silent emotions captured by exhaustive body language as Mrs. Ramsay concludes:

> to hide small daily things, and the children seeing it, and the burden it laid on them—all this diminished the entire joy, the pure joy, of the two notes sounding together, and let the sound die on her ear now with a dismal flatness." (Woolf, 39)

Woolf, who in her own way reflects upon and defines emotion after an absence of the immediate felt experience, so does she say of Mrs. Ramsay when she says "afterwards, not at the time, she always felt this." Yet, there is a sense of love between the two and what impedes this love is the inability to accept and or comfort the feeling that two separate notes can come together and create a beautiful harmony, even if one of those notes may continually pitch higher or lower than the other, never really knowing why or how the other pitch creates its sound. Julia Briggs in her biography entitled *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life (2005)* says that "she [Woolf] wanted to re-create the constant

changes of feeling that pass through human beings as rapidly as clouds or notes of music, changes ironed out in most conventional fiction" (164). Mitchell Leaska argues that Julia, like Mrs. Ramsay, pitied men and it was the constant pitying of others that made both Julia and Mrs. Ramsay weary. We can also assume the changing societal roles after the war played a role in changing attitudes. Looking back, Woolf sees the immense nurturing that must have been placed upon wives to comfort their war-ridden soldiers. The constant need for comfort, the constant need to pity them could have taken a toll on the strongest of marital relationships—the demand for sympathy exhibited by Mr. Ramsay is a constant reminder of the delicate and changing nature of the post war world. H.D's Julia also begins to resent the constant reminder of war that she sees in her husband Rafe, eventually leading to the demise of their marriage. The vacancy of love and the loss of marital bonds are what inform *To the Lighthouse*.

The death of Virginia's mother in May 1895 affected her tremendously, more than she could have ever imagined. Because Julia was often absent from the home[5], Virginia thought she would be able to deal with the loss of her mother. But as Virginia Brackett points out, "in reality, the death of her mother left her emotionally numb … [her] inability to deal with her grief led to her first severe depression, which eventually became a full-fledged mental breakdown. She would remember the scenes surrounding her mother's death for the rest of her life" (23). The absence of her mother and eventually the absence of her father, due to his death in 1904, is the absence that

[5] Julia Stephen was often away from home caring for others as she had taken on the vocation of a nurse. She would be called away from home, sometimes weeks at a time. Her passion for nursing and taking care of others translated into a book written by Julia entitled *Notes for Sick Rooms (1883).*

invades *To the Lighthouse* with the Great War as its backdrop. These two forces help to understand how powerful and unforeseen natural events can affect one's life.

"The Window," the opening section of the novel, is a picturesque view of Victorian life before the war where Mrs. Ramsay (Julia) is the quintessential Victorian woman and Mr. Ramsay (Leslie) the intellectual Victorian scholar. The Talland House, near St. Ives is where the novel is set, a summer home owned by the Stephens, and where Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, their children and many house guests would spend their time vacationing, as did the Stephen family. Returning to Talland House for the last time in March 1921 "she [Woolf] recognized it as the foundation of her imaginative life: 'Why am I so incredibly & incurably romantic about Cornwall? One's past, I suppose: I see children running in the garden. A spring day. Life so new. People enchanting. The sound of the sea at night … & almost 40 years of life, all built on that, permeated by that: how much so I could never explain" (Briggs, 162-3). Woolf's experiences at Talland house were both mystical and troublesome to her. As we will see in our exploration of *To the Lighthouse*, Victorian societal conventions are constantly at play with one another knowing "the sacrifices that the Victorian ideology of love, marriage and 'family values' had demanded from women, but she mourned its loss in Mrs. Ramsay, even while she enjoyed the exile's freedom with Lily Briscoe" (Briggs, 171). Virginia's mother dedicated her life to the service of others, often away from the home, she still believed that "women should not challenge established societal roles" (Brackett, 20) and her father "could not understand love as a union based on openness and equality … his notion of a good wife and a happy marriage required Julia's being entirely at his service,

assuring him that no one deserved more to be pitied" (Leaska, 52). These were, as we have explored previously in this discussion, the common place among men and women before the war. However, what Julia despised and what Virginia would learn from her father and mother, at a very young age, is that these roles were constantly clouded with insecurity and doubt. At play in "The Window" is the subtle destruction and obliteration of these Victorian values brought on by the war.

As the first section of the novel opens, we are immediately confronted with the imagery of war when Mrs. Ramsay says:

> poor fellows, who must be bored to death sitting all day with nothing to do but polish the lamp and trim the wick and rake about on their scrap of garden, something to amuse them. For how would you like to be shut up for a whole month at a time, possibly more in stormy weather … whole place rocking, and not able to put your nose out of the doors for fear of being swept into the sea … (Woolf, 5)

Woolf clearly hints at both the mundane nature of trench warfare and the inscrutable quickness at which death can come to one by uncontrollable forces. Mrs. Ramsay goes on to say,

> if you were married, not to see your wife, not to know how your children were—if they were ill, if they had fallen down and broken their legs or arms; to see the same dreary waves breaking week after week … (Woolf, 5)

We sense the anxiety and stress that war places on marriage and the relentless nature of war in which she responds “one must take them whatever comforts they can” (Woolf, 5). There is a world that is moving rapidly, changing, and one must seize life’s moments, take care, and comfort others.

Mrs. Ramsay is beautiful; men are attracted to her, even at the age of fifty. Men “felt an extraordinary pride” (Woolf, 14) just being by her side; she commanded those types of feelings from men; they wanted to please her. She did not pursue these things; yet her physical appearance drew others to her. She was the one person, the one piece of fabric that was holding everything together. However, in her personal thoughts and feelings, she was quite a different person from what others perceived of her, even her husband Mr. Ramsay. It is difficult to assume that Woolf had some intrinsic insight into her mother’s personal feelings or whether these are the perceived feelings that Woolf wanted to project on her mother through Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay’s ideas about love and marriage seemed to be consistent with her Victorian lifestyle.

In her first contemplation of Lily Briscoe, a young artist who is visiting the Ramsay’s summer home and who is painting a portrait of Mrs. Ramsay, the narrator tells us “Mrs. Ramsay smiled … she would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously” (Woolf, 17). In fact, Mrs. Ramsay loved to play matchmaker, often fancying two lovers together “smiling, for it was an admirable idea, that had flashed upon her this very second—William [Bankes] and Lily should marry.” (Woolf, 26) She prided herself on being able to bring people together, not realizing how little she

actually knew about true love and for Lily "Mrs. Ramsay's idea of marriage is outdated, absurd" (Briggs, 172). The omniscient narrator allows Lily into the personal thoughts of Mrs. Ramsay in which Lily hears her say "an unmarried woman (she [Mrs. Ramsay] lightly took her [Lily] hand for a moment), an unmarried woman has missed the best of life" (Woolf, 49). Lyndall Gordon says that Mrs. Ramsay is

> filled with Victorian certainties as to the high destiny of woman in marriage, she inflates a young pair, Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle, with the grandeur of feelings they cannot sustain. Minta is the kind of nice girl who is fatally submissive to Mrs. Ramsay. Minta is malleable because she cultivates the flaws of womanishness: too idle a rein on impulse, too easy enthusiasm. She explodes in sobs over a lost brooch. She is weeping, naturally, 'for some other loss' in having just then consented to marry. Her consolation prize is Paul's baby-blue eyes and domestic security. Paul's reward is Mrs. Ramsay's approval. (31)

The passage shows the power Mrs. Ramsay holds over not only the women in her life, but also the men: the women who fear her and the men who wish to please her. It is difficult to attack and blame Mrs. Ramsay for her views on love and marriage; it's what she knew those relationships to be. Woolf, however, makes Mrs. Ramsay's views seem ridiculously archaic, hinting at the changing attitudes where "assumptions about the past did not fit the postwar world" (Mondi, 13).

The idea of true love was not in what Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay exhibited in their marriage, it was not a love that "attempted to clutch its object" (Woolf, 47), nor was it something that demanded constant sympathy and pity; rather, it is as Lily so delicately points out as she watches Mr. William Bankes, another visitor to the Ramsay summer home, look up at Mrs. Ramsay:

> love which mathematicians bear their symbols, or poets their phrases, was meant to spread over the world and become part of the human gain. So it was indeed. The world by all means should have shared it … such a rapture—for by what other name could one call it. (Woolf, 47)

The feelings and emotions felt by Mr. Bankes toward Mrs. Ramsay were the same sentiments that Lily felt toward Mrs. Ramsay. Lily, clearly having a more modern perspective, exhibits a diverse view telling Mr. William Bankes, "you are the finest human being I know; you have neither wife nor child (without any sexual feeling, she longed to cherish that loneliness)" (Woolf, 24), a belief Mr. Bankes also shared. Lily, in a fanciful play of imaginative foreplay, envisions an encounter with Mrs. Ramsay, realizing that she "would urge her own exemption from the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that" (Woolf, 50). Even Mrs. Ramsay's daughter "Prue, Nancy, Rose—could sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers [Mrs. Ramsay]; in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other; for there was in all their minds a mute questioning of deference and chivalry" (Woolf, 7).

Lily is seeking something far different than marriage. Lily doesn't necessarily agree that what she sought had to be through marriage; rather, what she sought was that rapturous feeling of love for another human being, a love that creates one out of two things—it was a unity she desired—"not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge, she had thought, leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee" (Woolf, 51). This is the same unity that H.D. sought in her Julia. But how can one obtain such a love in the face of a rapidly changing world, a world to become void of such things. How would love, the social fabric of society that binds humans together, keep society moving forward in the face of impending doom? How does one freeze or capture a moment in time in order to savior that essence of unity?

The absence of love is what permeates through "The Window." Mitchell Leaska says "after their marriage Julia would never again say she loved Leslie" (42-3). As it was in real life between Julia and Leslie Stephen, so it was with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, never once telling each other that they love one another: "she never told him that she loved him" (Woolf, 123). Leaska argues that Julia never really loved Leslie because she still loved her late husband Herbert Duckworth. The argument is persuasive, and if true, would make the entire novel about the vacancy of Herbert Duckworth and her desire to meet him in the afterlife. It is important to note Leaska's argument:

> Herbert Duckworth had become her phantom lover and on day she would join him again. This is what Virginia was hinting at when three

times she described Mrs. Ramsay as 'walking as if she expected to meet someone round the corner.' This is what she was hinting at in the lyrical passage describing Mrs. Ramsay's melancholy: 'Never did anybody look so sad. Bitter and black, half-way down, in the darkness … perhaps a tear formed; a tear fell; the waters swayed this way and that, received it, and were at rest. Never did anyone look so sad. But it was nothing but looks, people said? What was there behind it—her beauty and splendor? Had he blown his brains out, they asked, had he died the week before they were married—some other, some earlier lover …' This train of feeling slowly builds throughout the novel, image by image, until a scene materializes with Mrs. Ramsay sitting alone with James; somehow the lighthouse moves into the foreground; time and place begin to lose their boundaries in a succession of incantation and images—'It will end, it will end,' she said. It will come, it will come … There rose … there curled up off the floor of the mind, rose from the lake of one's being, a mist, a bride to meet her lover.'

This is what the narrative has been leading to—'the bride to meet her lover'—Julia, her eyes on the searching beams of the lighthouse, waiting to be reunited with her lover—at peace, in solitude, in silence, away from the clamor of children, away from the demanding husband, alone to await Herbert. Death meant reunion. This was the dream no one could share, no one must know. Watching the lighthouse in this clam, she felt

> its silver beams of light were stroking 'some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness.' And all of it owing to her handsome, carefree, pleasure-loving Herbert. (43)

Then, why at the closing of the "The Window" would Mrs. Ramsay inquire "why is it then that one wants people to marry? What was the value, the meaning of things" (Woolf, 122). If she questions not only her desire to be matchmaker and her own decision to marry Leslie, then one would have to assume she would have asked the same question of her marriage to Herbert. But like our shell-shocked soldier who sought out a past love, when Chris seeks out Margaret and they again reunite in *Return of the Soldier*, we witness the failure of that love to thrive and survive. Mrs. Ramsay, like Julia, wants to hold onto a past that can no longer survive in postwar society.

Mrs. Ramsay seeks out a love that reminds her of a time that was pure, free of loss, free of anxiety, and free of doom. Her husband, Mr. Ramsay, is pictured roaming the grounds like a commander and soldier who are roaming amid the chaotic battleground of no man's land. He has "gesticulating of the hands when charging at the head of his troops" (Woolf, 32); he sees "but now far, far away, like children picking up shells, divinely innocent and occupied with little trifles at their feet and somehow entirely defenceless against a doom which her perceived" (Woolf, 33); he is running around continually shouting 'some one had blundered;" and walking up to his wife "he shivered; he quivered. All his vanity, all his satisfaction in his own splendor, riding fell as

a thunderbolt, fierce as a hawk at the head of his men through the valley of death, had been shattered, destroyed. Stormed at by shot and shell, boldly we rode and well, flashed through the valley of death, volleyed and thundered" (Woolf, 30). How can we blame Mrs. Ramsay for seeking an escape? Like Julia, Miss Ogilvy, and Chris, who all seek refuge and comfort in a time past, so does Mrs. Ramsay seek comfort and healing from a world changed by war. One has to ask the question: why didn't the Ramsay's divorce?

Woolf wanted to express the anxiety and the destructive nature that war places on marriage and relationships of love, and she is able to do this while commenting on the war and its effects on human beings in those relationships. "The Window" was the looking glass and "serves as the vista through which Woolf can delicately present the subject of war to her readers" (Mondi, 16). We should not mistake, however, that Virginia Woolf loved her parents and wanted to paint the most vivid and true picture of them and what they represented to her, both artistically and humanly. In a letter from her sister Vanessa:

Villa Corsica[Cassis, France]

11 May [1927]

My Billy,

> … It seemed to me that in the first part of the book you have given a portrait of mother which is more like her to me than anything I could ever have conceived of as possible. It is almost painful to have her so raised from the dead. You have made one feel the extraordinary beauty of her character, which must be the most difficult thing in the world to do. It was like meeting her again with oneself grown up and on equal terms and it seems to me the most astonishing feat of creation to have been able to see her in such a way. You have given father too I think as clearly but perhaps, I may be wrong, that isn't quite so difficult. There is more to catch hold of. Still it seems to me to be the only thing about him which ever gave a true idea. So you see as far as portrait painting goes you seem to me to be a supreme artist and it is so shattering to find oneself face to face with those two again that I can hardly consider anything else …
>
> Your VB (39)

Woolf successfully captures the essence of her parents and their marriage and their relationship, not only between them, but in their relationship to others. Her characterizations, as Vanessa points out, are eerily perfect.

The following section of the novel "Time Passes" represents the middle section of the novel. This section was completed in draft around May 1926, causing Woolf great anxiety. As James Haule notes "until now, the only manuscript known to exist was the

early Holograph preserved in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library" (267). However, Haule in "'*Le Temps passe' and the Original Typescript: an Early Version of the 'Time Passes' Section of To the Lighthouse*" shows us for the first time in publication, Woolf had revised the original Holograph before presenting it to Charles Mauron for translation: the manuscript "clearly typed by Virginia Woolf herself and containing last-minute alterations in her own hand" (267) and is presented in full in his paper.

The "Time Passes" section was problematic for Woolf because she had so brilliantly developed her characters in both "The Window" and later in "The Lighthouse" now having to write about the concept of an object during a span of time and the destructive nature of natural elements on that object. Woolf's anxiety about "Time Passes" is well documented. In May 1926 she writes to Edward Sackville-West, I'm "overcome by the feeling that I can't—the truth is I am all over the place trying to do a difficult thing in my novel [the *Time Passes* section] …" (Haule, 269). And with the translation published she writes to Edward again saying "glad, but surprised, that you like Time Passes …" (Haule, 269). John Mepham points out that "it is not clear why Virginia Woolf published 'Le Temps passe' nor why she subtly altered its emphasis. It is possible that she felt safe having it published in French, where such mystical prose and poems are a more familiar genre" (111). Pointing to one of Woolf's diary entries, Woolf says of the section "is it nonsense, is it brilliance" (Minogue, 286). There is no suggestive proof for the many revisions Woolf made and why she felt as she did about this section, but Haule points to a book written by Allen McLaurin in which he states "the first and last sections, being parallel, form brackets around the central section,

'Time Passes'" (274). It is very conceivable that Woolf considered this section the most important and poignant of all sections in the novel.

The most obvious of observations between the typed, revised manuscript and the published version of "Time Passes" is the addition of a more human element, infusing characters from "The Window" into chapters I and X, which were void in the typed manuscript. If one were looking at the section as a standalone object, its vacancy would be more representative of the loss that was experienced during this time period. Bringing the human element into this section does what Allen McLaurin says she does with the entire novel—it sets this section off in brackets.

The once vibrant Victorian landscape of the summer home is now enveloped in "immense darkness" (Woolf, 125). I would argue, separately from both Haule and Mondi, the section published in the novel has just as much war imagery in it than the typed manuscript. First, the darkness and vacancy that surround the home are implicitly due to the war and the causalities it has created, not only in human spirit but also in physical things such as the destruction of the house, the death of human beings, and the change in attitudes about love and marriage. The airs that invade the home ask tantalizing questions like "when would it fall," "were they allies," "were they enemies," "and how long would they endure" (Woolf, 126). Woolf equates these natural elements to the psyche of how people felt. These were the same questions both soldiers and civilians were asking, and it "has the feel of a brute act, singular, indivisible" (Minogue, 286). The social fabric of society is coming undone. "Woolf demonstrates that the war

affects domestic as well as political life … the house also functions as a representation of the shared experience of all the countries at war: war empties homes and leaves home fronts in despair" (Mondi, 18). Woolf attempts, however, to remain intact what the airs cannot touch, cannot invade:

> the little airs mounted the staircase and nosed round bedroom doors. But here surely, they must cease. Whatever else may perish and disappear, what lies here is steadfast. Here one might say to those sliding lights, those fumbling airs that breathe and bend over the bed itself, here you can neither touch nor destroy. (126)

For Woolf there is a sanctuary within each human being that only the person who owns it can access and alter what lies there. Even though the unity for which Lily sought and strove for in "The Window"—that unity of love—may be gone, and the marriage of her parents have come to an end, there was still hope that what lies innate in human beings would carry on, could combat these invading airs.

But, moving into chapter 3, the nights become successive and more brutal as "they lengthen; they darken" where the "autumn trees, ravaged as they are, take on the flash of tattered flags kindling in the gloom of cool cathedral caves where gold letters on marble pages describe death in battle and how bones bleach and burn far away in Indian sands" (Woolf, 127). The despair of loss is overwhelming, and then, we learn of Mrs. Ramsay's death. In the typed manuscript, Mrs. Ramsay's death is not announced to its readers until paragraph 7, in a sentence in a paragraph, almost lost in the text. In

the published version, Mrs. Ramsay's death is announced to its readers at the end of chapter 3, bracketed at the end of the chapter. The effectiveness in the method in which it is announced procures a more intense feeling, especially when coupled with Mr. Ramsay again fumbling around the hallway like a soldier who had been gassed, arms stretched out grasping at emptiness; his wife now gone:

> [Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty] (Woolf, 128)

The emptiness of a lost parent, a lost loved one, a lost spouse, is exacerbated by the carnage of the war. Perhaps the war afforded Woolf the platform in which to deal with these losses and to also come to terms with them. The losses of Prue and Andrew in this section are also placed in brackets. According to John Mepham "the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay and two of her children are placed, within square brackets … making them appear as shocking but minor interruptions to the flight of time and the ongoing processes of nature…the section as a whole is of the indifference and destructiveness of nature, and the transitoriness of all things human" (110). Herbert Marder comments "centering on the bracketed statement, the whole 'Time Passes' section, with its description of blind natural forces, reflects the chilling dissociation from human concerns" (165), creating an equality of importance in both the human element and the natural element. The section, Sally Minogue point out, "seeks to convey the suddenness, the unpredictability, the resultant savagery of death, but perhaps most of

all its devastating effect on our send of the life that has gone before" (289). The section serves as a baptismal rite of passage, where the life lived in "The Window" must be shed in order to move forward in a cleansed future and only the cold passage of time can do that.

The way in which Woolf deals with her mother's death through Mrs. Ramsay and her father's "failure to comfort her, or even acknowledge her presence, when she needed him most" (Marder, 165) elicits much discussion. Her parent's relationship with one another remained a stain of contention for Woolf. It is why Lily seeks to find that pure love, that pureness that two, distinct persons can create. Whether Woolf harbored anger, resentment, or pain from her mother's death or her parent's essentially failed relationship, she needed to create such destruction, as witnessed on the home, and such a vacancy, the lack of love and unity, in order to reshape and remold her feelings about them, and again the war allowing her to do that.

Aside from the modernization of her writing, primarily in this section, it is important to note that critics have seen Woolf's treatment of her mother's death disturbing. Sally Minogue points to a comment made by Randall Stevenson who said that "it is one of the most disturbing moments in twentieth-century fiction" (289-90). Herbert Marder says "focusing on the father's gesture, the convoluted statement again revises the original disturbing incident" (Marder, 165). Virginia's treatment in those four bracketed sections, both shocking and nonchalant, are meant to disturb its readers and deliberately deprive "the reader of what would seem the natural, sympathetic,

response,"—remorse. The outstretched arms of Mr. Ramsay convey the message that there is nothing left, nothing. The love he felt for her, regardless of the type of love it represented, was gone; his wife, gone now, forever.

The world upon which "The Window" was built unraveled. The shawl Mrs. Ramsay had woven came undone. The war had unraveled the delicate strings of the shawl. It was a symbol of a world far off in the distance, distant from the world in "Time Passes;" a symbol of Victorian life Mrs. Ramsey was weaving; a life of love and marriage that meant something very different, something very obscure. "War becomes 'the thud of something falling,' what 'loosened the shawl'" (Mondi, 19). War is what extinguishes all the lamps and causes the social fabric to come undone. It is why when Lily awakes at the end of chapter 10 she "clutched at her blanket as a faller clutches at the turf on the edge of a cliff. Her eyes opened wide. Here she was again, she thought, sitting bolt upright in bed. Awake" (Woolf, 143). With the anxiety of what the unknown future beholds, Lily "clutches," to a past, just as Virginia did until she was able to write away through Lily and through this novel, many years later, the loss that had so affected her life.

Like Virginia Woolf, the portrayal of loss that Radclyffe Hall, Rebecca West, and Hilda Doolittle exhibited through their literary voices is a testament to how even the strongest of human emotions and bonds could not sustain themselves in the face of such turbulent times like the period of the Great War. Love and marital relationships were on the front lines, entrenched, bombarded, and shell-shocked by a war that

invaded their personal lives like no other thing had done before. All of their characters sought refuge, enlisting their past, seeking an escape for something safe to hold on to, but in the end the devastation was too much. No matter how much they tried to isolate themselves from the damage that was being done, they were ultimately invaded and conquered by forces out of their control. These women writer's historical voices resound and allow us to see, through their lenses, the struggles that were faced in love and marital relationships. Their literature provides only a glimpse into what it must have been like to experience such horrors.

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