WOMEN'S POETRY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

NOSHEEN KHAN

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Department of English
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SUMMARY

This thesis seeks to study women's poetic response to the First World War a hitherto neglected area of the literature inspired by the war. It attempts to retrieve from oblivion the experience of the muted half of society as rendered in verse and document as far as possible the full range of the poetic impact the war made upon female sensibility. It is thematic in structure and concentrates upon the more recurrent of attitudes and beliefs which surface in women's war writings. The thematic structure was adopted to cover as wide a range as possible of the ways the historical experience could be met and interpreted in literature. This study takes into account the work of the established writers of the period as well as the amateur versifiers who made war their subject.

The first chapter discusses verse which defines the nature of war as apprehended by the female consciousness. Chapter Two examines the poets' use of religious concept and image to lend meaning and purpose to an event entirely at variance with the ideals employed to explain it. The third chapter considers the exploitation of the perennial poetic subject of nature to interpret war by accommodating it into the language and thought of an apparently alien literary tradition. War as it impinged upon the consciousness of people on the Home Front is discussed in Chapter Four; it is partly concerned with revising the calumnious images of women in war time as set out by the soldier poets. Chapter Five looks into the writing of those women who wrote out of their experience of working in the various organisations which were an integral part of the machinery of warfare. War as an experience of suffering - suffering peculiar to the female - defines Chapter Six.

The purpose of this study has been to suggest the variety of literary responses to the First World War by those who, at great cost, produce the primal munition of war - men - with which their destinies are inextricably linked. As part of a response to a particular historical event, the literary interpretation of which has conditioned modern war consciousness, women's war poetry is not without relevance for it adds a new dimension to the established canon of war literature and correspondingly a new vista to understanding the truth of war.

CONTENTS

Introduction		i - xiii
Chapter One	Women on War	1 - 43
Chapter Two	War and Religion	44 - 72
Chapter Three	War, Nature and the Elegiac	73 - 111
Chapter Four	The War at Home	112 - 166
Chapter Five	Vision of War Seen from the Inside	167 - 206
Chapter Six	Women's Voices	207 - 251
Conclusion		257 - 258
Appendix A		259 - 264
Appendix B		265 - 266
Bibliography		267 - 282

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INTRODUCTION

This is a study of women's poetic response to the First World War a hitherto neglected area of the prodigious literature inspired by the war. The ignorance meted to women's literature of the First World War, in an age which lavishes wholesale attention even upon the most peripheral of material spawned by the war,[1] is hard to understand unless it is seen as flowing from the atavistic feeling that war is man's province and has no room for woman, succinctly rendered thus:

> The Man goes forth to battle with pulse that throbs for strife,
> He knows the joy of action, the zeal and thrill of life,
> He goes the great adventure to seek, perchance to find,
> And, somewhere in the background, the Woman - stays behind. 2

Or connected to the male fallacy that subordination is habitual to the female, who so demands no recognition for herself. In "The Women's Share", Eric Thirkell Cooper, a subaltern, thus envisions woman content in her submission and calmly informing the Maker:

> The history of our times won't mention us,
> 'Tis so indeed that we would have it be;
> Let men have all that may seem glorious,
> Let us but feel our part is known to Thee. 3

This thesis attempts to retrieve from oblivion the experience of the muted half of society as rendered in verse and document as far as it is possible the full range of the poetic impact the First World War made upon female sensibility. Much has been written about the literature of war but none of it makes reference to women's writing on this subject.[4] Modern war anthologists, too, have paid scant attention, but stand a little redeemed by their occasional inclusion of a token woman poet in their collections.[5] Women had to wait till 1981, more than sixty years

after the event, to receive some fuller acknowledgement of their war verse: Catherine Reilly's anthology, Scars Upon My Heart. Though the traditional view that woman has no significant role to play in time of war may have contributed to literary critics' obliviousness of her war writing, theirs is a negligence which cannot be excused or justified. The First World War is notable for having transformed woman's conventional role of mere spectator of a male event into one of active participant, at various levels, in the war machine. Relegation to the background in war time would be appreciable if it preserved woman from the blight of war. But, as Helena Swanwick, a prominent feminist who was also active in the pacifist lobby, points out: 'War is waged by men only, but it is not possible to wage it upon men only. All wars are and must be waged upon women ... as well as upon men'.[6] The male agony of the trenches is well known and well documented; it has undoubtedly played an important role in the formulation of a modern concept of war. The suffering endured by the female goes unacknowledged and unremarked; a state of affairs summarized by Frances Hallowes thus: 'The sufferings of women through war ... are seldom dwelt upon. Books and treaties dealing with ... war almost invariably omit to mention the damage done to one half of the human race'.[7] This remissness has wrought immense harm to womenkind; more so, because the trench writers who have conditioned modern responses to war often use woman as a scapegoat in their efforts to come to terms with their war neurosis.[8] Their biased images of the role played by women in war, images not a little untouched by their misogyny and homosexual proclivities,[9] being the only ones widely known, have become embedded in the modern consciousness and are accepted as the norms of female behaviour at that moment in time.

This thesis seeks to put into proper perspective this negative representation. Assuming that war is a human event, not a happening which affects one age or

sex rather than another, it holds that anyone affected by war is entitled to comment upon it. It also believes that a war poetry which does not include the depth and range of female reaction cannot claim to tell the truth of war since it ignores the response of those who, at great cost, produce the primal munition of war — men — with which their destinies are inextricably linked. This study tries to throw a light on the writings of women who lived through one of the most extreme of modern situations and strives towards a representative view of what it was like to be living at this time of crisis and struggle.

Modern definitions of war poetry allow room for women's writing on war. Julian Symons describes war poetry as 'quite simply the poetry, comic or tragic, cynical or heroic, joyful, embittered or disillusioned, of people affected by the reality of war';[10] for Richard Eberhart 'the writing of war poetry is not limited to the technical fighters . . . The spectators, the contemplator, the opposer of war have their hours with the enemy no less than uniformed combatants';[11] to M. Van Wyk Smith 'war poetry is not only verse written by men who are or have been under fire ... it is also the work of observers at home as much as that of soldiers at the Front'.[12]

Vera Brittain, who saw war service as a VAD both at home and at the Front, records in Testament of Youth (1933), her reminiscences of the war years: 'all through the War poetry was the only form of literature that I could read for comfort, and the only kind that I ever attempted to write'.[13] It would not be irrelevant to mention that Testament of Youth was partly inspired as a corrective to the distorted male portrayal of women. Stung by their injustice to women, whom she believed 'weren't all, as these men make them out to be, only suffering wives and mothers, or callous

parasites, or mercenary prostitutes', Brittain decided to set down her war experiences, though acutely conscious that 'no one expected a woman to understand anything about war, much less to record it'. She persevered, however, firm in the conviction: 'I see things other than they [male writers] have seen, and some of the things they perceived, I see differently'.[14] This difference in perspective and vision asserted by Brittain, however platitudinous it may sound now, by reason of its constant reiteration in feminist criticism, nevertheless is of immense relevance to this study. The male and female spheres of experience in time of war are clearly demarcated and influence the outlook of each sex. Brittain's aforementioned avowed preference for reading and composing verse during the war appears a trait shared by a sizeable portion of the population; Catherine Reilly in her bibliography of First World War poetry has identified over five hundred women who wrote on the theme of war.[15] The general upsurgence of poetry during the war — The Times reports receiving 'as many as a hundred metrical essays in a single day'[16] while Punch records 'war has not only stimulated the composition, but the perusal of poetry, especially among women'[17] — is undoubtedly connected with the appeal of poetry to the emotions. And during war passions and emotions are intensely felt.

The particular frame of mind working behind a fair proportion of this metrical composition is best described in the words of May Wedderburn Cannan, herself a poet. Of the poets who rushed into print she comments: 'they weren't, and didn't expect to be, among the immortals, but they knew what life was being like and they said the things we wanted said at the time and in a way that "ordinary" people could understand'.[18] The peculiar poetics of this verse, geared to meet the emotional demands

of its audience, is thus summed up by Ellen Coleman in "Beyond the War Zone": 'I sing of simple things within my ken - / The consolation of a little flower - / The solace of a friend in time of grief',[19] and by Mary Cheery in "For the Trenches": 'I only pray my simple lay / May hearten homesick men'.[20] The elegiac, however, is but one aspect of women's war verse and not to be mistakenly assumed as characteristic of the whole of their work.

But the writing viewed collectively is markedly unequal; no claims of being great poetry can be made for it. Though the dichotomy between the theme and the poverty of much of the verse has to be borne, a summary dismissal of the whole does it no justice. Samuel Hynes in his review of Scars Upon My Heart declared: 'It is hard to imagine any single poem in this collection finding its way into a general anthology of twentieth century poetry'.[21] Such collective dismissal is best stayed clear of; May Cannan's "Rouen", included in Scars Upon My Heart, is present in Philip Larkin's Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse (1973), who claims to have found it 'enchanting' conveying 'all the warmth and idealism of the VAD's in the First World War'.[22]

Though the poetry under discussion collectively merits no great literary claim, at its best it conveys an artistic transmutation of experience which manifests female powers of expression and perception on a par with those of the soldier poets. Taken on its own terms this body of poetry provides a complex and multifaceted perspective of the female mind in time of war. Women poets see their war roles variously as reporters, propagandists, interpreters, advocates, satirists, elegists, healers and visionaries and their verse correspondingly expresses a comprehensive range of human emotions: pity, revulsion, horror, disgust, hate, anger,

togetherness, isolation, love and compassion, all are in evidence.

War poetry will always have a historical context; the context is an inescapable element. But war poetry does not constitute historical documentation, consulted to verify the facts of history. Of the nature of war poetry Maurice Bowra observes:

> It provides no facts which we cannot learn better from elsewhere; . . . But it does what nothing else can do. It not only gives a coherent form to moods . . . [of] the time . . . but incidentally provides a criticism of them . . . through the character of its approach and the power or insight with which it gives them shape. 23

Women's war verse provides an index to the mood and vision of women during the war; it not only tells what women were thinking in war time about war but also about their preferences in poetry.

En masse their poetic habit is conservative and traditional, with individual talents occasionally vying for the modern in technique and expression. This corresponds with the fact that most of the writers were amateur versifiers who had probably never thought of writing verse before and in whom the fire may not have been struck save for the war. Some of the writers were of established reputation and prominent on the literary scene; these number amongst them Katharine Tynan, Alice Meynell, Charlotte Mew, Edith Nesbit, Teresa Hooley, Sylvia Lynd, Evelyn Underhill, Eleanor Farjeon, Margaret Sackville, Amy Lowell and Rose Macaulay. Many of them, like Cicely Fox Smith and Jessie Pope, the latter having won the notoriety of being the dedicatee of one of the earlier drafts of Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est", were prominent in producing what may be termed 'popular literature'. Their war verse is primarily jingoistic which explains Owen's intended dedication.[24] This verse, despite modern

unwillingness to credit First World War heroics, is of relevance to the whole story of the years 1914-1918. The present thesis holds that the anti-war view, which Jon Silkin regards 'the current total view of war',[25] cannot fully explain the poetry of the First World War. It strives for a representative point of view of war at the time, which was not solely the anti-war view, this having gained ascendancy in the years of the aftermath. Some women wrote out of their experience of war service at home and at the Front; of these Vera Brittain, Carola Oman and Enid Bagnold were to pursue successful literary careers after the war. Taken together this verse written by differing talents, in diverse circumstances, from a variety of motives and with many aims and objectives helps gauge female awareness of the war from the established to the ordinary woman who felt the need to express her thoughts and feelings in verse if only for the first and last time. Their work remains literature, despite a lack of excellence, for it was offered in literary form and not as a historical document.

The idiom exploited by women poets is primarily of the nineteenth century; a feature shared with the soldier poets who, apart from Read, Ford and Aldington, have transmuted their war experience in the Georgian mode, which despite its assertions to the contrary did not herald a complete breakaway from Victorian romanticism but was a modified continuation of it. War being a phenomenon with endless precedents and its own well established repertoire of stock responses, idioms and metaphors to describe itself, it proved disastrous for the more revolutionary movements afoot to revitalise poetry. Futurism, Vorticism, Imagism were displaced off centre stage by the war which, according to Martin Gilkes, 'threw back poetry at least thirty years - if not right back into the arms of her old Victorian grandmother, who might be moribund but was by

no means finally deceased'.[26]

The poetic tradition at work behind women's war verse comprises the shrill jingoistic public tones of Imperialists like Henley, Kipling, Newbolt; the realism pioneered by Masefield and Gibson; the ruralism and irony characteristic of Hardy and Housman; the sentimental strains of a poetry of private lives as typified by Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese. With the exclusion of the strident noisier voice of the Imperialists the rest of the above characteristics appear variously blended in Georgian poetry; the sentimental tones are here, however, transferred to a celebration of the English countryside, a Georgian feature which readily lend itself to exploitation in the cause of King and Country.

This study is primarily descriptive though it does not eschew evaluation of the poetry under discussion. It is thematic in structure and concentrates upon the more recurrent of attitudes and beliefs which surface in women's war writings. The thematic structure was primarily adopted as an aid to comprehensive representation of the female view of war. The themes which define each of the six chapters were selected only after extensive reading of the poetry, covering numerous volumes of verse, anthologies, periodicals and newspapers. This thesis examines women's war poetry in the context of topical opinion and thought, and in comparison with other writers' imaging of the female character in war time. The trench poets are occasionally invoked to emphasize similarity or contrast in the handling of themes which are focused upon by both sexes. Lack of biographical detail, which otherwise could help understand a writer's preference for a particular attitude or belief has been a hindrance; wherever available it is incorporated into examining the writer's approach to her subject. Since the majority of the poets studied here

are obscure, minor figures of the time, an appendix has been added which lists alphabetically with their particulars all those writers about whom some biographical information could be found. Another appendix comprises extracts from the very few topical appraisals of the war poetry of women which could be located. The excavational character of this study has necessitated much quotation; the non-availability of much of the material made this unavoidable.

Women's war poetry encompasses a variety of response ranging from the fervently romantic and heroic to deeply realised expressions of revulsion and outrage. Chapter One, which is divided into two parts, contrasts verse inspired by the traditional concepts and attitudes governing portrayal of war with that born of a more considered and humane reflection of the nature of war. This contrast can be described as the difference between the public poetry of ideas and abstraction characteristic of Imperialists and what C.K. Stead regards as the Georgian 'attempt to confine poetry within the limits of what had actually been experienced'[27] by repudiating the 'large, sweeping dishonesties of their immediate predecessors'.[28] The aim is to show that though denied actual experience of battle women poets realised the inadequacy of the hackneyed traditional approach fully to describe their subject; their vision is not solely limited to a celebration of the moods and emotions conventionally ascribed to war but provides criticism of these too. This criticism is at times the result of a conscious and overt effort, and at others, manifest in the approach adopted.

According to Paul Fussell 'one of the cruxes of war, . . . is the collision between events and the language available - or thought appropriate - to describe them'.[29] The next two chapters concentrate on showing how women poets partially resolve this discrepancy by appropriating religion and

nature to interpret war. Chapter Two discusses how religious concept and image is manipulated to lend meaning and purpose to an event entirely at variance with the ideals employed to explain it. Chapter Three considers the exploitation of the perennial poetic subject of nature to interpret war by accommodating it into the language and thought of an established literary canon. Nature regarded as an agent of comfort and solace, as typified by the pastoral elegiac mode, facilitates exorcism of the loss and sorrow wrought by war as well as advocating reconciliation with the grief borne. Correspondingly, the Georgian fashion in local pride helps stimulate patriotism and so foster the national cause.

War as it impinged upon the consciousness of those on the Home Front is discussed in Chapter Four. It is partly concerned with revising the received calumnious images of women in war time by examining them in the atmosphere of the time and so putting them in proper perspective. The First World War forced women into active participation in the running of the war machine on a wide scale. Chapter Five considers the work of those women who served at the Front or at home in hospital units or in numerous other capacities as members of the Voluntary Aid Detachment and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. The uniqueness of this work lies in the writers' repsonse which is conditioned by their own particular area of experience and at times approaches the disenchantment born of the trenches.

War as an experience of suffering - suffering peculiar to the female - defines Chapter Six. The verse reviewed here depicts women in their various roles of wives, mothers, sisters and lovers giving utterance to the traumas suffered by them. The mental and emotional lacerations which cluster around war-regulated experiences of meeting, parting, separation, love, loss, death and despair can be considered as the female equivalent of the

agony of the trenches. Typified by its highly personal tones this body of verse constitutes an interpretation of a public historical event through a private personal experience of it.

Arthur Marwick observes in Women at War 1914 - 1918 (1977): 'Surprisingly, very little has in fact been written on women's experience during the war'.[30] This thesis attempts to study the female experience of war as manifest in their poetry. As part of a response to a particular historical event, the literary interpretation of which has conditioned modern war consciousness, women's war poetry cannot be ignored for it adds a new dimension to the established canon of war literature and correspondingly a new vista to understanding the truth of war.

NOTES

1. For example Colin Walsh's Mud, Songs and Blighty: A Scrapbook of the First World War (London, Hutchinson, 1975) and Maurice Rickards's and Michael Moody's The First World War: Ephemera, Mementoes, Documents (London, Jupiter Books 1975).

2. Quoted in Grace Mary Golden's Backgrounds (Oxford, Blackwell 1917).

3. Eric Thirkell Cooper, Soliloquies of a Subaltern Somewhere in France (London, Burns and Oates 1915), p. 35.

4. Prominent examples are John Johnston's English Poetry of the First World War (Princeton, Princeton University Press 1964); Bernard Bergonzi's Heroes' Twilight (London, Constable 1965); Jon Silkin's Out of Battle (London, OUP 1972); Paul Fussell's The Great War and Modern Memory (London, OUP 1975).

5. Patric Dickinson includes Alice Meynell in his Soldiers' Verse (London, Frederick Muller 1945); Charlotte Mew and Fredegond Shove appear in I. M. Parson's Men Who March Away (London, Heinemann 1965); more recently Elizabeth Daryush and May Wedderburn Cannan are to be found in Jon Stallworthy's The Oxford Book of War Poetry (Oxford, OUP 1984). Jon Silkin's inclusion of the two Russian poets Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetayeva in his The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books 1979), is not of relevance to this study which concentrates on the British experience of war.

6. Helena Swanwick, Women and War (London, UDC 1915), p. 1.

7. Frances S. Hallowes, Women and War (London, Headley Bros. 1914), p.3.

8. The blame lies mainly with Sassoon, Owen and Aldington. Whilst Sassoon's disgust with women is primarily conveyed in "Glory of Women" and "Their Frailty" Owen's is spread through a number of poems: "Disabled", "The Dead-Beat", "The Send-Off","SIW". His rejection of women is pivotal in "Greater Love" and surfaces also in "Apologia pro poemate meo". Aldington's disgust with women permeates the whole of his novel, Death of a Hero (1929).

9. This aspect of Owen's and Sassoon's work is touched upon in Chapter Four, pp. 156-157.

10. An Anthology of War Poetry, edited by Julian Symons (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books 1942). Preface p. viii.

11. War and the Poet: An Anthology of Poetry, edited by Richard Eberhart and Selden Rodman (New York, Devin-Adair Co. 1945). Preface, Richard Eberhart, p. xv.

12. M. Van Wyk Smith, Drummer Hodge: The Poetry of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 (Oxford, OUP 1978), p. ix.

13. Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925 (London, Gollancz 1933). Virago Edition 1978, p. 133.

14. Vera Brittain, 'War Service in Perspective', in Promise of Greatness: The War of 1914-18, edited by George A. Panichas (London, Cassell 1968), pp. 364-376 (p. 368).

15. English Poetry of the First World War: A Bibliography, compiled by Catherine Reilly (London, George Prior Publs. 1978). Foreword p. xix.

16. The Times, 6 August 1915, p. 7.

17. Mr. Punch's History of the Great War (London, Cassell 1919), p. 247.

18. May Wedderburn Cannan, Grey Ghosts and Voices (Kineton, Roundwood Press 1976), p. 105.

19. Ellen Coleman, Beyond the War Zone and Other Poems (London, Routledge 1919), p. 7.

20. Mary G. Cherry, Hill and Heather or England's Heart (London, Erskine Macdonald 1915), p. 13.

21. Samuel Hynes, 'The Irony and the Pity', TLS, 18 December 1981, p. 1469.

22. Philip Larkin and Anthony Thwaite, 'A Great Parade of Single Poems', Listener, 12 April 1973, p. 473.

23. Maurice Bowra, Poetry and the First World War (Oxford, OUP 1961), p. 3.

24. For a full discussion about Owen and Jessie Pope see W. G. Bebbington's 'Jessie Pope and Wilfred Owen', Ariel, vol 3, no 4, (October 1972), pp. 82-93.

25. The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry, edited by Jon Silkin (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books 1979). Paperback edition, Introduction, p. 24.

26. Martin Gilkes, A Key to Modern English Poetry (London, Blackie 1937), p. 54.

27. C. K. Stead, The New Poetic (London, Hutchinson 1964), p. 82.

28. ibid., p. 87.

29. Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (Oxford, OUP 1975). Paperback edition, p. 169.

30. Arthur Marwick, Women at War 1914-1918 (London, Fontana 1977), p. 8.

CHAPTER ONE

WOMEN ON WAR

'Went to the war with Rupert Brooke and came home with Siegfried Sassoon'. May Wedderburn Cannan reminiscing about the publication of her first book of verse, In War Time (1917), remembers this witticism, symptomatic of the change of heart which set in amongst writers after the Somme, doing the rounds in literary circles, circa 1917. Cannan whose war verse is markedly romantic and sentimental evokes this reference whilst describing the wave of popularity enjoyed by her book, despite antithesis with the poetry published by Sassoon: The Old Huntsman (1917).[1] There is no standard response to war; the romantic and the realistic both are representatives of it. In the context of the First World War neither one can be rejected nor disclaimed.

War and poetry are inextricably linked. The fact that the modern war poet sees his task as unmasking 'the ugly face of Mars' and so 'war's apology wholly stultify',[2] cannot obliterate the truth that responsibility for this unseemly camouflage resides mainly with poets. Harriet Monroe, the American poet and critic, and editor of Poetry, at the very start of hostilities, in an article,"The Poetry of War", stressed poets' complicity in making war appealing to the public imagination and the need for a contrary approach to curtail such fascination. 'Poets', she declared 'have made more wars than kings, and war will not cease until they remove its glamour from the imaginations of men'.[3] The glamour of war would over the years suffers a near mortal devaluation, but in September 1914 when Monroe made her observation, poets of all belligerent nations were busy selling war to the people, wrapped in a haze of romantic illusion.

This chapter discusses verse which defines the nature of war as apprehended by the female consciousness. It contrasts verse which delineates war, exploiting the traditional idealistic idiom of heroics, with that which, influenced by more humane ideals, reflects the agony, futility and waste generated by war. In terms of poetic tradition this contrast can be described as the difference between the public poetry of abstraction and argument favoured by Imperialists and the Georgian 'attempt to confine poetry within the limits of what had actually been experienced'.[4]

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part One concentrates on showing how women poets, like their male counterparts, 'victims of moral and literary prepossessions',[5] exploit and utilise a ready-made set of conceptions and vocabulary, decked with righteous purposes and visionary aims, to promote the nation's cause. It considers how the heroic, romantic and jingoistic genres are availed of to inculcate the virtuous abstractions, honour, duty and sacrifice, in sentimental or hectoring tones.

Part Two, moving away from the traditional, examines a body of verse informed by a more mature, compassionate and discerning outlook. This verse reveals women imaginatively contending to comprehend the mysteries of the Front and the trenches; mirroring the individual and collective cry of misery and terror animated by war; eschewing the narrow confines of nationalism, in preference for a more humane ideal propagating the undesirability of bitterness and hate.

. . . . . .

PART ONE

The traditional idealistic concept of war manifests itself variously: it defines the romanticized portrayal of soldiers as warring knights setting off on adventure, bewitched by the lure of succouring Belgium and civilization at large; it colours the belief that war is an elevating and ennobling experience, offering new vistas of unprecedented excitement and achievement, in lieu of the petty timidities and cautions of everyday life; it sustains the conviction that those who take up this supreme test of manliness are wreathed in glory.

The heroic ideal stamps the portrayal of men and women pushed into prominence by the war, whose characters and deeds are set up in suitably stirring verse for the nation's edification. The execution of Nurse Edith Cavell by the Germans in 1915, on the charge of helping allied prisoners to escape, made her a heroine overnight. She was widely commemorated in verse and her plight viciously exploited to flame popular fury against the enemy. Lord Roberts's death in France made another hero; it was an excuse to versify his glorious exploits. In intention much of this verse is similar to a recruiting poster issued shortly after his death; the poster carries a portrait of Lord Roberts below which runs the inscription: 'He did his Duty. Will you do yours?'. In statistical terms, however, Lord Kitchener appears to have proved the most popular individual hero; his death was an occasion of national grief and produced a spate of verse. Many books of verse published after his death contain one or two poems highlighting his heroic bearing. One anthology, of the several poems composed in his praise, Poetical Tributes to the Late Lord Kitchener (1916), numbers seventy-four contributions by women while Anita Dudley devotes a whole volume to celebrating his innumerable heroic qualities: Valedictions: Sonnets to Kitchener (1916).

The heroic genre has recourse to centuries of tradition, historical and literary, which can be appropriated to relate the present. Besides making for glamour, this provides poets with a set of references which facilitate description of contemporary proceedings without putting strain on their imaginations. "They shall Renew their Youth", a sonnet by Helen Bosanquet, symbolizes the courage of fallen soldiers in terms of two of the most hackneyed standards of heroic endurance: 'These are the men who died at Marathon,/ Who held the passes at Thermopylae'.[6] The bravery displayed by Belgium in momentarily stalling the Germans finds analogy in the historcial tale of Catherine Bar-lass. In "Belgia Bar-lass", Mary Duclaux hymns her as 'Brave Belgium, Bar-lass of the Western world'.[7] The image of Tommy as a latter day glamorous cavalier, answering the call of honour, could be substantiated by reference to Lovelace's "To Lucasta, Going to the Wars". Mary Carolyn Davies's "Richard Lovelace and Richard Smith", an insignificant piece in itself, is noticeable for the manner in which she transposes the chivalric order of the seventeenth century into the present. Her poem, which quotes the whole of Lovelace, addresses Lucasta, informing her that the reasons given by Richard Smith to explain his departure to his lover are similar to those of Lucasta's lover, though perhaps not so prettily expressed:

> 'So long, kiddie! Be good to yourself!
> I wont come back
> Till we've hanged the kaiser
> To one of his own linden trees!'
>
> He didn't say it as poetically as your Richard did,
> But he mean't exactly the same thing. 8

The vacuity of such a style, its inadequacy to do justice to the present situation, is a point taken up by V. Helen Friedlaender in "To Poets who Break but Silence". Written in December 1914, this poem chastises those who resort to such practice and emphasizes the need for an alternative realistic approach:

Are you, then, dead, you poets of today,
Who tilt with phrases and contend with rhymes?
A world in arms - and all you have to say
Is musty with the breath of ancient times.
O, you go down to springs that long are dry
(Archaic as your language is your thought!)
And search the scriptures of old poetry ...

Is there not one among you that will dare
To see with his own eyes. 9

Friedländer's poem shows women not unaware of the limitations of the traditional style.

The conviction that war jolts man awake from the stupor of mundane existence, offering an ennobling spiritual enfranchisement, is shared by many poets. One such is Emily Underdown. Her poem "The Gifts of War" shows war warding off its detractors by drawing attention to 'the torpid hearts/ that into life I wake'; the many nations bestirred 'From apathy and sloth' and pointing out:

'See many a hero rise,
Who, but by me inspired,
Had lived a life of ease,
By no fine action fired.' 10

The apotheosis of the clerk, fostered by Herbert Asquith's "The Volunteer", which advocates the salutary effects of war, inspired poems of a similar kind by women. "The Volunteer", by Enid Petre, concerns a clerk whose pre-war existence was a mere vacuum: 'Who living - h'd not yet lived a single day'; but answering 'freedom's call' imparts new meaning to life: 'Risking your all, you lay your hand on all,/ And facing death, have learned the way to live'.[11] Similar sentiments permeate Aimee Bying Scott's "The Bank Clerk"; this individual, answering the country's call, has been able to travel beyond 'the rigid pettiness,/ The nothingness that leads to nothingness' and perceive 'the glories beyond the iron gate,/ Dividing mortals from the fear of death'.[12]

This liberation of the spirit heralded by war is manifest at its most romantic in Anna Bunston De Bary's "Youth Calls to Youth"; in it she captures the romantic exultation and excitement of war:

> Youth calls to youth:
> Come, for new verdure
> The earth is adorning,
> Come, it is springtime
> Life's at the morning,
> Come, come and die.
>
> Youth calls to youth:
> Come, see a pageant,
> Death and hell blended,
> Red blood a-flowing, –
> Youth loves to be splendid, –
> Come, come and die. . . .
>
> Youth calls to youth:
> Let others grow aged
> Doubting their duty,
> Clearer our course is,
> Swift, full of beauty,
> Come, come and die. [13]

The particular context in which De Bary has used the phrase 'come and die' is interesting. Rupert Brooke, while on training, wrote in a letter to John Drinkwater, who had as yet not joined up: 'Come and die. It'll be great fun'.[14] De Bary's poem has caught the idealistic euphoria intrinsic to Grenfell's "Into Battle". The first stanza, too, is reminiscent of the opening stanza of Grenfell's poem. Though both poems celebrate war, "Youth Calls to Youth", does not rise above being an exercise in propaganda; a fact evident in the last stanza.

The salubrious nature of war can be depicted in different ways. Ethel Talbot Scheffauer in, "The Four Ages", regards war as an antidote for a sick and suffering society; war has come 'To surgeon the sick world' laid low by the 'age of gold' which had 'bound the ... world with chains'.[15] The belief that war gets rid of the dross and brings into eminence the finer qualities in man appears in many poems. Janet Begbie in an untitled piece, commends war for helping people shake off

their littleness,
Their squalor, and their dross,
And put on arms of light, and taste
The rapture of the cross. 16

Ella Fuller Maitland in, "Our Fighting Men", believes 'The war is like the Judgement-Day —/ All sham, all pretext torn away',[17] while Lillian Gard in her cockneyesque piece, "War", marvels: 'I sez 'tis 'mazin' what stuff comes out/ Of the best us be, when a war's about'.[18]

The most comprehensive criticism of the ideal of war discussed above appears in Helen Hamilton's "The Savage Optimist". Hamilton, a schoolteacher, brings together in Napoo! A Book of War Bêtes-Noires (1918), thirty people, each personifying an attitude, belief or practice in prominence during the war. An acute diagnostician of hypocrisy, as her title indicates, Hamilton satirizes and denounces with much cogency in each of these figures aspects of the war which strike her as execrable. In "The Savage Optimist" her targets are those who preach the beneficience of war for mankind. The poem presents one of these rejoicing at the 'blood-bath' in progress and declaiming:

'Splendid!
There's nothing like it
To show man the fine stuff in him,
To bring out all his best —
Courage, endurance, self-abnegation,
Devotion even unto death!
A certain end it makes of all
That's selfish, soft and slothful!
So long live War!
May it never cease to visit
Beneficient, uplifting,
The torpid earth of ours!
Else shall man
Not know his splendour,
His finest splendour
Nor reach his fullest stature.'[19]

The satiric effect is augmented by Hamilton's dexterous amassing of the chief arguments sustaining this particular belief. The ironical last line emphasizes the fatuous nature of a conviction which she herself maintains is a 'savage doctrine'.

Images of knights riding out to adventure and to succour abound in women's depiction of war conceived within the traditional heroic framework. At the start of the war Belgium was the heroine of the hour. The relative smallness of this country gave currency to the epithet 'little' to describe her; this could variously convey her courage in having braved the Hun or her need for protection. The most ubiquitous use of this adjective occurs in Blanche Weitbree's "The Little People"; each of the twelve stanzas employs it building up the finale: 'And the little murdered people wait the / vengeance of the Lord'.[20] The formation of the Royal Flying Corps added a new dimension to war heroics. Marian Allen in "The Raiders", envisages airmen departing on their bombing missions as 'Dusky raiders with their bat-like wings' carrying 'stings of death' lured by the 'spirit of Adventure'.[21] This spirit of adventure is evoked differently in Helen Gray Cone's "The Imperative". It describes a world fallen foul through the evil machinations of rulers and demanding human strength and sacrifice to regain its pristine hue:

> The world is a broken ball,
> Stained red because it fell
> Out of bounds, in a game of kings,
> Over the wall of hell:
>
> And now must the spirit of man
> Arise and adventure all -
> Leap the wall sheer down into hell
> And bring up the broken ball. [22]

The image of the world as a ball, which has to be retrieved by gallant adventurers, is evocative of the sport terminology favoured by Imperialists in describing war. Cone's first stanza suggests affinity with lines of Kipling's "For All We Have and Are": 'Our world has passed away, / In wantonness o'erthrown'.

The joyous crusading mood which swept Britain when war was declared, was the expression of a people, who, according to Michael MacDonagh, 'regarded their country as a crusader - redressing all wrongs, and bringing freedom

to oppressed nations'.[23] Symptomatic of this mood are poems such as Alice Cooke's "The Knights of a New Crusade" which tells of soldiers setting out on a 'New Crusade' in answer to the 'call' of 'Imperial honour'[24] and Virna Sheards's "The Young Knights" which concerns soldiers who 'fared forth upon a quest' in answer to the 'King's behest'.[25] In such poems the soldier/knight comparison assumes religious, romantic and imperialistic connotations. The religious and the romantic are juxtaposed in Constance Ada Renshaw's sonnet, "The Noblest Height", to convey the honour and glory accruing to those who die in battle. Renshaw published two volumes of war poems: England's Boys (1916) and Battle and Beyond (1917). The Athenaeum notice of England's Boys, which went into second edition soon after publication, commended Renshaw's work as being 'far and away better than a large proportion of the war poetry' being published. Renshaw's work goes beyond the mere versification of ideas. In "The Noblest Height", the religious reference is incorporated to lend meaning and authority to the deaths of those, who buoyed by tales of romance are swept into an adventure, the probable outcome of which had failed to register:

> He tossed his shield in the bleak face of Fate;
> He dreamed of riding out on splendid quests,
> Threading dim forests . . .
> Thundering at some foeman's stubborn gate.
> His heart throbbed like a sea. Romance was great
> In him; his soul was lustful of red war; . . .
>
> Desires are fled, dreams richly sacrificed;
> Romance ebbs with his blood into the night, . . .
> Death calls him
> home
> — Home to the quiet human face of Christ.
> . . . The lonest star is his, — the noblest height.[26]

In the opening lines of the octave Renshaw has skil fully evoked the enthusiasm of the young for war by capturing the nuances of minds fed upon romance.

A persistent theme of idealistic war poetry is the belief that death in battle is the most fitting and honourable end to life. An ideal revitalized

by Brooke's two sonnets to "The Dead" it appears in various guises in women's verse. Alice Colly in "A Soldier's Death" affirms the glorious nature of death in battle by presenting it as a state envied by angels; they being denied the joy of laying down their life for a friend:

> There is a glory in the death of man
> 'Bove all resplendent – envied of the bright
> Angels – may not their envy be delight?
> What angel can
> Give life for friends or scale that dizzy height,
> That beacons from afar,
> Of sanctified
> Heroic Death which men have died.[27]

"Soldiers Immortal", by Daphne De Waal, draws inspiration from the traditional belief which envisions the dead in battle as the 'undying dead'; she thus writes of soldiers who perish in war: 'they live on for ever who die well!/ These died, yet are not dead'.[28] This view includes the conviction that death in war is glorious.

The conventional and the sentimental are characteristic of Katherine Tynan's verse. A most voluminous writer she published four books of war poems, Flower of Youth (1915), The Holy War (1916), Late Songs (1917), Herb O'Grace (1918) and a volume of reminiscences, The Years of the Shadow (1919), besides her regular output of novels, short stories and plays during the war years. Her pretty and sentimental verses meet the need of the moment, for they are chiefly consolatory, but what strikes is her capacity for advocating the doctrine of honour and glory even in the later years of the war. While other poets, like the feminist S. Gertrude Ford, in poems such as "Men of Seventeen",[29] were decrying that young boys were being pressed-ganged, Tynan envisages them as 'little Knights of Paradise'. She explains the title of her poem "The Children's War" thus:

> This is the Children's War, because
> The victory's to the young and clean
> Upto the Dragon's ravening jaws
> Run dear Eighteen and Seventeen.[30]

Another poem "The Short Road to Heaven" centres on the conjecture: 'There's a short road to Heaven, but you must take it young, / And if you're for long living the road is all as long'. The poem celebrates those who have opted for the shorter route:

> But the wise lads, the dear lads, the pathway's dewy green,
> For the little Knights of Paradise of eighteen and nineteen;
> They run the road to Heaven, they are singing as they go. 31

Tynan's facile synthesis of the heroic and the religious imparts a touch of banality to her poems, more so, when compared with Renshaw's "The Noblest Height".

Ruth Comfort Mitchell in "He Went for a Soldier" voices a stringent criticism of beliefs nourished by writers like Tynan; she demands dispensation of the heroic illusions which made boys dupes of glory. Her poem, which is in six stanzas, traces the course of Billy, the Soldier Boy's venture into war. The first two stanzas detail the panoply of war on display at send-offs: the flower-throwing girls, the flag waving, the martial music. Stanzas three, four and five narrate the reality which lies behind the romantic facade. Plunged into battle, Billy soon 'has done with the knightly joke of it'; 'He fights like a rat in a corner' and being wounded is left on the field for dead where 'The Thing that was Billy lies a-dying there, / Writhing and a-twisting and a-crying there'. The transmutation of would-be-knight into a 'Thing' serves to drive home the shallowness of the heroic creed preached by poets. Providing her protagonist with a name and using the refrain, 'Billy, the Soldier Boy', at the end of each stanza, helps Mitchell assert that war involves ordinary human beings and not fictive knights and heroes. The refrain also helps establish the extreme youth of boys inveigled into war. The declamatory sixth stanza further stresses the poet's distaste for the rhetoric and gestures of heroism and the need for change :

How much longer, O Lord, shall we bear it all?
How many more red years?
Story it and glory it and share it all,
In seas of blood and tears?
They are braggart attitudes we've worn so long;
They are tinsel platitudes we've sworn so long –
We who have turned the Devil's Grindstone,
Borne with the hell called War. 32

The tinsel and gaud of tradition, which enable poets to dissemble, strike her as 'braggart attitudes' wrapped and marketed in 'tinsel platitudes'. Mitchell's poem, which appeared in 1916, is indicative that women were writing protest poetry before Sassoon and Owen.

In "Insensibility" Owen expresses disapproval of poets whose euphemistic style, he believes, fails to do justice to their theme: 'But they are troops who fade, not flowers, / For poets' tearful fooling'. A similar disenchantment with poetic practices is the inspiration for Helen Hamilton's "The Romancing Poet". In it she chides sentimentalists to 'refrain / From making glad romance / Of this most hideous war' and advises that they should attempt portrayal of it only if they possess 'Fit words' and 'Not your usual stock-in-trade, / Of tags and clichés'. If these insist upon making war their theme, then their work, she suggests, should mirror the real :

If you must wax descriptive,
Do get the background right,
A little right! . . .
The blood, the filth, the horrors, . . .
Don't make a pretty song about it. 33

The inability of 'a pretty song' to delineate war, corresponds with the inadequacy of the 'tearful fooling' rebuked by Owen; both poets imply that propagandists and idealists should realise the tragedy that lurks behind the illusionary facades manufactured by them.

The anti-heroic is in evidence in Letitia Riddel Webster's sonnet "To a Staff-Officer on His Promotion". It pictures an individual who has been allotted 'the harder task: to sit all day / In the cramped office, there he hid away / Nor see the field where doughty deeds are done'; that this

seclusion is self imposed is implicit in the ironical concluding lines: 'continue so to live / Who knows if thou a general may'st not become'.[34] Webster adopts an attitude which anticipates Sassoon's "Base Details"; her sonnet was published in 1916.

. . . . . .

'That inverted patriotism whereby the love of one's own nation is transformed into the hatred of another nation';[35] J. A. Hobson's definition of jingoism specifies the mood and vision which motivates verse composed in a jingoistic strain. Aimed at disseminating patriotic fervour amongst the populace, it works by vindicating the justness of the nation's cause and correspondingly stressing the noxiousness of the enemy. Jingoistic verse reflects pride in an Empire rallying as if it were a family; this is chiefly conveyed through the image of an old mother and her children. It depicts war in terms of sport, which can perhaps be interpreted as a device utilized to convince that Britons fought cleanly, earnestly and for an unselfish cause. It cultivates anti-German xenophobia by portraying the enemy as an undiluted criminal, often personified by the Kaiser.

Marie Van Vorst, the American novelist, who was in London when war broke out, awed by the immense enthusiasm with which Britain's entry into the war was greeted, wrote to her sister: 'this wide response of the British Empire from shore to shore .... it seems to me that it is one of the finest things in history'.[36] "The Return of the Prodigal", by Cicely Fox Smith, mirrors this effusiveness at its most crude and sentimental. It tells of a soldier who is 'spitting and swearing' in some far flung corner of the Empire when he hears of war and instantly decides to return, dedicating himself to the Motherland thus on his arrival:

'Take me,
Mother, I'm here!
Here, for I thought you'd want me; ...
A chap that's a bit of a waster, come from the ends of the earth,
To fight with the best that's in him for the dear old land of his birth'. 37

Among women poets Smith's work most persistently embodies the imperialist spirit. Her pre-war verse was mainly concerned with maritime history; the advent of war sees her extend her range beyond sailors and shanties to include Tommies. Her volume Fighting Men (1916) claims descent from the method and style of Kipling's Barrack-Room Ballads. Though she has mastered the rhythm and language her work does not rise above the mediocre, being marred by its literariness which robs it of all authenticity. Titles such as "The Route March" and "Mules" in The Fighting Men recall Kipling's "Route Marchin'" and "Oonts"; her poems being overwhelmingly dramatic and anecdotal, dramatic monologues recited in character, make it difficult to forget that their primary inspiration comes from literature rather than life.

Like the sailor in Smith's poem the Mother Country's other children, too, kept faith and enthusiastically espoused her cause. Florence T. Holt's "England and America", Marjorie Pickthall's "Canada to England" and above all Helen Gray Cone's "A Chant of Love for England", written in retaliation for Ernst Lissauer's notorious "Hymn of Hate" are tokens of this.

The call to enlist in the Mother's cause is voiced in different ways. In the case of Emmeline Richardson's "Will you come to the Old Country" it appears ensconced in the rhythms of folk song, to enhance the appeal to the emotions; the repetitive query strikes a persuasive note too:

Will you come? Will you come away with me?
Over the seas to the old country,
Where there wages a war for me and thee.
Will you come? Will you come with me. 38

"The Mother Country", by Emily Underdown, makes its appeal by emphasizing the indissoluble bond forged between a mother and her children:

> Who would not die for England!
> Her children ne'er forget,
> Scattered through vast dominions,
> Their home is England yet.
>
> The Mother Country holds them,
> The mother-heart is true,
> Love for their mother binds them
> As nothing else could do. 39

Katharine Tynan's "The Call" depicts men from all over the Empire, filled with love for their mother, hastening to be by her side:

> White men, black men, men of the tawny gold,
> Golden-eyed like the lion, sons of the sun,
> Men from the snow, their eyes like frost or a sword;
> They have but one heart, one desire, they run one way. 40

The reasons which prompt men to answer the call of their country are defined in different ways - 'But if thy fair name demand it, / Then, England, I will die for thee'; thus the protagonist in Barbara Tickle's "The Recruit" agrees to sacrifice his life for fair England's name although he deems life 'sweet'.[41] In "The Volunteer", by Helen Barry Eden, the would-be soldier thus explains his motivation to enlist: 'Lest little girls with linked hands in the lane / Should look "You did not shield us!" As they wended / Across his window when the war was ended'.[42] Emily Orr in "A Recruit from the Slums" explains the slum dweller's desire to defend a country which has done nothing for him thus:

> 'We thought life cruel, and England cold;
> But our bones were made from the English mould,
> And when all is said, she's our mother old
> And we creep to her breast at the end'. 43

Elizabeth Chandler Forman in her poem, "The Three Lads", rising above the narrow confines of nationality, sees the German, Russian and English drawing inspiration from the same source; they, she shows, all go to war firm in the righteousness of their country's cause.[44] Forman ridicules war nationalism and lays bare the international nature of deceptions perpetrated by propagandists.

In close connection with the Mother Country concept is propagated the belief that the conflict is a means of consolidating England's supremacy among the nations of the world. War is an antidote to the ease and luxury, seeing her wallowing in which had led the enemy to presume England old and decrepit. This belief is central to Ellen Spencer's "England",which begins; 'All round the world the wor d had gone, / England is decrepit, England's growing old'. Accepting the challenge, to which, 'As one, her sons gave answer brave', restores her to her former 'role of leadership'.[45]

Among the women poets of the day who were furthering the cause of the Empire none is more prominent than Jessie Pope. She can be regarded as the country's best known woman war poet. A most versatile exponent of the popular jingo mannerisms, she touches upon each and every aspect of the war in racy swinging metres. She published three volumes of war verse: War Poems (1915), More War Poems (1915). and Simple Rhymes for Stirring Times (1916); the first two volumes contain all her poems published in the Daily Mail and in the last are collected poems which appeared in the Daily Express. Her characteristic manner of agitating patriotic sentiments is illustrated by the opening stanza of "The Call":

> Who's for the trench —
> Are you, my laddie?
> Who'll follow French —
> Will you, my laddie?
> Who's fretting to begin,
> Who's going out to win?
> And who wants to save his skin —
> Do you, my laddie. 46

The TLS notice of War Poems appreciated Pope's ability to hit a 'point on the head with a smart tap'; the ending of the above stanza is an example.

Pope arouses interest and curiosity by reason of being the individual to whom Owen originally intended dedicating "Dulce et Decorum Est", the poem in which he denounces those who preach 'The Old Lie : Dulce et decorum est /

Pro patria mori'. One draft of this poem bears the cancelled inscription 'To Jessie Pope etc.' and another 'To a certain Poetess'. W. G. Bebbington in an article,'Jessie Pope and Wilfred Owen', suggests that "The Call" may perhaps have been the chief prompter of "Dulce et Decorum Est" which Owen may have read in the Daily Mail.[47] "The Call" was published in the Daily Mail of 26 November 1914; Owen's letters show that he did take this paper and was aware of the political stance taken by it. "Dulce et Decorum Est" was however written in late 1917; it is difficult to presume this poem was inspired by impressions retained of reading "The Call", when Owen was himself still a civilian. A more probable explanation is that he may have come across Pope's books of verse while at the Front, for they were very popular with the troops and Pope received letters of appreciation from soldiers from all over the world. This popularity may perhaps have influenced his choice of her as a poet deserving the reprimand, signified by the intended dedication.

In contrast to Pope, Elizabeth Blanche Terry adopts an entirely different style and manner in making her demands on the national spirit. "To the Men of England" is typical of her dogmatic, sermonizing and coercive method. Here, men are pressurized by suggestions of cowardice:

> England needs you all and quickly, yet you still
> stay loitering here
> Perhaps from thoughtlessness or slowness, or —
> but surely not — from fear.

Women are subjected to a fervid rhetoric which makes unjust demands on them:

> Send your husbands, send your brothers, send
> your sons, your friends, send all ...
> And do not say if they return not, 'We have
> sent them to their death' ....
> You have saved them from dishonour though
> their lives you could not save. [48]

With Terry, the jingoistic manner borders on offence.

Interpreting war in terms of sport, an analogy authorized by Henry Newbolt

in "Vitai Lampada", was useful in promoting the national cause. The belief that war was a bit of sport was carried over to the trenches, where it surfaced in the activity of kicking a football towards the enemy line while attacking. May Aldington's "Come Over Here!" makes its recruiting appeal by reference to the most famous of these Front-line ball-kicking episodes; one involving the Surrey Regiment in the Battle of Loos:

> Come over here and play the game! . . .
>
> The Surrey's kick off was really fine,
> The Bands were playing all the time!
> What if the Band is a roar of guns.
> They must have our music, the German Huns!
>
> Forward, or half-back - what's yer name?
> Trickle 'er forrard! Play the game. 49

In their service for the patriotic cause the jingoists could not have discovered a more emphatic euphemism; the reality of the military struggles and horrors of war is ecstatically devolved into the metaphor of athletics. Pope was an expert in the use of this analogy; "Who's for the Game?" and "Play the Game" are examples. Although football is the sport most frequently evoked in this category of verse, cricket is not far behind; an example is Pope's "Cricket - 1915". The first two stanzas of this poem build up a haunting picture of a deserted cricket pitch in high season; the last explains the empty pitch:

> Our cricketers have gone 'on tour',
> To make their country's triumph sure.
> They'll take the Kaiser's middle wicket
> And smash it by clean British cricket. 50

The adjective 'clean' connotes the British sense of fair play and the devious underhandedness of the Hun.

Attributing foul play to the enemy is one of the means adopted to emphasize his ignobleness; Cicely Fox Smith favours this device. In "Hans Dans An' Me" she portrays a sailor, who disgusted with the chicanery indulged in by the enemy, can entertain no feelings of reconciliation:

Hans Dans An' me was shipmates once, an' if e' 'd
fought us clean
Why, shipmates still when war was done might
Hans an' me 'ave been,
The truest pals a man can have are them 'e 's
fought before,
But - never no more, Hans Dans, my lad d'ye get
me, never no more. 51

It was by representing the enemy as a blackguard that the jingoists were able to arouse feelings of vengeance and cultivate the mood for war. In "The Lowland Sea" Smith depicts the sorrow and lamentation caused by the sinking of a civilian boat at the hands of those who 'were not common pirates ... / But gentlemen of high estate / Come out of Germanie'; such she believes deserve to 'swing as pirates swing / Upon the gallows tree'.[52]

Though the jingoists, in sowing dissension, reserve special recrimination for the Kaiser, this does not imply the enemy nation escapes vilification. One example of this is "A Nation Self-Condemned", by Evelyne Close :

Down in the mire, down in the mire,
Blackened with awful sin!
Coward and liar, coward and liar,
Damned without and within. 53

The villainous Kaiser, a favourite jingoist target, is the subject of May Aldington's "Stains". He is portrayed as the incarnation of all iniquity and one of the slurs hurled at him in the course of this poem is: 'The very name of "man" disdains this stain'.[54] Imaging the Kaiser in hell was a popular means of reviling him. In Smith's "The Ballad of the Hun King's Dream" the Kaiser's soul, 'a shrunk and wizened thing', is told that it shall stay in hell eternally because

no boat shall ferry you
No ford shall bring you through
The red river that runs alway
Between your God and you. 55

'We make out of our quarrel with others, rhetoric'.[56] Yeats's remark makes a telling commentary on the nature of the verse examined in Part One. Partisan arguments rendered in verse seldom are conducive to poetic merit.

In time of war, however, decked with sentimental clichés and ideals, they allow poets to propagate the national cause by striking at the very roots of patriotism: emotion.

. . . . . .

PART TWO

Women poets, restricted by their non-combatant status from direct experience, are solely dependent on newspaper reports and hearsay for any knowledge about life in the trenches. The complexities of trench life falling outside their range, although many are not averse to hymning the various battles fought in heroic style, very few poets attempt to visualize the activities and atmosphere particular to the Front. Constance Renshaw is one poet who, writing at second hand, has skilfully caught the spirit and atmosphere of the Front line in the manner of the trench writers. The Bookman in its review of Renshaw's England's Boys (1916) lauds her expertise, though surprised at her ability, as a woman, to have captured realistically the feelings of men at the Front. It quotes, too, from a soldier's letter, who commends Renshaw's work for having 'grasped the spirit of the soldier and expressed his thoughts and emotions in action — and after — in a manner that has few equals even in these days when there is a perfect spate of war poetry'.[57] Her sonnet "All Quiet on the Western Front" captures the misery and monotony of the infantrymen in trenches:

> 'All quiet on the Western Front.' The foe
> Is firm entrenchèd near our lengthening lines.
> They have placed their guns and laid their deep
> designs,
> And built their bomb-proof shelters. Numbèd
> grow
> Our aching limbs, and deadly grim and slow
> The weary hours and days .... And yet the
> signs
> Of death are round us, treacherous bursting
> mines,
> And shattering shells that hiss and sing and glow.

'All quiet on the Western Front' — and yet
We keep untiring watch beside our guns,
The while Death hounds us down in tireless hunt.
We know that some of us, with stern face set,
Will be among the morrow's silent ones.
Yet ... 'All is quiet on the Western Front'. [58]

Renshaw's use of the phrase, 'All quiet on the Western Front', the dismissive, all embracing newspaper headline, a commonplace of official reports, as title, allows her to expose the truth hid behind such jargon by answering cant through ironic revelation. Her poem bears some affinity with Owen's "Exposure". Both poets manipulate a certain phrase to reveal the paradoxical nature of proceedings at the Front; the suffering of men in trenches, which continues unabated, through their acute awareness of being surrounded by the ever volatile instruments of death and affliction, even when 'nothing happens' as in "Exposure" or 'All' is 'quiet on the Western Front'. The poems display a similarity in technique; both adopt the interior monologue to lay bare the mood and feelings of soldiers keeping watch in the trenches. Renshaw's poem is not of the quality of Owen's; mainly descriptive, it lacks the subtlety and depth of vision of "Exposure". But the resemblance between the two is an undeniable factor. The concluding lines of both poems manifest a remarkable similarity in thought. The deathly vigil the soldiers keep, with the nagging consciousness:

We know that some of us, with stern face set,
Will be among the morrow's silent ones.
Yet ... 'All is quiet on the Western Front'

discovers a variant in the following lines from "Exposure":

Tonight, this frost will fasten on this mud and us,
Shrivelling many hands, puckering foreheads crisp ...
But nothing happens.

In contrast to Renshaw, May Herschel-Clarke in "Nothing to Report", adopts the pithy epigrammatic style, characteristic of Sassoon, to depict the individual human tragedy which goes unnoticed, uncomprehended, in the platitudes which spring up around war :

One minute we was laughin', me an' Ted,
The next, he lay beside me grinnin' — dead.
'There's nothin' to report', the papers said. [59]

The paradoxical title, as with Renshaw, helps convey the tragic irony of life in the trenches.

Of the various battles of the First World War, which stirred the public imagination and inspired verse, none are more conspicuous than the Somme and Passchendaele. Renshaw's "The Great Push" and Aimee Byng Scott's "July 1st, 1916" are illustrative of poets' attempts to interpret the Battle of the Somme from the observer's standpoint. Both poets in writing of the Somme follow a similar pattern; they depict the situation before and after the battle. The difference lies in the choice of style adopted. Scott favours a symbolic approach. Borrowing a metaphor from nature she sets the battle within the context of a storm. The aftermath of battle is thus visualized by her:

Flames, not of poppies, cleave the quivering air,
The corn is razed, the twisted trees are dead;
War in his might
Has passed; Nature lies prostrate there
Stunned by his tread. [60]

Though the image of a storm allows Scott summarily to convey the havoc and destruction wrought by war, the euphemistic style fails to relate to the torture and agonies endured by the troops.

Renshaw's poem on the Somme, a descriptive piece, by comparison attains a degree of verisimilitude in imaging the atmosphere of battle:

Dawn greyed the dusky East. The hellish whine
Of shrapnel quickened to insensate noise,
And star-shells streaked the air.
Impatient boys
Crouched down and waited for the vital sign.
.... A red sun leapt the far horizon-line,
Hung low amid the mist in shuddering poise,
And saw of what grim deaths men made their
joys,
What anguished hopes, what agonies divine.
The minute struck. Men fixed their bayonets

With eager, trembling hands.
The signal flashed
From man to man; ...

A thousand deaths swept by! The boys held on
With close-shut lips. ...
Though comrade saw loved comrade sink and
writhe;
Though ghastly fragments hurtled through the
air,
And drew men's tears; though Pain was every-
where;
... On - on - they marched through fire and
steel and hell. 61

Renshaw focuses upon both the excitement preceeding the battle and the courage and heroism which keep the combatants going after the initial onslaught. The male thrill and excitement of battle is conveyed through images of 'Impatient boys' waiting for the 'vital sign' and men fixing bayonets 'with eager trembling hands'. The tremendous cost at which this excitement is bought is also stressed: 'of what grim death men made their joys, / What anguished hopes, what agonies divine'. By interpreting the situation through the effects on the people involved and incorporating realistic details, 'the hellish whine / Of shrapnel', the 'star-shells', among others, Renshaw achieves a more effective representation of the scene of battle than Scott.

Knowledge of battlefield minutiae by itself is not conducive to effective delineation of the scene of battle; "The Battle of the Swamps", Muriel Elsie Graham's interpretation of Passchendaele, is an illustration:

Across the blinded lowlands the beating rain blows
chill,
The trenched earth turns to water, the shell-holes ooze
and fill,
A tragic land where little that's sweet or sane survives, -
O hungry swamps of Flanders that swallow up men's
lives. 62

Despite her awareness of the particular conditions pertaining to this battle, Graham's poem remains a noticeably feeble piece when compared with Renshaw's. The weakness arises from the elegiac style adopted by Graham

which is incongruous with the theme. Her poem is characteristic of the manner adopted by the majority of poets to describe the various battles of the First World War.

Graham's "Bright Fields of Death" in which she attempts representation of No Man's Land suffers from the same weakness, but contrives to evoke the waste particular to this section of the war locale. The trenches lying on either side of No Man's Land strike her as being a 'double-link'd, ... sinister human chain, / The driving belt of man's grim war-machine'; in these live men, 'hid away / Lest Death should smite the careless head up-reared'. Her vision of 'No Man's Land - the land that lies apart -' stresses the suffering and waste generated by war; to her it appears 'A rubbish heap of nations where men tread / Fragments of homes and fragments of the dead'.[63]

. . . . . .

'No doubt it is the main object of war, when it does not kill, to maim'. This ironic comment upon the nature of war, by the novelist, Sarah Macnaughton, is the studied reflection of a woman, who in her job of running a soup kitchen from a station platform at Furnes 'saw, day after day, labelled humanity with a number on it passing in an endless succession upon bloodstained stretchers'. Macnaughton compares her experience of witnessing numberless convoys of wounded which passed through the station with that of 'persons who stand on the beach while others put out to sea, and at whose feet pieces of wreck and corpses are thrown up by the tide. The excitement of the heart of the storm is not for them, they only see the results of it. And the results are so pitiful in their dumbness, and their loneliness, and in their pain'.[64]

The flotsam of war, observed by Macnaughton at the Front, impressed itself forcefully upon the consciousness of those at home in the shape of such experiences as documented by the social historian, Caroline E. Playne.

On a visit to Brighton in June 1917, she records suffering 'sickening horror' when confronted with 'the sight of hundreds of men on crutches going about in groups, many having lost one leg, many others both legs'; she comments that 'the maiming of masses of strong, young men thus brought home was appalling'.[65]

The pitifulness, loneliness, dumbness, which Macnaughton associates with those, whom she evocatively designates 'Rendered inefficient', emerge fully in poets' representation of the traumas and tribulations, both individual and collective generated by war. Most poets, perhaps, affected by sights similar to that witnessed by Playne, illustrate the physical and mental upheaval precipitated by war by focusing upon the plight of individuals scarred by war. Women's view of war in the concrete, war at close quarters, could come only in the shape of experiences as instanced by Playne; this explains their reliance on the incidental to convey their apprehension of the tragedy and pathos inseparable from war.

Helen Mackay, an American poet, who chiefly expresses herself through the medium of free verse, in her tellingly titled piece, "Quinze Vingt", illustrates the tragedy of young lives gone to waste. She uses the war inflicted blindness of young soldiers as an occasion to deplore the squandering of human life incurred in waging war:

> Their last sight was the red sight of
> battle,
> and they will see no other thing,
> down all their lives. ...
> At the door of their house is hopelessness. . . .
> Hopelessness is thick and dense.
> It has no wet of tears.
> One could take hopelessness in one's
> hands,
> And make a bandage of it
> to bind about one's eyes.
> It would be dry and stiff,
> And hurt one's eyes.
> They are all young and strong.
> They will have long to live,
> And to be blind. [66]

The eternal agony which has become the particular fate of these soldiers and which brooks no assuagement is underlined by: 'It has no wet of tears'. In "Quinze Vingt" Mackay achieves a graphic representation of the catastrophe propagated by war by adopting a succinct understated style.

By comparison, Margaret Postgate Cole's ironically titled poem, "The Veteran", which uses the incident of a meeting between a blinded nineteen year old soldier and the still-to-be-tried new recruits to expose the waste inflicted by war, fails to impress, being marred by its moralizing tones, which stem from the writer's pacifist sympathies. Cole's conversion to pacifism was influenced by her brother Raymond Postgate's victimization as a conscientious objector. He was put on trial and imprisoned for a short time. Of the effect this verdict had on her, Cole records in her autobiography that when her brother's trial concluded she 'walked into a new world, a world of doubters and protestors, and into a new war'.[67] Among her poems "Rest" and "Recruited", which satirize and condemn official war policies, exemplify her war against the government. Cole, when she manages to restrain her instinct for propaganda, can, however, evoke impressively, as in "Praematuri", the tragic sterility with which war engulfs young lives:

> When men are old, and their friends die,
> They are not so sad, ...
> they are happy with many memories,
> And only a little while to be alone.
>
> But we are young, and our friends are dead ...
> our memories are only hopes that came to nothing.
> We are left alone like old men; we should be dead
> — But there are years and years in which we shall
> still be young. 68

The last line, as with the ending of Mackay's poem, stresses the desolation which clouds the future of youth, victimized by war. "Praematuri" like "Quinze Vingt" owes its effectiveness to the simple unembellished style favoured by the writers.

Dorothy Julia Baynes and V. Helen Friedlaendar adopt the dramatic monologue, a device also used by Owen in "A Terre", to depict the void, futile existence of men 'rendered inefficient' by war; the grievance thus given personal utterance accentuates the nature of the ordeal borne. Baynes's "Litany of a Derelict" presents a blinded, bed-ridden soldier making an impassioned appeal to God for some alleviation of his woe:

> I lie on my bed, I cannot move and I cannot
> see,
> And so it will be till I die.
> O God help me now ....
> The Great War has passed,
> And I am left, a piece of wreckage in its wake ....
> My youth has been trampled under the feet
> of war,
> My pride and my manhood have been flung
> in the dust . . .
> I am blind and I cannot move, I am blind and
> I cannot move —
> Was ever loneliness like to my loneliness. [69]

Baynes may succeed in evoking the pathetic plight of the disabled soldier and even move readers with her portrayal, but the manner of expression she employs deprives the combatant of all dignity, irrespective of the fact that the poem is in the nature of a prayer.

Friedlaendar, in "Artist: Demobilized", highlights the damage done by war by focusing upon the predicament of an artist, who benumbed by his war experiences, has lost his visionary powers. Her use of the monologue to define the artist's dilemma is reminiscent of Browning. The artist laments his loss by comparing his present condition with his past:

> how empty I've become . . .
> Empty of feeling. In the old dead years
> I used to feel; I know I used to feel.
> I still could find the very paving-stone
> That turned to gold once in the Strand; or go
> Back to that orchard where, one dewy morning,
> I walked with God. But what would be the use?
> They would be only trees and paving stones.

He yearns for the return of his lost power and muses if he will ever

> know again
> The thrill of the indwelling ecstasy,
> And feel the stab, the shiver of delight
> That heralded creation. [70]

His plight is aggravated by the inquisitiveness of the people around him; their well intentioned query: 'And now / When does the Thames blaze up again, dear boy?', jars on his nerves.

The insensibility displayed by civilians in coping with the maimed and injured, and its tortuous effects, is touched upon by some poets. Agnes Grozier Herbertson evokes this in "Disabled" through the portrayal of a maimed soldier, who seeks refuge in nature to escape the well meant but inquisitive solicitude of people:

> The lack of speech that held the wood
> Ease was and comfort to his mood;
> The ample trees' aloofness came
> With kindness to the hurting flame
> Within his blood; . . .
> Each scalding comfort, look or word;
> His quivering consciousness had heard,
> His broken body winced to bear,
> Melted into the quiet air;
> His limbs within the wood's sweet ken,
> Their scars ignored, were whole again. [71]

The officiousness of the public is implicit in phrases such as, 'lack of speech' and 'ample trees' aloofness'. The 'scalding comfort' which accentuates the scars rather than alleviate, is also the theme of Elizabeth Daryush's "Maimed". She elucidates her theme by criticising the traditional belief, much exploited during the war, that through suffering man attains greater nobility. Her poem shows a disabled soldier chiding an acquaintance for the inane words of comfort he offers:

> Nay, leave me, false friend: for false 'tis, I know,
> Thy smoothly-spoken comfort: - Joy of life
> Lament not, for through grief's unwelcome strife
> Must the proud spirit to perfection grow . . .
> His gasp'd days can be to him but a curse
> Who thus must now till welcome death endure. [72]

While others may deplore the damage done to human life and denounce the maleficence of war, jingoists like Jessie Pope could seize any situation to celebrate British pluck. Pope could perceive no pathetic decrepitude amongst the wounded and disabled as imaged by Baynes in "Litany of a Derelict",

The one-legged soldier man in her poem of the same title wants no sympathy, 'For sighs and sackcloth bore him'; he still has immense life and vitality in him and if people believe otherwise 'The croakers have maligned him' for though his 'one shank may be wooden, / There's a kick left in the good 'un'.[73] In a similar vein Katharine Tynan in "The Broken Soldier" celebrates one who, despite appearing a 'remnant of a man, maimed and half-blind', still, 'goes singing like a bird' 'Hither and thither, hopping, like Robin on the grass'.[74] Eva Spurway in a sonnet "Blind Soldiers" uses the combatants' disability to incite hatred and crush any incipient laxness towards the enemy:

> Look on them well; strong-limbed in life and youth,
> Great-hearted, they have fought with those broad hands
> That tremble in the darkness. Will ye yet
> Speak of forgiveness, while unveiled Truth
> Cries 'Vengeance' on those war-besotted lands?
> Will ye forget, my land, will ye forget. 75

Spurway's sonnet captures the mood and tones of 'a fight to a finish' fanatics.

. . . . . .

Compassion and comprehension, qualities adduced by Edmund Blunden as characteristic of soldiers' verse are manifest also in women's war writings.[76] Women's vision of war, conditioned by circumstances particular to their own experience, embodies a humaneness and understanding which belies the dismissive 'giddy jilts' appellation, indicative of their inability to comprehend the true nature of war, ascribed to them by Owen in "Disabled". Marian Allen in an untitled poem which opens with the query 'And what is war? ... what of its story?', tells that tale of war which she believes is overpoweringly shadowed by the ancient 'tale of valour, ... tale of glory, / Of vanquished enemies and righted wrong'. To her war appears

A rising water, deep and wide,
Which washes some away, and leaves some lonely, . . .

A growing stillness, many empty places,
A haunted look that comes in women's eyes;
The sound of laughing voices disappearing,
The marching of a thousand eager feet,
Passing, ever passing out of hearing,
Echoing, ever echoing down the street;
A sudden gust of wind, a clanging door,
And then a lasting silence — that is war. [77]

Allen's interpretation of war reflects that suffering which becomes the particular fate of women in time of war. In contrast to the idiom of traditional heroics she tells the tale of war only in terms which are comprehensible to her; the cost inflicted by war in human heartache and desolation. Diana Good in an untitled lyric defines war in terms similar to Allen's:

War, to me
Is the scream of fear,
The strong limbs shattered,
The bright hair spattered.

War, to me,
Is the weeping child
Instantly grown old,
And unconsoled.

War, to me,
Is the still woman
With eyes of stone
Who lives alone. [78]

Both writers interpret war by reference to the pain and suffering it imposes.

Women poets, denied personal knowledge of the physical aspect of battle, at times utilize activities connected with war which fall within their range of observation to comment upon it. Amy Lowell, the American poet, who apart from H.D. was the chief female propagator of Imagism, exploits the occasion of a parade review in "In the Stadium", to convey the futility and waste war symbolizes for her. The spectacle of a brash new regiment passing in front of spectators, imaged as 'the young bodies of boys / Bulwarked in front of us', by ruminative progression of mind evolves into

'The white bodies of young men / Heaped like sandbags / Against the German guns' and prompts the reflection:

> This is war:
> Boys flung into a breach
> Like shovelled earth; . . .
>
> Behind the boys . . .
> Life weeps,
> And shreds her garments
> To the blowing winds. 79

Nettie Palmer in "Chelsea Barracks" utilizes a scene of soldiers at bayonet practise to connote the inhumanity war betokens. The sight of soldiers attacking 'A sack of straw suspended from a tree', indifferent to the 'summer wind ... moving dreamily', provokes the thoughts:

> We learn to slay our kind. Ah! might we know,
> Dying, that every foe our hands had smitten
> Was but a mute and soulless man of straw. 80

Palmer views war as an aberration, which compels man not only to acquire the skill, but also relish the task of killing his own kind.

Margot Robert Adamson, a poet whose war verse the TLS praised for avoiding the hackneyed, by contrast to the above, employs the visionary poem, characteristic of the Romantics, to illustrate the 'Suffering, Anguish, Sorrow' war epitomizes. Her poem "1914" which opens, 'It seemed I stood upon a mighty peak', depicts her looking down at an earth, in the throes of a torrential storm, which 'shrieked and screamed' and in which 'desolate companies' of leaves were being blown about and scattered. The storm tossed leaves she soon perceives are other than what they seemed:

> they were human, that disturbèd throng
> That were e'en so disastrous swept along;
> Women and men and children, such as fill
> A city with their noises and their song. 81

The sight of people who 'From broken town, deserted house and village, ... / were poured out like water from a jar', 'unpathed fugitives, / Whom wild winds swing, / Like an old wain or waters of the sea' makes her query the validity of this 'Terror and Suffering' which she maintains is unwarranted

and unjustified. This poem, dated February 1915, probably owes it inspiration to the mass exodus of people from the beleagured Belgian cities.

The muted disapprobation of war reflected in the above assumes more vigorous expression in some other works. In "The Bombardment" Amy Lowell denounces war for its corroding effect on civilization. The scene of destruction in her vivid prose poem is a town whose cathedral is laid low along with the buildings and houses around it. Seen and experienced by an old aristocratic lady, a scientist, a poet, a mother and child, it is a hideous and soul-destroying experience.[82] To Florence Earle Coates, war, in a sonnet of the same title, seems 'Medusa-like', heralding into the world 'Shame more appalling than men dare to name, / Betraying them that die and them that slay'.[83] This view challenges the orthodoxy which propagates war's beneficence for man. Like Coates, neither Katharine Lee Bates nor Maud Keary subscribe to the conviction that men who participate in war are wreathed in glory. For them such participation, enforced or voluntary, constitutes desecration of life. Bates's evocatively titled "Fodder for Cannon" is a graphic expression of the squandering of life entailed by war,[84] while Keary's "Decadence" laments the warped humour of an age which flings 'away upon the battlefield / The finest fruit the nation has to yield / In men, the perfect-limbed, the young, the brave'.[85]

The most ironic comments on war's stupidity appear in poems referring to the soldier's role. Lowell's "A Ballad of Footmen" evinces astonishment that a man would kill another 'Because some one he calls his Emperor, pleases'; a contradiction of jingoism, which delighted in depicting men answering the call of King and Country. Rulers, Lowell argues, would not war if all men laid down their arms. Since men did not refuse to fight and willingly chose to become 'lackeys', perhaps, slaves 'to a little gold lace', they must enjoy the taste of blood and the torture of wounds: 'Take the dust

of the streets and sprinkle your head, / The civilization we've worked for is dead'.[86] "A Ballad of Footmen" shows Lowell contending with an enigma which had previously struck Charles Kingsley. In his novel, Alton Locke, he argued that to become a man servant and soldier were forms of moral suicide which he could not accept. In another poem, "Lead Soldiers", Lowell attacks war as an infantile game and also highlights the destruction of intelligence it portends. War leaders she believes are like small boys with toy soldiers. They line up their soldiers in splendid array and if some soldiers are knocked over in manoeuvres the blame lies not with them. For although the soldiers are 'Like a cleverly trained flea' which 'can follow instantly / orders',

> some quick commands
> Really make severe demands
> On a mind that's none too rapid,
> Leaden brains tend to the vapid. [87]

Lady Margaret Sackville is one of the writers of the time who was most intent upon unmasking 'the ugly face of Mars'. A pacifist, she was writing and publishing protest poetry before such was conceived of by Sassoon and Owen. Both seem to have met her during their stay at Craiglockhart Hospital in Edinburgh; she lived nearby and had presented Sassoon with a copy of her war poems: The Pageant of War (1916). A copy of the same exists also amongst the books in Owen's library. Sassoon in a letter of 3 October 1917 informed Robbie Ross that Sackville had sent him her war poems;[88] before that in a letter dated 25 September he had queried Ross 'Do you know her? Her verse is fairly rotten is'nt it?'.[89] The war poems, however, must have proved an exception for Owen in a letter of 2 October 1917 wrote to his mother that he was going through Sackville's poems and 'found some of them very fine'.[90] It is not known whether Owen was aware of her poem "The Dead" published in the Herald, 23 December 1916, for the lines: 'Shell and shrapnel, gas and flame, / Their burial service were' recall the imagery

of "Anthem for Doomed Youth" which was written at Craiglockhart.

Sackville's volume of war verse is devoted to dispelling illusions about war's glory. The titular poem, "The Pageant of War", focuses upon the pitiful tragedy and blasphemy of destruction war brings in its wake; it stresses that the pageantry of war is in fact the pageant of death. At the very beginning Sackville establishes war as an aberration, a discord; the pageant of war enters town on a spring day when the

> soft and kindly weather
> Was as a magic link - a thread
> By which were earth and heaven wed
> In holy bonds together.

War and his accomplices 'Come trampling through the town', along a road 'starkly white'; the white is the crusted dust of trampled bones. War who leads the pageant is

> like Death sitting astride
> A pale and neighing horse, . . .
> There was no trace
> Of laughter, tears or pity
> In the blue-veinéd, swollen face,
> And so perforce
> He had to wear a mask, lest seeing
> That obscene countenance too near,
> The heart of every human being
> Should shrink in loathing and in fear.

The mask connotes the panpoply of war, devised to gull and deceive people. Following war are 'The pitiful, bright army of the dead', who

> saw too late,
> The face of him
> To whom so willingly they sacrificed,
> And who had come to them disguised
> In the garb sometimes of Peace, sometimes
> of Christ.

Sackville regards the manipulation of religion and other magniloquent doctrines in waging war, as the sole responsibility of the 'High-priests of War, crafty and keen' who also follow in war's train. Their chief concern is

evermore that none might see the
bare
Face of their master, and their ceaseless
task
Was with the form and colour of his mask

Part of the 'form and colour' of this mask are the beguiling beliefs which enable war to present itself to the susceptible sometimes as 'the road of God' and sometimes the 'Road of triumph — road of glory'.[91] "The Pageant of War" is in the tradition of the pageant of the seven deadly sins, an ingredient of the medieval morality plays. The poem is patterned on the procession of the deadly sins with war usurping the pivotal role conventionally assigned to pride. Sackville's choice of the pageant motif to evoke the deception, horror and inhumanity concomitant with war, imparts to her subject not only all the disgust and loathing traditionally associated with the seven sins, but also reinforces its evil and the need therefore for its speedy expugnation.

The pacifist outlook which characterizes Sackville's war verse emphasizes the homogeneity of human experience, indivisible by cultural or national boundaries. "Reconciliation" concerns women of belligerent nations 'who are bound by the same grief for ever' and who hope to meet one day 'Each asking pardon from the other one / For her dead son'.[92] "Quo Vaditis" depicts hostile combatants drawing inspiration to fight from alike convictions; 'we see /The self-same light which kindles in our friend/ Shine from the faces of our enemy'.[93]

This homogeneity stressed by Sackville is a theme taken up also by other poets. Rapprochement between enemy soldiers who have shot one another and are on the verge of death is a motif often exploited to connote the uniformity of human experience; it also asserts the fatuousness of war. "Two on the Battlefield" by Lucine Finch is one example of this genre. It takes the form of a dialogue between two dying soldiers who recognise

one another as the enemy each shot. Both lament the loss of a life cut short: 'What did you leave behind you / That you loved?' and join 'The phantom hosts . . . / To seek and question God, / Why this should be'.[94] A more impressive rendition of the same situation is offered by Irene Rutherford McLeod. Her poem, an untitled piece, appears in her volume, The Darkest Hour (1918). The TLS review singled out this dialogue between two dying soldiers as 'one of the effective things' in the volume. The dying belligerents who had been friends in peace time grieve over their perfidious act and probe the nature of their crime, decrying the inanity and waste it signifies:

> 'What is this thing we've killed each other for?"
> 'Our countries," . . .
>
> "What have we done, we two,
> That we should die to make an old word true?
> Who made this war? We didn't. But we die.
> I wonder how the old ones feel. . . .
> My Dad's proud
> Of his three sons in khaki'.
> "So is mine
> Of his in grey. . . .
> They'll celebrate
> My honourable death with deeper hate
> And fiercer pride' . . .
> 'O God, the things they say! ... they don't know
> The truth of war, or they'd not blather so.
> How many more must die before they learn
> The truth at last? How much more beauty burn
> To ruin? O, the waste! And what's the end.' [95]

What arrests attention in the above, apart from criticism of the older generation, an attitude shared with soldier poets, is McLeod's concern with 'The truth of war'; this truth which comprises the 'ruin' and 'waste' apprehended by combatants at the cost of their lives and passes unrealised by those who propagate war recalls 'the truth untold, / The pity of war' which preoccupies Owen in "Strange Meeting".

Victoria T. Coats in "Snow in Weimar", included in her book of verse, To-day and Yesterday (1915), nostalgically remembering Weimar transmits a mood in sharp contrast with the jingoistic atmosphere of the early days of war:

> Weimar, keep your ancient place
> In our hearts' heart; the Abode of Peace.
> Oh, may the wars and clamour cease,
> And may we meet, soon, face to face,
>
> As friends .... For, see, the snow doth fall
> On each, . . .
> For all are one, and one is all. [96]

The oneness recognised by Coats at that point in time supposedly strikes a discordant note, if the received opinion of First World War Poetry as a steady progression from illusion to disillusion, vision to reality is to be subscribed to. A scrutiny of the date of publication of various works discussed in this chapter indicates, however, a simultaneous existence of the various attitudes towards war examined above. The presence of the romantic and the realistic, the pro-war and anti-war mood can be detected both at the beginning as towards the close of the war. If Emily Underdown commends war in "Gifts of War", published in 1914, Florence E. Coates in her sonnet, "War", published in the first week of war takes the opposite view as also does Grace Tollemache in "War"; Tollemache regards it as a harbinger of death and destruction:

> O devastating, desolating War,
> What dirges follow thee! what dearth
> And blackened ruin, where thou goest, mar
> The goodly pleasantness of Earth. [97]

V. Helen Friedlaender at the same time can criticise the inadequacy of the traditional approach to competently represent war. On the other hand Eva Spurway adopts an offensive jingoistic manner late in the war, while Cicely Fox Smith continues composing in the same strain even after cessation of hostilities. The intermediary years manifest simultaneous presence of the idealistic, humanitarian and jingoistic moods. The point is that

different poets, at the same time, can interpret the same situation variously. Although the emphasis shifts and at times a particular attitude or mood may come into prominence, the firmly entrenched course of First World War Poetry from Brooke to Sassoon and on to Owen is too simplistic and belies the multiplicity of response manifest at a particular moment. Women's apprehension of the nature of war is inclusive of the attitudes symbolized by these three soldier poets but does not constitute uniform progression from idealistic euphoria to disenchantment which has come to characterize the trench writers perception of war.

NOTES

1. May Wedderburn Cannan, Grey Ghosts and Voices (Kineton, Roundwood Press 1976), p. 113. Cannan's In War Time was published in the spring of 1917; Sassoon's The Old Huntsman came out on 8 May 1917.

2. Siegfried Sassoon, Siegfried's Journey 1916-1920 (London, Faber 1945), p. 64.

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4. C. K. Stead, The New Poetic (London, Hutchinson 1964), p. 82.

5. C. M. Bowra, Poetry and the First World War (Oxford, OUP 1961), p.10.

6. Helen Bosanquet, Zoar: A Book of Verses (Oxford, Blackwell 1919), p. 47.

7. Mary Duclaux, "Belgia Bar-lass", TLS, 10 August 1914, p. 393.

8. Mary Carolyn Davies, The Drums in Our Street: A Book of War Poems (New York, Macmillan 1918), p. 85.

9. V. Helen Friedlaender, "To Poets who Break but Silence", New Age, 17 December 1914, p. 179.

10. Emily Underdown, War Songs: 1914 (London, Riley and Co. 1914), p. 16.

11. Enid Petre, Autumn Leaves (London, Arthur Humphreys, 1915), p. 10.

12. Aimee Byng Scott, Scattered Leaves (Oxford, Blackwell 1916), p. 28.

13. Anna Bunston De Bary, New and Selected Lyrics (London, Daniel O'Connor, 1923), pp. 146-147.

14. Quoted in Reginald Pound's The Lost Generation (London, Constable 1964), pp. 89-90.

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16. Janet Begbie, Morning Mist (London, Mills and Boon 1916), p. 103.

17. Ella Fuller Maitland, "Our Fighting Men", Spectator, 30 October 1915, p. 579.

18. Lillian Gard, "War", Queen, 29 August 1914, p. 356.

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20. Blanche Weitbree, "The Little People", Clarion, 19 February 1915, p. 8.

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25. Virna Sheard, Carry on! (Toronto, Warwick and Rutter 1917), p. 8.

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30. Katharine Tynan, Late Songs (London, Sidgwick and Jackson 1917), p. 11.

31. Katharine Tynan, Herb O'Grace (London, Sidgwick and Jackson 1918), p. 19.

32. Ruth Comfort Mitchell, The Night Court and Other Verse (New York, The Century Co. 1916), pp. 21-22.

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CHAPTER TWO

WAR AND RELIGION

'Soon you will be soldiers, but remember in the heat of the battle that you are Christians ... Strike hard and kill as many of the enemy as you can'.[1] This advice offered by a certain Canon Riviére, which found its way into the 'Current Cant' column of the New Age, is remarkable for its freedom from the conscientiousness concomitant with true faith. The Canon's advice illustrates the paradoxical manoeuvring of religion in the cause of patriotism. However reprehensible the above counsel may seem it has the approbation of religious authority; ArticleXXXVII of the Church of England reads: 'It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars'. J. A. Hobson in, The Psychology of Jingoism (1901), commenting upon the church's complicity in advocating war observes :

> When has a Christian nation ever entered on a war which has not been regarded by the official priesthood as a sacred war? In England the State Church has never permitted the spirit of the Prince of Peace to interfere when statesmen and soldiers appealed to the passions of race-lust, conquest, and revenge. 2

The position taken by the English Church during the First World War, and doggedly maintained, is summarized thus by John Williams:

> The attitude of Britain's Established Church was one of total acceptance of the war. Britain was imbued with the idea that she was somehow acting as the agent of a divine power in a struggle from which she would emerge spiritually stronger and more united than before the war. 3

For the discerning, like Helena Swanwick, a prominent feminist and passionate advocate of pacifism, the religious atmosphere of the time

was best described as 'a Moratorium in Christianity for the Duration of the War'.[4]

A nation going to war always passionately believes in two things; the essential justice of its own cause and that God is on the side of Right. At the popular level the British illusion of being 'the agent of a divine power' was sustained through comparison of the conflict with a 'holy war', which image with its connotations of the Crusades, helped establish the maleficient Anti-Christ character of Germany and its Kaiser. The imagery of the Christian life as one of warfare, universally diffused through hymns such as "Onwards Christian Soldiers", "Fight the good fight", "Soldiers of Christ, Arise", assured easy acceptance of this analogy by the populace. The militant evangelism of the Salvation Army, dependent on the use of military metaphor, perhaps, proved a useful backdrop for the new militarization of Christianity that set in. The British Army, as conceived of by the English Church, appears to all effects and purposes a 'Salvation Army' setting out to redress the woes of the world. The overzealousness displayed by the clergy in promoting the national cause comes out in the chauvinism of Dean Inge of St. Paul's; he was reported to have offended his congregation when during the course of a sermon he spoke of the serenity of the Deity being 'pestered' by repeated petitions for victory and alternatively advising that time given to prayers for victory would be better occupied to the purpose of making munitions.[5]

The one drawback in an otherwise expedient adaptation of religious myth to justify the cataclysm of war in the Christian terms of sacrifice, atonement and regeneration was the non-partisan nature of God; an impediment glozed over by the hostile nations' reiteration of the

confident claim: 'God on our side'.[6] The irony of both sides calling on God is highlighted by Karle Wilson Baker in "Unser Gott"; she condemns the widespread patronage of the 'fierce / Old hating Gods of nations' and appeals: 'let us make Him large enough for all, / Or cease to prate of Him'.[7] Beatrice Webb, reflecting on the behaviour of the clergy on both sides in the opening days of the war, observed in her diary:

> There has been a disgusting misuse of religious emotion in the assumption of the Almighty's approval of the aims of each of the conflicting groups of combatants ... The theologians of Europe have disgraced themselves ... this horrible caricature of religion is depressing. 8

In England the mockery of religion, despaired of by Webb, also showed itself in the division between the convenable and non-convenable views of Christianity a person could ascribe to in time of war. Mabel Dearmer, best recognised as the author of the children's play, Brer Rabbit, at the start of the war, along with her husband, a clergyman, joined a hospital unit to work in Serbia; she died there in July 1915, a victim of the cholera epidemic. While in Serbia she wrote a number of letters to the Irish writer Stephen Gwynn, who had joined up. These letters containing her reflections on the war and life on the Serbian Front were published after her death as Letters from a Field Hospital (1915). Dearmer was a pacifist, who, though she did not prevent her two sons from enlisting, could not comprehend the male enthusiasm for war. She observes in one letter:

> If I had been a man I could not have fought,
> for the way in which I read the words of
> Christ is that the Kingdom of Heaven is
> gained by a different method altogether.
> A method never tried by diplomatists. 9

In another she points out that 'the hardest fight is to love the person

you want to fight and to seek his good rather than yours'; she continues: 'it sounds a platitude, but today it is Christ or Kitchener. What chance would Christ have today? Crucifixion would be a gentle death for such a dangerous lunatic'.[10] A review of Dearmer's letters which appeared in the Spectator, 22 January 1916, is interesting as a specimen of the Christian opinion in ascendance at the time. The unsigned review states:

> Mrs. Dearmer could not bring herself to believe that it was right for Christians to fight. She held the prohibition of the Gospel to be absolute. She took, in fact, the 'Quaker view', though she was not, of course, a Quaker . . . hers was an attitude one can respect, however mistaken it may have been. 11

The impression left by the above is that the dead Mabel Dearmer, who is let off with a mild rebuke about her 'mistaken' view, would have fared differently at the hands of the pro-war Spectator if she was living at the time of the review.

The verse discussed in this chapter depends on an awareness of the moral climate of the time, which to an extent explains the ubiquitous appropriation of religious terminology to interpret the war. Religion is also public property and free to be utilized by all; to the purveyor of popular sentiment, as also to the more discerning writer, it offers an established canon of thematic sources in addition to providing a firmly acknowledged reference for human conduct. This chapter examines the various ways in which the religious motif, both concept and image, was manipulated by poets to ascribe method and meaning to the war.

. . . . . .

The image of a 'holy war' could be used to mean quite strictly a Crusade with God against the powers of darkness, or to express a general conviction that England was on the side of right. The frequency with which this image appears is not incomprehensible when considered in the

light of topical opinion. Marie Van Vorst, who travelled frequently between Paris and London in the early months of the war, wrote to a relative in America: 'There has not been, since I came to England, [from France] one note of doubt as to the righteousness of the Cause'.[12] No doubts could surface at a time when even the Poet Laureate deemed it necessary to proclaim in The Times: 'I hope that our people will see that it is primarily a holy war. It is manifestly a war declared between Christ and the Devil'.[13] Margaret Cole, writing of the war years, recalls that statements to the effect that the war was a 'crusade of Christ against the Devil' were frequently made.[14] Vera Brittain, who was at Oxford in the opening stages of the war, remembers 'dons and cleries ... doing their best to justify the War and turn it into England's Holy Crusade'.[15]

"The Holy War", a short poem by Althea Gyles, epitomizes the sentiments which permeate much of the verse inspired by a belief in the righteousness of the English cause:

> We fight for Peace - not for Revenge or Hate,
> Forgetful of the names of Fame or Fate -
> Winning by war the Time when wars shall cease.
> Soldiers of Concord! Sentinels of Peace. 16

The nation's justness in taking up arms, accentuated by strident capitals, assumes the reader's awareness of the antithesis between the opposing armies as spelled out by the Poet Laureate.

War seen in terms of the Crusades served various purposes. Besides the obvious advantage of aligning Germany with the barbaric civilization of the infidel, this analogy also provided a means of resolving the taint of sin inseparable from the act of bloodshed; fighting in a holy cause absolved the combatants from all charges of impiousness in addition to offering the consolation of martyrdom. Katharine Tynan's "To the Others",

which appears in her volume, significantly titled, The Holy War (1915), illustrates this aspect of the Crusade motif:

> This was the gleam then that lured from far
> Your son and my son to the Holy War:
> Your son and my son for the accolade
> With the banner of Christ over them, in steel arrayed. ...
>
> Your son and my son have heard the call,
> Your son and my son have stormed the wall. ...
>
> Your son and my son, clean as new swords,
> Your man and my man and now the Lord's. [17]

The repetition used in the above underlines the universal applicability of the belief propagated in the poem: the modern Crusaders' remission from sin connoted by 'clean as new swords'. The reiteration weaves a web enticing all women to share in the consolation meted by the writer. The versatility of religious concepts to lend meaning to the varied struggles of the world comes out in the use of the term 'holy war'; before the war the suffragettes' campaign was designated a holy war.[18]

. . . . . .

Within the context of religion one of the ways in which the existence of war could be justified was to portray it as divine punishment for a variety of national sins; a judgement on a pre-war world that had spurned God. Though the product of human folly, the presence of war could be explained as a means adopted by God to jolt England out of selfishness and complacency, which the long years of peace had cocooned her in. These sentiments, along with the belief that war heralds a great moral regeneration, reflect a mood which had earlier found expression in Part III of Tennyson's Maud: 'I wake to the higher aims / Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold, / And love of a peace that was

full of wrongs and shames'.

Kate Mellersh's sonnet, "Britain Asleep: 1914", blends together all the arguments essential for such interpretation of war. The slothful Britannia of the opening lines of the octave: '"Wealth, ease are mine", she said and laid her down / On her soft-cushioned couch, and sank to sleep', evolves into a repentant, regenerated figure in the sestet:

> God's Voice woke her! And she stared aghast
> And flung herself before His awful Feet;
> Then rose to strip her jewelled hands at last,
> To dip them deep in blood, to make them sweet
> And clean from self and sin! So, 'gainst the blast
> Of Death she went forth - fearless - Life to meet. 19

Mildred Burton's "Not Peace, But a Sword!" which begins 'Britain was sleeping in luxurious ease. / Forgetful of times past, forgetting God' ends on the pious note 'Britain will rise again, but purified'.[20]

A point to note in this category of war poem is the reiteration of the presence of sin of which the world needs to be cleansed. It is only by acknowledging this presence of sin that the advent of war in a Christian world can be justified, which otherwise might imply the existence of a malevolent deity or even the non-existence of God. The concept of war as penance for sin, forgetfulness of God as in Burton's poem, or the slothfulness hinted at by Mellersh, is of the essence for the validity of the Christ/soldier analogy, discussed below, which without the idea of a sinful society would lack coherence. Conversely belief in sin could necessitate sacrifice: 'without shedding of blood is no remission' (Hebrews 9.22). Mellersh's picture of Britannia stripping her jewelled hands 'To dip them deep in blood, to make them sweet / And clean from self and sin' echoes the biblical sentiments. Helen Hamilton's "The Bleating Shepherd of Souls" hints that the vision of war, as a divine

punishment for a variety of sins, enjoyed the blessings of the clergy. The bleating shepherd, one amongst the several of the war bêtes-noires portrayed by Hamilton, is shown haranguing his congregation thus:

> 'Yes, my brethren,
> I must say it.
> This agony, so unremitting,
> Those battle-fields ensanguined,
> All the host of ghastly horrors,
> You've drawn them on yourselves.
> It is a visitation earned,
> Of wrath Divine!
> What have we done - you cry -
> So unconscionably sinful?
> Ah! my brethren,
> My brethren dearly loved,
> Look in your hearts,
> Your guilty hearts!
> There lies the answer'. [21]

Hamilton pinpoints the key concepts which define this view of war: the 'visitation earned, / Of wrath Divine', the 'guilty hearts' 'unconscionably sinful'. Her exposition of this variety of 'shepherd', of whom she 'a humble lamb', 'O,yes! a very black one!', may perhaps have heard a great deal, is helped by the facility with which she captures in verse the preacher's mannerism and intonation.

War regarded as a means of salvation is the theme of Amy Redpath Roddick's "Armageddon" and "We were Content", by Ella Stewart Caldwell. Roddick's interpretation adds a new dimension to the beneficial nature of war discussed in Chapter One. She sees war as conceived of by a benevolent deity, particularly for the spiritual enhancement of man:

> The Armageddon of the ages,
> The Lord of all, in pity stages,
> That little souls may grow in grace,
> That little souls may know His face. [22]

Caldwell, too, views war as a charitable gesture on the part of a kind paternal God. In her poem the spiritual suffocation associated with an

existence entirely confined to material pursuits is built up by piling a mass of detail all leading to the denouement:

> And God the Father in love and in mercy,
> Seeing our vision had fallen so low,
> Had rent the veil that was blurring our vision,
> His larger purpose of life to shew. 23

Sibyl Bristowe's representation of war acknowledges also the kindly ministration of God. Central to her poem,"The Great War", is the image of the light spectrum; the Creator finding the world's range of vision bedimmed and impoverished because of a break in the spectrum, steps up to replenish the missing colour, the colour of sacrifice and martyrdom, and so redresses the world's vision.[24] Vera Brittain in "August 1914" offers an ironic commentary upon the attitude towards war adopted by the poets above. The destruction which is heralded into the world by God so that 'The souls that sleep shall wake again, / And blinded eyes ... learn to see', contrary to the belief of the above, instead of consolidating people's faith provokes from them the despairing cry: 'There is no God'.[25]

A variant of the spiritual ennoblement attributed to war manifests itself as the rediscovery of Christ by man. It is an expression of a conviction widespread at the time, that Christ the Saviour who had been near forgotten in the soft days of peace was being discovered anew by man in the testing days of war.[26] This theme had advantages: it suggested the sinful quality of pre-war existence and was a means of doling Christian comfort by implication of the kinship between man and the Son of God. Lucy Whitmell's "Christ in Flanders",which first appeared in the Spectator, 11 September 1915, was the most popular of the poems based on this theme:

> We had forgotten You, or very nearly -
> You did not seem to touch us very nearly - . . .

Now we remember; over here in Flanders -
(It isn't strange to think of You in Flanders)-
This hideous warfare seems to make things clear. . . .

You helped us pass the jest along the trenches -
Where, in cold blood, we waited in the trenches - . . .
You stood beside us in our pain and weakness -
We're glad to think You understand our weakness -
Somehow it seems to help us not to whine.

We think about You kneeling in the Garden -
Ah! God! the agony of that dread Garden -
We know You prayed for us upon the Cross. . . .

Though we forgot You - You will not forget us -
We feel so sure that You will not forget us. 27

This poem was one of the minor phenomenona of the time. Demand for it was so overwhelming that subsequent to its publication various issues of the Sepctator, throughout the war years, carry the information that it is available in leaflet form. The accent on sentiment, perhaps, contributed towards the appeal of the poem. The Bishop of London is reported to have reprinted the poem from the Spectator for his diocesan magazine and quoted it in sermons.[28] Being written from the soldiers' standpoint perhaps guaranteed it success with them. A soldier was moved to write a short poem entitled: "To the Writer of 'Christ in Flanders'"; published in the Spectator, 13 January 1917, it begins: 'On the battlefields of Flanders men have blessed you in their pain: / For you told us Who was with us, and your words were not in vain'.[29] Whitmell, a clergyman's wife, died in 1917. She did not write anything else which achieved the popularity of "Christ in Flanders".

"The White Comrade", by the American poet Amelia Josephine Burr, also expatiates on the same theme; Christ who is seldom remembered in times of comfort is easily recognised in moments of affliction: 'Till comes a day when we are under fire, ... / Then, a living presence at our side, / White Comrade, we find - Thee'.[30]

. . . . . .

'Out of it all, I know there will rise some great spiritual conquest and good; and everything will, out of this baptism of fire and blood, come purified';[31] Marie Van Vorst's observation reflects another of the beliefs which found currency during the First World War. This feeling for salvation through martyrdom, the inclination to locate virtue in pain and suffering, emanates from a mood based on the conviction that only through some vast sacrifice and redemption society could be purged of its complacency and its grossness. Such a context, with its strong Christian overtones, provides a useful reference for justifying the war and proferring comfort. 'Baptism of fire', 'purified', terms used by Van Vorst are the staple rhetoric of verse which embodies this attitude; representative titles are "The Cleansing Fire", "Purged by War" and the ubiquitous "Sacrament". The redemptive effects of suffering could also be channelled for propaganda purposes. 'Through Darkness to Light' and 'Through Fighting to Triumph' are phrases which appear on a recruiting poster which depicts soldiers against a background of ruins. The main caption reads: 'The Only Road For An Englishman'.

The redemptive effects of suffering form the theme of a vast number of poems and are evoked in different ways. Janet Begbie's "London in Darkness" celebrates a capital rendered 'beautiful at last! Cleansed of the glare / That mammon daubed' it with.[32] Rose E. Sharland regards the wounded aboard a hospital barge in "The White Ship" as 'cleansed in the fires of affliction'.[33] "Voices", by Irene Rutherford McLeod, resolves the dilemma of the havoc wrought by war in human life by resorting to the conventional belief that suffering strengthens character:

> Out of futile strife
> There shall arise
> Purged and triumphant life,
> Chastened and wise.[34]

Irene Hammond's "The Summit of Gain", which begins, 'O thou who art cleansing by fire', finds meaning for the upheaval by introducing into the poem the 'Voice of God' which proclaims: 'There shall come from this terror of torment / Sweeter peace than all words can foretell'.[35] Similar justification for war's existence is proferred by Sibyl Bristowe in "A Sacrament": 'The crimson flood which stains the hapless earth / Is but the prelude to a nobler birth'.[36] Working within the context of the sacrifice / redemption motif, Katharine Lee Bates deems the war as primary to the achievement of everlasting peace. In "Wild Europe" she sees 'the song of brotherhood' rising 'from all this wail and moan' and proclaims: 'The throne / That war is building is the throne of Peace'.[37] A similar resolution is achieved by Bates in "The Cry": 'a hope has gone abroad, a hope that crowns the sword; ... / Peace shall be the prize of strife'.[38] Man cleansed by the fires of affliction and perfected by pain is the subject of Winifred Hughes's evocatively titled poem, "The Soul Factory". The 'snowy linen and misty lace' producing factories of pre-war Flanders have given way to factories where the 'souls of men are wrought'. By 'the steady flame of courage' are 'Twisted and wrenched and hammered

> Keenest tools for the Master's hand,
> Vessels for him to use
> Of strength and patience and energy, planned
> And fashioned as he doth choose;
> And the web of man's divinity
> Is woven on that plain . . . 39

The image of God as the potter, moulding man's soul, thus, too, could be availed of to vindicate war.

Margaret Sackville, in keeping with her pacifist principles, in "Sacrament" exploits religious practice to convey the absolute nullity of war; she underlines the meaningless destruction of life in the cause of war by

invoking the ingredients of the sacrament: 'This flesh (our flesh) crumbled away like bread, / This blood (our blood) poured out like wine, like wine'.[40]

. . . . . .

The poets' highlighting of the plight of 'little Belgium', of immense value as propaganda, illustrates their technique of locating virtue in pain and suffering by interpreting it through Christian concept and image. The particular imagery appropriated to describe the predicament of Belgium and the French towns is that of martyrdom. Belgium as a crucified innocent, humiliated and destroyed,but ultimately invincible,figures in many poems. Aimee Byng Scott's "Belgium", opening with the pledge: 'We will not sheathe the sword until revenged / The agony that saw thee crucified,' offers the comfort 'Oh, martyred land, hope still, the morning star / Trembles on the horizon'.[41] In "Belgium" Mary Du Deney assures that the country's 'martyred blood' will not pass unheeded by God for He 'hears His smallest creature's cry'.[42] "Belgium",by Lily Marcus,which starts: 'We speak of thee as Belgium, crucified', celebrates the country's courage in challenging 'that vast Might which vainly sought / To make thy land a gateway to its gain' and promises that history shall always remember 'Belgium, ruined, but invincible'.[43] The unequal struggle of David and Goliath could also be adapted to depict Belgium's resistance to the 'vast Might'; Emily Underdown's "The David of Europe" is an illustration. Jessie Pope in "The Two Goliaths" uses the same to score off the Kaiser's supposed dismissal of the British Expeditionary Force,as the contemptible little army.

The German aggressiveness exhibited in violation of Belgian territory suggested a sexual interpretation of Belgium's woes; such interpretation was eminently summarized in the phrase, 'rape of Belgium', popular newspaper terminology at the start of the war. Marion C. Smith's "Heart of all the World" implies such interpretation in a poem overtly Christian in context:

> Heartstruck she stands — Our Lady of all Sorrows —
> Circled with ruin, sunk in deep amaze; . . .
>
> Crowned only with the thorn — despoiled and broken — . . .
>
> She made her breast a shield, her sword a splendour,
> She rose like flame upon the darkened ways;
> So, through the anguish of her proud surrender
> Breaks the clear vision of undying praise. 44

Working within the context of martyrdom Smith's poem is striking for her substitution of the feminine archetype of suffering,'Our Lady of Sorrows', to depict Belgium's calamity; it facilitates the sexual implication.

. . . . . .

In war the woman with the greatest at stake is the mother. The ideal of motherhood as promulgated by a jingoistic press was a sentimental, sanctimonious one, often relying on the mother's identification with Mary. The comparison with Mary deified motherhood and helped inculcate in the mothers of sons the virtues of self-sacrifice and resignation, useful acquisitions for them in time of war. "Mothers of Soldiers",by Helen Gray Cone,exemplifies this exploitation of mothers to further the cause of war:

What should we say to you, O glorious
Mothers
Sacred and full of sorrows . . .
We kneel to you as haloed women . . .
Not ours the exquisite anguish of surrender,
The deep, still courage that day by day
endures,
The rosary of memories piercing-tender,
The travail and triumph that are
yours. . . .
You have made yourselves part of the
world's salvation,
You have shared the passion and the joy
of God . . .
Out of your pain shall Man be newly born. 45

The use of words with religious connotations such as 'sacred', 'rosary', 'haloed', 'salvation' all contribute towards the final effect the writer aims at: the equation of mothers with Mary. An equation further sustained by the phrase 'full of sorrows', which evokes the sorrows of Mary. The pain and anguish which mothers may suffer at losing their sons is glozed over by the compensation of the honour and glory accruing to mothers whose sons die, supposedly, to save the world.

The comparison with Mary was also utilized to reconcile mothers with the loss of their sons. The suffering of Mary, with its inherent clause of divine justification for all the pain endured both by sons and mothers, was a useful device for ascribing meaning to the mothers' bereavement of sons lost in a prolonged senseless massacre. The exploitation of the Christ / soldier analogy to explain the mass slaughter of men, as pertaining to the male experience of war, is paralleled by the adoption of the Mary / mother comparison to find religious justification for the feminine experience of war, as relating to the mothers of men.

The equation of the mothers' agony and torment with Mary's, at times implicitly acknowledged, assumes a complete identification of the mothers with Mary in some other poems. One of such is "The Litany of the War-

Mothers", by Edith Grensted Rochester. Here the identification with Mary and supplication for power of endurance is of a personal nature; the writer's son was killed in action in 1918:

> Mary, Mother of God!
> I, too, am a mother like you!
> I, too, have borne a man-child - ...
>
> Even as you in your time,
> We are sending our sons forth to save -
> The whole world to rescue and save -
> To a future sublime! ...
>
> As Christ, they have taken their cross!
> Giving up all for the cause - ...
>
> May we, in our love for each son -
> Each dearly-loved, love-worthy son -
> The Christ-courage find. 46

Rochester through identification with Mary seeks greater courage and endurance to bear the loss of her son. "To Our Lady of Sorrows", by 'a mother', adopts the same analogy to impart significance to the affliction borne by mothers:

> Mother, you knew beneath the Cross
> More than a mother's pain and loss;
> Our sons have suffered too and died,
> And so our place is at your side. 47

Gretchen Warren's "Prayer to the Virgin" establishes kinship between mothers and Mary by equating the former's sorrow with that suffered by Mary, and through such identification hopes for greater vision and understanding of the loss sustained:

> We gave our sons. Close by the Hill
> Where yours laid down His life they lie; ...
> We know the sending forth to die,
> The night, the loneliness, the grief.
>
> O Mary! show us more than death, ...
> on our tear-blind vision lay
> Your hands that took Him from the Cross. 48

The most impressive and moving of the poems which are centred on the Mary/mother analogy is "One Mother", by Irene Rutherford McLeod. First published in her book of verse, Swords for Life (1916), the poem so struck the public imagination that it was issued as a pamphlet. "One Mother" is in the form of a monologue which makes it more convincing a representation of the speakers inner thoughts. The poem is an intense, anguished cry to the Mother of Christ, of a mother, whose son has fallen in the war. The first part of the monologue describes the mother's need to invoke Mary's help and the nature of her kinship with the Mother of Christ. Part of the poem's appeal lies in its intense, dramatic opening.

> Mary!
> I'm quite alone in all the world,
> Into such bright sharp pain of anguish hurled ...
> I plod
> Among wild stars, and hide my face from God.
> God frightens me. He's strange. I know him not. ...
> But you - you had a son ...
> You are not Mary of the virgin brow!
> You agonized for Jesus! ...
> Your crown
> Is my crown! ...
> I seek you, Mary, Spread
> Your compassionate skirts! I bring to you my dead. [49]

The disassociation from God the Father experienced by the mother recalls the soldier-poets identification with Christ the Son and disenchantment with God the Father. Having established her link with Mary, the mother's monologue unfolds the intimate details of her life: her intense love for her son which irritated him as he grew up; her pleasure that he had not fallen into the clutches of some woman. This pleasure was shortlived, for soon he was in the clutches of something more deadly than women: 'Almost before I knew, ... / Death and not woman took the son I bore'. The rest of the poem comprises an effusion of mother-love; the mother details all her son's mannerisms, which make him prominent, so that Mary can recognise

him easily and comfort him: 'Seek for him, Mary! Bright among the ghosts / Of other women's sons he'll star those hosts / Of shining boys'. The aura of sentiment which pervades the poem explains, perhaps, its appeal to the masses.

Apart from the 'mater dolorosa' image central to the poems discussed above, poets with pacifist sympathies brought their own particular interpretation to the mothers' predicament in war-time. The intense sorrow of the mother in S. Gertrude Ford's "The Mother's Wound" emanates not from the loss of her son in battle,but the realisation that he killed and crushed life out 'From some young heart that held it dear' and through this deed other mothers 'Sit as I sit, in homes as drear'; this is the root of her suffering: 'My Golgotha, Gethsemane / And Calvary is here'.[50] Ford's poem illustrates how the religious metaphor could be manipulated to countenance a variety of convictions.

. . . . . .

The Crucifixion suggested a valuable reference for interpreting the condition of the prime instruments of war: soldiers. This association of soldiers with Christ the Saviour aimed to provide comfort and consolation. The powerful implication of blood sacrifice,as revealed in the Crucifixion, convinced of the necessity of bloodshed if a sinful society was to be redeemed. Shedding of blood was basic to the redemption of man; by offering their lives to save society the soldiers were at one with the Saviour.

One of the earliest poems which places Christ alongside the soldier is Alice Meynell's "Summer in England, 1914"; it first appeared in The

Times, 10 October 1914, and proved a popular anthology piece. In it Meynell skilfully wields the patriotic and the religious to justify the righteousness of England's decision to take up arms. The beauty of an English summer described in the first two stanzas leads to the following opening lines of the third: 'And while this rose made round her cup, / The armies died convulsed'; Meynell uses the rose as a symbol of continuing growth and fertility, of uncaring fecund nature which is oblivious to the horrors of war. An indifferent nature, tranquilly going on with her golden processes in the midst of so much devil ment, was exploited by some poets to highlight the sacrifice man makes to redeem her, a motif discussed in the next chapter. The third and fourth stanzas register distaste for the carnage wrought by war and the fourth concludes: 'Love, hide thy face / From man's unpardonable race'. The contrast offered in the first four stanzas is essential for the resolution achieved in the fifth and final stanza; any qualms which surface in the fourth are overcome and the war receives Meynell's sanction:

> Who said 'No man hath greater love than this,
> To die to serve his friend'?
> So these have loved us all unto the end.
> Chide thou no more, O thou unsacrificed!
> The soldier dying dies upon a kiss,
> The very kiss of Christ. 51

The poem implies that the war which has disrupted the beauty of peace-time existence is necessary for the preservation of this very beauty. The Christian disapproval of war suggested by 'Love, hide thy face' is mitigated by reference to Christ's injunction at the Last Supper, which was often pressed into service to define the allied cause: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'. The salutatory kiss establishes kinship between Christ and soldiers. Meynell's conviction in the justness of the English cause remained steadfast, despite the loss of a son-in-law and the pacifism of her son, Francis.

The latter describing his parents attitude towards the war comments: 'to my parents, accepting the propaganda phrase of the time, it was "the war to end war".'[52]

A popular picture of the time captioned, 'The Great Sacrifice', which first appeared in the Christmas 1914 number of the Graphic, is a visual representation of the close alliance between Christ and soldiers; it portrays a dead soldier in the field, his uniform neat and tidy, his only wound the size of a small coin in his head as he lies with one hand on the feet of a spectral Crucified Christ. The Christ / soldier analogy utilized to depict kinship between Christ and the combatants appears in various guises. In Olive Lindsay's "What the Moon Saw" it surfaces in the soldiers directly being called Christ: 'Christ in the field? Yea, many Christs ... / And as the Christs amid the throng / Were strong, so He the more was strong'.[53] "The Spectral Army", by Mrs. Warren, shows ghosts of millions of soldiers 'Tramp up Death's highway' who

> As they pass ...
> look at Christ's red wounds, and smile
> In gallant comradeship — they know
> Golgotha's terrible defile. [54]

Winifred Cook in "To the Wounded" interprets the soldiers injuries in terms of the stigmata; to her, scarred and disfigured soldiers seem 'Crowned with His blossoms, everlastingly! / — Blossoms wine-red and thorned'.[55] Winifred M. Letts's "To a Soldier in Hospital", which first appeared in the Spectator, 12 August 1916, and proved a favourite with anthologists, celebrates a wounded soldier's patient resigned endurance of agony as the outcome of a great truth learnt: 'You know the wisdom taught by Calvary / At twenty-three'.[56]

While soldiers though engaged in an unchristian activity could be shown as one with Christ, the clergy prohibited by church law from taking up arms were equated with the morally reprehensible 'shirkers'. Ben Tillet, the vocal dockers' leader, keeping in mind the clergy's wholehearted approval of war, ironically demanded to know why men so fond of talking about Heaven should be afraid to pass through its gates.[57] Children in industrial areas were known to accost parish priests, thumb to nose, with the shout: 'Kitchener wants you'.[58] Letts's "Chaplain to the Forces" is an attempt to vindicate the clergy's position. The chaplain is presented as the 'Ambassador of Christ' who pays a 'price' 'not small' for his priesthood: 'To be a man and yet stand by, / To hold your life whilst others die, / To bless, not share the sacrifice'. Affinity between Christ and his ambassador is established by showing that the chaplain in pursuance of his duty treads the same 'roads of hell' which 'With nail-pierced feet ... He trod'.[59]

As has already been stated religion provided a flexible frame of reference which could be manipulated to accommodate all manner of war experience. Thus it is not surprising that the traumas and travails of conscientious objectors also discovered a prototype in the figure of Christ. Francis Meynell records that when arrested as a conscientious objector and introduced to others in prison, one of them took him aside and earnestly asked: 'Are you enlisted in the army of Christ?'.[60] The conchies in associating themselves with Christ considered themselves the true adherents of His teachings. S. Gertrude Ford's sonnet,"A Conscientious Objector", incorporates this analogy to depict the ordeal suffered by one whose 'crime was that he loved Peace; followed her / For Christ's sake':

They bound him, mocked, maltreated; wounded sore
They left him, crying 'Coward'. So once the rude
Cries of the crowd rang round the Tree that bore
Leaves for the healing of the nations strewed.
Few then His followers; now, the wide world o'er,
Behold them as the stars for multitude. 61

Ford implies conscientious objectors silently enduring all hardship, sustained by the image of Jesus derided and buffetted, but ultimately triumphant. Theodora Mills's "Unpopularity" portrays conscientious objectors as 'Reviled, and hated, and with thorn-wreaths crowned', sheltering 'Beneath the shadow of the Cross'.[62]

The Crucifixion could also be evoked to express disapprobation of the war; Elinor Jenkins's "Ecce Homo!" is one illustration. Free from the dialectics which define much of the verse using the religious idiom, Ford's sonnet discussed above is representative, and making no attempt to win solace for the wounded heart, "Ecce Homo!", derives its impact from its independence of all superfluous thought and phrase :

He hung upon a wayside Calvary,
From whence no more the carven Christ looks down,
With wide, blank eyes beneath the thorny crown,
On the devout and careless, passing by.
The Cross had shaken with his agony,
His blood had stained the dancing grasses brown,
But when we found him, though the weary frown,
That waited on death's long delayed mercy,
Still bent his brow, yet he was dead and cold, ...
As we stood turned to ice
The sun remembered Golgotha of old,
And made a halo of his yellow hair
In mockery of that fruitless sacrifice. 63

The stark approach favoured by Jenkins emphasizes the horror of the soldier's lonely death. "The New Crucifixion", by Gladys Ridgway and Ellen Kenyon's "The New Calvary" are more traditional exercises devised to illustrate war's mockery of the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. Mrs. Warren's "The Second Calvary" uses the religious metaphor to denounce

a war which was bruited as divinely sanctioned. The poem presents Christ intervening on man's behalf and asking God to accept the sacrament offered by man,which comes 'from War's vineyard pressed / The bitterest Cup of all'; the hoped for appeasement is not forthcoming for God tasting 'the blood-bright wine' answers 'This is Man's will – not Mine'.[64] Warren's poem is another instance of the division in sympathy between the Father and Son which appears in First World War Poetry. Emily Orr's "Europe at War" regards the conflict as a deliberate act of sinning in defiance of the precepts of Christ:

> Thou the true Vine dost shed from every vein,
> Life-giving streams for thirsty sinners' need,
> And we ingrates can coldly watch Thee bleed
> And turn us to our deadly draught again. 65

. . . . . .

Maude Onions, who served as an army signaller at the Front, in a chapter titled 'A Christian War' in her book of war experiences, A Woman At War (1929), recalls a conversation with a corporal who after three years at the Front was most disgruntled with the 'Christian aspect' of the war. He remarked to her: 'if this war can be justified from the teachings of Christ, we must look for something else to put the world right'.[66] The First World War, which from the start was set in a religious context, heavily reliant on the bromide of setting the world right, despite dissentient voices, managed to retain an aura of religiosity throughout its length. However, the corporal's disillusionment was not misplaced; as has been shown above the religious metaphor was primarily employed to advocate the war and lend significance to the wholesale slaughter of human life. As a frame of reference religion in the image of the

crucified Christ offered an expedient means of consolation, which by its affirmation of life's triumph at the moment of death and assertion of the value and purpose of pain, served the object of reconciling people with the anguish of the loss borne. The 'teachings of Christ', aided and abetted by the agile interpretation of the clergy, subserved the purpose of quelling all doubts of sin and damnation which the thought of killing might produce. The pressures of patriotism and bereavement perhaps gave currency to a quasi-Islamic belief that soldiers dying nobly in a 'holy war' would immediately enter into everlasting life. The Bishop of London was recorded as saying: 'if we are to comfort mourners, we must go back to a much brighter view of death'. To give substance to his argument he is reported as often quoting in his sermons a poem of Katharine Tynan's: "Flower of Youth".[67] Of this poem Tynan writes in her reminiscences of the war years:

> A poem of mine in the Spectator, "Flower of Youth",... apparently caught and held many. Since it first appeared, in the Autumn of 1914, it ... brought me many hundreds of letters. I believe I have written better poems of the War, or as good, but nothing I have written ... approached its popularity ... The poem ... had an extraordinary vogue. The Bishop of London ... used it more than once in his sermons ... I read in the Times of the 30th December 1918, that the Primate, preaching at Canterbury Cathedral, quoted "Flower of Youth" as 'a poem adventurous but rich in brave thought'. [68]

The poem weaves together the religious, the elegiac and the sentimental to affect Christian comfort for those in need:

> Lest Heaven be thronged with grey-beards hoary,
> God, who made boys for His delight,
> Stoops in a day of grief and glory
> And calls them in, in from the night. . . .
>
> Heaven's thronged with gay and careless faces,
> New-waked from dreams of dreadful things,
> They walk in green and pleasant places
> And by the crystal water-springs ...

Dear boys! They shall be young for ever. . . .
God who made boys so clean and good
Smiles with the eyes of fatherhood. . . .

Now Heaven is by the young invaded;
Their laughter's in the House of God.
Stainless and simple as He made it
God keeps the heart o' the boy unflawed. 69

The belief in the modern crusaders remission from sin surfaces again in this poem; the war dead are 'clean and good', 'Stainless and simple' and 'unflawed'. Their passage from life into death, unhindered by penitence or purgatory, ends in paradise; the 'green and pleasant places', 'the crystal water-springs' evoke the Muslim paradise ready to receive all true believers and participants of holy wars. Tynan appears to subscribe to the Islamic belief that the dead in battle go straight to heaven; in her poem,"The Long Vacation", the roads which used to bring the boys home are deserted for, 'The roads of the world run Heavenward every one'.[70] The cosy picture of paradise conjured up in "The Flower of Youth" is used in another poem, "The Old Soldier", to the effect: 'Lest the young soldiers be strange in Heaven, / God bids the old soldier they all adored / Come to Him and wait for them'. The 'old soldier' is Lord Roberts, whom Tynan visualizes after his death as 'A happy door-keeper in the House of the Lord' letting in the 'clean, new-shriven' young soldiers.[71] Tynan's verse periodically does descend to the bathetic.

In the cause of patriotism, religion was monopolized by poets to console, whilst being simultaneously structured to deceive under the guise of justifying events.

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CHAPTER THREE

WAR, NATURE AND THE ELEGIAC

Nature regarded through the lens of war, like religion, offered poets a means of interpreting the conflict by assimilating it into the language and thought of an established, though apparently alien, literary tradition. This incorporation of war into the pastoral scheme of things, symptomatic of writers' efforts to elucidate ongoing events in terms of existent modes of expression, necessitated modification in traditional interpretations of pastoral, if explicit and forceful exposition was to be achieved. A theme taken up in this chapter is the poets' distortion of pastoral symbolism to define war. An examination of the role played by nature in describing war cannot overlook the poets' indebtedness to the Georgian mode of writing. Georgian poetry, wherein 'poets expressed themselves primarily through images and scenes of landscape and of the natural or rural world',[1] made easy the adoption of the symbolical processes of nature to comment upon war. Among other things, this chapter shows how the Georgian 'obsession with hill and dale, seed time and harvest, ... woods and ... flowers'[2] was translated to the purpose of depicting war. The parochial character of Georgian poetry, implicit in poets' preoccupation with the feelings and emotions peculiar to the love of one's own folk and one's own corner of the country - Brooke's "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester" is representative - commended itself to the writers of patriotic verse as a befitting medium for arousing nationalist sentiment. The opening part of this chapter examines how, pure patriotism, the Georgian celebration of the sights and sounds of rural England in rich sentimental tones, was exploited to substantiate the necessity for sacrifice and the need to keep the home

fires burning.

'Pastoral has always been a favoured mode for elegy, whether general or personal'.[3] This traditional association between nature and the elegiac explains the juxtaposition of the two in this chapter. Elegy mourns in personal or general tones the passing away of a particular person or a particular quality of life. A time of protracted war is conducive to the writing of elegiac verse; verse stimulated by personal remembrance or the sorrow of it all. The pastoral world, like religion, by its affirmation of life and its continual ability to renew itself, allows poets to dole comfort and hope to the bereaved.

Poets resorted to nature and exploited its imagery and symbolism to give expression to a variety of hopes, beliefs and attitudes. The first part of this chapter considers verse which illustrates nature subservient to the cause of patriotism. The middle part examines the variety of ways in which poets located in natural phenomena modes for reading war. The last discusses elegiac verse, pastoral and other.

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Constance Ada Renshaw's "The Lure of England", which won a prize for best war poem on its publication in the 1915 November/December issue of the Poetry Review, exemplifies how nature was utilized to further the patriotic cause. In this category of war poetry nature becomes a vital ideal in justifying the suffering and carnage of war; the scenes of the English countryside, conceived as peculiarly gentle by the Georgians, are shown as demanding and being worthy of sacrifice:

There's a misty sea-girt island in the sunset -
haunted west;
I can see it in my wounded dreams of home . . . .

Oh! there's Spring upon the island, and the
greening lures me back
To mysterious meres and woodways in the west.
. . . They have stripped my manhood from me,
they have stretched me on the rack . . .
. . . Take me home, a blinded broken thing,
to rest!

I can never see the island with its fields of sheeted
gold,
And the wisps of sunset drifting in the west.
Darkness drowns the dim green valleys and the
silent hills of old,
And the hedges where the sparrow builds her
nest.

Let me put my blind eyes down among the blue-
bells and the grass.
Let me feel the brimming coolness on my brow.
Let me touch the dewy bracken where the dream-
ful shadows pass.
. . . I have bled for England! ... Let her
heal me now! ...

O my misty sea-girt island in the sunset-laden
west!
I can feel your moorland wind upon my eyes;
I can hear your sleepy birdeens in their swaying
moonlit nest ...
England - England! ... with your bluebells
and your skies. 4

Like much of Georgian poetry, Renshaw's poem relies upon impressions and simple emotional responses; the pathos and sentiment which permeate it are primarily responsible for the immense popularity it enjoyed with critics and public alike. The rich sensuous pictures which make up the poem, though obviously based on observation of natural scenes, connote a literariness stemming from the Romantic canon. Though Renshaw uses the blind soldier's reminiscences of home scenes chiefly to convey the love for his country which inspired him to risk all, she also implies criticism of the war, by stressing the immense cost at which the beauty

the soldier yearns to behold has been redeemed. The transmutation of a human being into a 'broken blinded thing' suggests the unnaturalness of war, an unnaturalness further strengthened by comparison with the wholesomeness of the spring landscape; 'thing' implies the combatant's severance from the order of nature and of humanity. The last stanza sums up the change effected by war in the protagonist; the immense lover of nature's beauty, tries to reconcile himself with his visual loss, by diverting attention to the other senses through which he can still attain affinity with home scenes: 'I can feel your moorland wind upon my eyes; / I can hear your sleepy birdeens'. The soldier's heightened imagination, spurred by the consciousness that he may not make it home, finds alternative ways of seeking unison with what is sorely missed.

Nostalgia for the English country scenes, scenes forsaken in the cause of duty, led to the composition of verse intensely parochial within the wider nationalism. Renshaw, a native of Sheffield, cannot refrain from introducing the 'moorland wind' into her poem. Much of this poetry of nostalgia, regional or other, is composed from the standpoint of the fighting soldier; a context necessitated by the writers' non-combatant status. The usefulness of such a context is apparent: wistful reminiscences of the Mother Country and grossly idealized contemplations of the countryside, carry more weight when pictured as a means of escape from the savage and alien landscape of war; correspondingly the need to preserve the inviolability of the scenes of home is emphasized. This parochial character of patriotism is touched upon by Sheila Kaye-Smith in her novel, Little England (1918); of the men who lay down their lives she comments:

> They had not died for England - what did they know of England and the British Empire? They had died for a little corner of ground which was England to them,

> and the sprinkling of poor common folk who lived in it. Before their dying eyes had risen not the vision of England's glory, but just these fields . . . with the ponds, and the woods and the red roofs. 5

Maud Anna Bell's "Crocuses at Nottingham", which appeared in the TLS, 22 March 1917, is an illustration of the regional sentiment outlined by Kaye-Smith. A note appended to the poem informs that it was composed after reading the correspondence column of the TLS, 1 March 1917. A quick glance at this column shows correspondents pondering over the mysteries of Napoleon's height, Garrick's date of birth and the caste problems of India; the only way in which war intrudes upon civilian consciousness is by way of a query about the removal of the Heine Tablet from a London street. "Crocuses at Nottingham", exploits a soldier's memories of the scenes of home to define the sharp division between Front-line existence and the complacency of life at home:

> Out here the dogs of war run loose,
> Their whipper-in is Death;
> Across the spoilt and battered fields
> We hear their sobbing breath.
> The fields where grew the living corn
> Are heavy with our dead;
> Yet still the fields at home are green ...
>
> There are little girls at Nottingham
> Who do not dread the Boche,
> Young girls at school at Nottingham
> (Lord! how I need a wash!)
> There are little boys at Nottingham
> Who never heard a gun;
> There are silly fools at Nottingham
> Who think we're here for fun.
>
> When —
> There are crocuses at Nottingham! ...
> Thousands of buds at Nottingham
> Ungathered by the Hun.

But here we trample down the grass
  Into a purple slime;
There lives no tree to give the birds
  House room in pairing-time.
We live in holes, like cellar rats,
  But through the noise and smell
I often see those crocuses
  Of which the people tell.

Why!
There are crocuses at Nottingham! ...
Because we're here in Hell. 6

Bell's poem, addressed as from the trenches, strives to inculcate awareness among the civilians of the tremendous cost at which life at home is being preserved. She waxes critical of those upon whom the monstrosity of war fails to register: 'There are silly fools at Nottingham / Who think we're here for fun'. As with Renshaw, Bell, too, implies disapproval of the ongoing war. The forceful hunting image which starts the poem manifests how poets inverted peace-time activities to interpret war; the 'sobbing breath' of the cornered animal, now describes the condition of men who 'live in holes, like cellar rats'. Throughout the poem Bell elucidates war by making contrasted definitions of peace. The penultimate stanza illustrates how memories of home provide the combatant relief from the war-scape; when the reality of the Front goes beyond the endurable, he takes refuge in remembrance of home, which so totally absorbs him, that he seems to grow oblivious of his actual physical environment: 'But through the noise and smell / I often see those crocuses / Of which the people tell'.

By itself "Crocuses at Nottingham" reveals how women were imaginatively trying to comprehend the soldiers' point of view. It is also interesting as having evoked a response which appeared in the next week's edition of the TLS. "In England", by May O'Rourke, bearing the inscription, 'after

reading the poem "Crocuses at Nottingham",' written from the civilian standpoint, implies criticism of Bell's barely concealed conjecture of civilian insensibility to the soldiers' predicament. "In England" rates as a companion piece to "Crocuses"; it employs the metres and stanzaic pattern of the latter to depict civilian consciousness of the price at which the sanctity of the homeland was being maintained, as well as highlighting the suffering, stoically borne, by those at home:

> To-day the lonely winds are loose,
> And crying goes the rain,
> And here we walk the fields they knew, ...
>
> And —
> There are silent homes in England, now,
> And wakeful eyes in England, now,
> And tired hearts in England, now ...
>
> And none forget in England, now,
> The wasted lives and powers. ...
>
> Our hearts are pierced in England, now,
> And none forget in England, now,
> That redder seed than England's now
> In Flanders earth is sown. 7

O'Rourke's poem, despite its sophistry and lashings of sentiment, lacks conviction; it does not attain the authentic note of "Crocuses" and appears an exercise in propaganda.

The soldiers' awareness of the contrast between life at home and at the Front, commented upon by Bell, is also the theme of Constance Renshaw's "Sleeping and Waking". Renshaw uses a soldier's wistful night-time imaging of home and peace to emphasize the scourges of war:

> My dull dust-reddened eyes, that love far hills
> And luring lines of moorland, close in sleep
> On haunting things in England! ... But Dawn
> thrills
> Above torn fields ... my dreams are blotted out;
> I gaze upon a mangled human heap.
> And crimson gleams from some black cannon-snout. 8

Earlier Thomas Campbell, in "The Soldier's Dream", used the same dream context to voice disapproval of war as Owen, too, was to do later in his "The Soldier's Dream"; in all the protagonist's dream of release from battle is in the nature of a day dream, which fades away at dawn. "Dead Days", also by Renshaw, accentuates the negative impact of war. Constant exposure to the war-scape, she implies, impairs even the imaginative processes of man. The solace, however arbitrary, enjoyed by the soldier in "Sleeping and Waking", is denied to the combatant in "Dead Days"; his attempts to win momentary relief from the 'alien world' he inhabits, by focusing his thoughts upon scenes of home, are stunted, because of his inability to shake-off consciousness of the 'world defiled, . . . / where tired men lurch on shell-swept roads, / And stretchers bear their pain-fraught loads', which devours his senses.[9] Continual exposure to the war-scape enforces a habit of mind which images home scenes in terms of battle-front phenomena, imparting to them an unnaturalness which connotes the abnormality of the activity which fosters the new analogies. In Cicely Fox Smith's "The Five Ricks", a soldier dreaming of his father's farm sees it covered by a blue sky 'Where small white clouds go floating high, / Like shell-bursts round a battle-plane'. The activities of the rats which play in and about the ricks he images thus: 'The lean grey rats slip in and out, . . . / Like snipers out in No Man's Land'.[10] "The Great Push", by Frida Wolfe, is a celebration of spring which can be described as pastoral, militarized :

> Snowdrops pierce the iron mould,
> Daffodils their spears unfold,
> Lilac buds are shooting fast — . . .
>
> Wind-flowers from their ambush fly,
> Larches toss their banners high,
> And blue bells raid the woods around —
> Spring at last is gaining ground. 11

Wolfe's appropriation of military terminology to describe the spring landscape, which may strike as too easy and facile, nevertheless, does deftly capture the individual characteristics.

In contrast to Renshaw's "Sleeping and Waking", referred to above, Norah M. Holland's "Home Thoughts from Abroad", recalling Browning's "Home Thoughts, from Abroad", utilizes the soldier's consciousness of the difference between home life and life at the Front to justify the war. The scenes, scents and sounds of an English spring, evoked from the trenches with constant reminders of the war-scape, produce a vehement desire for preserving England's sanctity:

> April in England! Blood and dust and smother,
> Screaming of horses, moans of agony;
> April! Full many of thy sons, O Mother,
> Never again those dewy dawns shall see.
> April in England! God, keep England free. [12]

If the poetics of popular patriotism, with special reference to the role assigned to nature and home-land memories, was ever enunciated, the credit must be to Lily Marcus. Her poem, "In the Trenches", after expatiating on the soldiers' habit of singing songs, redolent of home, draws this conclusion:

> Why, it makes you know the value
> O' the things you're fightin' for,
> An' you'll feel an inspiration
> That defies the ruth o'War,
> For it's just the homeland mem'ries
> That be callin' everywhere,
> An' you'll sing the songs they bring you,
> Then be strong to do an' dare,
> Aye, be proud to die, if need be, in the trenches. [13]

Depiction of country sights and sounds in susceptibly sentimental tones was one method adopted by poets to inculcate awareness of the 'value' of things which demanded sacrifice. Edith Anne Stewart's "The Summer

Recruit", a poem much commended by reviewers, exemplifies how Georgian pure patriotism could be easily translated to recruiting appeal. It concerns a boy who desists from enlisting, arguing that he has neither mother, sister nor wife to protect; the sight of the country in high summer, however, inspires him to join up:

> ma country's pitten on her best, -
> I never saw her just sae graun'ly drest, -
> Why should I fight? I think I couldna' rest
> And her sae finely drest. 14

Katharine Tynan in,"High Summer", uses pictures of summer scenes to a double purpose; they serve to highlight men's inspiration to war, as well as expressing civilian awareness of the value of the soldiers' immense sacrifice:

> Pinks and syringa in the garden closes
> And the sweet privet hedge and golden roses.
> And pines hot in the sun, the drone of the bee;
> They die in Flanders to keep these for me. . . .
>
> These are bought with a price, a bitter fee -
> They die in Flanders to keep these for me. 15

The refrain which rounds off each of the four stanzas which make up the poem serves to accentuate civilian consciousness of the combatants' great sacrifice. "Flanders", by Helen C. Foxcroft, is a tribute to the soldiers' sacrifice based upon the pattern set out in the above:

> Under my feet the springing blades
> Are green as green can be;
> It's the bloody clay of Flanders
> That keeps them green for me. 16

The 'dear' scenes for which soldiers 'fight and endure' and are forced into 'exile in alien lands' are highlighted by Evelyn Underhill in "England and the Soldier"; listed amongst these dear scenes are the

Homely texture of roads, fragrance of autumn
gardens -
The dahlia flaunting its standard, the aster starring
the sod -
Whisper of falling leaves in the golden coppice,
Evening mist white on the solemn fells. 17

Aelfrida Tillyard's "A Load of Hay", illustrates the facility with which the idealistic patriotism, characteristic of the Georgians, could be exploited to propagate nationalist sentiment. The poem turns upon a confrontation between the writer and a hay-woman bringing hay to serve her King. The hay which is intended as feed for horses overseas is not mere hay,

'Tis grass and flowers and songs of birds
And pale gold sunlight from an English sky;
A gathered posy of the lavish joys
That springtime strews about our country side.

A whiff of this hay to a soldier feeding horses in far away Alexandria, or battletorn France, will transport him to the scenes of home:

His eyes a vision of the meadow see -
Grey-green and brown, in rose-crowned hedges set, . . .
And there's a cottage in the picture too,
With birds a-flutter in and out the thatch,
And honeysuckle o'er the lattice trailed,
Where hive bees come and go on busy wing
To gay flowers, prim beside the garden path. 18

This poem encompasses within the context of war the prime ingredients of Georgian pastoral. This same is evoked by Cicely Fox Smith in "Homestead", which portrays a soldier dreaming of his village during a lull in battle: 'Brown thatch and gardens blooming with lily and with rose, . . . / Wide fields of oats and barley, and elder flower like foam'.[19] The Georgian pastoral, as has been shown above, was manipulated by poets to do service to King and Country, primarily by playing upon the sentiments of the populace.

. . . . . .

Nature suggested to poets a variety of images and metaphors which could be utilized to comment upon war and bring it into the range of intelligible experience. The storm image is one amongst the many figurative devices appropriated from natural phenomena to delineate war. This was a device eminently suitable to describe war, for as Northrop Frye has pointed out, 'the wind bloweth where it listeth, and images dealing with the movement of "spirit" are likely to be associated with the theme of unpredictability or sudden crisis'.[20] As was pointed out in Chapter One (see p. 22) this particular metaphor allows writers to remark tellingly upon war in a compact succinct manner. Helen Parry Eden's "After the Storm" is one illustration. The sight of the 'ruthless spoil of nut and shell' harvested by a storm from chestnut trees produces this reflection:

> So shall we see our night's grim tolls -
> When dawn displays the insensate dusk's
> Ravage - the unnumbered, fallen souls,
> The unnumbered, vacant, mangled husks. 21

The phrase 'mangled husks', conveys strikingly the distortions, physical and spiritual, wrought by war, as well as underlining the vacuity of the whole proceeding. "April Nights", by Elinor Jenkins, employs the same image to emphasize both the futility of war and the tragedy of young lives gone to waste. While inside houses the helpless old mourn the 'eager hearts that in the grave lie cold,' 'the toil and pride of years made vain', outside

> the lost wind desolately crying
> Scatters poor spring's frail children rent and torn,
> And . . . the moon looks, . . .
> On barren blossoms, strewn upon the night. 22

The 'barren blossoms' 'rent and torn' recall the 'vacant, mangled husks' of Eden's poem; both writers associate war with night and

darkness. Vera Brittain, in "War", uses the same analogy to interpret the German spring offensive of 1918: 'A night of storm and thunder crashing by, . . . / And broken flowers that will not bloom again'.[23] Amy Randall's "The Storm", stands out as a description of war within the context of this particular metaphor, by reason of the intense fusion that she effects between the human and the natural:

> On the high-road
> The poplars are mad with terror:
> They strain at their roots and scream,
> Flinging up their white arms
> Towards the black sky.
>
> In the valley
> The trees stand motionless,
> With hunched-up shoulders
> And patient feet set close together.
> The heavy drops
> Make a dull clutter on their leaves,
> And the trees blink
> As each bullet strikes a leaf.[24]

The pathetic fallacy is impressively utilized by Randall to describe the soldiers' condition, when in the midst of and after battle. The picture of soldiers bundled together after an attack, occasionally startled out of their patient ruminations by stray bullets dexterously captures the atmosphere of the trenches.

The storm image is incorporated within an elegiac piece by Alys Fane Trotter in "The Brave Trees of France"; the sacrifice of the 'splintered and battered . . . / Betrayed, and poisoned, and shattered'[25] trees, which can never put on new leaves, she maintains, shall be forever remembered. The equation of men with trees, central to Trotter's poem, is also the basis of Margaret Cole's elegiac, "Afterwards". The poem, a lamentation of youth, axed by war, is a monody which assumes wider significance. The felling of larches 'to make pit-props / For mining the coal for the great

armies', regarded by Cole as an abortion of life, for 'a pit-prop cannot move in the wind, / Nor have red manes hanging in spring from its branches', is used to define the human condition:

> And if these years have made you into a pit-prop,
> To carry the twisting galleries of the world's reconstruction
> (Where you may thank God, I suppose
> That they set you the sole stay of a nasty corner)
> What use is it to you? What use
> To have your body lying here
> In Sheer, underneath the larches. 26

The bracketed aside is typical of the ironic manner used by Cole to express disapprobation of those who run the war.

V. Helen Friedlaender, in a style reminiscent of Edward Thomas, avails of a scene from the world of nature to illustrate war. "Holiday" is set in a wood of 'young green beechwood' where the writer has ventured to escape war. The wonted relief is not forthcoming because her consciousness of the 'woodman's leisured blows' and the sunlight running 'From bole to dappling bole' turns her thoughts to war:

> From bole to bole .... Is that a crimson stain?
> The cross of death on striplings such as these?
> Ah, now to shut the eyes is vain - how vain!
> The very blind should see men here as trees:
>
> Should weep the limbs as goodly and as straight, . . .
> That crash with these into the speechless dust. 27

The drawback in Friedlaender's style is that she believes in underlining the point, which is amateurish.

. . . . . .

The autumnal fall of leaves offered a symbol which could be manipulated in several ways to express thoughts and feelings about the war. It is also one amongst the many euphemisms in vogue during that time. The

elegiac possibilities of this symbol, adroitly made use of by Herbert Read in "Auguries of Life and Death" were exploited by women, too, to the same purpose. Margaret Cole's "The Falling Leaves" uses this image to convey the indiscriminate slaughtering of the young. The sight of 'brown leaves' 'dropping' 'thickly, silently' reminds of the

> gallant multitude
> Which now all withering lay,
> Slain by no wind of age or pestilence,
> But in their beauty strewed
> Like snowflakes falling on the Flemish clay. [28]

The sight of fallen leaves assumes a personal significance for Helen Dircks in "The Leaves":

> I thought I saw my lover there
> A-lying on the ground,
> But when I knelt to touch his hair,
> 'Twas only leaves I found. [29]

To Jessie Miller in "Autumn Leaves", the patter of the falling leaves suggests the sound of 'an army in the thousands, / Rustling quietly in its flight'.[30]

The autumnal desolation evoked by this image of falling leaves, besides serving as a reflection of the war's negative and deadly effects on the lives of people also symbolizes the futility of human endeavour. Unlike the leaves in nature whose fall is the culmination of a biological process, the death of the soldiers, who, according to Cole, are in 'their beauty strewed', suggests a breakup of the traditional harmony between nature and man. The association of soldiers dead in their prime with rotting autumnal leaves is not without irony; it is one of the distortions effected by poets to accommodate war within the natural order. Katharine Tynan's elegiac, "Autumnal", avails of this discrepancy between the world of nature and that of man to lament the young dead:

They are dying like the leaves of Autumn fast,
Scattered and broken, blown on every blast:
The darling young, the brave, . . .

Alas, alas, the Autumn leaves are flying!
They had their Summer and 'tis time for dying.
But these had barely Spring. 31

This seasonal fall of leaves is more individually utilized by Hylda C. Cole in "The Trees"; the trees stripped bare of their 'leafy splendour' and standing 'strong and free' for the hard fight with winter's hate are fit analogues of the soldiers' condition: 'the lads who have let life's trappings go ... / Stripped, like the trees, - till their firm souls show ... / Clean-limbed, clear-couraged to live or die'.[32]

War enforces changes in traditional interpretations of pastoral. These new perceptions serve not only to bring war within the range of the comprehensible but also accentuate the aberration war symbolizes. 'The September of 1917 was a lovely autumn month ..... the long moonlight nights brought in a harvest of casualties'.[33] Lesley Smith, who served as a nurse at the Front, in one sentence pinpoints some of the new associations fostered by war. Autumn is no longer the Keatsean Autumn of 'mellow fruitfulness'; it is rather symbolic of death and decay, a fact underlined by poets' use of the symbol of falling leaves to describe the condition of men. The moon is a malevolent presence,in the words of Malcolm MacDonagh, 'an object of omen, a baleful visitant of the night, presaging wrath and destruction'.[34] War wrought a change in man's attitude towards the moon. The traditional romanticism, the loss of which is bemoaned by Helen Dircks in "To the Moon", was engulfed by a new perception, a perception succinctly set down by Monica Salmond, a sister of Julian Grenfell, thus: 'It was moonlight . . . , and a lovely night for a raid'.[35] This war-fostered disenchantment with the moon is central to Margaret Cole's "October Night,

1915", which laments the passing away of the beauty and splendour of moonlight nights:

> A golden slip of moon low down the sky,
> A mist of stars ... Oh, shall I never see
> Such a fair night of early moon, but still
> Turn my eye quickly, lest I see again
> The split sky racked with light, and shattering
> sound,
> Flung in great waves, from each pole pouring
> black,
> A flaming birth of momentary stars,
> And pain, pain, pain. 36

K. E. Luard, who worked with several hospital units just behind the Front line, describes the German bombardment preliminary to the Spring offensive of 1918 thus: 'to-night bombs are dropping like apples on the country round'.[37] Shirley Millard, who also served as a nurse, conveys the havoc wrought by the German bombing of the hospital where she worked in the following terms:

> Against the blood-red sky of sunrise stood a tree which had spread its bare branches over one of the barracks. For a moment I could think of nothing but a Christmas tree; the building had disappeared and the barren branches had blossomed horribly with fragments of human bodies, arms and legs, bits of bedding, furniture, and hospital equipment. 38

Millard evocatively illustrates the destruction by transposing it into the peace and harmony of a world antithetical to that of war. The war-fostered analogies also manifest themselves in the ascription of animal characteristics to the engines of war; Jessie Pope in "To a Taube", moving away from the common-place of equating planes with birds of prey, achieves a more ironic connotation by the word play upon 'taube', the German for dove. It would not be out of place to suggest that ascribing negative qualities to natural objects was a means of incriminating innocent nature and making it a party to the havoc perpetrated solely by man.

'A standard way of writing the Georgian poem was to get as many flowers into it as possible'.[39] Though Katharine Tynan antedates the Georgians her style is inseparable from theirs. In,"Herbal", she bridges the gulf between the two alien worlds of beauty and ugliness, flowers and war, by interpreting the latter solely through her skilful amassing of flora:

> Love-lies-bleeding now is found
> Grown in every common ground. . . .
>
> Love-in-a-mist, bewilderèd
> With the many tears Love shed,
> Seeks for herb-o'-grace to bind
> Up her wounds, and fever-few
> To give ease to a hurt mind;
> Wound-wort is not wanting too. . . .
>
> Ladders-to-heaven may be found
> Now in any common ground. 40

Middleton Murry's condemnation of the Georgians for their addiction to, among other things, 'lists of names which never suggest things',[41] is out of place here; the list of names is central to the meaning of this poem.

. . . . . .

The rhythmical cycle of the pastoral world offered in the guise of harvesting, with its associated images of ploughing, sowing, reaping and winnowing, another means of delineating war. The harvest image serves two ends: it indicates the pastoral norm by reference to which the war-induced horror and negation of life can be gauged; in opposition to the preceeding, it is adopted as a device for purveying optimism and consolation.

The American poet, Josephine Preston Peabody, in her volume of verse, Harvest Moon (1916), examines war's disintegrating effect on women. The whole volume underlines woman's empty fate; it was woman's duty to bear sons, suffer for them, raise them and give them up to war. The titular poem, "Harvest Moon", employs a harvest landscape to emphasize war's assininity; it depicts woman as war's puppet. This poem takes the form of an address by a Woman, symbolic of motherhood, to the harvest moon, who shines over 'bleeding furrows, with their sodden yield / Of sheaves that still did writhe, / After the scythe'. The irony implicit in this picture of battle-harvest is further enhanced by the comparison evoked between the moon's barrenness and the fecundity enjoyed by the earth. In calling upon the moon, the Woman laments the meaningless slaughter of lives dearly achieved:

> 'But we were crazed ... . . .
> You, for your ever dreaming it was worth
> A star's while to look on, and light the earth;
> And I, for ever telling to my mind
> Glory it was and gladness, to give birth
> To human kind.
> I gave the breath, . . .
> Lording it over anguish, all to give
> My life, that men might live,
> For this.
> You will be laughing now, remembering
> We called you once Dead World, and barren thing. ...
> You far more wise
> Than to give life to men.' [42]

"Harvest Moon", though lacking the compact forcefulness of Owen's "Futility", nevertheless, reveals a frame of mind similarly assailed by the fatuousness of war. The poet, Mary Webb, also avails of the harvest motif to stress the unwisdom of war in,"Autumn,1914": 'O world, come in from leasowes grey / And cold, where swaths of men are lying, / And horror to shuddering horror crying'.[43] Cicely Fox-Smith in "Hay Harvest: 1916", uses the same to stress the immense cost at which the homeland is

being redeemed:

> I see the mowers swinging
> Their scythes in the English hay ...
> What swathes of dead are lying
> In fields of France this day!
>
> Ah God! what price has bought it,
> This English peace of ours. 44

Emphasis on redemption, the redemption which is to be achieved by sowing seed, less euphemistically, forfeiting one's life, in what Kate Mellersh terms the 'red seed-time of the Right', in "The Harvest of the Sword',[45] is the most popular method adopted to reconcile soldiers to their fate; typical of this attitude are "Long Furrows", by Eleanor Alexander, and Rose E. Sharland's "War Gleanings". The image of sowing, as inculcating an attitude of hope, is differently evoked in Fredegond Shove's "The Farmer". Shove begins by presenting the farmer as an emblem of hope, a symbolic character, in a war-riven world: 'He seems to be the only man alive / And thinking through the twilight of this world'. In the latter part of the poem the farmer is joined by the ghosts of dead soldiers, 'And they are him and he is one of them'; the poem concludes:

> O single farmer walking through the world,
> They bless the seed in you that earth shall reap,
> When they, their countless lives, and all their thoughts,
> Lie scattered by the storm: when peace shall come. 46

Shove regards the war as barren activity in that the ghosts have no seed of their own to bless; their blessing of the seed which the farmer is sowing, however, implies that they are sacrificing themselves for it and reconciled to it. Their death in battle is equated with the destruction of crops by storms, a natural unavoidable event.

. . . . . .

One attitude adopted to register disapproval of war was to regard it as violation of nature and of natural processes. S. Gertrude Ford in, "Nature in War-Time", employs her characteristic rhetorical manner to denounce man's displacement and destruction of things natural: 'Such ruined grace on earth ..., / Such works as only God could limn / Wrecked by thy madness, Man'.[47] The sanctity and harmony of nature, wilfully broken by man, is a theme also taken up by Sylvia Lynd in her powerful and moving poem, "The Hare". In "The Hare", first published under the title,"The Sound", she adopts the persona of a hare and exploits a summer idyll enjoyed by it, 'A soft, contented, couchant hare / Hid in the grass', to comment upon war. The hare's peaceful enjoyment of 'the blue dome of sky' 'the sea / Striped by the yellow grass' and butterflies, which titillate by fluttering their cool wings near its face is destroyed by the jarring sound of the guns heard from afar:

> from that blue and friendly dome
> There comes a sudden breath, . . .
>
> Bruising the gentle grassy hills
> With news of grief and pain. ...
>
> Oh, then no summer do I see,
> Nor feel the summer air;
> But think upon men's cruelty,
> And tremble like a hare. 48

Conversely the inviolability of the seasonal cycle could be exploited to show nature's indifference to man whilst highlighting the sacrifice made by him to receive her blessing. Teresa Hooley's "In Memoriam" illustrates the sacrifice made for nature's benison:

> Be gay, you silly innocent lambs, . . .
>
> You thrushes, drench with song divine
> Your leafy solitudes;
> His voice is stilled that you may nest
> Unharmed in English woods. 49

Spring, being the season of hope and renewal, strikes the war-weary mind as the epitome of heartless and witless nature, which cares naught for what assails man. In a war context the pathetic fallacy attributes new attitudes to nature. Nature's indifference and uncaring are themes taken up by the American poet, Sara Teasdale. Her gentle probing of the rightfulness of spring's appearance in a war-riven world in "Spring in War-Time": 'Oh how can Spring take heart to come / To a world in grief, / Deep grief',[50] assumes a more outright expression of nature's indifference in "There Will Come Soft Rains", which proclaims the subordination of men and war to earth's processes:

> There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
> And swallows calling with their shimmering sound; ...
>
> And not one will know of the war, not one
> Will care at last when it is done.
>
> Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,
> If mankind perished utterly;
>
> And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn
> Would scarcely know that we were gone. [51]

Muriel Stuart's "Its Rose-Time Here ...", which first appeared in the English Review, February 1918, most eloquently evokes an indifferent nature, tranquilly pursuing her golden processes oblivious of the devilement around. The poem starts with a series of repetitive queries which establish nature's detachment from the world of men:

> It's rose-time here ...
> How could the Spring
> Be the same merry thing? . . .
> How could she wear
> Such coloured broideries
> Beside the tattered garments of despair?
> Tenting the hill's with April's canopies,
> Setting the tulips' spears . . .
> How could she keep her tourneys through
> such tears.

The military terminology of 'tenting', 'spears' and 'tourneys' aligns nature with war; an enemy of man. The middle part of the poem lists the varied 'coloured broideries' and stresses anew spring's apathy: 'She has not grieved - even a little space - / For those who loved her once - / For those whom surely she must once have loved'. The last section allies soldiers with roses. This analogy effected against a background of the plenteous beauty of nature's rose-time serves to accentuate the war-induced dearth of the same in human life:

> It's rose-time here ...
> While over there . . .
> all the roses of the world have
> blown . . .
> Those heavenly roses, torn and tossed about
> On the vast plains of Death.

This fusion of soldiers with roses, however, is not a mere euphemistic device, but the expression of a frame of mind which having established affinity between the two, hates the wholesomness of that which is at hand—'How I shall always hate the Spring'—as it mocks the other which, too, was beautiful, but now

> Lies faceless, mouthless, mire in mire,
> So lost to all sweet semblance of desire
> That we in those fields seeking desperately
> One face long-lost to Love, - one face that lies
> Only upon the breast of Memory -
> Would never know it - . . . .
> for these things are
> Not men -
> Things shapeless, sodden, mute,
> Beneath the monstrous limber of the guns. 52

The skill with which Stuart encompasses within a seemingly sentimental context the brutal realities of trench warfare suggests that women could vividly apprehend the putrefacient transmogrification that became many a lover's lot in the trenches. In."Insensibility" one of the things which Owen denounces is the topical poets' use of euphemistic devices:

'But they are troops who fade, not flowers'. Stuart's poem illustrates how such euphemisms could be adroitly used to decry war; the image of full blown flowers, disintegrated and fallen on to the ground, trampled upon, rotting and bearing no semblance to the original, is the basis for the description of the dissolution suffered by fallen soldiers in the trenches. The titular phrase, which is repeated in the poem, and with which the poem begins and ends, stresses the destruction wrought by war through implicit contrast between pre-war and war-time existence. The poem regrets the passing away of a particular quality from life as well as lamenting the loss of lives, intrinsically valuable.

Elinor Jenkins, like Stuart above, also incorporates reference to 'foregone seasons' to reflect upon the upheaval in life heralded by war. In "Poppy-fields", she illustrates this change through a contrast between the seeming dearth of a 'garden close' 'Laid under penance for an unknown crime' 'In the full glory of the summer time' and the apparent overwhelming rankness of poppies:

> Beyond the close, smothering the wholesome corn,
> A flight of scarlet locusts fallen to earth
> Baleful, and blighting all that they adorn,
> The burnished heralds of a bitterer dearth, . . .
> raised by gramarye from English sod . . .
> Each silken tent enclosing dusky night,
> Drowsy dream-laden poppies beck and nod.

The topical belief of the poppies' redness deriving from soldiers' blood is given a more striking interpretation by Jenkins; her portrayal of the rank poppies as marauding hordes of locusts, wilfully preying and destroying, throws a new light on their blood-like hue which is at variance with the tenets of pastoral elegy. Jenkins uses the poppy to two purposes: to indicate the indiscriminate destruction of life in war; to convey the passing away of all comfort and delight from a war-riven

world by showing these as solely located in 'dream-laden poppies':

> Now that love's rose has crumbled into dust, ...
> Now thought is fear and memory is pain ...
> Nowhere now doth remain
> A place of refuge for us, or release,
> Save in the shadowy wastes of idle sleep. 53

The anodyne offered by poppies: 'Go, in an empty dream lost joys regain / And down among the poppies meet your dead', contrasts sharply with the 'gay delights' of a summer garden 'dismal grown' because of war; the contrast underlines the hollowness and desolation concomitant with war.

. . . . . .

Elegiac writing in times of war, especially a long-drawn-out war, fulfils a need of the time; it shows how to cope with the facts of death and human loss. This coping with grief is closely associated with the doling of consolation and comfort, which in the case of pastoral elegy has the full backing of tradition. This tradition is in evidence in Helen Cole Crew's lamentation of dead soldiers, "Sing, Ye Trenches!":

> Sing, ye trenches bloody-lipped!
> Sing! For into you has slipped
> Lycidas, dead ere his prime. . . .
> Under frost and under rime . . .
> All his body wonderful,
> Low hath lain. Now, cunningly,
> April, with sweet mystery,
> Moulds the trenches horror-lipped
> Into chalices of spring.
>
> Who would not sing for Lycidas?
> See, across the hideous gashes
> Soft green fire of April flashes, . . .
> Where again his pulses blow
> In young clover. . . .

Sing, ye gaping wounds of earth!
Tomb-like, ye have taken him,
Cradled him, distillèd him;
Womb-like, ye have brought to birth
Myriad flowers and fragrances.
Requiemed with spring he lies.
God, who took unto his heart
All his throbbing, vital part,
Sowed his body in the earth. 54

Transposing lines from Milton's elegy into her own poem allows Crew to set it firmly in the context of the pastoral elegy tradition; moreover Lycidas becomes a useful symbol for connoting all the potentially valuable lives gone to waste. "Sing, Ye Trenches" strictly adheres to the conventions of pastoral elegy: it opens with the conventional invocation to mourning and depicts the world of nature in complete sympathy with man. In the first stanza the call to lament is vividly realized by picturing the trenches as 'bloody-lipped'; the venomous blood-sucking trenches now commemorate the dead by spouting 'chalices of spring'. Though her elegy does not live up to the dramatic promise of the opening lines it manages to impart the consolation of tradition by charting the passage from grief into joy and triumph. The pattern of consolation which emerges in the second and third stanzas, especially the third, derives from Shelley's "Adonais" XLII :

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own.

In the interests of patriotism the Shelleyean injunction, 'He is made one with Nature', contrives to convey not only consolation but also promote a mystic sense of union of the dead with the country for which they sacrificed their lives. Margery Ruth Betts's "Unforgotten" and "Primrose

Time", both set out as a dialogue between a dead soldier and his mother, reflect this attitude. "Unforgotten" shows a dead combatant comforting his mother thus:

> 'never the Spring shall come again
> With her tremulous sunlight and laughing rain,
> But she shall bring you news of me
> In every dewdrop and blossoming tree.
> And never the English daisies sweet
> Shall throng at the English children's feet,
> But they shall remember, blossom and bud,
> In their innocent white, my scarlet blood.' [55]

The 'innocent white' proclaims the innocence and purity of the dead soldier; another instance of the remission from sin discussed in Chapter Two. In "Primrose Time", a soldier chides his mother for her indifference towards the beauties of spring-time, pointing out:

> 'Oh, the English primroses in an English lane!
> I it was who died, my dear, to bring them back again,
> Back to happy English soil, where English Springs go free —
> So don't you be a-slighting them that come to you from me.' [56]

The popularity of the 'He is made one with Nature' motif, as a means of purveying consolation, can be gauged from its frequent occurrence in elegiac pieces. Though to all effects and purposes a euphemistic device it is not without a sanative purpose; in poems which express a personal sense of loss it shows women struggling to avoid loosing their hold upon sanity by clinging to some comfort, however fantastical. Katharine Tynan's "A Girls' Song", celebrates a lover who though dead and buried by the Meuse and Marne rivers still contrives to be near the girl: 'His blood is in the rose's veins, / His hair is in the yellow corn'.[57] "Succory", by Elinor Jenkins, rejoices in a dead lover discovered again amidst flowers; the blue succory, for the bereaved girl, is representative of the blue eyed lover:

Sweet eyes of my sweet slain
  Lost all these weary hours,
Lo, I beheld again
  Turned into flowers. 58

The sights and objects of nature which were once witnessed and enjoyed in the company of the dead afford another source of comfort; the dead will have continual existence in the mind of the living through the latter's intense awareness of them amongst scenes once frequented together. This conviction finds expression in different poems. "To Them", by Vera Brittain, which apparently commemorates both her lover and her brother, opens:

I hear your voices in the whispering trees,
  I see your footprints on each grassy track,
Your laughter echoes gaily down the breeze. 59

Joan Thompson's "Time Was" begins: 'Silent my footsteps fall on the soft, wet sand, / Where the paths are haunted by you'.[60] These same sentiments appear conjoined with the Adonais-like consolation, discussed above, in Elsie Paterson Cranmer's "The Dead Hero":

I know where I can find him. I shall look
In every whispering glade and laughing brook,
In every passing wind I'll hear his sigh . . .
And in the sun I'll see his smile again,
And on the roses blowing in the South
I'll feel once more the soft touch of his mouth. 61

. . . . . .

Nature as a medium of consolation and comfort, the kind nature mourning in season or out of season of pastoral tradition, defines many an elegiac poem. Elinor Jenkins's sonnet, "Lying in State", provides one illustration:

If with his fathers he had fallen asleep,
Far different would have been his drear lyke-wake. . . .

we've laid him 'neath a chestnut tree,
That bears a myriad candles all alight,
And faintly glimmering through the starry gloom -
No dimmer than a holy vault might be -
It sheds abroad upon the quiet night
A gentle radiance and a faint perfume. 62

The ceremoniousness in evidence here stems not from artifice, but rather acts as a buffer to the chaotic feelings of loss, with which the writer strives for reconciliation, by imposing the orderliness of ceremony. The unburied dead in Mrs. Warren's poem of the same title are shown requiemed by a benign nature:

not unwatched they lie;
The steadfast moon, pale ghost-star of the sky,
Night's acolyte, doth heaven's Altar keep.

And choired winds a litany . . .
chant, antiphonal and low. 63

Mildred Huxley's "Tribute to England's Deathless Dead", depicts dead soldiers requiemed by 'the music of the daffodils'.[64]

The origin of a consolatory phrase like 'deathless dead' is difficult to determine; it can be Christian, traditional or sentimental. What goes without argument is that it was a mainstay of much elegiac verse. Ellen Ling's "A Tribute to the Boys Who Fell", invokes it variously as 'Call them not dead', 'They are not dead', in a poem which also utilizes another frequently adopted mode of consolation, manifest in the following:

For them the fight was sharp, the battle short,
For them there was no campaign hard and long;
God took them early from the strife of war,
To sing eternally the victor's song. 65

These comforting sentiments, which seem to derive from the Christian belief that regards existence as a continuous struggle between good and

evil, surface in the poet Margaret Woods's celebration of the soldiers' heroism thus:

> They need not to endure
> The travail, the blind seeking, the obscure
> And long struggle towards the light whereby
> Others attain it.

Woods's "Soldiers of 1914" also incorporates one of the clichés of heroic verse; the metaphor of young men seeking glory as the bridegroom seeks the bride, which the historian E. S. Turner declares was a popular device for enjoining men to enlist in newspaper verse till 1915[66] :

> They drew
> On their white gloves, as though the enemy gun
> Had been a bride, and like a bridegroom flew
> Each to encounter that fierce kiss that lies
> Now on their crushed and ever-darkened eyes.

Composed in the traditional heroic mode "Soldiers of 1914" glorifies the combatants laying-down of life in an idiom influenced by the Shelleyean mode of consolation, discussed above, as also the symbol of sowing:

> As things unworth,
> Carelessly as a sower scatters grain,
> They hurled their starry souls countless to heaven.
> They have made the clouds epic, the void deep
> Of space, impregnate with their essence, keep
> Their breath, their shining looks, their gestures proud.
> The elements for bodies to them are given. 67

The classical dictum that those loved by gods die young was another means of professing consolation,as also the belief that early death saves from a variety of sins. These concepts define Madeleine Nightingale's "On a Young Subaltern"; death in war has not only brought glory at an early age to the young officer, he 'being one of those / Whom the gods love', but also effected a reprieve: 'into nothingness crept back a host / Of shadows unexplored, of sins unsinned'.[68] "To a Soldier Lad", by Gertrude Renny,

commemorates the dead in a similar manner: 'To live might be your loss, / And death has spared you many a cross'.[69] Alice Meynell in, "Length of Days", adopts a more dialectical approach to reflect upon the charm of dying young in conjunction with the palliative that such dead do not forego much. She argues that the young dead have experienced that prime time of life which is the most wholesome of human existence; the rest of the years constitute a mere reminiscing of that which was once one's youth:

> What have you then foregone?
> A history? This you had. Or memories?
> These, too, you had of your far-distant dawn.
> No further dawn seems his,
> The old man who shares with you,
> But has no more, no more. . . .
>
> Therefore be satisfied;
> Long life is in your treasury ere you fall. [70]

A more homely and humane form of consolation, one which contrasts with the dialectic of the above, is manifest in Olive Primrose Downes's "All Souls' Day":

> These are not dead! In tender close communion
> Of thought we meet their spirits true and brave;
> Till dawns that day of full and perfect union
> With them, beyond the grave. [71]

This theme that the dead will live in the mind and memory of the living, which is presented in Evelyn Underhill's "The Return", thus:

> Meet in the shattered homestead of the heart
> The old familiar touch, the faithful ways,
> The dear known hands, that still possess the art
> To mend our broken days. [72]

and is used to similar purpose by Katharine Tynan in "The Welcome" and "The Old House" could also be put to jingoistic effect as in "Soldiers' Graves", by Irene Hammond:

Tho' names be lost, be Glory's Streams o'er flowing,
For in proud hearts you live in deathless fame,
Honour acclaimeth, loud her trumpet blowing,
Heroes who nobly played in Life's great Game. 73

One of the methods of commemorating dead youth was by reference to the deserted seats of learning, such as Oxford and Cambridge, hastily abandoned by inmates in their quest for adventure. "Subalterns: A Song of Oxford",by Mildred Huxley, Norah Holland's "The Gentlemen of Oxford", "The Spires of Oxford",by Winifred M. Letts, Kathleen Wallace's poem about war-time Cambridge, "Unreturning", and Norah Griffiths's "The Wykhamist" are representatives of this genre. "The Spires of Oxford", which appears in eight anthologies between 1917-1919,perhaps,owes its success to its imitation of a popular Christmas carol. This poem which first appeared in Letts's book of war verse, Hallow-e'-en and Other Poems of the War (1916),so caught the public's imagination that it became the title for the American edition published in 1917. For the Oxford men who gave up everything 'To seek a bloody sod', the poet holds forth the benison of peace and quiet:

God rest you, happy gentlemen,
Who laid your good lives down,
Who took the khaki and the gun
Instead of cap and gown.
God bring you to a fairer place
Than even Oxford town. 74

Rose Macaulay's "All Souls Day" expresses horror over the loss of Cambridge men like Rupert Brooke and others of his kind. Macaulay, who, according to her biographer, was at one time a little in love with Brooke, adopts a jarringly racialist tone to express her bitterness by invoking comparison of the dead golden lads with the war-time Cambridge population of foreign and colonial students, who though seemingly lesser mortals, go comparatively unscathed:

The blacks will walk the empty streets,
  Securely at their ease;
They'll walk, gibbering black men's speech, . . .
But ever they'll pale, as black men pale,
  A-wilting in the breeze,
To think how Cambridge called her own
  From beyond the bitter seas. 75

The ending of hostilities marks a shift in the pattern of elegiac composition. Whilst the war was on elegiac verse was the vehicle of consolation, reconciliation, as well as voicing disapprobation; such writing presumed that the sacrifice of soldiers would be remembered eternally. This presumption, geared to the needs of the time, overlooked the transiency which effects all things; the realisation of which had made Tennyson write in In Memoriam LXVIII 'O sorrow, then can sorrow wane? / O grief, can grief be changed to less? / O last regret, regret can die', and Shelley proclaim ruefully in "Adonais" XXI : 'And grief itself be mortal'. Commemorative verse composed after the cessation of hostilities, realising the public's fickleness to the memory of its redeemers, consciously strives to revive it. The Christ / soldier analogy is central to Muriel Stuart's "Forgotten Dead, I Salute You"; it focuses upon the sacrifice of one whose 'rotting, fruitless body lies / That sons may grow from other men', to bestir the nation from the apathy which set in :

There was his body broken for you,
There was his blood divinely shed
That in the earth lie lost and dim.
Eat, drink, and often as you do,
For whom he died, remember him. 76

On a less stringent note Elizabeth Daryush in,"Flanders Fields", preaches respect for the memory of the slain :

O glad passer-by
Of the fields of agony
Lower laughter's voice, and bare
Thy head in the valley where
Poppies bright and rustling wheat
Are a desert to love's feet. 77

Both writers invoke the passage of time by reference to the cyclical changes of nature; both wish to keep alive the memory of those, whose passing away, made possible the re-emergence of spring from the autumnal dearth of war.

The way the nation does honour its dead can evoke different responses. Ursula Roberts in,"The Cenotaph", evinces contempt for the Remembrance ceremony; to her the sight of 'The relatives of dead heroes, / Clutching damp wreaths', whom all present strain their necks to stare at is a gross manifestation of a private emotion. Assuming the persona of one of the passers-by she expresses her thoughts thus :

'I wouldn't stand in a queue to have my feelings harrowed,
Not myself, I wouldn't . . . . .
But there . . .
I often think it wouldn't do
For us all to be alike.
There's some as can't,
But then, again,
There's some, you see,
As can'. 78

In contrast to Roberts, Charlotte Mew in,"The Cenotaph", regards the building of a memorial in a market-place, whence all the bereaved shall carry their tokens of remembrance, a befitting memorial to the dead :

here, where the watchers by lonely hearths from the thrust of
an inward sword have more slowly bled,
We shall build the Cenotaph : . . .
And over the stairway, at the foot - oh! here, leave desolate,
passionate hands to spread
Violets, roses, and laurel . . .
when all is done and said,
God is not mocked and neither are the dead. 77

The writers' choice of verse form, vers libre and the conventional, complements the attitude taken by them towards a public form of remembrance.

The poets' adoption of the pastoral and elegiac modes as befitting mediums for interpreting war was motivated, as has been shown above, by the immense scope these offered for gauging the calamity. A whole gamut of war-associated emotions could be accommodated within them: the call to patriotism; the vacuity and fatuousness of the proceedings; lamentation for the slaughtering of lives, intrinsically valuable; the attempt at consolation and reconciliation with the bereavement borne.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE WAR AT HOME

A Tommy home from the Front, on being asked by some women what life in the trenches was like, replied airily, 'Oh, you've no idea! Up to the knees in mud and mufflers'.[1] This topical story, illustrative of the wit credited to the Thomas Atkins of tradition, is notable also for the off-handedness which is deemed sufficient to quench female curiosity about the war. The image of women of the war era, as perpetrated and sustained in the public consciousness by the writings of Owen, Sassoon, Aldington and Graves, is anything but complimentary. In their works women appear as the epitome of the callous or sentimental ignorance which came to characterise the Home Front for combatants. The immense influence which the trench writers have exercised in conditioning modern responses to the war period is evident through many a commentator's unquestioning acceptance of the bellicose Little Mother, whose jingoistic letter is quoted by Graves in, Goodbye to All That, as the standard reference for connoting civilian insensibility and incomprehension.[2] So thorough is the belief that the anti-war writers were concerned with conveying the truth of war that it has been easy to overlook the fact that the Little Mother's letter, if at all it is a genuine document, gives as restricted an impression of truth as do the soldier poets and is not representative of all women. The Little Mother's composition asserting that 'there is only one temperature for the women of the British race, and that is white heat' may perhaps have been a little aided and abetted by someone at the conservative pro-war Morning Post, where according to Graves it first

appeared.[3] In the absence of any scepticism on the part of modern observers of the First World War scene the Little Mother has evolved into one of the myths spawned by the war.

Women's 'supposed' lack of comprehension of the true nature of war, for which they were chastised and rebuked, is not attributable to a failure of vision on their part. The combatants themselves were prey to inhibitions which helped foster an optimistic picture of war for those at home; an officer in a letter home to his mother states:

> If people would cease to be stupidly casual and untruthful when on leave, and let people know the truth - you for one would very soon alter your opinion. ... This isn't War as the world understands the word at all. The truth of the matter is everyone out here considers it only fair to one's womenkind to hush up the worst side of war. 4

To this consideration and the casualness of Tommy's attitude can be ascribed the roots of that insensibility which Owen and Sassoon despaired of in women. If the mud and mufflers of Tommy's story are taken respectively to symbolise the male and female experience of war, an important aspect of this chapter is to demonstrate how many a female poet emerged from the cocooned muffled existence, which for the soldiers particularly pertained to the women folk, and were imaginatively capable of insights into war not believed of them. Correspondingly it is a discredit to the trench writers that they were so engulfed in the mud of the trenches that it rendered them incapable of sympathetically imaging a war existence on a level other than their own, although theirs was undeniably the more traumatic experience.

This chapter documents the female experience of war in the concrete: the changes heralded in women's life by war; the particular nature of

women's war-work; the sights and sounds of war as they struck the female consciousness. Authentic writing comes out of recording the home scenes, for here inspiration draws upon lived experience, and a recurrent factor which emerges throughout this chapter is that women were not unfeeling and uncomprehending, but open and sensitive to the bestial, futile nature of war. Apart from a preliminary section which focuses upon the liberating social changes which the First World War brought in its wake for women and which also takes into account the war dictated roles of women as recruiters, flag sellers and single mothers, each of the subsequent sections deals with a different aspect of the war at home as it impinged upon the feminine mind.

. . . . . .

In order 'To keep the old Motherland going' women proclaim in Jessie Pope's, "Ready, Aye Ready!":

> No labour or toil we're afraid of
> Though the jobs may be rough
> We'll show you the stuff
> That the women of Britain are made of. 5

Women's job as recruiters was of immense relevance to the furtherance of the war in pre-conscription days; the implications and ethics of their embroilment in recruiting, which earned them a notoriety as difficult to shake off as the Little Mother image, are examined in detail in a later section. Typical of the verse which highlights this aspect of female war endeavour is Miriam E. Gladwell's, "A Nursery Rhyme: New Style":

> "Where are you going to, My Pretty Maid?"
> "Enlisting Soldiers, Sir," she said; . . .

'What if the men don't want to fight?'
"I'll give each one a feather white,
That English men may scorn the breed
Of those who fail us in our need.' 6

Nina Macdonald in her,"Where Are You Going to My Pretty Maid?", incorporates women's war work as nurses within the framework of the same nursery rhyme: '"Where are you going to, my pretty maid?" /"I'm going a-nursing, Sir," she said'.[7] Flag selling was an aspect of women doing their bit allied to recruiting. Helen Hamilton, though, mindful of the patriotism which may lead women into this job, however, cannot contain her disgust that such manipulate people's emotions; she defines her dilemma in "The Blackmailers", thus: 'I hate being blackmailed, / Yet lack the moral courage, /To stalk the streets / Conspicuously indifferent.[8] Edith M. Thomas, an American poet, who devotes the whole of her book of war verse, The White Messenger (1915), to stressing war's destructiveness, uses the occasion of women making flags to emphasize the waste in human lives and endeavour, which is the worst of war's toll. In "The Flag", whilst other girls stitch 'with fond proud haste' one girl's fingers lag for in the colours of the flag she perceives: 'The red of flowing blood.../ The white of faces upturned to the skies, / The blue of heaven wide above the dead'.[9]

The new incarnations of women in war-time, each type taking on duties essential to the smooth functioning of the Motherland, whilst not entirely foregoing the traditional female occupations of ministering angel and knitting, form the subject of Jessie Pope's "War Girls":

There's the girl who clips your ticket for the train,
And the girl who speeds the lift from floor to floor,
There's the girl who does a milk-round in the rain,
And the girl who calls for orders at your door.
Strong, sensible, and fit,
They're out to show their grit, . . .
No longer caged and penned up, . . .

> There's the motor girl who drives a heavy van,
> There's the butcher girl who brings your joint of meat,
> There's the girl who cries 'All fares, please!' . . .
> And the girl who whistles taxis up the street. 10

The obvious relish with which Pope lists the new jobs which the war made possible for women appears to celebrate the long sought emancipation which women had struggled for and finally attained, though not in a manner which was a part of their scheme of action. However, despite the emergency, the jobs had not been easy to come by; according to the Marchioness of Londonderry, who organised the Women's Legion,

> in 1914, so prejudiced were many people at the prospect of women stepping beyond the recognised spheres of nursing, sewing, and cooking, into any war work, that ... letters appeared in the papers in insulting terms about 'women masquerading as men' - 'apeing' them was a favourite expression - and all sorts of abuse. 11

Having finally escaped the 'caged and penned up' existence, women were advised to eschew all lassitude and stiffen themselves up for their new jobs. Thus in "Heads Up, Girls!", Pope admonishes:

> if we wear a warlike kit,
> The mien must match the mode.
>
> What! would you set a 'forage cap'
> Upon a drooping brow?
> The feet that used to mince and tap
> Must stride with vigour now.
> No longer must a plastic crouch
> Debilitate the knees. 12

The war was able to arouse many a woman from a life of langour and listlessness and motivate them to some act of public good; Tennyson's "Mariana" became a useful reference in delineating this aspect of the female character. In Stella Sharpley's "Mariana in War-Time", the war-time Mariana has shaken off the crippling apathy of her Tennysonian predecessor by throwing 'herself into the part / Of cooking for the V A.D.'. Having 'wholly lost her lethargy' she has 'got a lady-gardener

in ... / who, before she'd been a day / Had scraped the blackest moss away', and has also managed to 'put a jolly little boat / For wounded soldiers on the moat'. However, like her Victorian ancestor, the new Mariana cannot eradicate the romantic notions so deeply embedded in her heart; but with her they have taken a more realistic turn:

> She found her thoughts were centred
> less
> On that young man who never came
> And more on Captain What's-his-
> name,
> Who'd left his other leg in France
> And was a model of romance. 13

While appreciative of the ease with which women adjusted themselves to the traditional male domains of labour, poets were not blind to the romanticism which held sway over female hearts and found it a fit target for satire. In Pope's "The Beau Ideal", the protagonist Rosie, as with Sharpley's Mariana, provides a means of criticising topical female sentimentalism by her preference for a mate who 'Must have one member in a sling / Or, preferably, missing.' Rosie's taste in the matter of future husband, which previously centred upon 'Belvidere Apollos' has undergone a complete reorientation; now

> Her maiden ardour cleaves to him
> Who's proved that he is brittle,
> Whose healing cicatrices show
> The colours of a prism,
> Whose back is bent into a bow
> By Flanders rheumatism. 14

In her variation upon the 'Mariana' theme Pope scoffs at a Mariana who dissatisfied with her appearance during a zeppelin raid decides to set matters right 'And spreads a négligé of charm / (The very thing - for air-raid wear)', and waits for the alarm and a night of excitement; but after 'a quiet night' she is left sighing painfully 'It cometh not'.[15]

On the same theme,in "Beauty Triumphant", Pope pours ridicule upon Rosie who, fearing a gas-bomb attack, gets hold of a respirator, but discovering that wearing it she looks 'Like some shocking nightmare creature' decides to brighten it up with 'some spangled chiffon' and 'saucy rosebuds' so that in any eventual raid she 'Will retain her well-known chic'.[16] Pope's verses,despite their light hearted approach,are not without a sting in the tail capable of wounding the guilty.

Writers were perceptive, too, of the difference in motive which attracted women to all manners of war-work. Lady Randolph Churchill, in Women's War Work (1916), differentiated between those who worked for love of humanity and those who worked to gratify a craving for excitement.[17] The latter type dubbed 'social butterflies' by the Countess of Warwick, are regarded by her as interlopers who wanted limelight and for whom war was little more than a new sensation.[18] Typical of such amongst the aristocracy was Lady Diana Manners, who joined up as a nurse at Guy's Hospital and fitted her nursing between flitting from one party to another. She was rumoured to be the original of Lady Queenie Paulle in Arnold Bennett's The Pretty Lady (1918);[19] of Queenie, who has few rivals as a war-worker, Bennett further writes:

> she had done practically everything that a patriotic girl could do for the war, except, perhaps, join a Voluntary Aid Detachment and wash dishes and scrub floors for fifteen hours a day and thirteen and a half days a fortnight. 20

Another aristocratic war worker was Lady Cynthia Asquith who, for a short time, worked at making portions of respirators and commented of her experience: 'it is such fun feeling a factory girl'.[21] The lower classes, too, produced their butterflies, who having once in their lives come into money were all set to enjoy it; the desire for enjoyment being

influenced by the precariousness of the time they lived in. In Madeline Ida Bedford's "Munition Wages" the woman who earns 'Five quid a week' enjoys the pleasing sensation of possessing:

> bracelets and jewellery,
> Rings envied by friends;
> A sergeant to swank with,
> And something to lend.

She firmly believes in having a good time for she realises that in her job she is constantly shadowed by death which may strike any moment 'Fate tumbles on us / And blows up our shed'.[22] In opposition to her stands the self righteous wife and mother portrayed in Lilian Gard's "Her 'Allowance'!", who does not believe in frittering away her allowance upon a 'long feather and trimmy-up gown' preferring to save up her coins 'For Bill, who's out fightin' such brave miles away'.[23]

One of the issues of the time, an aspect of the war at home, was the problem of the new breed of unmarried mothers, the so called 'war mothers'. This panic which,according to Sylvia Pankhurst,set in eight months after the war began was one of the leading sensations of the time and is referred to in writings set in this period in history; an example is Ford Madox Ford's novel, Some Do Not. This whole issue was a mere flash in the pan and Pankhurst notes that the illegitimate birth rate was not great for the girls had guarded their maidenhood efficiently.[24] While it lasted the war babies scandal gripped the public imagination in a big way and inspired verse and invention of tales. A story popular among women workers in munition factories concerned a patriotic lady, more than forty years of age, who unaware that a certain young foreman had been exempted from war service, accosting him with the query 'Why aren't you carrying a white feather, sir?' received the rejoinder, 'And why aren't you

carrying a war-baby ma'am?'.[25] Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the popular American poet much concerned with social problems, wrote sympathetically of single mothers. In her poem, "War Mothers", the unmarried mothers present their case for honourable acquittal before the 'clergy of the land', by drawing the clergy's attention to their condonation of the unchristian act of killing one's fellow men:

> Because we were not wives
> We are dishonoured. Is it noble, then,
> To break God's laws only by killing men
> To save one's country from destruction?
> We took no man's life but gave our chastity,
> And sinned the ancient sin
> To plant young trees and fill felled forests in. 26

As has already been discussed in Chapter Two, the religious reference could be inveigled to apply to various facets of the war.

. . . . . .

Under the caption 'The Ruling Passion' there appeared in Punch a cartoon in which a waitress being requested soup, queries absentmindedly, 'Purl or Plain, Sir?'.[27] Mrs. Peel, in How We Lived Then (1929), records that women knitted at theatres, in trains and trams, in parks and parlours, in the intervals of eating in restaurants, of serving in canteens.[28] Caroline Matthews, a doctor who served in Serbia, referring to the early days of the war comments: 'it was a time when in Britain every woman, who was prevented by age, duty or infirmity from serving the Empire in a more direct method, had .... a great ball of soft warm wool and a half-knitted scarf within her fingers'.[29] This knitting fever which gripped the female half of the nation was in evidence at all levels. Queen Mary was reported to keep a piece of work - vest, muffler, mitten,

sock, or body-belt - in everyone of the royal apartments, so that she may take up her work anywhere if she finds herself with an odd minute of leisure.[30] The actress, Ellen Terry, about to undergo an operation for cataract was unperturbed, except that her knitting for the soldiers was being interfered with.[31] The soldiers, too, were not unmindful of the labours on their behalf and were titillated into poetic appreciation; a Corporal Fanning's "On the Receipt of a Pair of Socks", which appeared in the New Age ends: 'take, then, these simple lines of mine / In token for this gift of thine'.[32] Apart from the fact that women genuinely believed that their efforts might save some man something of hardship and misery, knitting was for the women themselves a sanative and therapeutic activity; Dickens in A Tale of Two Cities acknowledged as much.[33] The ridicule apart, and a good deal was directed towards this activity, feminine observers of the scene were full of praise for the unflagging spirit with which women soldiered on; for these realised: 'there is no glamour or excitement about the cult of the knitting needle, and as the months drag by even the novelty of it all that buoyed ... at starting, wears off into a dull enduring ache'.[34]

"A Woman's Prayer",by Philadelphia N. Robertson,is a telling commentary on the manner in which women cloaked their nervous trepidation beneath an apparent calm, placid exterior and plodded on with their everyday tasks:

> I am so placid as I sit
> In train or tram and knit and knit; . . .
> Within the house I give due heed
> To every duty, each one's need, . . .
>
> Sometimes the newsboys hurry by,
> And then my needles seem to fly . . .
>
> And when the house has grown quite still,
> I lean out on my window sill - . . .
> And pray to God to see to it
> That I keep sane enough to knit. 35

The danger of losing one's sanity amidst the exigencies of war was not the soldiers' problem alone; the gnawing fears and the monotony of existence, suggested through the repetition of 'knit and knit' in the above, which engulfed women, made them likely targets too. The agitation caused by the sound of newsboys was a constant plague; in Jessie Pope's "Socks", a girl knitting, lost in thought of her distant lover, is unceremoniously jolted by the news boy's call: 'Hark! The paper-boys again! / Wish that shout could be suppressed; / Keeps one always on the strain'.[36] Though widely divergent from living under the strain of constant shelling, a life constantly attuned to the sounding of battle changes was not entirely free from the element of distress.

The plight of the waiting women, calmly bearing their brunt of the war's calamity is the theme of Cicely Fox Smith's "The Knitters":

> Knitting and waiting
> Through hours like years —
> Not with loud grieving
> Nor sighing nor tears —
>
> Every thread a sorrow,
> Every strand a prayer —
> ('Oh, where sleeps my dear one?
> Or how does he fare?') 37

Contrary to male accusations, as set out in Owen's "Disabled" and "The Dead-Beat", women were not unheedful of the far off soldiers; concern for them seemed to absorb their whole existence. Nor do they merit the reproach of paucity of emotion levelled at them by Sassoon in "Their Frailty"; in this he laments the dearth of vision which makes women forgetful of war as long as their man is safe: 'Mothers and wives and sweethearts, — they don't care / So long as He's all right'. Sassoon's view is a restricted one and has not the authority of ultimate truth, especially when viewed from the alternative, though perhaps equally

limited standpoint of the Spectator. In an article 'Women and the War', the Spectator thus commends the female spirit:

> No woman has cried in agony that the future of the world might go hang so long as her husband or her son was safe. We can hardly find words in which to express our admiration for this noble bearing, this limitless capacity for sacrifice. 38

In "Portrait of a Mother", Violet Gillispie presents a woman who, having lost her one and only son,and whose grief knows no assuagement, persevering in producing comfort for others in the only manner possible for her:

> Knit two and purl one;
> Stir the fire and knit again.
> And oh, my son, for another's son
> My hands are working. The wind and rain
> Are shrill without. But you are gone
> To a quiet land. I shall come anon
> And find you, out of this wind and rain;
> But I'm working now for another's son. 39

Even women with no heart concern in the ongoing conflict were impelled to exert their faculties on the soldiers' behalf, even if it were in so humble an activity as knitting. "The Old Woman's War-Work", by Helen Bosanquet, concerns such a one who believes her ability to comfort Tommy lies in knitting garments for him:

> I'll shape the toe and turn the heel,
> And vary ribs and plains,
> And hope some soldier-man may feel
> The warmer for my pains. 40

The image of women which comes across in the above poems, whether rendered in the guise of personal narrative,as in "A Woman's Prayer", "Socks", and "Portrait of a Mother", or offered as a collective impression,as in "The Knitters", suggests that for the women left behind the war was not an event as it was for the men; it was their

lives stretched to the most painful degree of tension and desperate effort of which they were capable.

. . . . . .

Arthur Marwick discussing the war time work options available to women in Women at War 1914-1918 observes: 'Inciting men to go to war could ... also be regarded as a traditional activity to be set alongside knitting and nursing'.[41] First World War tradition, however, does not explain, but looks down upon the disreputable white-feather-peddling reputation which has clung to women. This needs to be examined and understood in the light of the various ruses practised by those who ran the show to control and influence female minds and behaviour, so that they be more useful to the war effort.

References to women dispensing white feathers, as proverbial for the social and emotional blackmail effected at the Home Front, disregard an important element of this hysterical gesture which has generated universal disgust: the white feather movement was the brainchild of a certain Admiral Penrose Fitzgerald and was not female-inspired. Women were merely pawns in an activity geared to suit the needs of the country, particularly in pre-conscription days. Until 1916, when conscription was finally introduced, the recruiting process was one of applying varying forms of moral and emotional pressure. Women were themselves the target of a great deal of pressure to send their men to fight; a fact which did not miss them. As one observed: 'the Englishwoman has to bear, in addition to separation, anxiety and possible loss, the cruel responsibility of influencing the men's decision'.[42]

Inciting women into rousing their men to enlist took various forms. According to Ruth Adam the Daily Mirror laid down that 'every woman in England who has trained herself to do a woman's work should nag every man she has influence over to enlist'.[43] Of the pre-conscription period, David Mitchell records that jingo booklets by the dozen urged women to use their charms and wiles to increase the number of volunteers in Britain.[44] In The Times, a male correspondent advised in a letter: 'The English girl who will not know the man - lover, brother, friend - that cannot show an overwhelming reason for not taking up arms - that girl will do her duty and will give good help to her country'.[45] An advertisement appearing in the same put to women the question: 'When the War is over and your husband or your son is asked "What did you do in the Great War?" - is he to hang his head because you would not let him go?'.[46] Discerning women, who could see through male machinations, took umbrage and wanted to know why 'the women of Britain are to-day addressed by the authorities in terms which lend themselves to the construction that, in the opinion of the authorities, it is Britain's women who are keeping Britain's men from enlisting'.[47]

Posters were an important ingredient of the recruiting process. Women oriented recruiting posters, hortatory, hectoring, persuading them to coax, coerce, or nag their men into entering the army are indicative of the emotional blackmail women were subjected to. Varying in range from attempts to shame men into enlisting by depicting a woman saying: 'Will You Go - or Must I?'; sowing dissension between lovers by exhorting: 'Sweethearts if you cannot persuade him to answer his country's call and protect you now Discharge Him as Unfit'; pressurising through insinuation: 'Don't pity the girl who is alone; her young man is probably a soldier

fighting for her and his country - and for You', these prevarications should be seen as the backdrop to women's involvement in distributing white feathers.

Female thoughts and feelings about these recruiting processes can be gauged from a number of contemporary poems. "The Jingo-Woman" reveals Helen Hamilton engaged in scorning, in trenchant satirical tone, the dealer in white feathers:

> Jingo-woman
> (How I dislike you!)
> Dealer in white feathers,
> Insulter, . . .
> Of all the men you meet,
> Not dressed in uniform, . . .
> Oh! exasperating woman,
> I'd like to wring your neck,
> I really would!
> You make all women seem such duffers! . . .
>
> Do hold your tongue!
> You shame us women.
> Can't you see it isn't decent,
> To flout and goad men into doing,
> What is not asked of you. 48

Hamilton appears acutely conscious of the slur on women's intelligence through participation in such activity. In "The Old Man Rampant" she turns her attention on another category of recruiters of which the novelist, Arnold Bennett, can be taken as example; the very presence of young men in the streets makes him note in his diary: 'When one sees young men idling in the lanes on Sunday, one thinks "Why are they not at the war?"'[49] Correspondingly Hamilton declares that if she had her way 'all raging dotards' 'chattering, senile folly, / Bloodthirsty lunacy' 'Would go, this very day, straight to the front'.[50]

The sight of posters, advertisements 'Strewing the landscape, /Adjuring this, / Commanding that, / In tones cajoling, threatening, grieved',

makes her question the justification for such in "The Writer of Patriotic Ad.". These exhortations strike her as unnecessary victimization of a people already laid low by the 'Armageddon' raging:

> Why then insult and plague us
> With flaming posters,
> Shrieking 'ads ',
> Excruciating, maddening?
> Or pompous platitudes. 51

Hamilton's denunciatory verse derives strength from her direct onslaught on the objects of her displeasure. The ubiquitous posters, undignified, bullying, screaming and crying for men provide Margot Robert Adamson an occasion for denouncing war in "Posters". Her poem which takes the form of a vision inspired by 'The autumn sun ... shining with clear light / On the bright posters of the Hippodrome', emphasizes war's destructiveness by synchronizing the 'frantic choruses of notes; / Heavy and high and screaming' which issue from the 'bloody mouths uplifted' of the imagined legions of dead soldiers with 'The wild, sharp voice' of the 'Yellow and black and scarlet' which gape from the hoardings. The ending implies that the dead were ensnared by the very posters which continue unchecked to wield their deathly power:

> Pale beyond thought,
> And sickened beyond hope,
> The unnumbered soldiers of the ghastly dead
> Gibbered and shrieked and murmured
> Overhead,
> Line upon line to uttermost anguish wrought;
> While underneath,
> In yellow, black, and red,
> The uttermost summing of their banded thought,
> 'More men! More men!'
> The yelling posters spread;
> Nor saw the advancing army overhead,
> Nor knew, not caring, for the thing they wrought.[52]

The famous poster of Kitchener with the pointed finger was printed in red, yellow and black. "The Woman's Cry", by the pacifist Edith Thomas,

cuts through nationalistic fetishes and calls on men on both sides to ignore the puissant claims made on them by the glaring posters and refuse to be mobilized,even if it means execution:

> Be ye not 'mobilized' but stand like stones;
> And if to prison ye be haled,and if
> They rain upon your hearts their leaden rain
> Because ye will not serve, stand till ye fall!
> Ye can but die - but so, die innocent. 53

The Hungarian novelist, Andreas Latzko, in the story, "Off to War", which forms part of Men in Battle (1918), a book which was suppressed and confiscated in all belligerent countries for its strong anti-war perspective, indulges in a bitter arraignment of women, stemming from the disillusionment that they did nothing to dissuade men from going to war: 'What was the most awful thing? The only awful thing is the going off. You go off to war — and they let you go. That's the awful thing ... That was the surprise! That they gave us up — that they sent us . . . Do you think we should have gone if they had not sent us'.[54] In his effort to shift the blame on to woman for man's indulging in war, Latzko's attitude parallels Owen's and Sassoon's who, too, seek to come to terms with their own war guilt, by invoking women as the culprit; to them, women conditioned in the conventional heroic responses wish glory for their men and consequently exercise no staying hold. In making his accusation Latzko overlooks that conscription was the norm in European countries. He is also unheedful of the immense persuasive powers enjoyed by the clergy of all hostile nations. The average susceptible woman living in a male-dominated culture had little chance for revolutionary initiative when she was preached in sermons: 'Women . . . do your duty! Send your men to-day to join our glorious army',[55] and counselled by the likes of the pro-war Bishop of London, who, referring to a topical poster captioned: 'Women of Britain say "Go!"', advised women they should

say to their men: 'Go, with my love and blessing'.[56]

. . . . . .

The nature of feminine involvement in the propagation of war is a complex one and not fully explained by simplistic arguments which present woman either as victim or culprit. The passive voice which regards war as a male abomination and women gullible pawns, free from all responsibility in promoting war, is to be heard in Mrs. Alec Tweedie's Women and Soldiers (1918). Incorporating the argument from nature that woman being the life-giver cannot conceive of such destruction as war, she states: 'Women it was who gave life, and through war live to see what has cost them so dearly ruthlessly thrown away. Women did not make war any more than they made law, and yet in silence they must abide by both'.[57] She also emphasizes the toll in suffering levied on women through no crime of their own: 'The war was begun without their sanction. The war is waged without their counsel . . . and yet women have paid the price, in flesh and blood, aye, in their very own life's blood'.[58] "The Soldier's Mother", by S. Gertrude Ford, an ardent suffragist, is based on attitudes similar to Alec Tweedie's. Ford denies women any complicity in the making of war: 'Oyes! / Men made the war; mere women we, / Born to accept and acquiesce'; stresses the labour that goes into producing the 'temples' reared by women and wantonly shattered by men:

> The body I built up with pain
> Through nine long moons - the mother's lot -
> Took not so long to ruin; slain, . . .
> with a single shot

and underlines her conviction that if women had had an active part in the formulation of laws they would have dispensed with war: 'O, had we

made the laws, we had made / The War-lord's as the Traitors doom'.[59] This latter assumption on Ford's part seems to have been shared by many of the women involved in the feminine cause. According to David Mitchell: 'For many of them, the war was something of a paradox. It was the product of the blundering of male politicians, of male thinking. It was, therefore, a disgrace and might never have happened if women had been given their fair share in policy making'.[60]

This arrogance on the female part appears to have roused the spleen of the philosopher, C. E. M. Joad, writing when the Second World War was at hand. Remarking that great things were prophesied from the incursion of women into public affairs, 'above all questions of war and peace - for women as providers both of the bomb-droppers and the bomb-fodder, were thought to have a special interest in the preventation of war', he points out, 'the vote is won, but war is very far from being a thing of the past', and severely chastises women for their failure to 'save men from the destruction which incurable male mischievousness bids fair to bring upon them'.[61] Joad in taunting women forgets that if the male themselves cannot conquer this 'mischievousness', his euphemism for war which evokes the idea of war as a sport, in which they have indulged since times immemorial how could women do away with it in a time span of less than twenty years. Joad in his reasoning seems to be in the tradition of Ruskin who can wax lyrical upon war, stress its beneficial qualities for man and civilization and yet proclaim to women: 'I for one, would fain join the cadence of hammer-strokes that should beat swords into ploughshares: and that this cannot be, is not the fault of us men. It is your fault. Wholly yours. Only by your command, or by your permission, can any context take place among us'.[62] Thus passing any burden of guilt on to the female.

Mary Gabrielle Collins in,"Women at Munition Making", uses the change enforced in the traditional role of the female, to stress her belief that war is a male conceived activity, an aberration of all things natural. Women whose 'hands should minister unto the flame of life. / Their fingers guide / The rosy teat, swelling with milk, / To the eager mouth of the suckling babe', have been compelled to have 'Their hands, their fingers .../ coarsened in munition factories'; thus 'They . . . take part in defacing and destroying the natural body'.[63] Collins's concern about women's inveiglement into the destructive war machinery, though steeped in sentiment, is nevertheless one which was needed to counterpoise the over-the-top ebullience of men like the Anglican Padre, the Reverend George Studdert-Kennedy, known as Woodbine Willie, who uses women's making of munitions to implicate them in the deadly scheme of warfare. He writes of the shells exploding on the Western Front: 'By George, its a glorious barrage, and English girls made 'em. We're all in it, sweethearts, mothers and wives. The hand that rocks the cradle wrecks the world. There are no non-combatants'.[64]

A weakness apparent in Collins's poem is that in protesting women's innocence she leaves them open to charges of culpability. Women have, throughout the ages, she says, seen men 'Cancelling each other / And . . . marvelled at the seeming annihilation'. 'Marvelled' suggests that women are conscious of the implications of the destruction wrought by war, but accept these passively and do nothing to redress the order of things. In contrast to Collins, the pacifist Margaret Sackville, in "Nostra Culpa", uses the argument of women as life-givers to launch an attack on them for their mute passive acquiescence to a scheme of things, which they instinctively perceive as a monstrosity, and yet will not speak out against for fear

their veracity might lose them the love and respect of men. The particular nature of female complicity in furthering war is thus set out by Sackville :

> We knew, this thing at least we knew, - the worth
> Of life: this was our secret learned at birth.
> We knew that Force the world has deified,
> How weak it is. We spoke not, so men died.
> Upon a world down-trampled, blood-de-filed,
> Fearing that men should praise us less, we smiled.
>
> We knew the sword accursed, yet with the strong
> Proclaimed the sword triumphant. . . .
> We feared the scorn
> Of men; men worshipped pride; so were they led,
> We followed. . . .
>
> We betrayed
> Our sons; because men laughed we were afraid.
>
> Ours was the vision, but the vision lay
> Too far, too strange; we chose an easier way. 65

The subject of Sackville's particular recrimination in "Nostra Culpa" are mothers, whom she argues have no right to mourn or lament their sons for, choosing 'an easier way', they with their very 'hands prepared these blood-drenched dreadful lands'; for her nothing can detract from the guilt of these 'mothers and . . . murderers of man-kind, whose passivity and inaction thoroughly incriminate them.

Sackville's indictment of women needs to be approached as warily as the trench poets' jaundiced view of them. Quick at pin-pointing the reasons for women's non-interference: 'Fearing that men should praise us less we smiled'; 'We feared the scorn / Of men'; 'because men laughed we were afraid', she does not take into account the conditioning processes from which these attitudes stem. In her autobiography, I Have Been Young (1935), Helen Swanwick, a prominent feminist, referring to the First World War, during which time she suffered much abuse and violence for her pacifist

views, concedes that men could never make war 'if the mass of women had not been admiringly even adoringly with them'.[66] She, however, also sets out the reasons accountable for women's acquiescence: 'Women', she observes, 'were so far from free, legally, socially, economically, and politically that it would be absurd to expect them to be authentically womanly; to stand on their feet and think womanly thoughts. They still in the mass, thought a weak version of men's thoughts'.[67] The Countess of Warwick posed with the question of explaining female attraction for war saw the responsibility for it lying solely with the male, and sardonically parried,'Is it the irony of fate that man must pay the terrible price for having made woman what she is?'.[68] A. C. Ward appears to attribute to this view; he points out that women's wayward attraction to war

> is because they have been dazzled by the masculine gauds of honour, heroism, sacrifice, patriotism; because they have taken over at second-hand and without examination the standards which men imposed upon the world centuries back, when savage habit first cloaked its ugly deformity in the picturesque trappings of chivalry. 69

Whilst Sassoon may seek to lighten his guilt by satirizing female foibles, as in "Glory of Woman":

> You love us when we're heroes, home on leave,
> Or wounded in a mentionable place.
> You worship decorations; you believe
> That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace,

Swanwick can see no justification for this scorn. Referring to the soldiers writing of 'bitter war-poems', in which the cruellest truths they uttered were directed against soft, fond, adoring women who 'sent them' to the war, she comments: 'It wasn't fair, of course, for the soldiers to make women the scape goats; women were trying, after all, to be what men said they wanted them to be. But it was natural. Most people in anguish look for a scapegoat'.[70]

Granted that woman is inextricably involved one way or another in the male oriented activity of war, Owen's and Sassoon's use of her as a chopping block for their war neurosis has unfairly propagated a negative picture of womanhood; one, which because of the currency achieved, has suppressed the unaccounted for male attraction to war, incomprehensible to the female, which is detailed by Guy Chapman in A Passionate Prodigality:

> Once you have lain in her arms you can admit no other mistress. You may loathe, you may execrate, but you cannot deny her. No lover can offer you defter carresses, more exquisite tortures .... Even those who hate her most are prisoners to her spell. They rise from her embraces, pillaged, soiled, it may be ashamed; but they are still hers. 71

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The gulf between the civilians' and the soldiers' comprehension of war is a recurring theme in First World War literature; it chiefly manifests itself in the combatants' lambasting of what is designated: 'Home Front complacency'. This chasm in understanding is commented upon by many a woman who served in one capacity or another behind the firing line on the Western Front. Vera Brittain, who saw war service as a V A D nurse both at home and in France, records: 'In the First War, returning to London, from service in France, I . . . noticed a deep spiritual gulf between the soldiers and nurses in the fighting areas, and the civilians who remained at home'.[72] Lesley Smith, who worked as a V A D nurse in France, also takes up this theme in her book, Four Years Out of Life (1931). Referring to her first leave home she states:

> When my leave did come through at last I could not catch the mood in which to enjoy it. Everyone at home seemed to agree that, though 'it was all very distressing of course, the

> less said about it the better'; and I couldn't learn to talk politely about the marvellous spirit of the troops or the softening influence of the nurses. 73

On the occasion of another visit home she describes her inability to enjoy the luxuries home offered,

> because of the turmoil of despair and envy and hatred which filled me when I thought of the determined ignorance of all those kind people at home. This very kindness was an added offence . . . . Whenever I allowed myself to appreciate the quiet beauty and comfort of this hiatus I felt a traitor to the people out there. 74

This conflict which assailed Smith was perceived also by someone who stayed at home; Cynthia Asquith gauges her husband's mood thus in her diary: 'I think he feels tremendously the sense of the completely different plane in which the men at the front are living, and the great gulf between them and those at home . . . I think this produces a sort of sub-conscious irritation and indignation against the immunity and immobility of people ... at home'.[75]

The breakdown in understanding, the civilians' unwillingness to comprehend, is also commented upon by Smith. Writing of her efforts to convey some idea of the war, as experienced by her, to the people at home, she observes: 'Everytime I tried to tell them anything they put on a soothing bedside manner: "There, there, dear, one knows its all dreadful, but it doesn't help to be so emphatic about it"'.[76] The novelist, Sarah Macnaughton, who went to Belgium with a female hospital unit at the start of the war, records that when she attempted to explain to a friend, who believed war was a beneficial experience for all, that she had seen another aspect of it 'the kind soothing suggestion was that I must be a little over-tired'.[77] The soothing syrupy accounts

that were favoured by those at home and which would be demanded of her on her return, made Shirley Millard, an American who served as a nurse in France, note in her diary: 'How could they know what real bravery, real heroism, was? I had seen it and wanted no chatter about it over tea cups and cocktail glasses'.[78]

Despite these charges of insensibility, poets at home were not entirely unaware of the barriers between combatants and civilians and some of them render this aspect of the war in their writing. Since the expression of female experience, even one shared with the male, is not only frequently muted by the dominant male culture, but also superseded by male representation of it, women poets interpret this theme of the gulf between those at home and those at the Front in terms of male experience. V. Helen Friedlaender's "Dying" unfolds the tortured sensibility of a seriously wounded soldier. This individual knows that he is dying and feels ill at ease and out of place surrounded by a wife and friends whose behaviour jars on his nerves; he sorely wishes that he had been left to die at the Front, for he believes it would be better to have 'someone beside you who could understand'. Written as a monologue it provides the poet the opportunity to plumb the soldier's feelings through his musings on all those who come to visit him in hospital. He is tortured by the 'one maddening note / Of mimic cheer reserved for me alone' that the stream of visitors tune their speech to; he does not like this enforced 'brightness' and reflects 'while I live I shall not hear / Again, it seems, the natural voice of man / Or woman'. His friends have turned into strangers who 'only want to do the decent thing, / And then away - away'. He wishes he had been left at the Front for then he would not have been surrounded by 'all these people, smiling yet afraid, / Beating off thought, behind a fence of words', for he perceives the shallowness of his friends' concern:

With their lips
They murmur greetings - hope I have no pain -
Can they do anything? - But with their eyes
They beg I will not call on them to think
Even for a moment thoughts I live with now.

He tries to ward them off by pretending sleep, to evade 'that cursed brightness', which their tones adopt 'even on the stairs', and can sense their sigh of relief at being let off from a painful duty. He is depressed that not one of them has strength to 'pierce this veil / That sets me now apart from all the world', and say: 'Friend, you are dying; speak now as you will; / I am content to listen and to feel'. Left to the company of his wife who is 'cheerful, very calm' having been advised 'she must be calm / For my sake - mine!', he feels more 'utterly alone' than when he is on his own.[79]

The alienation experienced by this soldier is evoked in more general terms by Margaret Sackville in "Home Again". The returning soldiers who are plied with 'sweets and picture-books and cigarettes and things', perceive that like them, before they saw the real war, the people at home think war is just flag waving and singing patriotic songs, and muse: 'It's waste of breath to talk to folk who 'aven't been in 'Ell'. They are conscious that ''tween the likes O' them an' us the're days and nights between: / Such days, such nights! - there ain't no words, not human, to express,'[80] but fail to realise that this inability to communicate their experience contributes to the complacency which raises barriers between them. "Home Again" appears to be composed in what was regarded as the genial attitude characteristic of the average Tommy. Rose Macaulay, in "Cambridge", stresses the unbridgable gap that will divide those who return 'from countries far' and those who 'come from schoolrooms' to study at Cambridge: 'they shall speak with alien tongues, / Each an alien race. / They shall

find no meeting place, / No common speech at all'.[81]

The attack on the civilians is at its shrillest in Margery Lawrence's "Transport of Wounded in Mesopotamia, 1917". The soldiers blame the civilians 'who sat safe at home / And let us die', for all misfortunes incurred, and expose the hypocritic means by which the war machine at home explains the deaths caused by its blunders: 'Hush, and bury it deep - ... / Shuffle the cards again / Juggle - "regret" and "explain"'.[82]

One of the aims of Sassoon's statement of protest against war, made on behalf of suffering soldiers, was to 'destroy the callous complacence with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realise'.[83] The people at home may have lacked imagination to image the particular atmosphere of the battlefront, but they were not blind to the foibles of those whom they believed relished the war. The opening poem in Helen Hamilton's Napoo! A Book of War Bêtes-Noires (1918), is "The Ghouls", which shares the condemnatory attitude adopted by the trench writers towards old men and is noticeable for its strong anti-patriarchal ring. Even the soldier poets did not quite manage so effective and striking an image to register their disapproval of the war-crazy older generation as is conjured up by Hamilton. In her typical straightforward manner she launches her attack on the old men, who, to her, appear to draw nourishment from drooling over lists of the dead:

You strange old ghouls
Who gloat with dulled old eyes,
Over those lists,
Those dreadful lists,
To see what name
Of friend, relation,
However distant,
May be appended
To your private Roll of Honour

Unknowingly you draw, it seems,
From their young bodies,
Dead young bodies,
Fresh life,
New value,
Now that yours are ebbing. 84

One of the reasons for the ignorance of people at home of the true nature of life in the trenches was the censorship, coupled with the patronising stance adopted by journalists. The newspapers habit of hoodwinking was noted by Sarah Macnaughton who was in Belgium at the time of the fall of Antwerp; of this time she notes in her diary: 'the newspapers, like some old hurdy-gurdy with only one tune to play, loyally drummed out tales of victories'.[85] At home newspaper reporters were indicted for their deliberate fanning of patriotic emotion aimed at gulling innocent young men. This is the theme of a sonnet, "The Journalist", by Margaret Leigh, in which the war-time newspaper writer is projected thus:

He called for blood, and would not shed his own,
He sat at ease, and sent young men to die
With his strong pen; he was the enemy
Stalking at noontide, by whose hand were sown
Rank tares among us - love of country grown
To poisonous cant, and blind hostility. 86

Hamilton, in "The Knowing Watch-Dog", moving away from the rhetoric of the above, points her satire at a species of reporters who thrive on war and are uninterested in peace talks. Such a reporter informs his readers: 'The Boche, a wily bird is he, / Always spreading peace-traps, / To ensnare you', and advises

Fight on! Fight ever!
Never think of peace
Eyes right! (On me!)
And when I see an olive-branch outstretched,
I'll warn you.
I have an Eye
A Searchlight Eye
But hush!
Or you might get peace. 87

In "Certain Newspaper Correspondents at the Front", Hamilton takes objection to the reporters' use of the first person plural to describe action at the Front, a device which she sees as a deliberate attempt to snatch some of the credit, and admonishes: 'They, of course, is what you mean. / Then why not say so.'[88]

The barrier in understanding which crept up between soliders and civilians has various aspects. While the soldiers' charges of indifference and inhumanity, levelled at the people at home, have been well aired, the civilian point of view has been neglected. If the combatants were reticent about divulging their experiences of war, the same could be true of those at home; the stiff upper-lip tradition could apply to both. Elsie R. Martin, in "England in War Time", focuses upon the stoicism with which those at home ply their every-day tasks whilst battling tormenting thoughts. She perceives that the apparent veneer of gaiety may strike as callous and counterpoints:

> England, say you, does not care? -
> Oh! you are not right:
> Every family has some share
> In this dreadful fight.
> England turns her brightest side
> For the world to see.
> England proudly smiles to hide
> All her agony. 89

Women's apparent calm and poise, which brought charges of apathy from soldiers, Martin explains thus: 'Bravely smiling through the day, / Choking back their tears, / England's women go their way, /Calming other's fears'. An interesting testimony, which augments Martin's observation, is in a letter by a Lieutenant written to his wife-to-be, who saw him off to the Front; he writes: 'Darling, you were splendid when you saw me off at Waterloo. You just typified the women of England by your attitude,

everything for us men, and you have your dark times to yourselves so as not to depress us'.[90]

Owen in "Insensibility" considers various categories of people who have grown immune to the horrors of war. Whilst he can excuse and even explain away the various levels of indifference as manifest among soldiers, he can evince no leniency towards the people at home, whose callousness he holds inexcusable, being motivated by a conscious decision to cut themselves off from knowing the soldiers' agony:

> But cursed are dullards whom no cannon stuns,
> That they should be as stones.
> Wretched are they, and mean
> With paucity that never was simplicity.
> By choice they made themselves immune
> To pity and whatever mourns in man.

Rose Macaulay, who was involved in a variety of war work, ranging from nursing to working in the Ministry of Information, takes up this theme of deliberate distancing from the war in her poem,"Picnic: July 1917". The poem, which has for its locale the Sussex Downs where the war physically intrudes upon civilian consciousness - the sound of its guns wafted upon the wind - is divided into three sections. Each section projects a different level of the writer's sensibility towards the war. The first section records the nonchalance with which the sound of the guns is received:

> We did not wince, we did not weep,
> We did not curse or pray;
> We drowsily heard, and someone said,
> 'They sound clear to-day'.
>
> We did not shake with pity and pain,
> Or sicken and blanch white.

The second records how this placidity and imperturbability has been achieved; the pity, rage and pain which was always brimming over has been

wilfully contained:

> We are shut about by guarding walls:
> (We have built them lest we run
> Mad from dreaming of naked fear
> And of black things done.)

This self-protective callousness, which is attained by eschewing all haunting fanciful thoughts of war is of the category of indifference Owen excuses as a type of loss of imagination in soldiers: 'And terror's first constriction over, / Their hearts remain small-drawn'. The third section records a change of mood. The confidence voiced in the second: 'Not all the guns that shatter the world / Can quite break through', gives way to a heart-rending plea for equanimity, which demonstrates the flimsiness of the indifference striven for and conveys the ineffectuality of efforts to barricade the war, whose tortuousness the mind wishes to evade:

> Oh, guns of France, oh, guns of France,
> Be still, . . .
>
> Be still, be still, south wind, lest your
> Blowing should bring the rain.... . . .
>
> Oh, we'll lie quite still, nor listen nor look,
> While the earth's bounds reel and shake,
> Lest, battered too long, our walls and we
> Should break ... should break..... 91

Owen is not justified in his allegations of those at home being 'dullards whom no cannon stuns'. Macaulay's poem shows that war was an ever-present reality which had to be striven with - thus the attempts at indifference - to retain one's hold on sanity. Owen, perhaps, preoccupied with conveying the truth of the soldiers' war, overlooked the fact that civilians, too, like combatants, could subscribe to the believe: 'Dulness best solves / The tease and doubt of shelling'.

. . . . . .

'I do not pretend that work on the land is attractive to many women. It is hard work - fatiguing, backaching, monotonous, dirty work in all sorts of weather. . . . In all respects it is comparable to the work your men-folk are doing in the trenches at the front'.[92] This comparison evoked in a propaganda speech by the Agriculture Minister, at a women's meeting, was one which had also come to Rose Macaulay's mind when she went to work as a land-girl on a farm near her home in early 1916. The land-girls were a preliminary to the Women's Land Army, which was formed in 1917 by the Ministry of Agriculture to combat shortage of farm labour. This shortage felt as early as the spring of 1915 had forced the government to induce unwilling farmers to accept female labour; by 1916, however, they needed no encouragement and welcomed women workers.

While serving as a land-girl Macaulay wrote a group of poems in which she describes her farm experiences with a total lack of sentimentality and touches of wry humour. These poems grouped under the collective title, "On the Land: 1916", are "Driving Sheep", "Hoeing the Wheat", "Spreading Manure", "Burning Twitch" and "Lunch Hour". There was no mechanization at the particular farm Macaulay went to work on. The most back-breaking labour of all was the hoeing, set out in "Hoeing the Wheat"; the gruesome task of spreading manure made her compare her and her companions' plight with that of soldiers in the Flanders mud and imply that the soldiers are better placed than women engulfed in muck. These poems are interesting for the contrast they provide with the pastoral poetry of those serving in France and Flanders whose vision of rural activities is an idealistic one cast in the Georgian mould. Macaulay's poems highlight the difference between romance and reality. While not strictly dependent on the land for her living, she was for a time involved in earnest in the hard manual labour of farming, and it is on the intense physical discomfort, the

exposure to all weathers and the frustrating monotony of the task that she dwells rather than on pastoral pleasures.

In "Burning Twitch", she describes the seemingly endless task of attempting to get rid of this species of grass which 'is like souls in hell torment, / For it burns, but it never burns out. ... / hell fire blown by wings of angels / Would not burn all the twitch away'.[93] Hoeing the wheat is an activity hardly more profitable or preferable:

> We hoe up thistles and dandelions,
> And all the plantain brood,
> And sometimes by mischance we hoe
> A swathe of People's Food.
> The sun beats down unpitying
> On bent neck and head;
> Our shoulders ache with chopping out
> The thistles from the bread. 94

The physical discomfort involved in spreading manure which 'must lie quite close and trim, till the ground / Is like bread spread with marmalade', while 'The north-east wind cuts and stabs our breath; / The soaked clay numbs our feet', makes her regard her lot as a far more difficult one than that of soldiers in trenches :

> I think no soldier is so cold as we,
> Sitting in the Flanders mud. . . .
>
> I wish I was out there, and off the open land:
> A deep trench I could just endure.
> But, things being other, I needs must stand
> Frozen, and spread wet manure. 95

Macaulay's land poems contrast sharply with the emotional outpourings of Mrs. Humphrey Ward's high-minded and patriotic land-girls in Harvest (1920). This difference between reality and propaganda comes into evidence when one considers the pretty and wholesome speech made by one of Mrs. Ward's land-girls when out recruiting: 'It's hard work, but we love it! It's cold work often, but we love it! The horses and the cows

and the pigs - they're naughty often, but they're nice! - yes, the pigs, too. Its the beasts and the fields and the open air we love.'[96] The poetry and the romance of farming proceeds from the uninitiated.

The birth of the allotment system, which was prompted by growing food difficulties, provided women with another opportunity to do their bit for their country in the field of agriculture. While Virginia Woolf may disapprove of Kew Green being turned into allotment gardens, 'ugly patches of raw earth, spotted with white paper stuck into sticks',[97] Queen Mary, unperturbed by aesthetic considerations, noted of her work in her allotment at Buckingham Palace: 'worked from 3 to 5 planting potatoes. Got very hot and tired'.[98] This category of war work, open to both men and women alike, inspired verse mainly comic and satiric. A characteristic example is Jessie Pope's, "Come into the 'Lotment, Maud", where the lover believes that after Maud has split the heavy clods they 'shall blossom, beneath her feet, / In onions and curly kale'.[99]

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Interpreting war in terms of the atmosphere and emotion pervading the metropolis is a means by which the established tradition of poetry about London life is availed of to comment upon the conflict. Viviane Verne's "London: December 1914", gives a kaleidoscopic view of the war at home as witnessed in the course of a single day; the passage from light into darkness is an occasion for emphasizing at the close, the conviction: 'England! be calm. This storm will quail before thy just ambitions, / This night will pass to dawn'. The first scene shows winter trees standing,

> Naked and listless above strange tents in their midst,
> Strange things that came on the grass of the children's playground;
> Strange men they cover, who substitute grim action for play.

The epithet 'strange' while it conveys the unnaturalness of war proceedings also invokes the difference between real war and the mimic warfare of childhood which, perhaps, attracts many to war. The next scene concerns streets brimming with cars and buses, but stripped of all but a few horses, these having been commandeered. Through these muddy streets march soldiers, 'Fearless young cubs of the Lion', whom the crowd looks at 'with restrained approval, / That diffuses a silent enthusiasm, needless of cheers'. There is no cheering for 'Life is too grim, too stern for mirth just now', and many of the onlookers realise that 'London's mud that may cling' till the soldiers reach the trenches may be the 'last of Old England's soil that many will ever possess'. This mobile pageant of soldiers comprising 'Clerks and paupers and millionaires', who are made one 'in their gamble with life and death', elicits the sanctimonious reflection: 'death is the ladder to victory and victory is freedom for all'. Just as war has diminished barriers between men, so also has it united all women who watch the soldiers go: 'White hands bejewelled, and toil-worn fingers press, / With the same Spartan strength, on the same aching void'. Evening and approaching night empties the streets which besides the 'dulled lamps' are lit up by 'great sprays of search-lights that cut the opaque darkness, / Telling the populace of their rulers' vigilance'.[100] Searchlights at home appear to exercise an attraction not different from that which held sway over the Front line. This fascination with searchlights and bursting shells is thus captured by a nurse who served on the Western Front:

> Our guns are very busy, and they are making yellow flashes like huge sheets of summer lightning. Then the star-shells rise, burst, and light up a large area, while a big searchlight plays slowly on the clouds. It is all very beautiful when you don't think what it means. 101

Marian Allen in an untitled sonnet about London life relishes the colours of nature and shaded lights across the Mall which seem to her protected by the 'blazing streams of twin-tongues light' with which the searchlights 'leap and swing and scour the night'.[102] For Dorothy Kempe Gardiner the searchlights appear as a 'seraphic sword / Flaming in wrath' against London's enemies in her sonnet, "London at Night".[103]

The night-time activities which continue unchecked, unhampered by war give Verne an opportunity to gauge and comment upon the temperament of those at home:

> The halls and the theatres are open because London's spirit is brave,
> But the hearts that mimic and laugh are full of prayers for the trenches;
> And they who sit smiling and clapping are filling the social trenches
> In stoical self abnegation
> Which finds vent in aloof pursuance
> Of Duty, wherever it calls.

Though Verne's concept of 'Duty' is questionable, the motives behind such conception can be assumed as similar to those which governed Sassoon's denunciatory "Blighters"; each projects his and her feelings in accordance with their own particular angle of vision. The night life ends with the emptying of theatres and restaurants; the sleep which engulfs the country, Verne regards as proceeding from and protected by the immutability which London symbolizes:

> Sleep! England! sleep in thy calm impregnability,
> Pulsed by thy great heart, London, whose blood will flow if need be, for thy weal.
> London, who sits sedate and unalarmed beneath the menace of your skies.

The immutability and inviolability of London, concepts stressed by Verne, perhaps as an assuagement for fears, are beliefs nourished by other poets too. The 'sedate and unalarmed' metropolis described above draws strength from the belief earlier voiced by Verne when imaging the marching soldiers: 'London looks on, immune from doubt, / For she knows she is safe in the love of the lives - free-given - / Of her splendid soldier sons'. This concept of London and thus the whole country as a deity accepting voluntary sacrifice as her due, connoted by 'free-given', is elaborated upon in Helen Mackay's "Oblation", included in her volume, London, One November (1915), which is entirely devoted to recording the scenes and emotions of London in the early months of the war. "Oblation" testifies the poet's belief that London is worthy and deserving of the sacrifice being made for her preservation:

> London, of lives upon lives,
> is it all one? . . .
> One great offering
> to -
> what God can there be great enough?
> London -
> what God can there be
> great enough. 104

Noticing the 'trains full of refugees' from Belgium, who are kindly treated by one and all, makes Verne comment upon the uprightness of her country: 'Britain, whose doors were always ajar to the persecuted,/ Wide opens them now to all suffering, / And she and her Allies are fighting for freedom, and justice for all'. This compassion and steadfastness are qualities also stressed in Dorothy Gardiner's "London at Night": 'compassionate, / Bearing a thousand thousand helpless ones / Upon her breast'.[105] The attitudinising apparent here emanates from a patriotism which seeks to justify the British involvement in war as a dispassionate humanitarian move unaffected by personal motive.

By contrast Helen Dircks in "London in War" uses war-time London images to convey the disorientation in the settled rhythms of life wrought by war: 'White faces, / Like helpless petals on the stream, / Swirl by, / Or linger / And then go'. This comparison recalls the image central to Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro": 'The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough'. The dislocation in life, which for Dircks characterizes war, is also stressed by the difference between the war and peace-time attitudes towards natural phenomena. Summer's beauty fails to charm for it is perceived 'Through a throbbing gloom, / While death rattles / To a tripping melody', and sleep, haunted by spectres of the past, brings no peace.[106]

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The civilians' closest encounter with physical war came in the form of zeppelin raids. These evoked a multiplicity of response comprising sheer enjoyment and pleasure at the novelty of the sight witnessed; rebuking the enemy; highlighting the destruction caused; emphasizing the difference in the degree of anguish borne by soldiers and civilians. Jessie Pope's "A Zeppelin Show", besides capturing the enjoyment got by 'The upturned faces in the street' from watching zeppelins, also conveys the superiority of the British guns in combating these enemy intruders: 'An upward leap of straining shell, / A distant, dying glow'.[107] Whilst Pope's light hearted appreciation of an object which inflicted damage to life and property may cause offence, her attitude was in no way singular. Beatrice Webb and her husband could gleefully witness a raid though later he assailed by the wrongfulness of their response: 'It was a gruesome reflection afterwards', Beatrice Webb notes 'that while we

were being pleasantly excited, men, women and children were being killed and maimed'.[108] Arnold Bennett could record of such a raid: 'spectacle agreed to be superb'.[109]

"To a Zeppelin", a sonnet by Ellen Rose, is a rhetorical invocation to the 'hideous mammoth monster of the air', a 'frightful product of the Teuton brain' adjuring it not to sully English territory lest it meet its doom.[110] In contrast to this hectoring stance, "Zeppelins", by Iris Tree, focuses on the destruction let loose by the hellish spray from the sky:

> Look how they struggle in a mist of fire,
> Those hunchbacked chimneys and distorted homes -
> Now gloat on Hell, the colour seems to roar,
> An army fierce upon its own destruction,
> A famished monster tearing in its claws
> Gigantic foods to glut its lean desire
> Digesting all the world. [111]

The fourth line suggests that Tree does not take kindly to people rushing out to watch the zeppelins; it strikes her as an act of self immolation. Emily Orr's "Zeppelin Raids". focuses upon the suddenness of the destruction which catches people unaware: 'The childish bodies bruised to reddened clay, / The slaughter, ten times useless, of old folk, / Who from safe sleep to horrid death awoke';[112] this same forms the theme of "Zeppelin Nights", by Eleanor Gray: 'Men slept. A mighty rape / Seized, smote - and left them dead'.[113]

Despite her protestations in "Spreading Manure" that soldiers were better placed in the trenches than women working on the land, Rose Macaulay was only too well aware of where the real horror of the war lay. Her poem, "The Shadow", which describes a zeppelin raid, contrasts the suffering of civilian victims with the greater suffering of men at the Front.

Although undeniably distressed by the savagery of war, she is more especially appalled by the fact that young men of quality and promise are being indiscriminately destroyed. The fear which the zeppelins awaken in the people at home strikes her as being only a 'Strayed shadow of the Fear that breaks / The world's young men'; the pain the zeppelins inflict is but a 'Pale shadow of the Pain that grinds / The world's young men'. Macaulay was particularly upset by the death of Rupert Brooke, who was a close family friend and for a short while an object of romantic adoration. The third and last stanza of "The Shadow" stresses the deeper tragedy of the loss of men like him in comparison to the civilian dead. The query about blood running like wine which starts off the stanza suggests that those who 'poured out the red / Sweet wine of youth', as in Brooke's "The Dead", are held uppermost by Macaulay:

> The weak blood running down the street, oh, does it run
> like fire, like wine?
> Are the spilt brains so keen, so fine, crushed limbs so swift,
> dead dreams so sweet?
> There is a Plain where limbs and dreams and brains to set
> the world a-fire
> Lie tossed in sodden heaps of mire. . . . Crash! To-night's
> show begins, it seems.
> Death . . . Well,
> What then?
> Rim of the shadow of the Hell
> Of the world's young men. 114

Though personal considerations cannot be disregarded, Macaulay's poem does show woman speaking out against war, however, uneasily perched on the 'Rim of the shadow of ... Hell'; a position, which if the war poets' testimony about women is to be taken as the truth, barred them from divining the waste in human life incurred by war.

. . . . . .

Besides journalists and those designated 'ghouls' by Helen Hamilton, the types of people who caught the poets' imagination on the Home Front were conscientious objectors, shirkers, slackers, profiteers and food controllers. Pre-conscription days inspired a body of verse which aimed at promoting the national effort by directing opprobrium and discredit at those evincing any signs of hesitation in joining up; a form of moral blackmail which women had no right to subscribe to, and which, as has been pointed out above, was censured by Hamilton in "The Jingo-Woman", it can be excused as an embodiment of the jingoistic spirit of the time. "To a Shirker", by Marjorie Pratt, Miriam E. Gladwell's "To a Shirker" and "The Slacker", by Constance Powell, exemplify this genre. Casting a slur on the victim's manhood and shaming him, is the technique generally adopted in such verse; Powell's poem provides an example which describes all:

> He knows he isn't acting like a man.
> His pluck is wearing thin,
> For he's thinking of his skin,
> And he's damn well going to save it, if in any way he can. [115]

On a more humanitarian note Helen Bosanquet's "The Puzzled Conscience" describes the ambivalence between disliking militarism and the wish to be thought honourable: 'duty bids me join at once, while conscience says I mayn't, / And I'd hate to be a shirker, though I'd like to be a saint'.[116] Bosanquet's focusing upon this inner conflict, acknowledges the existence of this amongst the population, a fact which went unregarded by those swept on the tide of chauvinism.

Conscientious objectors attracted much infamy but also received sympathetic consideration. Disclaiming the pacifist standpoint is the theme of Rose E. Sharland's "Non-Resistance"; she justifies British entry into the war by highlighting Germany's intrusion into Belgium and tersely points out:

'For had we waited for the Huns, of common-sense bereft, / There would have been no Pacifists nor any of us left'.[117] Katharine Lee Bates achieves her purpose of shaming and humiliating conscientious objectors by having them addressed by soldiers in her poem,"Soldiers to Pacifists":

> Not ours to clamour shame on you,
> Nor fling a bitter blame on you,
> Nor brand a cruel name on you,
> That evil name of treason. 118

The repetitious rhythms of the first three lines suggest a web which ensnares pacifists in the web of the soldiers' disapproval despite the latter's claim to the contrary. Iris Tree in an untitled poem supports the pacifists' sentiments which strike her as noble in comparison with the ignoble foolishness which calls 'destruction great and slaughter brave', and she queries of the upholders of such sentiments: 'Are they not strong in courage who withstand / The armies of your folly and shall cease / To tarnish with spilt life their motherland?'[119] The Irish poet, Eva Gore-Booth in "Conscientious Objectors" portrays the humiliation undergone by such in their justification of their cause at the hands of the tribunals set up to ascertain the validity of their beliefs:

> Before six ignorant men and blind,
> Reckless they rent aside
> The Veil of Isis in the mind ....
> Men say they shirked and lied. 120

Gore-Booth writes from an intimate knowledge of the functioning of such tribunals; a pacifist, she visited conscientious objectors in prison and attended tribunals and courts-martial as a 'watcher' and a 'prisoner's friend'. For her these tribunals were places of horror 'strewn with wreckage and haunted with memories of vain appeals and helpless protest'.[121] Monica Ewer's "The C.O.'s Wife" also records the disparagement afforded to pacifists brought to trial:

the chairman, with a sneer,
Asked if he 'affected beer',
Said, 'We want no conscience here;
What ails you is simply fear'. 122

The Defence of the Realm Act, popularly abbreviated to D.O.R.A., allowed the government an insidious hold over the people during the war. "D.O.R.A.", by Nina Macdonald, describes in a comic strain the precise functioning of this act :

There was a young person named D.O.R.A.,
Who'd a face like a flaming Aurora,
When engaged, she would pounce
On a man, and denounce
Him, for doing what he 'didn't oughter'. 123

Marie Corelli, the popular novelist, fell foul of D.O.R.A. for food hoarding and was prosecuted 'on a charge of unlawfully acquiring certain articles of food in excess of the ordinary consumption of her household, contrary to the Food Hoarding Order'.[124] Food rationing and the restriction imposed by food controllers produced a good deal of comic verse. Beryl Swift's "My Hymn of Hate" set in tradition of Lissauer's notorious "Hymn of Hate" locates its object of maleficence in food controllers: 'I hate Food Controllers; / They play cards - sugar-cards -/ Which give me a headache but no sugar'.[125] Alfrida Tillyard's "Invitation Au Festin", deriving inspiration from Marlowe, offers an invitation to dinner: 'Oh come and live with me, my love, / And share my war-time dinner'.[126] Catherine Durning Whetham, parodying Wordsworth, in her sonnet "The Poet and the Butcher" describes the peculiar dearth which has overtaken England; a dearth which needs the imagination of a Milton to be overcome:

Milton, thou shouldest be living at this hour,
England hath need of thee. . . .
O organ voice of England, who but thee
Could conjure Sunday joints for coupons vile
And fright the butcher from penurious ways. 127

According to Marwick 'profiteering was one of the emotional corrosives of the war period';[128] an activity which could not be contained even by the erstwhile omniscient D.O.R.A. Much social opprobrium was directed against war-profitters. Margaret Leigh's epitaph "On a Profiteer" is a denunciation of such: 'I fattened on the blood and tears / Of these long laborious years; / Out of loss came forth my gain'.[129] Katharine Lee Bates's, "War Profits" voices the conviction that such nefarious practices toll the death of glory. Ethel Talbot Scheffauer's "Spiders" regards munition profiteers as having solely devised the war to further their own particular cause, at the expense of unsuspecting young men:

> The lean grey spiders sat in their den
> And they were starved and cold - -
> They said - - Let there be strife among men
> That we may gather gold. . . .
>
> And the spiders sat in their lighted palace
> And feasted, no more a-cold - -
> And redly, out of burning chalice,
> Gathered their minted gold. 130

Women were not blind to the ignominious characteristics of the war. Scheffauer shows women capable of scathing portrayal of profiteers, spurred by an indignation which equals the venom which made Owen decry such; 'I wish the Bosche would have the pluck to come right in and make a clean sweep of the Pleasure Boats ... and all the stinking Leeds and Bradford war-profiteers now reading John Bull on Scarborough Sands'.[131]

. . . . . .

The trench writers representation of women is biased; perhaps deriving from an attitude described thus by Cynthia Asquith: 'the tendency of the war was to depreciate Woman and her significance, the camaraderie there-

fore born between men being a much stronger thing than love'.[132] The lack of appreciation on the part of the male for women's war work, which if at all considered is negatively invoked as in Sassoon's sardonic: 'You make us shells' in "Glory of Women" and Owen's observation to his mother: 'shells made by women in Birmingham are at this moment burying little children alive not very far from here',[133] seems, perhaps, not unrelated to the ethical base of 'the greater love' which often expressed itself in terms of rejection of the love of man and women; Owen's "Greater Love" is an example. Woman thus relegated to the category of the other, the outsider, could be adversely characterized.

Owen's and Sassoon's negative portrayal of women is not unconnected with their sexual proclivities. Owen was described by Graves as 'an idealistic homosexual with a religious background' in the American edition of Goodbye to All That; a phrase cancelled at the request of Owen's brother, Harold, from the British reissue.[134] Sassoon discussing his personal life with Lady Ottoline Morrell, on her visiting him at Craiglockhart Hospital, told her that he got engaged because he felt he ought to be, as all his brother officers had a girl, but broke off for he found it impossible, as he really only liked men and women were antipathetic to him.[135] On being asked by another officer why there were so few women in his verse, Sassoon informed that they were outside his philosophy.[136] Of his poem, "Glory of Women", often taken as representative of women of the war era, Sassoon wrote to Robbie Ross from Craiglockhart: 'I sent Massingham a very good sonnet, but he hasn't replied. It is called "Glory of Women" - and gives them beans'.[137] Here it becomes difficult to distinguish whether the negative projection of women is a result of 'seeing in them manifestations of the uncomprehending civilian ethos',[138] or a mere

question of pique.

The female mind could, however, embrace various aspects of the conflict. The insensibility and indifference encountered on the Home-Front is forcefully projected by Edith Sitwell in "The Dancers":

> The floors are slippery with blood:
> The world gyrates too. . . .
>
> The music has grown numb with death -
> But we will suck their dying breath,
> The whispered name they breathed to chance,
> To swell our music, make it loud
> That we may dance, - may dance.
>
> We are the dull blind carrion-fly
> That dance and batten. 139

The carrion-fly is as effective and striking an image as ghouls to symbolise the negative attitudes of people at home. Kathleen Wallace's "Interval: Front Row Stalls" portrays a state of mind never far from thoughts of those out fighting. If snowflakes are imaginatively transformed into falling blossoms, which bring memories of home for the soldiers in Owen's "Exposure",the rustling of a newspaper and a sudden glance at the headlines in Wallace's poem produces the realisation:

> And between my eyes and the crimson lights,
> Move the ranks of men who sat here o'nights,
> And now lie heaped in the mud together,
> Stiff and still in the bitter weather. 140

Ffrida Wolfe's "Bond Street in War Time" pictures a mind constantly beseiged by thoughts of the dead, from which it attempts to seek momentary relief by indulging in the opulent displays encountered in its passage through the street:

In the endless chain of Bond Street -
In many a link are age-old treasures set. . . .
gilt Phoenician phials, whence amber scent
Steals into the narrow street -
That made me awhile forget
You. . . . .

You with the blood in your hair
And thewounded feet.
Why are you lying there
Under the heavy sea
Beyond. 141

"Night in the Suburbs, August 1914", shows the poet, Elinor Jenkins, contending with the dilemma of to whom falls the easier part in war-time; soldiers or civilians:

E'en now that moon in her own silver guise,
Looks down on some stretched on a stricken plain,
Yet she shows red unto their blood-dimmed eyes
That never shall behold the sun again.

We, weary of the idle watch we keep,
Turn from the window to our sure repose
And pass into the pleasant realms of sleep,
Or snug and drowsy muse upon their woes.

And whether we that sleep or they that wake, -
We that have laboured light and slumber well
Or they that bled and battled for our sake -
Have the best portion scarce seems hard to tell.

Soon shall the sun behold them, where they lie,
Yet his fierce rays may never warm them more;
No further need have they to strive or cry,
They have found rest that laboured long and sore;

While we take up again in street and mart
The burden and the business of the day:
And which of these two is the better part
God only knows, whose face is turned away. 142

Perhaps Henry Newbolt was correct when he commented of the trench poets that their irritation with those at home emanated from having suffered merely 'in the nerves and not the heart';[143] Elinor Jenkins's appraisal of the problem of who suffers most, rendered in slow, moving rhythms,

though eliciting no definite answers shows an imagination capable of highlighting the peculiar anguish borne by both sides without the intrusion of any prejudice.

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31. The Times, 8 February 1915, p. 8.

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CHAPTER FIVE

VISION OF WAR SEEN FROM THE INSIDE

An unsigned review of In War and Peace (1918), which appeared in the Englishwoman, July 1918, carried the following observation of the reviewer: 'For me its [the book's] chief interest lies in its vision of war seen from the inside, and finding expression through the woman-poet's mind'.[1] The author, Mary Henderson, was one of Dr. Elsie Inglis's helpers in the foundation of the Scottish Women's Hospitals and served with her in Russia and Roumania. The varied and occasionally grim experiences she had are reflected in some of her verse.

Since the beginning of things women have been mixed up in war, but until the conflict of 1914-1918 it presented no direct challenge to them. In the past they might deplore war's savagery, pity its victims, honour the courage of its heroes and feel gratitude for the protection which the army afforded them, yet they remained spectators. War was by tradition alien to women's preoccupation; it was not their province. The First World War changed this; it provided women with an opportunity to participate and observe war on a scale hitherto unknown. This chapter examines the work of those women who served at the Front or at home, as members of the various organisations which over the war years became an integral part of the machinery of warfare. In Women's War Work (1916), Lady Randolph Churchill comments of such: 'The women who are working in the active zone, ... or ... at home, are to be envied, for they have the exhilarating feeling that they are on active service'.[2] Besides this feeling of exhilaration, women, especially those who worked

just behind the firing lines, were reported to be acutely conscious and grateful for the privilege 'to have been allowed to see beneath the surface, and to get some faint knowledge of what the men suffer'.[3] The experiences of these women, rendered into poetry or prose, add a new dimension to the interpretation of the inner side of war, which has been regarded solely through the works of the trench writers. The opening part of this chapter considers the work of those women who at the start of hostilities, of their own initiative, set up or joined other similarly organised hospital units and went with them to the Front, well before the more official schemes of VAD's in military hospitals and WAAC's got going. The next section discusses verse by women who worked in hospitals at home while the last takes into account verse written by VAD's who served at the Front.

. . . . . .

At the outbreak of war London became the mecca for women volunteers, eager to make themselves useful; committees sprang up like mushrooms and issued stirring 'Calls to Women'. Yet, despite these calls, women found their efforts to be useful constantly spurned. Remembering this attitude, the novelist, Sarah Macnaughton, who was one of the few who managed to go to Belgium, as a member of a hospital unit run by women, wrote: 'Everyone was making "calls to women", and the women responded by calling at bureaux, and were frequently snubbed, which left them wondering why they had been called'.[4] Regardless of the rebuffs and discouragement women persevered. A prominent feature of female determination to participate in war work, in the early stages of the war, was the setting up of women's hospital units with the intent of

taking them to the Front. The idea of providing war hospitals staffed by women surgeons originated in Scotland, but it received plenty of support outside the country of its origin. Dr. Elsie Inglis, a founding member of the Scottish Women's Suffragette Federation, suggested in August 1914 that Scottish Women's Hospital Units should be formed for service overseas; she worked to get funds and recruits but her offer of help was waived aside by the British War Office with the comment, 'My good lady, go home and sit still'.[5] Dr. Flora Murray and Dr. Louisa Garrett, who as militant suffragists had had dealings with the Home Office, refrained from approaching the War Office realising that it would only mean courting a rebuff. They offered their services to the French and as heads of the Women's Hospital Corps set up and ran a hospital at the Hotel Claridge in Paris. This hospital was closed in January 1915 for the British authorities realising the excellent work the two were doing decided to take them under their patronage. They both set up and ran the British Hospital at Wimereux and later the Endell Street Hospital in London.

According to Dr. Murray 'in August 1914 it was a popular idea that war was man's business and that everything and every one else should stand aside and let men act'.[6] The refusal of the British Government to make use of women power, however, did not reconcile women to doing nothing; on the contrary it led to a considerable number of determined women getting to the war in various capacities, usually under their own steam or by other forms of private enterprise. It was not till April 1915 that the War Office formally acknowledged the role women's organisations could play. Cicely Hamilton, the actress, journalist, playwright and feminist, who served as a clerk with a unit of the Scottish Women's Hospital in France, points out in her autobiography, that it was because British authority showed little

enthusiasm for the idea of war hospitals run by women that all such units were placed at the service of our allies.[7] The British Army's refusal to make use of women's hospital units led to their being quickly snapped up by the willing French, Belgium, Serbian and Russian authorities.

The suffragette, Sylvia Pankhurst, who unlike her mother and sister opposed the war, whilst on a fact finding mission to Paris during Christmas, 1914, records coming across 'Dr. Flora Murray and a staff of women ... running a hospital under the French Government ...; for the British War Office was ... unwilling to accept their aid'. She records also Dr. Murray's waiving aside of a cast-iron Army tradition; Dr. Murray, she discovered, 'in defiance of all precedent ... gave equal treatment to officers and privates, placing them side by side in the same wards'.[8] This was a practice adhered to also by Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland, who was one of the first of aristocratic ladies who established their own hospitals in France. She was engaged in organising medical relief work from the start of the war. The Millicent Sutherland Ambulance set out for Namur, Belgium, on 8 August and worked there till the German takeover on 27 August. She returned to England in September to make preparations for setting up a hospital which she established in Dunkirk in October 1914. Sarah Macnaughton who visited the Duchess's hospital found it run on egalitarian principles; the Duchess firmly believing that 'a wounded man is a wounded man, and there is no distinction between them'.[9] The Duchess published an account of the German invasion of Belgium during the first weeks of the war: Six Weeks at the War (1914). This work is notable for the attitude adopted by the writer; though critical of the Germans and acutely aware of the ruin wrought by them she stays clear of heaping insults upon them, nor does she panegyrise

the Allies. A poem, "One Night", signed British Hospital, Malo, Dunkirk, France, which appeared in the English Review, February 1915, reflects the vacillation, resulting from a juxtaposition of the comforts of orthodox belief with the harsh reality on display in the hospital, the 'House of Pain'. This poem takes the form of an address to the moon, asking her 'if creeping round the Zones / She had seen good, or only poor things' bones'. The moon assures that 'the dead die brave'

> Passing so quickly from the things that count
> Count to all mortal thoughts, to find the Fount,
>
> Where angels pour elixir into bowls,
> Drink, not for broken hearts, but thirsty souls.

The moon informs also that she lights the path 'Of great Adventurers, released from death' 'To reach the garden of Life's aftermath'. The pause at the end of the poem, which separates the concluding couplet - 'Now pondering from the moon I turned again, / Over the sands, back to our House of Pain' - from the rest, serves two purposes. Firstly, it highlights the vacuity of the popular fallacy which held that those who die in battle, do so speedily - suggested by 'passing so quickly' - by implicit contrast with those who lodge in the House of Pain, many of whom may not recover. This same fallacy receives more stringent treatment from Sassoon in "How to Die"; according to him soldiers who go west have

> been taught the way to do it
> Like Christian soldiers; not with haste
> And shuddering groans; but passing through ...
> With due regard for decent taste.

Secondly, the pause brings into focus the disparity between the vast range of comforts guaranteed by orthodoxy to those who lose their lives in battle and the relative non-existence of any such religious consolations for survivors, many of whom may be maimed. It carries the implication that though some may draw comfort from thoughts of their war dead drinking

elixir poured by angels, those who tend and are in constant contact with the residues of war can but question and ponder over the validity of such beliefs.

The various hospital and ambulance units to which women were attached came across one another, especially during the Allied retreat from Belgium. Sarah Macnaughton went to Belgium with a hospital unit run by Mrs. St Claire Stobart. Mrs Stobart was a veteran hand at organising such activities; in 1907 she had formed the Women's Sick and Wounded Convoy Corps which served in the 1912 Balkan war with the Bulgarians. When the war started she formed another body, the Women's National Service League with the aim of providing a body of women qualified to give useful service at home or abroad. Like Dr. Inglis, her offer of help was rejected by the War Office, and she went into action independently first in Belgium and France and later in Serbia. The typhus epidemic, which swept over Serbia in early 1915, decided her to go there with her team of doctors and nurses; Mabel Dearmer and her husband were members of this team.[11] Mrs. Stobart's first hospital was established in Brussels; Sarah Macnaughton was attached to it in the official capacity of 'Head of the Orderlies'. After the fall of Brussels the hospital was shifted to Antwerp. It was after the retreat from Antwerp that Macnaughton met with the novelist, May Sinclair, at Ostend; both having moved there with their respective units. Macnaughton was in Belgium and France from September 1914 till June 1915; she wrote an account of her experiences, A Woman's Diary of the War (1916). The posthumously published, My War Experiences in Two Continents (1919) - Macnaughton died in July 1916 - is based on extracts from diaries recording her experiences in France, Belgium, Russia and Persia. A note of depression, sadness and criticism marks both the works.[12]

Her close encounter with the anguish borne by wounded soldiers makes her question 'whether there ever was a more mad way of settling a quarrel than to put a lump of lead into . . . [a] boy's lungs'.[13] This same consideration colours her observations upon the preparations afoot for the 1915 spring offensive:

> It is madness to slaughter these thousands of young men. Almost at last, in a rage, one feels inclined to cry out against the sheer imbecility of it. Why bring lives into the world and shell them out of it with jagged pieces of iron, and knives thrust through their quivering flesh? The pain of it is all too much. I am sick with seeing suffering. 14

She waxes critical of the role played by the press. Their reporting of the Allied retreat in Belgium produces the comment: 'The English papers rather annoy one with their continual victories, of which we see nothing'.[15] Of the German bombing of Antwerp, prior to its surrender, she writes: 'The firing ... is furious - sometimes there are five or six explosions almost simultaneously. I suppose we shall read in the Times that "all is quiet"'.[16] The male upperhandedness, manifest in their treatment of women, does not escape comment; she writes home in a letter from France:

> Women have been seeing what is wanted, and have done the work themselves at really enormous difficulty, and in the face of opposition, and when it is a going concern it is taken over and, in many cases, the women are turned out. 17

May Sinclair, who before the war 'rattled collection boxes on London street corners to raise funds for the suffragettes',[18] like Macnaughton, left for the Front at the beginning of the war. She was attached to an ambulance corps raised by a Scotsman, Dr. Hector Munro. Munro, finding the British authorities unapproachable, offered assistance to the hard pressed Belgian Army and was welcomed by the Belgian Red Cross. A leading feminist, he included four women in his team. Of these four it

was Mrs. Knocker and Mairi Chisholm who were to display the most daring feats of courage; for their acts of valour both received the Military Medal and the Cross of the Order of St. John. Sinclair was engaged to keep accounts, write up the reports and send articles about the activities of the Munro Corps to newspapers in order to raise funds. The Motor Field Ambulance set out for Flanders on 25 September 1914, and was initially stationed in Ghent; it enjoyed a period of relative calm till the fall of Ghent and the start of the Allied retreat. It was at this time that the female members of the unit proved their worth. At Ostend they met up with Macnaughton's unit, which was forced there because of the fall of Antwerp. Of this meeting Macnaughton records in her diary:

> Dr. Hector Munro came in from Ghent with his oddly-dressed ladies, and at first one was inclined to call them masqueraders in their knickerbockers and puttees and caps, but . . . they have done excellent work. It is a queer side of war to see young, pretty English girls in khaki and thick boots, coming in from the trenches, where they have been picking up wounded men within a hundred yards of the enemy's lines, and carrying them away on stretchers. Wonderful little Walküres in knickerbockers, I lift my hat to you. 19

Macnaughton shows herself free of jingoistic emotions, which otherwise, would take umbrage at the use of a markedly Germanic expression to describe the courage of British women.

Unfortunately May Sinclair was not allowed any part in this action detailed above; she was taken to see the Front line once during a lull in hostilities, but was never allowed to accompany the others on their rescue missions, which started at dusk and continued late into the night. Perhaps it was her age, she was over fifty, which made them exclude her. Though she did have occasion to pull the wounded off the

road, at the time when the ambulance corps was accompanying the retreating army, she felt strongly her exclusion from the more daring activities. In her A Journal of Impressions in Belgium (1915), it is in very injured tones that she records an instance when having contrived to board an ambulance, ready to set off on a rescue mission, she found herself literally thrown out by one of the other four women. Despite feelings of self pity, Sinclair had no misgivings and bore no grudge. She observed the women in action and marvelled at their coolness; one of her poems, among those which document the time spent in Belgium, is a celebration of the courage shown by these women. She returned to England in mid October 1914 to procure funds for the Corps. The Ambulance Corps was amalgamated with a unit of the Scottish Women's Hospital after the German takeover of Belgium.

"Field Ambulance in Retreat", first published in 1914, was perhaps written while Sinclair was still in Belgium. This poem, which is in three parts, documents the changed character of the traffic which flows along a Flemish Road; meant for use originally by horses, oxen and 'high waggons piled with corn from the harvest' it now suggests the Via Dolorosa. Its old users have to make way for the passage of a new harvest:

> the labourers are few;
> They and their quiet oxen stand aside and wait
> By the long road loud with the passing of the guns, the rush of armoured cars, and the tramp of an army . . .
> And where the piled corn-wagons went, our dripping Ambulance carries home.
> Its red and white harvest from the fields.

Sinclair's use of the harvest metaphor is one more variant of poets' adoption of this particular image to interpret war, as discussed in Chapter Three. The implied comparison in the above lines of the trail left by corn dropping off overladen wagons and blood from the wounded,

piled in the ambulance, oozing on to the road is striking. The retreating army which the ambulance accompanies is seemingly unbowed; though moving along 'the sacred, dolorous Way', it can still doggedly smile:

> a regiment driven back league by league
> Rifles at trail, and standards wrapped in black funeral cloths.
> Unhasting, proud in retreat,
> They smile as the ... Ambulance rushes by. 20

Moving away from this celebration of British pluck, in "After the Retreat", which appeared in the Egoist, May 1915, Sinclair conveys the desolation concomitant with war. Central to this poem is the image of a lone desolate house, witnessed by her in her passage with the retreating army. It continues to haunt and the dearth and ruin which it signified cannot be forgotten:

> The house we passed on the long Flemish road
> That day
> When the Army went from Antwerp, through Bruges,
> to the sea; . . .
>
> It looked
> Through windows blurred like women's eyes that have
> cried too long.
>
> There is not anyone there whom I know,
> I have never sat by its hearth, I have never crossed its
> threshold, I have never opened its door,
> I have never stood by its windows looking in;
> Yet its eyes said: 'You have seen four cities of Flanders ...
> And there is none of them that you shall remember
> As you remember me'. 21

Like Sinclair, Ford Madox Ford, in "The Old Houses of Flanders", employs the image of ruined houses to denote the destruction wrought by war: 'And those old eyes, / Very old eyes that have watched the ways of man for generations, / Close for ever'.

To her account of experiences in Belgium, Sinclair prefixed a poem,

"To a Field Ambulance in Flanders", wistfully dedicated to the women of her Ambulance corps. This poem, dated 8 March 1915, is of a personal nature. It opens with lines which suggest that Sinclair is disturbed still by feelings of having missed the main action:

> I do not call you comrades,
> You,
> Who did what I only dreamed. . . .
> you have taken my dream,
> And dressed yourselves in its beauty and its glory.

'Danger / The Beloved', who, like an enchantress, beckoned the women to follow her, lured Sinclair as well, but when Sinclair 'came within sight of her, / She turned aside, / And hid her face'. Having got rid of her pent-up feelings Sinclair focuses on the actions of the women; the remainder of the poem is a celebration of their courage and daring:

> you go,
> Gathering your wounded from among [the] dead.
> Grey night falls on your going and black night on your returning.
>
> You go
> Under the thunder of the guns, the shrapnel's rain and the curved lightning of the shells,
> And where the high towers are broken,
> And houses crack like the staves of a thin crate filled with fire;
> Into the mixing smoke and dust of roof and walls torn asunder
> You go. 22

Female feats of heroism went mostly unrecorded; occasionally they got a mention in newspapers. The heroism and bravery displayed by nurses in carrying out their duties amidst air attacks and shelling received no widescale commemoration. Though Vera Brittain records that 'nurses who lost their lives in the bombing of Etaples [1918] were buried beneath crosses marked "Killed in Action"',[23] yet they were not deemed worthy of a memorial put up as a tribute to their courage and spirit of endurance. This indifference meted to women, who die in the service of their country,

is the theme of Brittain's "The Sisters Buried at Lemnos":

> Seldom they enter into song or story;
> Poets praise the soldiers' might and deeds of War,
> But few exalt the Sisters, and the glory
> Of women dead beneath a distant star. 24

Similar sentiments permeate Brittain's "Vengeance Is Mine", written in memory of the nurses who died in the German air raids upon hospitals at Etaples in the spring of 1918.

Mary Henderson, like Sinclair, witnessed feats of daring not expected of women. She served on the Eastern Front with Dr. Elsie Inglis. Dr. Inglis left for Serbia in April 1915 but was forced to return home after the Serbians surrendered. She was ordered to give up her whole hospital outfit to the Germans; when she demurred, she was told: 'this equipment is too perfect for anything but a German hospital'.[25] In mid 1916 she received an appeal for help from the Serbian First Division which was then fighting alongside the Russian Army on the Roumanian Front. After making the necessary arrangements she set sail from Liverpool in August 1916 with a team of eighty women, including Henderson. Their journey involved a constant threat of German submarines and a tiresome trek lasting fourteen days across Russia before they arrived at their destination, the Roumanian Front.

Henderson published her volume of poems, <u>In War and Peace</u> (1918), with the aim of raising money for the Dr. Elsie Inglis Memorial Fund; Dr. Inglis returned home in November 1917 and died shortly afterwards. John Oxenham, a popular poet of the time, in his Foreword points out that 'Mary Henderson has had experiences beyond most, even for one living in these chaotic times'. Her list of experiences ran into narrowly escaping capture by the enemy; ferrying stores to hospital units stationed at other ports along the Front;

witnessing the havoc caused by the revolution in Russia; watching its victims being buried in scarlet coffins and rubbing shoulders with the Women's Battalion of Death. This particular battalion was raised by Kerenski as an attempt to boost the sagging courage and morale of the Russian Army. The commandant, Madam Botchkareva, was a Siberian peasant whose husband had been killed in the war; she obtained permission to take his place and won two St George's Crosses for bravery at the Front. During the First World War, apart from the Russians, the Serbs were unique in allowing women to join the regular army. Flora Sandes, an Englishwoman, rose through the ranks to be made lieutenant and later captain. She went to Serbia initially as a nurse but, after the surrender, seeing Serbian peasant women fighting with the army she too enrolled. She saw a lot of action and was wounded and operated upon a number of times. Despite suggestions of preferential treatment by the rank and file, which emerge in both her accounts of service with the Serbian Army, An English Woman-Sergeant in the Serbian Army (1916) and The Autobiography of a Woman Soldier (1927), she saw enough of soldiering to be able to formulate her own method of dealing with the problem of the ubiquitous 'cooties'. She discarded wearing grey shirts in preference for white, because 'on white they [cooties] could at least, be promptly located and dealt with'.[26]

The courage and resourcefulness shown by Dr. Inglis and her team in combating military and climatic rigours did not fail to make an impression upon the local people. A remark by the Prefect of Constanza was widely quoted in the British press:

> It is extraordinary how these women endure hardships; they refuse help, and carry the wounded themselves. They work like navvies. No wonder England is a great country if the women are like that. 27

This remark inspired Henderson's "Like That". The poem dedicated to the 'Rank and File of the Scottish Women's Hospitals' has prefixed to it the Prefect's comment: 'No wonder Britain is so great if her women are like that'. This poem, like Sinclair's dedicatory poem, is an appreciation of female pluck and daring; it provides an excellent record of conditions under which women were working and the nature of their work. The poem takes the form of an address to the hospital workers; these women, who maintain a stiff upper lip and 'laughed above the lurking submarine, / Clothing Death's terrors in a happy sheen / Of debonair light heartedness', have endless resources of nerve and daring. The writer has seen them

> kneeling on the wooden floor,
> Tending your wounded on their straw-strewn bed,
> Heedless the while that right above your head
> The Bird of Menace scattered death around.
> I've seen you guiding over shell-marked ground
> The cars of succour for the sheltered men,
> Dauntless, clear-eyed, strong-handed, even when
> The bullets flung the dust up from the road,
> By which you bore your anguished, helpless load.
>
> I've seen you, oh, my sisters, 'under fire'. 28

One of the weaknesses in Henderson's verse, apparent in this and other poems, is that she verges on the jingoistic, which detracts from the quality of her work. The above poem concerns British women who 'Bearing the Flag of British Liberty' go beyond the 'sheltering British shore' because in their 'hearts there burned but one desire / What British men and women hold so dear / To do your duty without any fear'. A noticeable feature is the mode of address adopted by Henderson in writing of her fellow workers: 'my sisters'. The male camaraderie and brotherhood of the trenches was to a degree reflected in the life of women also. The Marchioness of Londonderry, who founded the Women's Legion and was closely associated also with the Women's Volunteer Reserve, claims that 'during those terrible

years of war women developed that spirit of comradeship amongst each other that hitherto we had been accustomed to associate only with men'.[29] 'sisters' can be regarded as the female equivalent of 'lads' and 'boys'.

Of the other poems, "A Cargo Boat", most likely describes the vessel used by Henderson on her journeys ferrying stores to other hospital units. She knows it intimately; the little cargo boat's

> funnel was riddled with shrapnel,
> And the little saloon where we ate,
> Was splintered by notes of music
> From the Boches' Hymn of Hate. 30

The poem is a tribute to the courage of 'our Merchant Service'. "A Russian Soldier" and "The Young Serbian" are cameos of life witnessed in the course of hospital duties. Both appear to be based on actual incidents and in both the incident is an occasion to expatiate on the war. The opening lines of "A Russian Soldier" are highly subjective and simply rendered:

> Opening all unaware my office door,
> I found him lying on the boarded floor,
> A young slight figure with an ashen face,
> On its distorted lineaments the trace
> Of nature's last revolt that such a life
> Of promise should be shattered in the strife
> Of man's insensate lust. 31

Hereafter the poem dwindles into haranguing the Kaiser, who is held responsible for the flood of 'The broken fragments of God's handiwork'. The first two stanzas of "The Young Serbian" are similar in style to "A Russian Soldier":

> He was just a boy, as I could see,
> For he sat in the tent there close by me. ...
> As the doctor took the blood-stained bands
> From both his brave, shell-shattered hands -
> His boy hands, wounded more pitifully
> Than Thine, O Christ, on Calvary.

he could not hold the spoon or cup,
And I fed him .... Mary, Mother of God,
All women tread where thy feet have trod. 32

The last stanza effects a synthesis of the two images central to the above, which is used to define the human condition: the soldier, like Christ, is stretched 'on the battlefield of pain' whilst 'Womanhood', following in the steps of Mary, is 'striving to ease His pangs'. A point to note is the attitude adopted by nursing women towards their male patients. Old women, like Henderson, invariably regarded them with a mother's eye; young nurses, such as Enid Bagnold, perhaps to keep all emotional involvement at bay, viewed them as brothers.[33] With both the attitude taken was an idealistic one.

The image of the nurse as a mother figure, evoked in Henderson's poem, was one which was widely used for propaganda purposes. In the majority of countries, allies or enemy, the nurse was a near-religious symbol. One of the most striking of the various posters which apotheosise the nurse is the one captioned, 'The Greatest Mother in the World'; the picture shows a monumental Red Cross nurse with a diminutive stretcher-case cradled in her arms. This veneration is in evidence also in many a poem written by junior nurses and probationers about their ward sisters; this adulation can be regarded as a variant of the trust and admiration which the Tommies had for their officers. The sister in Winifred Letts's "A Sister in a Military Hospital", is like the 'Madonna', the epitome of 'Four seasons blent in rare accord'.[34] The Red Cross nurse in Alberta Vickridge's poem of the same title is described as the 'white Madonna of the ward',[35] whilst Vera Brittain's "To My Ward-Sister" concerns one, who is blessed by all she passes by in the ward.[36] The night-sister in Eva Dobell's poem of the same title, is a 'bright-haired angel come from

heaven', who is surrounded by 'reverent worshippers'.[37] All four writers served as nurses during the war.

. . . . . .

Mary Borden, an American settled in Britain, spent the war years working with a hospital unit attached to the French Army. An aspiring writer, who came into her own after the war, she was prominent on the literary scene in pre-war days. Wyndham Lewis records meeting Shaw for the first time at her house; he and Ford Madox Ford were both staying with her and her husband in Scotland when war broke out.[38] Borden immediately left for France, where she stayed till the end of hostilities, equipping and directing a mobile hospital at the Front. In recognition of her services to the French Army, she received medals both from France and England, including the Croix de Guerre and was made a member of the Legion of Honour. The Forbidden Zone (1929), is a collection of sketches and poems based on her war experiences. Contrary to Nicola Beuman's conjecture that Borden 'did not try to publish her work about nursing until 1929 - or perhaps she wished to but had to keep it in a bottom drawer for ten years',[39] all of Borden's poems, apart from one, included in The Forbidden Zone appeared in various issues of the English Review, 1917, as did also one of the prose pieces.

Of her choice of title Borden remarks in the Preface:

> I have called the collection of fragments 'The Forbidden Zone' because the strip of land immediately behind the zone of fire where I was stationed went by that name in the French Army. We were moved up and down inside it; our hospital unit was shifted from Flanders to the Somme, then to Champagne, and then back again to Belgium, but we never left 'La Zone Interdite'.

The title, perhaps, implies also a woman's venture into those areas in life which are a masculine preserve, forbidden to the female. Of the work collected in The Forbidden Zone she explains:

> I have not invented anything in this book. The sketches and poems were written between 1914 and 1918 during four years of hospital work with the French Army . . . To those . . . who find them unbearably plain, I would say that I have blurred the bare horror of facts and softened the reality, ... not because I wanted to do so, but because I was incapable of a nearer approach to the truth. 40

Borden shows the war as it was; she does not indulge in making innocuous statements but concentrates on the reality as perceived by her. Of her work discussed here, "The Hill", "The Song of the Mud", and "Where is Jehovah?" appeared under the collective title 'At the Somme' in the English Review, August 1917; "Unidentified" was published in the December issue of the same year.

"The Hill", which is a description of the battleplane as seen from a high vantage point, anticipates Owen's "The Show"; it also suggests Borden's familiarity with Hardy's The Dynasts. The desolate, defiled, charred, scarred landscape, violated and blasphemed, which is presented in this poem is a means of registering disapproval of the war:

> From the top of the hill I looked down on
> the beautiful, the gorgeous, the super-
> human and monstrous landscape of the
> superb exulting war.
> There were no trees anywhere, nor any
> grasses or green thickets, nor any birds
> singing, nor any whisper or flutter of any
> little busy creatures.
> There was no shelter for field mice or rabbits,
> squirrels or men.
> The earth was naked and on its naked body
> crawled things of iron.
> It was evening. The long valley was bathed
> in blue shadow and through the shadow, as
> if swimming, I saw the iron armies moving.

> And iron rivers poured through the wilderness
> that was peopled with a phantom iron host.
> Lights gleamed down there, a thousand
> machine eyes winked. . . .
> I looked down, searching for a familiar thing,
> a leaf, a tuft of grass, a caterpillar; but the
> ground dropped away in darkness before
> my feet, that were planted on a heap of
> stones. 41

The barren sterile nature of war is conveyed through the transmogrification of all things natural into things of iron. The earth stripped bare of all its flora and fauna emphasizes the destructiveness concomitant with war and strengthens the implied conviction that war is an aberration. Borden's work is modernist in that all her distaste of war is transmitted through a piling of realistic detail without any overt reflection or comment. The photographic realism, evident in the above, is a characteristic of her work. The juxtaposition of epithets in the opening sentence is not without irony. As the poem unfolds it demonstrates the vacuity of those ideals which held war a thing 'beautiful', 'gorgeous', 'superb' and 'exulting'. The poet's loathing of war also defines her description of tanks, which she observes from her perch upon the hill. Tanks, which were first introduced in the Battle of the Somme, 15 September 1916, by General Haig as a last desperate bid to alter the situation, appear thus to Borden:

> A strange regiment was moving in
> single file, a regiment of monsters.
> They moved slowly along on their stomachs.
> Dragging themselves forward by their ears.
> Their great encircling ears moved round and
> round like wheels. . . .
> Obscene crabs, armoured toads, big as houses,
> They moved slowly forward, crushing under
> their bellies whatever stood in their way.

The monstrosity, which Borden associates with war, is emphasized in the poem's ending through contrasting the man-made carnage with the peace and

beauty of the universe spurned by him:

> Above the winking eyes of the prodigious war
> the fragile crescent of the moon floated
> serene in the perfect sky.

'Prodigious' recalls the 'superhuman' and 'monstrous' of the opening lines.

"The Song of the Mud" - the title is reminiscent of Thomas Hood's "The Song of the Shirt" - is a graphic celebration of 'The invincible, inexhaustible mud of the war zone'

> That sucks the guns down and holds them
> fast in its slimy voluminous lips, . . .
> Soaks up the fire, the noise; soaks up the
> energy and the courage;
> Soaks up the power of armies;
> Soaks up the battle. . . .
> the smooth fluid grave of our soldiers.

Borden's description of the havoc wrought by the mud of the war zone shows that she observed it closely and is appalled by the tragedy and waste it engenders:

> This is the hymn of mud - the obscene, the filthy, the putrid,
> The vast liquid grave of our armies.
> It has drowned our men.
> Its monstrous distended belly reeks with the undigested dead.
> Our men have gone into it, sinking slowly,
> And struggling and slowly disappearing.
> Our fine men, our brave, strong, young men; . . .
> Slowly, inch by inch, they have gone down into it,
> Into its darkness, its thickness, its silence.
> Slowly, irresistably, it drew them down,
> sucked them down,
> And they were drowned in thick, bitter, heaving mud. 42

The keen and minute detail with which Borden describes the 'frothing, squirting, spurting, liquid mud', is on a par with Henri Barbusse's representation of the water-logged earth, based on his experiences in the Somme area, in the novel Under Fire (1917).

In "The Hill" and "The Song of the Mud", Borden adopts a depersonalized approach to the tragedy of war; all criticism is implied through descriptive detail without the intrusion of any explicit personal comment. "Where is Jehovah?" and "Unidentified" show a shift in stance; here she feels the need to exhort and denounce those responsible for the ruin and desolation caused by war. "Where is Jehovah?" makes its passionate appeal for an end to war by highlighting the plight of the ordinary soldier, whom Borden regards as abandoned by both God and those in charge of the show:

> All the host of them, each one of them, quite
> alone each one of them, every one of the
> hundred thousand of them, alone, must
> stand up to meet the war. . . .
> With the hills on fire and the valleys smoking,
> and the few bare trees spitting bullets; and
> the long roads like liquid iron torrents,
> rolling down on him with guns and iron
> food for guns - always guns and more guns
> - with these long roads rolling down like
> cataracts, to crush him and no way of escape, . . .
> With the men near him going mad, jibbering,
> sobbing, twisting,
> With his comrade lying dead under his feet,
> With the enemy beyond there - unseen - mysterious, . . .
> He stands there, he keeps on standing; he
> stands solid, this sheep man. 43

Besides conveying the pathos and futility which mark the soldiers' condition, the above is also a tribute to their patience, strength and spirit of endurance.

"Unidentified" shows Borden preoccupied again with the predicament of the ordinary soldiers; the poem stresses both the bitterness of their experience and the indifference, which Borden believes, is meted to them. "Unidentified" like "Where is Jehovah?" is noticeable for its hectoring tone. The poem opens with an invitation to those who rule and govern to observe the peculiar condition of one who 'stands ... planted in the mud like some old battered image of a faith forgotten by its God'. The detailed description which follows reveals both Borden's intimate knowledge of Front line

conditions and her ability to present them in a graphic succinct manner:

> Look close at this man. Look!
> He waits for death; . . .
> He feels it coming underneath his feet, run -
> ning, burrowing underneath the ground;
> He hears it screaming in the frantic air. . . .
> He takes the impact of it on his back, his
> chest, his belly and his arms;
> Spreads his legs upon its lurching form;
> Plants his feet upon its face and breathes deep
> into his pumping lungs the gassy breath of
> death.
> He does not move.
> In all the running landscape there's a solitary
> thing that's motionless:
> The figure of this man. 44

The poem stresses the suffering and desolation of those lured into the service of their country, each a supposed saviour, 'A single rivet driven down to hold a universe together'. The title is a metaphor for the tragedy which becomes the particular fate of many a soldier, whose courage and heroism passes unacknowledged, unrewarded and unknown, having gained no official recognition:

> The guns will chant his death march down the
> world;
> The flare of cannon light his dying;
> The mute and nameless men beneath his feet
> will welcome him beside them in the mud.

Borden emerges as the most impressive female exponent of the battlefield amongst those who wrote out of a direct experience of it; her work shows that women could perceive and delineate the ruinous effects of war in as gripping a manner as the male poets. Her championship of the common soldier - her book is dedicated to the poilus - is as emphatic as that of Owen and Sassoon. If realistic detail is one criterion for judging poetry inspired by the war, then Borden's poems can be confidently set beside the works of any of the trench poets.

. . . . . .

'The only way to see war is from a hospital';[45] thus wrote the pacifist, Mabel Dearmer, who went to nurse in typhus ridden Serbia with Mrs. Claire Stobart. Of the numerous women who served at home, a few drew on their hospital experiences to depict war in a manner which falsifies the received image of women at home as ignorant and idealistic; Winifred M. Letts and Eva Dobell are examples of such. Winifred M. Letts, who was a minor poet of the time, joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment in 1915 and went to work at Manchester Base Hospital; later she joined the Almeric Paget Military Massage Corps, working at Command Depot Camps in Manchester and Alnwick. This Massage Corps was one of the various organisations that sprang up during the war, funded by the rich. On the outbreak of war Mr. and Mrs. Almeric Paget offered the military authorities at the War Office to supply and run a Corps of fifty fully trained masseuses for work among the wounded in the United Kingdom. The offer was accepted, and appointments of the masseuses to hospitals began in September 1914. Early in 1915 the Corps was given official recognition. Monica Salmond, a sister of Julian Grenfell, also trained as a masseuse and worked in different hospitals run by the aristocracy.

In 1916 Letts published a volume of verse, Hallow-e'en and Poems of the War. The Spectator in its review observed: 'Though they do not come from the battle-front, several of Miss Letts's poems show direct contact with war in hospital . . . she grieves over the shattered flotsam of battle'. Included in this volume are also poems of a purely patriotic kind and a sequence of intensely realised 'In Memoriam' sonnets. Of the poems which relate to her hospital experience, "What Reward?", shows that women were voicing criticism of the war well before the dominant male voices emerged on the scene:

You gave your life, boy,
And you gave a limb:
But he who gave his precious wits,
Say, what reward for him?

One has his glory,
One has found his rest.
But what of this poor babbler here
With chin sunk on his breast?

Flotsam of battle,
With brain bemused and dim,
O God, for such a sacrifice
Say, what reward for him. 46

The poem highlights in a simple, unadorned style the cruel fate of some of those, who having fallen for the ploy of the 'Great Sacrifice' and enlisted, are rendered inefficient, robbed of all their senses. Letts appears to challenge the advocates of glory to pay heed to the plight of this 'Flotsam of battle' and realise the desolation and pain inherent in the ideals which they market with ease. She must have come across in the course of her duties what Owen was later to label "Mental Cases", to be sufficiently affected to write of them.

In "Screens" Letts details an everyday incident of hospital life:

They put the screens around his bed;
A crumpled heap I saw him lie,
White counterpane and rough dark head,
Those screens - they showed that he would die. 47

A simple descriptive poem it features some routine hospital practices: leaving the dying man by himself; stopping the gramophone, to allow him a peaceful exit; bringing in the Union Jack to cover the dead body. This last act an acknowledgement of the nation's indebtedness to her saviours. Enid Bagnold, on starting work at a hospital, very soon learned the significance of orderlies bearing a stretcher with the empty folds of a flag flung across it. She records in her A Diary Without Dates (1918), one such instance:

> They take the stretcher into a ward, and while I wait I know what they are doing behind the screens which stand around a bed against the wall. I hear the shuffle of feet as the men stand to attention, and the orderlies come out again, and the folds of the flag have ballooned up to receive and embrace a man's body. 48

Thus, sacrifice is honoured. What strikes Bagnold is the discrepancy between the honour meted and the dumping of the body in the mortuary. The lighthearted tone, which marks the ending of Letts's "Screens", is born not of paucity of emotion, but reflects the veneer of indifference adopted by those who tended the dying, as a safeguard to coping with such tragedies which occurred all the time:

> Another man will get his bed,
> We'll make the row we did before
> But - Jove! - I'm sorry that he's dead.

Letts's "Casualty", takes up the theme central to Borden's "Unidentified", discussed above; the sacrifice of thousands of soldiers which goes unacknowledged, unrecorded, uncommemorated:

> No history will hold his humble name.
> No sculptured stone will tell
> The traveller where he fell;
> That he lies among the dead
> Is the measure of his fame. . . .
>
> All unknown and all unmissed.
> What to us that he is dead? —
> Yet he died for you and me. 49

"Casualty" reprimands the injustice done to the memory of those whose sacrifice passes unknown and pleas for a widening of the bonds of sympathy and understanding.

Eva Dobell, a niece of the poet Sidney Dobell, volunteered as a nurse at

the outbreak of war. Her book of poems, A Bunch of Cotswold Grasses (1919), has a section titled 'In War Time'; the poems present in this are a record of scenes and emotions associated with her hospital work. Five of the poems in this section are grouped together under the heading 'In a Soldiers' Hospital', an unconscious echo, perhaps, of Henley's 'In Hospital'. The first of these, "Pluck", illustrates the courage of a boy maimed for life at seventeen; it also touches upon the recruiting racket which allowed for boys younger than the requisite age to join up. Boys wishing to join, but innocent enough to give their real age, were often advised to come the next day when they would be nineteen. As with the hero in Owen's "Disabled", who lied to join up, this boy too 'told a lie to get his way', swayed by the intense desire 'To march, a man with men, and fight'; one more victim of propaganda posters and recruiting sergeants. The third and fourth stanzas illustrate the fortitude of this soldier, who is just 'A child - so wasted and so white':

> So broke with pain, he shrinks in dread
> To see the 'dresser' drawing near;
> And winds the clothes about his head
> That none may see his heart-sick fear.
> His shaking, strangled sobs you hear.
>
> But when the dreaded moment's there
> He'll face us all, a soldier yet,
> Watch his bared wounds with unmoved air,
> (Though tell-tale lashes still are wet,)
> And smoke his woodbine cigarette. 50

Dobell's portrayal of the onslaught of fear in the boy's heart at the prospect of renewed pain and his attempts to calm down suggest that she must have observed such proceedings closely, as also the insouciance assumed to hoodwink the dressers. A nurse reminiscing about the terrible sufferings witnessed by her in the wards observed: 'I think that the uncomplaining bravery of the men made it all the more heart-breaking ... I look back on that time with such a loathing of war that remembrance

becomes almost physical pain'.[51]

Dobell's "Gramophone Tunes" depicts a grotesque medley of maimed humanity apparently enjoying themselves. All are swept away on the tide of music: the Welsh boy whose 'one leg was blown away'; his neighbour with the shattered arm; 'Jock' who 'with his crutches beats the time' and also a victim of shell-shock who 'Listens with puzzled, patient smile'.[52] The poem is a tribute to man's powers of forbearance; the concluding lines: 'Man that is master of his flesh, / And has the laugh of death and pain' are in the spirit of Henley's "Invictus". Dobell's interpretation of hospital life lacks the originality discernible in Letts's hospital poems.

"The Band" crystallizes Dobell's view about war; critical of the traditional, it apparently proceeds from her own personal experience of war:

> Down the street comes the marching music,
> New-called soldiers go swinging by. . . .
>
> Here in the ward are sick men lying,
> Ne'er to follow the drums again:
> Young men broken in life's fair morning,
> Weary-hearted and spent with pain,
> Turn to listen, as through the window
> Swells the lilt of that mocking strain.
>
> Silence, silence, oh, lying music!
> War is waste and a searing fire;
> Youth and gladness and all things lovely
> Trodden out in the bloody mire.
> Still the music comes calling, calling,
> 'Glory! Glory! beyond desire'. 53

The penultimate line implies that individual realisation of the tragedy lurking behind the much vaunted ideals of heroism has not the power to contain this deathly tide of glory; this demands as massive a machinery as that brought into action to preach war's beneficience.

Dobell, besides nursing, as part of her war work, carried out the morale boosting job of corresponding with prisoners of war. May Bradford, on the other hand, wrote letters home for the wounded lying in French hospitals. She was the wife of Sir John Bradford, who was consulting physician to the British Expeditionery Force. She was called 'Little Mother' by the Tommies, who invariably fussed over the length of the 'barbed wire entanglement' at the end of their letters; Tommy's way of referring to the x's denoting kisses.[54]

In January 1918 the Bookman ran a poetry competition for men and women on war service. The prize was won by Alberta Vickridge, who was serving as a VAD nurse at the Red Cross Hospital, Taunton, for her poem,"Out of the Conflict"; the consolation prize went to Owen for his "Song of Songs". "Out of the Conflict" recalls Letts's "Screens" for it details the same happening as described there:

> The ward is strangely hushed to-day;
> The morning nurses, sober-eyed,
> Recall the screened space, where, they say,
> At midnight number Twenty died. . . .
>
> God rest him, then ... but we must turn
> To face the same sad tasks again -
> To tend new convoys, and discern
> The same . . . pain. 55

The poem's conclusion manifests an attitude reminiscent of the ending of Letts's poem.

The war, if only in deference to the law of contraries, has its lighter side and this, too, is reflected in the writings of some women. Winifred Wedg wood, who served as a kitchen-maid with the Devonshire 26th Voluntary Aid Detachment, casts a humorous eye over her particular sphere of war work. In the Foreword to her Verses of a VAD Kitchen-Maid (1917), she

states: 'A great many of the ideas for the verses have come to the writer during actual work in a Military Hospital Kitchen'. "The VAD Scullery-Maid's Song" runs thus:

> Washing up the dishes;
> Washing up the plates;
> Washing up the greasy tins,
> That everybody hates. . . .
>
> Washing 'for duration',
> That's what I will do;
> As I've got no head-piece
> For the cooking too. 56

Kitchen work, rated as the lowest in the VAD hierarchy, - a former kitchen-maid records that nurses looked down upon 'kitchen people'[57] - was, however, not the easiest of works to do. Reminiscing about her work in Boulogne, a worker wrote: 'I was put to work in a vast underground scullery, where we stood on duckboards because there was so much water on the floor, to say nothing of the rats'.[58] Though memories of her kitchen work lead one worker to exclaim, 'how I did hate cleaning those beastly urns and the eternal washing up',[59] the kitchen girls were still better off than the poor VAD girl who disgustedly records that she 'spent her time in a hospital freeing from lice the uniforms of the soldiers who were brought in! That was my job'.[60]

I. Grindley in Ripples from the Ranks of the Q.M.A.A.C. (1918), gives a humorous rendition of her life with the Q.M.A.A.C. The Q.M.A.A.C. originally started as the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps; formed in December 1916 it marked the first official entry of women into the services. This Corps did military work of a non-combatant kind and in May 1918, as a recognition of its achievements, was renamed the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps. The WAAC's in their military uniform of khaki coat-frock, soft felt hat, gaiters and brown shoes were the butt of many jokes. Michael Macdonagh

notes in his war diary that one of the riddles of the day is: 'Which would you like: a whack on the head or a WAAC on your knee'.[61] Duff Cooper, writing from the Front, informed his fiancée, Lady Diana Manners, of a quaint practice followed by the Tommies; on sighting a contingent of WAAC's they would with one accord bleat quack, quack, quack until the WAAC's had passed away. He added 'it is the usual thing. I think it is so funny'.[62] The WAAC's, newly initiated into the intricacies of military routine, were learning to cope with their best foot forward; Grindley's "Route March Sentiments" is one illustration of their attempts at coping:

> I'm happy from the ankles up, . . .
> But, from the ankles down, alas!
> I do not feel so well.
> A frieze of sticking-plaster winds
> Around each wounded heel,
> And words of mine can not describe
> The feelings that they feel. 63

. . . . . .

'It was on October 16, 1914 that a unit, ... drawn from the Voluntary Aid Detachments, was mobilized for foreign service'.[64] The following years, 1915 to 1918, would see women such as May Wedderburn Cannan, Carola Oman and Vera Brittain depart with some such unit on their way to work in France. All three were members of the VAD; Cannan's membership dated from pre-war days. The Voluntary Aid Detachment, popularly known as VAD, was a development of the Voluntary Aid Organisation set up as part of the Territorial Army Scheme in 1909; its purpose was to supplement the Territorial Medical Service. The Voluntary Aid Detachment scheme in itself began in 1910; its work was not, as popularly assumed, just limited to nursing. It encompassed every kind of work from the humblest of scrubbing and cleaning to the highest skilled work in nursing and in administration. Rose

Macaulay's first experiment in war work was as a scrubber; she persevered for about six months, before quitting to work on the land.

May Cannan, poet and novelist, first left for France in April 1915 to work in a canteen at Rouen; the poem "Rouen", which depicts in minute detail the flux of life and incident peculiar to a war-time railway canteen, is a record of the time spent there. Later she worked in the Intelligence Service, based in Paris. She was engaged to Basil Quiller-Couch, a major in the army, who fell victim to the influenza epidemic which gripped Europe after the armistice. Cannan published two volumes of war poems: In War Time (1917) and The Splendid Days (1919). A novel, The Lonely Generation (1934), is semi-autobiographical. In this the heroine, Delphine, goes to France to work in Intelligence; her lover is killed in the war and though she ultimately reconciles herself with his loss and accepts a proposal of marriage, she cannot forget him. All echoes from Cannan's own life.

"Rouen", which appeared in In War Time, is a singularly vivid experience. Of her four week stint in the railway canteen, Cannan observes in her posthumously published autobiography, Grey Ghosts and Voices (1976): 'I did not say much about my four weeks ... but at night my mind went back and sometimes I dreamed'.[65] The poem is a pledge to stay faithful to the scenes and shadows of the war panorama as witnessed by her. A record of her first contact with war, the poem's most noticeable feature is the spirit of idealism which pervades the whole:

> Early morning over Rouen, hopeful, high, courageous morning,
> And the laughter of adventure and the steepness of the stair, ...
>
> Quiet night-time over Rouen, and the station full of soldiers,
> All the youth and pride of England from the ends of all the earth;
> And the rifles piled together, and the creaking of the sword-belts,
> And the faces bent above them, and the gay, heart-breaking mirth, ...

Can you recall the parcels that we made them for the railroad,
Crammed and bulging parcels held together by their string,
And the voices of the sergeants who called the Drafts together,
And the agony and splendour when they stood to save the King?

Can you forget their passing, the cheering and the waving,
The little group of people at the doorway of the shed,
The sudden awful silence when the last train swung to darkness,
And the lonely desolation, and the mocking stars o'erhead?

Can you recall the midnights, and the footsteps of night watchers,
Men who came from darkness and went back to dark again, ...

Can your forget returning slowly, stumbling on the cobbles,
And the white-decked Red Cross barges dropping seawards for the tide, ...

... When the world slips slow to darkness, . . .
My heart goes out to Rouen, Rouen all the world away;
When other men remember I remember our Adventure. 66

Nine out of the thirteen stanzas which make up this poem start with the reiterative invocation to memory: 'Can I forget', 'Can you recall' and 'Can you forget'. This same insistence upon memory is manifest in Sassoon's "Aftermath", which was published in March 1919. "Aftermath", like "Rouen", is a pledge to honour the memory of war; what strikes is the curious similarity in content and stanzaic pattern which is discernible between the two. Sassoon's, of course, details the scenes of war as experienced by him:

Do you remember the dark months you held the sector ...

Do you remember the rats; and the stench . . .

Do you remember that hour of din before the attack - . . .

Do you remember the stretcher-cases lurching back
With dying eyes and lolling heads.

Cannan's is the earlier poem of the two; it was written in November 1915.

Carola Oman, a childhood friend of Cannan's, worked as a VAD nurse in France. Her book of war verse, The Menin Road and Other Poems (1919), is dedicated to four VAD's, one of whom is Cannan; the poems collected here

are mainly elegiac and documentary in character. Oman's "Night Duty in the Station" records scenes from station life not different in detail from those recalled by Cannan in "Rouen".

> Slowly out of the siding the troop train draws away,
> Into the dark it passes, heavily straining. . . .
>
> The station in this watch seems full of ghosts. . . .
>
> Forms sleeping crowd beneath the rifle-rack, . . .
> They seem
> All to be grey and burdened. Blue and black,
> Khaki and red, are blended, as a dream
> Into eternal grey, and from the back
> They stagger from this darkness into light
> And move and shout
> And sing a little, and move on and out
> Unready, and again, into the night. . . .
>
> Across the bridge serene and old
> White barges beyond count
> Lie down the cold canal. 67

Though Cannan and Oman worked apart in France, the sense of shared experience brought them together more strongly. Cannan's "France", which is dedicated to Oman, lists the varied experiences which bind them together:

> You also know
> The way the dawns came slow
> Over the railway stations out in France; . . .
>
> You've seen the Leave Boat in, . . .
>
> You know how black
> The night sea tides surged back
> On dock stones where the stretcher bearers kneeled; . . .
>
> You've woke to see
> Death hurtle suddenly
> On to the hut roofs when the Gothas came. 68

This unity born of shared experience parallels the bonds of friendship forged by common war experience, as set out in Graves's "Two Fusiliers", which describes his and Sassoon's friendship:

Show me the two so closely bound
As we, by the wet bond of blood,
By friendship, blossoming from mud.

Vera Brittain, arriving at her place of duty in France, at once made acquaintance with the most prominent characteristic of the Western Front: mud. She describes her arrival thus in Testament of Youth: 'A heavy shower had only just ceased when I arrived at Etaples with three other VAD's ordered to the same hospital, and the roads were liquid with such mud as only wartime France could produce after a few days of rain'.[69] Brittain published one volume of war poems: Verses of a VAD (1918); the poems collected here, as with Oman's and Cannan's, are primarily elegiac and documentary in character. Of the three it was Brittain whose life was most affected by her wartime experiences; she changed from an ordinary patriotic woman into a convinced pacifist. Glimmerings of pacifist feeling are visible in one of her poems: "The German Ward". This poem shows the author reflecting that in years to come she shall always remember her stint of duty in 'The ward in France where German wounded lay', because it was here that she

learnt that human mercy turns alike to friend or foe
When the darkest hour of all is creeping nigh,
And those who slew our dearest, when their lamps were burning low,
Found help and pity ere they came to die. . . .

I shall always see the vision of Love working amidst arms
In the ward wherein the wounded prisoners lay. 70

Of the attitude taken up in this poem Brittain commented in Testament of Youth: 'The sentiments were, of course, irreproachable only from the standpoint of a society whose motto was "Inter Arma Caritas"; that first flicker of genuine if slightly patronising internationalism would hardly have commended itself to the "Fight to a Finish" enthusiasts'.[71] During her stay in Belgium, May Sinclair, too, had discovered the impossibility

of hating another human being in compliance with the laws of patriotism. Describing a wounded German soldier lying on the road in her, A Journal of Impressions in Belgium, she observes: 'the crowd booed at him as he lay there. His was a terrible pathos, unlike any other. He was defiant and so helpless. And there's another emotion gone by the board. You simply could not hate him'.[72]

F. Tennyson Jesse, in The Sword of Deborah: First-Hand Impressions of the British Women's Army in France (1918), records a conversation which took place between her and a Director of Transport concerning women workers:

> 'People talk a lot', he said reflectively, 'about what's to happen after the war ... when its all over and there's nothing left but to go home. What's going to happen to all these girls, how will they settle down?'
> 'And how do you think ...?'
> 'I don't think there'll be any trouble whether they marry or not. They will have had their adventure'. 73

The adventure as detailed in Cannan's "Rouen", was poor subsistence for life, if suggested as such for women war workers. The men who went to war, too, had their adventure but this was not deemed sufficient to fill out their lives; jobs, pensions and rehabilitation schemes were the order in the male sphere. Women had just been made a convenience - a temporary convenience for the duration of the war - therefore, the male assumption that they would readily subside into their pre-war existence without much ado. When women proved loath to acquiesce it did not take long for the earlier 'Calls to Women' to change into cries of condemnation. Whilst the war was on and their services were required women were hailed as heroines and saviours. According to Ruth Adam 'since the middle of 1916, the women of Britain had been treated with the anxious consideration and flattery offered to an invaluable servant who might

otherwise give notice and leave one helpless.'[74] She further states that once the war ended

> newspapers began to refer to women who did not go back voluntarily to their personal-relationship roles (domesticated wife, stay-at-home mother and dutiful daughter) as 'limpets' who would not be prised of their war-time job even when the rightful owner came back to resume it. 75

The feminist, Irene Clephane, considering the change in attitude to women which occurred in the press between 1918 and 1919, observes: 'From being the saviours of the nation, women in employment were degraded in the public press to the position of ruthless self-seekers depriving men and their dependents of a livelihood'.[76]

The resentment of the war workers at the treatment meted is central to Brittain's "The Lament of the Demobilized":

> 'Four years', some say consolingly. 'Oh well,
> What's that? You're young. And then it must have been
> A very fine experience for you'. 77

Cannan, eschewing the satiric tones favoured by Brittain, evokes the pathos of women demobilized by having a character in her novel, The Lonely Generation, explain to another, innocent enough to query why they were to be presented with their discharge certificates immediately following the Armistice: 'Bless you, they don't want any of us now. . . the War's over, my child'.[77]

NOTES

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78. May Cannan, The Lonely Generation (London, Hutchinson 1934), p. 151.

CHAPTER SIX

WOMEN'S VOICES

In an article published in the Englishwoman, October 1918, the author, Hilda P. Cumings, draws attention to the poetry written by women, inspired by the war. Whilst acknowledging the inherent differences in the area of experience of the two sexes she implies that women's poetry is as significant as that of combatants, as record of the sorrow and hardship being endured by the nation. Referring to the keen topical interest in the metrical compositions of soldiers she points out:

> But as well as these which spring direct from the battle line, is another poetry as significant. The women at home are also impelled to express their feelings in verse, though their voices perforce strike a different note ... The woman's song must of necessity be rather a cry against the awful silence of suspense, ... the loneliness to be borne amongst familiar things ... the tragedy of the empty places ... her purgatory of waiting. This is the fact of War as lived through by the woman. 1

The claim that war makes upon women, in comparison with that made upon men, is more hidden and often more difficult; for it is easier to be active than passive, easier to place oneself under obedience at a crisis than to serve by silent anxiety. Courage is manifest not only in brilliant attack, but also in patient waiting and patient endurance. In war time women, too, go to battle; they battle with the slow torture of fear and suspense, the long agonies of anticipation; the sleepless nights and fevered imagination; the pitiless hours usurped by visions of battered bleeding bodies.

Although the First World War was obviously a directly less harrowing experience for women than for the men involved, women were profoundly affected by it. The fact of war as lived through by women forms the subject of this chapter. Examined here is verse concerned with the themes of parting, separation, bereavement; the broken heart of mother, wife, sweetheart, daughter; the traumas suffered in receiving back sons, husbands, lovers, alive indeed, but so spoiled in mind or body that never again could they be more than so much war wreckage; the lament for and attempt to come to terms with things once hoped for and now never to be; for the lives of many women were stunted or left lop-sided because the men who should have been their husbands and the fathers of their children were killed.

The first section of this chapter discusses briefly verse which delineates war as it affected the female population; each of the subsequent sections examines in detail the feminine experience in the varied role of mother, wife, widow, lover and the maiden, never to wed.

. . . . . .

The situation in which women were placed when war broke out is summarized thus by Ruth Adam:

> Only the women were out of it. There was nothing for them to do while the men queued outside the recruiting offices and drilled in the square and marched about the countryside singing ribald men-only versions of patriotic songs. There was no exhilaration, no sense of starting a new and adventurous life for women. 2

As a consequence women who had tasted emancipation in their schooldays and considered themselves equal with boys in all kinds of activities felt their

existence severely limited by nature of their sex; they were impelled to give expression to the frustration they felt. Rose Macaulay was one of such. Her poem, "Many Sisters to Many Brothers", written at the start of hostilities, sums up the disappointment of girls who viewed their sex as a disability in war time. According to Catherine Reilly, Macaulay was much vilified for the seemingly naïve sentiments expressed in this poem;[3] the last line 'But for me ... a war is poor fun', was taken by many in the latter stages of the war as symptomatic of women's incapacity to comprehend the true nature of war. But the poem is no more representative of Macaulay's views about war than Sassoon's "Absolution" and "To My Brother" are typical of his attitude. The poem easily explains itself if one takes into consideration the biographical facts that in her childhood Macaulay not only did behave like a boy, but boasted too of what she would do when she was a man; for years she believed that she would one day grow up to be a man. The poem transmits Macaulay's feeling of injustice at a system which excludes her from an experience for which she feels she is as well qualified, perhaps even better than her brothers:

> When we fought campaigns (in the long Christmas rains)
> With soldiers spread in troops on the floor,
> I shot as straight as you, my losses were as few,
> My victories as many, or more. . . .
> Or, when it rained too long, and the strength of the strong
> Surged up and broke a way with blows,
> I was as fit and keen, my fists hit as clean
> Your black eye matched my bleeding nose;
> Was there a scrap or ploy in which you, the boy,
> Could better me.

An air of naïvete marks the whole. It is more a wail at being left out of things than a Newboltesque attempt to attract men to war by representing it as a continuation of school sports:

Oh, it's you that have the luck, out there in blood and muck:
You were born beneath a kindly star;
All we dreamt, I and you, you can really go and do,
And I can't, the way things are. 4

May Sinclair experienced this same sense of rejection when she saw her attempts to coerce the military authorities in Belgium to grant her official recognition as a war correspondent frustrated. She discovered an analogy for this injustice meted to her in her football playing days with her brothers: she, the younger sister, was allowed to kick off and make goal after goal, but when it came to the scrimmage she was gently but firmly moved to one side. If she persisted she became an infernal nuisance.[5]

Like Macaulay, Nora Bomford also deplores women's exclusion from the male activity of marching off to war; her cry against this discrimination, as voiced in "Drafts" is, however, more emphatic, assuming a feministic connotation not discernible in Macaulay's poem: 'O, damn the shibboleth / Of sex! God knows we've equal personality'.[6] Helena Coleman in "'Tis Not the Will that's Wanted", as with Macaulay, deplores the hindrance of her sex which bars from participation in the war:

Would God that mine were better luck
Than falls to the lot of woman, . . .
In these great days when the hour has struck
Calling for every ounce of pluck —
God help me not to curse my luck
That I was born a woman. 7

Seen in comparison with the Macaulay and Bomford poems, Coleman's lacks the sincerity of utterance discernible there; it suggests that she is merely attitudinising.

In ironic opposition to the above poems stands Alice Meynell's "A Father of Women"; the catastrophic changes which war heralded made imperative

the acceptance by the male population of the services of those relegated into the background, deemed inconsequential. In many cases theirs were the only ones available. Vera Brittain recalls that 'as the War continued to wear out strength and spirits, the middle-aged generation, having irrevocably yielded up its sons, began to lean with increasing weight upon its daughters'.[8] Brittain was one of these daughters; she was recalled from France, where she was nursing, to tend her ailing parents. Meynell's poem addressed to her sister, Lady Butler, is a purely personal commemoration of their father which assumes universal significance from the fact that their father had no son:

> Our father works in us,
> The daughters of his manhood. Not undone
> Is he, not wasted, though transmuted thus,
> And though he left no son.

The poem calls upon fathers to willingly open their hearts and give their daughters the position erstwhile reserved for sons; and to the daughters to remember, in a world crippled of its sons, that they are 'daughters of men', to rise to the occasion and fill befittingly the empty places:

> Like to him now are they
> The million living fathers of the War —
> Mourning the crippled world, the bitter day —
> Whose striplings are no more.
>
> The crippled world! Come then,
> Fathers of women with your honour in trust;
> Approve, accept, know them daughters of men
> Now that your sons are dust. [9]

Meynell, an ardent suffragist, adapts the war situation to further the feminine cause.

A theme taken up in some poems is the position of the prostitute in war time. Helen Mackay's "Courtesan" is an eloquent rendering of the 'other

woman's point of view; the war ruthlessly brings home to her all the hollowness and desolation of her life. The courtesan realises she has no right to mourn anyone, however dear they may be for

> This thing is theirs.
> Those other women,
> they have it for their own.
> Theirs is the right to pride,
> the right to grief.
>
> Those other women, women of men's houses,
> where children may be -
> I have made mock of them.
>
> And now this thing is theirs.

The war strikes her anew with the futility of her existence. The picture of the courtesan in Mackay's poem stands in sharp contrast to the prostitute depicted in Arnold Bennett's The Pretty Lady (1918); she, undisturbed by any deeper feelings, regards her lavishing of favours on soldiers as her own particular, divinely inspired contribution to the war effort. Mackay in her characteristic succinct style eolquently evokes the pathos of the courtesan's existence:

> For them the men go out upon the road.
> And to each one of them
> if her man fall,
> belongs the field wherein he lies.
>
> The burden of the war is theirs to bear,
> And bearing it they have a right to sing
> of love and death and glory,
> honour and faith and sacrifice,
> exultantly. . . .
>
> And I, I have no right. 10

On the same theme, May O'Rourke's "The Minority: 1917", does not rise above the level of jingoistic moralising:

> see her as she preens,
> Bright thro' the weary days,
> Tinkling her silly mirth. ..

- Ah! fool! You tread
No mere commercial street,
But ground made consecrate by their spilt lives. 11

An interesting feature of women's war verse is the number of poetic compositions by apparently elderly spinsters who deem it their special duty to thank the soldiers who are fighting to protect them, as they themselves have neither sons at war nor are capable of any strenuous war work. These poems are, to say the least, banal; however, the point that rises is whether old men, without son or heir, too, experienced the need to thank the soldiers or not. Typical examples are C. Elissa Sharpley's "Old and Useless" and "Why". A. M. Colligan's "The Toast of the Spinsters of England" catches the spirit, characteristic of much of this verse:

Here's to the men who have gone to defend
The women of England, who've no one to send,
Not a husband or brother, no children to lend,
The lonely spinsters of England. 12

"Non-Combatants", by Evelyn Underhill, is the most eloquent of the mass of poems which describe the singular role women are called upon to play in war time. Her poem gains momentum from the paradoxical title; officially all women were graded 'non-combatants':

Never of us be said
We had no war to wage,
Because our womanhood,
Because the weight of age,
Held us in servitude.
None sees us fight,
Yet we in the long night
Battle to give release
To all whom we must send to seek and die for peace.
When they have gone, we in twilit place
Meet Terror face to face;
And strive
With him, that we may save our fortitude alive.
Theirs be the hard, but ours the lonely bed.
Nought were we spared - of us, this word shall not be said. 13

The imperious tone adopted challenges any incipient contradiction of the facts set down: the stoicism and indomitable courage of women who battle unceasingly, though none sees them fight. The distinctive features of the role woman is called upon to play in war time are delineated also by Emily Underdown in "Woman's Part":

> A fight is hers which numbers not its slain;
> To smile with lips which hide a bleeding heart,
> To show calm courage through all stress and strain,
> To watch unflinching those she loves depart,
> And face not death, but life's far greater pain. 14

Ethel de Fonblanque in "The Women of Britain" interprets the feminine wartime role thus: 'theirs is the weariest trial, / Long vigils of pain day and night'.[15] Rose Sharland in "The Woman's Lament" describes thus the suffering which becomes the particular fate of women in war time:

> War brings to women but anguish and grief,
> Long partings and vigils, and pain past belief,
> Despair that dusk brings when the babes all are still,
> And ... a black void and sweet memories that kill. 16

Set apart from the poems just discussed is a body of verse which describes the effects of war on women in their separate roles as mothers, wives and young girls. Typical of this genre is Ruth Duffin's "The Woman's Toll"; a popular anthology piece of the time it first appeared in the Nation, 15 May 1915:

> O Mother, mourning for the son . . .
> Amid your tears take comfort for a space,
> They showed them worthy of their island race.
>
> O Wife, who heard across the wintry sea
> Death's trumpet shrill for him . . .
> In whose dark heart your bitterest hour shall bring
> Scents from the scattered petals of the spring.
>
> O Maid, with wondering eyes untouched of grief,
> War's dreadful shadow spares your innocent years,
> Yet shall you deem the ways of sunshine brief,
> Paying long hence your toll of hidden tears
> For love that perished ere the web was spun,
> And children that shall never see the sun. 17

Irene Brittain Bell's "Lost Love" and Winifred M. Letts's "The Call to Arms in Our Street", another anthology favourite, are structured in the same way as the above. Occasionally the pattern is varied; Miriam E. Gladwell's "Women in War-Time", has as its subjects a war bride, a widow and a young girl. The important factor which emerges from these poems is the force of the conventional belief that all women are basically cut out to be just wives and mothers. Such a stream of thought cannot contemplate any alternative life style for women; thus the constant emphasis, as apparent in Duffin's last stanza, on the sentiments that the death of men in war presages a barren existence for women.

. . . . . .

Some women wrote out of their own particular experience of war. Their work rooted in things personally endured rather than in things merely imagined is the most moving, written both to commemorate a person and to exorcise their own sense of loss. With its source in individual tragedy this verse illustrates what war means to the individual heart; it is history written in terms of private lives. Written soon after the event which it commemorates this verse shows the immediate impact of war on the writers' lives and their attempts at adjustment with the loss sustained; it is a touching record of the personal tragedy which the war, for them, became.

Mary Elizabeth Boyle's Aftermath (1916), is a sequence of thirty sonnets written in memory of her brother, David, who was amongst the earliest victims of the war; he was killed at Le Cateau on 26 August 1914. In the Introduction Boyle explains the existence of her book of sonnets; the book 'was meant to be my private memorial of a very wonderful and

perfect companionship'. She attributes her choice of the sonnet, as a fit medium for this memorial, to her brother's intense love of this poetic form. The sonnet sequence follows the traditional light-out-of-darkness movement characteristic of all elegiac writing. The sonnet form being above all a vehicle for the expression of personal emotions is well suited to Boyle's needs; her handling of it, especially in delineating mood and feeling is reminiscent of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese. An earlier, though relatively unknown, instance of a writer using the sonnet sequence to depict her relationship with her brother is George Eliot's Brother and Sister (1869).

Boyle's sequence opens with the forlorn sister enwrapped in a romantic fantasy of the dead brother arriving home as he was wont to do when alive and regretfully recognising it as a mirage. Thereafter the sonnets highlight different aspects of the life shared together, its hopes, dreams and plans and conclude with the traditional leave taking from the dead. The 'happy comradeship' between brother and sister, the perfect harmony of their relationship and the special bond of love which held them together is depicted in sonnet XXI:

> no words were needed, just a look,
> No explanations, for our hearts would brook
> No slightest bar, our sympathy so grew,
> That words were needless, e'en though miles apart
> Our letters crossed, oft said the selfsame things,
> We thought some previous life had welded us,
> The fine cement of love held heart to heart. 18

Their particular way of registering appreciation of one another; the intimacy enjoyed in comprehending one another's thoughts and feeling is expressed in sonnet XXV:

You had just one look which sprang to life
In your blue eyes, a starry look intent,
When something in me touched your inmost heart,
Its very sweetness stabbed me like a knife,
We smiled, and then to common-places bent,
Yet in some holy place had walked apart. 19

Sonnet XXIV illustrates the intense need to relive the happy moments of the past, thus achieving momentary relief from present sorrow:

You know that winter . . .
When every evening we wrote rival songs,
And all day argued over rights and wrongs, . . .
I long to live that winter o'er again,
Enjoy once more our singing rivalry. 20

The garlands of traditional elegiac verse, symbols of poetic commemoration of the dead, are spun anew with the threads of shattered hopes and desires in sonnet XXIII:

Since you loved words, 'tis words I bring to you
Woven in garlands to adorn your brow,
Wreathed sonnets are the gifts I bring you now,
Prismatic words, glowing in crimson, blue,
And vivid green, the colours you once knew, . . .
Poor garland, meant to deck your well-loved head,
The words stab back at me like sharpened swords. 21

With sonnet XXVIII there is a shift in mood; an attempt to come to terms with the loss experienced: 'I know, / The desert journeying cannot always last, / And pain must somewhere reach finality'.[22] The last sonnet is in tradition of the conventional parting from the dead, characteristic of the elegy:

Take these, then, David . . .
These lines which owe their very birth to you, . . .
Weighted with love's great burden, they renew
By their illusion, strong emotion proved. 23

As an attempt at poetic transmutation of personal experience Boyle's sonnets are effective because of their simple sincerity which makes them all the more poignant. The synthesis of the sonnet and the elegy effected

in Aftermath is one instance of poets' adapting traditional forms of expression to translate war experience.

The private event, grief for a dead brother, is also the inspiration for a group of poems titled 'The Pathway of Dreams',by Isabel C. Clarke. Her volume of verse, The Pathway of Dreams and Other Poems (1919), carries the inscription: 'To the Dear Memory of My Brother, Lieutenant M.E.L.H. Clarke, Who fell at Caudry, August 26th, 1914'. The four poems which constitute Clarke's memorial to her dead brother, like Boyle's Aftermath, utilise the sentimental strain, characteristic of Romantic poetry, to convey personal regret and loss. The first poem in the group sets out the place where the sister can still rendevous with her dead brother; the world of dreams is the 'trysting-place' where the love they shared, 'still a radiance of brightness flings':

> The dreams that hold your voice and your dear laughter,
> Wherein I live again
> Those days undimmed by all that followed after
> Of parting and of pain. . . .
>
> Wherein you stir anew the grief that ever
> Lies sleepless in my heart 24

The other three poems all employ the Romantic dream motif; each starts with the phrase 'I Dreamed'. "Revenant" manifests the hallucinatory nature of the sister's hopes:

> I Dreamed that you came with me as of old,
> Through flowered fields aflame with shining gold; . . .
> And then, because you did not speak nor smile,
> I knew you had been dead a weary while. ... 25

The last poem, "A Dream Journey", makes use of the traditional Romantic motif of a journey as a means to mark the laying to rest of the ghosts of the past; the poet accepts that she is forever severed from her brother. The visionary journey enshrouded in a spring-like atmosphere offers none

of the hope and joy of spring; its goal is the acceptance of the hard truth that her brother is gone forever:

> I Dreamed I journeyed all the night ...
> And . . .
> Came to the house I used to know.
>
> It was the time of later spring . . .
>
> And in the garden's sheltered ways
> I wandered, and the lilies there
> Grew tall and white as in past days,
> Grew tall and white and very fair. . . .
>
> I saw the city set within
> Its cup filled full of silver mist,
> The white streets I had wandered in,
> The faint far hills of amethyst.
>
> I saw the sharp black cypresses, -
> Things of such fragile shadowing, -
> And set within the ring of trees
> The stones that gave you sheltering ...
>
> And I - I beat my hands in vain
> On that fast-closed and shuttered door. ... 26

The last two lines recall the mood and atmosphere of Tennyson's In Memoriam VII :

> Dark house, by which once more I stand ...
> Doors, where my heart was used to beat
> So quickly, waiting for a hand,
>
> A hand that can be clasp'd no more -

The realisation that the dead really are dead and gone forever though difficult to assimilate could not be avoided. More than the sisters was the need felt by mothers to reconcile themselves with the loss of their sons. Mater Dolorosa (1915), by Alexandra Ethelreda Grantham, is a sequence of thirty-three sonnets which follows the same pattern as Boyle's Aftermath. Women, perhaps, influenced by the precedent set by Barrett Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese, regarded the sonnet sequence as a mode suitable for representation of personal detail. Mater Dolorosa is a poignant

expression of the yearning and grief felt by a mother who has lost her son in the war; the son, her eldest born, was killed in Gallipoli on 28 June 1915, at the age of twenty. In writing of the tragedy Grantham takes into account also the instrument of the tragedy; a bitter indictment of war is voiced in some of the sonnets.

The title epitomises all the anguish and sorrow borne by the mother; it also aligns her suffering with that of Mary's. The conventional image of the mater dolorosa most effectively comes alive in sonnet V:

> see facing you
> The sorrow of a mother for her son,
> Sorrow whose eyes a thousand tears have wept,
> Whose mouth each dark night rends with anguished cries
> For him the worshipped one, who laughing leapt
> Into ... death. 27

Sonnet XXVI exquisitely mirrors the torture and agony suffered by the mother:

> Thy broken eyes, dearest one, I could not close, ...
> I could not tend thy body as it lies
> Dead, not fold thy stricken hands, nor wipe from those
> Sweet lips the blood, which for God's pity cries.
> Yet in own blood it hurts me, as it flows
> To silence, and its last throb in thee dies. 28

Perhaps if Arnold Bennett had possessed imagination enough to perceive the traumas suffered by mothers he would not have stated flippantly, as he does in Over There: War Scenes on the Western Front (1915), that 'bereavement, which counts chief among the well-known advantageous moral disciplines of war, is, of course, good for a woman's soul'.[29]

The "Requiem" at the end of the series records the mother's final acceptance: 'Now is the time to bury my great grief / Deep in the very fountain of my blood'. In sonnets XVII, XVIII, and XIX Grantham sets down her opinion of war. Though influenced by personal circumstance it is no less valid an interpretation of war than that made by the soldier poets. The

hectoring tone adopted in sonnet XVII emphasizes the prodigiousness of the crime, which the writer takes war to be:

> That thou shouldst die midst human bodies battered
> To shapelessness, shouldst fall slaying and slain, ...
> That all the hideousness of red flesh shattered
> Should be the last clear image in thy brain, ...
> O ye misguided rulers of the State,
> Some day crime 'twill be held against you, shame,
> This turning of man's tenderness to hate,
> This luring them to death with cries of fame,
> Danger, duty, sacrifice. 30

Sonnet XVIII is in the same strain:

> War is a time when lawless lust of conquest
> Parades as righteousness and all things blest, ...
> When fools trampling truth, in fear and anger yell,
> Red shambles making of God's earth. 31

Sonnet XIX eschews the declamatory for a more personal form of utterance:

> War is a time of sacrifice and parting,
> Of hard-fought victory o'er mothers' tears,
> That when their sons towards far fights are starting,
> By the loud train be mirth, not moan of fears.
> Good wishes, agony of farewell kisses,
> As they together for the last time stand - ...
> War is a time of death and long good-bye
> To home and all its peaceful blessedness.
> A time when our travail's dear children lie
> Killed or maimed on alien soil. 32

The particular experiences evoked in the above - the scenes of parting, the simulated joy and fervour - represent the ordeal which became those mothers' lot whose sons were at the war.

Another mother who wrote about her son is Margaret Tyrell-Green. Her son, Denis, was killed in Palestine. "I will a Tomb Upraise" is an attempt on her part to come to terms with the newly assimilated detail that her son's body was left unburied on the field of battle near Gaza:

I will a tomb upraise to thee, my son,
A tomb to weather every earthly storm, ...
I pile it up for thee in loving verse, ...
Though thy dear dust doth everywhere disperse,
Still, still may mother-love, with fire divine,
Cleave more than marble for thy hallowed shrine. 33

. . . . . .

A large portion of verse about mothers written during the 1914-1918 conflict was in tune with the ideals of motherhood as prescribed by a jingoistic press. The writers of such verse respond strongly to the magnetism of traditional patriotic feeling with its varied religious nuances and present in poem after poem a tender sacrosanct picture of mothers. Throughout the war years this species of poetry continued to glorify motherhood, to recommend self-sacrifice and preach acceptance of the seemingly inevitable tragedies of their sons' death with patient sorrow and religious resignation. Themes of patriotism, duty, glory, sacrifice are all interwoven in poems which depict mothers content and at peace over their sons' death in battle. Stressed throughout such poems is the courage and stoicism of the mothers as is also their keen satisfaction at having been able to do something for England. Marjorie Crosbie in "The Soldiers' Mothers" evokes these feelings thus:

Theirs is a courage ... dauntless, too,
Though they do not face the guns.
There's never a one will not kneel down
With a silent prayer of joy,
To think that she gave for England's sake
The life of her life - her boy. 34

Blanche Adelaide Brock's "British Mothers", which describes the mother of an only son, treats the same sentiments in more explicit jingoistic terms. This mother gladly sees her son off to war, though he is her only one,

For she was formed of British mould,
And never would have known content
Had HER son not his aid have lent
To save his country's honour, as brave sons of old.

He was her ALL, and ill to spare,
But for her country's FAITH and TRUTH
She bravely helped him to prepare
To face the foe, and bear his share
Of hardships, and of glory, like true British youth.

Shades of Graves's 'Little Mother', who supposedly wrote in her letter that 'women pass on the human ammunition of "only sons"' are discernible in this portrait of British motherhood. The capitals employed reinforce the poet's jingoistic purpose. The final stanza salutes such mothers who know no content until their sons have done their bit:

The men of Britain well may bend
Their bared and reverent heads this day,
To Mothers countless who thus send
Their sons to fight, though their hearts may rend. 35

The chauvinistic strain is most apparent in "England's Son", by Dorothy Grenside, where it is rendered more effective by the poet's use of the monologue:

I knew that it must come,
For how should England live without your blood, -
Her son's, - the best? ... I will not grudge her need
For I am England's child and freely give ...
My best I give. My best? Why, its my all! ...
If I should grudge you, how could England live?
And so I give you up to her who gave, -
I give you up to England, - England's son. 36

On a similar note the mother in Dorothy Margaret Stuart's "Mater Dolorosa" regards her son's death in war as the only worthwhile offering she could make for her beloved England:

What have I given thee,
England, beloved of me? . . .
I have given the hand that held my hand,
The feet that once on my palm could stand,
The hopes I was nourished by. . . .
These have I given; is it not meet
To have striven that thou mayst strive. 37

Margaret Peterson's "The Mothers", moving away from the jingoism of the above, voices emotions typical of a body of verse which sets out in strong sentimental tones the loss experienced by mothers whose sons had progressed beyond the protective love of the wide arms of motherhood:

> We are the mothers of the world. Draw near
> And see our anguish, ye who prate of War! . . .
> It is our share to give the sons we bore.
> Oh baby feet, that ran to us in play;
> Oh baby hands, that clung to us in fear;
> Blood stained and rugged is your path to-day, . . .
> Love cannot shield you through the bitter fight,
> Love cannot hush your new found sob of pain.
> Olives we loved, the darkness holds you fast,
> Our arms are empty and our dreams are spent. 38

The opening statement, the use of the word 'prate' reveal the poet's wish to focus on the pain war brings to women, all awareness of which is lost in the idle tittle-tattle of war-mongers. This category of verse holds forth no consolation to the bereaved mothers; the death of their sons cannot be recompensed by anything. However so ingrained is the tradition that in war sacrifice is necessary of women that despite realisation of the barren void which was heralds into the mothers' lives the attitude is one of resigned acceptance.

Mothers seemingly recompensed by the gaud of glory for the love of their sons are the subject of Constance Powell's "A Story of To-Day" and May Herschel-Clarke's "Behind the Firing Line". Both poems embodying the same sentiments of pride, sacrifice, acquiescence are interesting for the contrast they offer in poetic style. Powell's is a vignette of subjective impressionism, bordering on the melodramatic:

> An open drawer, a woman lowly kneeling,
> Some little crimson shoes, a lock of hair,
> Some childish toys, an engine and a trumpet,
> A headless horse, a battered Teddy bear. . . .
> And now she places on the top of all
> A soldier's sword, his photograph, in khaki - ...
> While in her hand she holds a V.C. tightly. 39

May Herschel-Clarke's poem, though equally sentimental, stays clear of the extravagant emotionalism which defines the above:

> Behind the firing line she stands,
> She who must proudly play her part,
> While honour, glory, peace of lands
> Are paid for with her mother-heart.
> And in her arms a flag she holds, . . .
> She kisses it; within its folds
> She sees her dearest, bravest, best. 40

In contrast to the above Georgette Agnew's poem,"The Mother", demonstrates the inadequacy of the ideals symbolized in 'a hero's death' and the accompanying honour suggested by 'How warm the gratitude he won / In that stern strife! / How blessed his sacrifice of life', to compensate the loss sustained by mothers. To emphasize that the mother's loss is essentially inconsolable Agnew juxtaposes the traditional modes of consolation and highlights their feebleness in face of the mother's mode of thought and feeling. The belief that 'Men live / In every noble word and deed / More than in flesh' is no recompense for mothers, for

> mothers find
> Their children very fair to see -
> Sweet smiles, sweet eyes,
> Young arms that wind
> Round necks in loving pleasantry
> With quick surprise -
> Ah! mothers need those smiles and eyes.

The pride of having borne an hero is an empty gaud:

> Yet still she weeps,
> This mother, for she loved him so -
> Loved all his ways. . . .
> Such anguish only mothers know,
> Such bitter days.
> Oh! how she loved his winsome ways. 41

The senseless massacre of men, the increasing disaffection with the manly ornaments of glory and heroism, as fit recompense for the mothers' loss, turned some poets attention to discover new modes of interpreting

the mothers' experience in war time and in doing so reconcile them to an extent with the bereavement borne. The Mary / mother analogy discussed in Chapter Two was one aspect of this search. Other attempts to come to grips with the mothers' bereavement, which were characterized by pietistic overtones, were in the manner as exemplified by Alice Colly's "Killed in Action". The poem, which is a dialogue between a mother and her dead son, achieves its purpose by juxtaposing the viewpoints of the two. The mother though vaguely conscious that her son 'did not live or die in vain', still cannot adjust herself to the shattering of all her hopes:

> Where is the happy dwelling I had made,
> And pictured till it beautiful became?
> Fashioned of hope, like hope it too must fade.
> What comfort's left? Things are no more the same.
> My heart is but a shrine to empty fame,
> A haunt of sorrow and of futile dreams
> Too early shattered.

The only comfort left to her is in her son's insistence that 'Old age was all my portion, had I stayed' and his firm conviction that the earth is a prison from which it is good to be free:

> 'I tread the gleaming way
> Of all my heart's desires - the realms of day.
> For you the darkness and the narrowed space,
> For me the light transcendent of God's Face'. 42

The poet, Edith Nesbit, in "The Mother's Prayer", uses the idea of a just and righteous conflict as a means to comfort bereaved mothers and exorcise their grief. The poem, a moving appeal to God by one mother to accept the sacrifice made by her son to cleanse the world of its evil, assumes universal connotations:

> By all that my love has borne,
> By all that mothers bear,
> By the infinite patient anguish,
> By the never-ceasing prayer,

By the thoughts that cut like a living knife,
   By the tears that are never dry,
Take what he died to win You -
   God, take your victory.

The sacrifice asked of mothers had been difficult to make in itself, but much more painful and tortuous, and impossible to accept was the suffering experienced by the sons on the road to the world's salvation:

Little hands I have kissed
   Trampled by beasts in Hell ...
Growing beauty and grace ....
   Oh, head that lay on my bosom ...
Broken, battered, shattered ...
   Body that grew like a blossom! ...
   Only a ghost, and clay.

Lest all this pain and torture suffered be futile, the mothers appeal to God to take heed of their sons' sacrifice:

We pray with empty hands
   And hearts that are stiff with pain.
O God! O God! O God:
   Let the sacrifice not be vain.
This is his blood, Lord, see!
His blood that was shed for Thee. 43

Only through their reiterated prayers, their reliance on the traditional belief of the divine acceptance of all sacrifice made in the path of truth and justice, can the mothers behold any justification for their sons' deaths.

The warped picture of motherhood which emerges in Aldington's Death of a Hero is not representative of war-time mothers. Seen in the light of female depiction of mothers, Aldington's unfair portrayal seems no more than an embodiment of the misogyny which defines the whole novel. The reliance on the male for a representative view of motherhood in war-time is not without ambiguity; is one to accept Mrs. Winterbourne in Aldington's novel as typical of all war-time mothers or is one to believe the testimony

of The Times journalist, Michael Macdonagh, who in his war diary describes the bereaved mothers he saw about London streets thus:

> They do not complain, nor do they boast. But it is not fortitude. They are miserable and rebellious in spirit. You can see their mood in the strained expression of their eyes, denoting unshed tears. Rage is in their hearts at what they regard as the purposeless sacrifice of their sons - Lost! Wasted. 44

. . . . . .

Perhaps no human idea has destroyed the happiness of so many women as that of military glory. The exultation of battle which makes man impervious to all, described by Grenfell in "Into Battle" as the state when 'All things else are out of mind, / And only Joy-of-Battle takes / Him by the throat', and the exhilaration of war peculiar to the male are the backdrop against which Grace Fallow Norton's poem, "The French Soldier and His Bayonet", unfolds. This poem, which is addressed to his wife, shows the departing soldier delineating the greater joy and excitement proferred him by his bayonet, affectionately called 'Rosalie':

> Farewell, my wife, farewell, Marie,
> I am going with Rosalie.
>
> You stand, you weep, you look at me -
> But you know the rights of Rosalie,
>
> And she calls, the mistress of men like me! . . .
>
> My white-lipped, silent Rosalie,
> My thin and hungry Rosalie! . . .
>
> On the long march you will cling to me
> And I shall love you, Rosalie; . . .
>
> And you will laugh, laugh hungrily
> And your lips grow red, my Rosalie:

And you will drink, drink with me,
My fearless flushed lithe Rosalie! . . .

Go mourn, go mourn in the aisle, Marie,
She lies at my side, red Rosalie . . .

My cry when I die will be 'Rosalie'. 45

The romance of war, as experienced by men, permeates this whole poem; war is the mistress which provides men the opportunity for proving their manhood and drink to satiety of exultation and exhilaration. Norton conveys the superior attraction of war in comparison with the staidness of everyday life through the names 'Rosalie' and 'Marie'. The male view that in war woman's duty is to pray and mourn is explicitly set out as are the male tones of pity for the poor wife left behind to perform these genteel rites, whilst the man sets forth to do battle.

The precarious predicament in which wives were placed, with the shadow of tragedy looming constantly over their horizon in the form of possible widowhood, produced a mass of verse devoted to detailing the functions of soldiers' wives. This verse ranges from the merely jingoistic to keenly realised descriptions of the sadness concomitant with the upheaval war brings into the lives of the fighting men's wives. Ethel Talbot's "Soldiers' Wives" is typical of the jingoistic category of verse which exhorted wives to keep good cheer in the face of all odds; such verse advocated wives to maintain a bold front lest they in any way inconvenience the departing soldiers:

You're a nice sort of soldier's wife,
A settin' there so tearful!
Now, don't you start a-sniv'llin'; don't you let 'im see a tear!
Ef you starts on weepin', 'e'll guess the reason why.
'E's off to serve 'is Country, and we'll send 'im with a cheer;
Keep yourself a-smilin' while the boys go by. 46

This cheerfulness, which men attributed to women's keenness to get rid

of their husbands, was regarded by women as a necessity, for, 'when our Country wants our men, / We've got to give 'em cheerful'. The patriotic strain is in evidence also in "A Wife's Farewell", by Amy Campbell-Strickland:

> Yes, I can say farewell, can speed thee on thy way,
> And with thy little ones remain, to think of thee and pray;
> I would not dare to keep thee back when King and Country call, ...
> I know not when or where we two shall meet again,
> But I know thou wilt be covered with glory, not with shame. 47

The traditional belief that it is shameful for men to desist from enlisting is a contributory factor in reconciling this wife to the departure of her husband for war. The conventional ideals of glory assist the wife to accept her husband's death in Aimée Byng Scott's "The Woman's Share"; this poem, which stresses the stoicism, resignation and self-sacrifice that war demands of women, concludes with the wife proclaiming in tones of passive acceptance that if news comes that her husband has been killed, 'Then, dear, with head held high, / I'd count the years pass by; / It is my share'.[48]

Some poets attempt to describe the wives acceptance of their husbands death in battle in terms other than the purely patriotic and jingoistic. Thus in Mary Carolyn Davies's "A Soldier's Wife", the wife draws comfort from a conviction which is a variant of the Shelleyean injunction: 'He is made one with Nature'; she is consoled by the belief that her husband's death has not removed him from her sight for he has attained a permanent presence in the things he sacrificed his life for, things which she can behold:

> You fought that these young things today might sate
> Their thirst for Spring, might laugh, and weep and mate ...
> To save their youth, your youth was crucified.
> Because of this you shall forever after
> Be one with love and youth and joy and laughter.

Because of this you still in all that meet
Shall smile and touch and speak within this street. . . .
In all who pass, there is a part of you. 49

Fears of the husband's possible death in battle which overpower a wife on seeing her husband depart for war and her effort to overcome them are the subject of Dorothy Plowman's "Any Soldier's Wife". The terror that grips the wife is conveyed through the varied feelings which surface in her heart in correspondence with the fading sounds of the departing husband's foot-falls, until they can be heard no more:

Listen: going up the street
The echo of my soldier's feet.
A sound already growing dim
Is all I now can hold of him.
In this wide world that thinning sound -
First threat of lengthening miles of ground -
Is all the wealth I still possess,
My dwindling store of loveliness;
An ebbing tide, a fading ghost . . .

O dying sound, O scarce-drawn breath,
You whisper, fail; and then comes death;
Darkness: and no footstep more.
Turn, go in, and shut the door. 50

The second part of the poem shows the wife having conquered her intense fear by reasoning that a successful existence is one which is 'Unsapped by dual inward strife'. Excessive worrying she argues does nothing but detract from 'speeding whole' towards ones goal. The moment of death is fixed and beyond mortal control: 'There is a time for ground and nest, .../ Only when song and flight are spent / Utterly, will you drop'.

The relative ease and comfort enjoyed by the wives at home made them the object of much hostile criticism; that women were aware of this is made clear in Marjorie McNair's "English Women". This poem argues that the wives may be comfortably off in comparison with their husbands at the Front, but criticism of their relatively easy existence is unjustified, for

Our spirits dwell 'out there' to lend them strength
Our hands with those they left with us at home.
Let none believe we keep hell at arm's length
Because we tend our flowers against they come. 51

Dsecribing her feelings at the start of the war, the feminist, Helena Swanwick, records in her autobiography that she had 'felt that men had dropped their end of the burden of living, and left the women to carry on, while they played this silly, bloody game of massacring the sons of women'.[52] The wives left to carry on at home found their battlefield an extensive one; it included shouldering the men's 'burden of living' with all its attendant responsibilities, whilst fulfilling also their own share of household duties. The gaps left by husbands, whether dead or at the Front, doubled the mothers' responsibilities towards their children; they had to fulfil the roles of both parents. Women poets disenchanted with the ruinous war going on and realising that mothers have the first moulding of their childrens' mind tried to impart to them some awareness of the disastrous enchantment with war which takes hold of little boys' imagination through playing war games with war toys and stressed the undesirability of such toys. Claire Ingledew's "The Song of the Children", addressed to both fathers and mothers, sees the roots of man's fascination for war lying in his childhood days of playing at soldiers. This poem is a plea to both the sexes to dissuade children from playing at soldiers if peace and freedom from heartache are cherished by them:

Are there not better playthings
Than the gun, the trumpet and drum?
You may think of it oft with aching hearts
In the far-off days to come.

In the children are centred the hopes of the future and these hopes shall be but devastated unless the playtime activities of children are drastically changed:

But the children are playing at soldiers —
Oh! teach them a better play —
For life has a greater purpose
Than our fellow-men to slay. 53

By far the most emphatic of poems making a plea against war toys is Pauline Barrington's "Education"; the poem, directed at women, tries to jolt them into consciousness of their responsibilities towards their male children:

The children play with soldiers made of tin,
While you sew
Row after row.

The tears are slipping, dripping one by one;
Your son has shot and wounded his small brother.
The mimic battle's ended with a sob,
While you dream
Over your seam.

The blood is slipping, dripping drop by drop;
The men are dying in the trenches' mud.
The bullets search the quick among the dead.
While you drift,
The Gods sift. . . .

War is slipping, dripping death on earth.
If the child is father of the man,
Is the toy gun father of the Krupps?
For Christ's sake think!
While you sew
Row after row. 54

Barrington stresses the apathy and negligence shown by women in inculcating the right standards of value in their children by emphasizing their preference for the seemingly easier task of sewing; this preference is rooted in the endless world of dreams open to the mind while the hands are occupied. Women burdened with the responsibility of their offsprings' future need to snap out of their world of dreams and fulfil their duties towards them in a more positive way.

The widowed mothers' duties were manifold; besides being responsible for their children's education they had also to impress upon them some

awareness of the necessity of their fathers' sacrifice. This was a therapeutic exercise also in that it enabled women to come to terms with their loss. In Marjorie Smyth's "Baby Mine" the wife laments her lost husband through description of the joys denied to her fatherless child:

> Mother's hands are not big and brown,
> Baby mine,
> To toss you up or roll you down,
> Baby mine,
> Mother's voice is not strong and deep
> To tell you tales when you cannot sleep,
> To croon a song when the night seems long
> Baby mine. 55

The poem ends with the mother promising her baby to make up for this loss if he promises to retain forever the memory of the father he never knew: 'Oh, love the Daddy you never knew, / And mothers love will make up for two'. Marjorie Wilson's "To Tony (Aged 3)", attempts to explain to all children who have lost their fathers in the war the reason for their fathers making the supreme sacrifice:

> And know it was for you who bear his name
> And such as you that all his joy he gave -
> His love of quiet fields, his youth, his life,
> To win that heritage of peace you have. 56

The tragedy of empty houses, widowed lives with new responsibilities are themes taken up by some poets. Mrs. G. O. Warren in "War-Widowed" exploits religious metaphor to delineate the endless, life-long anguish of a widow:

> By my lone bed each night I kneel
> As Thou didst in Gethsemane,
> And like Thee, pray that this my bitter cup
> May pass from me.
>
> Not yet I say 'God's will be done',
> Like Thee Mine eyes are blind with tears
> That I, unlike my Lord, must bide, must wait
> these many years. 57

The desolation, the void wrought in the lives of women by war is depicted in the poem,"Darkened", by the same poet:

> The cottages are lone and cold.
> For up and down the village street
> The stricken women move and talk
> In whispers, as if ghosts did meet. . . .
>
> Now cottages are dark and still.
> Behind each silent grief-barred door,
> The women lie alone, and dream
> Of those who shall return no more. 58

The empty, still, dark homes complement the void which engulfs women's existence. The tragedy of homes destroyed by war, homes made desolate through the loss of the one person whose presence gives meaning to family life is evoked through a series of images by the American poet, Margaret Widdemer, in "Homes":

> The lamplight's shaded rose
> On couch and chair and wall,
> The drowsy book let fall,
> The children's heads, bent close
> In some deep argument, ...
> The hearth-fire's crackling glow:
> His step that crisps the snow,
> His laughing kiss, wind-cold ...
>
> Dear homely evening-things,
> Dear things of all the world,
> And yet my throat locks tight ...
>
> Somehwere far off I know
> Are ashes on red snow
> That were a home last night. 59

. . . . . .

The tragedy of war, with all its accompanying injustice and misfortune, is nowhere more apparent than in poems describing the experience of lovers, sweethearts and little girls on the threshold of youth; the single note

of restrained sadness, which characterises this poetry, emanates from either the memory of a love to which the war has brought a close, or lamentation for a love that can never be. As a preliminary to the examination of this poetry of anguish and lost loves can be set Lesbia Thanet's "In Time of War"; this poem, which has the nature of a personal statement, succinctly puts across female realisation of the difference between the ideal and the real. It won the Bookman Prize Competition, December 1914, for the best original lyric:

I dreamed (God pity babes at play)
How I should love past all romance,
And how to him beloved should say,
As heroes' women say, perchance,
When the deep drums awake -
'Go forth: do gloriously for my dear sake'.

But now I render, blind with fear,
No lover made of dreams, but you,
O You - so commonplace, so dear,
So knit with all I am or do!
Now, braver thought I lack:
Only God bring you back - God bring you back. 60

This inadequacy of the world of dream and romance to sustain a real life situation, which is the inference drawn by Thanet, is a view subscribed to also by Gabrielle Elliot. In her poem, "Pierrot Goes to War", Elliot gently chides macho war romance from deserted Pierrette's point of view. Pierrot goes forth lured by the challenge: 'Leave your dreams behind! / Come away from shadows, turn your back on June - / Pierrot, go forward to face the golden noon'. Pierrot having taken up the challenge, there is nothing left, but a life of heartache and memories for the forsaken Pierrette: 'Dreams too soon are over, gardens left behind. / Only shadows linger, for love does not forget - / Pierrot goes forward - but what of Pierrette'.[61]

The difference between the suffering of men who die in battle and the women waiting at home is most poignantly and effectively summarized by Irene

McLeod in an untitled poem beginning, 'Life I crave, or death':

> Men battle and die on a breath,
> But women who love them must wade
> Up to the lips in a sea
> Bitter as death; they are flayed
> To the soul, yet await the decree
> Of a chance, live till the game is played. 62

Women may not participate in actual warfare, but the impact of war on their lives is more enduring; often their lives are irrevocably warped. Vera Brittain and May Wedderburn Cannan are examples. Spread throughout their respective memoirs, Testament of Youth (1933) and Grey Ghosts and Voices (1976), are reminders to the fact that though they may have been lucky enough to have found a new love this could never replace the lovers that they lost. Brittain's "Perhaps" and "Roundel", both dedicated to her lover, Roland Leighton, who died of wounds, are embodiments of this mood. "Roundel" makes the statement:

> I shall spend brief and idle hours beside
> The many lesser loves that still remain,
> But find in none my triumph and my pride. 63

"Perhaps" ends on the note:

> But though kind Time may many joys renew,
> There is one greatest joy I shall not know
> Again, because my heart for loss of You
> Was broken, long ago. 64

This state of mind, wherein the memories of the old loves refused to slacken their hold on the women, is summed up by Marian Allen in "The Wind on the Downs":

> I like to think of you as brown and tall,
> As strong and living as you used to be,
> In khaki tunic, Sam Brown belt and all,
> And standing there and laughing down at me.
> Because they tell me, dear, that you are dead,
> Because I can no longer see your face,
> You have not died, it is not true, ...
> That you are round about me, I believe; . ..
>
> I think of you the same and always shall. 65

Allen, perhaps, also writes out of personal experience; her volume of verse, The Wind on the Downs (1918), is dedicated to A. T. G., killed in action, April 1917.

The pertinacious hold which the dead lovers could exercise over the minds of their sweethearts was partly rooted in the latter's memories of the lives planned together and which could not be; May Cannan's "Lamplight" exemplifies this:

> We planned to shake the world together, you and I
> Being young, and very wise; . . .
> We planned a great Empire together you and I, ...
> Now in the quiet of a chill Winter's night
> Your voice comes hushed to me
> Full of forgotten memories: you and I
> Dreamed great dreams of our future in those days, ...
>
> We shall never shake the world together, you and I,
> For you gave your life away;
> And I think my heart was broken by the war,
> Since on a summer day
> You took the road we never spoke of. 66

The idealistic force moving behind the poem, which demands subsumption of the plans for a personal empire to the greater needs of the nation, exists with reference to the strong topical belief in the validity of the Imperial task. This same lends meaning to Edith Nesbit's "To Her: In Time of War"; in this the departing soldier tells his sweetheart:

> Dear, if I come back never,
> Be it your pride that we gave
> The hope of our hearts, each other,
> For the sake of the Hope of the World. 67

For some women neither patriotic fervour nor words of comfort could make up for their lost loves; thus, the protagonist in Helen Dircks's "The War's New Year" proclaims:

> I live on dreams.
> Dreams
> Of those days
> When he lived,

And dreams
Most bitter,
Of what happiness there might have been
If only
He had not been killed. . . .

For me
There is neither earth,
Nor hell,
Nor heaven. 68

The pathos of those too young to have any memories of the past and yet realising that their existence is to be frustrated even at its earliest stage is evoked in "The Guns in Kent", by Enid Bagnold. In this a young girl who wears 'Pretty clothes, pretty hats, and a band / At night in [her] hair', finds no pleasure in life for 'When you talk of your Dead / I can't sleep in bed'. The war, the sounds of which she can hear even in bed, have made her old before her time, and denied her her share of innocence and freedom to indulge, the right of the very young:

I think as an old woman thinks
That life isn't much,
That on each of my pleasures is writ
Musn't touch. Musn't touch'.

And my eyes from the star
I withdraw, and my face from the flowers,
This isn't my hour. I withdraw
My life out of this hour. 69

This poem which first appeared in the Nation, 20 July 1918, was addressed to Sassoon; perhaps the writer conceived it as a contradiction of his portrayal of women as unfeeling and un-comprehending. The ill fortune which war brought to the very young, all its desolation, distress and damage, is also evoked in Margaret Cecilia Furse's "1914 and After":

we who are young and have given
Without dismay
Our loves away.
Joy unmeasured as yet, a heaven
All young and gay -
We are made free as the wandering winds
Whom neither war urges nor sorrow binds. 70

The emotional upheaval caused by the partings and separations necessitated by war along with all its attendant fears and trepidations surfaces in a number of poems. "The Woman's Hope", by Constance Ada Renshaw, expresses the final loss of all hopes, heralded by the lover's death, to which a woman has desperately clung to ever since parting from him: 'Then on her light, a sudden darkness flowed. / Hope shrivelled in her soul's dim corridors / Like dead leaves rattling down a windy road'.[71] Though Edith Nesbit may be accused of attitudinising and the sentiments embodied in her poem,"At Parting", may strike as artificial, yet through this very posing, she effectively conveys the death-in-life existence which was the destined fate of many a woman in war time:

> Go, since you must, but, Dearest, know
> That, Honour having bid you go,
> Your honour, if your life be spent,
> Shall have a costly monument.
>
> This heart, that fire and roses is
> Beneath the magic of your kiss,
> Shall turn to marble if you die
> And be your deathless effigy. 72

The feelings of women whilst the ominous threat of the imminent departure of their lovers hangs over them, form the subject of Eileen Newton's "Last Leave: 1918" and "The Last Evening", by Elinor Jenkins. The former poem advocates the enjoyment of as much pleasure as can be had by deliberately banishing all thoughts of tomorrow when the lover departs: 'Let us forget to-morrow! For to-night . . . / we may rest, and see / The firelight flickering on familiar walls'.[73] By contrast Jenkins's "The Last Evening" conveys the impossibility of banishing thoughts of the impending departure from the lovers' minds. The joy that they feel in each other's company cannot conquer the fear that grips their hearts, with increasing intensity, as the moment of leave-taking approaches:

The doom that marched moment by moment nigher,
Whose couriers knocked on every heart like death,
And changed all things familiar to our sight
Into strange shapes and grieving ghosts that wept . . .
round the room
The shadows crouched and crept.
Among the legions of beleaguering fears,
Still we sat on and kept them still at bay,
A little while, a little longer yet,
And wooed the hurrying moments to forget
What we remembered well. 74

Of the two poems, Jenkins is the more appealing and effective. Of the varying modes of anguish that women were heir to in war time, the one causing the greatest trepidation was that of receiving news that their lovers leave had been cancelled; this invariably resulted in a fit of despondency, which with all its tormented musings is evoked by Diana Gurney in "Leave is Stopped":

Leave is stopped . . .
On some
Glad spring day he should have come
But now
Leave is stopped -
And how
Or when - if ever - will he come?
In summer when the bees hum
At sultry noon?
Or later when the corn is red?
He said
He would come soon. 75

This poem is reminiscent of the mood and atmosphere of Tennyson's "Mariana".

The demands made by war on women's sensibilities at times involved levels of disconcertion which women found hard to take. Some of the men who returned from the trenches were so traumatised by their experience that their wives and lovers had to learn to adjust to the hostility and alienation shown by their men or give them up for good. Right at the start of the conflict women were conscious that war would in one way or

another enforce a barrier in understanding between the two sexes. In Testament of Youth, Vera Brittain reminiscing about her feelings for her fiance, fighting somewhere in France, records how she had been overpowered at the time amongst other things by

> a new fear that the War would come between us - as indeed, with time, the War always did, putting a barrier of indescribable experience between men and the women whom they loved, thrusting horror deeper and deeper inward, linking the dread of spiritual death to the apprehension of physical disaster. Quite early I realised this possibility of a permanent impediment to understanding. 76

The impediment to understanding feared by Brittain was acknowledged as fact by Agatha Christie; in her autobiography, recalling her meeting with her fiancé, who had joined the Flying Corps, after three months of war she states:

> In that short period I had lived through an entirely new kind of experience ... Archie had had an equal amount of new experience, though in a different field ... Both of us had lived a large tract on our own. The result of it was that we met almost as strangers. 77

The strangeness about her lover is what is lamented by the woman in Elinor Jenkins's "I Loved in Days that Were". This poem describes the catastrophic change that war has wrought in the woman's lover; although he has returned from the war and 'Still was ... fair to see, / And still ... smiled', yet the smile is not the carefree smile of old:

> So one might smile, no doubt,
> Who died to save,
> And 'twas with fear cast out
> His eyes were brave.

The gulf which war has thrust between the two is regretted by the woman:

> He had grown too high for my whim.
> Out of the ease of my lot
> I stretched my hands to him,
> And reached him not.

The poem ends with the woman proclaiming that the tragedy of women whose lovers return alive, yet dead to their womenfolk, outstrips that of women whose lovers are killed:

> Oh maids that mourn, give ear,
> With ghosts ye wed;
> How shall I win my dear
> Whose heart is dead?
>
> You grieve your loves are slain,
> 'Tis worse for me,
> My love came back in vain.
> Yet 'twas not he. 78

That the difficulties in adjustment experienced by this woman were widespread is supported by a note appended to the poem: 'Acknowledgements are due to the Westminster Gazette ... And to its Problem Page for having suggested to the author the poem'; it also explains the rhetorical tones of the last two stanzas, and the shift from the personal to the universal. The tortures inflicted upon women by the returning heroes were of a varied nature. Marion E. Gladwell's "Two Days", locates the schism between the lovers, sorely lamented by the woman, in the soldiers version of war profiteering:

> I have watched you return
> With eyes that ache and yearn: . . .
> But rich with Honour's grace
> You never sought my face . . .
> Wearing a Victor's laurel on your brow - ...
> I am all forgotten of you now. 79

The seemingly callous behaviour of women, their apparent indifference to the plight of the fighting men for which they were rebuked and upbraided by male writers is sought to be explained by May Cannan and Edith Sitwell. Both stress in their respective poems that the indifference is simulated, a façade. Cannan in "An Old Song" sets out the accusation and the reasons responsible for it:

They think us hard because we laugh
I and you and you -
Our men went laughing out to die
So how else should we do . . .

But when these Happy are not near
Then I and you and you -
May break our hearts and weep our loves
As any girl must do. 80

The female practice of concealing their true feelings, keeping them confined to themselves is illustrated in Sitwell's "A Histrion". During the day, the woman whose lover has been killed goes dancing and practises 'smiles that crack my face apart' 'but when Night falls, to my reflection / I lay bare this empty hole that once had been a living heart'.[81]

. . . . . .

By far the most crushing of the blows which war dealt to women was the barren, sterile existence enforced upon thousands of them through the loss of more than half a million of the men. In terms of a society which had no substantial social and economic alternatives for the system which regarded marriage as the only possible career for a woman, the tones of religosity adopted by Frances Hallowes at the start of the war, to define one aspect of the female predicament resultant of war are not out of place. In Women and War (1914), she declaims :

And are not women crucified by war! How many
women are there who can never marry because
their potential husbands have been killed off!
How many can never become mothers because
the potential fathers have been slain. 82

Hallowes's sentiments would not have appeared exaggerated in a society of which Ruth Adam assures that such was the pre-occupation with marriage that a little girl's 'first nursery card-game - in which there was no winner

only a loser left humiliatingly unpartnered - was "Old Maid"'; she also points out that even in pre-war England spinsters were officially categorised as 'the superfluous women'.[83] Against such a background Carola Oman's "The Lament of Many Women" appears an epitome of emotional and social needs:

> The King is dead!
> Slain in Battle. There
> Are no more of his line.
> For his heart was mine.
> And in his stead
> There is no heir. 84

The mass of verse lamenting unwedded maids and children,never to see the light of day,is nothing if not sentimental; it cannot, however, be dismissed or taken lightly for it mirrors genuine human emotions and needs. Of her poem "The Superfluous Woman", written long before she got married, Vera Brittain observed that it

> represented the last bitter protest against
> the non-fulfilment of one part of my human
> potentialities to which the War appeared
> to have condemned me and so many other women
> whose natural completion had been frustrated by
> the withering frost of grief and loss. 85

The question with which her poem ends 'But who will give me my children'[86] surfaces one way or another in the verse of many a writer. Katharine Tynan takes up this theme in "The Vestal"; her poem is typical of many which represent young girls musing about their destined lovers whom they are now never to meet in this world. In Tynan's poem the girl remains unwedded 'Because some man she never knew, / Her destined mate, has won his bays, / Passed the low door of darkness through'. The penultimate stanza touches upon the question of the unborn children and unrealized hopes:

What of their children all unborn?
   What of the house they should have built?
She wanders through her days forlorn,
   The untasted cup of joy is spilt.

Implicit in the last stanza is the relative 'peacefulness' of the dead and the lifelong torment of the woman; an inference which reinforces the assertion that the effects of war on women at times warped their existence forever:

She lives unwedded, - as for him
   He sleeps too sound for any fret
At their lost kisses, or the dream
   Of the poor girl he never met. 87

Georgina Paget's "Lament of the Maidens" voices young girls' discontent with the consolation offered them for the death of their would be lovers; the maidens can find no comfort in the suggestion that the men perished for the future of the race: 'Cold, cold the comfort that ye have found us, / Who pine for tiny hands in ours, and strong arms round us'.[88] These things the maidens pine for are elaborated upon in Constance Ada Renshaw's "Ballad of the Unborn"; her poem, like Tynan's, stresses the endless torture of the frustrated hopes of women and the 'peace' of the dead heroes:

The Dead are happy, for Death opes
   The vasts their souls had willed.
But many a phantom fledgling gropes
   To virgin hearts unthrilled.
.....Dear God! the tender mother-hopes
   That will not be fulfilled!

They rest, who poured the vintage bright
   On many a Flanders sod, ...
.....But childless women weep at night,
   Who gave their all to God. 89

Women's overpowering desire for children expressed in Renshaw's poem appears in a different guise in "Little Unborn Children", by Catherine

Kirsopp. This concerns a woman so stunned by the tragedy that 'The man she loved went out to war; he fought and bravely died; / And she who is so beautiful will never be a bride', that she has immersed herself in a dream world, comforted by children who would have been. She peoples a world of 'misty dreams' which no one can understand; in this

> She walks with little unborn children clinging to her hands; ...
> Upon her cheeks, upon her lips their little mouths are pressed,
> They live within her dreaming eyes, they sleep upon her breast. 90

The poems discussed above are evocative of the lives of thousands of women, ruined, because their prospective husbands and fathers of their children were claimed by the war. "The War Widow" is another of the poems which laments children who cannot be:

> Babe of mine, who may not be,
> Often do I dream of thee:
> Feel thy tiny fingers prest
> Close against this empty breast;
> Touch the lashes on thy cheek,
> Kiss thy brow, so pure, so meek;
> Watch with tender, awed surprise
> Soul-light dawning in thine eyes. 91

This poem by Georgina Paget appeals through being written in the first person which gives it an air of genuinely conceived emotions. On the same subject, Nina Mardel, who worked as a VAD, appears to write out of personal experience; her book of verse, Plain Song (1917), is dedicated to her lover, killed in the war. "I Shall Never Feel" evokes all the anguish and longing which became the fate of women who lost their loves:

> I shall never feel
> The clasp of little arms about my neck -
> A soft form cradled near my empty heart,
> Oh ravening cruel need!
> I could sob my very life away
> For empty heart - and empty mother-arms. 92

Elizabeth Margery Mackenzie's "The Dream Child" also reflects personal

experience. She apparently lost her lover in the war; her volume of verse Poems (1917), is dedicated to the 'Happy Memories of 1914, Before the War'. Her poem, like Mardel's, manifests the anguish of hopes, frustrated:

> Dear little Dream Child
> That I shall never hold,
> Fair little nestling baby
> With gossamer curls of gold.
> Sweet little laughing baby,
> The child of my love and me,
> You grow in the far country -
> In the World of 'Never-to-be'. 93

The pathos and anguish embodied in the above poems is almost terribly naked; it is an undeniable aspect of the truth of war, an aspect lost in the overpowering ascendancy enjoyed by the truth born of the trenches.

A different aspect of poets' intense absorption with the subject of unborn children is represented by Teresa Hooley's "Outcast"; "Outcast" is typical of those poems which show writers captivated by the belief that the death of men in battle has orphaned their destined children till eternity. In such the doctrines of predestination and prenatal existence stretch the borders of sentimental fantasy way beyond the limits of acceptable fancy. "Outcast" is set in heaven, where 'the unborn children played' 'And prattled, clinging round the knees of God'; these child souls are happy for they are sure of their human existence in the future. Suddenly one of them is jolted out of its joyfulness and tries to draw God's attention to the plight of those child souls ever to remain unborn, unmothered because their destined fathers are no more:

> 'Father, look down! Upon a suffering star
> Their fathers have been slain, been slain in War.
> I hear them wail, bereaved and forlorn -
> The little children who can ne'er be born.' 94

The belief that the souls of the unborn are conscious of their destined homes defines an untitled poem by Janet Begbie; here the unborn child souls upset the equanimity of a young girl's existence by informing her that they, her would-be future children, have come to take their leave of her, for

> We were the children you should have borne,
> But to-night our sire to the grave was torn,
> And we become but shadows and dreams.

Remonstration on the girl's part 'I have never loved, I was never wed', is quelled with the argument:

> Strongly plaited and bound souls be.
> Yours bows in an unknown misery
> Because he was slain who was marked for thee,
> Whose beloved eyes thou shalt never see. 95

The emotional attitude which defines the above two poems manifests a strong awareness of the price in human suffering and deprivation of natural rights which war enforces. The verse discussed in this section - strongly rooted in 'feeling' - cannot be waived aside as mere sentimental claptrap. It springs from genuine emotions in the writers and also meets very real needs in the readers, which perhaps accounts for the existence of a sizeable portion of its kind.

. . . . . .

> When it is over, the noise and the clamour
> Then come the creeping years, heavy with silence -
> Peace cannot break it, and we who must suffer
> Must, and in silence. 96

The women's saga of pain and anguish does not begin and end with the war; those afflicted lie on the rack for life. The mood evoked in Mary Teresa Parnell's "After the War", which first appeared in the Saturday Westminster

Gazette, 1916, is manifest also in May Wedderburn Cannan's "Women Demobilized". Cannan's poem bearing the date, July 1919, the day the Versailles Peace Treaty was signed, illustrates the world of peace and quiet opened up for the women who lost their loved ones:

> Now must we go again back to the world
> Full of grey ghosts . . .
>
> Now are put by the bugles and the drums,
> And the worn spurs, and the great swords they carried,
> Now are we made most lonely, . . .
>
> Now are the Fallen happy and sleep sound,
> Now, in the end, to us is come the paying, . . .
>
> Now in our hearts abides always our war,
> Time brings, to us, no day for our forgetting,
> Never for us is folded War away,
> Dawn or sun setting,
> Now in our hearts abides always our war. 97

The 'paying' which war levies on women, a paying disregarded by those who mount such shows as the First World War, is set out in Alice Maud Allen's "The Peace Procession: 1937". This poem, written when the Second World War was at hand, when regarded from the distance of the present uncannily implies a renewal of the cycle of pain and anguish heralded by the First World War:

> Here we all come, the losers, the defeated,
> Who've lost what we never had: lovers, sons,
> Daughters, children's children. 'What ancient ones!
> They're almost all old women!' Hear the young voices:
> Why should we listen to what they've to say?
> They're dead. They've shuffled all their lives like this,
> I'm sure. They've never been alive, they're grey'.
> 'We had one victory. This did we win:
> One passionate conviction for our lot:
> War is the unpardonable sin;
> Nature does not forgive it, life does not.' 98

The verse discussed in this chapter is an embodiment of women's share of the national grief and loss; this strictly female reality - reality energised by a host of obscure personal anguish - is the truth of war

as experienced by the female. The poems examined, though of varying quality, provide a multifaceted perspective of the agony endured by women; an agony no less overpowering than that suffered by the male in the trenches.

NOTES

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7. Helena Coleman, Marching Men : War Verses (Toronto, Dent 1917), p. 11.

8. Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth (London, Gollancz 1933). Virago edition 1978, p. 401.

9. Alice Meynell, A Father of Women and Other Poems (London, Burns and Oates 1917), pp. 7-8.

10. Helen Mackay, London, One November (London, Andrew Melrose 1915), pp. 90-91.

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34. Marjorie Crosbie, Love's Melodies (Wolverhampton, Alfred Hinde 1915), p. 71.

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92. Nina Mardel, Plain Song (London, Erskine Macdonald 1917), p. 16.

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96. Mary Teresa Parnell, Out of the Mists (London, Philip Allen 1936), p. 93.

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98. Alice Maud Allen, The Upland Field (Cambridge, Gordon Fraser 1937), p. 70.

CONCLUSION

In this study I have tried to describe the female experience of war as manifest in their poetry. According to Vera Brittain 'even after the war was over, women . . . were not regarded as having had any contact with its realities'.[1] The 'realities' of war impinge upon the female and the male consciousness variously; for women and men see and hear and feel differently,and reality has many sides. This thesis has tried to document the female reality of war as rendered in verse.

The poetry studied is indeed often a flawed poetry; there are the scars of haste, of hysteria. There is the abuse of the melodramatic, there is much that is low voltage versifying or mere doggerel but when the compulsion to say something that has dug into the poet's experience finds powerful words it is at its best. When women approach war they seldom lose their personal standpoint; their war verse, however, cannot be dismissed because it refuses to generalise or universalise individual experience. Taken collectively the various poets' personal sense of loss, horror, anguish, tension, as conveyed in their poetry, provides a multi-faceted perspective of female sensibility during the First World War.

NOTES

1. Vera Brittain, 'War Service in Perspective', in Promise of Greatness: The War of 1914-1918, edited by George A. Panichas (London, Cassell, 1968), pp. 364-376 (p. 367).

APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The biographical detail where available is of the barest. Though many biographical dictionaries were consulted my main source of information has been Author Biographies Master Index 2 vols. (Michigan, Gale Research Company 1978).

Margot Robert Adamson. Contributed verse to the Nation and other leading journals.

Georgette Agnew. Playwright and poet. Mainly wrote for children.

Alice Maud Allen. Novelist and poet.

Marian Allen. Writer of children's verse.

Enid Bagnold. Novelist and playwright. Best remembered as the author of National Velvet. At the outbreak of hostilities she went to work as a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse at the Royal Herbert Hospital, Woolwich; A Diary Without Dates is an account of her experiences there. As a result of this she was immediately sent away from the hospital for a breach of military discipline. Later she joined FANY, and served in France as a driver.

Pauline Barrington (b. 1876). American. Born in Philadelphia. Worked as a secretary. Contributed verse, short stories and sketches to various magazines; also reviewed books. Married Charles Barrington, September 1901.

Katharine Lee Bates (1859-1929). American. Was appointed instructor in English Literature at Wellesly College in 1885; in 1891, following graduate study at Oxford, was awarded a full professorship which she held till her retirement in 1925. A poet and writer of children's books, she is the author of the famous hymn "America the Beautiful".

Dorothy Julia Baynes. Wrote under the name 'Dormer Creston'. Author of Enter A Child (1939), reminiscences of her childhood.

Maud Anna Bell. Worked for various war charities.

Mary Borden (1886-1968). Born in Chicago. Educated at Vassar. Settled in England. Novelist, poet, short story writer. At the outbreak of war she went to France and stayed there till the end of hostilities equipping and directing a mobile hospital at the Front. Married Major General Sir Edward Spears in 1918; this was her second marriage.

Mary Elizabeth Boyle. Writer of children's verse. Brother killed in the opening stages of the war.

Sybil Bristowe. Brother killed in early 1917.

Vera Mary Brittain (1896-1970). Born in Newcastle-under-Lyme but spent her childhood in Macclesfield and Buxton. Educated at St. Monica's, Kingswood and Somerville College, Oxford. Served with the Voluntary Aid Detachment in army hospitals in London, Malta and France. Both her brother and lover became victims of the war. Author, journalist and lecturer, she was closely associated with the work of Peace Movements in both England and the United States.

May Wedderburn Cannan (1893-1973). Poet and novelist. Born in Oxford and educated at Wychwood School. Worked for the Oxford University Press in Oxford for some years. Her father, Charles Cannan, was Secretary to the Delegates of the OUP for many years. She served with the Voluntary Aid Detachment and the Intelligence Service during the war. Was engaged to Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's son Bevil, who died of influenza after the war.

Mary G. Cheery. Served as Quartermaster of a Red Cross Hospital.

Isabel Constance Clarke. Novelist, poet and biographer. Born in Plymouth and educated privately. Lost a brother in the war.

Hylda Constance Cole. Writer of children's verse.

Margaret Postgate Cole (1893-1980). Born in Cambridge, a professor's daughter. Educated at Roedean and Girton. Married G. D. H. Cole, socialist writer, economist, labour historian and author. Wrote several books, some in collaboration with her husband - including many detective novels.

Helena Coleman (1860-1953). Canadian.

Helen Grey Cone (1859-1934). American. Author of "A Chant of Love for England", written in retaliation for Ernst Lissauer's "Hymn of Hate".

Nancy Cunard (1896-1965). Daughter of Sir Bache and Lady Cunard. After a disastrous marriage she settled in the Paris of the twenties and thirties in high café society and the world of jazz and Cubism. During the Spanish Civil War she went to Spain as correspondent for the Manchester Guardian. In the Second World War she worked for the Free French in London.

Elizabeth Daryush (1887-1976). Born in London, daughter of Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate. Married Ali Akbar Daryush in 1923 and lived for several years in Persia.

Mary Carolyn Davies. American. Poet. Born in Sprague, Washington. Contributed verse to the Bookman and other periodicals.

Anna Bunston De Barry. Contributed verse and articles to the Poetry Review, the Bookman and other leading journals.

Eva Dobell (1867-1963). Writer of children's verse. During the war worked as a nurse and also corresponded with prisoners of war.

Helen Parry Eden (b. 1885). Born in London. Contributed verse to Punch and other journals.

Gabrielle Elliot. American. Wrote for war organisations such as the American Fund for French Wounded.

Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965). Born in London. Wrote innumerable things - fiction, poems, music, children's stories and games. Fell in love with the poet Edward Thomas, who is the subject of some poems written during the war.

S. Gertrude Ford. Feminist. Contributed verse and articles to the Herald, the Poetry Review, Poetry, the Bookman and other periodicals.

V. Helen Friedlaender. Novelist. Contributed verse to Country Life.

Dorothy Kempe Gardiner (b. 1894). Writer of mystery and detective novels.

Eva Gore-Booth (1870-1926). Poet. Born in Sligo, daughter of Sir Henry Gore-Booth, Irish landowner. Educated privately. Prominent in suffrage and women's trade-union work in Manchester before the war. An ardent pacifist she visited conscientious objectors in prison and attended tribunals and courts-martial.

Alexandra Ethelreda Grantham. Eldest son killed in the war.

I. Grindley. Served with the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps.

Helen Hamilton. Schoolteacher.

Mary Henderson (b. 1874). Served with the Scottish Women's Hospitals in Russia and Roumania. Actively promoted the Serbian Relief Fund.

Norah M. Holland (d. 1925). Canadian. Contributed to various magazines.

Teresa Hooley (1888-1973). Born in Derbyshire. Educated by private governess, then at Howard College, Bedford.

Elinor Jenkins (1893-1920).

Margery Lawrence (d. 1969). Born in Wolverhampton. Novelist, journalist and short-story writer.

Winifred M. Letts (1882-1971). Born in Ireland. Served as a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse in 1915. Later joined the Almeric Paget Military Massage Corps.

Amy Lowell (1874-1925). American. Poet and critic. Born in Brookline, Massachusetts, into the illustrious and wealthy family of Lowells. She met Ezra Pound in England in 1913 and sought to influence the Imagist movement. Her quest for a hard-edged, unsentimental American verse was dubbed 'Amygism'.

Sylvia Lynd (1888-1952). Novelist, poet and short story writer. Born in Hampstead, London. Educated at King Alfred School, the Slade School and the Academy of Dramatic Art. Married Irish critic and essayist Robert Lynd in 1909. Member of the Vie Heureuse Committee in 1923 and the Book Society Committee in 1929.

Rose Macaulay (1881-1958). Born in Rugby, daughter of G. C. Macaulay, a classical scholar and lecturer at Cambridge University. A prominent novelist, essayist and poet, she won several major literary prizes, including the Femina Vie Heureuse and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. During the war she served as a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse, a land-girl, and in early 1917, joined the War Office where she worked till after the Armistice.

Helen Mackay (1876-1966). American. Poet and essayist. Born in Livingston Co. New York.

Irene Rutherford McLeod (b. 1891). Contributed verse to the Bookman and other journals.

Nina Mardel. Served with the Voluntary Aid Detachment.

Charlotte Mew (1869-1928). Born in Bloomsbury, daughter of an architect. Lived in poverty, grief and misfortune. Her output was small but extraordinary — so much so that she was awarded a Civil List pension on the recommendation of Hardy, Masefield and de la Mare. She finally committed suicide.

Alice Meynell (1847-1922). Poet and essayist. Born in Barnes but spent most of her childhood in Italy. Wife of Wilfred Meynell, the author and journalist. She and her husband were on intimate terms with the great literary figures of the time — Browning, Tennyson, Ruskin, Rossetti, Patmore, Meredith and George Eliot. Supported the feminine cause.

Ruth Comfort Mitchell (1882-1953). American poet and novelist. Born in San Francisco. Contributed verse to various journals.

Edith Nesbit (1858-1924). Born in London. Educated in France and Germany. A novelist, poet and writer of children's stories, she is best remembered for the last. Married Hubert Bland in 1879. She took a keen interest in socialism and in 1883 was one of the founders of the 'Fellowship of New Life' out of which in 1884, sprang the Fabian Society.

Carola Oman (1897-1978). Born in Oxford, daughter of the historian Sir Charles Oman. Educated at Wychwood School, Oxford. Served as a nurse on the Western Front from 1916-1919. Writer of books for children, novelist and historical biographer, she was awarded the Sunday Times annual British literature prize for Nelson (1948) and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Sir John Moore (1953).

May O'Rourke (b. 1898). Contributed verse to various journals including the Bookman and the Poetry Review. Became secretary to Thomas Hardy in March 1923 and was the friend and confidante of both Hardy and his wife, Florence.

Josephine Preston Peabody (1874-1922). American. Poet and dramatist. Born in Brooklyn, New York. During the war she delivered speeches and gave readings for refugee relief.

Margaret Peterson. Novelist. Contributed verse to the Sphere and other periodicals.

Jessie Pope (1868-1941). Born in Leicester. Wrote humorous fiction, verse and articles for leading popular newspapers and magazines, including Punch.

Constance Ada Renshaw. Contributed verse to the Poetry Review.

Ursula Roberts (b. 1887). A contributor to literary reviews and periodicals. Wrote under the name 'Susan Miles'.

Edith Grenstead Rochester. American. Lost a son in the war.

Margaret Sackville (1881-1963). Daughter of the 7th Earl de la Warr. She was mainly a poet, but wrote some books for children. A pacifist, she was a close friend of Ramsay Macdonald and with him visited the Morrells at Garsington.

Ethel Scheffauer. Contributed verse to the Bookman, the English Review, the Queen and other journals.

Aimeé Byng Scott (d. 1953). Published a number of poems and plays, writing under the name 'Alec Holmes'.

Fredegond Shove (1889-1949). Daughter of Virginia Woolf's cousin Florence Fisher and the historian F. W. Maitland. Studied at Newnham College, Cambridge. In 1915 she married the economist Gerald Shove who was a conscientious objector and worked on the Morrell's farm.

May Sinclair (1865-1946). Born in Cheshire. Educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College. During the war she served with a Field Ambulance Corps in Belgium. An active feminist, in her time she was considered one of the greatest of the Georgian novelists.

Edith Sitwell (1887-1964). Born in Scarborough, sister of Osbert and Sacheverell. Recognised as one of the most eminent women poets of her time. She earned a reputation for eccentricity by habitually dressing in medieval clothes.

Cicely Fox Smith (1882-1954). Born in Manchester. Novelist and writer of fiction for children. She contributed to many journals, her special subjects being maritime history and the English countryside.

Dorothy Margaret Stuart (1889-1963).

Muriel Stuart (d. 1967). Born in London. She wrote poetry from an early age, her first major work appearing in the English Review in 1916.

Sara Teasdale (1884-1933). American. Born in St. Louis. Her poetry was much influenced by the work of Christina Rossetti. Committed suicide.

Joan Thompson. Served with the Red Cross in France.

Aelfrida Tillyard (b. 1883). Born in Cambridge. Educated in Lausanne and at the University of Florence.

Iris Tree (1897-1968). Born in London, daughter of Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the famous actor-manager. She studied art at the Slade and became popular with the Bloomsbury Group.

Alys Fane Trotter (1863-1962). Contributed verse to Punch, the Cornhill Magazine and other periodicals. Lost a son in the war.

Katharine Tynan (1861-1931). Born in Dublin, daughter of a farmer. A poet and prose writer, she was a leading member of the Celtic literary revival and a friend of Yeats, the Meynells and the Rossettis. During the war she did philanthropic work and had two sons serving in Palestine and France respectively.

Margaret Tyrrell-Green. Son killed in action in Palestine.

Evelyn Underhill (1857-1941). Born in Wolverhampton. Poet, novelist and writer on mysticism. At the start of the war she was engaged in work on behalf of the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association; later worked for Naval Intelligence. Her husband, a lawyer by profession, helped in the development of artificial limbs for the war-wounded in the Surgical Supply Workshop.

Alberta Vickridge. Served as a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse in the war.

Mrs. G. O. Warren. American. A Rhodes scholar at Oxford. Actively promoted the Allies cause in America.

M. Winifred Wedgewood. Served with the Voluntary Aid Detachment as a kitchen-maid.

Margaret Widdemer. American. Poet and novelist.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919). American. Born in Wisconsin. Studied for a short time at the University of Wisconsin. Popular poet. Author of "Solitude" which opens 'Laugh, and the world laughs with you'.

APPENDIX B

Presented here are extracts from some topical comments and opinions about women's war verse.

1. Women War Poets
   Galloway Kyle

It has been my lot and privilege to note two remarkable features of the poetry evoked by the war — one the fine spirit displayed by numerous soldier-poets, and — what has been overlooked by the many critics who have dealt ... with the poetry of the war — the rare quality and beauty of the war verse produced by women. . . .

I am certain that the best war poetry has been the incidental verse characterised very often by a fine singularity and exquisite tenderness, and that the finest work in this class has been done by women, who in a thousand ways have felt the tragedy and pathos inseparable from this horrible business of insensate, cruel war. The imagination that is appalled by the world tragedy and stricken into futility has been responsive to the individual and collective cry of misery and terror, and particularly to the little human incidents and personalia of war.

Where the big poets have left us cold the women writers of verse have stirred the feelings.

Source: Daily Mail, 24 May 1916

. . . . . .

2. War Blossoms
Hilda P. Cumings

Among the thousands of books the War has produced, none will be more interesting to the literary historian of the future than the record left by our soldier-poets . . ..

But as well as these which spring direct from the battle line, is another poetry as significant. The women at home are also impelled to express their feelings in verse, though their voices perforce strike a different note. Their inspiration cannot be found in the clash of arms. The woman's song must of necessity be rather a cry against the awful silence of suspense, and the loneliness to be borne amongst familiar things . . . This is the fact of War as lived through by the woman . . . The man, from the distance, feels the separation, but his longing made articulate is not . . . local in form. . . .

But the woman is near to the possibility of loss . . . To the soldier comes the exaltation from rapid action, but for the woman is the deadness of waiting. To him with face set towards the enemy, war is the great game, but from her more distant view, it is ... only ... a vast machine of slaughter.

Source: Englishwoman, October, 1918

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