

ENGLISH POETRY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

AND ITS CRITICAL AND PUBLIC RECEPTION

JOANNA MARY ATKINSON

Royal Holloway College

T
YKB
Atk
151,234
Aug 79

This Thesis is submitted for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of London

November, 1978

ProQuest Number: 10097464

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10097464

Published by ProQuest LLC(2016). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

F O R S A K I S

10/10/10
10/10/10

*Write as you will
In whatever style you like
Too much blood has run under the bridge
To go on believing
That only one road is right.*

In poetry everything is permitted.

*With only this condition, of course:
You have to improve on the blank page.*

NICANOR PARRA
(born 1914)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should first like to record my appreciation of the encouragement given to me by Dr. P. M. Ball in initially proposing that I should undertake research for a higher degree and in providing me with the confidence to combine my studies with a full-time teaching post.

My particular thanks are due to Professor Francis Berry for ably continuing the supervision of my research and for his sustained interest in my subject over the lengthy period of compiling and collating material. I am especially grateful for the numerous discussions we have shared during the actual writing-up process which have provided me with valuable insights into both the character of the age and the work of a wide range of early twentieth century poets.

I am indebted to the staff of the Royal Holloway College, Senate House, Bodleian and Birmingham Public Libraries and of the Imperial War, National Army and British Museums which I have used or contacted in the course of my research, for the help they have proffered.

I should also like to thank Miss A. P. Callender, Head of the Business Studies Department of Windsor and Maidenhead College, for consistently making provision for my studies when arranging my timetable, and mention should be made of my students who have approached the subject of First World War Poetry with unprecedented enthusiasm and whose suggested interpretations of the poems in 1914-18 In Poetry have helped me to refine my own opinions in several respects.

Finally I should like to acknowledge the constant support offered by my family and friends who have unfailingly made sure I was informed of any references in the media to the general field of twentieth century war poetry. Out of this plethora of useful information, the contributions of my Father (in describing his own experiences of the Second World War with special vitality and immediacy) and of my Mother (in giving me the benefit of her extensive reading and, especially, in her championing of R.B.) deserve to be most fully recognized.

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
 <u>CHAPTER I</u> 	
<u>ENGLISH POETRY ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE WAR</u>	7
 <u>CHAPTER II</u> 	
<u>THE GEORGIAN RESPONSE TO WAR</u>	70
2 (a) 'THE TOPOGRAPHY OF GOLGOTHA': THE NEW LAND-SCAPE	71
2 (b) REGIONAL AND NOSTALGIC POETRY IN THE GEORGIAN IDIOM	89
2 (c) DEBILITATED AND DISTORTED PASTORAL	160
2 (d) THE PASTORAL SUSTAINED	202
i. <u>Edward Thomas</u>	202
ii. <u>Edmund Blunden</u>	234
2 (e) THE THIRD <u>GEORGIAN POETRY ANTHOLOGY</u>	266
2 (f) CRITICAL RECEPTION OF POETRY IN THE GEORGIAN IDIOM	287

C O N T E N T S

(Continued)

	<u>Page</u>
<u>CHAPTER III</u>	
<u>IMAGISM UNDER FIRE</u>	336
3 (a) THE ROSENBERG CONNECTION	337
3 (b) WAR POETRY IN THE IMAGIST MODE	398
3 (c) CRITICAL RESPONSE TO WAR POETRY IN THE IMAGIST MODE	437
<u>CHAPTER IV</u>	
<u>THE HOME FRONT : 1914 - 1918</u>	467
<u>CHAPTER V</u>	
<u>'THE UNRETURNING ARMY THAT WAS YOUTH'</u>	552
<u>EPILOGUE</u>	587
<u>APPENDICES</u>	594
<u>APPENDIX 'A'</u> THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE TERM 'NO MAN'S LAND'	594
<u>APPENDIX 'B'</u> PAUL NASH PAINTINGS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER II	598
<u>APPENDIX 'C'</u> LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	602
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	606

ABSTRACT

While other researchers have sought to put poetry of the First World War into perspective in the general context of twentieth century verse, it is proposed that this study will focus principally on the contemporary response - of readers, reviewers and critics - to this remarkable poetic efflorescence between the years 1914 and 1918.

A general survey of the situation in English poetry on the threshold of the War is initially presented, taking into account the reading public's expectation of poetry and the current critical dicta pertaining to the composition of verse. The three subsequent chapters examine in some detail the different types of War Poetry - Georgian-influenced, Imagist-inclined, non-combatant - in conjunction with analysis of the particular readership to which each appealed and the response of reviewers to the different modes, while the final chapter traces the evolution of certain themes characteristic of First World War Poetry, such as the changing concept of sacrifice and the development of the important camaraderie-motif.

The brief Epilogue which completes the study assesses the overall response of readers, reviewers and literary critics of the time to First World War Poetry, and briefly evaluates the extent to which such verse contributed to the formulation of a 'new poetic' in the decades after 1918.

PREFACE

The First World War period has attracted a good deal of attention, particularly since the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of War between England and Germany on 4th August, 1914. This interest has manifested itself in the form of radio programmes¹ - including the recollections of veterans of the Great War and compilations of contemporary songs and verse - assessments by historians² of the War's origins and course and a surge of literary reappraisals³ of the poetry of the War and evaluations⁴ of major War Poets. A significant crop of anthologies⁵ of First World War verse similarly flourished in the mid-1960's and the 1914-18 era as a whole offered itself as a profitable area for perusal by both established literary critics and postgraduate researchers.⁶

The momentum of interest in First World War poets has carried over into the present decade - as recent critical biographies of Wilfred Owen⁷ and Isaac Rosenberg⁸ testify - and preoccupation with the impinging influence of the Great War on English literature between 1914 and 1918 (and since) has stimulated two further major analyses⁹ in the last six years. Altogether, one could perhaps justifiably protest that the field of First World War Poetry has therefore been already too well-mined

-
1. Most notably Charles Chilton's 'The Long, Long Trail', broadcast in December, 1961, which was heard by Joan Littlewood who subsequently asked Chilton to make a stage-adaptation of the material. Oh What A Lovely War, the result of their collaboration, was first presented by Theatre Workshop at the Theatre Royal, Stratford, East London, in March 1963 and 5 years later Richard Attenborough's film under the same title was released.
 2. A.J.P. Taylor, The First World War, 1963, for example.
 3. John H. Johnston, English Poetry of the First World War, 1964, and Bernard Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight, 1965.
 4. D.S.R. Welland, Wilfred Owen, 1960; Christopher Hassall, Rupert Brooke, 1964; Michael Thorpe, Siegfried Sassoon, 1966.
 5. Ed. Gardner, Up the Line to Death, 1964; ed. Parsons, Men Who March Away, 1965; ed. Hussey, Poetry of the First World War, 1967.
 6. P.J. Widdowson, Illusion and Disillusion in the English Poetry & Painting of the I W.W., 1968; Amitava Banerjee, The Muse & Mars: An Examination of English Poetry written during the 2 World Wars, 1969; Alexander Forsyth, The Poetics of War 1914-18, 1971.
 7. Jon Stallworthy, Wilfred Owen, A Biography, 1974.
 8. J. Liddiard, I.R.: The Half Used Life; J. Cohen, Journey to the Trenches; J.M. Wilson, I.R.: Poet & Painter - all three, 1975.
 9. Jon Silkin, Out of Battle, 1972; Paul Fussell, The Great War & Modern Memory, 1975.

but it is hoped to investigate in this study some approaches to the subject which have been hitherto overlooked.

Previous critics, literary biographers and general researchers in the area of First World War Poetry have been concerned either with evaluating in considerable detail the work of just one recognized War Poet, or possibly several poets representative of different phases of the War, or with assessing the significance of the corpus of First World War Poetry in the wider context of twentieth century verse. No concerted effort has yet been made to examine how exactly the bulk of the poetry of the War years - much of it issuing from 'amateur versifiers' or men who had never before conceived the notion of giving poetic expression to their thoughts - was received by the poetry-reading public, the critics and reviewers of the time. This study thus assumes as its objective the fulfilment of this present deficiency in critical writing on the poetry of the First World War by looking specifically at trends of War Poetry - rather than concentrating on individual poets - and by relating closely to the contemporary reactions of the reading public and reviewers - rather than distancing this immediate response in order to establish First World War Poetry in the mainstream of twentieth century verse.

In order to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the public and critical estimation of poetry during the War years, an extensive programme of reading has been undertaken - not only of verse published between 1914 and 1918, but also of contemporary journals and periodicals, principally The Times Literary Supplement and The Egoist of 1914-1919 inclusive. In addition, such prose accounts as field-diaries of English combatants (of which Herbert Read's War Diary is an exceptional example) and a few French 'cahiers de route' and German 'Tagebüchen' have been examined, as well as letters from serving soldiers¹ and civilians (Arnold Bennett and D.H. Lawrence, for instance). Attention has been given to back-

1. From 2 principal collections: ed. L. Housman, War Letters of Fallen Englishmen, 1930; ed. J. Laffin, Letters from the Front, 1914-18, 1973.

ground material, such as War novels - Under Fire, All Quiet on the Western Front, A Farewell to Arms, Death of a Hero, for instance - and War-memoirs - Goodbye to All That, The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston, Undertones of War - even though the majority of these were published some ten years after the Armistice. With the exception of David Jones' In Parenthesis, which seems to qualify as a special case on two counts: Jones wrote or published no poetry actually during the War, and In Parenthesis has a distinctively epic flavour and format uncharacteristic of First World War Poetry in general, the post-War poetry of certain poets who still seem to be deeply influenced by their War-experience - Ivor Gurney being a case in point - has been analysed and included where appropriate in the body of the thesis.

The study itself has been divided into five chapters, the first of which investigates the function and form of English poetry on the eve of the War. Recourse is made, however, to the preceding decade and a half, and particular trends in verse of the time - 'public' poetry; the movement towards realism - are examined. Crucial figures of the Edwardian era (such as Newbolt) whose verse had some considerable influence on the formulation of certain attitudes among the young, are discussed, while the tendency towards realism in contemporary poetry is traced through the work of W.E. Henley, Kipling, W.W. Gibson and John Masefield, culminating in the first Georgian Poetry Anthology. The parallel iconoclastic mood, represented by the Futurists, Imagists and Vorticists, is also taken into account. and the overall response to contemporary poetry by the reading public and the fraternity of literary critics and reviewers is assessed.

The second chapter considers the exposure of Georgian-influenced poetry to the reality of war and the subsequent rehabilitation of its pastoral proclivities to accommodate the harsh 'new landscape' which is described at the head of the chapter. Regional and nostalgic poetry in the Georgian idiom is discussed and the debilitation and eventual distortion of the original Georgian approach to Nature is examined. The work of two poets - Edward Thomas and Edmund Blunden - who were able to combine most successfully their appreciation of war's devastating potential with their idiosyncratic poetic visions and the essentially Georgian quality of their poetry is described at some length, while the next section looks at Edward Marsh's third Georgian Poetry Anthology (1916-17) and the output of two poets -

Gibson and Robert Nichols - whose verse illustrates other specifically Georgian features.

The following chapter which estimates the achievement of Imagist-influenced poets in their response to war - with some reference made to the Vorticists under Wyndham Lewis and Blast, and to the successors of Marinetti and his Futurist disciples - uses the poetry of Isaac Rosenberg as an initial connection between the previous discussion of the Georgians and the subsequent assessment of the Imagist Poets. An interpretation of the principal Imagists' War Poetry - Richard Aldington, Frederic Manning, Ford Madox Ford - is presented, finishing with a review of Herbert Read's early poetry, strongly derivative of the Imagists' experiences in 'vers libre', and the chapter concludes with a section which discusses the treatment awarded to poetry in the Imagist idiom by the standard literary journals and by the predominantly Imagist-run publication The Egoist.

The poetry of the non-combatants is examined in Chapter IV, beginning with a definition of who the 'Armchair Poets' were - Hardy, Housman, Newbolt, Kipling, chiefly - and continuing with an analysis of their war-verse, including individual poems appearing in newspapers and journals, and concluding with an investigation of the proliferation of anthologies edited by civilians. Particular reference is made in this context to editorial comment indicative of the non-combatants' attitude to War poetry and the reception by readers and reviewers of non-combatant War verse is likewise gauged, primarily, from contemporary periodicals.

The final chapter evaluates the essential character of much War Poetry produced by young serving officers, in particular, beginning with an assessment of the public-school ethos - of which Rupert Brooke and Julian Grenfell are generally considered to be archetypal exponents - moving on to a consideration of the nobility-in-sacrifice ideal, which underwent a bitter transmutation as the casualties of the War mounted and were seen less as the 'Heroic Dead' than as the helpless victims of Chance and the War-Machine. The development of poetry designed to shock (A.G. West), satirize (Sassoon) or celebrate the intense camaraderie of the trenches (Owen) is traced and the public and critical reception of such poetry is examined, while the 'Slim Volume of Verse' genre of young officers (usually killed in action) with the attendant 'In Memoriam' tribute, receives particular attention.

The thesis concludes with a brief Epilogue which consists of a resume of the findings accumulated in the course of this research. Some mention is made of the special relationship between certain poets of the First World War and the next generation of poets, particularly those who wrote and fought during the Spanish Civil War and Second World War, and it is suggested that this absorbing area - which is but roughly sketched here - could well provide a fruitful subject of study for future research.

CHAPTER I

ENGLISH POETRY ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE WAR

Looking back at the fourteen, or so, years before the Declaration of War on Germany in August 1914, it is no easy matter to disentangle satisfactorily the principal elements in the English poetry scene, such was the state of flux then prevailing. To that doyen of literary circles and vigorous contemporary commentator, Ezra Pound, the 'common verse of Britain' in the latter part of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth could be collectively dismissed as:

... a horrible agglomerate compost, not minted,
most of it not even baked, all legato, a doughy
mess of third-hand Keats, Wordsworth, heaven
knows what, fourth-hand Elizabethan sonority,
blunted, half-melted, lumpy.¹

The poetry-reading public of the time still cherished an affection for the Romantic poets, as well as a profound respect for the 'lions' of the mid-Victorian era², who had frequently exploited the medium of verse for purposes of moral uplift. This predilection for the traditional in poetry accounts, in substance, for the regard in which the so-called 'poets of retrenchment' - William Watson and Sir Henry Newbolt, for instance - were held, particularly at the turn of the century, and might also explain why they were still able to command a sizeable audience in 1914. Poetry readers were equally susceptible, during the first decade of the twentieth century, to 'bards' who appeared to articulate particular aspects of popular nationalistic or Imperialistic sentiment, such as Kipling;

1. Quoted by Michael Reck, Ezra Pound: A Close-Up (1968), p.14.

2. An admiration further testified to by the many monographs on the major Victorian poets still published even during the War years.

they similarly respectfully acknowledged the individual stature of such poets as Thomas Hardy, A.E. Housman and W.B. Yeats, who were not aligned with any particular movement or coterie. Much less discrimination was shown, however, in the reading public's avid appreciation of the imitative verses of a whole bevy of 'singers' of slight talent. These 'dilettanti of letters'¹ manufactured poetry from 'the songs of birds and moonlight' in the knowledge that the right shuffling of these 'sure cards of the poetic pack ... the safe things to sentimentalize over' would secure them a regular readership from both a public and a school of critics who 'took it for granted that sentimentality [was] the business of poetry'.² With so much disorder in the literary arena, it was little wonder that Pound should have so disparaged the 'horrible agglomerate compost' which represented the poetic scene between 1890 and 1910 and should have felt impelled to spearhead the mood of disaffection among young poets in the pre-War lustrum, aimed at ousting the 'rhetorical din and luxurious riot' of so much 'cosmic poetry'³ in favour of 'fewer painted adjectives' and a poetic language which would be 'austere, direct, [and] free from emotional slither'.⁴

However, in order to assess the extent and effectiveness of the various movements⁵ directed at effecting change in English poetry before the War, it is important to examine in greater detail the

-
1. Arnold Bennett's term quoted in Books and Persons.
 2. F.M. Ford, 'On Impressionism', Poetry, August, 1913.
 3. Defined by Robert H. Ross, The Georgian Revolt, p.71, as 'that segment of nineteenth century verse which was didactic in conception or in which the poet's aim seemed to be more to convey general ideas or absolutes than to objectify an emotion or describe an object in the existential world'.
 4. E.P., 'Prolegomena', Poetry Review (1912), p.76.
 5. Georgianism and Imagism, principally, to which Arthur Waugh gave the generic title the 'new rebellion' (irrespective of the particular 'humour' of the groups involved) in 'The New Poetry', The Quarterly Review, October, 1916.

poetry of the Edwardian era, looking in particular at the function which poets were expected to fulfil according to the poetry-readers, critics and reviewers of the first ten years of this century. This was a period characterized especially by the development of the 'realistic' novel, through the work of Arnold Bennett, H.G. Wells, and John Galsworthy, for example, and for the revival of drama, (primarily through the agency of G.B. Shaw) with both media orientated towards evoking a greater degree of realism in their exploration of contemporary society and in their efforts to comprehend its moral and psychological problems. Poetry, on the other hand, having passed through a period of debility with the 'fin-de-siècle' 'Nineties Poets' (which in the end all but discredited the vocation of poet¹) had lost contact with the 'sturdy self-confidence of the earlier Victorian age'. Since the sweep and range of high Victorian poetry had been adapted to a 'wider and less critical audience', the inevitable tendency of the Edwardian age - as far as verse was concerned - was 'to dilute'², with the result that the poetry which conformed most nearly to public taste tended to be that which had no compunction about sacrificing 'depth to readily-grasped generalities'.³

Certainly, as the political climate of the country became more perceptibly Liberal⁴, a corresponding movement away from the rigid tradition of the 'public versifier' or national seer evolved, as illustrated in the approach to poetry of such 'Liberal Revivalists' as G.K. Chesterton, Lascelles Abercrombie, W.W. Gibson and

1. As F.M. Ford laconically remarked of the post-Oscar Wilde-trial period: 'Poets died or fled to other climes, publishers also fled, prosateurs were fished out of the Seine or reformed and the great public said "Thank heavens, we need not read any more poetry!"', Return to Yesterday, p.45.

2. G.S. Fraser, The Modern Writer and his World, p. 250 and p. 252.

3. C.K. Stead, The New Poetic, p.68.

4. Especially following the Liberal 'landslide' Election victory of 1906.

John Masefield¹. But the fact remained that during the first decade of the twentieth century, the majority of poetry-readers were happy to direct their attention to the 'effective versification' of 'Imperialist sentiments, the public school spirit, or patriotic fervour'², supplied by Kipling, Newbolt, Watson, Alfred Austin and their imitators³ the 'hordes of amateurs' who swelled the ranks of the 'huge rentier army of the intellectual or the artistic', and who, after having emerged 'like a cloud of locusts, from the Victorian Age' had 'covered the entire landscape, to the dismay of the authentic artist'⁴.

The poetry-readers who succumbed to being 'thrilled' by the rhetoric of the 'public' poets were drawn principally from the upper, or upper-middle, classes⁵ whose approach to poetry was both reverential and strikingly un-critical:⁶

Poetry was regarded as something inseparable from the worship of the classics, and especially the Victorian classics, Tennyson, Browning and Arnold.... [It] had to be pleasant, dignified, moral not difficult or introspective, and based on the pretence that the rhythms of suburban life were still those of the old England of the feudal countryside.

It was, in other words, the 'poetry of the school-prize bound in half-morocco' and, like this leather-bound appendage of every well-groomed library, its function was mainly decorative - or occasionally didactic - and the philosophy it propounded was rarely challenged. The conservative element in the poetry-reading public, which flattered itself on being 'cultured', nevertheless distrusted the striving for

-
1. All precursors of the Georgian Poetry Movement.
 2. Stead, Op.cit., p.50. As Newbolt (more distinguished as a critic than as a poet) understood: 'If... [readers] come to the artist it is for something that will help them to the fuller life, and they demand of him...that he shall excellently express feelings such as they can understand and value', 'A New Study of English Poetry', E.R. Jan.1912.
 3. Who had presumably adopted Bennett's axiom that the 'sagacious artist [is he who] will respect national prejudices [and realise] the futility of writing what will not be immediately read', E.R., Oct. 1913.
 4. Wyndham Lewis, 'Ezra Pound', Essays on E.P., ed. Peter Russell, p.260.
 5. Characterized by Bennett (Books and Persons) as complacent, '[unresponsive] to external suggestion', with a 'grim passion for the "status quo"'.
"status quo".
 6. M. Roberts, T.E.Hulme, p.207: most readers were not 'sharply critical of the actual content of the poems'.
 7. V. de S. Pinto, Crisis in English Poetry, p.117.

perfection in poetry or the 'pure expression of beauty', and relied rather on the soothing properties¹ of verse to provide 'repose from material and nervous anxiety', and the 'apt or chiselled phrases' of poetic diction to stimulate 'the imagination'. These readers were similarly alive to the mnemonic value of poetry and its potential as an oratorical embellishment² or propagandist device for they realized that:

... truth put into metre sounds overwhelmingly true, and quotations can be tossed about like balls. Great men have a way of quoting poetry in their speeches, just as though they read it every evening. Vaguely enthusiastic people compose majestic phrases about it; lawyers try to intimidate the jury with it; from hundreds of pulpits it is recited to yawning congregations.³

Newbolt, himself an immensely popular 'public' poet, subscribed to this view of poetry's having a conspicuous decorative function when he later evaluated the success of his career as a poet in terms of how many times he had published in The Times, or submitted verses for inscribing on public monuments⁴; he considered being asked to write 'to order' an honour, rather than an indignity, confident that he could always supply the verses that 'were wanted'. It is this crucial assumption - that poetry could be written 'to order' - which sums up the fundamental ethic of the 'public' poet of the Edwardian era in relation to his readership: he was 'conscious of an audience to be influenced rather than a poet to be made'⁵, and the Idea was expected to take precedence over Experience or Art.

-
1. It was this anodyne aspect of Edwardian verse which so offended the perceptive young Charles Sorley who complained that: 'The voice of our poets and men of letters is finely trained and sweet to hear; it teems with sweet saws and rich sentiment: it is a marvel of delicate technique; it pleases, it flatters, it charms, it soothes: it is a living lie', The Letters of C.H.S. (1919), pp.37-8.
 2. Anticipating the penchant for juxtaposing suitably uplifting verses with editorial comment in the journals of the I.W.W., especially the T.L.S., e.g. T.Hardy's 'Song of the Soldiers', with the leader 'Men and Marionettes', Ibid., 10.9.14.
 3. Harold Monro, 'The Future of Poetry', P.R., Jan.1912.
 4. E.g. Newbolt was commissioned to compose the lapidary inscription for the Monument on Helles Point, Gallipoli.
 5. Hugh Kenner, The Poetry of E.P., p.72.

Following the unseemly departure of Wilde and his associates from the poetry scene, the 'aesthetic' pose had been discarded as too disreputable and a shocked public had turned wholeheartedly instead to the 'healthy' school of 'poets of action', whose function was social and moral rather than aesthetic and who were committed to conserving 'political and social ideas and institutions'¹ [even though they were ultimately] doomed to collapse'.² One such bulwark of the Poetry Establishment was the Edwardian Poet Laureate, Alfred Austin, who was hailed by the conservative Quarterly Review as the supreme 'philosophically sound'³ vates, whose work was said to demonstrate all the mystical qualities of the 'Objective Poet':

... a wide outlook on life, an instinctive insight into the motives of other men and women and the varieties of human circumstance, together with some formal or at all events some virtual philosophy, by which the facts of life are bound together or focalized.

Having categorized Austin as an objective poet (and 'the greatest poets of the world have belonged to this order'⁴) the reviewer goes on to make clear that, in the exalted position of vates, the ultimate standard by which Austin's rank and significance should be measured is 'what he means as a thinker, as an observer, as an impassioned critic of life, not the manner in which he produces his notes as a singer. The importance of the latter is vital, but is subsidiary to the importance of the former'.⁵

-
1. The principal topics in Edwardian public poetry being: the indomitable British spirit, represented through the great figures of the past (Drake, e.g., idealized by Noyes and Newbolt); celebration of the 'status quo' (particularly the class-system, with the dominant influence of the upper class and its dependence upon the public-school code); and the ascendancy of the British Empire.
 2. Stead, Op. cit., p.70.
 3. Defined by Stead, Ibid., p.72, as that 'poetry with an apparently abstractable "content" which coincided with general feelings'.
 4. Dante and Shakespeare, no less.
 5. 'The Poetry of Mr Austin', Q.R., Jan. 1908.

Austin's 'philosophy of social life', which had so much gratified the Q.R. reviewer, amounted, in fact, to no more than 'the sentimental conservatism of an idealized Old England'¹, with its rigid hierarchy and disproportionate distribution of wealth intact. This philosophy achieves its amplest expression in the much-anthologized 'Why England is Conservative'² where Austin combines generalised sentimental images of rural England³ with an equally fallacious and highly alarmist version of the alternative to the 'status quo'⁴:

Mother of happy homes and Empire vast,
Of hamlets meek, and many a proud demesne,
Blue spires of cottage smoke 'mong woodlands green,
And comely altars where no stone is cast.
And shall we barter these for gaping throne,
Dismantled towers, mean plots without a tree,
A herd of hinds too equal to be free,
Greedy of other's, jealous of their own,
And where sweet Order now breathes cadenced tone,
Envy and hate, and all uncharity?

According to the Q.R. reviewer, Austin's undisguised philosophy of entrenched conservatism was deserving of approval not in spite of, but because of its unoriginality: 'It is essentially the poetry of commonsense and healthy directness', in keeping with Austin's own lack of personal pretension as - first and foremost - a 'normal and healthy man' who happened to be 'in close contact with realities'. Instead of presenting himself as the poet glorifying in his isolation from the 'man of the world', Austin offered the poetry-reading public a 'man of the world distinguished by possessing the temperament of a

1. Stead, Op. cit., p.73.

2. The Lyrical Poems of Alfred Austin, p.116.

3. The 3rd stanza evokes this idealized picture of a severely class-structured rural England, which had actually ceased to exist at least a century earlier, with the reference to the 'whistling yokel [guiding] his teaming share /Hard by the homes where gentle lordship dwells'.

4. Austin also takes the opportunity to play upon the national invasion-phobia by suggesting the possibility of foreign domination (implicit in the lines: 'The foreign froth that foams against our shore, /Only by its white cliffs to be repelled!') should the 'status quo' in England be challenged.

poet', or - in other words - an 'average man ... dependent on the average man'.¹ The most alarming feature of his poetry, to the modern student of the pre-War period, is the fact that at the time it contributed not a little to the formulation of the public's taste in verse, being widely approved as the work of a wise man whose philosophy - expounded through the medium of poetry - was equal to the challenge of this complex 'new age'.

Another instance which can be cited of the acceptability of the 'philosophy of rhetoric' in the Edwardian era is the enthusiastic response of the poetry-reading public to Austin's close contemporary, William Watson, another of the 'public moralists',² who has now the reputation of being perhaps the archetypal Edwardian poet of 'educated suburbia ... the world of E.M. Forster's Sawston in The Longest Journey³, and whose mind never failed to run 'at the level of public expectation'.⁴ Watson consciously adopted the pose of an 'heir of the aureate strain in English poetry, of Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson, steeped in the classics'⁵ who doggedly carried on through the First World War a tradition against which younger men were in 'open revolt'. His fervent patriotism took the form of Wordsworthian sonnets or stately rhetoric, as illustrated in the 'Ode on the Coronation of Edward VII'⁶ and, like Newbolt and Noyes, Watson indulged in the practice of hymning great men⁷, thereby extolling the national and Imperial virtues⁸, much to the satisfaction of several contemporary

1. Holbrook Jackson, 'The Creation of Taste', E.R., Dec. 1913.

2. Stead, Op. cit., p.78.

3. Pinto, Op. cit., p.117.

4. Stead, Op. cit., p.50.

5. Geoffrey Bullough, The Trend in Modern Poetry, p.12.

6. Of which 'Time and the ocean and some fostering-star, /In high cabal have made us what we are, /Who stretch one hand on Huron's bearded plains, /And one on Kashmir's snowy shoulders lay, /And round the streaming of whose raiment shines /The iris of the Australasian spray', is fairly representative.

7. E.g. his polished, melodious elegies on Tennyson and Arnold.

8. Which also infuse 'The Battle of the Bight', 'The Charge of the 9th Lancers' and the utterly banal 'The Three Alfreds'. (See Chapter IV for further comment on the Non-Combatant Poets).

reviewers.

An enthusiastic assessment of Watson's ponderous style in the English Review¹ congratulated him on only being aroused to 'anything like passion' by 'public events', and took comfort from the fact that 'in a world where poetry has become a vehicle only for intimate self-revelations, Mr Watson remains calmly impersonal'. His assumption of 'the cloak of the grand manner in an age of little men' was duly acknowledged and it was hoped that when Watson ascended - 'surely the last poet to enter Parnassus - his place may not be very far from the tranquil throne of Wordsworth'. He was further eulogized for providing 'in a turbulent and unmannerly age a soothing draught for well-bred, contemplative, unprogressive, peaceable persons who have a regard for the decencies of language and a respect for the limitations of form'.² But at least one contemporary critic, the vigorously anti-Imperialist J.M. Robertson, felt uneasy with Watson's bland declamations and 'picturesque writing',³ which attempted to solve 'the riddle of the painful earth by the science of the chivalrous schoolboy', and denounced his 'political psalmody' which sounded suspiciously hollow to 'our generation, stirred by the sense of wrong inwoven in the fabric of all things national'.⁴ Robertson nevertheless understood Watson's predicament as a 'public' poet who, 'bent on great things, must needs sing moral truth, and inspire right action: it is congenital burden so to yearn; and yet in the nature of things he

1. 'Book Notices', E.R., Dec. 1909.

2. J. Griffyth Fairfax, 'William Watson: the poet of public affairs', P.R. (1912), p.163. Just as Austin's conspicuous lack of originality was considered a point in his favour by the Q.R. reviewer, so Watson's limitations as a poet were turned to his advantage, as in Newbolt's comment that 'something of the Philistine, something of his great stupid superiority to mere tricks and turns of phrases, is found in the simplicity of all great art', 'Book Notices', E.R., Sept. 1911.

3. W.B. Yeats, Essays (1924), p.240.

4. J.M. Robertson, 'Substance in Poetry', E.R., July 1911.

cannot so fulfil himself and still be a poet'. Ironically, however, Watson himself was probably quite unaware of this conflict of interests between his dual roles of public moralist and respected poet; his primary responsibility, as he saw it, was plain: to project ideas for the approval and delectation of the largest possible number of poetry-readers, and for this purpose the familiar form and diction of the poetic tradition would suffice. Watson, in common with Noyes¹ and Newbolt, with whose work his own verse was reviewed², was quite content to belong to the centre of this tradition in which 'none of them [Noyes, Newbolt or Watson] insists on any new formula for the definition of poetry. The compass of the old instrument is, in their view, still wide enough to contain modern music. They aim at a quality of beauty in expression which demands no violent readjustment of sympathy or taste on the part of the reader' and therein - it is implied - lies the strength of their appeal to the poetry-reading public.

The same review went on to bestow a particularly fulsome accolade upon Newbolt's latest poems, which were thought to have probably marked the 'highest level ... Mr Newbolt's poetry has yet touched. They show the rare art, the art that seems to be more attainable in music than in poetry, of sustained deliberation and even devious thought in the purely lyric mood'. The exact significance of the reviewer's terms of reference here is somewhat difficult to determine

-
1. Although now considered a minor figure (like Stephen Phillips, Monro's successor as editor of P.R.) Noyes was widely read and 'universally praised' by reviewers during the Edwardian era, which had the effect of rendering him as Monro's 'bête noire': the reactionary Imperialist from whose 'dogma, vociferation, sermonizing' Monro was trying to ween away public taste. In his verse, Noyes was committed (as was Newbolt) to the 'English Mystique, based on chivalry and adventure' and in his prose he stressed the need for modern verse to encompass in a 'cosmic sweep' the 'whole world of ideas' in order to restore a 'great world-poetry' to the English Muses, 'Book Notices', E.R., Sept. 1911.
 2. T.L.S., 18.11.09. Ironically, this review appeared just 4 months after a T.L.S. leader (23.7.09) which welcomed the wave of new poetry which was being cultivated with 'an energy, a varied range of emotions, and a technical skill of which we may be proud....'

but, at all events, his remarks are laudatory in tone and indicate that he was just as impressed by the 'philosophical content' of Newbolt's 'lyrics' as his colleagues of the Quarterly Review¹ and English Review² had been with the 'sound' verse of Austin and Watson respectively. Among all the 'public' poets of the Edwardian era, Newbolt was a most influential figure³, determined to preserve the 'Nelson Touch' principally by instilling into his readers the ethos delineated in 'Vitai Lampada' and 'Clifton Chapel'. Not unnaturally he appealed particularly to an upper-middle class readership who shared his imperialist enthusiasms and who appreciated his championing of the virtues of the public school - especially its predilection for games, which had encouraged a certain 'weltanschauung' to develop whereby 'rugger', cricket, boxing, soldiering and war were indiscriminately lumped together under the general metaphor of 'The Game'.⁴ Newbolt was therefore instrumental in helping to mould the attitudes of a certain element of the poetry-reading public⁵ towards such crucial issues as: how to behave in war; how to face death (with the aid of the 'Noble Sacrifice' ideal); how to evaluate the manly virtues; and how to recognise 'sound' poetry.

It was a patriotic platitude on Speech Day at every public school to re-affirm the School's loyalty to the profound institutions of God,

-
1. Jan. 1908.
 2. Dec. 1909.
 3. H.N.'s redeeming quality, according to both his younger contemporaries and the modern researcher (to whom his philosophy of life is repugnant) was his facility for encouraging - in lectures and reviews - the work of young poets. His review of G.P.I in P.D. (March 1913) e.g., applauded the contributors' efforts to 'strike out on their own' while still 'keeping close to the familiar shore'.
 4. 'Games trained you for War - or at least the straightforward notion that a lad who'd had a good rugger training was well on the way to commanding troops, certainly appealed to a good many soldiers and most school-masters' but in fact 'the relation between games and warfare is not nearly close enough to make the first any sort of training for the other. You can be a brave full back; it does not mean you will be brave under fire'. (J. Gathorne-Hardy, The Public-School Phenomenon, pp.147-8).
 5. Viz. ex-public school-boys who were to constitute a substantial number of the Front Line officers in the War.

King, Country and Empire and it was the daily function of the school to inculcate into its pupils the doctrine of individual self-command and discipline, mixed with determined cheerfulness and bravado, and to remind them of the infinite honour attached to the tag 'Dulce et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori'.¹ Substantiated by Newbolt's versification of its philosophy, the public-school ethos 'with its traditions of conservatism, its tinges of cruelty and its zest for passionate male friendship, its idolization of games, flourished on the battle field and went on permanent record in the poetry'² which, to begin with at least, shared Newbolt's own conviction - illustrated in 'Vitai Lampada'³ - that war and sport could be equated with impunity. The first stanza focuses on the public-school lad 'play [ing] up the game' (of cricket) with urgency and dedication as the 'last man in' with the honour of the school at stake; the circumstances are no less desperate in the second stanza:

The sand in the desert is sodden red, -
Red with the wreck of a square that broke; -
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke,
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

but the same spirit triumphs, and the third stanza makes explicit the relation between the two first and reinforces the idea of the same principles infusing the participants in the two 'games'. In this poem, as in others set in the same mould: 'The Best School of All' (where

-
1. A tag which Wilfred Owen used as his punch-line in perhaps his most savage experiment in the satiric mode where the promise of 'some desperate glory', embodied in the expression 'Dulce et Decorum est...', is manifestly deflated and, by implication, the whole public-school ethos governing the attitude to war of the pupils is discredited as 'The old Lie' in the context of a real gas attack in modern warfare. ('Dulce et Decorum Est', Collected Poems of W.O., ed. Day Lewis, p.55).
 2. Maurice Hussey, Poetry of the I.W.W., p.3. (See Chapter V for discussion of the influence of the public-school ethos on I.W.W. poetry).
 3. H.N., Collected Poems, 1897-1907, p.131.

death is euphemistically referred to as 'the last bell call'), 'The Fighting Téméraire', 'Clifton Chapel' and 'He Fell Among Thieves'¹, for example, Newbolt is delineating his ideal man², characterized as honourable, stoic, brave, loyal, courteous but unaesthetic, unironic, unintellectual, devoid of wit, and willing to accept without question the War/Game³ analogy, with its attendant Newboltian ethic:

To set the cause above renown,
To love the game beyond the prize,
To honour, while you strike him down,
The foe that comes with fearless eyes;
To count the life of battle good,
And dear the land that gave you birth,
And dearer yet the brotherhood
That binds the brave of all the earth.⁴

The general attitude expressed throughout Newbolt's poetry, and in particular this easy association of War-Game-Fun, imparted to the impressionable young a totally false notion of the actual circumstances of 'battle' in the age of the machine-gun and high explosive shell. 'Death and blood [were rendered] a harmless convention, ... as they are in Western films'⁵ and the novitiate to war needed only the 'force and the thoughts and the character'⁶, acquired presumably from a public-school education, to embrace the challenge of 1914. Such a dangerous over-simplification of the preparation necessary to combat the rigours of trench warfare is indicative of an inherent lack of seriousness and responsibility in Newbolt's verse, which is all the

-
1. In which poem the hero is able to pass the night before his certain death with equanimity, secure in the knowledge that he has lived according to the Newboltian code of honour.
 2. Irreverently designated by Patrick Howarth (quoted by Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory, p.25) as the 'homo newboltiensis', of which genus Earl Haig would have been an exemplary specimen, especially since H.N. and Haig were contemporaries at Clifton College and H.N. admired Haig and considered him the incarnate 'Newboltian Ideal Man'.
 3. Not an altogether far-fetched analogy if Capt. W.P.Nevill of the 8th East Surreys is recalled, who launched his section of the Somme Battle by kicking a football towards the German lines.
 4. 'Clifton Chapel', Collected Poems, p.128.
 5. Stead, Op. cit., p.78.
 6. The Later Life and Letters of Sir Henry Newbolt (1942), p.187.

more reprehensible when it is recalled how much his work was respected and his principles supported in the pre War (and early War¹) years.

The same charge of irresponsibility cannot be levelled, however, against Newbolt's contemporary and fellow 'Imperialist', Rudyard Kipling, with whom he is often - somewhat inaccurately - associated. Unlike Newbolt, Kipling did not propound a philosophy to his readers which had already become anachronistic by the Edwardian era, and neither did he make no effort to come to terms with the reality of soldiering and warfare in the early twentieth century. Judging by the result of the plebiscite held in the Journal of Education in 1913 to discover the most popular poet in England, Kipling was by far the most widely-read,² a fact which has subsequently earned for him the opprobrium of certain mid-twentieth century critics³ who accuse him of having 'surrendered himself completely to the vulgar ethics of the crowd'⁴ and of seeing poetry as just 'another vehicle on which opinion and prejudice could be trundled into the drawing-room'.⁵ Kipling's combination of robust ballad-metre and colloquial idiom and his presentation of the lowly (as well as lofty) aspects of Britain's imperial responsibility extended the appeal of his verse across the whole spectrum of poetry-readers - whereas Newbolt's poetry had been specially directed towards

-
1. Having occupied himself in his poetry with public affairs and the maintenance of national virtues (derived from the English Heroic Tradition and the cult of the public school) Newbolt's work and opinions have a considerable bearing on the poets and poetry of the I W.W. and will be discussed further in Chapters IV and V.
 2. With Watson second, Bridges third, followed by Noyes and Newbolt. R.K.'s popularity with the late Victorian/Edwardian poetry-readers has not endeared him to subsequent generations and T.S. Eliot finds himself in the Intro. to A Choice of Kipling's Verse, p.6, having to defend R.K. against 'the charge of excessive lucidity'.
 3. Not to mention contemporary disapproval of R.K. from Bennett, Books and Persons, p.161, who denounced him as 'the bard of the hordes' prejudices and their clayey ideals', and W.S. Blunt, the anti-imperialist poet who strongly deprecated, in Satan Absolved, the poets who 'write big of the "White Burden", Trash! /The White Man's Burden, Lord, is the burden of his cash'.
 4. Pinto, Op. cit., p.32. 5. Stead, Op. cit., p.76.

the upper echelons of the poetry-reading public. Kipling's 'poetry of action' was further distinguished from that of Newbolt in that he consciously tended towards greater realism in his verse, initially as a result, perhaps, of his association with W.E. Henley, an important pioneer in this respect: 'Henley with his hospital poems, Kipling with his ballads of common soldiers, and both in their introduction of hitherto "unpoetic" vocabulary, the idiom of the street or the barrack-room, were making advances in new material for poetry'¹. With In Hospital² and London Types³, Henley had demonstrated his facility for acute observation of external detail and skilful outlining of character⁴. His impressions of London are particularly effective evocations of atmosphere and scene, evincing a surprisingly 'modern' tone in the description of 'the Hangman Wind that tortures temper and light/ ... slouching, sullen and obscene /Hard on the skirts of the embittered night' with the 'grim' job of throttling London, 'the afflicted City', in whose 'nightmare labyrinthine' the lamplight 'scattered and sick and pale, /Shows like the leper's living blotch of bale'.⁵ Apart from introducing an enlivened sense of actuality in such poems, Henley resolutely endeavoured to liberate his poetry from the 'intolerable staleness of hackneyed rhymes and the smoothness of traditional rhythms' and to

-
1. R.K.R. Thornton, Poetry of the Nineties, p.28. John Davidson, to whom T.S.Eliot acknowledged a special debt had similarly made use of both ballad and lyric forms to write about mundane subjects in an original, impressionistic style.
 2. Originally published as Hospital Outlines in The Cornhill Magazine XXXII, 1875, and retitled In Hospital in Poems (1898).
 3. 1898.
 4. As exemplified by 'Lady-Probationer' ('Some three, or five, or seven, and thirty years; /A Roman nose; a dimpling double-chin:... /Quick, skilful, quiet, soft in speech and touch ... /"Do you like nursing?" "Yes, Sir, very much"./ Somehow, I rather think she has a history') and Henley's sensitive portrait of the archetypal London bar-maid in 'Any Bar' ('Handling the engine, turning taps for tots, /And counter-ing change, and scorning what men say', posing 'as a dove among the pots' until 'having mopped the zinc for certain years, /And faced the gas, she fades and disappears').
 5. 'Largo e Mesto', London Voluntaries, IV, Poems, pp.196-9.

dismantle the 'pompous and orotund traditions of Victorian literary verse' in order to 'create a "free" verse which would express by its movement the restlessness and spiritual disintegration of the modern world and yet have a satisfying pattern'.¹

This same desire to free verse 'from formal shackles'² and to propound a more positive philosophy, based upon actual observation and experience, than was present in the Decadents' poetry, also characterized Kipling's early work, in which he sought to adapt the metre and diction of his verse to the subject matter, particularly through his application of the vernacular and the familiar rhythms of ballad or music-hall song. He introduced plebeian idiom at a time when 'diction was in danger of etiolation' and 'his rawness and vulgarity were [certainly] salutary',³ - whatever may be the opinion of subsequent poets and literary critics as to the scope of Kipling's poetic achievement and the acceptability of his idiosyncratic view of the world.⁴

The modern student of this period faces something of a dilemma in attempting to assess Kipling's verse for, while he was undoubtedly an 'astonishing observer of facts, and manipulator of words [who] plunged into the noise, the smoke, the slang and the vulgarity of a world of hard-bitten engineers, soldiers, sailors and capitalists',⁵

1. Pinto, Op. cit., p.29. Unfortunately Henley's achievement is somewhat marred by the blistering Imperialist rhetoric of 'England, My England' (which was much anthologized during the first year of the War and lent its title to an anthology of 'Battle Poems & Patriotic Verse', ed. by George Goodchild, and dedicated to the memory of Henley, 'A true poet and beloved of all who knew him') and by the insidious celebration of violence ('The Song of the Sword') or the ponderous self-congratulatory stoicism of 'Invictus' ('In the fell clutch of circumstance /I have not winced nor cried aloud. /Under the bludgeonings of chance /My head is bloody, but unbowed').

2. Bullough, Op. cit., p.9.

3. Ibid., p.11.

5. Exemplified by Barrack Room Ballads, 'MacAndrew's Hymn', 'The Mary Gloster', 'Back to the Army Again' and 'The Ballad of the Bolivar'.
4. Even in 1912, R.K. had been accused by the P.R. of '[singing] a reactionary Imperialism' & ever since, R.K. has been (perhaps unfairly) associated with the hidebound attitudes of the Edwardian Establishment.

and who revived the 'rough, supple colloquial verse of English popular tradition ... [and] brought a healthy vulgarity back to a poetry which had grown excessively bookish and refined',¹ there is also detectable a tendency to abnegate altogether the 'inner life' and pursue the 'life of action' to the exclusion of any philosophical reflection in his verse. Nevertheless, Kipling was without question a considerable literary presence during the Edwardian era, having already established his reputation with Barrack Room Ballads², for thirty or forty years 'the most popular book of verse in the English-speaking world, as popular in America as in England'.³ Kipling's achievement was acclaimed by Henry James who commended the fact that Kipling 'never arranges or falsifies, but goes straight for the common and characteristic', but other contemporary commentators⁴ were less impressed, censuring Kipling's use of English as 'pert' and 'common', and dismissing his subject matter as 'of the vilest', while still admitting that he had managed to produce an effect by the 'orchestration ... of such low-lived and degraded vocables as "bloomin" and "beggar"' comparable with the 'great polysyllable of Milton'. In his most successful ballads, form, rhythm and subject matter are mutually compatible, as in 'Danny Deever'⁵, with its underlying sense of marching feet and the movement of men in disciplined formation:

'What are the bugles blowin' for?' said Files-on-Parade.
'To turn you out, to turn you out,' the Colour-Sergeant said.
'What makes you look so white, so white?' said Files-on-Parade.
'I'm dreadin' what I've got to watch,' the Colour-Sergeant said.
For they're hangin' Danny Deever, you can hear the
Dead March play,
The Regiment's in 'ollow square - they're hangin' him
today;
They've taken of his buttons off an' cut his stripes away,
An' they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

1. Pinto, Op. cit., p.32.

2. The original 13 pieces had appeared between February and July, 1890, in The Scots Observer (ed. by W.E. Henley) and after an immediately enthusiastic response, R.K. collected them with some miscellaneous pieces into Barrack Room Ballads & Other Verses, 1892.

3. Charles Carrington, The Complete B.R.B. of R.K. (1973) p.2

4. E.g. the reviewer of R.K.'s verse in Scots Observer, 10.5.1890.

5. R.K.'s Verse: Definitive Edition, p.397.

The success of Barrack Room Ballads was followed by Service Songs written, in part, while Kipling was working as a war correspondent in South Africa in 1900 and collected in The Five Nations in 1903, and several of these 'songs' show a more pronounced sense of disquiet about the conditions of the serving soldier and the general conduct of the Boer War.¹ 'Stellenbosch'², for example, presents a quite savage indictment from the typical 'ranker' against the incompetent and over-cautious general who 'was markin' time to earn a K.C.B.' while the Boer 'commando' closed on the British forces and inflicted heavy casualties:

And it all goes into the laundry,
But it never comes out in the wash,
'Ow we re sugared about by the old men
('Eavy-sterned amateur old men!)
That 'amper an' 'inder an' scold men
For fear o' Stellenbosch.

'M.I.'³ likewise discusses in vigorous, grim detail - with occasional flashes of sardonic humour - the life, devoid of martial glamour, of the Mounted Infantry of the Line, a motley assortment of rankers and officers from a range of regiments, who were called upon for all the dirtiest, meanest and most hazardous assignments in the Boer War:

The new fat regiments come from home, imaginin' vain V.C.'s
(The same as your talky-fighty men which are often Number Threes⁴)
But our words o' command are 'Scatter' an' 'Close' an' 'Let
your wounded lie'.
We used to rescue 'em noble once, -
Givin' the range as we raised 'em once -
Gettin' 'em killed as we saved 'em once -
But now we are M.I. ...

-
1. In some respects the Boer War anticipated the spirit in which the Great War was fought: it was a war waged between white men who came to respect each other; it had few deliberate atrocities and 'hating the enemy' was left to the civilians at home. In 1914, British military commanders relied upon their Boer War experience to prepare for the future campaigns: casualties were expected to be on the Boer War scale and Flanders was confidently compared with 'The Great Veldt'.
 2. R.K.'s Verse, p.477.
 3. Ibid., p.463.
 4. A textual note in the Definitive Edition of R.K.'s Verse, p.465, explains that 'Number Threes' were 'horse-holders when in action, and therefore generally under cover'.

That is what we are known as - that is the song you must say
When you want men to be Mausered at one and a penny a day;
We are no five-bob Colonials - we are the 'ome-made supply,
Ask for the London Ikonas! Ring up the _____ M.I.!

In other of the South African 'Songs', Kipling further indicates his profound sympathy with the warring participants' whole range of experience²: 'The Parting of the Columns'³ commemorates the camaraderie which had sprung up between the regular British troops and the 'Colonials'⁴; in 'Lichtenberg'⁵, nostalgia for the Outback, evoked by the 'smell of the wattle', is presented - as it affects one member of the New South Wales Contingent; and 'Piet'⁶ testifies to the mutual respect⁷ which developed between the 'Regular of the Line' and his 'Empire's foes' ('Myself, I'd just as soon as not /Respect the man I fight'). In "'Wilful Missing'"⁸, Kipling approaches, with unexpected perception, the taboo subject of 'the side-world' where the deserters of the Boer War congregate; while 'The Return'⁹ follows the demobilized soldier back to 'Ackneystadt', where he has to re-orientate himself towards the normal routine of 'little things' (after the traumatic war experience which had transformed him from an 'average kid' into a 'thinkin' man') and concludes with the new 'civvy', aware of the difficulties of acclimatizing to the peace-time situation, wryly invoking God's help to 'Look after [him] in Thamesfontein!'

1. Another textual note, Definitive Edition of R.K.'s Verse, p.463, explains that the blank should be filled in 'according to taste and service of audience', obviously allowing for a variety of disyllabic epithets common in Army slang to be supplied, and also stressing the 'public' aspect of R.K.'s verse, since it is written with the audience very much in mind and the prospect of recitation taken into account.

2. As he was to do later in the Epitaphs of the Great War, discussed in Chapter IV, together with R.K.'s other verse prompted directly by the War.

3. Op. cit., p.468.

4. 'There isn't much we 'aven't shared, since Kruger cut and run, /The same old work, the same old skoff, the same old dust and sun; /The same old chance that laid us out, or winked an' let us through; /The same old Life, the same old Death. Good-bye - good luck to you!.'

5. Ibid., p.476.

6. Ibid., p.479.

7. A definite feature of I W.W. literature.

8. Ibid., p.482.

9. Ibid., p.485.

Altogether, Kipling was able to visualize, more realistically than any other Edwardian poet, the life of the ordinary soldier, without sentimentalism or condescension, for he recognized in his soldier songs 'the endemic harshness and cruelty'¹ of army life and he understood how the dirty work of war ultimately always falls on the private soldier. The more critical tenor of Service Songs did not go unnoticed among the poetry-reading public, and Five Nations, which seemed to suggest that Kipling had some doubts about the conduct of a war which had been generally approved of, was consequently less popular than Barrack Room Ballads had been.

Returning to England from South Africa, Kipling found himself estranged from the contemporary atmosphere of Liberalism in politics; he derided the 'soft optimism' of the Liberals and through his oracular utterances in The Times, urged a return to traditional standards of conduct, particularly where upholding the British ethical code² throughout the Empire was concerned. For him, the Empire was not simply an Idea to which he might respond as the 'morally insensitive, and aesthetically disgusting... jingo Imperialist'³, he is sometimes depicted as being; rather it was a real and complex social and political structure and he was anxious to convey to a seemingly complacent Mother Country not only a sense of its grandeur but also an awareness of the responsibility it exacted: above all, he wanted to preserve the soundness of its core. This attitude imbues the statuesque and essentially highly serious 'Recessional', 1897⁴, which seeks to remind the

1. Silkin, Out of Battle, p.60.

2. As documented comprehensively in the celebrated (subsequently notorious) 'If', a testament to the philosophy of stoicism and self-reliance which surely influenced the spirit in which many fought in the I W.W. ('If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew /To serve your turn long after they are gone, /And so hold on when there is nothing in you /Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"').

3. George Orwell, 'R.K.', Kipling's Mind and Art, ed. Andrew Rutherford (1964), p.70.

4. Definitive Edition of R.K.'s Verse, p.328.

British people of the vulnerability of all Empires - especially those which have forgotten that they hold 'Dominion over palm and pine' not for material advantage but for the edification and enlightenment of the 'heathen hearts' entrusted to their care by divine ordination:

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law -
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget - lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word -
Thy mercy on Thy People, Lord!

It is this solemn emphasis upon custodial responsibility which Kipling wants to impart to the U.S.A. (a novice in Imperial expansionism) upon her acquisition of the Philippine Islands, when he urges America in 'The White Man's Burden',¹ 1899, to 'send out the best ye breed ... /To seek another's profit, /And work another's gain', aware that after all this toil the only rewards will be the probable resentment of the natives and the eventual disintegration of the Imperial structure. Nonetheless, in Kipling's view, the obligations commensurate with the Empire-building process must be responded to, as to a challenge testing the Mother Country's moral fibre and young manhood, for it is only by upholding the White Man's Burden with unrelenting stoicism in the face of every exigency, that a nation can at last claim to have fulfilled her 'sacred civilizing mission',²:

Take up the White Man's Burden -
Have done with childish days -
The lightly proffered laurel,
The easy, ungrudged praise.
Come now to search your manhood
Through all the thankless years,
Cold-edged with dear-bought wisdom,
The judgement of your peers!

1. Definitive Edition of R.K.'s Verse, p.323.
2. Silkin, Op. cit., p.64.

As far as his own country was concerned, Kipling considered it was essential not only to adopt a paternalistic approach to the people of the Empire but to safeguard national security at home in case of attack from the 'lesser breeds without the Law'. To this end, in 'The Islanders'¹, 1902, Kipling had angrily catalogued the instances of British smugness and unpreparedness for war. Aware himself of how poorly-equipped was the average recruit when flung into battle, he directed a scathing attack upon the ignorant civilian² who was prepared to see young men futilely squandered in battle after inadequate training:

Yet ye were saved by a remnant (and your land's long-suffering
star),
When your strong men cheered in their millions while your
striplings went to the war.
Sons of the sheltered city - unmade, unhandled, unmeet -
Ye pushed them raw to the battle as ye picked them raw from
the street.
And what did ye look they should compass? Warcraft learned in
a breath,
Knowledge unto occasion at the first far view of Death?

Even so, with his strong sense of national and imperial responsibility, Kipling was bound to endorse 'necessary' suffering in what he considered a 'necessary' war to preserve English civilizing power, although he fervently hoped that by being properly prepared and competently led, British troops would sustain minimal casualties and achieve their goal with speed and efficiency. He can hardly be blamed for not being able to envisage how prolonged, bloody and tragically wasteful the War would actually be, for, in spite of the fact that 'before the War, few English poets - Imagists or Georgians - had anything approaching Kipling's sense of the realities of combat'³, an appreciation of the lot of the pre-1914 common soldier, however carefully documented, was no real pre-

1. Definitive Edition of R.K.'s Verse, p.301.

2. Paradoxically, considering R.K.'s reputation as a reactionary Imperialist, the butt of his attack here is the same as that of Siegfried Sassoon and others of the War Poets. (See Chapters IV and V).

3. Silkin, Op. cit., p.65.

paration for the task of accommodating in verse all the unprecedented circumstances of this first full-scale modern war.

Certain aspects of the reality of war had also been explored in verse, early in the century, by two poets - Thomas Hardy and A.E. Housman - who stood aloof from current, poetic trends, but who nonetheless extended a considerable influence over the younger poets of the new rebellion (just before and during the War) in their efforts to restore a greater measure of realism to modern poetry. Hardy's presence 'as a brooding, presiding spirit'¹ during the pre-1914 years has been widely acknowledged especially by the younger Georgian Poets, the best of whom tried to emulate his plain-ness, honesty and countryman's eye for noticing Nature's 'mysteries'. His early poetry has a prophetic quality, dealing as it does with the impact of undefined forces on the individual, and haunted by images of death, war and premonitions of disaster, and in the epic The Dynasts² or such a short poem as 'Drummer Hodge'³, Hardy makes a point of confronting the subject of war and its victims directly.⁴ In the latter poem, which 'embodies the tragedy of the destruction of human lives by the vast inhuman mechanism of modern warfare'⁵, the young Hodge, 'Fresh from his Wessex home', has no sooner entered the alien environment of kopjes, veldt, broad Karoo and bush, than he is killed and unceremoniously 'thrown in' to his foreign grave, never having known why he was involved in this conflict in a strange land. Unlike Rupert Brooke, whose 'corner of a foreign field' will be 'for ever England', Drummer

1. G.S. Fraser, The Modern Writer and His World, p.256.

2. 1903 - 08.

3. Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy, p.83.

4. In addition, 2 of his volumes: Time's Laughingstocks (1909) and Satires of Circumstance (Nov. 1914) were critically important in establishing 'a terrible irony as the appropriate interpretative means' (Fussell, Op. cit., p.3) for expressing the war-experience as poetry.

5. Pinto, Op. cit., p.45.

Hodge's dust will mingle with that of his unknown resting-place, suggesting that although his death in war may have been futile, the result of Fate's 'crass casualty' towards Man, there is some useful function he can perform when merged with the unfamiliar soil:

Yet portion of that unknown plain
Will Hodge for ever be;
His homely Northern breast and brain
Grow to some Southern tree,
And strange-eyed constellations reign
His stars eternally.

Certain of Hardy's other Boer War poems probe the innate poignancy of the war situation: 'Embarcation'¹, for instance, connects the soldiers 'deckward tramp [ing]' with the whole warrior tradition in which men persist in arguing 'in the selfsame bloody mode'; a sense of doom afflicts the onlookers, of which the soldiers themselves are quite unconscious, though Hardy leaves no room for doubt as to their fate, with the allusions to autumnal leaves, 'white hands' and imminent weeping:

Yellow as autumn leaves, alive as spring;
And as each host draws out upon the sea
Beyond which lies the tragical To-be,
None dubious of the cause, none murmuring,

Wives, sisters, parents, wave white hands and smile,
As if they knew not that they weep the while.

Again, in 'The Souls of the Slain', Hardy applies his characteristic combination of pity and irony² to his treatment of the home-ward bound spirits of the dead: the slain are not remembered by their kin for 'glory and war-mightiness' but for their 'doings as boys', their 'old homely acts /And the long-ago commonplace facts' which do not

-
1. Collected Poems, p.78. The subtlety of this poem is further underlined by comparison with the strident 'Men Who March Away' which describes a similar situation in the I.W.W., though with none of the premonition of disaster which impresses the reader of 'Embarcation' as being wholly appropriate to the scene described. T.H.'s contribution to I.W.W. poetry (esp. Poems of War and Patriotism) will be analysed in Chapter IV, 'The Home Front'.
 2. Another instance of T.H.'s favourite irony, that of 'human frailty being tested and found wanting' (Silkin, Op.cit., p.49) occurs in the faithlessness of some bereaved sweethearts ('many think /It is not unattractive to prink /Them in sables. Some fleet and fickle hearts /Have found them new loves'.)

fit into the picture the slain have projected of themselves as the 'Glorious Dead', fallen in the service of their country.

With The Dynasts, Hardy attempted through the Spirits of the Years, Pities and Ironies, to examine the historical pageant of the Napoleonic Wars in which the 'hero' is not Napoleon or Wellington, but the 'inarticulate suffering masses of Europe', 'distressed by events which they did not cause ... writhing, crawling, heaving and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities'.¹ In the devastation which results from the total indifference of the Immanent Will to human suffering:

Opposed, opposers, in a common plight
Are scorched together on the dusk champaign,

while the smaller creatures in the natural environment, helpless victims of the War's destructiveness², are similarly reduced:

The mole's tunnelled chambers are crushed by wheels,
The lark's eggs scattered, their owners fled;
And the hedgehog's household the sapper unseals

Trodden and bruised to a miry tomb
Are ears that have greened but will never be gold,
And flowers in the bud that will never bloom.³

What is particularly striking about Hardy's treatment of war in poetry is the fact that he does not look at war as an experience isolated from the activities of everyday life, but as a factor contributing to the irony of life's circumstances, to be seen as 'an exacerbator, but not as a factor qualitatively different from other experiences of "chance and change"'.⁴ Something of the same unimpassioned manner and

1. Stage directions from The Dynasts.

2. The frailty of these creatures if 'an exact emblem of human frailty and vulnerability in war' (Silkin, Op. cit., p.37), an analogy which several I W.W. poets develop - esp. Edmund Blunden (see Chapter II (d) 'The Pastoral Sustained').

3. 'Chorus of the Years', 3, VI, viii, p.483. The metaphor of the young corn untimely harvested, by machine-guns, which was an often-used image in I W.W. poetry (see Chapter II (c)) could be very effectively applied to these lines.

4. Silkin, Op. cit., p.49. A somewhat similar attitude is to be found in the approach to war in poetry formulated by Isaac Rosenberg, (see Chapter III (a) 'The Rosenberg Connection').

carefully under-stated diction - tending at times to a Hardy-esque sense of irony - characterizes the poetry of A.E. Housman whose A Shropshire Lad, published in 1896, was allegedly in 'every pocket' just before the War and who had, as a result of this volume's immense success, exerted an influence over the younger generation. In particular, poets writing in the Georgian idiom adopted Housman's regionalism, economy of utterance and simplicity of phrase, as well as absorbing the paganistic mystique of a lad's¹ early death which permeates Housman's poetry:

But now you may stare as you like and there's nothing to scan;
And brushing your elbow unguessed-at and not to be told
They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage of man,²
The lads that will die in their glory and never be old.

Towards the end of the Edwardian era, there was an increasing tendency among poets - mostly those of, or approaching, middle age and separate from the 'public' poetry tradition - who admired the undemonstrative diction and direct approach to subject-matter of Hardy and Housman, in particular, to evolve a less ornate style and cultivate a wider range of more commonplace subjects in their verse, reminiscent of the spirit of Wordsworth's 'Preface' to The Lyrical Ballads: 'The principal object ... was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men'³ Generally, working-class rural⁴ subjects recommended themselves to these poets of the 'Liberal Revival' (whose verse suggests their philosophical

-
1. Perhaps Housman's greatest contribution as far as the I.W.W. was concerned was the very term 'lad', to which his poems had given the specific meaning of a 'beautiful, brave, doomed boy' (as in 'Lovely lads are dead rotten; /None that go return again', No.XXXV, A S.L., p.39) and it was with these connotations that the word 'lad' was applied in the homo-erotic strain of I.W.W. writing (see Chapter V).
 2. No. XXIII, A S.L., p.29.
 3. Wordsworth, Poetical Works, p.734.
 4. G.K. Chesterton is something of an exception, being a poet of the suburbs and an ebullient observer of the bustling life of Edwardian London, aware of the growing restlessness among the lower classes for whom 'no man speaketh as we speak in the street' ('The Secret People').

affiliations with the political party then in the ascendancy)¹ because, 'in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer, and more emphatic language'.

This assumption is certainly applicable in the poetry of W.W. Gibson, whose Stonefolds² and Daily Bread³ (the very titles of which were imbued with a sense of stark reality) offered little verse dramas of humble life⁴ to a section of the poetry-reading public⁵ whose taste was becoming perceptibly more liberal, in keeping with the general 'zeitgeist', and who relished the realism of these 'harbingers of progress'. Gibson depicted working people at moments of crisis: an elderly shepherd and his wife in their stone house on the Fells, besieged by both storm and death as they struggle to save the lives of both their daughter's child and the weakly lamb⁶; the destitute family in 'On the Road'⁷; the 'hill folk' who have been driven by want to the City and their 'empty garret in the mouth of Hell'⁸; the young miner who refuses to relinquish the pit, in spite of his 'betrotted's' appeals⁹; the printer's wife dying of cancer¹⁰; the harsh life of the impoverished farm labourer, described in 'Summer-

1. Pinto, Op. cit., p.128, underlines this idea by describing John Masefield's early long poems as 'the poetical counterparts of the emotional radicalism of Lloyd George and the sentimental socialism of the young Ramsay Macdonald'.

2. 1907

3. 1910.

4. Joy Grant, Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop, p.29.

5. Including the 'affable meliorists in the Fabian Society, steady subscribers to the New Statesman, intellectual commuters in Surrey who supported cricket in the hope that by playing it they might become Tom, Dick or Harry'. (Edwin Muir, The Present Age, p.98).

6. 'Stonefolds', title poem of that volume, Collected Poems, p.14. The other poems in this volume similarly deal with the ascetic life of shepherds in the barren Fells, redolent of the atmosphere in Wordsworth's 'Michael'.

7. Collected Poems, p.67.

8. 'The Garret', Ibid., p.88.

9. 'Mates', Ibid., p.112.

10. 'The Operation', Ibid., p.130.

Dawn'¹ - all of whom are governed by the basic necessity to toil for their daily bread:

All life moving to one measure -
Daily bread, daily bread -
Bread of life and bread of labour,
Bread of bitterness and sorrow,
Hand-to-mouth and no tomorrow,
Dearth for house-mate, death for neighbour²....

Gibson's strenuous avoidance of any suggestion of inflated rhetoric sometimes results in an excessive matter-of-factness but, as a resolute portrayer of ordinary people and 'common or sordid things - situations or details', he was able at times to 'suddenly bring all tragedy, or at least the brutality of actual emotions'³ to the reader. He can thus be seen as a link between the careful observation of character found in W.E. Henley's In Hospital and London Types and the colloquial idiom and mundane subject matter popularized by Kipling in his Barrack Room Ballads on the one hand, and the Georgian Poets with their 'urge to deal honestly and accurately with experience'⁴, on the other.

Similarly, John Masefield was both a precursor of the Georgians⁵ as well as a link with the older Edwardian poets⁶, for he had established his name initially with Salt Water Ballads in 1902. His reputation had been substantiated by the historical novel, Captain Margaret, in 1908; the poetic drama, The Tragedy of Nan, in 1909, and two books of short stories, A Mainsail Haul and A Tarpaulin Muster, all of which virtually presented the public with the social, realistic novel in different guises. With the publication of The Everlasting Mercy, in

1. Ibid., p.141.

2. Verses serving as an epilogue to the Daily Bread volume.

3. R.B.'s letter to Edward Marsh, 22.12.11, declaring his unrepentance over the 'unpleasant' poems in Poems, 1911.

4. Grant, Op. cit., p.30. Gibson's own 'little verse dramas' can be compared with the work of Gordon Bottomley and Lascelles Abercrombie in reviving the genre of realistic poetic drama. Gibson was also closely involved (with J.Drinkwater and R.B.) in the instituting of the quarterly review and anthology of verse, New Numbers, at Abercrombie's country retreat, 'The Gallows', Ryton, Dymock.

5. Esp. since E.M. was of crucial importance to the inception of G.P.I (judging from Marsh's comments, A Number of People, p.320)

6. Cf. L.M.Clark, The Realistic Revolt, p.23, who describes J.M. as a 'link poet' between 'high & noble traditions' & 'romance of actuality'.

1911, however, Masfield achieved something of a break-through for modern poetry: 'he made the general public read what he had writtenThe Everlasting Mercy was the work that started all the excitement which had such important sequels'.¹ It helped to convince Edward Marsh, for one, that 'a golden age was beginning' in poetry and has since been recognised as 'the seminal work of the new realistic school which achieved almost instant, wide-spread popularity because it was the first book of verse since Barrack Room Ballads to succeed in titillating the British public by poetry which managed to be at once ribald and respectable'.²

In 1911, Masfield represented the poetry-reading public's concept of realism, 'par excellence', as well as sharing the euphoria of other poets³ in the poetry-intoxicated, pre-G.P.I years when, for those who counted:

Those hours of life that were a bursting fount
Sparkling the dusty heart with living springs,
There seems a world, beyond our earthly things,
Gated by golden moments.⁴

Masfield's verse, derived from the harsh realities of modern life (judiciously selected, it has to be admitted), relying in its diction on the simplicity and familiarity of actual speech, offered to the poetry-reading public just the right degree of realism for easy assimilation. Both The Everlasting Mercy⁵, dealing with the drunken poacher Saul Kane, and The Widow in the Bye Street, centred around a widow's

-
1. Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Literary Scene, p.209.
 2. Ross, Op. cit., p.37. A less exuberant assessment of Masfield's poetic achievement by F.R. Leavis, disapproved of The E.M. and Masfield's subsequent excursions in the same style, on the grounds that he combined the vice of gratuitous indulgence in sordidness with an irresponsible and unrealistic attitude towards life's deeper issues, '[reconciling] the sordid facts of life with the rosy mists of poets' experiences' (New Bearings in English Poetry, p.58).
 3. E.g. Abercrombie who exulted in 'the terrific, splendid fact, the fact that we do exist', and L.Binyon who urged his fellow poets to 'stretch [their] limbs, to move, to dance, to feel their life-blood running again' ('The Return to Poetry', Rhythm, Spring 1912, pp.1-2).
 4. 'Biography', G.P.I, p.19. ⁵ According to L.A.G.Strong, J.M., p.19: 'In terms of literary manners, this poem belched at meals, and put its feet on the table'.

son hanged for murder, tend to ineptitude and sentimentality, but the dialogue is impressive, 'a candid presentation of the language of the prize-ring and the public-house',¹ and Masefield has tried to make his readers enter more fully 'into the daily life of the sailor, the agricultural labourer, the village seamstress ... dealing with raw lust, savage stupidity, brutish work, futile deaths'.² He seems to have relished the 'dirt and the dross, the dust and scum of the earth' and, in order to underline his role of self-appointed balladeer of the oppressed, Masefield dedicated his songs to 'the men with the broken heads and the blood running into their eyes'.

With The Everlasting Mercy, in particular, poetry appeared to have 'come ... abreast of the times'³: Masefield was dealing with contemporary conditions, taking into account both the squalor and the vitality of working-class life, and employing colloquial idiom in the process, with the result that The Everlasting Mercy 'energized poetry and the reading of it,⁴ no matter what extremes of feeling it then aroused or now fails to arouse'⁵:

Here was the stuff that the general public could appreciate without straining its intelligence. People who thought that English poetry had died with Tennyson, suddenly recognized their error. The blank verse of Stephen Phillips was a mere echo of the Victorian manner, but the rapid free doggerel of The Everlasting Mercy, its modernity, its bald colloquialism and its narrative interest awakened the curiosity of the public in 1911, and a revival of the dormant interest in poetry was at once assured.⁶

-
1. Babette Detsch, This Modern Poetry, p.36. B.D. places Masefield in the tradition of Langland, Chaucer, and Browning and notes that his 'new realism' stimulated such American imitators as Edgar Lee Masters and Carl Sandburg who also wanted to 'come to closer grips with actuality'.
 2. Ibid., pp.37-8. It could be argued that, laudable as J.M.'s trend towards realism was, just as the 'public' poets had invested the Empire and the heroic past with an aura of romance, so Masefield invested ugliness with a certain kind of glamour.
 3. Ross, Op. cit., p.157.
 4. The rapid, free metres, colloquial diction and mild oaths ("You cloyshy put" / "You bloody liar") delighted the middle stratum of the poetry-reading public, although some more conservative voices were raised in protest that this was not poetry.
 5. Walter de la Mare, 'Poetry of the Present Reign, John O'London's Weekly, 27.4.35, (quoted Ross, Op.cit., p.55).
 6. Harold Monro, Some Contemporary Poets, p.23

The basic theme of the poem: the progress of the village poacher, Saul Kane, (who had 'poached and stole and gone with women, /And swilled down gin enough to swim in'), from experiencing tentative pangs of remorse (' [I] wondered how my tot would end, /First Nell cast off and now my friend'; '... looking round I felt disgust /At all my nights of drink and lust'), to more intensely appreciating the debauchery of his life, after the scolding from Jimmy Jaggard's mother ('But this old mother made me see /The harm I done by being me'), and finally submitting to the remonstrations of Miss Bourne, the Quaker, ('I did not think, I did not strive, /The deep peace burnt my me alive'), recalls the passage of a Victorian didactic drama. Yet there are pointed references throughout the poem to the iniquities of the social and economic system, as seen from the lower class, all of which subscribe to the notion of the poem's bold realism. One particular example occurs when Saul challenges the local parson, 'red-eyed as a ferret / From nightly wrestlings with the spirit', over the hypocrisy of the Church in sanctioning an unjust social hierarchy:

Your only fire's the jolly fire
Where you can guzzle port with Squire,
And back and praise his damned opinions
About his temporal dominions.
You let him give the man who digs,
A filthy hut unfit for pigs, ...
With all your main and all your might
You back what is against what's right ...
You teach the ground-down staring man
That Squire's greed's Jehovah's plan.
You get his learning circumvented
Lest it should make him discontented
(Better a brutal, starving nation
Than men with thoughts above their station).
You let him neither read nor think,
You goad his wretched soul to drink
And then to jail, the drunken boor;
O sad intemperance of the poor.

The parson is able, however, to counter Saul's charges that he teaches 'not God's Word, nor honest schism, /But Devil's cant and pauperism', by the argument usually propounded to uphold the 'status quo':

... keep the existing social state;
I quite agree it's out of date,
One does too much, another shirks,
Unjust, I grant, but still ... it works.¹

It has been claimed², with some justification, that Masfield's presentation of the protagonist's character is deficient and he fails when he tries to explore the 'subtleties of personality', so that when Saul Kane undergoes his spiritual conversion, the reader is taken too much by surprise and fails to be convinced. Likewise, by comparison with Kipling's hearty use of the vernacular, it could be said that Masfield's rumbustious couplets are 'too obviously sprung from the forcing house, too self-conscious, too clearly contrived'³, yet these latter-day censures should in no way detract from the public acclaim awarded to The Everlasting Mercy at the time of its publication, which so exactly corresponded with both the mood of the poetry-reading public and the emergence of a new strain of realistic verse:

It was published at precisely the right moment to act as a catalyst for some of the new forms of discontent stirring beneath the surface of British poetry in late 1911 ... like the naturalistic novel and the realistic drama, The Everlasting Mercy suited its age. In the liberal though not radical social ethos with which the poem was infused, in its racy, colloquial diction, in its rigorous avoidance of traditional 'poetic' subject matter, the English reading public saw tangible evidence that poetry had finally caught up, so to speak, with the contemporary novel and the stage.⁴

Above all, The Everlasting Mercy represented a departure from the stylized poetic tradition of the 'public' poets to the language of everyday life; it embodied the movement away from the acceptance of

1. The Everlasting Mercy, Poems, pp.59-61.

2. By Bullough, Op. cit., p.51 ff., especially the comment that: 'The preparation for the spiritual conversion which is the crisis and the "raison d'être" of the poem is ... scantily done and the climax itself is too briefly described, the sudden illumination of a soul is inadequately shown, while the joyous pictures of the countryside with which the poem ends are insufficient to portray Saul Kane's change of heart, and have no inevitable relation to the scoundrel of the first part of the poem'.

3. Ross, Op. cit., p.54.

4. Ibid., p.55.

only certain subjects as appropriate for treatment in poetry; it was the first substantial poem to appeal to more than one section of the poetry-reading public, and - more than any other single work - it signalled the advent of a poetry renaissance which the Georgian Movement was to interpret more fully.

It had been obvious from the enthusiastic response given to Masefield's poems in 1911 that there was a wider public ready to accept new developments in poetry, provided that they were not too 'new' and were easily accessible.¹ Based on this premise, and supported by Harold Monro² and a bevy of young poets³, Edward Marsh set out in 1912 to cater for this popular need by compiling his first Georgian Poetry Anthology, guided by his own tastes in modern poetry which happened to coincide with those of the large, educated public.⁴ His outlook was characteristically English; he ignored aesthetic and critical doctrines; his attitude towards his contributors was in keeping with the current trend in politics (liberal and paternalistic); and few poetry-readers could fault his criteria for judging whether a poem was good or not.⁵ All in all, Marsh's approach to poetry was essentially that of the cultivated amateur who recognised, from his own response to modern verse, that in order for it to reach as wide a public as possible (and Georgian Poetry was nothing if not consumer-orientated) it should

-
1. As James Reeves, Introduction, Georgian Poetry, p.xiii attests: 'There was a large public awaiting a particular kind of new poetry, served up in a particular way'.
 2. 'Editor, publisher, and dean of the Poetry Bookshop circle' (Ross, Op. cit., p.80), without whom, as E.M. acknowledged (A Number of People, p.325) G.P. 'could not have come into being'.
 3. Principal among whom was R. Brooke who offered to use his influence as 'brazenly as a commercial traveller' (Drinkwater, Discovery: The 2nd Book of an Autobiography, 1932, p.228) in order to bombard England with the claims of the new poets, as presented in G.P.I.
 4. E.M. Op.cit., p.322, modestly acclaims his success in instigating G.P. when he points out: 'I do want it to be clearly understood ... that my sole and single object in the venture was to provide a means by which writers whose work seemed to me to be beautiful and neglected might find a hearing from the reading public'.
 5. 'Intelligibility', 'music', 'raciness', written according to some 'discernible formal principle', with the poet letting the reader know 'what he is driving at'. (E.M., Op.cit., pp.322-3).

be 'modern', but not too much so, and neither complicated or obscure. He was most successful in his role of 'Georgian impresario'¹ as the popularizer of the 'poetry of the Centre' for, as his presidency of the G.P. Anthologies advanced and the tendency towards formlessness in verse intensified, he became proportionally more rigid in adhering to those standards² which he had established at the end of the first decade of the century - largely as a result of the impression made upon him by The Everlasting Mercy and Rupert Brooke's Poems,³ both published in 1911. Marsh was to remain devoted to Brooke - and his memory - throughout his life, considering him the embodiment of all a young man should be⁴, and, having undertaken to act as Brooke's literary mentor, Marsh extended this function, and his generous patronage, to other young poets in his circle.

Without question, Rupert Brooke was one of the most crucial figures in the development of the Georgian Poetry Movement, whose own 'habit of mind' - shaped, to some extent, by his Fabian sympathies - set the tone for many of the younger poets' contributions to both G.P.I and II. He tried to define his understanding of realism in a letter to 'Ben' Keeling, the 'chief among the Cambridge Fabians of Rupert's day'⁵, when he expressed the exultation he felt in 'just looking at people and things as themselves - neither useful nor moral

1. Ross, Op. cit., p.107.

2. Sometimes facing rebellious rumblings from within his own ranks, as in D.H. Lawrence's complaint that E.M. was 'a bit of a policeman in poetry', in his dogmatic insistence that poetry should 'satisfy his ear'.

3. Reviewed in T.L.S., 29.8.12; Morning Post, 11.12.11; The Spectator, 27.1.12; English Review, Feb.1912, which noted R.B.'s 'ironic imagination'; New Age, 18.1.12; The Nation, 6.7.12, which commented on the 'Donnesque tone'; Manchester Guardian, 3.4.12, which considered R.B. 'too cynical'; and Daily Chronicle, 9.4.12, in which Edward Thomas detected in R.B.'s poetry 'a symptomatic quintessence of the rebellious attitude today'. The Oxford Magazine review (quoted in R.B.'s letter to E.M., Hassall, R.B., pp.366-7) however, described R.B.'s language as 'not only vulgar' but savouring 'of the gutter' and selected, out of a book 'full of bad taste', 'Dead Men's Love' as 'especially disgusting'.

4. 'He was nearer completeness & perfection than anyone I have known...& there is no knowing what he might have done if he had lived', (E.M., A Number of People, Chapt.13, p.274).

5. E.M., Memoir, p.1.

nor ugly nor anything else; but just as being'.¹ Impressed, as Brooke was, by the 'immense value and potentialities of everything', and intoxicated by the 'wild adventure of it all ... the enchantment of being even for a moment alive in a world of real matter ... and actual people', he plainly had no time for the 'pessimism', of which Keeling complained, as he strove to imbue his verse with his exuberant sense of the rich texture of life.² In the context of 1911/1912, however, Brooke's efforts to come to terms with specific events or situations - as in 'Dining-Room Tea',³ for example, where he tries to 'crystallize and transfix' in the 'immote, immortal' moment not only solid objects ('the marble cup; the tea, /Hung on the air, an amber stream; ... /The painted flame, the frozen smoke'), but also the nuances of his feelings for one particular woman present ('every glint /Posture and jest and thought and tint /Freed from the mask of transiency') - endowed him with the reputation of being a complex⁴ poet: 'gifted with an intellectual curiosity and a natural and habitual intensity of feeling that recalls the work of Donne'.⁵ Marsh's patronage of Brooke could well have dubbed him as one of the 'avant-garde', bearing in mind the opinion many of Brooke's contemporaries (especially those who reviewed

-
1. Letter to Keeling, 20.9.10, quoted by E.M., Memoir, p.liii.
 2. Such an approach lays the poet open to the charge that in his effort to respond directly to things, he has merely given a catalogue of objects, as in 'The Great Lover', G.P.III : 'These I have loved: /White plates and cups, clean-gleaming, /Ringed with blue lines; and feathery, faery dust; /Wet roofs, beneath the lamp-light....'
 3. G.P.I, p.45. R.B. refers in his review of Matisse in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition (Cambridge Magazine, 23.11.12) to this idea of the inviolability of certain moments when 'some sight suddenly takes on an inexplicable and overwhelming importance - a group of objects, a figure or two, seem in their light and position and colour to be seen in naked reality... for a passing minute'.
 4. R.B. complained that Mrs Frances Cornford and her school of 'Heart-Criers' considered his poetry 'unreal, affected, "literary", and full of long words', and he was exasperated that 'so many intelligent and well-tasted people didn't seem to have any idea of what I was driving at, in any poem of the last few years' (quoted Memoir, p.lxviii).
 5. Newbolt, Poetry and Drama, March 1913. R.B. was in the forefront of the revival of interest in Donne's poetry following H.J.C.Grierson's 1912 edition of Donne's Poems. R.B.'s letters & many references to his interests & literary predilections in Hassall, Op.cit. & Memoir suggest that he had ^amore Metaphysical imagination than critics often credit him with.

Poems in the various journals of the day) - had of Brooke as a cynical and thoroughly shocking young man who 'flouted long-cherished poetic conventions', judging by 'Channel Passage'¹ ('the disgusting sonnet') and 'Menelaus and Helen'². Marsh had, in fact, remonstrated with Brooke over the more 'unflinchingly realistic' poems in the 1911 volume, and persuaded him to change the title of 'Lust' to 'Libido' and 'The Sea-Sick Lover' to 'Channel Passage' but, from records and letters³ of this discussion of the degree of realism permissible in poetry, it appears that in time a rift would have occurred between patron and protege over this subject. Nevertheless, Brooke's importunings had resulted in Marsh's showing greater tolerance towards verse in the realistic mode, and it was largely because of Brooke's exhortations that Georgian Poetry not only came into being⁴, but was to 'exploit one major phase of the poetic renaissance - the new realism'.⁵

In his choice of contributors for the first Georgian Poetry Anthology, Marsh took into account the trend towards realism in the work of such poets as Masefield, Gibson, Abercrombie, Bottomley and W.H. Davies, who already had some standing in literary circles, as well as taking the opportunity to introduce less well-known figures, most notably D.H. Lawrence. This 'judicious mixture' of the already-established and the little-known, 'though it may have slightly vitiated the headiness of the new wine, did much to increase its market value among those with untrained or traditional palates',⁶ and testifies to

1. Collected Poems, p.109, e.g.: 'Retchings twist and tie me, / Old meat, good meals, brown gobbets, up I throw ... / The sobs and slobbers of a last year's woe'.
2. Ibid., pp.92-3, in which the 'perfect Knight' and 'perfect Queen' degenerate into a garrulous bore who often 'wonders why on earth he went / Troyward' and a shrill scold whose 'dry shanks twitch at Paris' mumbled name'.
3. E.g. letter of 22.12.11. to E.M., (quoted Hassall, R.B., p.294) in which R.B. stresses the importance of an element of realism introduced through the 'common and sordid things' at which he 'grasped relievedly' after having 'beaten vain hands in the rosy mists of poets' experiences'.
4. R.B.'s original idea was to publish an anthology of poems (written by himself in different styles) to arouse public interest in modern verse.
5. Ross, Op.cit., p.117. 6. Ibid., p.120.

Marsh's eminent good sense in introducing to a public interested in finding out more about the alleged 'poetry renaissance' a blend of styles which would stimulate interest without rousing alarm. Even Marsh was taken aback, however, by the strength of the public response to G.P.I, and the contributors were amazed and delighted by their financial return from the venture¹ for, after its initial remarkable impact, the sales of G.P.I continued to go well: seven months after publication, it was in its sixth impression and by the end of 1919 it had topped 13,000.² The Anthology also effected quite a stir among other contemporary poets belonging to rival movements and a number of anthologies in the G.P. mould appeared before long, not least Ezra Pound's Des Imagistes, apparently a 'direct result of the successful launching³ of G.P.I'.⁴ Between the crucial years of 1912 and 1915, Georgian Poetry was looked upon as 'the image of modern poetry in the minds of most educated readers'⁵, characterized as it was by a sense of freedom from enervating restrictions, a more honest and direct approach to common experience, and an exuberant vitality:

[G.P.I] is like a big breath taken when we are waking up after a night of oppressive dreams The last years have been years of demolition And behold, out of the ruins leaps the whole sky In almost every poem in the book comes this note of exultation after fear, the exultation in the vast freedom, the illimitable wealth that we have suddenly got The great liberation gives us an overwhelming sense of joy, 'joie d'être', 'joie de vivre' There is no 'carpe diem' touch It is not the falling rose, but the rose for ever rising to bud and falling to fruit that gives us joy. We have faith in the vastness of life's wealth.... What are the Georgian Poets, nearly all, but just bursting into a thick blaze of being.⁶

1. W.H.Davies' attitude is representative when he wrote to E.M.: 'You have performed a wonder... you made poetry pay!' (quoted Ross, Op.cit p.129).
2. In 1939, E.M. estimated that in all G.P.I sold 15,000 copies and G.P.II, 19,000.
3. Charles Norman, Ezra Pound, p.81.
4. Most significantly in the present context, G.P.I set the vogue for the corporate publication of verse which proliferated during the War when 'more poetry anthologies were rained down upon the heads of the British public than bombs from the Kaiser's zeppelins' (Ross, Op.cit, p.130).
5. James Reeves, Op.cit., p.xi.
6. D.H.L., 'The Georgian Renaissance', Rhythm, Mar.1913, pp.xvii-xx.

Although no one poet of genius emerged, the corporate effort of many young poets (so appropriate to the compilation of an anthology) encouraged certain critics¹ to compare this poetic burgeoning to the flowering of the arts in the original Renaissance, although a sourer note was sounded by one reviewer at least who commented that the new poetry 'like everything else in the democratic age, seems to be more remarkable for extent and size than for distinction'.² As a group, the Georgians did, however, manage to mount an 'assault against dead conventional bondage'³ and their efforts to actively communicate experience rather than passively receive impressions and ephemeral emotions was applauded by the T.L.S. reviewer⁴ of the first Anthology:

[The Georgians] do undoubtedly represent, though not a revolt, at least a reaction from a mood which was characteristic of poetry in its latest Victorian years [the weakness of which was] its timidity in affronting experience. The desire, however wild its aim may be at first, to clarify and shape experience, rather than to sit receptively awaiting its impact, promises more for poetry than the power of writing now and then an exquisite lyric.

A striking movement in the first two G.P. Anthologies was this movement away from the lyric to the dramatic poem, 'the dramatic handling, in some form or other, of life and character', which in itself betokened a more realistic approach in poetry.⁵ Even when the poem was not set out in dramatic form (as was the case in The Sale of St. Thomas, G.P.I., or King Lear's Wife, G.P.II), there were many examples of dramatic verse where the poem was conceived within a dramatic framework:

1. E.g. J.C.Squire, 'Mr W.H. Davies', Land and Water, 3.10.18, p.15: 'I do not see any age since the Elizabethan which can compare with ours'.
2. John Bailey, 'The Poetry of Robert Bridges', Q.R., CCXIX (1913) p.231.
3. R.Bridges, letter to E.M., Marsh Letter Collection, 6.2.13, quoted Ross, Op.cit., p.141.
4. 'Georgian Poetry', T.L.S., 27.2.13.
5. According to Abercrombie, P.R.I., pp.112-8: 'The verse play gets "closer to life" ... because it seeks to diagnose the diseases of life ... and comes closer than any other form to making us perceive that terrific splendid fact, the fact that we do exist'. Hassall, R.B., p.362, suggests that the Georgian Group's consciousness of its audience accounts for their efforts to revive verse drama.

Brooke's 'The Old Vicarage, Grantchester', de la Mare's 'The Listeners', and Gibson's 'The Hare' are all representative of this technique of exploiting a dramatic situation.

Similarly, G.P.I illustrated the evolution of a particular poetic diction which was more truthful to the accents of common speech, as in Davies' 'Days Too Short'¹, Gibson's 'Geraniums'² and de la Mare's 'Miss Loo'³, and although in their anxiety to avoid 'decorated' verse, the Georgian Poets tended to write unattractively flat or, at worst, banal⁴ poetry, at its best, 'Georgian diction' combined simplicity with technical mastery and revealed itself to be in a direct line of descent from the real 'language of men' advocated by Wordsworth in his Preface.⁵ But, above all, it was the emphasis on realism which most clearly differentiated G.P.I and II from the other anthologies. The primary function of Georgian Poetry initially had been to avoid 'as its first enemy'⁶ the insipid, to adopt an anti-sentimental approach to the subject-matter and present it honestly and fully by means of details, however pleasant, which would more immediately evoke the reality of the situation described. In this respect, the T.L.S. reviewer⁷ accused some G.P.I poets of affecting a 'self-conscious brutality' and exchanging 'the romantic, the sentimental, the fictive conceptions of literature, for an ingenuousness, sometimes a violence,

1. G.P.I, p.60: 'When butterflies will make side-leaps, /As though escaped from Nature's hand /Ere perfect quite; and bees will stand/ Upon their heads in fragrant deeps'.

2. Ibid., p.106: 'Stuck in a bottle on the window-sill, /In the cold gaslight burning gaily red /Against the luminous blue of London night, /These flowers are mine'.

3. Ibid., p.70: '... how she'd open her green eyes, /As if in some immense surprise, /Whenever as we sat at tea, /She made some small remark to me'.

4. T.S.Eliot in Egoist, Sept.1917, was to particularly deprecate the Georgian predilection for the word 'little' which, when used with 'a caress, a conscious delight', far from reducing the subject to honest proportions, invited sentimentality.

5. In Newbolt's view, 'G.P.I, 'P.D.I, Mar.1913, the Georgian Poets' diction was their birthright, inherited from predecessors who have worked 'for the assimilation of verse to the manner & accent of natural speech'.

6. Alan Pryce-Jones, Georgian Poets, p.5. 7. T.L.S., 27.2.13.

almost a rawness in the approach to life itself'. He presumably had in mind here certain aspects of Abercrombie's The Sale of St. Thomas, such as the Indian King's sadistic punishment of the missionary zeal of one stranger whose skin was groomed so thoroughly with steel combs that 'at last /They curried the living flesh from off his bones /And stript his face of gristle, till he was /Skull and half skeleton and yet alive', or the description of the land itself 'where the hot soil / Foul with ceaseless decay steams into flies!' In G.P.II a quite sensational critical furor developed over Bottomley's King Lear's Wife, from which the bizarre corpse-washer's song was often cited as a prime example of deliberate and gratuitous brutality: 'nastiness for nastiness' sake', where the violence 'seems ... to be merely a mechanical development of something altogether outside the experience of the writer The result is violence, but a violence as conventional as the Victorian sweetness':¹

A louse² crept out of my lady's shift -
Ahumm, Ahumm, Ahee -
Crying 'Oi! Oi! We are turned adrift;
The lady's bosom is cold and stiffed,
And her arm-pit's cold for me.

For all the reviewers' quibbling over whether certain instances of brutality in G.P.I and II were structurally necessary or gratuitously introduced, both volumes were warmly appreciated by the reading public and the poets themselves and signified 'the high summer'³ for Georgian Poetry in which the move towards greater realism reached its consummation: poetry was confined 'within the limits of what had actually

-
1. Review (probably by Edmund Gosse) of 'The Young Poets', i.e. G.P.II and Poems of Today, T.L.S., 9.12.15.
 2. A curiously prophetic subject, considering the ubiquity of lice in the trenches and the references to them by certain poets with Georgian affiliations: Rosenberg's 'The Immortals' and 'Louse Hunting', for example. (See Chapter III (a)).
 3. Ross, Op.cit., p.159. Future volumes of G.P. would be examined with increasing circumspection by critics and public alike for the robust 'coterie spirit' of G.P.II was to have a debilitating effect on subsequent volumes, where the 'spontaneous co-operative effort' hardened into a 'form of literary tyranny'.

been experienced'¹; 'poetry' and 'life' were as a consequence once more 'merged'; and the ultimate aim of looking at things 'as they are' and writing 'with one's eye on an object'² was - by and large - achieved.

In apportioning credit for the overall success of the Georgian Poetry Movement, however, once the poets themselves have been acknowledged, and Edward Marsh congratulated for his admirable efforts in promoting Georgian Poetry (as salesman, public relations officer and 'generalissimo in charge of strategy'³) it must be admitted that the impact of G.P.I.'s appearance on the poetry market would surely have been dulled had it not been for Harold Monro's commitment to the project. Monro had dedicated himself to the crusade of making poetry as easily accessible and popular as other reading material,⁴ and he was convinced that it was the modern poet's duty, for his part, to 'give poetical expression to the ideas and feelings of the new age that ... is dawning; an age in which man must finally cast off worn-out beliefs and meaningless traditions and begin to live more joyously and rationally'.⁵ Having returned to London in the autumn of 1911 (shortly after which he became the editor of the Poetry Review), Monro flung himself into his campaign to educate the public's taste in poetry, stolidly believing that 'no one who has had any experience in the matter imagines that the public taste in poetry, however perverted, is instinc-

-
1. Stead, Op.cit., p.82: 'art is not for the Georgians something fragile, magical and remote from ordinary living, as it was for the aesthetes; nor is life equated with politics, public affairs, and large conservative generalisations as it was for the imperialists. Life for them was what they experienced'. B.Deutsch, Op.cit., p.41, subscribes to this view in her analysis of the Georgians 'exploring...the immediate scene ... [to represent] art for life's sake'.
 2. Letter from E.M. to Sassoon, quoted in The Weald of Youth, p.138.
 3. Ross, Op.cit., p.123, with R.B. as a 'most enthusiastic lieutenant' who enjoyed the organizing of a high-powered advertising campaign which exercised his considerable practical abilities.
 4. 'We desire to see a public created that may read verse as it now reads its newspapers', H.M., P.D.I (1913).
 5. Arundel del Ré, (sub-editor for a time of P.R. and P.D.), 'Georgian Reminiscences', Studies in English Literature, XII, pp.325-6.

tively bad'.¹ What was needed, according to Monro, was a redefinition of what comprised poetry, so that the 'poets and professors' could frame their concept of poetry more aptly to suit the public's taste² (though Monro stressed that they should not compromise the standards of good poetry³ by so doing): 'Poetry is the finer essence of thought, the vivid expression of personality; it is never the mere product of literary skill and craftsmanship. Therefore, we believe in personality before we believe in books, in life rather than in letters. We admire sincerity more than originality'.⁴

Monro's creed of persistently cultivating and discussing poetry in order to stimulate the desire for its readier accessibility, was put into practice through his robust editorship as 'smiling philosopher' of the Poetry Review and Poetry and Drama, and under the auspices of the Poetry Bookshop where he proved equally energetic in publishing poetry⁵ and arranging for its dissemination⁶ through other channels, such as poetry-readings. The phenomenal success in late 1912 of G.P.I. which Monro had been commissioned to publish, provided 'splendid advance publicity for the Bookshop' due to open in January 1913, and confirmed or exceeded many of Monro's own expectations about modern poetry. G.P.I. convinced Monro first and foremost that the public would receive modern poetry; it stimulated the reviewers who wrote for P.R.,

1. P.D.I., p.265.

2. The policy advocated by H.M. here is the direct antithesis of T.S.E.'s 'credo' (as expressed in his 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' articles, Ego., Sept. and Dec. 1919) and the ideas expressed by F.P. on the relationship (or preferably lack of one) between poet & public.

3. H.M. never disguised the fact that 'the appreciation of civilized poetry requires study, and study requires effort' (P.D., June 1913).

4. Editorial, P.R. I (1912).

5. Where his main aim was to co-ordinate the sizeable but diffuse poetry-reading public: 'to draw this public together and bring it into touch, through the Bookshop, with poetry as a living art, and as represented in the work of living poets' (P.R.I., p.498).

6. One aspect of which was H.M.'s later venture into printing Chapbooks, Broad-sides and Rhyme-sheets when the P.B. took over the Flying Fame Press set up by Claud Lovat Fraser, Holbrook Jackson, Ralph Hodgson in 1914.

7. Grant, Op.cit., p.94.

and through G.P.I , Monro found himself in contact with a wider audience of actual and potential poetry-readers than he had ever thought possible through a single publication. Not surprisingly, he supported Marsh's proposal that a second volume of G.P. should be published and, in spite of the intrusion of the War and the opinion of such as Abercrombie that in 'these terrific times', poetry would degenerate into 'ridiculous fiddle-faddle'¹ , G.P.II rolled off the presses in November 1915, to eclipse the first volume not only in terms of sales, but - it was generally believed - in literary merit also.

Having achieved through the first G.P. Anthology, a substantial link with the public, whose response to that volume had attested to their interest in poetry, Monro made it his business as editor of the P.R. and P.D. to exercise extreme vigilance in examining all contemporary journals and censuring any lapses on their part in offering the public what he considered to be bad verse. He contended that journals such as the E.R. and Q.R. had a public responsibility and should not print any verse if they could not discriminate between the banal and the 'real poetry of modern England' and if they persistently ignored the stirrings of the poetic renaissance² to which Monro was especially sensitive. In a situation where 'young poets of real talent could only write what would flout public taste, and hope that in time readers would come to judge them fairly'³ , Monro was aware that the Georgian Poets could effect a readjustment⁴ in the relationship between poet and

1. Abercrombie's letter to E.M., 24.8.14, M.L.C., quoted Ross, Op.cit. p.133.

2. By 1912, 'new era', 'new age', 'boom in poetry' had become clichés in some literary journals and there was a growing tendency among the younger generation of poets and literary commentators (particularly those affiliated to the Imagist Group) to reject out of hand any consideration of the poetry tradition, simply because it belonged to 'sacripant Past'.

3. Stead, Op.cit., p.66.

4. Though not everyone agreed with H.M.'s assessment: Alfred Noyes accused the Georgians & P.B. poets of 'bringing the contempt of the man in the street down on poetry' (reported, P.D., June 1914, p.122) and Watson condemned the Georgians of 'very nearly erecting cacophony into a cult' (Penkraft: A Plea for Older Ways, p.50).

public, by introducing to a large audience a brand of verse which had not sacrificed its integrity to accommodate the least discriminating poetry-reader but had nevertheless been widely accepted.

Monro had good reason to guard rigorously against any suspicion of literary compromise in the work of the younger poets, for he was all too well aware¹ how easy it was for an aspiring poet to be adversely influenced (in the interests of establishing his reputation) by the current trend on literary reviewing and criticism which urged conformity² and a respect for the mediocre³, since those were the qualities which the public was said to want. Indifferent contemporary reviewers who lacked 'any coherent views on poetry ... found security in an appeal to tradition, or rather to the example of the acknowledged masters of verse, and in a quasi-religious⁴ reverence for the Art of Poetry⁵, which enabled them to abuse their contemporaries with a clear conscience'.⁶ Praise or blame was meted out in such lazy clichés as 'the true stuff of poetry', 'the charm of complete sincerity', and Monro denounced this

-
1. From his assessment of the pre-1914 literary scene in which a close correlation existed between the outlook of the conservative literary journals (Athenaeum and Q.R., for instance) and the subject matter & approach of the 'public' poets which, when combined, formed the 'impenetrable adamant' (Letters of E.P., p.42) of the Poetry Establishment.
 2. E.P. summed up the situation more bluntly: 'the general trend of British criticism at the time was towards petrification or vitrification' (quoted Hugh Kenner, The Poetry of E.P., p.305) and accused the contemporary critics & reviewers of debasing the 'literary coin to a point where it no longer deceives even the gulls' (Literary Essays, p.81).
 3. F.M.Ford, Return to Yesterday, p.181, singled out the Daily Telegraph reviewer, W.L.Courtenay as primarily responsible: 'The D.T. heralded mediocrity to the sound of shawms & oboes: it never praised any writer of merit & originality until he had grown old and imbecile. Its influence among the middle class was tremendous'.
 4. As David Daiches, Some Late Victorian Attitudes (1969) p.88, points out: literary critics, interpreting Matthew Arnold's philosophy had a pontifical function, 'they must establish [poetry's] canon & teach others how to distinguish the true word from the false & heretical. The critic becomes a priestly interpreter of the true Word to the people and a mediator between the poet and his public'.
 5. Arthur Waugh, e.g., warned readers to beware of the insidious threat of this 'new rebellion' which heralded 'a condition of liberty and licence' which might submerge old standards in a 'process of literary democratization' ('The New Poetry', Q.R., Oct.1916).
 6. Grant, Op.cit., p.32.

practice of 'reviewing in platitudes'¹ which resulted in the degradation of the profession of literary critic, as well as the exaltation of undesirable models of poetic excellence:

Reputations are made like those of William Watson or Alfred Noyes. Every time such an author publishes a book, some trained person has merely to jot down a series of the conventional phrases: - 'sustained inspiration', 'splendid and virile', 'among the finest achievements in English poetry', 'finished craftsmanship', 'essential quality of high poetry', 'most conspicuous achievement of our age', 'sounds depths only possible to a master', 'never been surpassed', 'noble', 'felicitous' - we all know them so well that we do not trouble to pay the slightest attention to them. The criticism of poetry has been degraded and prostituted out of all recognition: it still remains genuine in only a few periodicals.

In many popular magazines, verse was either a 'space-filler' or a trivial ornament, while the more serious politico-literary journals such as E.R.³ or even A.R. Orage's The New Age⁴, did nothing to correct or form taste in poetry - although they might have provided a more honourable platform for the publication of verse⁵. However, Monro in

-
1. Edward Thomas, forced to supplement his income with reviewing hack-work, was an outspoken critic of his sloppy colleagues who depended on 'second-hand words and paralysed, inelectric phrases' ('Reviewing: an Unskilled Labour', P.D. II, March 1914) & even such a reviewer as J.M. Robertson who wrote such an enlightened article on the 'public' poets ('Substance in Poetry', E.R., July 1911) was prone to occasional fatal vagueness, as in his definition of a poet as 'the harp of the winds of feeling, an exquisite word instrument to give cadence and charm to any or all the passions of men'.
 2. P.D. II, March 1914, p.53. R.B. offered a more light-hearted view of the disastrous state of reviewing in a letter to Frances Cornford (quoted Memoir, p.1): 'The Daily Chronicle or some such, that reviews verse in lumps will say of Thoughts in Verse on Many Occasions, by a Person of Great Sensibility by F. Cornford & Dead Pansy-Leaves & Other Flowerets by R. Brooke... "Mr Cornford has some pretty thoughts, but Miss Brooke is always intolerable" (they always get the sex wrong)'.
 3. Under the supervision of F.M. Ford, initially, an 'exceptionally gifted editor'; The Everlasting Mercy was first published in E.R.
 4. 1907-22, allegedly the 'most influential radical weekly of its time' (ed. T. Rogers, Georgian Poetry 1911-22: The Critical Heritage, p.3).
 5. The 19th century survivals (Cornhill Magazine, Spectator) virtually ignored new verse, while the T.L.S. presented a more conscientiously comprehensive range of all types of poetry (e.g. 1st 6 months of 1914 T.L.S. reviews Max Weber's Cubist Poems and Basil de Selincourt's new book on Walt Whitman) but made little effort to seriously understand or direct new poets: throughout 1913 and 1st 7 months of 1914 T.L.S. received on average 6 slim vols. of new poems per week and all were reviewed indiscriminately (e.g. N. Tier's Goodbye & Other Poems, 2.4.14, applauded for being 'simple & full of nice feelings' & in same vein, Frost's North of Boston, 28.5.14, noted for 'little pictures from ordinary human life').

his function as editor of the P.R., undertook to tackle at source both the parlous state of literary criticism and the unsatisfactory aimlessness of so much modern verse by firstly introducing a more precise and analytical approach to poetry-reviewing (which was also intended to 're-educate a public that had come to misunderstand the uses of poetry'¹) and by, secondly, encouraging new poets to keep 'a clear and sound grasp upon facts' and to 'reweld metre to meaning', for poetry must be 'fundamental, vital, innate, or nothing at all. It must be packed and tense with meaning; no line may be thin, no link may rattle'².

With his evangelizing impulse to the fore, Monro proudly enunciated in his Preface to the First Number of P.R.,³ what his purpose would be in editing the journal:

Time is ripe for forging a weapon of criticism, and for an emphatic enunciation of literary standards. Poetry should be, once more, seriously and reverently discussed in its relation to life, and the same tests and criteria be applied to it as to the other arts. This periodical will aim not so much at producing poetry as at stimulating a desire for it. We shall strive to create an atmosphere. We shall attempt to co-ordinate the bases of thought from which poetry at last emerges.

Bearing in mind this statement of intent, it is not surprising to find more space given in P.R. to articles and reviews than to new verse,⁴ and throughout 1912 P.R. certainly sustained Monro's promise by publishing some of the most significant and original work of the year on contemporary poetry: Iascelles Abercrombie on 'The Function of Poetry

1. Grant, Op.cit., p.41.

2. 'The Future of Poetry', P.R., Jan. 1912.

3. January, 1912.

4. Although a catholic selection of poets were featured during 1912: Gibson, de la Mare, Chesterton, Rupert Brooke and Ezra Pound, for example.

in the Drama'; Marsh reviewing Rupert Brooke's Poems (1911); F.S. Flint's 'On Contemporary French Poetry'¹ and Ezra Pound's 'Prolegomena' and 'Credo' introducing a group of his Imagist-style poems - to cite but a few examples.

By the end of 1912, however, Monro could no longer support the interference of the Poetry Society in the running of P.R. and resigned as editor, only to re-instate himself on the critical scene a few months later in the spring of 1913 with Poetry and Drama - a literary magazine of 'greatly improved quality'² - in which he continued to wage war on bad taste in poetry and to censure the publishers of inferior verse for 'commercial engineering of the market, which constitutes a mischievous misrepresentation and a wilful degradation of art'.³ On the other hand, P.D. dealt sympathetically with Imagism - particularly in the June 1913 issue - and Monro hailed Pound, whose ruthless assault upon the banal and mediocre he applauded, as a 'purging influence in our world'. Monro flirted briefly with the aims of the more fundamental Futurist Movement in the September 1913 issue, but by December Monro had reappraised the work of the exotic Marinetti⁴ and coolly dismissed his 'present compositions' as no more than 'an advanced form of verbal photography' which would not greatly assist Monro's central campaign of re-educating the public's taste in poetry.

-
1. Flint's article promoted such enthusiasm and interest that the idea of reviewing poetry currently being written abroad was adopted by other periodicals: e.g. the 'Paris Column' in the Egoist and the 'French Chronicle' in the later P.D.
 2. Grant, Op.cit., p.53. H.M.'s contributors included Robert Bridges, F.M.Ford, F.S.Flint, T.E. Hulme (who all submitted reviews or critical articles) and Thomas Hardy, Emile Verhaeren, Rabindranath Tagore (who were represented by their poetry).
 3. P.D.I., June 1913. The particular cause of H.M.'s indignation was the fact that a book of very bad verse had been allowed to run into 4 editions. In the Sept. Issue of P.D., he railed against the E.R. for also publishing poor verse: '... it would be better not to print any poetry at all than to approach a wavering public with verses which may disgust it into withdrawing its attention from the real poetry of modern England'.
 4. E.M. in a letter to R.B. (14.12.13) reported on Marinetti's recitation of his own poems at the P.B.: '...what he writes is not literature - only an "aide-mémoire" for a mimic'.

By 1914, Monro's 'crusade' to 'stimulate a desire for poetry' in the reading-public was evidently making some headway against the 'infidels': he had at last established himself as one of the most influential figures in English poetry, through his activities at the Poetry Bookshop, and as editor of the P.R. and P.D., and when the War brought the latter to an untimely end, it had already gained for itself 'a permanent place among the periodicals: a public had been formed; the circulation was steadily increasing; the strength and general quality of the whole was ... gradually improving'.¹ In the mood of optimism engendered by Monro between 1912 and 1914, it was generally acknowledged that 'English letters' (critical as well as creative) had entered upon a period of 'new and sanguine vitality' in which the legacy of 'Parnassian Poetry'² and staid critical attitudes inherited from the Victorian era could at last be renounced and the new age could 'really begin clear of all muddled notions of its amorphous predecessors'.³

This view was certainly shared, though stated more uncompromisingly⁴ by Ezra Pound and his various associates, who were similarly determined to no longer accept 'entrenched assumptions about the way things ought to be'⁵, and who pursued the movement towards originality in poetry with as much vigour as did Monro, Marsh and the Georgian Poets. Whereas the Georgians, however, were anxious to restore a greater degree of realism to contemporary verse, the Imagists were preoccupied with

1. P.D.II, Dec.1914. The proliferation of 'Little Magazines' just before the War (such as J.Middleton Murry's Rhythm, 1911-3 & its successor the Blue Review) was probably partly due to the considerable popular success of P.R. and P.D. The War gave a similar impetus to public interest in 'little magazines' associated with modern poetry with the emergence of Frank Rutter's Art & Letters, The Monthly Chapbook (H.M.'s next venture) and The Owl (ed. R.Graves) enlivening the scene from 1917.
2. Pinto, Op.cit., p.122. 3. Frank Swinnerton, Blue Review, No.1, May 1913.
4. Aldington in the first Egoist after the Declaration of War (15.8.14) translated Nicholas Beauduin's 'The New Poetry of France' which protested that 'up to now, poets have lamented over ruins. They translated the anguishes and last convulsions of a world which is now deadThis is the hour of virile creations, of joyous audacities....'
5. Jean Liddiard, 'The Café Royal', I.R. :The Half Used Life, p.114.

the problems of introducing a more appropriate poetic technique¹,
diction and form, to suit the changing modern consciousness:

Objectivity and again objectivity; no hind-side-beforeness,
no straddled adjectives ... no Tennysonian-ness of speech;
nothing - nothing, that you couldn't, in some circumstance,
in the stress of some emotion, actually say.²

The Imagists had been deeply impressed by Synge's dictum that poetry,
in order to be human again, must first learn to be brutal and as
'advocates of nudism in poetry'³, in revolt against 'the elaboration
of end-of-the-century aestheticism, against the romantic movement
faltering in sentimental prettiness, against the genteel tradition in
decay'⁴, they relished the 'primitively ugly', believing that 'in
primitiveness alone lay strength'. According to the 'metaphysician of
Imagism'⁵, T.E. Hulme, modern poetry had to be pruned of any vestiges
of the sentimental, luxuriant verbiage beloved of many poetry-readers
(and poets), for a period of 'dry, hard, classical verse' was imminent
which would be much more in keeping with the present 'zeitgeist'⁶ and,
as one Imagist 'aficionado' suggested more picturesquely: 'poetry should
be burned to the bone by austere fires and washed white with the rains
of afflictions'.⁷ In this 'new dark age of barbarism and vulgarity',
the Imagists agreed that the arts could only survive in 'small islands
of culture ... fashioned anew by a self-chosen "élite" that [had] managed
to escape the spiritual degradation of a commercialized world',⁸ and,

-
1. As E.P. makes clear in his 'Prolegomena', P.R.I (1912): 'I believe in technique as the text of a man's sincerity in law when it is ascertainable; in the trampling down of every convention that impedes or obscures the determination of the law, or the precise rendering of the impulse'.
 2. E.P. to Harriet Monroe, The Letters of E.P. 1907-41, ed. D.D. Paige, p.91. Ford supports the idea of the poet writing 'his own mind in the language of his day' (Critical Writings of F.M.F., ed. Frank MacShane, p.154) and in his Preface to his Collected Poems (1913) pp.13-20, he states that his one aim had been 'to register my own time in terms of my own times', believing that 'it is...better to be vulgar than affected'.
 3. Deutsch, Op.cit., p.87. 4. J.G.Fletcher, Life is My Song, p.68.
 5. Ross, Op.cit., p.73.
 6. Defined by Abercrombie, 'John Drinkwater: An Appreciation', P.R.I (1912) as 'a time fermenting with tremendous change...a change in the idealistic interpretation of the universe'.
 7. Rebecca West, New Freewoman, I, 15.3.13. 8. Pinto, Op.cit., p.154.

believing that the other 'wing' of the movement towards reform in modern poetry, the Georgians, were either too insular or too committed to improving the public's taste in poetry¹ to institute a truly radical reappraisal of the status of modern verse, the Imagists confidently assumed custodial responsibility for upholding literary standards.²

The Imagist Poets, although essentially individual artists, were united through that 'camaraderie of minds'³ characteristic of the pre-War era, into a combined force which - for a time - 'marched against the enemy [of "passéisme"]', waving a single banner'⁴. They had admired Futurism's 'vigour and energy, its hatred of the stylized, sentimental and academic, and its concentration on its own times'⁵, while at the same time deprecating the 'utterly unrestrained rhetoric, ... use of abstractions, [and] vagueness'⁶ of Marinetti's poems. Various Imagists acknowledged their indebtedness to a wide range of other poetic influences: modern French Symbolist poetry⁷; the Japanese 'tanka' and 'haiku'⁸; the poets of Ancient Greece⁹, and the Orient - underlining the cosmopoli-

-
1. R. West, Op.cit., lamented in particular the fact that poetry had been debased over the 19th century and was now offered, in its 'diluted' form, to the public by H.M. and his P.B. in Devonshire Street: 'from the beautiful bride of Blake poetry has become the idle hussy hung with ornaments kept by Lord Tennyson, handed on to Stephen Phillips and now supported at Devonshire Street by the Georgian School'.
 2. Although H.M. advised the Imagists rather to regard themselves as 'one of the latest groups in the forward march of English poetry - not the only one', 'The Imagists Discussed', Ego., 1.5.15.
 3. R.A., Life for Life's Sake (N.Y., 1941) p.110. R.A. recalls this curious, inexpressible awareness of a 'community of letters' which distinguished the pre-War years, never to be recaptured.
 4. Glenn Hughes, The Imagist Anthology (1930).
 5. S.K. Coffman, Imagism: A Chapter for the History of Modern Poetry (1951) pp.196-7. The Imagists joined the Futurists in condemning: 'the commercial acquiescence of English artists, ... the narrow views of the English public, who stupidly adore the pretty-pretty, the commonplace and ... mediocre', ('Futurist Manifesto', published in The Observer #6.4).
 6. New Freewoman, I,1.12.13. The Imagists esp. differentiated themselves from the Futurists in their insistence upon form and the 'careful, efficient control' of content.
 7. Flint, Ego, II, 1.5.15, in his 'History of Imagism' makes particular reference to the French 'Symboliste' influence and the Imagists' adoption of 'vers libre' form.
 8. Forms which recommend themselves on account of 'their telling concreteness of imagery and...extreme compression', (Deutsch, Op.cit., p.65).
 9. Especially appropriate to an era of 'neo-classicism'.

tan outlook of the Group, as well as their predilection for verse-forms which compress and concentrate meaning. The 'purest' Imagist poems - H.D.'s 'Oread' and 'Hermes of the Way', for example - indicated precisely the influence of classical models¹ on the Group:

Whirl up, sea -
Whirl your pointed pines,
Splash you great pines
on our rocks,
hurl your green over us,
cover us with pools of fir,

and again: The hard sand breaks,
 And the grains of it
 Are clear as wine

Wind rushes
Over the dunes,
And the coarse, salt-cruled grass
Answers.

A more explicit, and correspondingly more self-conscious and less effective, evocation of the classical setting informs Richard Aldington's 'To A Greek Marble'²:

Πόντια, πόντια,
White grave goddess,
Pity my sadness.
O silence of Paros

I have whispered thee in thy solitudes
Of our loves in Phrygia,
The far ecstasy of burning noons
When the fragile pipes
Ceased in the cypress shade,
And the brown fingers of the shepherd
Moved over slim shoulders;
And only the cicada sang.

Although, elsewhere³, Aldington acknowledged the presence of the modern world in verse expressive of a savage misanthropy, he illustrated

1. H.D. was most particularly influenced by the translucent, refined lyrics of Ancient Greece, as she admitted in her 'Epitaph': '... "Greek flower; Greek ecstasy /reclaims forever /one who died /following /intricate song's lost measure"'.
2. Included in *Des Imagistes* (1914), *Imagist Poetry* ed. Peter Jones, p.56.
3. E.g. 'Interlude', 'In the Tube', 'Cinema Exit'.

the general trend among the Imagists to isolate their images from the world of real experience, believing that 'the creation in words of a beautiful image was an end in itself, as though the image had an existence of its own which was isolated from experience and the external world'.¹ The Imagists had been encouraged, by the statement of their aims and principles set out by T.E. Hulme, and reinforced by the pronouncements of Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington on the subject, to suppress considerations of the degree of realism² in their subject matter and to concentrate instead upon achieving exactness in their diction and imagery: 'always the hard, definite personal word ... with an image sticking on to it, never as a flat word passed over a board like a counter'.³ Hulme believed himself to be justified in his demands that accurate description should be regarded as a 'legitimate object of verse', considering the current 'receptive' critical attitude which thrived on debauched-Romantic qualities in verse and disregarded any poetry which lacked 'some form of vagueness' or was not 'moaning or whining about something or other'. Language should no longer be lavishly and carelessly employed by the poet with only half a mind on the actual significance of the words used, but should be applied only after a 'concentrated effort of the mind' to produce the 'exact curve' of what the poet sees. Lazy clichés, the 'conventional curves of ingrained

-
1. Stephen Spender, 'Epilogue', The Destructive Element. This tendency to isolate the image from experience was to greatly hamper R.A. when confronted by the harsh realism and intellectual questioning of the War (see Chapter III for discussion of Imagist War Poetry).
 2. In 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry', Further Speculations, ed. Sam Hynes (1955), pp. 72-5, Hulme draws attention to the growing introspection in subject matter away from 'heroic action' to 'the expression and communication of momentary phases in the poet's mind'; whereas poetry in the past 'endeavoured to tell a story, the modern attempts to fix an impression', R.A. took up this idea in his review of Flint's poetry (Ego., 1.5.15) when he declares: '...there is an escape from artificiality and sentimentality in poetry, and that is by rendering the moods, the emotions, the impressions of a single sensitized personality confronted by the phenomena of modern life'.
 3. T.E. Hulme, Notes: Hulme stressed the avoidance of introducing 'some of the emotions that are grouped around the word infinite' in poetry. ('Romanticism & Classicism', 1913, repr. Critiques & Essays in Criticism Stallman, N.Y. 1949, p. 9).

technique' could not be supported if the poet made 'sincerity'¹, the holding on 'through infinite detail and trouble to the exact curve you want'², his paramount concern. Ezra Pound similarly advised poets assuming the Imagist idiom to 'go in fear of abstractions, that is, use concrete images having the hardness of cut stone' and to eschew 'philosophical or descriptive poetry. Other essential qualities included: direct treatment of the "thing" whether subjective or objective'; absolute concision; and adoption in 'vers libre' of the 'sequence of the musical phrase' rather than the 'sequence of the metronome'³ in devising the unrhymed 'organic' cadence - and these were the fundamental principles⁴ governing the composition of Imagist poetry which the contributors to the first Imagist Anthology⁵ tried to put into practice.

Des Imagistes was initially endowed with an element of respectability by emerging under the auspices of the Poetry Bookshop, which was already associated in the public consciousness with the success of G.P.I.

-
1. Since Wordsworth's first use of the word 'sincerity' as a specific term in literary criticism, it had accumulated through the 19th century a number of unintended connotations - in particular being associated with moral truth until 'eventually the term "sincerity" itself, gathers opprobrium and implies its Victorian associations' (P.M. Ball, 'Sincerity: the Rise and Fall of a Critical Term', Modern Language Review, LIX (1964), p.7). The slackness of 'sincerity' as a critical term is apparent when it is applied carelessly to indicate "an impeccable moral standpoint" (Ibid., p.9) without necessarily intending literary merit. However, when H.M. stated that he admired 'sincerity meaning the true representation of a given situation or emotion more than originality', or Hulme defined 'sincerity', as here, in terms of accuracy, it would appear to be another manifestation of their abandoning the 'worn-out beliefs and meaningless traditions' inherited from the Victorian era, and restoring to such de-based terms as 'sincerity' (or 'realism') something of their original force and precision.
 2. Stallman, Op.cit., pp.12 and 13.
 3. 'A Retrospect', Pavannes and Divisions (1918) reprinted in Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, ed. T.S. Eliot (1954).
 4. R.A., Preface, S.I.P. (1915) pp.vi-viii defines more fully these principles: use the language of common speech and the exact word; create new rhythms; allow freedom in choice of subject; present image not generalities; 'hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite' poetry; 'to believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry'.
 5. After Pound's 'production', Des Imagistes (1914), Amy Lowell commanded the idea of an Imagist Anthology and instituted the next 3 volumes: Some Imagist Poets, 1915, 1916 and 1917.

The obvious differences between these two innovatory anthologies were, however, speedily recognized and any communion of purpose, shared by both Georgians and Imagists, in trying to effect a reappraisal of what constituted poetry in this 'modern era' was largely overlooked by the poetry-reading public¹ - many of whom registered their sense of outrage against this new School of English Poetry by returning their copies of Des Imagistes to the Poetry Bookshop. The Imagists relished this rebuff for it confirmed their low opinion of the taste of most poetry-readers (who had apparently resisted all Monroe's efforts to educate them towards an appreciation of modern verse), and it likewise proved that the Imagists had in no way compromised their integrity by adopting the degrading conditions of modern popular art?²

'What the public wants' are the stale ideas of twenty, or even fifty, or even seventy years ago, ideas which any man of talent rejects at once as banal. It is only the 'cliché', only the stale, the flat and the profitable in art which finds ready acceptance and eager purchasers; while the exploiters at third hand of original ideas are the only innovators to secure applause The arts are now divided between popular charlatans and men of talent, who, of necessity, write, think and paint only for each other, since there is no one else to understand them.³

This view represents the complete antithesis to Monroe's attitude of inviting the public to participate fully in the appreciation of poetry and Monroe tempered⁴ his admiration for the Imagists' aims

-
1. H.M. however, sprang to the defence of this poetry which was never intended to 'sing' since the 'test of intellect is more important to [the Imagists] than the test of tradition' (Ego., 1.5.15).
 2. In his review of Wyndham Lewis (Ego., 15.6.14) E.P. takes the view that by catering for the public taste, the artist is countenancing 'Mediocrity', the 'god of the rabble and the bureaucracy'. E.P. dispute Whitman's premise that 'poets [need] an audience' for if the artist whose aim is perfection tried to 'mirror [himself] in the eyes of the public, woe be unto [his] art'.
 3. R.A., 'Some Reflections on Ernest Dowson', Ego., 1.3.15. Ford also took up this idea in 'Thus to Revisit' (E.R., XXI (1920), p.403): 'The Cubists, Vorticists, Imagists... said simply: "All this attempt to hypnotise the Public is a waste of time...."'
 4. 6-column article entitled 'The Imagists Discussed' in the 'Imagist Number' of Ego., 1.5.15. This issue included Flint's 'History of Imagism'; R.A.'s 'The Poetry of E.P.'; & J.G. Fletcher's review of Amy Lowell's verse, as well as poems from H.D., R.A., Flint, D.H. Lawrence and Marianne Moore.

by disapproving of their policy towards the public - of 'telling the Philistines a few home truths' - and threw some doubt on whether these poets did not practise deliberate obscurity and 'labour to appear skilful'. Nevertheless, the Imagist Group were an undeniably salutary influence upon the course of modern poetry before the War¹ (especially if T.S. Eliot's notion of the 'vague [being] a more dangerous path for poetry than the acrid'² is to be accepted), with their insistence upon the value of the contemporary response³ and their incisive denunciation of verse in the 'public' idiom, which had been popular for the wrong reasons for too long:

... it is nevertheless true that the majority of the poetry of the last century had nothing to do with life and very little to do with poetry. There was a plague of prettiness and a plague of pomposity and several minor diseases - such as over-much suavity, the cult of decorative adjectives. And except for Browning and a little Swinburne, there was no energy which was not bombast, no rendering of life without an Anglican moral, no aesthetic without aesthetic cant.⁴

In some quarters it was considered that the only viable course to follow in order to overthrow this entrenched traditionalism in the field of the arts⁵ was to propound an aggressively radical philosophy which endorsed the 'violent, the elemental, the barbaric ... energy and self-assertion at all costs'⁶

-
1. 'Shaking the literary scene, calling into question all the dogmas sacred to the established journals and publishers', Stead, Op.cit., p.98. As Assistant Editor in Ego, T.S.E. in particular managed to disturb and alarm the poetry-reading public, while at the same time instilling in them some appreciation of a poem's 'essential being' and insisting upon 'the importance of intelligent criticism' (May, 1918).
 2. 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry', Ego, Sept. 1917.
 3. In E.P.'s review of James Joyce's The Dubliners (Ego, 15.7.14), he makes it plain that Joyce 'belongs to our own generation - the 1910's'; similarly, in 'Wyndham Lewis' (Ibid., 15.6.14), E.P. emphasizes that the contemporary young artists are 'not "les jeunes" of "The Thirties" nor of "The Nineties" nor of any other decade save our own'.
 4. R.A., Ego, 1.7.14.
 5. Which reflected the political and social condition of the time too where, beneath the staidly-conservative surface stability, 'boiled a seething subterranean turbulence of discontent and baffled ambition which agitated all Europe till it exploded in Armageddon', (Frank Rutter, Art in My Time, p.163).
 6. Laurence Binyon, 'Tradition and Reaction in Modern Poetry', English Association Pamphlet, No.63 (1926), pp.5-6.

The artist must live by craft and violence. His gods are violent gods There is a recognition of this strife in the arts - in the arts of the moment I think we are sick to death of plausibilities; of smooth answers; of preachers who 'prophecy not the death of kings' We are sick to death of assorted panaceas, of the general acquiescence of artists; of their agreement to have perfect manners, and to mention absolutely nothing unpleasant For thirty or more years we have had, in ¹ deluge, the analyses of the fatty degeneration of life.

Ezra Pound's dissatisfaction with the literary 'status quo' impelled him to take the principles of Imagism, which he had helped to launch, a stage further and in mid-1914, he moved to the next point on the 'curve of his development'² in his association with the Vorticists, amending his creed of the Image to accommodate his new situation: 'The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and into which, ideas are continually rushing'.³ The characteristic outlook of the Vorticists, as demonstrated by the bombast of Blast⁴, was violently anti-sentimental⁵, anti-Romantic, anti-Establishment⁶, and pro-The Present:

We stand for the Reality of the Present - not for the sentimental Future, or the sacripant Past
WE ONLY WANT THE WORLD TO LIVE, and to feel its crude energy flowing through us
We want ... to make individuals, wherever found
BLAST presents an art of Individuals.⁷

-
1. E.P., 'The New Sculpture', Ego., 2.2.14.
 2. Glenn Hughes, conversation with E.P., reported in Imagism and the Imagists (1931), p.38.
 3. 'Vorticism', The Fortnightly Review, XCVI (1914), pp.469-70. 'The Image' was considered by the Vorticists as 'the primary pigment of poetry' (Blast I, 1914) and according to J.G. Fletcher, E.P. contended that Vorticist principles were 'only an extension of the old principle of Imagism, developed to embrace all the arts' (Life is my Song, p.137).
 4. Edited by W. Lewis and published in only 2 issues (June, 1914; July, 1915). It was welcomed by R.A., Ego., 15.7.14, as an organ for new, vigorous art in England and Blast I was distinguished not only by the ribald categories of 'Blasted' and 'Blessed', but also for publishing T.S.E.'s 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' for the first time.
 5. Blast II (1915): 'Our Vortex is not afraid of the Past: it has forgotten its existence./Our Vortex regards the Future as as sentimental as the Past' (because both are distant from the Present).
 6. E.g. Blast I (1914) abused The Times as that 'slut-bellied obstructionist/... sworn foe of free speech and good letters....'
 7. 'Manifesto' introducing Blast I (1914) and signed by E.P., R.A., W.L., Gaudier-Brzeska & Edward Wadsworth.

The iconoclasm of the Vorticists had been to some extent inherited from the European-based Futurist Movement, founded by Marinetti in 1909, although the Vorticists scorned as 'effete' certain aspects of Futurism¹, and derided it in particular in 1914 for being 'passéiste'. Nonetheless, Wyndham Lewis and Pound subscribed to the idea of poetry as a 'violent assault'² and understood the pre-War craving for the 'violent, the self-assertive, and the primitive'³ in the arts which denied the possibility of any masterpiece being produced 'otherwise than aggressive in character'. The principles of Futurism articulated the underlying preoccupation of many people during the first and second decades of the century with unrest, suppressed violence and the imminent release of explosive energy, and not surprisingly, Futurism idealized war for its own sake.

This 'morbid desire for catastrophe'⁴, among many poets⁵ in Europe before the War, contributed to the general aura of restlessness and suggestion of cataclysmic changes imminent, which infected the European 'weltanschauung' and which, in England, vitalized the Vorticist Movement and helped to effect the reappraisal of the form and function of contemporary poetry and literary criticism undertaken

-
1. W.L., Blast I, referred slightly to a Futurist Art Exhibition as 'Impressionism up-to-date' and dismissed the pictures as too "picturesque", melodramatic, and spectacular'.
 2. Futurist Manifesto, 1909, trans. H.M., P.D.I (1913) p.263.
 3. Ross, Op.cit., p.56.
 4. Sir Maurice Bowra, Poetry and the I.W.W. (1961) p.7; Bowra goes on to say that 'whether they merely foresaw the coming bloodshed or actually desired it, the poets believed that it would come and prepared others to regard it as inevitable'.
 5. A striking usage is made of the terms 'tumult', 'violence' and 'barbarism' in literature of this period: Constantin Cavafy's barbarians who never turn up were anticipated eagerly as 'a kind of solution' ('Expecting the Barbarians'); Valery Bryusov in 'The Coming Huns' also welcomed a barbarian invasion; Georg Heym in 'Der Krieg' looked forward to the incarnate spirit of War setting out on its ghastly progress, while Alexander Blok foresaw a holocaust of a vaster, less definable kind in 'Voice from the Chorus'. Leonard Woolf, looking back to the pre-War era, in Beginning Again, p.123, similarly recalls how European civilization began to 'break up under the attacks of the barbarians'.

by the Imagist and Georgian Poets. An awareness of forthcoming violence also permeated English fiction with the 'Invasion-Novel' genre¹ and H.G. Wells' early science fiction² attracting a substantial following; more seriously, E.M. Forster's Howards End of 1910, which provides an insight into the intellectual, social and moral quality of pre-War life and which presents the 'decent' liberalist values under attack, is most particularly 'conscious of impending dissolution'.³ Helen Schlegel predicts that "'Life's going to be melted down, all over the world'" and 'survivals', of an earlier more stable era, such as Howards End, are doomed: 'the melting pot was being prepared for them. Logically they had no right to be alive'.⁴

Similarly, on the pre-War political front, 'beneath an outward prosperity so brilliant... a deeply felt unrest of heart and mind'⁵ pervaded the country and England's condition in 1914 was 'not really such a happy one - a whirlpool of industrial strife and suffragette agitation, of Ulster-men openly preparing for Civil War in Ireland and last-ditch Tories misbehaving themselves in the House of Commons'.⁶ in such a climate, the War when it came, offered some kind of release from tensions 'too great to be contained in the existing social and world setting'. Paradoxically, however, the privileged young men, many of whom were to furnish the officer-corps of Kitchener's Army, and who

-
1. E.g. Saki, When William Came (1913) describes the consequences of German invasion and occupation.
 2. E.g. The World Set Free (1914) a fantasy of the 1950's in which Wells' prophetic talent was exercised in his anticipation of trench warfare: "'From Holland to the Alps, this day ... there must be crouching and lying between half and a million of men, trying to inflict irreparable damage upon one another. The thing is idiotic to the pitch of impossibility"', quoted Bergonzi, Op.cit.,p.25.
 3. Bergonzi, Op.cit.,p.21.
 4. Howards End (Penguin Edition),pp.315-6.
 5. Comment of Sir Michael Sadler, eminent civil servant and educationist quoted in A.P. Newton (ed.),The Empire and the Future (1916)p.3.
 6. Professor Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the I W.W. (1965),p.10.

had enjoyed a 'gay and carefree' youth in a world which 'seemed permanent and invulnerably secure'¹, retained their innocent confidence through that 'last radiant summer when ..., doomed but unaware, [they] danced up to the very edge of that world which was about to crash under [their] feet'.² This pre-War generation³, characterized by its abundant optimism and uninformed enthusiasms, fell an easy prey to War and war-propaganda: it had grown up with 'no sense of danger - that is to say with no sense of responsibility'⁴, and everyone, 'the non-fighters as well as the fighters, had illusions - we certainly all believed that it was a war to end wars'.⁵ War to this generation implied 'campaigns on the Indian frontier, in Egypt, or in South Africa ideas of European War were derived from panoramas of the Franco-Prussian conflict to be seen in continental cities. It was the war of traditional cavalry charged at the foe. When death came, it was a heroic death brought about by heroes on the other side'.⁶ Memories of the Boer War were indistinct and, besides, that had only involved the Regular Army⁷; everyone took it for granted that the old standards of chivalry would prevail and the B.E.F. in August 1914 looked forward jauntily to 'a sort of prolonged Gentlemen v Players cricket match'.⁸

To many young men in 1914, the War came as 'a relief rather than a catastrophe' and was embraced as a challenge that 'was almost a con-

-
1. Lady Violet Bonham Carter, 'The Missing Generation', Sunday Times, 11.11.62. It has to be acknowledged that the unpreparedness of the pre-War generation was perhaps accentuated by those who survived the holocaust and recalled the era with the grim pity born of bitter experience.
 2. Ibid. Cf. Osbert Sitwell, whose contemporaries Raymond Asquith, Patrick Shaw-Stewart, Edward Horner and a host of other brilliant young men were waltzing on 'in complete inexpectation of massacre' (Those Were The Days).
 3. Poignantly defined by Vera Brittain (whose fiancé and brother had been educated at public school ['which stood for militaristic heroism unimpaired by the damping exercise of reason']) and were both killed in action) as a 'guileless' generation, Testament of Youth, p.17.
 4. Mr Britling Sees It Through (1916). 5. Lady V.B.C., Op.cit.
 6. E.Wrench, Struggle 1914-20 (1935), pp.112-3.
 7. As V.B. recalls 'we all knew so little of the real meaning of war', Op.cit., p.67 and 98: 'War was something remote, unimaginable'.
 8. Sitwell, Before the Bombardment, p.308.

scription of the spirit ... a challenge to what [they] felt was [their] untested manhood'¹ and they hastened to 'match' their youthful promise to 'the Hour'. The War supplied a focus for all the pent-up passions and energy of the pre-War world and offered certain 'ingénues' the prospect of an enlivening change from the stifling monotony of the chaperoned 'thé dansant': "'What fun this is going to be!" I had wanted a change of life, for my life had up to date been routine-ridden'.² All in all, it was not surprising that when War was finally declared on Germany, it should have been seen by many people as 'an act both of fulfilment and deliverance'³, through which those tired of the long peace, or frustrated by the intransigence of tradition in the arts, could find an outlet for their pent-up longing for action, or give expression to their desire for expiation or change - 'as swimmers into cleanness leaping'.

On the literary front, on the eve of the War, a growing liberalization of taste was perceptible among the revived poetry-reading public, as well as among the range of literary journals - especially those orientated towards contemporary verse. Largely as a result of the success of G.P.I and Monro's vigorous programme of stimulating a more widespread interest in poetry, this public was prepared to accept the work of lesser-known poets provided it was not excessively radical in content, form or metre, and did not offend the prescribed notion of what a poem should look like. It was no longer considered

-
1. J.B. Priestley, Margin Released, p.82.
 2. Ursula Bloom, Youth at the Gate (1959).
 3. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.31.

essential by a majority of the public or reviewers, that poets should assume a special 'poetic' diction, and the movement towards greater realism in the choice and presentation of subject matter was well received. Although the 'public' poets still commanded a loyal following - which was to proliferate dramatically during the first year or so of the War¹ - the majority of the poetry-readers directed their attention towards the Georgian School who had rejected 'large themes' and 'rhetorical language' and revived popular interest in a strain of realistic verse about commonplace subjects, presented honestly 'in a language close to common speech'², the origins of which could be traced back to the objectives outlined by Wordsworth in the Lyrical Ballads Preface. In spite of their facility for coming to terms with 'immediate experience, sensuous or imaginary' in their verse, the Georgians found the task of merging their poetic and discovered actuality in the maelstrom of Front Line experience an intimidating prospect.

While some soldiers adapted the Georgian idiom as the most appropriate for their nostalgic evocations of England in verse³, certain poets affiliated with the Georgian Movement, and familiar with its precepts concerning the importance of realism, reacted positively against the confident pastoralism of some Georgian Poetry⁴ and Nature the Comforter was transformed into Nature the Indifferent Permanence, who 'set sudden cups /In thousands' for the blood of young men, and whose inviting green slopes 'Chasmed and steepened sheer to infinite space'. Even though

1. See Chapter IV, 'The Home Front'.

2. Stead, Op.cit., p.89.

3. See Chapter II (b) 'Regional and Nostalgic Poetry in the Georgian Idiom'.

4. See Chapter II (c) 'Debilitated and Distorted Pastoral', and sporadic references throughout Chapter II to Owen, Sassoon and Rosenberg.

the Georgian-influenced trench poets were conscious that their 'oaten pipes' were scarcely adequate for articulating the 'vast chants of tragedy', rather than stay silent they determined to find or improvise some more substantial instrument with which to 'tell' their new 'strange music'.

Similarly, poets in the Imagist mode who had reduced expression to a most concentrated complex of words and images, found difficulty¹ in totally assimilating the 'stark and unlovely actualities' of the Western Front in their verse. Logically, in such an age, 'the essence of poetry ... [should be] a stark directness, without a shadow of a lie, or a shadow of deflection anywhere. Everything can go, but the stark, bare, rocky directness of statement, this alone makes poetry, today'.² But stark, bare statements of fact, however direct or vivid, on their own tend towards a barren aestheticism: they need to be supplemented by 'the human judgement, the human evaluation',³ in order to 'make poetry' - as the poets⁴ who practised the Imagist mode most effectively were to discover.

The more overtly subversive tendencies in pre-War poetry, representing the turbulent under-current of feeling in Europe and England, were faced with the horrifying realization that theoretical militancy was no match for the real 'wave of mechanized violence, thoroughly geometrical and anti-vital, that was to sweep over Europe'.⁵ The Futurists and Vorticists had advocated violence, but after two and a half years of war, 'violence had now become too common;

1. See Chapter III (b) 'War Poetry in the Imagist Mode'.

2. D.H. Lawrence, letter, 1.6.16, Letters, p.308.

3. J.G. Fletcher, Life is My Song, pp.213-4.

4. Chapter III, see especially references in (b) to Herbert Read, R.A., and in (a) to Isaac Rosenberg.

5. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.29.

devastation and anarchy [swept] Europe'¹, and the Russian Futurist, Vladimir Mayakovsky, could assert with justification in early 1917 that although 'Futurism has died as a particular group ... it has poured itself out in everyone in a flood. Today, all are Futurists'.²

Yet, in mid-1914, although the general atmosphere was conducive to the production of poetry: an audience stimulated to read poetry and encouraged by liberally-minded critics and reviewers to broaden their expectation of what constituted poetry; and poets - mainly young - but all fervent in their desire to render their own time in terms of itself; there was a fatal innocence in the poets' wholehearted embrace of 'this morning of life ... where everything is wonder and nothing is knowledge'.³ Like the military commanders who envisaged fighting the First World War in terms of the 'blitz-krieg' cavalry-dominated campaigns of the nineteenth century, the poets of 1914 prepared to confront the environment of war with the equipment of their craft apparently hardly equal to the task of accommodating the exigencies of war in verse. The value of their achievement lies in the fact that, having passed through the searing 'baptism of fire' in this first of modern wars, so many of them were able to compromise successfully their technique and previous poetic practice in order to apprehend - in some measure - this totally unprecedented experience.

1. John Cournos, Ego., Jan. 1917.

2. Ibid.,

3. Richard Church, Eight for Immortality (London, 1914), p.9. See Chapter V for discussion of certain concepts which were interpreted very differently as a result of the extreme 'knowledge' gained through the War.

CHAPTER II

THE GEORGIAN RESPONSE TO WAR

It is the object of Chapter II to examine verse written in the 'Georgian idiom' by a plethora of amateur versifiers - mostly combatants - in the course of the War. Some attention will also be paid to the actual contributors to the first three Georgian Poetry Anthologies, but the emphasis will be laid upon the bulk of 'soldier-poets' who had no established literary reputation and who had probably never thought of writing verse before. As the War progressed and the volumes of verse proliferated, the term 'soldier-poet' came to have certain connotations: it would evoke in the popular imagination the picture of a young man, cast in the Rupert Brooke mould of good looks, idealistic, and eager to sacrifice himself for his native land (though not in the spirit of brash jingoism advocated by the elder non-combatant poets). Similarly, the soldier-poet's verse was expected to be 'vivid, definite and concentrated', content simply to 'sing' in the manner of the most mellifluous nature lyrics contributed to G.P. I. It should be simple in expression, direct in approaching the subject (within limits); it should eschew bombastic metre and tone and - above all - it should be imbued with a profound love of the English countryside and a facility for pastoral recourse, even in the heat of battle. Since the body of verse from the soldier-poets was so substantial, an attempt has been made here to look at various areas or dominant themes, beginning with a consideration of the 'new landscape' to which the soldiers had to adapt themselves. In the process of adjusting to their alien surroundings, the combatant-poets fulfilled the popular notion of what kind of verse they should write by producing a good deal of regional or nostalgic verse which was well-received by the Nation at Home (to judge by the abundance of volumes published). As the War dragged on, however, prolonged trench-warfare and the proximity of the soldiers to the earth effected something of a change in combatant verse, away from reflections of home to a closer consideration of the devastation wrought in their immediate environment, and this movement, together with the contemporary critical appraisal, will be fully discussed.

2 (a) 'THE TOPOGRAPHY OF GOLGOTHA' : THE NEW LANDSCAPE

The character of the landscape which the soldiers of the First World War were to encounter on active service was, in most cases, very different from the familiar British topography. The environment differed, of course, depending on the particular 'Theatre of War' to which they were dispatched: Mesopotamia, Northern Italy, Salonika, the Gallipoli Peninsula or the Western Front. 'Mespot' offered sultry desert terrain; the next three fronts presented a mountainous, generally barren aspect, but it was the Western Front - 'that great livid wound stretching from the North Sea, or German Ocean, to the Alps: a wound never ceasing to weep from wan dusk to gangrenous dawn, from sunrise to sunset of Europe in division'¹ - which was to provide the most emotive 'war-scape'.

Perhaps it was because the static nature of trench warfare gave the participants so much time to contemplate their surroundings that so many detailed records of the cratered landscape permeate the writing of combatants, irrespective of their background or literary skill, but most probably it was the cataclysmic annihilation of familiar features from the landscape which prompted this urgent evaluation of what was happening to the natural world. The most immediate medium through which the combatants could essay their re-definition of Nature was the letter. As early as September 1914, it was apparent to one nameless French infantryman² that this War was to have a more penetrating effect on both the landscape and the

1. Henry Williamson, Chapter 1: 'The Staff of Life', A Test to Destruction (1960).

2. Letter to mother, 21.9.14, quoted in John Laffin, Letters from the Front (1973).

psyche of the participants than any before: '[War] is suffering beyond what can be imagined To sleep in a ditch full of water has no equivalent in Dante...'. An equally anonymous compatriot went even further by asserting¹ that 'our time in the trenches transforms us into lumps of mud'. A German medical student, Walter Roy², also writing late in 1914, remarked on the simple dichotomy between the summer of that year which had stimulated 'enthusiasm for Nature' and 'all the effervescence of youth' and the present 'cruel, bitter, earnest stormy winter, death and misery!'

By 1915, the early phenomenon - 'No Man's Land'³ - had become established as an all-too-familiar feature of the daily landscape: 'a shapeless waste - a mass of mine craters'⁴, whose presence was made less alien by the coining of names like Etna and Vesuvius for the more formidable excrescences. But the process of dehumanization which was taking place on the Western Front could not be so easily checked: it was impossible to experience the spring of 1916, for example, where it managed to raggedly manifest itself, except 'through a sort of veil of obscenity'⁵ or through the recollection of spring at home. The natural harbingers of spring in England, the birds and - more especially - the sky-larks, could however no longer be associated with pastoral normality for they were now inseparably connected with morning "stand-to" in the trenches'.⁶

Similarly, at the other end of the trench-day, the sunset could evoke no longer an aura of unalloyed tranquillity, reconciliation

1. Letter to mother, 14.11.14, Laffin, Op.cit.

2. Laffin, Op.cit.

3. See Appendix A for note on the etymology of the phrase 'No Man's Land'.

4. Letter from Capt. Rowland Feilding, Béthune, 7.8.15, Laffin, Op.cit.

5. Capt. T. Cameron Wilson to Mrs Orpen, 3.5.16, Laffin, Op.cit.

6. Ernest Boughton Nottingham, N.C.O., 27.3.16, Laffin, Op.cit.

and rural 'unsophistication': it was all too likely that 'an aeroplane might fly across and puff! puff! ... the whole scene is spoilt by clouds and shrapnel smoke.'¹ Sunrise and sunset, 'established by over a century of Romantic poetry and painting as the tokens of peace and rural charm'², underwent a traumatic reappraisal - both actual and literary - at the Front, when the previously picturesque dawn and twilight became irrevocably identified with the menace of morning and evening 'stand-to's': exactly those 'moments of heightened ritual anxiety' when attack was most likely.

As far as the poetry of the War is concerned, these sunrises and sunsets 'already a staple of prewar Georgian poetry and the literature of the Celtic "Twilight" move to the very centre', forming the 'constant atmosphere and special symbolic method', as illustrated by Rosenberg's 'Break of Day in the Trenches' or Owen's crepuscular 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' or the oft-quoted 'For the Fallen', all of which contribute to the idea of men in unprecedented conditions striving to make some sense of them by referring to inherited tradition.³ Again, in Owen's 'Exposure', the dawn breaks - according to pastoral literary tradition - grey on the eastern horizon, but it is a miserable affair and the grey has a peculiar significance in that it represents the enemy as well as the new day and both are anticipated with sad resignation by the front line troops:

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow...
We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.
Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army
Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey,
But nothing happens.⁴

-
1. Second Lt. William Henry Ratcliffe, June 1916, Laffin, Op.cit.
 2. P.Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory, p.52.
 3. Rupert Brooke anticipated this attraction to dawn and sunset in two of the 1914 Sonnets: 'Peace' and 'The Dead, II', and was himself recalled by W.W.Gibson as an emanation of a 'sunset glow'.
 4. Ed. C.Day Lewis, Collected Poems of W.O., p.48, my underlining.

In the modern popular imagination, grey and sepia are commonly associated with the First World War as being the appropriate hues for the 'last landscape of tens and thousands who lie dead'¹ and in 1922 T.S. Eliot made his own oblique contribution to this mythologizing process when he made use of the new associations of the dawn - acquired through the War - with cold, death and inadequately-buried corpses in Part I of The Waste Land, 'The Burial of the Dead'. Even the rosiness habitually associated with both sunrise and sunset in centuries of literature, comes to represent - as the War progresses - the more sinister 'sanguine sacrifice' of red blood, so that by the end of the War no serious poet could glibly apostrophize these hitherto Romantic half-lights.

In a lighter vein, Bruce Bairnsfather, one of the foremost cartoonists of the War, gave an ironic twist to another staple of Romantic poetry - the moon and its shimmering light - when he depicted in two adjacent cartoons a woman gazing fondly up at the full moon from her bedroom and the caption: 'And to think, it's the same dear old moon that's looking down on HIM!' while the 'Old Bill' character in the adjacent picture, out on a wiring party, scowls at the moon and grumbles: 'This blinkin' moon will be the death of us'.

Captain Ivar Campbell², in a letter home, tries to impart something of the trench-atmosphere to his non-combatant correspondent by drawing an analogy between the bleakness of the alien environment and the predatory nature of life 'in the line', and a similarly deadly but commonplace country activity which his correspondent, well-versed in the ways of the 'old landscape', would recognize, thus facilitating his understanding of the situation endured by the combatants:

1. Stephen Graham, The Challenge of the Dead, (1921), p.92.

2. Quoted Laffin, Op.cit.

No sign of humanity - a dead land ... there was no sound but a cuckoo in a shell-torn poplar. Then, as a rabbit in the early morning comes out to crop grass, a German stepped over the enemy trench - the only living thing in sight. 'I'll take him', says the man near me. And like a rabbit the German falls. And again complete silence and desolation.

A more explicit and comprehensive description of this 'dead land' is offered by Lt. Col. F.E. Whitton in his detailed records of every aspect of trench-life and military progress as they affected the 40th Division, of which he was the commentator. Amid pages of neatly-recorded but mundane factual material, interspersed with plenty of cheering comments about the excellent 'spirits of the men', is this graphic and impassioned delineation of the morass of the Somme battle-field in October 1916:

... churned-up, yeasty sea of mud But no pen can do justice to the front region - 'line' it could not be called. It just beggars description. It consisted of a mass of shell-holes; of a general sea of mud; of lesser lakes and lagoons of icy water. Trenches did not exist, except for short lengths on higher ground; of communication trenches there was none; men had to do the best they could to improve such shell holes 'as were least full of water and other more unpleasant relics of the battle.'¹

When interpreted by an artist, trained to extract every nuance of meaning from each critically-perceived detail, the new landscape assumed even more Golgothan proportions - totally eclipsing any previous battle-wracked field?²

I have seen the most frightful nightmare of a country more conceived by Dante and Poe than by nature, unspeakable, utterly indescribable. In the fifteen drawings I have made I may give you some vague idea of its horror, but only being in it and of it can ever make you sensible of its dreadful nature and of what men in France have to face Evil and the incarnate fiend alone can be master of this war, and no glimmer of God's hand is seen anywhere. Sunset and sunrise

-
1. History of the 40th Division (Gale and Polden, Aldershot, 1926), p.42, quoted in Liddiard, I. Rosenberg : the Half Used Life, for I.R. was with the 40th Div. as a private in A Company, 11th Batt'n, The King's Own Royal Lancasters.
 2. Cf. R.H. Mottram's juxtaposition in The Crime At Vanderlynden's of the 'prancing horses, gay uniforms' and the actual 'neglected arable, smashed buildings'.

are blasphemous, they are mockeries to man, only the black rain out of the bruised and swollen clouds all through the bitter black of night is fit atmosphere in such a land. The rain drives on, the stinking mud becomes more evilly-yellow, the shell holes fill up with green-white water, the roads and tracks are covered in inches of slime, the black dying trees ooze and sweat and the shells never cease. They alone plunge overhead, tearing away the rotting tree stumps, breaking the plank roads, striking down horses and mules, annihilating, maiming, maddening, they plunge into the grave which is this land; one huge grave, and cast up₁ on it the poor dead. It is unspeakable, godless, hopeless...

Such was the terrible impact of this forlorn waste land and such was the potency of Paul Nash's revulsion against it that he determined to be simply 'an artist interested and curious' no longer; he felt impelled - as did Wilfred Owen - to assume the persona of the 'messenger'², bringing back word 'from the men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on forever. Feeble, inarticulate, will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth, and may it burn their lousy souls'.

The War landscape wrenched Nash's art forcibly away from the early aestheticism demonstrated in the delicately-described 'Nash Trees', or the quiet pastoralism of 'Wittenham Clumps',³ to the bitter, powerful expression of a mass grave - of Nature as well as of men.⁴ A cursory glance at Nash's pre-War work and his War paintings reveals the curious distortion which the pastoral underwent at the Front⁵: whereas the early paintings in pastel colours concentrate on the

1. Paul Nash, letter to Margaret Nash, 2.5.17, Outline, (1949).

2. Cf. P.N.'s comment in another letter to M.N., 18.4.17, Op.cit., p. 198: 'We are all sent out here to glean...no one will return empty-handed but bringing his sheaves with him'. P.N. made it his business, as an Official War Artist (October 1917 to War's end) to show the Nation at Home 'What the scene of war is like'.

3. See Appendix B.

4. Of P.N.'s 'We are Making a New World' (see Appendix B), Eric Newton in 'Art and the First World War', The Guardian, 27.2.64, wrote: '[It was] both factual and personal, and because it was both it became an instantly acceptable image. It depicts ravaged nature, Earth stripped of living vegetation and turned into heaving mud, trees stricken and decapitated.... It was a world that would have disgraced the moon itself'.

5. See Section 2 (c) for discussion of the Distorted Pastoral in verse.

careful delineation of graceful trees¹, the war canvasses² are pre-occupied with the havoc wrought by war on both nature and man: shell craters pit the churned ground; rusting metal and concrete slabs jut from the scabrous earth; a few desultory weeds and the skeletons of trees protrude from the sides of trenches; the baleful sky is lit by exploding shells or dotted by the menacing silhouettes of aeroplanes; and the total effect (not forgetting the ironic titles: 'We Are Making a New World', 'Spring in the Trenches') is to depict a landscape which has been annihilated and which is a mockery of the artist's earlier understanding of nature - gleaned from the tranquil English country-side in 'an age of peace and security'.³

The juxtaposition of these quite different interpretations of 'landscape' (in pre-War and War paintings) had considerable impact upon the poet Herbert Read, who was to become closely associated with Nash after the War, and who recalled⁴ the immediate conviction that he felt when confronted by Nash's trench paintings on exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in May 1918. So impressed was Read by the realism of Nash's depiction of Nature violated that he attempted a comparative 'word-picture' of the devastation:⁵

...here was someone who could convey, as no other artist, the phantasmagoric atmosphere of No Man's Land. Other artists were to depict the psychological horrors of war - especially the poets and novelists - but the aspect which Paul Nash revealed was the outrage on Nature - the Nature which had been so delicate and sensuous to New English eyes. The revulsion which we had experienced could not have been more violent. Here, for example, are the feeble words in which I myself had tried to convey

-
1. E.g. 'The Elms', 1914 and 'Summer Garden'.
 2. The particular paintings considered here - 'We Are Making a New World' and 'Spring in the Trenches' - are reproduced in Appendix B.
 3. Herbert Read, Paul Nash (Penguin Painters Series, 1944).
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.

our outraged feelings: they come from a narrative¹ which I was writing at the Front about the same time that Paul Nash was making his sketches:

'All was black and upriven. In the valley the shell-holes were full of water and reflected the harsh cold sky. Devil's Wood was a naked congregation of shattered trunks, like an old broken comb against the skyline. An emotion - a sudden realization and anger - flushed his brain. This was his earth, earth of lithe green trees, earth of vigorous sap and delicate growth. Now riven and violated: a wide glabrous desolation; a black diseased scab, erupted and pustulous....'²

In Read's view, the crucial difference between his description - graphic as it was - and the immediacy of Nash's paintings, lay in their relative powers to convince: Read's words lack objectivity and the reader cannot instantaneously realize the meaning - he needs time to absorb the detail - but Nash's painting 'communicated truth directly' and totally.³

The recognition by writers that the devastation of the landscape was 'unspeakable', and therefore incommunicable through the medium of words, probably accounts for their obsession with pictorial detail in trying to delineate the features of this 'war-scape' to those at Home who had no conception of the magnitude of the destruction. They emphasized colours, natural shapes and textures in order to suggest through ironic contrast the transfiguration of the known and familiar: Guy Chapman uses⁴ this technique

1. The 'narrative' referred to here actually appeared in Read's short story, 'Killed in Action', from Ambush: Criterion Miscellany, No. 16, reproduced in Short Stories of the First World War, edited by George Bruce, 1971, pp.181-2. This passage might very well provide the 'commentary' to a Nash trench-painting, if the narrator's intermittent intrusion were overlooked.
2. Read goes on to describe 'black shell-holes' like 'earthy lips puckered to kiss...incestuously desirous...eager for his red wet blood' which is comparable with Owen's conceit of earth setting 'sudden cups /In thousands for their blood', ('Spring Offensive').
3. E.Blunden in Section XXV, Undertones of War, also pays tribute to the artist's evocative power when he applauds John Nash's skill in drawing 'this bad dream' of 'trees like black tusks and brown clods of hillocks', with 'exactitude'.
4. A Passionate Prodigality, (1933), p.187.

in his description of the view from Tower Hamlets Ridge¹ where he tries to convey the sinister atmosphere of an alien environment by means of constant reference to natural features (the bushes and avenue of trees, for example) which would be recognized by those who had not experienced the war-scape at first hand:

...The ornamental water [of the magnate's estate now overrun by trenches] has been replanned by more recent landscape gardeners; it is a quag of islands and stagnant pools, over which foul gases hang. The undergrowth has been tangled with more spiked and wiry bushes than ever nature grew. The woods are a quayside of naked spars. A tree hangs a maimed branch which creaks in the wind; another has been pruned to the roots: here a whole avenue has been sliced to extinction. The soil has been churned and furrowed until no two paces are level. In this belt, perhaps four miles wide, there are no seasons. The air grows colder or warmer; the days contract or lengthen: but the earth makes no response. To our eyes, its life has ceased. There is not a blade of grass, not a leaf. Only man, by his superior agility, has survived; but not often, if the sallow death-masks near the line - to bury them at this season demands greater leisure and fortitude than the infantry can command - are to be believed....

As far as Home itself was concerned, that belonged to 'another world that is gone from us',³ to be retained principally as a poignant memory submerged beneath the 'hard facts' or to be apotheosized to the exclusion of the brutal reality.⁴ The contrast between the new and the familiar natural landscape manifested itself in several different ways: there was the simple, obvious differentiation between the Front and the rest area behind the lines where:

Life, life abundant sang...and smiled; the lizards ran warless in the warm dust; and the ditches were trembling quick with odd tiny fish, in worlds as remote as Saturn.⁵

-
1. The tendency to name salients, buttes, ridges, even sections of the Front line, after familiar features of the home land or townscape only underlines the irony.
 2. Cf. Chapman, *Op.cit.*, pp.52-3: 'the familiar green field of dirty green with its hedges of wire' and see Section 2 (c) for further examples of barbed-wire metaphors: e.g. R.H.Sauter's 'unflowering' metal 'bramble thicket' in 'Barbed Wire'.
. E.M.Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, pp.83-4.
 4. The next Section deals specifically with regional and nostalgic poetry written in the Georgian idiom.
 5. Edmund Blunden, 'The Cherry Orchard', *Undertones of War*, (1928).

and an even more subtle distinction was made between billets early in the War and those which showed evidence of increasing dilapidation: the shattered village of Mailly-Maillet, for example - 'Up that naked road is the stern eye of Beaumont Hamel - turn, Amaryllis, turn - this way the tourist's privacy is preserved by ruins and fruitful branches',¹ or the grotesque scenario for a Concert Party: 'a filthy, limb-strewn and most lonely world's end',² where a Picard village had been and where still a foundation of bricks or the stump of an apple-tree, or even a leaf or two of ivy might be found'.³ This kind of 'domestic ruin' - 'shattered estaminets, withered fields ... naked hearths dripping with rain' - evoked in Edmund Blunden⁴ particularly, with his acute appreciation of the pastoral, the profoundest compassion⁵. By late 1917, he was compelled to realign his sympathy for the landscape: Nature was no longer a refuge (although the earth itself might afford some primitive protection⁶), no longer the 'innocent greenwood' but the veil - the 'kindly-meant lie' - behind which lurked the 'devilish truth'.

A similar interesting gradation in devastation was monitored by observers of the 'new landscape' who traced the deterioration

-
1. Blunden, Section X, Op.cit.
 2. Perhaps the very phrase 'world's end' is an unconscious ironical transcription of the title of William Morris' popular romance, The Well at the World's End, (1896).
 3. Blunden, Section XII, Op.cit.
 4. For a more detailed discussion of Blunden, see Section 2 (d).
 5. This sentiment was echoed in Blunden's poetry e.g. 'The Sunlit Vale' and the dichotomous 'Report on Experience' which traces the prostitution of the pre-War idyll.
 6. Cf. the concept of the earth shared by Paul Bäumer, All Quiet on the Western Front: 'To no man does the earth mean so much as to the soldier. When he presses himself down upon her long and powerfully, when he buries his face and his limbs deep in her from the fear of death by shell-fire, then she is his only friend, his brother, his mother....'

in the trenches from Spring 1915, 'flat meadows with corn-flowers, marguerites and poppies growing in the long grass',¹ to those 'sown with jagged iron' of late 1917: 'South of the Ancre was broad-backed high ground, and on that, a black vapour of smoke and naked tree-trunks or charcoal, an apparition which I found was called Thiepval Wood'.² Compared with the 'completed hopelessness' of Zillebeke Lake, the pre-Somme warfare and trench environment seemed 'almost Arcadian'.³

But perhaps it is in the War-novels, memoirs or recollections of the War landscape, written some years after the War, that its 'deadly conventional Armageddon'⁴ features are most vividly realized. Usually such detailed recollection was aided by the individual mind's sense of irony: the unconscious comparison between pre-War and War conditions and conceptions - especially those pertaining to landscape - as Private Alfred M. Hale acknowledged in his memoir, written four years after the War and now lodged in the Imperial War Museum: '....It is the irony of things, as they were in those days, that has forced me back on my tracks, as it has a habit of doing, whenever writing of what I then went through'. In fact, the 'irony which memory associates with the events, little as well as great, of the First World War has become an inseparable element of the general vision of war in our time'.⁵

1. Robert Graves, Goodbye to All That, p.89. Graves goes on to mention, almost casually, the 'few shell-holes, ...the wreck of an aeroplane, our barbed wire and theirs'.

2. Blunden, Op.cit.

3. The contrast between the post- and pre-Somme situation is epitomized in E.B.'s description of his Battalion's move from Ancre to Warloy in late 1916: 'not the same "we" who in the golden, dusty summer tramped down into the verdant valley, even then a haunt of every leafy spirit and the blue-eyed ephydriads, not Nature's slimy wound with spikes and blackened bone'.

4. Sassoon, The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston, p.624.

5. Fussell, Op.cit., p.33.

Trench warfare was unique in that it necessitated intimate communion, on the part of the soldier, with the earth¹, 'this present, ever-present eternally present misery, this stinking world of sticky, trickling earth ceilinged by a strip of threatening sky'.² Another disquieting factor which the soldiers - particularly those already with experience of travel on the Continent - appreciated was the 'ridiculous proximity'³ of the line, the soldier's troglodyte world, the world which might have been another planet', to 'home...England...sanity'.⁴ As Lady Violet Bonham Carter recalled in 1962 when remembering 'The Missing Generation'⁵:

One of my most vivid memories is of the emotions and atmosphere created by the men coming home on leave from the trenches. It was a relief and yet, in a way, heart-break. Because they were fighting just across the Channel, almost on our doorstep ... they would come back very often for short leaves with the mud still sticking on them.

For the combatants themselves, the restriction of their trench habitat compelled them to observe every day the devastation wrought by modern artillery, equalling the damage previously only caused by such natural phenomena as 'earthquakes and eruption' and they were constantly reminded that death was both imminent and the only certain fact of life in the Line:

...Concrete strong-posts were smashed and tilted sideways; everywhere the chalky soil was pocked and pitted with huge shell-holes; and wherever we looked the

-
1. Cf. the comments of: Sassoon, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer, p.444, 'The War was mainly a matter of holes and ditches'; G. Coppard, With a Machine-Gun to Cambrai, p.87, 'we lived a mean and impoverished sort of existence in lousy scratch-holes'.
 2. E.Norman Gladden, Ypres 1917: A Personal Account, (1967)p.65.
 3. Fussell, Op.cit., p.65.
 4. John Brophy and Eric Partridge, The Long Trail: Soldiers' Songs & Slang! (1965),p.22. Equally, those in the Home Counties, e.g. Kipling in Burwash on the Sussex /Kent border, were also conscious of the War's closeness. Kipling recorded that he actually heard the preparation at Passchendaele.
 5. Article in the Focus Column of The Sunday Times, 11.11.62.

mangled effigies of the dead were our 'memento mori'
.... Floating on the surface of the flooded trench was
the mask of a human face which had detached itself from
the skull...¹

and:
... the trenches that run in this [Valley of Death] have a
look of earthquake crevasses ...as if whole tombs of un-
couth things had been emptied on the ruins of the earth's
convulsion. And there, where no dead are, the very earth
is cadaverous.²

The annihilation of both nature and man in the Ypres Salient im-
pressed even the ordinarily less-articulate P.B.I.³ and lent his
depiction of the scene the quiet distinction of unadorned reality,
sincerely recollected:

Not a tree, not a blade of grass, not one green living
shoot, not a bird, not an insect - one vast stretch of
pulverised and poisoned earth and mud. No one can imag-
ine such a place unless they had actually seen it. The
effect on you was worse than shelling or fighting, *although*
you had that as well. Will power alone kept you going
Once lose that and you were finished.⁴

In such an environment, the seasons of the year were often
indistinguishable against the backdrop of war which had become
'a habit so confirmed and inevitable' that ' [it had] its grips
on the world just as surely as spring or summer'⁵ and it was quite
possible to attribute to an April day the 'yellow corpse-like'
quality more appropriate to November. A further irony attached to
the fact that spring - traditionally the season for pastoral cele-
bration - was, during the War, the most popular time for launching
offensives, as in the Spring of 1918, an aspect of 'ironic past-
oral' later assimilated by Eliot into the image of April as 'the
cruellest month, breeding /Lilacs out of the dead land'.

1. Sassoon, M.I.O., pp.434-5.

2. Henri Barbusse, Under Fire, (1916), p.268.

3. Army slang for 'Poor Bloody Infantryman'.

4. Ernest A. Atkins, 26699 B. Co., 16th Kings Royal Rifle Corps,
33rd Div. 100th Brigade, 4th Army Corps, who wrote a 50,000
word journal, A Few Tales of 1914-18, quoted by M. Moynihan,
People at War 1914-18, (1973).

5. Quoted from Letters published in Outline by Margot Eates,
Paul Nash: The Master of the Image (1973), p.22.

Yet, Nature tried to reassert herself amid 'the black nihilism of the ... battle wastes'¹, by means of the characteristic flaming poppies and singing larks undaunted by even the heaviest of bombardments. Paul Nash, sketching from 'the back-garden of the trenches' in Spring 1917, mingled exultation with his astonishment at finding a fresh efflorescence of the native flora and fauna: a crop of 'joyous' bright-gold dandelions on the parapet; a nearby lilac bush 'breaking into bloom'; a recently 'desolate and most ruinous' wood of gas-poisoned, decapitated trees, managing to 'sprout somewhere' in a 'vivid green' which masked the mutilation, and - the most 'ridiculous incongruity' of all - a nightingale's throbbing song pouring out of the 'wood's bruised heart'.² Recalling the Summer of 1918, Cecil Lewis in Sagittarius Rising specifies more clearly the juxtaposition of Nature flourishing amid Nature destroyed in a prose pastoral elegy. He walks through the 'diseased, pocked, rancid' area behind the Line and is much moved by the sight of 'clumps of crimson poppies' among the 'devastated cottages, the tumbled, twisted trees, the desecrated cemeteries', which thrust from the 'lips of craters, heedless of human fury and stupidity, Flanders poppies, basking in the sun'. The irony of the situation is intensified when, suddenly, 'a lark rose up from among them and mounted, shrilling over the diapason of the guns....'³

-
1. Henry Williamson, The Patriot's Progress, (1930).
 2. Letter to Margaret Nash, printed in Outline, quoted by Margot Eates, Op.cit., p.22. The accretion of Nash's impressions of April/May 1917 at the Front, which he carefully detailed in this letter, constituted an appositely-titled water-colour: 'Chaos Decoratif' (see Appendix B).
 3. Sagittarius Rising, p.113. Cf. Sassoon who noted a similar incongruity: 'A linnet who had lost her way / Sang on a blackened bough in hell'.

Perhaps because so much of the territory through which the trenches meandered was originally arable land, there was a suggestion that this unnatural occupation was only temporary,¹ and the 'implacable spirit of that borderland so often fought over'², symbolized by R.H. Mottram's 'Spanish Farm' would never be 'really conquered'; the day would come when the land would be ploughed by the farmer rather than by bullets and projectiles which would later be considered 'useless things' to be thrown 'on the scrap-heap'³ and corn would again grow on soil enriched by blood. Those returning to the Somme area today, however, comment on its sullenly peaceful beauty: where the shell and mine craters gouged the earth, an indentation is still distinguishable and the old barbed wire (now used for fencing) is a poignant reminder.

More frequently, however, the contrast between the use to which this 'tortured earth' was put in the War and its previous function as solid, farming country only served to underline the ironic distortion of the traditionally-accepted ideas of the pastoral and contributed to the charging of the new 'lunar landscape' - comprised of 'grinning skeletons', 'festoons of mud-caked wire', 'miniature mountain-ranges of saffron earth, and trees like gibbets', and the 'titanic casts of dying and shell-shocked actors' - with a 'romantic electricity': the old myth of

1. Although, at the time, to the 'Neverendians' it seemed the War might never end but would become the 'permanent condition of mankind', Fussell, *Op.cit.*, p.71, a view shared by the French ('Quand sera-ce fini?') and at least one German, "I see no end to it....It is the suicide of nations", Philip Gibbs, Now It Can Be Told, p.408.

2. Mottram, The Spanish Farm, (1924). Similarly, the Belgian peasant woman, Madeleine, is depicted as 'the most concrete expression of humanity's survival in spite of its own perversity and ignorance'.

3. R.C. Sherriff & Vernon Bartlett, Journey's End (1930), p.92.

the pastoral landscape was slowly replaced by a newly-conceived myth of the twentieth century war-scape as a 'cratered nothingness',¹ 'worm-dead watery wastes'.²

This re-mythologizing process was accompanied by a change of consciousness on the literary scene from the world of 'traditional moral action delineated in traditional moral language',³ by established writers such as Hardy, Kipling and Conrad, to Eliot's The Waste Land with its 'rats' alleys, dull canals and dead men who have lost their bones'. The last pre-War summer, June/July 1914, has assumed for the 'modern imagination' - as Professor Fussell has pointed out⁴ - the status of 'a permanent symbol for anything innocently⁵ but irrecoverably lost' and has marked the transition from the idea of Nature as a benign force celebrated through the pastoral convention to that of an alien presence: at best, indifferent to man's sufferings and, at worst, actively conspiring in his destruction - no wonder that it was said: 'Georgian complacency died in the trenches'.⁶ After immersion in the trenches, it was no longer possible to "describe war" in traditional literary ways': the catastrophic impact of the War compelled its victims (for so those involved in it came to regard themselves⁷) to 'domesticate' the fantastic and normalize the unspeakable,⁸ for they began to suspect the ominous rumour

1. Wyndham Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, p.132.

2. H. Williamson, Op.cit.

3. Fussell, Op.cit., p.23.

4. Ibid., p.24.

5. Cf. Philip Larkin's phrase, 'Never such innocence again' from his poem 'MCMXIV', written early in the 1960's which commemorates the 'sweet, generous people [of the remote Great War] who pressed forward and all but solicited their own destruction', Fussell, Ibid., p.19.

6. Cf. David Daiches' comment, Poetry and the Modern World, (Chicago, 1940), p.58: Prolongation of the War made an anachronism of the Georgians' 'meditative rusticity' which ' [domiciled] the western front along the lanes & fields of England'.

7. See Chapter V for discussion of the Sacrifice/Victim theme.

8. Fussell, Op.cit., p.74.

that the War might establish itself as an 'inevitable condition of modern life'.¹

What the War landscape did was to present itself as a demonic anti-pastoral to the hosts of British soldiers who had unconsciously (or consciously) assimilated the traditional pre-War concept of the pastoral which eulogized the ideal of an untainted English countryside - an ideal to which the Georgian Poets of G.P.I and II had given additional impetus. As the War dragged on and the War zone (ironically stretching through rich arable land, reminiscent of the farmland of Gloucestershire, the South Midlands and the West Country; and rolling downland, as in the Somme district, not dissimilar to the familiar downs of Wessex and Sussex) testified to the cataclysmic destruction, it became increasingly difficult to reconcile this 'graveyard of civilization',² 'this miasmic boneyard'³ to the innocent pre-War pastoral idyll.

Furthermore, it would be impossible for the truthful survivors to ever again rely on such phrases as the 'innocent green-sward', with its connotations of the pastoral idyll for, from now on, 'rural life ... [would be] tainted by awareness of "the enemy"; forever one will be conscious in a new way of adversary hazards'.⁴ The excoriated landscape, stripped of verdure, recalled - to a number of the more literary-minded combatants - the blasted heath in Macbeth or, more significantly, King Lear, where the devastated environment, pared to a bare skeleton, parallels the reduction of man to 'the thing itself'.

1. Fussell, Op.cit., p.74. Such suspicions can be seen to receive later scientific verification if C.G.Jung's comment, 'the war... was not yet over, but was continuing to be fought within the psyche', Memories, Dreams, Reflections (N.Y. 1963), p.203, is to be believed.

2. John Harris, Covenant With Death, (1961).

3. H.Williamson, Chapt. 1, Test to Destruction.

4. Fussell, Op.cit., p.258.

Frederic Manning¹ acutely observed in his analysis of the relationship between man and his new landscape that there is an 'extraordinary veracity in war, which strips man of every conventional covering he has and leaves him to face a fact as naked and inexorable as himself': the problem for the poets writing in every idiom, but particularly those whose verse was habitually governed by the Georgian pastoral convention, was firstly how to come to terms themselves with the new, 'naked' landscape and the subsequent reduction of life to its simplest terms, and secondly, how to communicate the 'inexorability' of these new conditions to those at home whose understanding of landscape was limited to an idealized appreciation of the English country-side and who shrank from the burden of 'very much reality'.

1. Her Privates We, p.43.

2 (b) REGIONAL AND NOSTALGIC POETRY IN THE GEORGIAN IDIOM

Faced with the exigencies of a generally savage and alien War-scape, it was only to be expected that many of the combatants would seek comfort in wistful reminiscences of the 'Mother Country' and, in particular, would indulge in - often grossly-idealized - contemplation of the countryside of home. The civilian press recognized that 'our fighting troops', while engaged in different theatres of war, would 'think more of England ... than they thought of her when they were at home'¹, and it was similarly accepted as common practice that those combatants who, either on account of their natural inclination for poetic utterance, or in the interests of economy and brevity, sought to articulate their longing in verse-form, should adopt quintessentially 'Georgian' subjects - 'remembered flowers and bird-songs' - as 'symbols of a love of country which is too deep for logic'.²

The rural associations of much pre-War Georgian Poetry which strove to achieve a more positive relationship with Nature have already been discussed³ and, bearing in mind this predilection for the pastoral, it is hardly surprising to find that innumerable verses written in the Georgian idiom during the War are imbued with nostalgia for 'the land'. What is more unexpected is that this mildly escapist tendency on the part of the 'braver

-
1. Taken from an article 'Literature for the Trenches', T.L.S., 29.9.15, which discussed the likely demand for familiar extracts from English literature to be presented in the form of broad-sheets for the edification of troops in the 'dreary, doubtful, waiting hours'.
 2. Review of Duncan Campbell Scott, Lundy's Lane and Other Poems, T.L.S., 22.2.17.
 3. See Chapter I : Pre-War poets who had to live in towns thought 'of the country, using the slenderest of associations as a means of escape', Bullough, Op.cit., p.56, so it was inevitable that this escapist tendency would be intensified when the poets found themselves geographically isolated from home.

'spirits' of the New Army should be indulged in on such a large scale by those combatant-versifiers who, having been 'shocked into poetry'¹, naturally seized upon 'home themes': the 'English countryside, English crafts and English sports'², and - more especially - 'English farms, and fields, moors and hedgerows'³, as 'solace amid the horrors of war'.⁴

This nostalgic attachment to the land, characterized by Masfield⁵ as such 'dumb loving of the Berkshire [or any other county's] loam /As breaks the dumb hearts of the English kind' had been earlier experienced by the 'Imperialist exiles'⁶ of the nineteenth century who had served in distant colonies and had looked on England as 'home' in:

that special sense in which home is a memory and an ideal. Some of the images of this 'home' are of central London But many are of an ideal rural England: its green peace contrasted with the tropical or arid places of actual work; its sense of belonging, of community, idealized by contrast with the tensions of colonial rule and the isolated alien settlement. The birds and trees and rivers of England ... these were the terms of many imagined and actual settlements.⁷

The English countryside was thus envisaged as a bulwark against the chaos of industrial life as well as an Arcadia for the oppressed colonial officials, and the response of many soldiers in the First World War is a logical development of this colonial

1. Galloway Kyle, Preface, Soldier Poets I (Sept. 1916), p.7.

2. James Reeves, Introduction, Georgian Poetry, p.xv

3. R.H.Ross, The Georgian Revolt, p.260.

4. Galloway Kyle, Op.cit.

5. 'August 1914', Poems (1948), pp.284-6. The poem begins with an evocative description of the conventional pastoral landscape: 'Beyond the hedge the sheep-bells in the fold /Stumble on sudden music and are still' and concludes with a solemn reference to other country-men who, having relinquished their 'lone Downland .../Loved to the death, inestimably dear' for the 'misery of a soaking trench' would be rewarded in the hour of their death by a vision of this 'quiet scene' and their spirits will subsequently haunt 'the fields of home and Downland copses'.

6. Fussell, Op.cit., p.232.

7. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (N.Y. 1973), pp.281-2.

attitude for they resorted to contemplation of their home-land in order to escape from the rigours and terrors of trench-life.

As Professor Fussell has pointed out¹:

Recourse to the pastoral is an English mode of both fully gauging the calamities of the Great War and imaginatively protecting oneself against them.² Pastoral reference whether to literature or to actual rural localities and objects, is a way of invoking a code to hint by anti-thesis at the indescribable;³ at the same time, it is a comfort in itself, like rum, a deep dug-out, or a woolly vest.

This idea of pastoral contemplation as a comfort in itself is well-illustrated in a letter which typifies the attitude of many young soldiers physically isolated from their native environments but stimulated by certain familiar features in the new landscape to reminisce about the past security of home in order to anaesthetize the anxiety of the present moment:

... it is lovely [in the spring] sitting in the sun and listening to the cock chaffinch and yellow-hammers tuning up, and expanding in the aura which has come straight from Burnt Hill Even in this hole in a turnip-field we are conscious of the largior [sic] aether, which is as broad as from here to England, at least, and as deep as all past years, made warm with old happiness.⁴

In many cases, this reminiscence took the form of a direct address, through an apostrophe, to a specific area: Cumberland⁵,

1. Op.cit., p.235.

2. Such pastoral recourse is not, however, an exclusively English trait nor is it confined to the Great War context. A recent illustration of the stylized pastoral idyll juxtaposed with unspeakable carnage and destruction is to be found in Theodor Angelopoulos' epic undertaking Travelling Players, released at the National Film Theatre in 1975. A troupe of travelling actors present their innocent 'ε.δωλλικκό δράμα', with its flimsy backdrop of Arcadian hillside with sheep, against a sinister wider socio-political background, spanning 16 years of Greek history (1936-52) and encompassing invasion, occupation and eventual Civil War.

3. Cf. Sir Maurice Bowra's comment, Poetry and the I.W.W., p.16: 'The surprises and paradoxes of war invite its participants to identify its uncouth scenes with others from a very different order...to bring it into the range of intelligible experience'.

4. Dennis Barnett, letter quoted L.Housman, War Letters of Fallen Englishmen, (1930). 5. Nowell Oxland, 'Outward Bound', e.g.

Berkshire¹, Gloucestershire², Sussex³ and the West Country⁴ were popular choices, probably because they were among the least-industrialized counties of England and they coincided most nearly with the ideal England of the imagination, as visualized by Rupert Brooke⁵ in the persona of 'An Unusual Young Man', sitting on a Cornish cliff-top after hearing that War had been declared with Germany:

He was immensely surprised to perceive that the actual earth of England held for him a quality ... which, if he'd ever been sentimental enough to use the word, he'd have called 'holiness' Grey, uneven little fields, and small, ancient hedges rushed before him, wild flowers, elms and beeches, gentleness, sedate houses of red brick, proudly unassuming, a countryside of rambling hills and friendly copses...

It is this 'holy' quality in the earth itself which Brooke endeavours to evoke in the often-maligned 'The Soldier', in the suggestion of a mystical relationship between the itinerant English soldier and the actual land which 'bore [him], shaped, made aware, /Gave once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam, /A body of England's, breathing English air, /Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home'. Such is the sanctity of this bond between the soldier and his native land, he can be assured that, if he should

-
1. John Masefield, 'August 1914'.
 2. Celebrated especially by F.W. Harvey and Ivor Gurney (see below) and a potent influence on Edward Thomas.
 3. Alfred Bathurst Norman, Ditchling Beacon (1918). Sussex - and especially the line of downs from Ditchling to Firle Beacon - is apotheosized as 'this holy ground', 'That most holy spot' and 'sacred place'; and although most of Norman's verses were written while he was at Oxford or training as a pilot in the North of England, all are characterized by the yearning to 'revisit in spirit his native haunts'. The 'smooth lawns' of Sandbeck Hall over which he made a training flight 'minded me of.../Whyly hid in Sussex woods, /Of Firle and Waringore, /Of Stanmer in the lone hills, /Where I may walk no more'.
 4. Geoffrey Howard, "'Without Shedding of Blood"'
 5. G. Matthews in his essay on 'Brooke and Owen', Stand, IV, No. 3, p. 30 interprets R.B.'s relationship with his homeland thus: 'England for Brooke was the sum of the sensations of goodness, that her people, products and topography inspired in him... [which he] hesitantly called "holiness"' and which he carried within him 'as a trustee'.

have the misfortune to die abroad, he will transmute that alien terrain into a 'riche ' earth simply because he has been nurtured 'under an English heaven' and therefore his 'corner of a foreign field' must - 'per se' - be 'for ever England'.

Perhaps a brief synopsis of the genesis of this seminal poem will elucidate what is meant by the expression 'sanctity of the bond between the soldier and his native land'. According to his biographer, Christopher Hassall¹, Brooke had been deeply influenced since 1912 by Hilaire Belloc's fantasy, The Four Men², in which the writer had described - enlivened by verse interpolations - an imaginary pilgrimage across the South Downs to the Valley of the Arun ('perhaps the most verse-producing mile in the world') to 'chronicle ... [the cherished sights and sounds of his native Sussex countryside] that soon must pass away'. Belloc unashamedly identifies himself with the 'high Downs that are my brothers and my repose'³ and, approaching the end of his journey on Barlavington Down, 'whence all the world lies out before one',⁴ he is so moved by the panorama of the familiar weald - 'all the land which is knit in with our flesh'⁵ - that he would have pronounced blessing on all the villages and landmarks 'had I known some form of word or spell which might convey an active benediction, but as I knew none such, I repeated instead the list of their names to serve

1. Rupert Brooke, p.482.

2. 1912.

3. The Four Men, p.304.

4. Ibid.

5. A comparable sense of communion between the land (of Sussex) and the people who live on it, infuses Rudyard Kipling's Puck Stories: '....Memory, Use and Love make live /Us and our fields alike - /That deeper than our speech and thought, /Beyond our reason's sway, /Clay of the pit when we were wrought, /Yearns to its fellow-clay', (quoted Rudyard Kipling, A Biography, Charles Carrington, p.379).

'instead of a prayer'.¹

Feeling that only in verse could he give adequate expression to his sense of identification with the land, 'the way in which our land and we mix up together and are part of the same thing', Belloc began to give a metrical expression to his thoughts and accumulate the lines as they suggested themselves to him: 'One with our random fields we grow ... because of lineage and because /The soil and memories out of mind /Embranch and broaden all mankind /And I shall pass but this shall stand /Almost as long as No-Man's Land'.² Coupled with this fierce sympathy for his particular region - 'one steadfast piece of earth which had nourished him and given him his being' - was the thought, crucial to Brooke's appreciation of Belloc's book, that if a man could somehow himself 'lend [this earth] glory and do it service ... it will be a friend to him for ever, and he [will have] outflanked death in a way'. The last stanzas of Belloc's composition on Barlavington Down have a special relevance to Rupert Brooke:

He does not die that can bequeath
Some influence to the land he knows,
Or dares, persistent, interwreath
Love permanent with the wild hedgerows;
He does not die, but still remains
Substantiate with his darling plains

The beeches know the accustomed head
Which loved them, and a peopled air
Beneath their benediction spread
Comforts the silence everywhere;
For native ghosts return and these
Perfect the mystery in the trees....

-
1. Cf. the tendency of many front-line Georgian Poets to name places in the new landscape which had become landmarks in a hostile environment and to specify local spots in their recollections of a particular home region. As the War progressed this habit of naming natural and unnatural landscape-features (Hill 60, Devil's [Delville] Wood, e.g.) assumed an even more poignant significance for '... abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments', A Farewell to Arms, p.144.
 2. A curiously prophetic usage of the term 'No Man's Land'.

In Rupert Brooke's treatment of the 'sentiment of local patriotism'¹, the emphasis has shifted slightly: 'instead of the patriot being "substantiate with his darling plains", Brooke made them substantiate with him, a part of his mind which if needs must, is buried with him in the corner of some field. "He does not die but still remains", said Belloc. "If I should die", says Brooke, it is England which remains, even on foreign soil'.² Originally, Brooke had intended the fifth sonnet of the 1914 Sonnet-Sequence to be entitled 'The Recruit', since the sonnet's subject was supposed to be a civilian who had discovered, through enlistment, a possible way of 'bequeathing his possessions; his country to the earth (which in a way would become his country) and the rest, the sights and sounds - "that scented store /Of song and flower and sky and face"³ - would somehow be returned whence they had come, for others to enjoy'.⁴ With the change of title to 'The Soldier', the sonnet seems to assume a more positively conventional 'patriotic' quality⁵, and appears to the casual reader as a statement of unequivocal national pride - quite in keeping with the prevailing

-
1. Hassall, Op.cit., p.484, and cf, 'An Unusual Young Man', New Statesman, 29.8.14. Interestingly, R.B.'s absorption with this 'sentiment' persisted up to his death in the Aegean, at which time he was contemplating a 'sort of threnody - really a discussion of England' (letter to Abercrombie, quoted Hassall, Op.cit., p.501), and in another letter to Violet Asquith (Ibid., p.504) he enlarged on the projected undertaking: it would be 'a very serene affair, full of major chords and larger outlooks, like an English lawn at sunset', though, in common with many combatant poets, R.B. found it difficult to concentrate on writing which needed 'a more certainly undisturbed subconscious'. One fragment of the project survives in a letter to E.M. where R.B. cites 'In Avons of the heart her rivers run' as a 'lovely' line.
 2. Hassall, Op.cit., p.484.
 3. 'The Treasure' - R.B.'s first poem after the Declaration of War, it eventually preceded the 1914 Sonnets as a kind of Preface.
 4. Hassall, Op.cit., p.485.
 5. So it appeared to Dean Inge who quoted 'If I should die...' in his Easter Day Sermon, ¹⁹¹⁵ at St Paul's Cathedral to a congregation of mainly widows, parents and orphans, with the comment that 'the enthusiasm of a pure and elevated patriotism had never found nobler expression' than in R.B.'s sonnet.

spirit of 1914/1915¹ - but incompatible with the general post-War 'weltanschauung'.

Not surprisingly, some critics have objected to 'The Soldier' as an advertisement of the most blatant brand of nationalism; others have treated it more flippantly, such as Vernon Scannell, in a recent broadcast, where he interpreted the poem as an extravagant offer on the part of the poet to present himself as some kind of superior fertilizer for the less-privileged soils of the Eastern Mediterranean.² Yet, if considered in the context of Brooke's other work, especially his admirable prose accounts and letters which testify to his appreciation of the special character of each country he visited, the poem can be seen less as a jingoistic attempt - however sentimental and clumsy - to portray the special quality, for an Englishman, of the English earth.

Whatever the present critical assessment of 'The Soldier', there can be little doubt that from 1915 onwards it set the vogue³ for a certain strain of verse about England,⁴ as well as initiating a considerable number of 'If I should die/fall ...' poems.⁵ It crystallized that traditional concept of England, as a largely

-
1. As characterized by the T.L.S. reviewer of New Numbers (which included the 5 Sonnets), 11.3.15, who commended 1914 for giving expression to 'the very blood and youth of England' and for representing the aspirations of 'all to whom her call has come in the hour of need and found instantly ready'.
 2. Cf. G. Matthews' equally sardonic suggestion, Op.cit., p.31, that R.B. considered himself 'a kind of repository of English holiness, which in the physical sense would fertilize un-English soil....'
 3. As late as 1917, 'The Soldier' headed the section entitled 'The Mother Land' in E.B. Osborn's Muse in Arms Anthology,
 4. E.g. F. Brett Young's 'On a Subaltern Killed in Action', Brereton, Anthology of War Poetry, pp.171-4: '[England] in whose quiet womb this body and soul were made, /That pale estranged flesh that we bowed over /Had breathed the scent in summer of white clover; /Dreamed her cool fading nights, her twilights long, /And days as careless as a blackbird's song'.
 5. E.g. S. Donald Cox, Rifleman, 2/5 C.L.R., London Rifle Brigade, S.P.I., p.22: 'To My Mother - 1916', which begins, 'If I should fall, grieve not that one so weak /And poor as I /Should die. /Nay! though thy heart should break /Think only this.../...thou canst say - "I too had a son; /He died for England's sake!"'

agricultural country, which had predominated up to and beyond the Industrial Revolution.

Thus it was possible for many soldiers - especially those deeply influenced by 'The Soldier'¹ and other poems in the same vein - through their reflections of an idyllic rural England, to conceive of England as a potent force uniting all Englishmen with their natural environment and making the sacrifice of their lives in battle² somehow representative of the purest kind of patriotism: that love of the country itself which supersedes loyalty to the state. E.V. Lucas attempted to define this 'new patriotism' based upon 'local inspiration' in his Introduction to Alfred Bathurst Norman's Ditchling Beacon³:

The new patriotism it might not inaptly be called, because - although ... it is the old patriotism too - love of country right enough - yet it is much more markedly love of county...; that it should be found so commonly now is reasonable enough when we reflect that most of our new poets are soldiers, and most soldiers are abroad, living there under such conditions of peril, strangeness and seriousness as continually send the thoughts home. In all the poetry which the War called forth are seen, along with sterner stuff, the wistful or ecstatic memories of England...where the writer once was happy and hopes to be happy again,

and the phenomenon of abundant combatant-verse in this idiom drew comment also from compilers and reviewers of War Poetry Anthologies.⁴

Looking back almost thirty years from the middle of the Second World War, Robert Nichols in his ruminative Introduction to An

-
1. W.N. Hodgson, for example, felt impelled to enlist after reading Brooke's 1914.
 2. See Chapter V for a more detailed treatment of the changing concept of sacrifice.
 3. Op.cit., p.5
 4. E.g. E.B. Osborn, Intro., The Muse In Arms, p.xix: '[The soldier poets'] love of country is expressed in a varied symbolism - in longing, lingering glances at the land which may not be able to give them even a grave, at the life relinquished which will be theirs again for evermore', and the Morning Post Review of S.P.I applauds their love of 'their own land, so far transcending all 'isms and 'isms (even the "patriotism" of the conscious patriot)'.
✓

Anthology of War Poetry¹ mentions the combatant-poets' preoccupation with the countryside as a distinguishing characteristic of First World War verse, instrumental in shaping their approach to death: In the letters of these officers we glimpse them gazing up in unfathomable wonder at the beauty of the downland sunlight, dwelling absorbedly - as Keats in his last months dwelled - upon the infinite treasure and mystery of the most casual blossom, drinking in the larksong as if these showers of sound were the very waters of life. The sacrifice these youths attend seems to them mysteriously connected with the bounty and beauty of nature.² Pondering their words, the reader concludes that it is out of a feeling of the fulness of living that they consecrate themselves to death: the act is a sort of flowering.

It is understandable that this voluntary consecration to death on behalf of the beloved mother country should prevail in the early months of the War as two 'leaders' of the time in the T.L.S. testify. The first, in September 1914³, which discourses at length (for five columns) on the subject of Patriotic Poetry - taking R.M. Leonard's Patriotic Poems as its principal inspiration - dismisses any suggestion that the initial, idealistic response to the War could be adequately circumscribed by the 'tarnished term': 'patriotism'.⁴ The article prefers instead to define this patrial feeling as the expression of an 'unquestioned devotion to the Motherland' made explicit by the final lines of a poem, ^{'August 1914' by 'Charitessi,'} appended to the leader, which joyfully embrace death in the course of serving one's country:

-
1. (1943), p.51.
 2. Jon Silkin, Out of Battle, pp.71-2, elaborates upon this quasi-mystical unification of the dead with Nature's 'bounty and beauty' in his discussion of those poets who struggled to adjust their noble concepts of death in battle to accommodate the horror of war: '...One way of squaring knowledge of combat with chauvinist idealism was to merge the death of the soldier with nature, thus vaguely associating the need for survival (immortality) with nature's recurrent life'. Something of this mystical interrelation between Man and Nature pervades Julian Grenfell's 'Into Battle' where he was sustained by the certainty of 'Nature's ^{utter} sanction of the fighter, and the consciousness of the whole Universe upholding him with all her mysteries'.
 3. T.L.S., 3.9.14. 4. The evident stigma attached to the word impels Osborn, M.I.A. p.xviii to assure his readers that they will find 'no professional patriotism' in his anthology.

Thou England has given
 Joyous life and free,
And life's dearest
 Treasure, love for thee.

Give then, England,
 If my life thou need,
Gift still fairer,
 Death, thy life to feed.¹

Another appreciation of the Mother Country is presented in a November 1914 number of the T.L.S.: entitled simply 'England', this leading article goes on to apotheosize this 'little land - abundant of meaning', for which the poet feels, in Wordsworth's phrase, 'as a lover and a child'. The tendency in similar contemporary reviews is to present England as a haven of quiet beauty and the English as a nation slow to wrath, devoted to the 'things of peace' and reluctant participants in a war which was none of their making:

We love the hearth, the quiet hills, the song,
The friendly gossip come from every land ..² -
You thrust this bitter quarrel to our hand.

Similarly, it is understandable to find the same approach pervading both the poetry and the critics' response to it one year after hostilities had been declared, by which time many of the men 'whose love of motherland /Is like a dog's for one dear hand /Sole, selfless, boundless, blind'³ would have actually experienced

-
1. This reciprocal feeling between the combatant and his native country, suggested in 'The Soldier' ('this heart.../Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given'), is examined further in F. Brett Young's aptly-titled 'The Gift', evidently composed under the influence of 1914: 'Marching on Tanga, marching on the parch'd plain /Of wavering spear-grass past Pangani River, /England came to me - me who had always ta'en / But never given before - England, the giver, /In a vision of three poplar-trees that shiver /On still evenings of summer, after rain, /By Slapton Ley.../Then I thanked God that now I had suffered pain.../In that I count these sufferings my gain /And her acknowledgement.'
 2. John Drinkwater, 'We Willed It Not', quoted in review of Poems of the Great War, T.L.S., 10.9.14.
 3. Quoted in review of Ralph Hodgson's Poems, T.L.S., 7.10.15, in which reviewer comments that the best things of life are the things of peace and the purpose of War is to fight to the death to recover and preserve those homely features which it is part of poetry's function to keep ever in the combatant's remembrance.

physical separation from home, as in the case of Private Wilfrid J. Halliday, 13th Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment, who records¹ with obvious sincerity the elation of self-dedication to his country's cause abroad:

As blithe as any summer's day
I leapt for joy to suck the sweet
Of sunshine, dingle, meadow'd hay,
And all the treasures at my feet.

But now tho' banished far from these,
In grosser places turned and tossed,
I feel a purer, nobler ease,
New heather ways have now been crossed ...

For thee, My Country, call'd to fight.
Forlorn, forgotten, self-defied,
I know that I have seen the light.

What is a little surprising is to find such sentiments as these surviving the débâcle of the Somme and still in regular parlance in mid-1917. In May of that year² a lavish exposition of the term 'Soldier Patriot' appeared in a T.L.S. leading article, couched in much the same diction as that used in the Introduction to The Muse In Arms which was being prepared for publication at roughly the same time. This Anthology opens with a section appositely titled 'The Mother Land' and the first poem is naturally enough 'The Soldier' which the editor, E.B.Osborn, believes totally expresses all the nuances implicit in the combatants' love of country.

The T.L.S. Leader - like Osborn's Introduction - is at pains to point out the special quality of these young soldier patriots who have given poetic expression to their mystic faith in their home-land: conventional terms such as 'patriotism', 'nationalism', and the 'Platonic "idea" of love of country' are mentioned only to

1. 'The Awakening', Soldier Poets I, p.37.
2. T.L.S., 3.5.17.

demonstrate their inadequacy and unsuitability for the present context when the ex-patriate soldiers 'shadow forth' their feeling for home in ubiquitous songs such as 'Tipperary'¹ or in such 'familiar symbols' as the 'sights, sounds, odours of the quiet English countryside, the frozen fugues of old English buildings, the varied young life of schools and colleges, the vast half-forgotten cities in the violet haze of November, the queer sayings ...of rustics which bridge the gulf between home and the rough men-

Seven or eight worlds away
Fighting and carelessly
Dying in ditches.'

Even such a commonplace and insipid beverage as French beer - sardonically dismissed by the English soldiers as a 'beery-like smell'- could exert an intoxicating influence quite out of proportion to its alcoholic potency over the soldiers, reminding them of real English ale, consumed in a 'friendlier age, and more familiar land'. No sight - least of all a 'sudden, small glimpse of the English countryside with the soul's eye' - or object was too trivial to serve as a symbol on which the soldiers could latch their passionate longing for home. Ernest Boughton Nottingham, who enlisted late in his thirties in 1915, assures his correspondent² that he has not forgotten 'there's another world than this hard cheerful objective life we lead' for he is reminded of it every time he hears a train or a church-bell, or sees flowers and the green of a hedge - only the sky-lark, now associated 'inseparably' with 'stand-to' in the trenches, fails to endow

-
1. Cf. E.B.Osborn's comment, Introduction, M.I.A., p.xi, that 'each singer sets his own meaning to the words: "Tipperary" was for one man a little upland hamlet in the Pennines, "Where one may lounge i' the market-place / And see the meadows mown"'.
2. Letter of 27.3.16, quoted in Laffin, Letters from the Front.

him with the consolation of unalloyed reminiscence.

Such was the intensity of the feeling of longing for home that it defied complete expression and just one or two homely features were concentrated upon in the attempt to recapture the 'golden world' which 'lay just over there, /Peacefully dreaming'¹, or to afford the poet some 'spiritual refreshment'. Such an absorption in the contemplation of 'England's eternal beauty' and the soldiers' own 'everlasting love of her' left no room for raging against their 'mortal enemy' and far from feeling embittered at the proliferation of wooden crosses² commemorating the British dead, 'each the resting place of a comrade', the soldiers rejoiced that the 'fallen' were 'held worthy to die for the love of country' to be 'thrice-happy and honoured seven-fold' for enriching, with their English dust, the alien soil in which they were buried - or so the T.L.S. reviewer contended in his assessment of the 'Soldier Patriot'.

Certainly this mystic sense of union with the Mother Country especially in death, is reflected in many verses - particularly those written early in the War. Lt. E.F. Wilkinson, for example, promises his parents that although his dead body may merge with the foreign clay, 'I shall come home' and he urges them to:

...listen to the wind that hurries by,
To all the Song of Life for tones you knew.
For in the voice of birds, the scent of flowers,
The evening silence and the falling dew,
Through every throbbing pulse of nature's powers
I'll speak to you.³

-
1. Max Plowman, 'Going into the Line', August, 1916.
 2. The wooden cross was a potent image with its connotations of the Crucifixion and Christ's sufferings and appeared very often in the corpus of I.W.W. poetry as 'The symbol of self-sacrifice that stood /Bearing the God whose brethren you are'. The Christ/Crucifixion motif will be more fully analysed in Chapter V.
 3. 'To "My People" before the "Great Offensive"', S.P.I., p.104.

Similarly, Max Plowman¹ answers the question 'What will you be /

At the "Last Post"?' with light irony:

A cold body in foreign soil;
But a happy spirit fate can't spoil,
And an extra note in the blackbird's mirth
From a khaki ghost.

The elegiac notion of the dead man - usually beloved of someone else - being somehow transubstantiated into the being of the Universe is, of course, by no means new and was not initiated by the First World War, even though it was exhaustively exploited by both combatant and civilian poets. In the nineteenth century two notable elegies for two young men whose considerable promise was cut short by an untimely death, made use of the transubstantiation-idea and were no doubt in the minds of the more literary combatant-poets. Firstly, Shelley had envisaged Keats' dead body mingling with Nature:

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 may² move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own²,

and some twelve years after the publication of Adonais, Tennyson began work on his tribute to A.H. Hallam, which also sought to lessen the shock and sense of injustice at a young man's death by offering the suggestion of his 'immortality', mingled with 'all the world':

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,³
And in the setting thou art fair.³

-
1. 'When It's Over', Hussey, Poetry of the I.W.W., p.105.
 2. Section XLIII, Adonais, (1821).
 3. Section CXXX, In Memoriam, (1850).

This method of identifying the dead with their physical surroundings and with Nature at large recommended itself to a number of First World War Poets. To Louis Golding¹, his dead friend 'is this smell of earth / This dead moist smell of rain!', while Robert Nichols in his sonnet 'Our Dead'² proffers a more detailed interpretation of the notion adopted in earlier elegies:

They have not gone from us. O no! They are
The inmost essence of each thing that is
Perfect for us; they flame in every star;
The trees are emerald with their presences.
They are not gone from us; they do not roam
The flaw and turmoil of the lower deep
But have now made the whole wide world their home.
And in its loveliness themselves they steep.

They fail not ever; theirs is the diurn
Splendour of sunny hill and forest grave;
In every rainbow's glittering drop they burn;
They dazzle in the massed clouds' architrave;
They chant on every wind, and they return
In the long roll of any deep blue wave.

Both Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon have recourse to this attitude of associating the beloved dead with the natural elements in their respective efforts to reconcile themselves to the death of their mutual friend, David Thomas (the 'Dick Tiltwood' of Sassoon's Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man).

In Fairies and Fusiliers⁴, Graves, walking through the trees 'to cool [his] heat and pain', senses David's presence:

All that is simple, happy, strong, he is.
Caressingly I stroke,
Rough bark of the friendly oak.
A brook goes babbling by; the voice is his.
Turf burns but with pleasant smoke;
I laugh at chaffinch and at primroses,
All that is simple, happy, strong he is.
Over the whole wood in a little while
Breaks his slow smile!

-
1. Sorrow of War, Poems, reviewed in T.L.S., 13.2.19.
 2. Section VII, 'Aftermath', Ardours and Endurances, p.66.
 3. Cf. a prose version of the same notion: letter from Denis Browne to E.M., 1.6.15, on passing Skyros, 'Rupert's island', it seemed 'that the island must ever be shining with his glory that we buried there'.
 4. Reviewed in T.L.S., 15.11.17.

while Sassoon, in May 1916, revisiting a hill near Flixécourt which he and David had frequented, finds his friend 'crushed to earth in scentless flowers, /And lifted in the rapture of dark pines' and learns from David's ghost that his body is "'the magic of the world, /And dawn and sunset flame with my spilt blood"'.¹ Henceforward, he will always be associated for Sassoon with 'Wonder awaking in a summer dawn' and he takes comfort from the concept that whenever David is recalled by his friends, he will appear 'dressed in green', 'Arm in arm with oaks and larches;.../Laughing at dawn in tumbling brooks'.²

A comparable rationalization of the dead appears in Donald F. Goold Johnson's sonnet 'In Memoriam'³ for his Cambridge contemporary Rupert Brooke. Johnson assures Brooke that he will retain a special position in the 'glades of England's deep memory' since his memory is entwined inextricably with the substance of the English countryside: he is indeed 'a body of England's':

The flowers are waking in her quiet fields,
The woods are robing for their festival,
By hedge and stream again the dear birds sing
And all the beauty that the fresh earth yields,
And all the springtime's maiden coronal,
Shall be to him a silent offering.

But in the view of Wilfred Owen there can be no justification for this consolatory identification of the dead with Nature: on the Western Front, 'Shelley would be stunned'⁴. David Jones' post-

1. Quoted in Virginia Woolf's intuitive review of The Old Huntsman & Other Poems, T.L.S., 31.5.17, where she predictably - considering her own predilection for associating places with feelings ('private code...secret language') - commends S.S.'s identification of D.T. with his surroundings. Later in the review V.W. remarks: 'To call back any moment of emotion is to call back with it the strangest odds and ends that have become somehow part of it, & it is the weeds pulled up by mistake with the flowers that bring back the extraordinary moment as a whole'.

2. 'A Letter Home', apparently to Graves, Flixécourt, May 1916.

3. Poems, quoted in T.L.S., 17.7.19.

4. 'A Terre'. As Silkin, Op.cit., p.225 points out: 'That kind of organic merging with nature is now seen as no compensation for death, and certainly not for a life truncated by war'.

War rendition of the notion in In Parenthesis also indicates, through its flippancy, that it is difficult to sustain the integrity of the transubstantiation-concept having lived through the horrors of the War and the no less threatening post-War peace:

The 'Queen of the Woods'
Some she gives white berries
 some she gives brown
Emil has a curious crown it's
made of golden saxifrage.
Fatty wears sweet-briar....
Ulrich smiles for his myrtle wand.
That swine Lillywhite has daisies to his chain -
 you'd hardly credit it...

While the War was in progress, however, not only was the merging-of-the-dead-with-nature idea urgently and enthusiastically pursued, but the suggestion was raised in many poems that not only would the 'foreign fields' be enriched by the dust of those who died for England, but the 'Mother Country' would be as well. Laurence Binyon in July 1915¹ elaborates upon the idea of the English countryside - as well as the English people - being redeemed through the sacrifice of her noble youth who have unstintingly volunteered a 'gift more precious in the giving'²:

It is to feel the world we knew
Changed to a wonder past our knowing;
The grass, the trees, the skyey blue
The very stones are inly glowing
With something infinite, behind
Their shadows, ardently divined,

and Lt. Dyneley Hussey sees the English countryside enhanced by the 'dead leaves' reft from England's 'tree of life' who:

-
1. 'The Cause', T.L.S., 8.7.15.
 2. Cf. the definition of the sacrificial dead advanced by 2nd Lt. Evan Morgan, Welsh Guards in 'What of the Dead?', S.P.I., p.65: 'those whose red blood has been given /A gift to their native sward', (my underlining).

...waken in the weary earth,
Making the barren warm and rich with life,
And give to nobler flowers a glorious birth;
And your dead lives are dead alone in name,
For you shall live anew after the strife,¹
And light in future hearts a sacred flame.

Conversely, according to Lt. Robert Nichols, the renewed beauty and significance of the English countryside can only be enjoyed by those who have actively contributed, through their courage, suffering and blood, to its renewal, while those who were not prepared to fight for England will be precluded from the benison bestowed by England on 'the Brave':

The gorse upon the twilit down,
The English loam so sunset brown,
The bowed pines and the sheep-bell's clamour,
The wet, lit lane and the yellow-hammer,
The orchard and the chaffinch song,
Only to the Brave belong;
And he shall lose their joy for ay,
If their price he cannot pay,
Who shall find them dearer far²
Enriched by blood after long War.

An interesting later poem by Binyon³, which - to some extent - repudiates the attitude presented in 'The Cause'⁴, goes a stage further than Nichols' optimistic assumption in 'At the Wars' that those who suffer in the War will be rewarded by the achievement of an intenser bond with their Mother Land. Binyon believes that it is fallacious to assume that the English country-side will appreciate the nobility of the sacrifice of England's youth. Such appreciation can only emanate from the men who survive the holocaust for Nature, concerned principally with the continuation of the seasons' cycle, is unaffected:

1. 'The Dead', S.P.I, p.52.

2. 'At the Wars', quoted Introduction, M.I.A., pp.xix-xx.

3. 'The New World', The New World; T.L.S., 14.11.18, reviewed.

4. See above, p.106.

Spring has leapt into Summer.
A glory has gone from the green.
The flush of the poplar has sobered out
The flame in the leaf of the lime is dulled;
But I am thinking of the young men
Whose faces are no more seen....
Spring will come, when the Earth remembers,
In sun-bursts after the rain
And the leaf be fresh-lovely on the bough,
And the myriad shining blossom be born,
But I shall be thinking of the young men
Whose eyes will not shine on us again.

The majority of soldiers who composed verses on distant England, however, did not venture into philosophical speculation on the possibility of mystical identification with their home-land in the event of their death. The more sensitive combatants who did not find the rigours of trench-life all-exclusive, and for whom 'a vivid imagination was ... a handicap', were conscious of existing in an eerie state as dual personalities: occupying both 'a dream life and a real one'. To some:

the life of England is the dim and half-remembered dream; now lost, now flashing with startling vividness on the 'inner eye'; to them the war is the real life; and on the whole they are the happier, I think. To others, the life that lies behind is the real, while that of today is a dream, often a nightmare, but a dream from which we shall awake some day. Many a time here I have found myself wondering if this or that is really happening, and if I were real. I feel as though my real self were sleeping in that England I love so much.¹

The T.L.S. reviewer² of three 'slim volumes' in late 1919, also noted this tendency on the part of the soldier poets to exist on two levels, endeavouring to ignore the agonizing or tedious present through recollections of the past. He sympathized with Capt. Griffyth Fairfax's nostalgia for 'the old sweet way...

-
1. G.B. Manwaring, If We Return (Letters of Summer-Autumn 1917), reviewed in T.L.S., 11.7.18.
 2. 'Three Books of Verse Reviewed': Griffyth Fairfax, Mesopotamia; J.R. Anderson, Walls and Hedges; E.Hilton Young, A Muse at Sea, T.L.S., 4.12.19.

'how long ago!' and his habit, when 'alone, and ill and far away' of drawing his 'memories round him like a cloak'; similarly he understood the real fervour behind E.Hilton Young's prayer:

Would that the War were over, and again
We walked together in a Wiltshire lane!

but the review is also an important indicator of the changing expectation of what constituted good poetry for it admonishes Fairfax and Hilton Young for a 'too limpid' approach. It condemns their excessive use of retrospection which requires considerable 'warming in the glow of so many past fires' before poetic ardour can find its tongue, but it still mildly applauds the sentiments expressed in a short piece by Hilton Young which links the proposed sacrifice of the soldier on behalf of his native region with the Crucifixion motif:¹

I should not mind to die for them,
my own dear downs, my comrades true.
But that great heart of Bethlehem,
he died for men he never knew.
And yet I think at Golgotha,
as Jesus' eyes were closed in death
They saw with love most passionate
the village street at Nazareth.

The more cynical versifiers on the other hand, such as W.W. Gibson, described by the T.L.S. reviewer of Battle in October 1915,² as 'An Ironist of the Trenches', questioned whether any other life had ever existed before immersion in the Flanders mud:

I sometimes wonder if it's really true
I ever knew
Another life
Than this unending strife
With unseen enemies in lowland mud,

-
1. Cf. the final stanza of Everard Owen's 'Three Hills', Hussey, Op.cit., p.101: 'There is a hill in Jewry, / Three crosses pierce the sky, / In the midmost He is dying / To save all those who die, / A little hill, a kind hill / To souls in jeopardy'.
 2. T.L.S., 14.10.15.

And wonder if my blood
Thrilled ever to the tune
Of clean winds blowing through an April noon
Mile after sunny mile
On the green ridges of the Windy Gile!

More often, though, the soldier poets did not doubt the existence of their previous lives and - in fact - clung all the more grimly to impressions and images of home and normality however mundane. The thankfully-wounded ¹'Stretcher Case' of Sassoon's poem delights in the familiar advertisements: 'Large friendly names that change not with the year, /Lung Tonic, Mustard, Liver Pills and Beer', and James Mackereth ², anticipating his return home after 'long years of greyness and filth in the Flanders gloom', luxuriates in the prospect of 'Clean-folded clothes in an oaken chest, and a firelight tea.../...the stir of singing kettles, the lazy purr /Of curled-up cats', and promises his suffering comrades: 'Ye will love again the homely things'. Something of this return to normality - 'picking up life [again] like the hens in orchard ditches' ³ - could even be achieved in the intervals of rest from the Front when an 'honest glass' represented 'all manner of riches' and such commonplace features as porridge and bacon and 'tea out of a real cup' were worthy of celebration because they signified temporary safety - 'nothing to mind ... an end to care' ⁴ - and release from the alien 'troglodyte world'.

The most emotive subjects for inducing vivid remembrance of home were, naturally enough, the 'Old folks at home that wait for

-
1. Cf. 'The One-Legged Man', Sassoon, Complete Poems, p.25, 'safe with his wound' who blithely surrenders his leg in order to escape from the War to his native 'August weald' finding it 'more/ Desirable than ever it was before'.
 2. 'Choric Hymn on the Advent of Peace' (P.R., Jan.1919) and New Verse Supplement, reviewed T.L.S., 16.1.19.
 3. Blunden, 'At Senlis Once', 1914-18 In Poetry, p.108.
 4. Ivor Gurney, 'On Rest', War's Embers and Other Verses.

C'est ce qu'on mange et ce qu'on voit,
Ce qu'on respire, ce qu'on entend,
C'est le goût de pain et du tabac
L'éclat des feuilles, l'odeur du vent,
Et les bruits familiers du village;
Les chiens qui aboient, / Les gens qui s'appellent,
Et le joyeux tapage
Des verres sous la tonnelle
C'est tout ce qu'on ne peut pas dire
Et tout ce qu'on sent,
Tout ce qu'on ne peut traduire
Qu'en le chantant.¹

By comparison with the English soldier's remembrance of home which is, in general, more inclined to present an idealized picture of the English countryside and to focus on the natural, rather than man-made, features of the landscape, the Belgian poet's impression of 'la patrie' is not confined to any one region but is compounded of a recollection of the physical realities which together constitute Belgian domestic life: the emphasis is on the actual rather than the imagined, and on the particularized description of the Belgian way of life rather than wistful evocation of the idyllic rural scene.

Such was the facility with which the English soldier-poets could launch into a reverie of home that any familiar feature in the apparently devastated landscape could evoke a poignant recollection, as in the case of Sergeant Streets² who is moved by the sound of the lark, in a lull in the bombardment, whose song 'touches in this place remote / Gladness supreme in its undying note, / And stirs to life the soul of memory'. In some cases, the home landscape seemed almost to superimpose itself upon the combatant's actual environment: for Charles Sorley, the image of

-
1. Extract from one of Cammaerts' New Belgian Poems, reviewed in T.L.S., 21.9.16.
 2. 13th Battalion, York and Lancs. Regt., The Undying Splendour, reviewed in T.L.S., 14.6.17.

the Wiltshire Downs near Lambourn, known to him since his days at Marlborough Public School, reasserts itself as he studies the French terrain from his trench so that the contours of the actual French country-side before him are moulded into an outline of his familiar Downs:

Away to rightward I descry
My Barbary ensconced in sky,
Far underneath the Ogbourne twins,
And at my feet the thyme and whins,
The grasses with their little crowns,¹
Of gold, the lovely Aldbourne downs.

Similarly, rather further afield, Lance Corporal Malcolm Humphrey², on active service with the B.E.F. in British East Africa, looks beyond the sunlit hills of Nairobi to those:

...hills of other days I loved to roam
When Spring was dancing through the lanes of those
distant hills of home.

The winds of heaven gathered there as pure and cold
as dew;
Wood-sorrel and wild violets along the hedgerows grew,
The blossom on the pear-trees was as white as flakes
of foam
In the orchard 'neath the shadow of those distant hills
of home.
The first white frost in the meadow will be shining
there today,
And the furrowed upland glinting warm beside the wood-
land way;
There, a bright face and a clear hearth will be wait-
ing when I come,
And my heart is throbbing wildly for those distant
hills of home.

In the trenches, often unable to look at anything save the sky, the combatant-poets would, not unnaturally, imaginatively reconstitute the familiar topography of home, as a means of alleviating the tedium of their present surroundings on a day when 'nothing happens':

1. Quoted in 'The Soldier Patriot', T.L.S., 3.5.17.

2. 'Hills of Home', S.P.I., p.48.

As I lay in the trenches
Under the Hunter's Moon,
My mind ran to the lanches
Cut in a Wiltshire down.

I saw their long black shadows,
The beeches in the lane,
The gray church in the meadows,
And my white cottage - plain;¹

but what distinguishes this particular poem is the third stanza in which Maurice Hewlett concedes that the German soldiers might also have been stimulated by the comparative quiet and the moon to think of home with a longing no less intense than his own:

... [the German] watches that riding glory
Apparel'd in her gold,
And craves to hear the story
Her frozen lips enfold.

And if he sees as clearly
As I do where her shine
Must fall, he longs as dearly,
With heart as full as mine.

Whether it be the 'Damson blossom, primrose blossom' of the 'shimmering white' orchards in April near Stratford-upon-Avon²; the 'consecrated ground' from 'Cooden Bay to Hoe',³ abounding with 'yellow great battalions' of daffodils; the open downland above the River Avon, lined with pollards 'like old henchmen in a safe and solemn row'⁴; the little commonplace details of student-life - 'warm dim chambers', 'the laughter of my friends', 'lectures and the voices of the dons deep-droning'⁵ - and the 'livid snakes-heads ... in Iffley Mead' and the 'cloud-dappled Cumnor Hills' which recall the 'sweet lotus-eatings'⁶ of the pre-War Oxford

-
1. Maurice Hewlett, 'In the Trenches', Gai Saber: Tales and Songs, reviewed in T.L.S., 8.6.16.
 2. Lance Cpl. George C. Michael, R.E., 'An April Song', S.P.I., p.63.
 3. Lt. Geoffrey Howard, Royal Fusiliers, 'The Beach Road by the Wood', S.P.I., p.43.
 4. E.W. Tennant, Poem written at Poperinghe, June 1916, Worple-Flit, quoted in T.L.S. review, 2.10.19.
 5. E.A. Mackintosh, 'Oxford From the Trenches', A Highland Regiment, p.24.
 6. Lt. D. Hussey, 'An Oxford Retrospect', May 1915, Poetry of the I.W.W., p.80.

under-graduate¹; or the purple heather and 'burning woodland' of Skiddaw², each such regional reflection adds a new connotation to the word 'home' as interpreted by the soldier poets. To Robert Graves, 'home' meant the wild and mountainous Wales of his walking-holidays and, amid the 'loathsomeness of war' he ruminates upon the 'delicious peace' of his lonely Welsh cottage:

Through the window I can see
Rocks above the cherry-tree,
Sparrows in the violet bed,
Bramble-bush and bumble-bee,
And old red bracken smoulders still
Among boulders on the hill,
Far too bright to seem quite dead.
But old Death, who can't forget,
Waits his time and watches yet.³

The dichotomy which had developed between the 'stench and noise' of Flanders and the unaffected - one might almost say indifferent⁴ - landscape of home is depicted again by Graves in characteristically Georgian pastoral terms in 'Country at War', in which even the French clouds hasten to escape across the Channel to England where Nature's 'diurnal round' still holds undisputed sway and the only 'shooting' is done by the bursting trees:

The hill stands up and hedges wind
Over the crest and drop behind;
Here swallows dip and wild things go
On peaceful errands to and fro
Across the sloping meadow floor,
And make no guess at blasting war.
In woods that fledge the round hill-shoulder
Leaves shoot and open, fall and moulder,
And shoot again. Meadows yet show
Alternate white of drifted snow
And daisies. Children play at shop,

-
1. Cf. E.M. Spearing V.A.D., From Cambridge to Camiers under the Red Cross who gives the corresponding version (in prose) of the environs of Cambridge: 'the slow quiet river...the old Roman highway...the yellow corn-fields, the pleasant green meadows'.
 2. W.N. Hodgson, 'Reverie', M.I.A., p.6.
 3. 'The Cottage', Fairies and Fusiliers, reviewed: T.L.S., 15.11.17.
 4. Cf. Sorley's deflation of the 'pathetic fallacy' in 'Marching Song': '...Earth will echo still, when foot / Lies numb and voice
mute.'

Warm days, on the flat boulder-top,
With wildflower coinage, and the wares
Are bits of glass and unripe pears.
Crows perch upon the backs of sheep,
The wheat goes yellow: women reap,
Autumn winds ruffle brook and pond,
Flutter the hedge and fly beyond.

One of the more striking and spontaneous treatments¹ of the sharp divide between the front-line environment and the placidity of life at home² deserves a mention here for, clumsy and hurriedly composed as it is, it seems to combine many of the distinctive features of this poetry of regional nostalgia: devotion to a particular locality (Nottingham); longing for the return to normality ('"Lord! how I need a wash!"') and confidence in the value of sacrificing oneself overseas for the preservation of the 'things of peace' ('There are crocuses at Nottingham'..../Because we're here in Hell'):

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
And I have heard it said:

That -

There are crocuses at Nottingham!
Wild crocuses at Nottingham!
Blue crocuses at Nottingham!
Though here the grass is red.

There are little girls at Nottingham
Who do not fear the Boche,
Young girls at school at Nottingham
(Lord! how I need a wash!)
There are little boys at Nottingham
Who never hear a gun;
There are silly fools in Nottingham
Who think we're here for fun.

-
1. An anonymous poem, 'Crocuses at Nottingham', composed in a trench after reading the Correspondence Columns of the T.L.S. 1.3.17 (where the arrival of Spring was mentioned) and printed in the 22.3.17 number of the T.L.S.
 2. The reply to 'Crocuses...' which appeared the following week in the T.L.S. from May O'Rourke, The Old Vicarage, Dorchester, is also of interest for putting forward the civilian response and is quoted in Chapter IV, p. 512.

When -

There are crocuses at Nottingham!
Young crocus-buds at Nottingham!
Thousands of bulbs 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 the crocuses
Of which the people tell.

Why!

There are crocuses at Nottingham!
Bright crocuses at Nottingham!
Real crocuses at Nottingham!
Because we're here in Hell!¹

When the reality becomes too much to bear at the Front, the soldier's remembrance of home so totally absorbs him that he seems to be oblivious of his actual physical environment. In many instances, the recollection is more potent than the present reality: Francis Brett Young, for one, swiftly dismisses 'the reek of iodine and blood' to revel in the particularized botanical detail of his room at home in England, 'Where rusty ivory scatters from the dying /Jessamine blossom, and the musk-rose breaks /Her dusky bloom beneath a summer heaven'.² For W.N. Hodgson, returning to Rest Camp after severe fighting at Loos³, the lively breeze has come straight from England and the 'Skies without a stain, /Clean-cut against the morning /Slim poplars

-
1. The necessity for soldiers to give their lives to preserve the corporate life of England has been given poetic utterance elsewhere: e.g. W.L. Wilkinson in 'A Lament for the Dead' proudly testifies: 'We are the Dead for England slain' and Lt. G. Howard stoutly urges not only that 'thousands' be 'slain' in order for 'the green wood to be green again', but - more specifically - each soldier should be responsible for the preservation of his particular local region, 'Malvern men must die and kill /That wind may blow on Malvern Hill; /Devonshire blood must fall like dew /That Devon's bays may yet be blue', "'Without Shedding of Blood...'", *S.P.I.*, p.45.
 2. 'After Action', *Up the Line to Death*, p.62.
 3. 'Back to Rest', *1914-18 In Poetry*, p.34.

'after rain' give him the impression that he too has been temporarily transported from war-scarred France to England. The 'slim poplars' and 'green gardens in Laventie' likewise transport E. Wyndham Tennant to the Downs of 'Home...a perfect place' with 'the green banks of daffodil, /...Great tan-brown hares in gusty March /A-courting on the leas;/And meadows with their glittering streams, and silver scurrying dace'.¹

Perhaps the best example of this tendency to consider the recollection as the reality was Francis Ledwidge who had become affiliated with the 'Georgian Brotherhood' through the good offices of Lord Dunsany. Ledwidge, with his 'delicate rustic muse' had been recommended by Lord Dunsany to Edward Marsh for inclusion in the second G.P. Anthology as a worthy though 'primitive'² poet whose verse revolved around the 'fairy places' of Ireland and whom Dunsany dubbed in his Introduction to Ledwidge's first 'slim volume', Songs of the Fields,³ the 'poet of the black-bird'.⁴

Having been cautiously accepted into the 'Georgian fold' - and association of which Ledwidge was inordinately proud⁵ - and having enlisted in October 1914 in the 5th Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Ledwidge prepared a second collection of poems in 1916, entitled by Lord Dunsany, Songs of Peace, since he considered the 'keynote' of the book to be the poet's

-
1. 'Home Thoughts in Laventie', U.L.D., pp.120-1.
 2. According to Hussey, Poetry of the I.W.W., p.172, F.L. was 'an Irish pauper with a native Celtic vision, and unusual innocence of outlook and an undisciplined technique'. Ledwidge was more enthusiastically acclaimed by his compatriot James Stephens, in a letter to E.M. (quoted Hassall, E.M., p.361): 'He is only a beginner and must digest his ancestors before we know what he is really like. Meanwhile he has a true singing faculty, and his promise is, I think, greater than that of any young poet now writing'.
 3. 1915. 4. Complete Poems of Francis Ledwidge (1955), p.9.
 5. 'G.P. (with my three excluded) contains, I think, the best poems of the century', quoted Hassall, E.M., p.408.

'swallow instinct'.¹ After Ledwidge's death in the 'vast maelstrom' in July 1917, Lord Dunsany wrote the Introduction² to the final volume of Ledwidge's verse: Last Songs. The assessment proffered in that Introduction of Ledwidge as a writer of 'verses of great beauty, simple rural lyrics that may be something of an anodyne for this stricken age'; a poet who 'stayed true to his inspiration' of the blackbird and the Irish 'faery', has tended to colour much critical estimation of Ledwidge's work and has resulted in his being largely overlooked in studies of the poetry of the First World War.³

Certainly Songs of the Fields is imbued with the spirit of 'old Ireland'⁴ and a due number of verses celebrate the various seasons - particularly the Spring⁵ - in conventional terms. Already some poems are characterized by the poet's plaintive desire to 'walk the old unfrequented ways.../Ere I the city knew'⁶ for, in the urban context, Ledwidge sees himself as 'a stranger, like the trees /That sigh upon the traffic all day long'⁷ and he recalls his native hills with real fervour.

This capacity for nostalgia and regional recollection is given greater scope in Songs of Peace, which Ledwidge composed while at a considerable geographical distance from Ireland: 'roaming' but 'listening still'⁸ to the familiar sounds of home.

-
1. Explained by Dunsany, Complete Poems, p.12 as: 'this devotion to the fields of Meath that, in nearly all his songs, from such far places [as Serbia, Egypt and Greece] brings his spirit home, like the instinct that has ^{been} given to the swallows'.
 2. Written on 9th October, 1917, actually in the Hindenburg Line.
 3. Though J.H. Johnston, English Poetry of the I.W.W., briefly cites F.L. as representative of a certain strain of soldier-versifiers with a very slight poetic talent.
 4. E.g. 'The Death of Ailill', 'The Sorrow of Findebar', 'The Death of Leag, Cuchulain's Charioteer'.
 5. E.g. 'Desire in Spring', 'A Song of April', 'Evening in May'.
 6. 'Behind the Closed Eye', Complete Poems, p.22.
 7. 'An Attempt at a City Sunset', Op.cit., p.30: obviously F.L. does not (according to the tentative title) feel competent to deal with an urban panorama.
 8. 'In the Mediterranean', Ibid., p.71.

When, in the Aegean, he watches an island shepherd marshalling his flock together 'through the evening red and still'¹, he is comforted to find that this ancient pastoral ritual somehow links him with the hills of Crocknaharna 'twenty hundred miles away'.² Elsewhere, however, the landscape of Mitylene - far from offering some comforting feature - intensifies his longing for the gentler contours of the Irish Hills, the image of which - imprinted upon his consciousness - needs but the slightest stimulus to articulate itself in verse-form:

I saw night leave her halos down
On Mitylene's dark mountain isle,
The silhouette of one fair town
Like broken shadows in a pile.
And in the farther dawn I heard
The music of a foreign bird.

In fields of shady angles now
I stand and dream in the half dark:
The thrush is on the blossomed bough,
Above the echoes sings the lark,
And little rivers drop between
Hills fairer than dark Mitylene.

Yet something calls me with no voice
And wakes sweet echoes in my mind;
In the fair country of my choice
Nor Peace nor Love again I find,
Nor anything of rest I know
When south-east winds are blowing low.³

Taking into account Ledwidge's own well-developed 'sense of local patriotism', it is hardly surprising to find him discussing the fate of another - more permanent - exile, Rupert Brooke, when he imagines a 'little flock of clouds', propelled by 'shepherd winds', weaving a 'rainbow's gay festoons / Around the lonesome isle which Brooke has made / A little England full of lovely

1. 'The Home-coming of the Sheep', Op.cit., p.75.

2. 'Crocknaharna', Ibid., p.71.

3. 'The Lure', Ibid., p.82.

'noons'. Ledwidge assures the poet's spirit that England has by no means forgotten him: 'for late I roamed awhile /Through English fields and down her rivers sailed; /And they remember him with beauty caught /From old desires of Oriental Spring /Heard in his heart with singing overwrought'.¹ Poignantly, Ledwidge hesitates to apply the same assurance to himself: 'In September'² suggests that his period abroad has not only made him acutely aware of the physical distance from home, but has somehow alienated him from his native environment. He fears a spiritual estrangement when he considers the stolid revolution of the seasons at home and the harvest which pursues its inevitable course, indifferent to his sufferings overseas:

Still are the meadowlands, and still
Ripens the upland corn,
And over the brown gradual hill
The moon has dipped a horn....

My song forsakes me like the birds
That leave the rain and grey,
I hear the music of the words
My lute can never say.

The anxiety that he might be regarded hostilely by his home environment recurs in Ledwidge's posthumously published last Songs³, when he regrets being unable to respond to Ireland's call to him to bring her 'crown from out the deeps of time, /It is my grief your voice I couldn't hear /In such a distant clime'. Such moments of doubt and questioning about how he is now regarded by his 'pastoral hills' are, however, more often eclipsed by his own certainty⁴ that the War cannot make much impression upon the inviolable picture he carries in his mind of 'Those hills of mine

1. 'Evening Clouds', Complete Poems, p.85.

2. Ibid., p.86.

3. 1919; 'Ireland', Ibid., p.93.

4. As one of those who 'reared /The banner of old Ireland high, /From Dublin town to Turkey's shores', ('At Currabwee', Ibid. p.96).

'Safe in my dearest memory',¹ even when he is physically immersed in the quagmire of the front line:

The silence of maternal hills
Is round me in my evening dreams;
And round me music-making bills
And mingling waves of pastoral streams.

Whatever way I turn I find
The path is old unto me still.
The hills of home are in my mind,
And there I wander as I will.²

Last Songs is probably the most interesting of the three volumes since the majority of the poems were written in France between late 1916 and Ledwidge's death in July 1917. Taken as a whole, they evince a remarkably detached attitude for a combatant poet to adopt at this stage in the War. In late December 1916, by which time the full extent of the Somme slaughter would have been appreciated by all at the Front, Ledwidge was increasingly preoccupied with 'Spring Love' or 'fairy music'³:

I take my pipe and play a tune
Of dreams, a whispered melody,
For feet that dance beneath the moon
In fairy jollity.

One such dream, of a congregation of the dead kings of Ireland at Rosnaree⁴, was rudely interrupted by the War's agency but in making only a cursory reference to the intrusion, Ledwidge emphasizes that through his personal perspective the War only rates a non-committal aside: '...And one said:"A loud tramp of men /We'll hear again at Rosnaree". /A bomb burst near me where I lay. /I woke, 'twas day in Picardy'.

-
1. 'Spring, '8th March, 1917', Complete Poems, p.103.
 2. 'In France', 3rd February, 1917, Ibid., p.101.
 3. 'Ceol Sidhe', Ibid., p.97.
 4. 'The Dead Kings', 7th January, 1917, Ibid., p.99.

Even by mid-1917, with the preparations for the Third Battle of Ypres well advanced, Ledwidge - depicted in his verses as a rustic piper - directs his thoughts to elfen dancing on fairy mounds or Pan leading the lambs safely 'to fold' (surely an ironical conceit in the context of mutinous French soldiers baa-ing like sheep as they were herded 'over the top'). Similarly, Ledwidge can still write of the innocent dawn 'smiling all the East along'¹ and poppies in the corn are used as an innocuous simile to describe the fairy huntsmen's scarlet coats.² It would seem that the more denuded the environment and the more cataclysmic the bombardment, the more profoundly absorbed Ledwidge becomes in his recollections of home and the ancient legends thereof. When a bird in a stunted tree sings near his trench, it does not provoke him to a fierce denunciation of man's desecration of nature (as would be the case with Blunden), nor to puzzled questioning of the reversal of the natural order in War (as in R.E.Vernède's 'The Listening Post'³), rather it simply revives the most emotive image in his consciousness which he has seemingly permanently super-imposed upon his surroundings: it reminds him of home:

A burst of sudden wings at dawn,
Faint voices in a dreamy noon,
Evenings of mist and murmurings,
And nights with rainbows of the moon.

And through these things a wood-way dim,
And waters dim, and slow sheep seen
On uphill paths that wind away
Through summer sounds and harvest green.

-
1. 'Dawn', Complete Poems, p.93.
 2. 'A Fairy Hunt', Ibid., p.106. See Section 2 (c) for examples of natural features - dawn, poppies - used for the purpose of ironic contrast in poetry of the 'distorted pastoral' genre.
 3. 1914-18 In Poetry, p.44: 'Strange that this bird sits there and sings /While we must only sit and plan - /Who are so much the higher thing - /The murder of our fellow man'.

This is a song a robin sang
This morning on a broken tree,
It was about the little fields
That call across the world to me.¹

Such an obvious facility as that displayed by Ledwidge, in projecting himself totally into the pastoral environment of home while in the midst of an actual, derelict landscape, gives credence to the contention of one contemporary reviewer² that some poets could even circumvent War's 'squalor and hideousness' with 'a kind of forlorn fascination and charm, thanks to the energy of their own imagination and fancy'. Two other poets who similarly exercised this singular ability to transport themselves to their home environment when beset by the most appalling conditions were F.W. Harvey³ and Ivor Gurney, both natives of Gloucestershire and friends from boyhood. In both their cases, however, the War was to impinge much more positively on them, and their recollections of home did not always afford them the refuge from War's ravages which Ledwidge found. Their work is deserving of special examination here both because it has strong Georgian affiliations and because it is so thoroughly permeated with their love of county.

In the case of F.W. Harvey, the longing for his native county was further intensified by his having to write many of the poems in his second volume, Gloucestershire Friends,⁴ from the confinement of the German Prison Camp at Gütersloh, although - as the advance notice in the T.L.S. heralding this book's imminent publication specified - it was to be 'full of the same love of

-
1. 'Home', Belgium, July 1917, Complete Poems, p.108: possibly F.L.'s last poem and a highly appropriate epitaph.
 2. 'The Rebirth of Poetry', Review of S.P.II, Daily Telegraph, 12.6.17, quoted in S.P.II.
 3. After his demobilization, F.W.H. made a rule never to sleep a single night outside his native county: a policy he sustained until his death in 1957.
 4. 1917.

'home, sincerity and happily-turned reflection as A Gloucestershire Lad at Home and Abroad'.¹

Besides its native stock, Gloucestershire attracted a number of poets closely identified with the Georgian Poetry Movement just before the War: Edward Thomas, Robert Frost, Lascelles Abercrombie and the composer Vaughan Williams, the Georgian pastoralist, whose typical sound - according to Maurice Hussey² - is 'rhapsodic, pastoral and impregnated with folk-song...the exact counterpart of Georgian poetry'. Some particularly 'English' quality in the topography of the county must have recommended it to devotees of the Georgian School and if, in addition, it contained the poet's actual birth-place, its influence upon his work appears to have been irresistible. Interestingly, the appeal of the Gloucestershire countryside was apparently not restricted to 'professional poets' only but infected also the Trench Journal of the Gloucestershire Regiment, 5th Gloucester Gazette.³ According to the T.L.S. Review of 'Trench Journals' in October 1916, the Gazette was the oldest and most literary of British trench journals, combining 'home-seeking thoughts and small appealing lyrics'⁴, and having been moved by the obvious sincerity of these rough verses, the reviewer concluded that such 'trench papers will teach future generations how joyously a younger race of athletes without banners or music or gay uniforms, addressed themselves to

1. The title betrays Harvey's indebtedness to Housman. Harvey's later volume, Comrades in Captivity, 1919, like G.F., recorded life in several German Prison camps with a strong nostalgic bias but after the War, F.W.H. concentrated on writing poetry about his home county as Gloucestershire: A Selection from the Poems (1947) shows.

2. Poetry of the First World War, p.6.

3. 'Trench Journals' Review, T.L.S., 12.10.16.

4. E.g. Cyril Winterbotham's 'The Cross of Wood' in which C.W. mourns the death in battle of his Gloucs. comrades who have thus been denied 'the glorious return /To steep Stroud valleys, to the Severn leas /By Tewkesbury and Gloucester, or the trees /Of Cheltenham under high Cotswold stern'.

'their tragic task. Time will ennoble all ephemeral things until in future age they will be seen "sub specie aeternitatis" and have for remote posterity the beauty of memorial'.

Harvey, whose 'I'm homesick for my hills again...' also featured in both the 5th Gloucester Gazette and the T.L.S. Review, had joined the Gloucestershire Regiment at the beginning of the War and won the D.C.M. while a Lance-Corporal. Shortly after, he got a commission but he was taken prisoner by the Germans and spent the rest of the War in seven different prison camps. His first volume, A Gloucestershire Lad, is characterized by his homesickness not just for England but specifically for his 'hills again'. In Flanders, Harvey is stimulated by the incongruity between his present situation in the low-lying Flemish countryside and his familiar home landscape, to visualize the 'Severn plain' where 'unscabbarded against the sky, /The blue high blade of Cotswold lies' and the 'giant clouds go royally/ By jagged Malvern with a train of shadows'.¹ The remembrance of his native county is more vivid to him than his actual environment and he revels in the thought that 'within my heart I safely keep, /England, what things are yours: /Your clouds, and cloud-like flocks of sheep /That drift o'er windy moors.../Great hills and little, gay /Hill-towns set black on sunrise-gold /At breaking of the day'.² Harvey believes that his service abroad for his country has somehow enhanced the natural bond between himself and his 'darling land' which has become more 'truly his' after his physical separation

1. 'In Flanders', A Gloucestershire Lad,
2. 'The Soldier Speaks', Ibid.

from and sacrifice for it.¹

Similarly, in 'If We Return', Harvey continues to conjecture how service abroad will have subtly intensified his relationship with England, not only as a spiritual ideal, but as an actual place. It will no longer be simply the place where he lives and 'earns [his] bread', but it will have been sanctified by the deaths of those who 'paid the price of Liberty' for England and Harvey and his fellow survivors will have a profound custodial responsibility - as Wilfrid Wilson Gibson also recognised in his 'Lament':

We who are left, how shall we look again
Happily, on the sun, or feel the rain,
Without remembering how they who went
Ungrudgingly, and spent
Their all for us, loved, too, the sun and rain?

An analogy can also be drawn with Ivor Gurney's 'Afterwards'² when he anticipates the return of the survivors of the War to 'walk old ways alone, /The paths they loved together, at even-fall, /Then the sad heart shall know a presence near, /Friendly, familiar and the old grief gone, /The new keen joy shall make all darkness clear'.

T.H. Collett in his Preface, justifies the nostalgia-emphasis in A Gloucestershire Lad by contending that the absence of 'mud, blood and khaki' is deliberate: these aspects of war 'are, in fact, the last thing a soldier wishes to think or talk about. What he does think of is his home'. In 'Defiance', Harvey recklessly invites the 'foolish shells' to 'blacken [his] limbs with flame' since he has enjoyed the apogee of all existence: 'I saw the

1. Cf. Robert Nichols, 'At the Wars', who suggests that the enjoyment of the features of the English landscape will be permanently denied to the man who 'cannot pay [their price]', whereas 'the Brave' will 'find them dearer far/Enriched by blood....'
2. Muse in Arms, p.152.

'English orchards / (And so may die content) / All white before I came'. There are similar extravagances and significant echoes of Rupert Brooke's¹ 'The Old Vicarage, Grantchester', also written 'in exile', in Harvey's 'Gonnehem':

Are the white walls now gay with roses?
Does the small fountain yet run free?
I wonder if that dog still dozes ...
Someday we must go back to see -

which, together with the Housman-influence reflected in the title, promotes the overall impression of A Gloucestershire Lad as being highly derivative.

Harvey's second volume, Gloucestershire Friends - recommended by the T.L.S. reviewer² for the author's 'grace, skill, force and depth of feeling ... most evident where [he is] faced with war and captivity' - does contain some verses offering maturer and more original reflection: the lightly sardonic 'To the Devil on his Appalling Decadence', for example. The more significant items, on the whole, are those concerned with retrospection: 'Memory', Bishop Frodsham, Canon Residentiary of Gloucester, informs the reader of Gloucestershire Friends,³ is 'at once the joy and torment of all who are forced to think It tears the heart-strings of those who are in captivity', but Harvey's recollections 'never lose the melodies of home' and for that reason, the Bishop anticipated that this collection of poems written from a

-
1. Harvey betrays the Brooke-influence on other occasions: e.g. he echoes R.B.'s sentiments about the War as a regenerative force in 'The Dead'II ('...They bought us, for our dearth, / Holiness, lacked so long, ... / And Nobleness walks in our ways again') in 'A People Renewed': 'And since at length they find / That life is sweet indeed, / They cast it on the wind / To serve their country's need. / See young "Adventure" there... / Hurls down his gods that were / For Honour and the Cross!... / And again / (Because men will it so) / England is ruled by men'.
 2. T.L.S., 4.10.17.
 3. Introduction to G.F., (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1917), p.11.

Prison Camp would be well-received by those 'many unfortunates' with 'dear ones imprisoned at Gütersloh'. He even suggests that the volume may well have a wider appeal for, if the sympathetic reader were to transpose 'any other county of the land for Gloucestershire, or any other house for the tree-encircled house at Minsterworth', he would 'learn what the best of England's captive sons are thinking, and so take heart of grace from the true love-songs of a Gloucestershire soldier' - written primarily for that 'best of all Gloucestershire friends', and most emotive symbol of home, the poet's mother.

Although recent critics¹ have had no great opinion of Harvey's abilities as a lyric poet in the Georgian idiom, there seems to be little doubt that during the War his two volumes - A Gloucestershire Lad and Gloucestershire Friends - were very well received. E.B. Osborn in The Morning Post review of A Gloucestershire Lad heralded Harvey as 'a poet of power and a subtle distinction' who deserved 'a high place in the Sidneian company of soldier-poets'. Gloucestershire Friends, likewise, was much appreciated by a substantial sector of the reading public, on its publication, since it presented the natural longing for home, friends and family experienced by soldiers serving abroad and, in particular, those in prison camps who were even more acutely aware of their isolation from home.

The T.L.S. reviewer² of Gloucestershire Friends admired

1. E.g. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.90: 'Harvey's wartime poems are slight and traditional in style and attitude, usually melodious, though without much profundity', and P.J. Widdowson, Illusion and Disillusion in I.W.W. Poetry and Painting, who disparages Harvey's 'simple diction and verse forms' and his absence of reference to the War.

2. Op.cit., 4.10.17.

Harvey's intensity of feeling, most pronounced when faced with the rigours of war and captivity where his innate gift was enhanced by pain and longing. More extravagantly, Bishop Frodsham acclaimed¹ Harvey's high standard of 'lyric excellence' and assumed the lyrical tone himself in his assertion that 'an agony of inarticulate longing shrills in a feathered cageling's song'.

It is evident from the pre-War poems featured in Gloucestershire Friends that Harvey's natural predilection was for the short lyric form - with some variation using the triolet, ballade and villanelle - and regular metre and plain diction. His subjects include such prescribed Georgian motifs as dogs, horses, children, mild philosophical ruminations on the problems of age, passion, God's existence or love and some tentative verse on 'Grown Ups' in the Gloucestershire dialect. A representative piece from this period is 'On Over Bridge at Evening'² where Harvey describes the advent of evening over hills and city and attempts to synthesise the rural and urban elements in his second stanza, at the same time betraying the weakness of much 'Georgian' poetry in his stereo-typed image of the 'roses-round-the-cottage-door' rustic retreat:

White and alluring runs the dusty road
Into the country, and with yellow eyes
A hastening car comes purring with its load:
Like some great owl it hoots, and then it flies
Past, and is swallowed up in dusk. And, singing,
A country girl with basket homeward wends
- Sweet as the dusty roses that are clinging
Around the cottage where her journey ends.

1. Introduction, G.F., pp.11-2.
2. Ibid., p.65.

Most of the poems in this volume, however, are written during the War and from German prison camps and the overall tone is set by the first poem 'Cloud Messengers'¹, in which Harvey whimsically uses the clouds to transport his thoughts to 'one sunny and sweet garden' in which his mother might be found 'straying /Among her dahlias'. In 'Autumn in Prison', Harvey again makes the imaginative leap from his 'prison of pine' to his own country-side and its woodlands, where the trees are swept bare by the wind and the robins' nests are in ruins but the spectacle of Lassington and Highnam Woods - 'Gaunt arms of stretching giants' - can invigorate even the prisoner in a foreign land. Harvey illustrates here a common practice¹ among poets with a propensity for regional/nostalgic verse, when he particularizes his reminiscences by referring specifically to the different localities²; alternatively, he finds a certain therapeutic and mnemonic value in listing the flora and fauna indigenous to an English country-garden but surprisingly discovered in Germany too:

Snapdragon, sunflower, sweet-pea ...
Thrushes, finches, ...
Blackbird with ... mellow songs,
Valiant robin, thieving sparrows,

whose presence 'pierces' Harvey 'with a blade /Beat from molten memory'³, reinforcing his awareness of both his isolation from home and his imprisonment. He is similarly taunted by the sight of the German country-side and the 'hateful road'⁴ whose freedom

1. Gloucestershire Friends, p.13.

2. Cf. Blunden's habit, continued in France, of specifying in the titles of many poems the actual village, battle-sector or building which prompted his reflections: e.g. 'Concert Party, Busseboom', 'January Full Moon, Ypres', 'Trench Raid near Hooge'.

3. 'English Flowers in a Foreign Garden', G.F., p.20.

4. 'The Hateful Road', Ibid., p.19.

mocks his confinement, just as the thoughts torture him, bearing on their wings 'Sweet Time-strangled things'¹ : 'things that we have done, and things that we mean to do: /Of girls we left behind us, of letters that are due, /Of boating on the river beneath a sky of blue, /Of hills that we have climbed together - not always for the view'. It is these reflections that haunt his sub-conscious as he paces around his cell, 'like the lions at the Zoo'.²

Occasionally the visitation of the natural elements - Sun, Wind and Moon - to Harvey's cell has a consolatory effect³, but more often than not, Harvey is immersed completely in recollection of his native county, as in the archetypal 'A Rondel of Gloucestershire'⁴ where he tries to evoke, in an alien environment, the essential benignity of this familiar country-side:

Big glory mellowing on the mellowing hills,
And in the little valleys, thatch and dreams,
Wrought by the manifold and vagrant wills
Of sun and ripening rain and wind; so gleams
My country, that great magic cup which spills
Into my mind a thousand thousand streams
Of glory mellowing on the mellowing hills
And in the little valleys, thatch and dreams.

O you dear heights of blue no ploughman tills,
O valleys where the curling mist upstreams
White over fields of trembling daffodils,
And you old dusty little water-mills,
Through all my life, for joy of you, sweet thrills
Shook me, and in my death at last there beams
Big glory mellowing on the mellowing hills
And in the little valleys, thatch and dreams.

More interesting than this rather nebulous, pseudo-Georgian evocation of rural England are the poems which denote a much more cynical approach towards the War and its consequences.

-
1. 'Cricket: the Catch', The Muse in Arms, p.207.
 2. 'What We Think Of', G.F., p.16.
 3. As in 'Solitary Confinement', Ibid., p.31.
 4. Ibid., p.32.

Harvey bitterly juxtaposes in 'Prisoners'¹ the mood of reckless daring in which the 'gallant Company' of enthusiastic volunteers 'wooded bright Danger for a thrilling kiss', and the severe depression of the same men, after being taken prisoner to 'drift and rot' with 'senses atrophied' on the 'filthiest backwater of Time's flow', with no present or future, dependent solely on the past while 'Life like a cinder [fades] black at last'. In captivity, Harvey urges his comrades, still serving, to visit his imagination² remembering how their camaraderie had earlier sustained him through 'grief and gaiety', and he recalls - rather unusually - with nostalgia,³ the trench environment: 'A battered roof where stars went tripping /With silver feet... /Yet rest was sweet .../ A dugout where the rats ran squeaking... / And out in front the poor dead reeking! /Yet sleep was sound'.⁴ It is with something akin to envy that he describes the final resting-place in 'a cell/ Of brown and bloody earth' of the 'sleepers' while he is confined inside a more 'sensible prison'.

As well as suggesting the intense bond between those sharing the same diabolical conditions which other poets - not least Gurney - were to probe more deeply,⁵ Harvey touched upon the idea of Christ's presence in the trenches, a notion again treated elsewhere⁶, in the ambitious 'The Stranger'⁷, in which Harvey envisages the approach of Christ, the Stranger, 'walking in khaki in a blood-red hell' where 'wounded men and great shells screamed

1. G.F., p.17.

2. 'Comrades O' Mine', Ibid., p.38.

3. But see p.155 for further examples of this 'regionalism-in-reverse' vein in combatant-verse.

4. 'The Sleepers', G.F., p.37.

5. See Chapter V, Camaraderie Section.

6. E.g. Sassoon, 'The Redeemer'; Owen, 'Soldier's Dream'; Read, 'My Company'.

7. G.F., p.69.

'together', to offer Himself to Death in place of the mortally-wounded narrator.

Although with variable success, Harvey does attempt to extend his range of treatment of the War situation¹: 'At Afternoon Tea', a lightly-satirical piece reminiscent of W.W. Gibson², jauntily declares 'We have taken a trench / (Oh, the bodies, the stench!)' and gaily asks 'Won't you have some more tea?'³; 'To the Devil on his Appalling Decadence'⁴, in more serious, sardonic vein, speculates on the degeneration of even Satan during the War from the familiar 'Old Nick' - 'a gentleman you know!' - respectful of the 'body of the dear deceased' which he would not 'mangle/ Nor maul' and whose 'bloody entrails' he would not 'kick ... flying in the air'; but now, with the excuse of 'Krieg ist Krieg' and 'C'est la Guerre!', Satan has no compunction about exercising the most abominable mutilation on the dead.

Harvey also assays the satirical approach in a few poems when he assembles a quite formidable armoury of invective - citing many of the blatant injustices which Kipling⁵ was also to champion on the soldiers' behalf - in 'Ballad of Army Pay',⁶ for example. In this poem, where each stanza ends with a Kiplingesque refrain: 'The maximum of danger means the minimum of pay', Harvey emphasizes the basic inequality between the lot of the men in the trenches 'living in holes like rats, with other rats, and lice, and toads', paid 'a bob a day', and the men who 'make munitions'

-
1. Thereby disproving the charge that Harvey totally excluded all mention of the War from his poetry.
 2. E.g. 'Breakfast'.
 3. G.F., p.44.
 4. Cf. Osbert Sitwell's 'Judas and the Profiteer' which takes up the idea of the I.W.W. devising unprecedented horrors to supersede the standard symbols of evil.
 5. E.g. 'Batteries out of Ammunition': 'If any mourn us in the work-shop, say / We died because the shift kept holiday'.
 6. G.F., p.40.

and who earn seventy shillings a week without ever having to 'see a lousy trench [or] hear a big shell shriek'. Likewise, other civilians enjoy the War vicariously, 'singing about it at high-class music-halls' and 'getting heaps and heaps of money and encores from the stalls'¹. The final stanza forcefully propounds the essential question: is it 'harder to make big shells at a bench, /Than to face the screaming beggars when they're crump- ing up a trench'? If it is agreed that the latter is by far the more hazardous, 'Should the maximum of danger mean the minimum of pay?'

In 'Ballades No. 1 and 2'², Harvey tries to accommodate - rather uneasily - the conventional idea of patriotism couched in orthodox Georgian diction: 'You dawns, whose loveliness I have not missed, /Making so delicate background for the larches /Melting the hills to softest amethyst ... /Nature's wild love that never cloys or parches; /Because of you I love the name of War', ('Ballade No. 2'), with an interesting account of the reality of the War-environment, in the style of Robert Nichols' Battle sequence, instancing the 'piteous corpses yellow-black, / Rotting unburied in the sunbeam's light, /With teeth laid bare by yellow lips curled back /Most hideously', on whose account Harvey 'loathes the name of War', ('Ballade No. 1'). Perhaps it is no accident that Harvey puts the more conventional attitude second since he has not been able to commit himself fully to the unremitting realism registered in the first Ballade.

1. Cf. Sassoon, "'Blighters'": 'The House is crammed: tier beyond tier they grin /And cackle at the Show, while prancing ranks/ Of harlots shrill the chorus, drunk with din' .
2. Gloucestershire Friends, pp.27-30.

Nevertheless, the awareness of the scale and grossness of human destruction, reducing the 'Beautiful shining forms of men alive, /... living lutes stringed with the senses five' to grotesque heaps of mangled limbs, is quite strikingly portrayed in the First Ballade. Although encumbered in parts with rhetorical impedimenta - such as expletives, nouns with capital letters and inversions of adjectives and nouns - this poem is congruent with the general development of Georgian Poetry exposed to the actuality of modern warfare, moving from the implicit to the explicit, the general to the specific and the disinterested to the impassioned. Thus Harvey can be seen as, in some respects, representative of the Georgian Poet faced with the extremity of war: much of his poetry seeks refuge in mellow reflections of an idealized country-side, redolent with nostalgia for Gloucestershire; a few poems deal with the characteristic moods of the First World War soldier-poet - early exhilaration and patriotic fervour, disillusionment, depression, sense of betrayal by 'Them' in England and consequent deepening of the bond of comradeship between 'Us' in the trenches; some poems adopt a lightly satirical attitude and, in one or two, there are suggestions that the poet writing in the conventional Georgian idiom is trying to apply his eye for detail in his native landscape to the unfamiliar and aesthetically repellent features of the trench environment - though, in Harvey's case, it must be admitted that this is a rather tentative adjustment of focus and he seems much more at ease in anodyne reminiscences of his home county.

The same criticism cannot be applied so conclusively, however, to Harvey's friend since boyhood and fellow 'son of Gloucestershire', Ivor Gurney, who was to face incarceration of a more irrevocable nature and whose stature as a poet¹ is unquestionably greater than that of F.W. Harvey, even though his talent is a remarkably uneven one.² Gurney was born in 1890 (coincidentally the same year as Isaac Rosenberg, who had a similar twofold gift and who also served in the ranks) the son of a Gloucester tailor, and he received his education at Gloucester Choir School³ before becoming a student at the Royal College of Music. He joined the Yeomanry in 1914 and transferred a year later to the Gloucester Regiment where he served throughout the War as a private. After service at the Front in 1916, Gurney was wounded in April 1917, recovered in hospital in Rouen and returned to the Front Line in time to be gassed at Passchendaele in August 1917.

After being gassed, Gurney was sent to a mental hospital in Warrington where he passed - in his own words - 'through a period of exceptional misery'. One month before the Armistice he was discharged from the Army and resumed his musical studies. Four years later, however, his progressive mental decline compelled him to return to a mental institution, this time Barnwood House, Glou-

-
1. According to Leonard Clark, 'Bibliographical Note', Poems of I.G., 1890-1937, (1973), p.27: '[I.G.] should be considered one of the most important of the First World War poets. Certainly he had a greater range of feeling and intensity, and of personal involvement, than any of the "established" war poets of that generation'.
 2. "'The splendid fragments of a mind immortal / With rubbish mixed, and glittering in the dust". It is a mind of many faculties, adventurous and to some extent scholarly, observant and visionary, terse but desultory too, musical away from music itself, pictorial in expanses and in minuteness', Blunden, Intro., Ibid., p.25.
 3. As Blunden's Intro., p.16, testifies in discussing I.G.'s Gloucestershire upbringing: 'The invincible love of his county which Gurney's experiences as a child and as a youth implanted may be said to have acted almost as a tyranny over his poetical character and range'. Cf. 'To Gloucestershire', Ibid., p.87: 'To my own country where I was born, and the earth / Entered into my making and into my blood - / Which I praised better than any ever of Her birth'.

cester, and for the rest of his life, until his death from consumption in 1937 at the City of London Mental Hospital at Dartford, he was confined in sanatoria in Gloucester and London.

The War experience had completely shattered his fragile sensibility and stunted his highly promising dual career as composer (star pupil of Sir Hubert Parry and Vaughan Williams) and poet. He continued to compose songs and poems in hospital, but much of his work - although poignant - is marred by extreme paranoid confusion, or what Blunden, more kindly, terms¹ 'an afflicting incoherence'. Unable to distinguish present from past, Gurney continued to write war poems after 1918 in his spasms of literary activity.² It is, according to Hussey², as if 'one is reading the poetry of war experience written in a post-war idiom'³ when one glances over the poetry Gurney wrote during this time, where the Severn and the Somme are virtually indistinguishable. The Western Front is the most potent reality to Gurney as he lives through the prophecy of the Third Spectre⁴

He'll stay untouched till the War's last dawning,
Then live one hour of agony -

though the 'hour' was to be translated into fifteen years during which Gurney was to become one of the most irretrievable and 'saddest casualties'⁵ of the War: a 'silent witness to the hideous

1. Introduction, Poems of I.G., p.23.

2. Poetry of the I.W.W., p.149.

3. For I.G. was much influenced by poets - especially G.M. Hopkins - instrumental in shaping the 'modern idiom'.

4. 'Ballad of the Three Spectres'.

5. Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight, p.88.

'crime perpetrated upon the spirit of man by modern war'.¹

Gurney began his career as a poet before the War somewhat similarly to Harvey, adopting the conventional pastoral idiom. Up to 1922, however, when he was consigned more or less permanently to mental institutions, he was able to exercise his talent for literary and musical composition synchronously but, in hospital, he found increasing physical difficulties in writing music and thus concentrated all his efforts on the development of his poetic faculty. Initially, Gurney had been more pre-occupied with music than with poetry, composing two song-cycles based on A Shropshire Lad, as well as arrangements for Elizabethan lyrics and setting some of his own - and John Clare's - poems to music. Towards the end of his life he was established in the field of music before being recognized as a poet: a selection of his songs was published just after his death,² and the journal Music and Letters, at the instigation of Gerald Finzi, attempted a re-appraisal of Gurney's contribution to modern music, with an incidental assessment of his standing as a poet.³ Finzi did his best to redress the unbalanced view of Gurney as principally a composer, recognizing the extent of Gurney's justified resentment⁴ at having been almost totally disregarded as a serious poet after the War - with the exception of occasional poems in The London Mercury, from 1918 to 1937. It was also Finzi who conducted

1. William Curtis-Hayward, quoted Silkin, Out of Battle, p.122.

2. Oxford University Press, 1938.

3. Special 'Gurney' Issue, Music and Letters, dated January, 1938.

4. According to Blunden, 'Intro.', Complete Poems of I.G., p.20, I.G. 'saw himself as "the first war poet", and as one who had been shamelessly and cruelly treated'.

a strenuous search for Gurney's poems after his death and it was largely because of his efforts that the 1954 selection of Gurney's poetry was compiled and published,¹ which helped to substantiate considerably Ivor Gurney's reputation as a poet.

Before the War, Gurney had begun to write verse ostensibly in the pastoral convention, but he could never be entirely contained within the limits of this tradition; his unusual imagination and response to the musicality of words 'separated [him] from many of his smoother Georgian contemporaries. Few poets have chosen such striking titles for their poems or explored such novel poetic territories'.² Equally idiosyncratic was Gurney's use of 'compound nouns, adjectival phrases before a substantive, oddly-placed epithets, internal rhyming, repetition, producing all in all an individual sense of emphasis',³ although the influence of Hopkins and Edward Thomas cannot be dismissed. Even so, Gurney's 'peculiar unconventionality' is attributable to no-one but himself and those 'masters of remote date or recent' - whether they be Thomas Campion, the Elizabethan poet-musician, Christopher Smart, John Clare, Robert Bridges, A.E. Housman, Walt Whitman, or, most particularly, Edward Thomas⁴ and (from 1918)⁵ G.M. Hopkins - did not 'supply him with what he had not got', rather they 'energized his calls upon innate and personal strength'.⁶

-
1. Poems of Ivor Gurney, (Hutchinson, 1954).
 2. Leonard Clark, 'Bibliographical Note', Poems of I.G. (1973) p.30.
 3. T.L.S. review of Poems of I.G., entitled 'Hero Betrayed', 31.8.73.
 4. I.G. acknowledges these kindred spirits in 'The Poets of My County', Poems (1973), p.54, citing Rupert Brooke and E.Thomas, but asserting that he himself 'praised Gloucester City as never before - and lay /By Tilleloy keeping spirit in soul with the way /Coopers comes over from Eastward sees Rome all the way'.
 5. When his friend, the solicitor and fellow Gloucestershire poet, John Haines, lent him a copy of the recently-published Poems of G.M. Hopkins.
 6. Blunden, Introduction, Poems (1973), p.25.

Gurney's 'gnarled', 'knotty', 'craggy' or 'fascinatingly unconventional' style - as it has been designated - verging, at times, upon the tortuous, is peculiar to himself and derives from his own experiments with phrasing and metring to achieve the subtly different nuance characteristic of his poetry. He shared with Hopkins a fascination with the musical quality of words¹ and the power of prosody to 'wrest from language an almost absolute expressiveness'.²

This 'craggy' quality - characteristic of Gurney's temperament as well as of his work - has encouraged a number of authorities³ to suggest that his mental derangement was incipient before 1914 although his War service undoubtedly did much to exacerbate the decline of his mental equilibrium. The close inter-relation between Gurney's predilections and his poetry has been also identified by John Press⁴ who has drawn an interesting analogy between one of Gurney's passions, Tudor Church music, with its 'austere, intricate melody, its mingled harshness and aspiring purity, its sharp, earthy flavour' and his poems which piquantly combine pellucid melody and harsh dissonance, in what Gurney calls 'patterns like earth-sense strong'.⁵

In terms of poetic output, Gurney's achievement was considerable: between 1913 and 1937 he wrote almost 900 poems, under conditions of excruciating difficulty. Forty-six poems appeared

-
1. Cf. Bergonzi's comment, *Op.cit.*, p.89, that in I.G.'s poetry one is particularly aware of 'a deft handling of rhythm and a feeling for the musical potentialities of language'.
 2. Silkin, *Into Battle*, p.120.
 3. E.g. C.Day Lewis in conversation with Silkin, *Ibid.*, p.122, and I.G.'s medical certificate which diagnosed 'manic/depressive psychosis aggravated but not caused by War Service'.
 4. *A Map of Modern English Verse*, p.140.
 5. An image suggested by Blunden, Intro., *Poems*(1973), p.26, is more explicit: 'the high-poised gargoyle against the flying cloud'.

in Severn and Somme,¹ fifty-eight in War's Embers² and a further seventy-eight in Poems by Ivor Gurney³, leaving 698 unpublished poems⁴, although there are indications that Gurney had considered arranging these poems into volumes, judging from the titles⁵ he gave to the notebooks filled during his asylum years.

It was, however, with Severn and Somme that Gurney 'reported "present" among the war poets available to the common reader'⁶ - in the wake of Robert Nichols, Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon and Rupert Brooke, all of whom had had some connection with the original Georgian Poetry Movement. Gurney's first volume was quite successful and went into a second edition - though the modest approval with which it was received can be ascribed, mainly, to the fact that this was the least exceptional selection of Gurney's poetry to be published. It largely portrayed the aspirations and responses to the War of a sensitive Georgian with a somewhat hackneyed approach to his material in 1917: 'that now familiar figure, the Gloucestershire countryman in the middle of a war',⁷ whose 'Home' was the Gloucestershire countryside and who celebrated it 'in a mood of subdued but authentic patriotism'⁸, never attempting the 'extremes of savage realism or anti-heroic revolt', but whose central concern was shared by many other soldiers: 'the poignant contrast between the sights and sounds of home and the brutalities of the present'.

1. Sidgwick and Jackson, 1917.

2. Sidgwick and Jackson, 1919.

3. Hutchinson, 1954.

4. Many of which are now housed in Gloucester Public Library and their actual existence is due to Miss Marion E. Scott of the Royal College of Music, who championed I.G.'s cause and assiduously kept copies of all the poems she received from him, for he was notoriously untidy himself.

5. E.g. Rewards of Wonder: Poems of Cotswold, France, London - a collection belonging to the period, 1919-25.

6. Blunden, Op.cit., p.18.

7. Hussey, Op.cit., p.148.

8. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.89.

The very title of this first volume is a dangerously simple antithesis, even more 'explicitly polar' than the 'melodramatic dichotomy'¹ of Graves' Fairies and Fusiliers² - 'pastoral and anti-pastoral, the "home" of Spenser and Shakespeare and Herrick versus the "France" of Haig and Ludendorff' - and, as Professor Fussell reasons, how can such an explicit polarization in the title result in anything other than 'a fatal lack of subtlety in [the] contents'? The title, Severn and Somme, is crucial however to any consideration of Gurney's poetry for it starkly presents his two principal subjects: 'his loved native Gloucestershire and his experience as an infantry soldier in the trenches on the Western Front'.³

The 'songs' of Severn and Somme have been fashioned 'out of [Gurney's] sorrow'⁴ and from the agony of front line experience, though some poems are at least partially couched in conventional rhetoric: the opening lines of 'To the Poet Before Battle', for example, 'Now, youth, the hour of thy dread passion comes; /Thy lovely things must all be laid away; /And thou, as others, must face the riven day /Unstirred by rattle of the rolling drums /Or bugle's strident cry'. The sonnet expresses the hope that the poet will prove as skilful in fighting as he is eloquent with words, and as 'strong of mettle as those we honoured'; above all, the poet must not disgrace the honourable craft of poetry by cowardice.

The sentiments portrayed here are staidly patriotic and it would seem that the poet is blithely embracing the prospect of

1. Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory, p.82.

2. 1917.

3. 'Hero Betrayed', T.L.S., 31.8.73.

4. 'Song of Pain'.

death in battle, but in 'Strange Service', the relationship between the poet and the country for whom he is doing 'dreadful service' is much more positively-realized than in the easily-assumed patriotism of the standard poem of consecration to one's native land.¹ To Gurney, the Gloucestershire water-meadows and the Cotswold Hills where he was born and bred are not merely topographical features but 'friends of mine and kindly' and permanently engraved upon his consciousness, although he is physically removed from them:

...your skies and rushy pools
Fragile mirrors easily broken by moving airs...
In my deep heart for ever goes on your daily being,
And uses, consecrate.

This is no idle longing to be restored to the home environment, for Gurney has accepted the basic patriotic premise² that to safeguard his home he must serve it 'In strange and fearful ways beyond [its] encircling waters', but he not unreasonably expects that in return for this service with 'its tears and sacrifice', he will be somehow repaid by his Mother Country and, allowing for such a tacit understanding with his country, it was no wonder that Gurney considered himself ill-used and cruelly betrayed after the War .

Gurney seems, in Severn and Somme, to look upon his separation from Gloucestershire as a means of revitalizing his natural bond with his county. From afar, he can 'anew see clear /Familiar

-
1. Though E.B.Osborn in Muse in Arms, does not recognize any such distinction for he puts 'Strange Service' in 'The Mother Land' section in company with 'Home Thoughts in Laventie', Tennant, and others in similar vein.
 2. Cf. Osborn, Ibid., pp.xviii-xix, who accepts the premise but stresses the soldier's innate reserve about using the term 'patriotism' in this context: in the case of the soldier who 'devotes himself to the service, blissful, sacrificial, keen, of his one and only Motherland' only the patriotism which 'serves in silence counts, or will count at all'.

'faces' and can appreciate, from the 'shadows', the joy of England's 'graces'¹, though - once again - he hopes his country will respond to him in his absence: 'Do not forget me quite /O Severn meadows'. Although Gurney's faith in the beneficence of nature may be unblemished, there is some suggestion in Severn and Somme of doubt in the benevolence of God and a need for reassurance that out of 'these wasted-seeming days'², there will be a reflowering of hope and beauty and the camaraderie of the soldiers will initiate a springing of flowers in barren deserts and the emergence of light or a lovely sound out of the difficult ground of France, difficult because barren of all loveliness and devoid of any hope of resurrection:

And strengthen Thou in me
The love of men here found,
And eager charity,
That, out of difficult ground,
Spring like flowers in barren deserts, or
Like light, or a lovely sound.

There is some indication in this 'Song' that Gurney's diction and syntax are moving in a different, highly-individualistic direction away from the conventional idiom of 'To the Poet before Battle', and although Gurney had yet to come into contact with Hopkins' poetry, the 'knotted' syntax of the stanza quoted above clearly anticipates the Hopkins-technique. In another poem of roughly the same period, however, 'The Old City (Gloucester)', written in July 1917 at Buire-au-Bois, Gurney betrays his unconscious Georgian proclivities and reverts to a more accepted style and arrangement of his subject matter, when he considers his native city and its environs, imbued with history since Roman times. His recitation of the names of familiar villages - 'Frame-lode, Frampton, Dymock, Minsterworth ... /You are the flower of

1. 'Song'.

2. 'Song of Pain and Beauty'.

'villages in all earth!' - followed by the assertion that 'If one must die for England', those who hail from Gloucestershire are more privileged than most since, to them, 'the air and skies of Heaven /And Beauty more than common have been shown', is strongly reminiscent of the local patriotism of Rupert Brooke towards Cambridgeshire in 'The Old Vicarage Grantchester'¹, though Gurney's poem lacks the half-mocking tone which leavens the Brooke poem.

Where Gurney's Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment first entered the Front Line, in the Somme sector between Armentières and Béthune, the rolling countryside was largely untouched by war's ravages and must have reminded him all the more forcefully of the Gloucestershire landscape - 'my own country where I was born, and the earth /Entered into my making and into my blood'² - with its 'quietly perfect' husbandry, 'its substantial half-industrial towns, friendly villages, lonely corners'³. In addition, being in a Gloucestershire Regiment, Gurney was ever made aware of his particular 'local heritage' by his companions-in-arms, 'men of his own shire' who shared the same tradition as himself, and appreciated as he did - though not with the same intensity - the special quality of the Gloucestershire 'genius loci'.

It is thus completely natural to find Gurney making the link between his relatively untouched rural surroundings in France and

-
1. E.g. 'I only knew that you may lie /Day-long and watch the Cambridge sky, /And, flower-lulled in sleepy grass, /Hear the cool lapse of hours pass, /Until the centuries blend and blur/ In Grantchester, in Grantchester'.
 2. 'To Gloucestershire', Poems(1973), p.87.
 3. Blunden (also stationed in this area and similarly invested with a strong love of county), 'Intro.', Poems (1973),p.17.

the remembered pastoral landscape in Gloucestershire - as in the elegy 'To His Love' in War's Embers, where he associates 'homoerotic emotion with a literal pastoral setting ... bringing into poignant (but still very literary) relation the redness of appropriate memorial flowers¹ and the redness of blood nobly and sacrificially shed'.² For the first three stanzas, the poem follows the prescribed pattern for an elegy in honour of one who has 'died /Nobly', with reference to the idealized past of country walks over the Cotswolds 'Where the sheep feed /Quietly' and gentle cruises along the Severn river. Just when it appears that Gurney has accepted the sentimental attitude: the necessity, as well as the proud dignity, of this sacrifice for the mother country, in the word 'nobly' with its 'propagandist aura'³, his ambivalent attitude to death in war asserts itself when he precisely visualizes the sheer physical horror of the 'quick body' reduced to 'that red wet /Thing' which he must forget if he is to preserve his sanity.⁴

The implication in this poem is that if Gurney could completely remove himself from the full realization of the war-environment (in the Ledwidge-manner) he could sustain his mental balance and, at the sacrifice of his integrity as a poet, retain control of his mind, but - unlike many of the versifiers in the

-
1. I.e. the violets - perennial flowers betokening immortality and signifying the colour of venous blood - 'Purple from Severn-side' (implying an anthropomorphic change on Gloucestershire itself, and relying on the inherent consolatory sweetness of nature to blot out War's horrors).
 2. Fussell, Op.cit., p.253.
 3. Silkin, Op.cit., p.123.
 4. Cf. 'Memory, Let All Slip', Bangor, October 1917, where I.G. pleads that his mind will obliterate all the horror 'save what is sweet /Of Ypres plains/...only autumn sunlight and the fleet/ Clouds after rains. /Blue sky and mellow distance softly blue', before he becomes totally 'ravished' by 'the Dead',

Georgian idiom - Gurney cannot conceive of the countryside as simply a refuge when he has identified it so closely with himself¹ as an integral and vital part of his being.² In fact, Gurney finds himself physically unable to concentrate his thoughts purely on the 'rich plain of sweet airs and pure' and 'Crickley Hill'³, for he admits to fear: fear, particularly, that he will not return to his home, and he cannot deny the presence of the barking guns that 'spoil the velvet silence deep'. Marooned in the trenches, he feels mentally as well as bodily removed from the 'quiet inns', 'tree-bordered lanes' and flowing Severn, in his native 'land of blossom and song':

We are stale here, we are covered body and soul and
mind
With more of the trenches, close clinging and foul,
We have left our old inheritance, our Paradise behind,
And clarity is lost to us and clean-ness of soul.⁴

The only consolatory prospect the poet can dare to admit is the possibility of eventual peace when the trenches will be filled in, the land levelled and the faces of the soldiers turned joyfully to the country; meanwhile, his sojourn in the trenches is made doubly intolerable, firstly, through taunting himself with the recollection of the Autumnal beauty of Gloucestershire:

...the road of coloured leaves
Is not for us, the up and down highway where go
Earth's pilgrims to wonder where Malvern upheaves
That blue-emerald splendour under great clouds of snow,

and, secondly, through the daily - if not hourly - expectation of

-
1. Cf. 'Walking Song', Poems (1973), p.50: 'My comrades are the small/
Or dumb or singing birds, /Squirrels, field-things all....'
 2. In Blunden's view, Op.cit., p.21: 'Music and poetry have always meant so much to Gurney that he is prepared to make any sacrifice for them, and often has been too absorbed to notice a sacrifice has been made'.
 3. 'De Profundis', War's Embers.
 4. The reverse of Brooke's 'into clean-ness leaping'.

death which will sever him permanently from his 'Paradise'.

Taken together, Severn and Somme and War's Embers present the early work of a poet with basic Georgian and pastoral affiliations and an unfashionable (at least to the post-War pacifistically-inclined generation) but undeniable strain of patriotism in his work, (though a particular brand of local patriotism stimulated by the Gloucestershire 'genius loci',¹ rather than derived from bellicose propaganda), who is yet capable of greater subtleties in the expression of attitude and greater freedom in form and diction than the conventional Georgian-biased poet.

Gurney's potential for development in a more original direction is fulfilled, in part, in his post-War poetry which, although chronologically outside the scope of this present work, is considered to be of relevance on the grounds that - for Gurney - the War continued after the official Armistice, and he wrote accordingly. After the War, Gurney made an attempt to resume his life as a music student at the Royal College of Music and achieved a little distinction in the post-War musical and literary world. His connections with Gloucestershire were as strong as ever and, according to John Haines, he would stride over the county: 'a fierce, tall stooping but athletic figure, with bushy eyebrows and most piercing eyes, a kind of combination of Don Quixote and D'Artagnan, gallant, intractable, kindly, ferocious and distressingly lovable With blazing eyes he would pour forth an end-

1. Cf. 'By Severn', Poems (1954): 'If England, her spirit lives anywhere /It is by Severn, by hawthorns and grand willows./ Earth heaves up twice a hundred feet in air /And ruddy clay falls scooped out to the weedy shallows. /There in the brakes of May Spring has her chambers, /Robing-rooms of hawthorn, cowslip, cuckoo flower - /Wonder complete changes for each square joy's hour, /Past thought miracles are there and beyond numbers'.

'less stream of talk on the English country, or on English poetry from Chapman to Edward Thomas, full of pithy and often violent, but always acute and exciting criticism'.¹

But already there were ominous signs that Gurney's delicate sensibility had been over-stretched by the War and he was confined in September 1922 to Barnwood House, to share the fate² of another countryman - John Clare - a century before. The predominant cause of Gurney's bitterness in confinement was that 'he, a lover of England if ever one existed, had been flung into a trap by England the beloved. "The earth had opened" a worse crater than any in Flanders and Picardy, for this defender'.³ Gurney's chief recourse at this time was to his War experience in which was inextricably woven recollection of his earlier Gloucestershire pastimes: lying beneath the pines at Brimscombe, for example, wearied by the steep climb - 'This perfect moment had such pure clemency / That it my memory has all coloured since, / Forgetting the blackness and pain so driven hence, / And the naked uplands from even bramble free, / That ringed-in hour of pines, stars and dark eminence; / (The thing we looked for in our fear of France)',⁴ - or gazing across the meadows at sun-set, with the grey line of the Cotswolds in the distance - 'A day of softnesses, of comfort of no false din. / Sorrel makes rusty rest for thy eyes, and the worn path / Brave elms, and stiles, willows by dyked water-run / North

1. Blunden, 'Intro.', Poems (1973), p.19.

2. Perhaps the most moving expression of Gurney's ordeal in these institutions is that given in 'To God', written at Barnwood House, December 1922, where he beseeches death to rescue him from 'this dreadful Hell within me' with 'gone out every bright thing from my mind'.

3. Blunden, Cp.cit., p.20.

4. 'Brimscombe', Poems (1973), p.63.

'France general look, and a sort of bath /Of freshness - a light wrap of comfortableness /Over one's being, a sense of strings music begun - /A slow gradual symphony of worthiness - /Quartets dreamed of perfection achieved masterless, /As by Robecq I dreamed them, and to Estaires gone'.¹ Although many of these post-War 'War poems' are 'defective' and confused, they manage to capture 'in a subtle series of reminiscences, ... many details² and tones which had combined in the quality of seasons and moments, anguish and relief never again to occur'.³ The later poems indicate greater maturity and a wider range of 'poetical resources' than are to be found in the poems of Severn and Somme and War's Embers, but - paradoxically -, this development is all too often impeded by increased incoherence and confusion⁴, particularly since Gurney's personal time-scale is peculiar to himself and he is obsessed with the past, as he himself recognizes in the end-page poem from one of his notebooks written in February 1925 ('in torture'):

There is nothing for my Poetry, who was the child of joy,
But to work out in verse crazes of my untold pain;
In verse which shall recall the rightness of a former day.

And of Beauty, that has command of many gods; in vain
Have I written, imploring your help, you have let destroy
A servant of yours, by evil men birth better at once had
slain.

And for my Country, God knows my heart, and men to me
Were dear there, I was friend also of every look of sun
and rain;
It has betrayed as evil women wantonly a man their toy.

-
1. 'Friendly are Meadows', Poems (1954).
 2. As illustrated by 'Cowslips', Poems (1954), 'Cowslips, celandines, buglewort and daisies /That trinket out the green swerves like a child's game' and the Hardy-esque 'Brown Earth Look', Poems (1973), 'Brown the sense of things, the light smoke blows across /The field face, light blue wisps of sweet bitter reek' - both of which poems testify to I.G.'s delight in 'endearing particularity, [refusing] abstractions', (as de la Mare had noted, Poems (1973) p.25.)
 3. Blunden, Op.cit., p.20.
 4. Cf. Silkin's comment, Op.cit., p.127: 'If the madness...helped him to discard his earlier...poeticisms...it also prevented him from merging the components of his art as deliberately as he might have done'.

against the waste and negativeness of the war process: 'The times were not of making but swift terrible waste'. This attitude pervades 'The Target'¹ which has affiliations with both 'Strange Meeting' and Hardy's 'The Man He Killed' in imagining the confrontation between the narrator and the man he shot, but the final stanza is a raw protest against the irrational and chaotic situation of war in which God appears to have abdicated any responsibility and the 'blind fight the blind':

All's a tangle. Here's my job
A man might rave, or shout, or sob;
And God he takes no sort of heed.
This is a bloody mess indeed.

War is also responsible for desecrating the French countryside² as well as for mutilating human beings: 'East of Ypres scarred was most foul and dreadful /With stuck tanks, ruined bodies needing quick honour's burial', where the only 'hope' of the corpses of those from Gloucestershire villages was 'to make meadows quicken /When Time has cleared this dreadful earth of infinite brute carnages'. Amid such ugliness and privation only two 'delights' help the soldiers to endure: the evening half-light which reminds them of their 'villages and dear households', for which they volunteered (perhaps 'too rashly') to suffer 'such vile pain and gray hideousness'; and their talk: 'The one goodness, greatness of bearing Hell-from-high without fear'.³ Again, in 'Crucifix Corner'⁴, the sunset on New Year's Eve reminds

1. War's Embers. The compression of this poem suggests the comment to Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.90, that I.G. must have been aware 'of the ironic potentialities in Housman's terse manner' - and certainly A Shropshire Lad had been prescribed reading matter for Gurney in the trenches.

2. Though I.G. does not find this aspect of the War's destructive force such a potent source of inspiration as the editor of his poems, Edmund Blunden, [see Section 2 (d)].

3. 'Ypres', ed. M. Hussey, Poetry of the I.W.W., pp.155-6.

4. Poems(1973), pp.57-8.

It is not only a particular trick of light or feature in the landscape which can transport Gurney home, but even the commonplace wood-bine - the characteristic cigarette of the Great War - reminds him, with his well-developed historical sense, of Raleigh and the 'England of madrigal, pipe and tabor', in addition to supplying a more practical, restorative service in anaesthetizing the over-active imagination:

...by Laventie or Ypres, or Arras the thing
Kept heart and soul together, and the mud out of
thinking.

Conversely, the English landscape can remind Gurney of the trench-scape - or simply of France² - by means of a kind of 'regionalism-in-reverse' process which a number of other poets also adopted. The Flanders trench-scape intrudes upon the tranquil Sussex Weald in several of Edmund Blunden's post-War poems³, for example, and even while the War was still going on, references to 'the dead men lying amid the dew'⁴ of the distant battlefields abounded.⁵ One year after hostilities had ceased, one ex-combatant revisited the well-known (after three years' savage intimacy) front-line sector, in his imagination, in order to pay tribute to '[his] dead'⁶, while for Vance Palmer⁷ - after several years

-
1. 'Tobacco', Poems (1973), pp. 60-1. Cf. 'Tobacco Plant', Poems (1954), in which I.G. strikes up a friendly conversation with a French soldier over their common interest in smoking which leads into a more general discussion of French literature: 'Friendly enough in that news-lacking and forlorn land / Talking of all my love....'
 2. E.g. 'Behind the Line', Poems (1973), p. 116: 'I suppose France this morning is as white as here / High white clouds veiling the sun'.
 3. See Section 2 (d). 4. From E.A. Mackintosh, War the Liberator.
 5. Sibyl Bristowe, 'To his Dear Memory', Provocations, reviewed in T.L.S., 28.11.18, for example, writes almost nostalgically of her brother's grave: 'Beneath the humid skies / Where green birds sing and heavy burgeoned trees / Sway in the fevered breeze', while for E.A. Wodehouse in 'Christmas Day, 1916' (On Leave, T.L.S., 2.8.17), the English bells joyfully pealing on Christmas morning operate as a powerful stimulus on his imagination, summoning before him an image of the shattered belfries, 'poor hulks', of Flemish churches.
 6. J.R. Anderson, Walls and Hedges (T.L.S., 4.12.19).
 7. 'The Farmer Remembers the Somme', 1914-18 in Poetry, p. 119.

betrayal, on behalf of the other survivors as well as himself,
since the country has not saluted:

...those boys who saw a terror
Of waste, endured horror, and were not fearer,
Before the barrages like Heaven's anger wanton known -
Feared not and saw great earth spouts in terror thrown,
But could not guess, but could not guess, alas!
How England should take as common their vast endurance
And let them be but boys having served time Over-seas.

On a purely personal level, as a 'war poet, England bound to
honour by Her blood'¹, Gurney interprets this sense of betrayal
most succinctly in 'The High Hills'², where he brilliantly com-
bines the actual physical separation from home with a spiritual
alienation from the country-side to which he was devoted:

The high hills have a bitterness
Now they are not known,
And memory is poor enough consolation
For the soul hopeless gone.
Up in the air there beech tangles wildly in the wind -
That I can imagine.
But the speed, the swiftness, walking into clarity,
Like last year's briony, are gone.³

Gurney is left to seek consolation from the dead Gloucesters of
his Regiment, his 'dear companions' of Laventie - Vermand - Ypres,
to give him courage 'from beyond the grave', as he wrestles with
the 'strange Hell within the mind', though he is always conscious
that past horrors will eventually overwhelm him as they did Owen's
mental cases,⁴ locked in 'purgatorial shadows' while 'memory fingers
in their hair of murders /Multitudinous murders they once witnessed./

-
1. 'O Tan-faced Prairie Boy', Poems(1954). Cf. 'Watching Music', Poems(1973), p.110, where I.G. describes himself who 'first was poet, am under three Hells and lie /((Sinned against desperately by all England high sworn to Duty) /Out of music, out of fire-light - or any joy. /A tale of heroic courage, made pains mask'.
 2. Poems(1973), p.120.
 3. Cf. 'When the Body Might Free', Ibid., p.124: 'When the body might free.../Then there was salt in life but now none is known/ To me who cannot go where the white is blown /Of the grass, or scarlet willow-herb of past memory. /Nothing is sweet to thinking, nothing from life free', and 'The Bronze Sounding', Ibid., p.119, 'the body now /No longer takes in distance as slow thought'.
 4. 'Mental Cases', ed. Day Lewis, The Collected Poems of W.O., p.69.

'Wading sloughs of flesh these helpless wander /Treading blood
from lungs that had loved laughter. /Always they must see these
things and hear them, /Batter of guns and shatter of flying
muscles, /Carnage incomparable, and human squander /Rucked too
thick for these men's extrication'.

In the final assessment of Gurney as a poet, two further factors should be considered: the opinion of William Curtis-Hayward - in a letter to Jon Silkin¹: 'I believe that what we have here is the ruins of a major poet, and that his madness is of the essence of the fragments of really original poetry he left'; and Gurney's own defiant justification of his erratic, often incomprehensible but, at times, deeply moving and highly original poetry, in 'War Books'² - a term applicable not only to Severn and Somme and War's Embers, but to his entire poetic output, for the War is the dominant and pervading subject even though it was not always satisfactorily reconciled with his pastoral background:

What did they expect of our toil and extreme
Hunger - the perfect drawing of a heart's dream?
Did they look for a book of wrought art's perfection,
Who promised no reading, nor praise, nor publication?
Out of the heart's sickness the spirit wrote
For delight, or to escape hunger, or of war's worst anger,
When the guns died to silence and men would gather sense
Somehow together, and find that this was life indeed,
And praise another's nobleness, or to Cotswold get hence.
There we wrote - Corbie Ridge - or in Gonnehem at rest.
Or Fauquissart or world's death songs, ever the best.
One made sorrows' praise passing the Church where silence
Opened for the long quivering strokes of the bell -
Another wrote all soldiers' praise, and of France and
night's stars.
Served his guns, got immortality, and died well.
But Ypres played another trick with its danger on me,
Kept still the needing and loving of action body;
Gave no candles, and nearly killed me twice as well,
And no souvenirs though I risked my life in the stuck tanks,
Yet there was praise of Ypres, love came sweet in hospital
And old Flanders went under to long ages of plays thought
in my pages.

1. Of 3.6.64, quoted Silkin, Op.cit., p.129.
2. Poems (1954).

Gurney was not so self-absorbed, however, as to recognize only the mental purgatory which was the War's legacy to him: he could visualize the indignity and injustice suffered by others who, having survived the fury of the physical hell of War, were reduced to living 'on State-doles, or showing shop-patterns /Or walking from town to town'.¹ There are a number of poems² of the 1918-1937 period which register Gurney's profound protest against the treatment of his fellow-combatants both during and after the War, as well as a group of poems³ - to be considered later⁴ - which explicitly pay tribute to the sense of security and happiness he derived from the fellowship of the trenches. Both these groups prove the fallacy of regarding Gurney as solely an introverted and self-centred poet, obsessed with how the War impinged on his own consciousness, and, therefore, Gurney can hardly be termed a 'Georgian' in the pejorative sense.⁵

Overall, Gurney's work is under-pinned by great humanity and a profound awareness of suffering, derived - no doubt - from his own experience of the War, which - in effect - cost him his sanity and irreparably disrupted his faith in 'our old [pastoral] inheritance'. As Gurney acknowledges in 'Poem for End'⁶, which identifies together 'Crickley with Crucifix Corner', the banks of the Severn and Artois Rivers are seared equally indelibly on his poetic sensibility as 'a war poet whose right of honour cuts falsehood like a knife', and for whom the War continued nearly twenty more years.

-
1. 'Strange Hells', Poems(1954).
 2. E.g. 'The Bohemians', 'What's in Time', 'Canadians', 'Picture of Two Veterans'.
 3. E.g. 'Servitude', 'To Certain Comrades', 'Smudgy Dawn', 'Tobacco'.
 4. See Chapter V, 'Camaraderie' Section.
 5. According to Blunden, Op.cit., p.26, I.G. epitomized in his poetry the best qualities of Georgian Poetry, although his 'merciless intensity of spirit' set him apart from the Georgian - or any - idiom.
 6. Poems(1973), p.130.

2 (c) DEBILITATED AND DISTORTED PASTORAL

It soon becomes apparent from the most cursory perusal of the critical - as well as creative - writing of the War period just how much the contemporary accepted literary idiom (which referred to the 'chaffinch flock'¹ of young poets as the 'flower of our young manhood', and to their slim volumes of verse as 'sheaves' which had been forced into early fruition by 'the fires of War') was imbued with rural imagery and just how heavily it relied upon 'Arcadian Recourse' to 'both a highly sophisticated literary pastoralism and ... a unique actual ruralism'.²

E.B. Osborn, for instance, introducing his anthology, The Muse in Arms, slips quite naturally into this somewhat archaic pastoral diction when he describes the soldier-poets going up 'in sunshine and with singing to win undying fame and deathless gratitude in the valleys of decision'. Similarly, the writer of a leading article in The Times Literary Supplement, entitled 'Poems in War-Time', in mid-1915³, endeavours to explain the increasing astringency in certain current verse by quite unselfconsciously manipulating the familiar image of England as a 'nest of singing birds' - 'though England is a nest of singing birds, the hawk that darkens its skies could not but have the effect of harshening and shrilling their voices'.

-
1. Phrase of Robert Bridges, quoted in review of John Freeman, Memories of Childhood, T.L.S., 27.3.19. Cf. Preface, S.P.I., p.9: '... the braver spirits were shocked into poetry and like the larks are heard between the roaring of the guns....'
 2. Fussell, Op.cit., p.231. Fussell enlarges upon the subject of 'actual ruralism' by citing as symptomatic of the English people's preoccupation with their 'immemorial rural roots' the figurative 'cultivation' of such traditionalist periodicals as Country Life and The Field, and their actual passion for gardening. He might also have given as examples of the continuing pronounced ruralism of the English their mania for living in the country (or at least the suburbs), and the national fascination with that symbol of 'the permanent tradition of the country', the B.B.C. Radio serial: The Archers, set amid the 'pleasant pastures of Ambridge'.
 3. T.L.S., 1.7.15.

Using the same idiom, the T.L.S. reviewer of Lt. Dyneley Hussey's Fleur de Lys : Poems of 1915 - echoing Matthew Arnold - pictures Hussey and every other young officer-poet in the New Armies as the 'scholar gipsy [going] forth to battle with the barbarians' in a 'rose-white mood of lyrical aspiration'¹, and Lord Crewe, quoted in the Introduction to A Treasury of War Poetry², confidently predicts that the 'soldier who is also a writer is as likely to set his mind on green fields and spring flowers as on the bloody drama in which he is an actor, and to tune his lyre accordingly'. Perhaps one of the most fully-developed examples of this critical diction with pastoral bias appears in the Preface to Poems³ by Donald F. Goold Johnson, whose untimely death in action prompted this lyrical exudation:

... What harvest Donald Johnson might have reaped in the fulness of time no man can tell; only a tiny sheaf of the first fruit remains. And yet from this the reader may augur what the full grain would have been.⁴

Throughout the nineteenth century, it had been generally assumed that as industrial life became the established condition for the majority of the populace, Nature could be trusted as a benevolent 'refuge and a touchstone'⁵, a 'stay' against the chaos and pressures of urban living, for - as Wordsworth had affirmed -

1. T.L.S., 8.6.16.

2. Edited by George H. Clarke, (Boston, 1917).

3. Preface by P. Giles, D.Litt., Master of Emmanuel College, (C.U.P.); reviewed in T.L.S., 26.6.19.

4. This inherent sense of the pastoral also apparently influenced the choice of book-titles, e.g. Private Alfred E.F. Francis, Shocks of Corn, War Songs and Hymns, T.L.S., 15.2.17; Field Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, Winnowed Memories, Recollections of 50 years' naval service, T.L.S., 1.3.17; D.F. Brundrit, Gleanings, descriptions of the horrors of war, T.L.S., 20.11.19; Private C.H. Warren, Pipes of Pan, Poems from Egypt, T.L.S., 3.10.18; and T.W. Mercer, Harvest and Other Poems, which anticipates a more satisfactory 'gathering' of ideas and experiences in his projection of post-War universal brotherhood.

5. Silkin, Op.cit., p.127.

Nature can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues
Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us.¹

This attitude towards nature which had been sustained by Hardy in his novels and poetry and which had prevailed for many years before 1914, had received a transfusion of fresh vitality just before the War, in the work of the best nature-poets of the Georgian coterie: W.H. Davies, D.H. Lawrence, John Masefield and - on the periphery - Edward Thomas.² On a wider front, however, a diluted or debilitated form of this pastoral lyricism obtained in general literary parlance, thus ensuring that when most of the combatants were confronted with an unfamiliar war-environment, their attempts at articulating their sense of (possible) exhilaration, isolation, horror or compassion relied not only upon evocations of the untouched landscape of home,³ but - more specifically - upon the use they made of the pastoral tradition embodied in language drawn from nature and the soothing cycle of the seasons.

It is intended in this section to investigate and analyse how this pastoral tradition was absorbed in the vocabulary of the combatants - principally in their poetry - and to trace the disruption of the pastoral from its conventional form, as manifested mainly in the early years of the War, through a period of severe debility, to an ultimately ironically distorted anti-pastoral - appropriate to the anatomy of an 'enemy world ... which had no relation to the landscape of life'⁴ - as presented most effectively by Edmund Blunden, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen.

-
1. 'Tintern Abbey', Poetical Works of Wordsworth (O.U.P.), p.163.
 2. See Section 2 (d).
 3. See Section 2 (b).
 4. Sassoon, Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man, pp.372-3.

Long before the War experience was fully assimilated in the poetry of its participants and long before many of them even arrived at the various fronts, attempts were made to incorporate War into the pastoral scheme of things.¹ John Drinkwater's 'Nocturne', quoted in a September 1914 number of the T.L.S.², talked vaguely about the 'living legions' bivouacking under a benevolent starry³ sky, while the quality of innocent song was ascribed to the guns⁴ - or, more ponderously, the cannons - of the artillery, whose sinister potential had not yet been even remotely gauged.

Most particularly, in the initial stages of the War, the appropriateness of the harvest-metaphor (with all its associated images of ploughing, sowing, reaping and winnowing) which was to proliferate as the War progressed, first suggested itself to such versifiers as A.K. Sabin in War Harvest, 1914,⁵ and the more distinguished Laurence Binyon in The Winnowing Fan: Poems on the Great War⁶. In this volume, which depicts - with zealous patriotism - Germany as the 'wolf beneath the sheepskin', Binyon exploits the pastoral

1. An early example of such a combination of 'pastoral and Bellona' comes from an unexpected Imagist source in the title Sword Blades and Poppy Seed, to Amy Lowell's 1914 volume of poems. A Georgian interpretation of the same idea is Drinkwater's Swords and Plough-Shares, 1915, echoed 4 years later by Signor Diego Angeli, Sword and Plough, whose book (describing the visit of a party of Allied journalists to the British battle-zone to report on the programme of reconstruction and re-cultivation undertaken there) is representative of the trend in sword > ploughshare literature, 1918-19. Cf. also R.L. Carton, Steel and Flowers, T.L.S., 5.7.17; and Graves, Fairies and Fusiliers, T.L.S., 6.9.17.

2. 10.9.14.

3. Several War Poets (e.g. Julian Grenfell, 'Into Battle': 'All the bright company of Heaven / Hold him in their high comradeship'; Alan Seeger, 'The Aisne': 'Intensely fair, / The winter constellations blazing forth', and L. Binyon, 'For the Fallen': 'As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness, / To the end... they remain') take comfort from the perpetuity of the stars, and generally combatant-verse abounds in references to the sky and its various features probably because, as Prof. Fussell, Op. cit., p. 51, has suggested, the sky is the 'only visible theatre of variety', to men trapped in trenches.

4. Cf. Herbert Kaufman, The Song of the Guns, T.L.S., 5.11.14.

5. Printed by the Temple Sheen Press, T.L.S., 5.11.14.

6. L. B. envisages the 'soul of divinely suffering man', purged of all dross by War's 'dreadful winnowing-fan'.

idiom firstly to underline the un-naturalness of the War situation whereby England has been reluctantly ¹forced by the German 'red reapers'² to leave 'earth's kindly crops unharvested'³ and, secondly, to ventilate his sense of moral outrage against the 'aggressor' who - he warns - will reap 'a heavier harvest' than he had bargained for when he deliberately interrupted the natural rhythm of the country-side by unleashing war on Europe.

The literal and metaphorical aspects of the harvest are again exploited, albeit somewhat crudely⁴, in a Scottish-dialect 'In Memoriam' tribute, roughly contemporaneous with Binyon's Winnowing

Fan : Noo silent is the hairst field,
 Wi' twa'r three women folk.
 Fu' weary bend the warkers,
 Noe laugh nor daff nor talk;
 An' I see anither hairst field
 Whaur the sheaves lie silently:
 An O, ma bonnie laddie,
 In the Laigh Countree.⁵

The potential of the harvest-image is explored more imaginatively in the 1916 Prize Poem at Winchester College by J.F.Duff⁶, who proposes that No Man's Land⁷, the 'narrow field between the lines' spread with 'war's unfruitful harvest' - the unburied dead whose

-
1. Cf. the tone of Drinkwater's 'England to Belgium', which recognizes that although loft to lay down the ploughshare, Belgium was quite justified in taking up the sword: 'Not lusting for a brief renown /Nor apt in any vain dispute /You throw the scythes of autumn down, /And leave your dues of autumn's fruits /Unharvested, and dare the wrong /Of Death's immitigable wing'.
 2. A role relished by the Germans according to 'O Mein Vaterland', quoted from Der Deutsche Krieg in Dichtungen, ed. W.E. Windegg, T.L.S., 14.10.15, which visualizes Germany, the mower, reaping the cornfield of war.
 3. 'The Harvest', Winnowing Fan, (1914), p.14.
 4. A.F. Graves' simile from The Long Retreat (quoted T.L.S., 1.7.15), is even more direct and undisguisedly gleeful when he describes 'tossing' Germans, with a bayonet rather than a pitch-fork, like 'cocks of hay'.
 5. J.S. and Kathleen Mary Carroll, 'Hairst', Or Sing a Sang at Least, (privately printed), T.L.S., 4.3.15.
 6. T.L.S., 24.8.16.
 7. Cf. the Winchester Poem and 'Sapper's' 1917 prose treatment of No Man's Land in a book so titled, which concludes with 2 sections on 'Seed-Time' and 'Harvest', though the latter looks forward to a more fruitful reaping after the War.

'sole winding-sheet' is the ragged grass¹ - should be dedicated to the memory of the dead of both sides, once hostilities cease, as a 'sacred way', testifying alike to the fear and suffering of the casualties upon whom 'the storm of death has rained', and to the grief of those who mourn them. Duff envisaged that before his 'sore smitten' wounded 'lad' sank into oblivion he would be transported to the idyllic pastoral surroundings of home, to be covered by the trembling branches of stately trees and regaled by the 'sound of streams, and ceaseless song /Of happy birds'.

But from the other side of the Channel - as has been suggested already² - the unsullied enjoyment of Nature's beauties had been diminished for the pre-War admirer of the pastoral (such as that 'uncatalogued Georgian'³, and protégé of Robert Bridges, Willoughby Weaving) who, deprived by War's ravages of his kindred spirits, found that the progress of the seasons which used to give him security and serenity, only served in 1916 to remind him of his lost friends. Two years later, however, Weaving seems to have overcome this harrowing desolation by investing the natural environment with a holy quality⁴, emanating from the 'dear dead, within [his] heart', whose corpses he can now look upon with equanimity, by means of a protracted 'harvest-image', believing them to be peacefully reconciled with Death and thus secured in nature as 'sweet

-
1. Cf. Major Harold Hastings, 'The Last Eucharist', quoted in a review of The Heavenly Tavern and Other Poems (T.L.S., 9.8.17), which develops a similar idea when the mortally-wounded soldier, stranded in N.M.'s L. thanks God for the 'blades of grass /My Eucharist to me in loneliness'.
 2. See Section 2 (b).
 3. Title of T.L.S. (7.12.16) review of Weaving's The Star Fields and Other Poems.
 4. See Section 2(b); cf. especially Gibson, 'A Lament': '...the birds and winds and streams /Made holy by their dreams'.

'memories' for him:

Where men fell thick, like sheaves beside
The shrewd machine [Death] that reaped and tied,
And life was left like stubble bare,
He could but see with inner sight
That life was but a thing how slight,
And Death a thing how fair.

How empty seemed those husks of men
That ne'er would lift their hands again
Nor fill with thought those faces grim;
But Death was present with them, more
Than life had been, and closer bore
Them now, in love to him....¹

Looking at the combatant poets of the early War years as a whole, the most popular metaphor of the harvest² is so widely-used (and consequently debilitated) as to become dangerously close to a cliché. It is generally found in the context of premature death - as exemplified by Max Plowman: 'Just as the scythe had caught them, there they lay /A sheaf for Death, ungarnered and untied'³; and Major Sydney Oswald:

The goodly harvest of thy laughing mouth
Is garnered in; and lo! the golden grain
Of all thy generous thoughts, which knew no drouth
Of mean-ness, and thy tender words remain
Stored in my heart....⁴

In a more striking poem, 'The Attack'⁵, Major Oswald juxtaposes two figurative harvests: the soldiers on the parapet, ready to go 'over the top', wait impatiently 'To reap the harvest which the gunner sows /Amongst the Huns', but the more likely result of

1. From Heard Melodies, dedicated to 'Friends among the Heroic Dead', reviewed T.L.S., 26.12.18.

2. The I.W.W. connotations of which are very much alive today to judge by two examples: firstly, Peter Porter's skilful rendering of the harvest image in 'Somme and Flanders': 'Those Harmsworth books have sepia'd /Their peasants' fields sown with barbed-wire. /In Nineteen-Nineteen, crops of crosses appeared /Seeded by bodies ripened in shell-fire'; and, secondly, the choice of title 'The Harvest of Battle' for a week-end Course surveying the poetry, biographies and drama of I.W.W., at Easthampstead Park Education Centre, February 1978.

3. 'The Dead Soldiers', U.L.D., p.103.

4. 'The Dead Soldier', S.P.I., p.68.

5. S.P.I., p.70.

their foray, Oswald suggests, is that all they will 'gather' will be tears, wounds and death for themselves in the 'harvest that reaps so many souls' of the flower of English manhood who lie 'waiting in the cold pale days of Springtime' - as H.F. Constantine interprets¹ the 'harvest' image. According to Robert Nichols², 'that mighty winnowing' which takes place in the 'unknown meadows' of an unspecified front, has a purgative force, by means of which 'Being is blown clean'³, but Eliot Crawshay-Williams - on the other hand - adapts the reaping/harvest figure for purposes of satire when he questions whether wars are perpetrated with their fruitless consequences solely to ensure that Man retains his primitive courage:

Shall courage die
Because man takes not from Time's hand
The ruthless scythe, and strew the land
With unripe harvest⁴ of humanity?⁵

The artist Paul Nash, unconsciously betraying his affiliations with the Georgian Poets, also finds the harvest-image highly appropriate in formulating what should be the function of every artist embroiled in the War:

We are all sent out here to glean - painter, poet,
musician, sculptor - ... and no-one will return⁶
empty-handed but bringing his sheaves with him.

At the other end of the agricultural cycle, the act of sowing seed⁷ offers itself for interpretation by poets as diverse as

-
1. Paths of Glory, ed. Bertram Lloyd, (1919), p.38.
 2. 'The Day's March', Ardours and Endurances, (1917), p.13.
 3. Cf. R. Brooke's 'swimmes into clean-ness leaping'.
 4. Cf. Joseph Lee, 'The Drum', M.I.A., p.234: 'Ripe! /Screams the pipe, /Is the field - /Swords and not sickles wield', and Dora Sigerson's unusual treatment of the harvest-metaphor: 'Death's sheaves have [fed] the Earth', which (like Owen's 'Spring Offensive') suggests that the Earth is not only indifferent to Man's suffering, but positively demands a blood-sacrifice from him to ensure her regeneration, 'Progress 1914-18; Lloyd, Op.cit. p.100.
 5. 'To Some Who Ask...', Ibid., p.43.
 6. Letter to Margaret Nash, 18.4.17, quoted Outline(1949), p.198.
 7. A peripheral usage occurs in Geoffrey Dearmer's 'From "W" Beach, Gallipoli', U.L.D., p.60: 'Now the sky gardeners speed the hurrying day/And sow the plains of night with silver grain....'

D.H. Lawrence and Laurence Binyon. By simultaneously exploring the phallic associations of the bayonet, Lawrence renders the sowing-planting sequence thus:

Like a bride he took my bayonet, wanting it,
And it sank to rest from me in him,
And I, the lover, am consummate,
And he is the bride, I have sown him with the seed
And planted and fertilized him.¹

Although less original in his approach, Binyon also makes imaginative use of the pastoral and anti-pastoral connotations attached to the activity of sowing, when he draws an analogy between the farmer 'scattering seed for his children's bread' - 'The immemorial gesture of Man confiding /To Earth' - and the battery of guns, 'makers of widows, makers of orphans', trundling along the long road above the plain to sow death amid the acres of War.²

A few poets used the harvest not for its metaphorical value but as representative agricultural activity, redolent of home. This is the case with Lt. E.A. Mackintosh³, whose Seaforth Highlanders, coming from a predominantly rural background⁴, would doubtless have experienced painful longing at the sight of French

-
1. 'Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?', *The Egoist*, 1.5.15.
 2. 'The Sower (Eastern France)', 1914-18 in *Poetry*, p.41.
 3. 'Harvest' (Buire-sur-Ancre, 1915), *A Highland Regiment* (1917) p.22. The 'Other Poems' section of *A H.R.*, follows the established pattern for intrinsically 'Georgian' War Poets (e.g. Vernede's 'Other Verses' section included 'The July Garden' with its catalogue of garden flowers; Nichols' 'Ardours' section is characterized by 'Midday on the Edge of the Downs'; and Sassoon's 'Lyrical Poems 1908-16' features 'Goblin Revel') all of whom conclude their 'slim volumes' of War verse with pre-War poems in the original Georgian idiom, plainly attesting to their pastoral proclivities.
 4. Mackintosh's 'In Memoriam' piece for Private David Sutherland, makes several direct references to the rural origins of his men: 'the new-cut peats are rotting' at home because the young men are in France and those who are left (like the old ploughman in Thomas's 'As the Teams's Head-brass') cannot keep pace with the demands of Nature. All that Mackintosh's men can do is give advice from afar about the sheep on the hill and urge their fathers to 'get the crops in /Ere the year gets stormier'.

farm-workers peacefully gathering in their crops, as the soldiers passed on their way to the War zone:

If on the hills about us,
Where now the thrush sings low,
The face of earth were bitter,
It would not hurt us so.
Though earth grew strange and savage
And all the world were new,
It would not tear our memory
The way the cornfields do.

Mackintosh makes a practice in other poems in A Highland Regiment of 'domesticating' his unfamiliar and habitually threatened environment: faced with a raid through the 'whispering, rustling' Hammerhead Wood¹, he explains a nearby sinister rustle as possibly just 'a German trying to stop a sneeze', thereby temporarily deflating the terror. Similarly, on a snowy day in the front line at Bois d'Authuille² he imagines the 'ghosts of childhood' of the Saxon Regiment in the trenches opposite, playing 'up and down the deadly slopes' of No Man's Land, even though he realizes that the innocent snow-ball fights of his imagination will be all too soon replaced by a renewed bombardment of far deadlier missiles.³

Although those poets who were firmly established in the Georgian ethic of benevolent pastoral might have found sustenance in the natural world, the fallacy of such an unquestioning (almost dogmatic) attitude - scarcely modified by actual experience of the Front - was recognized by their more sensitive contemporaries who tried to amend this naive confidence in Nature's beneficence. Lt. Wilkinson's⁴ attempt to draw an ironic parallel between the

1. 'In No Man's Land', Thiepval, 1915, A H.R., p.29.

2. 'Snow in France', Ibid., p.31.

3. Cf. Gibson's use of the snow-ball image in 'Between the Lines', Livelihood (1917), Collected Poems, p.389, when he describes the planes as dragonflies bombarded by 'snow-balls', i.e. explosions from anti-aircraft guns.

4. I/8th Battalion West Yorks (Leeds Rifles), 'Dad o'Mine', S.P.I., p.102.

glorious high-summer weather¹ and the paradoxically savage fighting at this time of year, indicates an - albeit haltingly-phrased - move towards greater awareness of how the War is impinging on, and distorting, Nature:

Midsummer-Day, and the mad world a-fighting,
Fighting in holes, Dad o'Mine.
Nature's old spells are no longer delighting
Passion-filled souls, Dad o'Mine.
Vainly the birds in the branches are singing,
Vainly the sunshine its message is bringing,
Over the green-clad earth stark hate is flinging
Shadow for shine.

A brief survey of Leslie Coulson's poetry, however, gives a clearer indication than Lt. Wilkinson's single poem of how the typical Georgian-style poet, filled with the true Brookean volunteer spirit², attempted to modify his inherited literary tradition to fit the extreme situation in which he found himself. Perhaps there is no better renunciation of the static pastoral than Coulson's 'From the Somme'³, in which he admits his limitations as a 'singer' of 'simple things...summer dawn, and summer noon and night, /The dewy grass, the dew-wet fairy rings /The larks' long golden flight'⁴, when faced with the devastation effected by the Somme Battle on the innocent summer landscape (which had survived largely undamaged⁵ up to the July 1916 Offensive).

-
1. Lt. Wilkinson probably has in mind here the brilliant June/July weather of 1916 which gives an extra poignancy to the whole Somme debacle and fixed in the national consciousness the association between poppies, corn, sunshine, larks singing and unprecedented, indiscriminate slaughter. Sassoon recalled that fateful 1st July, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer, p.71, for its weather which, 'after an early morning mist, was of the kind commonly called heavenly'.
 2. Brooke's influence asserts itself in Coulson's poem, From an Outpost (1917), p.8 which begins: 'If I should fall, do not grieve for me. /I shall be one with wind and the sun /And the flowers....'
 3. Hussey, Poetry of the I.W.W., p.56.
 4. Coulson's accumulation of characteristic pastoral features resembles those cited by W.N.Hodgson, 'The Call' : 'woodland hollows of green lawn ...sun-splashed grass; and hills of dawn'.
 5. R.Nichols, A.W.P., pp.50-1: 'in the Spring of '16 there were long stretches of line where nature still refused to be wholly defaced'.

Coulson is sufficiently aware of the implications of modern warfare to realise the inappropriateness of a 'lute' in attempting to give expression to its vast and 'too deep' 'chants of tragedy' and he wisely acknowledges that he is probably not capable of doing justice to his enormous subject. Initially, he tended to ignore his actual environment by indulging - like Ledwidge - in nostalgic visions of 'good ale and home-made /Bread ... the village greens... /The tranquil farms, the meadows free, /The friendly trees that nod for me',¹ but the next stage in the development of his poetry² seeks to forge a link between the features of the natural landscape, threatened by the War's destructiveness, and their pre-War prototypes. Amid the 'thunder of hidden guns' and the screaming shells, the virginally white dawn breaks as beautiful as ever and still capable of thrilling the imperilled onlooker; a nonchalant brown lark soaring 'through the tortured air' carols his fill, regardless of the holocaust and, at night, when the dead are collected (if possible) for burial, Coulson soothes his spirit - disturbed by the ashen-faced corpses - with contemplation of the 'still beautiful' stars. An element of strain has however intruded, occasioned by the corpses, when the poet finds it increasingly difficult to avoid the dull implication of the dead, strewn like flowers across No Man's Land, inadequately concealed by poppies and corn; after this the final line seems an altogether tenuous assumption:

1. 'When I Come Home', From an Outpost.

2. Exemplified here by 'The Rainbow', 18th June 1916, M.I.A., pp.291-2.

Where the parapet is low
And level with the eye,
Poppies and cornflowers glow
And the corn sways to and fro
In a pattern against the sky.
The gold stalks hide
Bodies of men who died
Charging at dawn through the dew to be killed or to kill.
I thank the gods that the flowers are beautiful still.

By October 1916, having lived through the exhilaration and subsequent disillusionment concomitant with the progress - or lack of it - of the Somme Battle, Coulson assumed a bitter, angry tone hitherto unknown in his work: Nature is no longer sanctified as a refuge from war, with all its traditional pastoral features intact, but is physically involved in the desecration ordered by some huge force, apparently beyond the control of men:

Who made the Law that men should die in meadows?
Who spake the word that blood should splash in lanes?
Who gave it forth that gardens should be boneyards?
Who spread the hills with flesh, and blood, and brains?
Who made the Law?¹

Paradoxically, just as Coulson seemed to have arrived at an avenue through which to approach the War's vast 'chants of tragedy' he was killed in action at the age of twenty-seven and it was left to other poets - such as Owen, Sassoon and Blunden - to explore more fully the implications of the demonic pastoral.

In many cases, it was the resilience of the flora and fauna - principally larks² and poppies³ - indigenous to the front line precincts which prompted the combatant-poet to explore his situation in the pastoral idiom. A plethora of verses exhausted the popular superstition that poppies grew from the blood of dead soldiers,

1. 'Who Made the Law?', apparently Coulson's last poem.

2. Cf. Fussell, *Op.cit.*, p.241: 'Flanders and Picardy abounded in the two species of bird long the property of symbolic literary pastoral - larks and nightingales', (though the nightingale appears little in War Poetry, perhaps because its native woods were so vulnerable to bombardment, whereas the lark's terrain was N.M.'s L. itself).

3. Butterflies and dragon-flies were also popular symbols of fragility and ephemerality, e.g. Gibson, 'The Dancers': 'All day beneath the hurtling shells, .../ Hover the dainty demoiselles -/ The peacock dragonflies'.

and soaring larks represented either the souls of the slain winging towards heaven or the indomitable human spirit triumphing over the 'sanguine strife' unleashed by the dogs of war.¹ Representative of this strain of diluted pastoral are two sonnets by Sgt. J.W. Streets: in the first², the skylark's ecstatic song 'touches in this place remote /Gladness supreme in its undying note /And stirs to life the soul of memory'³; and in the second, the lark provides a positive spiritual release: 'Upon the wings of his immortal ode / My soul rushed singing to the ether sky /And found in visions, dreams, its real abode - /I fled with Shelley, with the lark afar, /Unto the realms where the eternal are'.⁴

Willoughby Weaving pays homage to all the trench-birds, not only the lark, (and certainly Robert Nichols and R.E.Vernède have testified to the presence of at least the yellow-hammer⁵ and black-bird⁶ as well) whose activities continue irrespective of the noise, recalling 'sweet domesticities' to the jaded onlookers in an environment where the traditional pastoral values are in danger of being turned upside down, with this war 'harvest' signifying a time of dearth not fulness:

Ye fearless birds that live and fly where men
Can venture not and live, that even build
Your nests where oft the searching shrapnel shrilled
And conflict rattled like a serpent, when
The hot guns thundered further and from his den
The little machine-gun spat, and men fell piled
In long-swept lines, as when a scythe has thrilled,
And tall corn tumbled ne'er to rise again.

-
1. E.g. Gibson, 'The Lark', 'a lark soars into the light - /And its song seems the voice of the light /Quelling the voices of night/ And the shattering fury of battle'.
 2. 'A Lark above the Trenches', S.P.I., p.100.
 3. By evoking memories of home - 'peaceful summer days in gardens or pleasant landscapes in Blighty' - the larks became inevitably associated with sadness for at least one combatant, Sgt. Maj. F.H. Keeling, War Letters of Fallen Englishmen, p.164.
 4. Sonnet quoted in T.L.S. review of The Undying Splendour, 14.6.17.
 5. 'At the Wars'.
 6. 'The Listening Post'.
 7. 'Birds in the Trenches', M.I.A., p.64.

The prolific poppy similarly lent itself to poetic interpretation; it recommended itself to the combatant poets not principally because of its pagan mystical associations with Apollo and sleep (often itself suggestive, in the Line, of death¹), or as a result of its more recent fin-de-siècle connotations of opium and homo-eroticism, but rather - quite simply - because it was the colour of blood. It was the red colour which gave credence to the potent Front Line myth that poppies - 'Whose roots are in men's veins' - thrived on the blood of dead youth, a suspicion which Alec Waugh, for one exploits:

And scarlet by each ragged fen
Long scattered ranks of poppies lay,
As though the blood of the dead men
Had not been wholly washed away.²

Lt. John McCrae, in perhaps the best-known poem³ of the War, combines both the emotive poppy and lark motifs (as well as the standard pastoral references in the second stanza to the dawn and sunset, beloved of Georgian Poets⁴) 'under the aegis of a mellow, if automatic, pastoralism'⁵:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

-
1. E.g. W. Owen, 'Asleep'; Sassoon, 'The Dugout'.
 2. 'From Albert to Bapaume', France, August 1917, Paths of Glory, p.112.
 3. 'In Flanders Fields', Punch, 8.12.15 (first appeared anonymously).
 4. E.g. Brooke, 'Dawn was theirs...'; R.B. Marriott-Watson, 'And who is there believes in Fate / As a Soul goes out in the sunset flare?' ('Kismet'). Cf. also Sgt. Streets, 'At Dawn in France', where Dawn's serene light, borne on 'shimmering wings', steals across the faces of the watchers, encouraging them to sacrifice their own 'radiant morn' as the 'sun sets swiftly behind youth's hill'.
 5. Fussell, Op.cit., p.249.

The natural beauty of a 'young Spring day' is likewise able to 'bravely' flourish in spite of a recent salvo, as H. Asquith

records: Up and down, up and down
They go, the gray rat, and the brown.
A skull, torn out of the graves nearby,
Gapes in the grass. A butterfly,
In azure iridescence new,
Floats into the world, across the dew;
Between the flowers

Where the salvo fell, on a splintered ledge
Of ruin, at the crater's edge
A poppy lives: and young, and fair,
The dewdrops hang on the spider's stair
With every rainbow still unhurt
From leaflet unto leaflet girt.

Asquith's evocation of the trench-scape, wrought in the Georgian idiom, which focuses on particularized natural (as opposed to human) detail - including two appropriately-coloured rats¹ - overlooks the full horror of desecrated graves and the destruction indubitably caused by the bombardment and derives consolation from the knowledge that though 'man's house is crushed; the spider's lives'.²

All the poets, whose use of different aspects of the pastoral has been considered up to now, rely ultimately upon a pattern of rural order which they believe implicitly is existing and will continue to exist, certainly at home in England, irrespective of the 'torn fields of France'. The fact that this order to which they refer is a largely idealized figment of their imagination - an 'arcady' which is not only 'unheeding' but extinct - does not alter their faith in the benevolence of Nature, by comparison with whose wisdom the inadequacy of Man is all the more sharply etched.

1. Gray being the colour of German uniform and brown that of the British khaki.

2. 'The Salvo', U.L.D., p.81.

Bearing out Wordsworth's philosophy in 'Tintern Abbey', based on the consolatory properties of the pastoral, Martin Armstrong - for one - prepares himself to meet the perils of the Line by re-absorbing the sights and sounds of the countryside:

O consolation and refreshment breathed
From the young Spring with apple-blossom wreathed,
Whose certain coming blesses
All life with token of immortality
For now that I have seen
The curd-white hawthorn once again
Break out on the new green ...
And heard green virgin wheat sing to the breeze, ...
I can with heart made bold
Go back into the ways of ruin and death
I carry in my soul a power to quell
All ills and terrors such as these can hold.¹

Similarly, the regenerative power of nature is invoked by Lt. A.V.Ratcliffe in his projection of eventual peace which gives the poet the opportunity to reaffirm his general faith in nature's invincibility:

For tiny hopes, like tiny flowers of spring,
Will come, though death and ruin hold the land;
Though storms may roar they may not break the wing
Of the earthed lark whose song is ever bland.
Fell year unpitiful, slow days of scorn,
Your kind shall die, and sweeter days be born.²

Nevertheless, the combatant-poets were bound to readjust their response to the pastoral ideal the more they were exposed to 'front-line existence ... hateful and repellent', but also 'unforgettable and inescapable'.³ As they became immured in the

-
1. 'Going Up the Line', U.L.D., p.119. A similar approach to Nature as a restorative force pertains in the work of 2 women poets: Eva Gore-Booth, 'The Wood', Paths of Glory, p.64: 'Turning in blind distress /From war's dark ugliness /O'er the wide common heather spread /Through rain-soaked grass I fled....'; and Fredgond Shove, 'The Farmer, 1917', Ibid., p.98, whose farmer is representative of sanity and solid country virtues: 'the only man alive / And thinking through the twilight of the world'.
 2. A.V.Ratcliffe, 'Optimism', M.I.A., p.156. Cf. R.Aldington, 'In the Trenches': 'Soon the spring will drop flowers /And patient creeping stalk and leaf /Along these barren lines /Where the huge rats scuttle /And the hawk shrieks to the carrion crow'.
 3. Sassoon, 'Foreword', Collected Poems of Isaac Rosenberg, p.vii.

appalling confinement of the trenches, the devastation of the actual landscape - and the attendant distortion of the literary pastoral which this effected - were gradually borne in upon their consciousness. They realized that they were suffering not only with other men but also with the natural world, subjected to the same inexorable fate as themselves; an awareness which Paul Nash in particular among artists of the War, tried to convey in such a lithograph as 'Marching at Night', where the file of soldiers and the avenue of trees through which they march are depicted as being equally vulnerable.

Before the War - like many of the Georgian poets - Nash had found spiritual satisfaction in contemplating the 'ever-lasting hills and immemorial elms'¹, rather than in contemplating his fellow beings but, 'under the savage impact of war, the degree to which men and their landscape were alike overtaken by one and the same inevitable catastrophe, and were torn and twisted from their normal selves in a single cataclysm, was borne in upon him, and as a result he produced a number of studies in which human beings played an important part'.

One of the most poignant illustrations of War's disruption of the domestic and normal was to be found in the annihilation of the pleasant rural villages of Picardy and Flanders, reminiscent both of the quiet rustic hamlets of Southern England and of the charming cottages dotted about the idyllic pastoral landscape. A Canadian infantry-man, Private H. Smalley Sarson, apparently with a well-developed sense of the pastoral norm, attempts in

1. Margot Eates, Paul Nash : Master of the Image (1973), p.24.

two consecutive poems¹ to render the differences between the village scene in the summer of 1914 and that of the following year. In mid-1914, 'the weary workers / Turned from the plow, home-trudging from the fields, / Smile at their thoughts of well-earned peace and rest', as they enter the bustling village where 'peace and goodwill are the master tones' and the last² thrush of the day 'whistles in a distant copse'. One year later, however, the vista is transfigured: the village is desolate except for a scurrying rat³, the returning martins find their perennial nesting places, below 'the sheltering eaves', have been buried in rubble; the comfortable inn and venerable church have been devastated and the 'weary shrapnelled houses' stand like skeletons beside the once-welcoming road, now seamed and pockmarked with shell-holes. The 'bloated body of a puny kitten' floats in the 'greening slime' - once a sparkling stream - and the cheerful gardens of the cottages have been strangled by weeds.

Private Sarson could no doubt be criticised for making the contrast between the two states too crude and simplistic, but the essential poignancy of the last stanza of 'The Village, 1915', crystallized in the simple statement: 'The thrushes sing no longer in the woods', is undeniable. This awareness of the grim inroads made by the War on the peaceful routine of country-life is also evinced by two maturer semi-combatants⁴, whose respective

-
1. 'The Village, 1914'; 'The Village, 1915', S.P.I, pp.81-3.
 2. Unsuspecting that it is the last of an era, not just of a single day. Cf. 'that last sunset touch that lay / Upon the hills when day was done', Hodgson, 'Before Action'.
 3. The rat being, as Prof. Fussell, Op.cit., p.252, has pointed out, the demonic counter-part to the sheep of conventional pastoral: 'If the sheep is a symbol belonging to the model, that is, pastoral or apocalyptic world, the rat is the creature most appropriate to the demonic'.
 4. Laurence Binyon, who visited the Front in 1916, aged 47, as a Red Cross orderly, and Lord Dunsany (Ledwidge's patron) who actively participated on the W.Front as a Captain in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers until being wounded in April 1916, after which he was detailed to the London War Office.

jobs kept them for the most part a little behind the lines. In this capacity, they had more opportunity than the front-line troops to investigate and report on the ruin left in the wake of the War.

The dislocated-pastoral idea is fittingly expressed in Binyon's detection, in a ruined village, of a 'black /Skeleton of a vine, wrenched from the old house /It clung to',¹ symbolizing not only the War's complete disregard for Man's efforts to establish and cultivate, but also the extinction of a whole tradition of country-life. The villagers, whose 'memoried minds' had been filled with pictures of the 'wide green plain'(as it was before the juggernaut of War overwhelmed it) have disappeared: the centuries-old pastoral values which they and their village represented have been obscenely erased.

The same sense of total annihilation pervades Lord Dunsany's description of the return - after the cessation of hostilities - to Albert, where the familiar land-marks and remembered features of the town and its environs have been dislocated to such an extent that even a native of the area is unable to distinguish

them:Descending into Albert past trees in their agony, we came almost^{at} once on the houses. You did not see them far off...; we came on them all at once as you come on a corpse in the grassHe went no farther but turned round and round, peering piece by piece at that weedy and cratered² earth. He was looking for the village where he was born.

-
1. 'The Ebb of War', 1914-18 In Poetry, p.41. Cf. the more extravagantly rhetorical rendering of the same theme by R.E.Vernède, 'Before the Assault', War Poems and Other Verses (1917), p.58: 'We see all fair things fouled - homes love's hands builded / Shattered to dust beside their withered vines....'
 2. Quoted in the T.L.S. review, 11.12.19, of Unhappy Far-Off Things, a collection of 12 short sketches describing the devastation Lord Dunsany had witnessed while in rural France.

Concomitant with such a convincing overthrow of the traditional scheme of pastoral values is an apparent reversal in the whole natural order. R.E. Vernède ponders the irony of the War situation whereby a simple blackbird can supersede Man - allegedly the highest animal - in the evolutionary table:

Strange that this bird sits there and sings
While we must only sit and plan -
Who are so much the higher things -
The murder of our fellow man.¹

Immersion in the 'troglydte world' inevitably reduced man's opinion of himself as 'divine' - made in God's image - to a point where he seemed simply another form of trench-life (like the lice and rats). In fact, to the horror of a pre-War theology student², the combatants were 'treated worse than animals Hunted³ from place to place and in the end destroyed like vermin!'

The identification of Man with such primitive life forms as the microbe was a particularly forceful way of expressing both the total abnegation of the individual⁴, in the regimented context of war, and the general careless disregard for human life, shamelessly squandered. Max Plowman sees the uniform ranks of infantry advancing up the Line as a 'poor craven little crowd of human mites!'

1. 'A Listening Post', War Poems and Other Verses, p.64.

2. Johannes Haas, Leipzig, letter from the Champagne Region, 27.11.15, quoted Laffin, Letters from the Front.

3. Sassoon in 'Break of Day', Collected Poems, p.82, makes a play upon the idea of hunting, contrasting his 'happy dream' of the first hunt of the season across the Sussex Weald - the 'glimmering fields with harvest piles in sheaves' - with the sinister warning, 'They're drawing the Big Wood...' (for men, not foxes), which reminds him that now he, the pre-War hunter, has become the quarry.

4. Ernest Rhys' 'Lost in France', 1914-18 In Poetry, p.89, exemplifies the War's lack of respect for the individual with his solid country virtues. His pastoral background has done little to protect Jo from being overwhelmed by the War: the pastoral has been successfully eclipsed by the demonic world of mechanical warfare: 'He had the plowman's strength / In the grasp of his hand. / He could see a crow / Three miles away / And the trout beneath the stone. / He could hear the green oats growing... / He could make a gate, and dig a pit, / And plow as straight as stone can fall. / And he is dead'.

'...crawling over the scarred cheese, /Silently going towards that roaring sea'¹. According to Owen,² the dead - in their desperation to be revived, in whatever form - would welcome the chance to be re-incarnated as 'living mites in cheese /Or good germs even', and - having in mind King Lear's anguished cry over the dead Cordelia, which questions the whole logic of existence ('No, no, no life! /Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life, /And thou no breath at all?') - Owen's soldier is ready to exchange his mutilated body for that of an intact dug-out rat. A similar ironic reversal of the natural order is wilyly contemplated by Isaac Rosenberg in 'Break of Day in the Trenches'³ as he watches a 'droll rat' with 'cosmopolitan sympathies' and a 'queer sardonic' expression (curiously reminiscent of Rosenberg's own) who is more 'chanced ... for life' than all the 'haughty athletes' of mythology, Housman and the pastoral idyll.

Perhaps the most repugnant metaphor is the sustained image of the battle-field as the maggot-infested face of a gigantic corpse (bearded by 'that horror of harsh wire') in 'The Show', where Owen translates his traumatic initiation into No Man's Land⁴ - during the successful attack on Feyer in April 1917 - into a hideous aerial survey of 'a sad land.../Gray, cratered like the moon with hollow woe, /And pitted with great pocks and scabs of plagues', across which writhe miniscule caterpillars⁵ offering themselves 'as plugs /Of ditches' as their arduous

1. 'Going into the Line', 1914-18 In Poetry, p.58.

2. 'A Terre', Collected Poems, p.64.

3. Collected Poems of I.R., p.73.

4. Described most graphically in a letter to Susan Owen, 19.1.17, W.O., Collected Letters, p.429, as being 'pock-marked like a body of foulest disease and its odour is the breath of cancer ... No Man's Land under snow is like the face of the moon: chaotic, crater-ridden, uninhabitable, awful, the abode of madness'.

5. An image first used in W.O.'s letter, 14.5.17, Ibid., p.458, to Colin Owen where he describes the ground during the Feyer attack as being 'all crawling and wormy with wounded bodies'.

advance is checked.

The element of free will, characteristic of human kind, has been eliminated in the War: the Romantic aspirations of Man are ruthlessly overhauled (as T.E.Hulme had anticipated¹ before the War), and he is no longer considered singly but 'en masse', as part of the complicated war mechanism. Not unexpectedly, the confinement of the trenches: 'inescapable thrall / Against infrangibly wired and blind trench wall / Curtained with fire, roofed-in with creeping fire'², suggested the image of penned animals awaiting slaughter.³ Robert Nichols's picture⁴ of noon on a summer's day in the trenches explodes the accepted pastoral view of lush pastures, free-ranging animals, delicate butterflies and man - an integral part of the scene - but unquestionably in control of his environ-

ment: It is midday: the deep trench glares ...
 A buzz and blaze of flies ...
 The hot wind puffs the giddy airs ...
 The great sun rakes the skies,

and forty standing men 'Endure the sweat and grit and stench, /
Like cattle in a pen'.

The cattle image is found also in Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'⁵ - 'What passing bells for these who die as cattle?'⁶ - and appeared too, initially, in 'The Send-Off'⁷, testifying to Owen's habitual concern for his men - 'the herds' - for whom he felt responsible as 'Herdsman ... a Shepherd'⁸ of sheep that do

1. See Chapter I, pp.55 and 58.

2. Owen, 'S.I.W.', Collected Poems, p.74.

3. Cf. Owen's recollections in a letter to his mother, 31.12.17, Collected Letters, p.521, of the notorious Etaples camp, 'a kind of paddock where the beasts are kept a few days before the shambles, whose inmates wear an expression of blind panic 'like a dead rabbit's'. 4. Ardours and Endurances, p.18.

5. Collected Poems, p.44. 6. An early B.M. draft has 'die in herds'.

7. According to a B.M. draft, 'cattle-shed' was originally used instead of 'siding-shed' in 'They sang their way/ To the siding-shed'.

8. Cf. Blunden's characterization of himself as 'a harmless young shepherd in a soldier's coat'. Ironically, not even real shepherds were safe from the War's influence, according to W.J.Turner's 'The Sky-sent Death', which describes the death of a Greek shepherd whose Arcadian idyll is shattered by a bomb from a German aeroplane.

'not know my voice'.¹

Osbert Sitwell, similarly committed to his men, makes use of the sheep-image - with its strong connotations of pastoral innocence and security - to express his outrage at the spectacle of 'our lambs / Stuffed and fattened for slaughter'², and Max Plowman, reluctantly shepherding his men into the Front Line, finds a renewed sense of purpose (patriotic fervour having long since vanished) in the thought of serving 'these poor sheep, driven innocent to death'³ and, at the same time, the pastoral ideal - resuscitated briefly in his 'overheated mind' - offers him a prospect of eventual peace, peace with all (the enemy included) for whom he has developed a 'compassion ... as deep as for [his] own' men.

The sheep analogy appealed to a wide spectrum of writers, apart from those who exploited it as a metaphor in their poetry, as in 'Private X's' horrified account⁴ of the attacking waves of infantry involved in the 'advance' towards Passchendaele in late 1917, surging forward only to be annihilated in their lines of formation:

The first 'ripple' was blotted out. The dead and wounded were piled on each other's backs, and the second wave, coming up behind, and being compelled to cluster like a flock of sheep, were knocked over in their tracks and lay in heaving mounds The wounded who couldn't crawl to the dubious shelter of shell-holes were all doomed. They had to lie where they were until a stray bullet found them or they were blown to pieces.

Likewise, when Major P.H. Pilditch focused his binoculars on No Man's Land - the very place, as Professor Fussell⁵ has pointed

-
1. Letter to Sassoon, 1.9.18, *Op.cit.*, p.571. Cf. Owen's earlier letter (31.8.18), *Ibid.*, p.570: 'And now I go among cattle to be a cattle-driver'.
 2. 'Sheep-Song', *Paths of Glory*, p.108. Cf. the French soldiers in the 1917 mutinies who baa-ed like sheep as they were sent over the top 'like lambs to the slaughter'.
 3. 'Going into the Line', *1914-18 in Poetry*, p.58.
 4. Quoted in Guy Chapman, *Vain Glory* (1937), pp.465-6.
 5. *Op.cit.*, p.241.

out, where sheep may not safely graze¹ - he 'made out what seemed to be a flock of sheep grazing all over it'. On closer inspection the 'sheep' turn out to be 'hundreds of khaki bodies lying where they had fallen in the September attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt' and, once again, the pastoral reference serves to gauge how completely the War's demonism has prevailed against the natural order.

As well as exploiting the ironic reversal implicit in the trench environment, whereby Man has been reduced to the condition of the baser animal-life, the combatant poets grimly realized the appropriateness of the funeral service² - with its allusions to the ephemerality of human life and the return of 'dust to dust' - to their present predicament, 'where men are crushed like clods'.³ This understanding, together with an appreciation of the potentialities of the harvest image, permeates Harold Monro's 'Carrion':⁴

Your head has dropped
Into a furrow, And the lovely curve
Of your strong leg has wasted and is propped
Against a ridge of the ploughed land's watery swerve.

...You are fuel for a coming spring, if they leave you
here;
The crop that will rise from your bones is healthy bread.

It also influences Georges Bannerot's 'As Ye Have Sown...'⁵ where the poet begins by optimistically suggesting that the dead soldiers will 'fuel' the spring and provide the necessary regenerative force for the 'glad, golden grain':

Wrought of our flesh and bone the Spring appears,
Its sap our hearts-blood's deep and glowing stream,
Its bloom the radiant flower of stricken years -

-
1. Cf. Rosenberg's phrase 'the sleeping green between', which combines the qualities of superficial attractiveness and concealed danger appropriate to a sinister bog.
 2. The grave-yard association was further suggested by the spectral environment itself - 'the Place of Skulls' - as described by Sassoon, 'Golgotha'. 3. Sassoon, 'Break of Day', Coll. Poems, p.82.
 4. Youth in Arms IV, Poetry of the I.W.W., p.93.
 5. Taken from Les Statues Mutilées, (1918), trans. Stella Browne, Paths of Glory, p.31.

but this sanguine expectation is mooted only to be quashed for Bannerot believes that the only suitable 'harvest' from the futile suffering of 'this nameless strife' is 'iron /Ruin, armed and fanged again'.

With equal indifference Nature contemplates the mingling of the withered leaves with the mud and dust and the 'moulder [ing]' of the new recruits on the 'plains of France'¹ and in the relatively quiet Dordogne Sector the dead are disinterestedly absorbed into the sempiternal natural cycle - much as Wordsworth's 'spirit' is 'Rolled round in earth's diurnal course, /With rocks, and stones and trees',² though John Peale Bishop can take no consolation from this process which Wordsworth calmly views with 'no human fears':

...the leaves fell
and were blown away: the young men rotted
under the shadow of the tower
in a land of small clear silent streams
where the coming on of evening is
the letting down of blue and azure veils
over the clear and silent streams
delicately bordered by poplars.³

The fragility of the autumnal leaf seems a more suitable autumnal aspect to project than the harvest-sheaves of the dead soldiers who - far from being 'garnered by Death', cleanly gathered up from the battle-field - will disintegrate into a human-mould to merge with the contorted earth, of less account than 'the grass and coloured clay', as they join 'the great sunk silences'⁴

...his thin and sodden head
Confuses more and more with the low mould,
His hair being one with the grey grass
And finished fields of autumns that are old.⁵

-
1. Edward Shanks, 'Drilling in Russell Square', U.L.D., 1.16.
 2. 'A slumber did my spirit steal....', Poetical Works, p.149.
 3. John Peale Bishop, 'In the Dordogne', U.L.D., p.69.
 4. Rosenberg, 'Dead Man's Dump', Collected Poems, p.83.
 5. Owen, 'Asleep', Collected Poems, p.57.

The idea of Autumn not as a 'season of mellow fruitfulness', conspiring with the sun how to 'fill all fruit with ripeness to the core', but as indicative of decay, dereliction and the futility of all human endeavour is developed by Sassoon (whose Lyrical Poems 1908-16, published in The Old Huntsman and Other Poems, testified to his sharing Keats' view of Autumn¹):

October's bellowing anger breaks and cleaves
The bronzed battalions of the stricken wood
In whose lament I hear a voice that grieves
For battle's fruitless harvest, and the feud
Of outraged men. Their lives are like the leaves
Scattered in flocks of ruin, tossed and blown
Along the westering furnace flaring red....²

This rejection by the combatant poets of the traditional pastoral interpretation of Autumn as a time of ultimate fulfilment was symptomatic of the erosion of the whole relationship between a benevolent natural environment and grateful man. Likewise, the idealized representation of contented shepherds dozing beside their flocks, or ploughman drowsing in the hay-wain's shade (redolent of Constable's landscapes) was brutally metamorphosed under War conditions into ironic images of exhausted soldiers 'ungainly huddled' on the trench-floor and horribly suggestive of³ - or actually transformed into⁴ - the dead. The vulnerability of human flesh to violation by 'alien metal' is nowhere better illustrated than in the soldiers-bathing scene - recorded by several

-
1. Sassoon specifies his loss of pastoral innocence in 'Memory', The Picture-Show, Collected Poems, p.105, where he contrasts his 'gay feckless' youth when 'all the paths led on from Hawthorn-time /Across the carolling meadows into June', with his post-War-experience 'heavy-laden' heart.
 2. 'Autumn', Counter Attack and Other Poems, Ibid., p.88.
 3. E.g. Sassoon, 'The Dug-Out', St. Venant, July 1918, Ibid., p. 102, where the exhausted officer 'too young to fall asleep for ever' alarms Sassoon by reminding him of the dead - the reverse situation occurs in 'The Rear-Guard', where Sassoon savagely kicks the 'sleeping' corpse to rouse it.
 4. E.g. Owen, 'Asleep', Coll. Poems, p.57, where 'In the happy no-time of his sleeping /Death took [the soldier] by the heart'.

memoirists of the War¹ - which operates as a 'type of the pastoral oasis or a rare "idyllic moment"',², in an environment where the anti-pastoral predominates.

Essentially, however, it is not only the indignities and dangers suffered by man, but the transmogrification undergone by the landscape with the corresponding distortion of the established pastoral outlook which finds urgent expression in the work of the Georgian soldier-poets. The traditional idea of Nature's benignity could hardly be sustained in circumstances where 'the sky is gone.../...earth, air are foes'³, and a re-appraisal of man's relationship with his environment was therefore inevitable. Imagery and language had to be adjusted to accommodate the new situation although these elements were not always equal to the demands of the grim anti-pastoral of the combatants 'whose world is but the trembling of a flare, /And heaven but as the highway for a shell'.⁴

Although his overall achievement is grossly uneven, Robert Nichols, after only a fleeting glimpse of the 'topography of Golgotha', offers his impressions of these 'melancholy fields' which - though still rooted in country-terminology, such as 'hedges', 'hollow' ^{and 'high lonely tree'} - assay an evocation of the unprecedented experience of twilight in the Line:

The last gleam is gone.

It is not day or night; only the mists unroll
And blind with their sorrow the sight of my soul.

1. E.g. Nichols, A W.P., p.85: 'Such moments could at best be but brief and perhaps for the officer, subject to the pressure of necessity arising from the responsibility of command, they were even brieferLying on the grass, watching his men bathing he could not but wonder how many would still be alive to watch such as were. So it was that these idyllic moments, sweet though they might be, resembled nothing as much as ...the interims in nightmare'.

2. Fussell, Op.cit., p.299.

3. Blunden, 'Preparations for Victory'. 4. Owen, 'Apologia...', Op. cit., p.39.

I hear the wind weeping in the hollow overhead:
She goes searching for the forgotten dead
Hidden in the hedges or trodden into muck
Under the trenches, or maybe limply stuck
Somewhere in the branches of a high lonely tree -
He was a sniper once. They never found his body.¹

Nichols's twilight is still far removed from the perpetual semi-darkness endured by Owen's 'purgatorial shadows'², from whose hearts the War has so successfully blotted 'dear things' that they can no longer distinguish natural phenomena: 'Sunlight seems a blood smear; night comes blood-black; /Dawn breaks open like a wound that bleeds afresh'. Nevertheless, Nichols goes on to make skilful use of his pastoral heritage towards the end of the same poem, though there is still a somewhat arch literary quality about the images:

A pause: I stand and see
Lifting into the night like founts incessantly
The pistol-lights' pale spores upon the glimmering air ...
Under them furrowed trenches empty, pallid, bare ...
And rain snowing trenchward ghostly and white.

An oblique rural reference appears in another, more forceful description of the permanent putrescence of No Man's Land, as experienced by a group of soldiers patrolling it in the dark:

The sodden ground was splashed with shallow pools,
And tufts of crackling cornstalks, two-years-old,
No man had reaped, and patches of spring grass -

but the central issue is not the rotting harvest here, but the 'vile sickly smell of rotten-ness', emanating from the corpses who 'stank through all'.³

Above the trenches, the 'veil of obscenity' draped by the War obscured the moon also: although celebrated by centuries of

1. 'Night Bombardment', Ardours and Endurances, pp.19-21.

2. 'Mental Cases', Collected Poems, p.69.

3. A.G.West, 'God, How I Hate You', Poetry of I W.W., p.142.

poets as perhaps the archetypal Romantic image, it seemed to the combatants a malevolent presence - a 'witch-moon' - casting 'wolfish shadows'.¹ The distorting 'veil' applied to other theatres of war apart from the Western Front, and at least one Gallipoli Campaigner was aware of the sinister aspect of natural phenomena in war when he described the new moon over the Anzac trenches appearing 'to smile with a slit mouth and to have no mirth'.²

To an internee in Ruhleben Concentration Camp, on the other hand, the moon appeared as a gloating guard, mocking his suffering as it 'looks down /And grins'.³ Perhaps the most eloquent illustration of the moon's fall from grace is Edgell Rickword's satirical comment, 'Moonrise over Battlefield', which personifies the moon as no longer a chaste virgin, but a seductive whore⁴, practised in the art of inveigling the innocent to their doom:⁵

In privacy of music she made ready
with comb and silver dust and fard
She drifted with the grand air of a punk
on Heaven's streets soliciting white saints;
then lay in bright communion on a cloud-bank
as one who near extreme of pleasure faints.

Then I thought, standing in the ruined trench,
(all round, dead Boche white-shirted lay like sheep),
'Why does this damned entrancing bitch
seek lovers only among them that sleep?'

Rickword's whole response to the War-environment is somewhat reminiscent of Rosenberg's sardonic tone in certain poems⁶ and moves in a more original direction than that taken by the bulk of Georgian poets; his background is metaphysical, rather

-
1. Blunden, 'January, Full Moon, Ypres', 1914-18 In Poetry, p.66.
 2. Leon Gellert, Songs of a Campaign, T.L.S., 18.4.18.
 3. N.G.Kapp, 'Existence', Ruhleben Camp, The Egoist, December, 1916.
 4. Cf. T.S.Eliot's deflation of the Romantics' moon - as an enfeebled prostitute - in 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', Prufrock 1917, Collected Poems and Plays of T.S.E., p.24.
 5. Since direct moonlight intensified the likelihood of being detected when on a wiring or raiding party.
 6. See Section 3 (a) for further discussion of I.R.'s poetry.

than pastoral (as 'The Soldier Addresses His Body'¹ indicates). In a witty skit on the humourless subject of winter warfare, the severe cold is personified - as both Colonel Cold and Hauptman Kalte (since cold is no respecter of nationality) - and invested with the characteristics of a sadistic staff-officer admonishing the front-line troops with icy reproofs:

Stiffly, tinkling spurs they moved,
glassy-eyed, with glinting heel
stabbing those who lingered there
torn by screaming steel.²

Those poets who - unlike Rickword - were dependent upon recourse to a specific rural tradition for suitable images to describe their alien environment were able to suggest zeugmatically the degree of distortion suffered by the pastoral landscape. Green, the natural adjunct to fields and woods in the pastoral idiom assumed a gruesome aspect when applied to the war context, being the colour of poison gas³, the stagnant water in shell-holes and gangrenous flesh. It is in the latter sense that Sassoon applies 'green' in 'Counter-Attack' - 'green clumsy legs /High-booted, sprawled and grovelled along the saps' - and the effectiveness of the application is enhanced if juxtaposed with Sassoon's early vision of the French battle-field, triumphant in 'the vivid green /Where sun and quivering foliage meet'.⁴ The 'radiant forests' and 'spires of green /Rising in young-limbed copse and lovely wood' of 1914 have been savagely wrenched by the constant

1. Edgell Rickword, Collected Poems, p.9.

2. 'Winter Warfare', Ibid., p.10. Cf. Owen's 'Exposure', Collected Poems, p.48, where the frost is seen rather as the unjustified punishment meted out to those who already suffer, by a God whom Owen still cannot quite renounce: 'Tonight, His frost will fasten on this mud and us, /Shrivelling many hands, puckering foreheads crisp'.

3. Similarly, Owen describes sniffing 'the thick green odour' of 'Death's breath' ('The Next War', Ibid., p.86) and watching the doomed gas-victim floundering in the 'thick green light' as 'under a green sea' drowning, ('Dulce et Decorum Est', Ibid., p.55).

4. 'France', The Old Huntsman, Collected Poems of S.S., p.12.

artillery bombardment into the 'shell-chopped trees that fang the plain'¹ or 'gibbet trees like bones or thorns', protruding from the 'poisonous smoke - past all impulses'.²

In this 'fruitless'³ land, /Thorny with wire /And foul with rotting clothes and sacks', bereft of natural forests, the barbed wire might serve as an inorganic, unflowering 'bramble thicket'⁴, and the rows of 'commemorative crosses'⁵ suggested themselves to some poets as substitute trees: 'Of barren soil and bitter yield', among whose 'sapless boughs that bear /No fruit, no flower, for good or ill /No song of birds can ever thrill'.⁶

As for the birds themselves, they became inextricably associated for some combatants with the 'deadly planes', hovering ominously: Floyd Dell⁷, for instance, watching the wheeling squadron of pigeons, mourns the fact that he cannot now 'see birds as I saw them long ago'. Aerial combat was variously envisaged as

1. Blunden, 'Zonnebeke Road'.

2. Blunden, 'Thiepval Wood (September 1916)'.

3. The sterility of the War-environment which contributed to the formulation of a characteristic poetic voice for the 1920's poets, is evoked by Herbert Read's 'A Short Poem for Armistice Day', Poems 1914-34, p.87, which focuses upon the 'artificial flowers' produced by the maimed survivors: the British Legion poppies, exquisitely appropriate symbols both of the futile wastage of the War and of the inadequacy of any organized act of Remembrance: 'These flowers have no sweet scent /no lustre in the petal no increase /from fertilizing flies and bees .../And will not fade though life /and lustre go in genuine flowers /and men like flowers are cut /and withered on a stem'.

4. R.H.Sauter, 'Barbed Wire', P.O.W.Camp, U.L.D., p.63. Cf. Reginald Farrer's comment, The Void of War: Letters from 3 Fronts (N.Y.1918), p.82, 'derelict snarls of "barbedwiria volubilis"' were everywhere accepted as 'characteristic war flora'.

5. Edward Marsh quotes a different metaphor from the cross/tree association in his record of a visit to Albert and its environs as Winston Churchill's secretary in September 1917: '...there are still the lines of bare tree-trunks with their stumps of boughs, and everywhere the tiny nameless white crosses, single or in clusters, "like snowdrops" as Winston said'.

6. J.Griffyth Fairfax, 'The Forest of the Dead', U.L.D., p.65.

7. 'Pigeons', Paths of Glory, p.50. Cf. Gibson, 'Between the Lines', who describes a hit plane 'tumbling like a pigeon plump'.

a contest between 'iron birds'¹, white hawks (English planes) and black doves² (German)³; or the onslaught of a falcon (or other bird of prey) upon 'timorous fowl'⁴ (the Germans, of course). Similarly, the Zeppelin lent itself to poetic interpretation as the 'winged Worm', 'vulture-ship' and 'man-made Dinosaur', by an anonymous flier in The Muse in Arms⁵. For Paul Bewsher⁶, conscious of his deadly mission - to bomb targets behind the enemy line - his aeroplane is a 'bird of night' which must release 'with hard unsparing hand' the 'poison o'er the gloomy land'. To Blunden,⁷ on the other hand, the British BE-2 and German Albatross bi-planes - although deadly instruments of war - were quintessentially flimsy and it is this fragility⁸ which recommended the dragonfly metaphor to him.⁹

One of the best sustained images derived from the insect world is Rosenberg's brilliantly-handled bee-metaphor, in 'Dead Man's Dump'.¹⁰ The excellence of Rosenberg's handling can be measured more

-
1. W.J. Turner, 'Aeroplanes', Poetry of the I.W.W., p.138.
 2. Cf. Paul Nash's interpretation of the various Second World War aircraft in his capacity as Official Artist to the R.A.F. The Wellington Bomber was the 'exact image of a great killer whale hunting in unknown seas'; the Whitley Bomber was the 'dove of death' and the aircraft-hangars were seen as lairs of wild, savage beasts.
 3. Gilbert Frankau, 'Eyes in the Air', M.I.A., p.105.
 4. "O", 'Command of the Air', Ibid., p.108.
 5. "O", 'The Death of the Zeppelin', Ibid., p.117.
 6. 'Nox Mortis', Poetry of the I.W.W., p.46.
 7. 'Clear Weather', 1914-18 in Poetry, p.64.
 8. Interestingly, this association of the bi-plane with vulnerable insect-life appears to still pertain today, judging by a recently-coined image which aligned the out-maneuvred BE-2's with 'poor little moths fluttering in the flames of fate' (Barry Thomas, Wings, B.B.C. T.V., 5.1.78).
 9. And to other poets, e.g. Henri Bataille, La Divine Tragédie, (T.L.S. 11.5.16) who describes 2 planes fighting 'Comme autour d'un étang, dansent deux libellules'. Seen from the ground, their combat seems 'les amours d'insectes. /C'est très tendre /Et pas terrible'.
 10. Collected Poems of Isaac Rosenberg, p.81.

effectively by contrasting his use of the metaphor with that of another combatant, Nikolei Gumilev:

Shrapnel buzzes like a swarm of bees
Gathering its honey bright and red,¹

who applied the image - inherently weakened by being a simile rather than a metaphor - to a bombardment in a wood in order to illustrate his sense of intoxication (akin to that of Julian Grenfell) derived from the coalescence of the War and the natural environment. Rosenberg's application of the bee-image is both more subtle and more profound: having already suggested the tri-partite division of life into 'Iron, honey, gold' in 'August 1914',² with honey implicitly associated with youth and iron with the deadliness of war, Rosenberg develops the iron-bee / honey-youth interrelation to an extraordinary degree of intensity in order to crystallize that crucial instant when war consumes the 'half used life'. In that moment is concentrated a complex of accumulated associations: War's destructiveness - the tragic waste and lost promise commensurate with early and unnecessary death - the daring combination of pastoral element and Imagistic technique, and the curious interdependence between the fatal bullet and the doomed flesh with which it is ineluctably fused:

None saw their spirits' shadow shake the grass,
Or stood aside for the half used life to pass
Out of those doomed nostrils and the doomed mouth,
When the swift iron burning bee
Drained the wild honey of their youth.

-
1. Quoted Sir Maurice Bowra, Poetry and the I.W.W., p.16. The comparison of Rosenberg with a Russian combatant-poet is not altogether far-fetched bearing in mind Rosenberg's own parentage.
 2. Collected Poems of I.R., p.70: 'Three lives hath one life - /Iron, honey, gold, /The gold, the honey gone - /Left is the hard and cold. /Iron are our lives /Molten right through our youth. /A burnt space through ripe fields /A fair mouth's broken tooth'.

Not only might death manifest itself in the 'swift iron burning bee' of a bullet, it insinuated itself into all the remnants of natural beauty - the old pastoral order - available to the combatants: 'hiding its clever enormous voice' in a 'fragility of poppies'¹ or dropping 'from the dark' on 'our upturned list'ning faces' as easily as the song of unseen larks.² Since Death's insidious presence was implicit everywhere, perhaps the best way to allay its terrors was to approach it with the jaunty familiarity of one who has seen and known all its more horrible aspects and come to terms with them:

Out there, we've walked quite friendly up to Death...
We've sniffed the green thick odour of his breath ...
He's spat at us with bullets and he's coughed
Shrapnel. We chorussed when he sang aloft;
We whistled while he shaved us with his scythe.³

Yet implicit in this 're-alignment' with death is a realization that nothing else can be relied upon, least of all a certain faith in the permanence of the pastoral idyll, or a belief in Nature's benevolence. The 'Romantic view of a natural universe, quickened with power shared by man'⁴, eroded by the War's escalating violence was replaced by a - variously - cynical, angry, embittered, sad, resigned acceptance of the fact that Nature, no longer a 'benign sustaining entity'⁵, had been transfigured into a force positively hostile to Man. At no time was that hostility more keenly felt than at 'stand-to' in the trenches

-
1. e.e.cummings, from Tulips and Chimneys (1923), U.L.D., p.67.
 2. 'Returning We Hear the Larks', Collected Poems of I.R., p.80.
 3. Owen, 'The Next War', Collected Poems, p.86.
 4. Jean Liddiard, I.R. : The Half finished Life, p.221.
 5. Silkin, Out of Battle, p.219.

when the soldiers were exposed to the fury both of their probable assailants and of their natural environment. The disruption of the traditional Romantic interpretation of dusk/twilight has already been mentioned¹ but it was in their treatment of the 'ghastly' dawn that the trench-poets showed more forcefully the degree of distortion undergone by these natural phenomena, for the significance of the dawn extends beyond the confines of any specific poetry-movement to primeval times.²

When dawn, viewed from the trenches, is allied to a weary commander 'massing in the east [his] melancholy army' to attack 'once more in ranks on shivering ranks of gray'³; or appears to 'open a jagged rim around; a yawn /Of death's jaws'⁴, (reminding the watchers in the trenches that they are trapped by the restraints of Nature as of war); or is personified as a frowsty-faced soldier 'with blinking eyes, /Pallid, unshaved and thirsty, blind with smoke'⁵, more is being undermined than simply the conventional Romantic image of day-break. As well as 'inverting his habitual pastoralism to express his image of war'⁶ in this evocation of dawn:

Dim, gradual thinning of the shapeless gloom
Shudders to drizzling daybreak that reveals
Disconsolate men who stamp their sodden boots
And turn dulled, sunken faces to the sky
Haggard and hopeless....

-
1. See page 187, above.
 2. Something of this pagan, timeless quality is suggested in I.R.'s 'The darkness crumbles away - /It is the same old druid Time as ever', ('Break of Day in the Trenches', Collected Poems, p.73). Anticipating a rebuke from Marsh on this line's 'obscurity', I.R. explained in the letter which accompanied the poem to E.M. (June 1916): 'You might object to the second line as vague, but that was the best way I could express the sense of dawn....'
 3. Owen, 'Exposure', C.P., p.48.
 4. Owen, 'Fragment: Cramped in that Funnelled Hole', *Ibid.*, p.109.
 5. Sassoon, 'Counter-Attack', C.P., p.68. 6. Silkin, *Op.cit.*, p.155.
 7. Progressively in the poetry of the combatants, the less evocative term 'day-break' is used instead of the word 'dawn' with all its Romantic connotations.

Sassoon is overthrowing the time-honoured dawn/hope¹ analogy, and implying that the age-old relationship between Nature and Man may have been irrevocably ruptured rather than temporarily (for the duration of the War) dislocated. The distinction between day-break in the trenches and a 'pre-lapsarian' dawn is explored quite fully by Aldington in a prose-piece² which appeared in The Egoist³ near the end of the War, where he describes the extent to which his response to dawn has been affected by his War experience. The harsh, poignant or ironically lovely dawns of the War totally supersede in his consciousness their pre-War Romantic antecedents and the most appropriate image to associate with the dawn now - according to Aldington - is that of a corpse: the ultimate manifestation of the demonic anti-pastoral:

I am haunted by the memory of my dawns. Not those earlier dawns when one saw for the first time the bell-towers of Florence in the lucid air, or the hills of Ravello violet and mist-wreathed against the gold sky....

I am haunted by sombre or ironically lovely dawns seen from some bleak parade-ground, by misty spring dawns in the trenches, when the vague shapes of the wire seemed to be the forms of crouching enemies, by summer dawns when the fresh immeasurably deep blue was a blasphemy, an insult to human misery.

Yet one among them all is poignant, unforgettable. As the shapes of things grew out slowly from the darkness, and the gentle grey suffusion of light made outlines visible, little groups of men carrying stretchers on their shoulders came slowly, stumbling and hesitating, along the ruined street. For a moment each group was silhouetted against the whitening east: the steel helmets (like those of medieval men-at-arms), the slung rifles, the strained postures of carrying, the useless vacillating corpse under the sepulchral blanket - all sharply etched in black on that smooth sky. And as the groups passed they shouted the name of the things they were carrying - things which yesterday were living men.

And I forwarded my report through the usual channels.

1. In 'How to Die', C.P., p. 72, Sassoon explodes the Romantic myth attached to 'Death at Dawn' when he juxtaposes the stylized 'death of the noble hero' watching the glory that returns and lifting his hand to the skies 'where holy brightness breaks in flame', with 'the lads' who 'go West with sobs and curses', dying in agony with no 'due regard for decent taste'.

2. The same passage was arranged in verse-form in Aldington's volume, The Love of Myrrhine and Konallis (Chicago, 1926), pp. 93-6.

3. 'Dawns', The Egoist, October 1918.

Just as the poets' attitude towards the dawn was dramatically reappraised in the course of the War, so too was their response to Spring, traditionally the most important time of year in the pastoral calendar and - like dawn - imbued with a multitude of happy images suggestive of hope, creativity, regeneration and renewed harmony between Nature and Man. Paradoxically, Spring or Summer was the period of the year most favoured by the General Staff of both sides for offensives¹ and an all-round escalation of 'activity'. By Spring 1916, when plans were underway for the most catastrophic campaign of the War (from the British point of view) in the Somme region, Rosenberg was already aware of the irony of men preparing for wholesale slaughter against a background of a revitalized Nature, where the Spring - 'ruined queen' - seems to be both deriding Man's efforts to organize his own affairs and conspiring in his senseless self-destruction. Rosenberg mourns the Spring's loss of innocence and holds her, in part, responsible for the disaster about to befall those trusting men who ardently believed in Nature's beneficence and the Spring's restorative power:

Who lured her vivid beauty so
To be that strained chilled thing that moves
So ghastly midst her young brood
Of pregnant shoots that she for men did grow?
Where are the strong men who made these their loves?
Spring! God pity your mood!²

In this context, Owen's 'Spring Offensive'³ approaches most nearly the ultimate distorted pastoral, essentially because of his

-
1. E.g. the 1916 Spring preparations for the Somme and Verdun assaults and the March 1918 colossal Spring Offensive mounted by von Ludendorff in a last-ditch attempt to penetrate the Allied lines and sweep on to Paris and the Channel.
 2. 'Spring, 1916', Collected Poems of I.R., p.46.
 3. Collected Poems of W.O., p.52.

'Romantic lineage'¹ which had imbued him with a full understanding of the pastoral and its conventions which he was then able to exploit in his mature War poems. 'Spring Offensive' is based on Owen's traumatic involvement in a surprisingly successful attack in April 1917 against Fevet, when he had to face a constant barrage for twelve days without relief. This experience, largely responsible for his neurasthenia (and subsequent consequent consignment in Craiglockhart), took almost a year before it was refined into poetry², when the month was advanced to May to allow for the inclusion of long grass and buttercups - more prolific than in April.

In addition, the May landscape is that traditionally 'best loved by English poets' and Owen combines in the poem the landscape of home - 'the Shropshire countryside and its buttercups' - and the 'literary' scenery of much Romantic poetry - especially Keats' Odes which Owen recalls in his choice of vocabulary. Ultimately in 'Spring Offensive'³ the landscape betrays the soldiers because they have betrayed their pastoral affiliations: they have renounced the compact between Nature and Man by making war and must now suffer 'God's retributive wrath in the form of hostile nature'.⁴

The features of the landscape constitute an integral part of the actual offensive. At first, Nature is presented as benign and reconciled with the soldiers into whose veins 'the

1. Dominic Hibberd, Wilfred Owen: War Poems and Others (1973), p.43.

2. Such careful re-working could hardly be said to apply to Herbert Trench's 'Advance on the Somme', Poetry of the I.W.W., p.134 which describes a similar situation to 'S.O.' but relies for its effect upon archaic terminology ('cannon', 'pastures', 'brake') and a somewhat lame and anachronistic hunting image which does little to evoke the tension of the atmosphere on the verge of the assault: 'The woods are bullet-stript - with hum /Of cannon all the pastures shake /And some will cross the crest, and some /Will halt for ever in the brake..../They followed once.../As brave a hunt as e'er blew horn:/And now through warren'd woods of hell /They follow....'

3. Hibberd, Op. cit., p.49 notes 'the offensive is against the Spring as well as in it'. 4. Silkin, Op. cit., p.206.

'summer oozed.../ Like an injected drug for their bodies' pains'. But even as they marvel at the day's beauty and watch 'the long grass swirled /By the May breeze, murmurous with wasp and midge', Owen suggests the débâcle that lies ominously just beyond the 'shade of the last hill' and the 'imminent line of grass' under the sky's enigmatic 'glass'. Lulled by the Summer's opiate, the soldiers are tempted to consider themselves safe, remembering that 'the buttercup /Had blessed with gold their slow boots coming up' and 'the little brambles [had] clutched and clung to them like sorrowing hands'. Encouraged by Nature's kindly aspect, displayed through these anthropomorphic tendencies, they feel themselves totally integrated into the landscape: 'They breathe like trees unstirred'. When the signal to advance is given it appears to be ratified by the sun which flares into their raised eyes as they begin to race over the ridge, confident still of their mystical unification with Nature. Yet, as they race across the 'open stretch of herb and heather', they realize the full extent of their vulnerability to both the enemy and the earth, as well as the foolishness of having relied upon the 'pathetic fallacy' to sustain them. Nature, outraged, turns against those who have violated her and demands blood-restitution for the destruction wrought upon her by War - through Man's agency:

And instantly the whole sky burned
With fury against them; earth set sudden cups
In hundreds for their blood; and the green slope
Chasmed and steepened sheer to infinite space.

Just as 'summer had oozed into the soldiers' veins, so now their veins ooze back into summer'¹ as their blood fills the Earth's sacrificial chalices; the whole poem operates as an

1. Jon Stallworthy, Wilfred Owen, A Biography, p.274.

epitome of the movement from belief in traditional pastoral and Romantic values - through a debilitated application of these values to an inappropriate natural environment - to a rejection of the old Nature-Man alliance.

The landscape, having veered from benignity to malevolent hostility, there is but one stage left: the complete renunciation of all the natural elements on the grounds that they are simply impotent in this latest stage of 'man's inhumanity to man'. With this in mind, Owen takes the traditional source of life - the sun - and indicates its impotency in the case of a young farm-hand whose whole life had been governed one way or another by the sun, but whom the sun is incapable of reviving now that he has been killed.¹ The ironic depreciation suffered by the sun is summed up in the phrase 'kind old sun', which suggests good intentions but insufficient power to put them into practice - for it is all too obvious that the emasculated sun does not know of anything which 'might rouse him now'.

The central futility rests in the fact that the sun - capable of waking seeds, or even of bringing into being the 'clays of a cold star' - is quite impotent when it comes to restoring to life one farm-boy whose limbs 'so dear-achieved' and 'full-nerved sides' are still warm. Owen concludes the poem with two crucial questions in which the tragic waste of young lives in the War - 'Was it for this the clay grew tall?' - and (the central issue in this section) the relevance of the pastoral heritage to the First World War

1. 'Futility', C.P., p.58. The exceptional power and maturity of Owen's poem is further accentuated when compared to the following, composed around a similar theme: invocation to the life-giving elements to revive a youth missing in No Man's Land: 'Seek him, thou sun, in the dread wilderness, /For that he loved thee seek thou him, and bless /His upturned face, with one divine caress. /Lightly, thou wind, over his dear dark head /Where now the wings of dreamless sleep are spread, /Whisper a benediction for the dead..../He has no pall save the low-drifting cloud, /But Glory covers him as with a shroud'. (Lt.Col. F.W.D. Bendall, Lond. Regt., 'Missing', Front Line Lyrics, T.L.S., 12.12.18).

experience - 'O what made fatuous sunbeams toil /To break earth's sleep at all?' - coalesce.

The implication behind these questions is that Man is surely destined for a better fate than ignominious and premature death in war and if such a future is not forthcoming, not only is the pastoral heritage an anachronism, but the very elements of the natural world are irrelevant. In the final analysis, the War has not only distorted the whole relationship between Man and his environment, but thrown into doubt the traditional concept - hitherto impregnable - of Nature's efficacy under extreme circumstances so that 'even Earth's comfort has become a part /Of that futility nor breaks nor mends'.¹ Nature does not supplement what man advanced, neither does she complete what he began: 'With equal complacence she saw his misery, condoned his mean-ness, and acquiesced in his torture'² and the 'former happiness' emanating from a belief in 'Earth's comfort' is 'regrettably unreturning'.³

-
1. R.Nichols, 'At the Ebb', June 1916, Aftermath, Ardours and Endurances, p.59.
 2. Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse (1927) Penguin Ed., p.153. This extract is taken from section 6 of 'Time Passes' which (appropriately enough for the present context) ironically juxtaposes - as Owen had done - the 'jocundity' and 'serenity' of the summer, when one might be tempted to believe that 'good triumphs, happiness prevails, order rules', with 'ominous sounds like the measured blows of hammers dulled upon felt', 'the silent apparition of an ashen-coloured ship', and 'a purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea', culminating with the blunt parenthesized statement of the extinction of the potentially brilliant Andrew Ramsay: 'Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay....'
 3. Owen, 'Happiness', Collected Poems, p.93.

2 (d) THE PASTORAL SUSTAINED

1. Edward Thomas

Although Edward Thomas's poetry has unquestioned affiliations with Georgian poetry, many of his post-War critics and admirers¹ were at pains to dissociate him from the 'vapid' school of Georgian poets. Thomas, however, consciously associated himself with the Georgians from the time of the Movement's inception to his death in 1917. Many of his closest friends and acquaintances (Abercrombie², Bottomley, Sturge Moore, de la Mare, W.H.Davies, Rupert Brooke³) were 'founder contributors' to the first Georgian Poetry Anthologies and one of the most potent influences on Thomas, the American poet Robert Frost, who was instrumental in urging Thomas to experiment in writing poetry, was undeniably revered by and interested in the Georgian Movement.

Certainly, none of Thomas's poetry ever appeared in any of the original G.P. Anthologies - partly because both Edward Marsh⁴ and Harold Monro had a 'blind spot' over his work - but in more recent anthologies⁵ of poetry in the Georgian idiom, Thomas features prominently. Similarly, several critics of the last decade or so, have selected the virtues of Thomas's poetry as 'precisely the virtues which most of the Georgians aimed at, but seldom achieved'.⁶

-
1. See especially F.R.Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry and H. Coombes, Edward Thomas.
 2. It was Abercrombie and a fellow Georgian, R.C.Trevelyan, who published the first substantial number of Thomas' poems when they printed 18 in An Annual of New Poetry, 13.3.17.
 3. Thomas was one of the judges who awarded the prize for best poem published in P.R. during 1912 to Brooke's 'Old Vicarage, Grantchester'.
 4. E.M. resisted the concerted appeals of de la Mare, Freeman and Turner to include E.T. in G.P.III on the tenuous grounds that he would never publish for the first time any posthumous poet's work in G.P.
 5. E.g. ed. J.Reeves, Georgian Poetry, John Press, 'The Georgians', A Map of Modern English Verse.
 6. Press, Op.cit., p.115. Cf. Stead's comment, Op.cit., p.101: 'His poems are excellent examples of...what was best in the Georgian movement'.

C.K. Stead, highlights in particular two poems¹ of Edward Thomas which are indicative of the principal Georgian tenet: 'to realize with precision one intensely experienced moment in which the physical situation suggested something beyond itself'.² Like the 'purest' Imagist poems³, Thomas's poems aim at the 'expression of precise emotions or states of mind'.⁴ They were successful because they were always rooted in particular experience. They emulated the dicta of the first Georgian poets, namely that 'their poetry should reflect the patient accuracy of observation before the facts of nature, unpretentiousness, a plain and decent affection for the everyday and unemphatic sensitivity of language'.⁵ As Walter de la Mare acknowledged, in his Foreword to Thomas's Collected Poems,⁶ Thomas's poetry has a certain 'homespun' quality about it:

There is nothing precious, elaborate, brilliant, esoteric, obscure in his work. The feeling is never 'fine', the thought never curious, or the word far-fetched. Loose-woven, monotonous, unrelieved, the verse, as verse, may appear to a careless reader accustomed to the customary. It must be read slowly, as naturally as if it were talk, without much emphasis; it will then surrender himself, his beautiful world, his compassionate and suffering heart, his fine, grave, and sensitive mind.⁷

-
1. 'Tonight' and 'July'.
 2. Op.cit., p.102.
 3. Notably those of H.D., 'Oread', for instance.
 4. Stead, Op. cit., p.103.
 5. Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight, p.85.
 6. Faber, 1936. Cf. another comment from the Foreword by de la Mare that 'to be with [E.T.] in the country was to be in one's own native place'.
 7. Cf. the applicability to E.T. himself of his review of Pound's Personae in E.R., June 1909, pp.627-8: '... in each [form] he is true in his strength and weakness to himself, full of personality and with such power to express it that from the first to the last lines of most of his poems, he holds us steadily in his own pure, grave, passionate world'.

The appeal of Thomas's poetry even to those with general antipathy to or indifference towards the Georgian style of writing, was also analysed by J. Middleton Murry writing in The Nation¹, only two years after Thomas's death:

Edward Thomas was like a musician who noted down themes that summon up forgotten expectation. Whether the genius to work them out to the limits of their scope and implication was in him, we do not know. The life of literature was a hard master to him; and perhaps the opportunity he would eagerly have grasped was denied him by circumstance. But, if his compositions do not, his themes will never fail - of so much we are sure - to awaken unsuspecting echoes even in unsuspecting minds.

Although the 'life of literature was a hard master' to Thomas, his hack work and criticism give some idea of the direction Thomas's poetry was to take, although he was forced to rely upon this general literary drudgery in order to support his wife and three children and did not begin writing poetry until December 1914. Nonetheless, through his verse criticism, Thomas developed a fine understanding of the essential quality of poetry - an 'intuitive awareness of what poetry should be about'² - as well as familiarizing himself with 'refinements of technique' and assimilating the sense of 'historical continuity' in English literature.

Likewise in his letters, Thomas evidenced his views of what constituted real poetry (and he certainly had ample experience, in his capacity as reviewer³, of encountering vast numbers of volumes of inferior verse which must have helped to tauten his

-
1. Review of Edward Thomas, Last Poems, The Nation, January 1919; reprinted and retitled 'The Poetry of E.T.', Aspects of Literature, 1920, pp.29-38.
 2. Vernon Scannell, Edward Thomas, (Writers and their Work Pamphlet, No.163), 1963, pp.8-9.
 3. Such was the quality of E.T.'s discriminating criticism that Joy Grant, Harold Monro and the P.B., p.55, designated E.T. as 'perhaps the most valuable of P.D.'s acquisitions'.

own critical faculty and make him wary of acclaiming too fulsomely the work of amateur versifiers¹). While Thomas was able to appreciate - though not wholly sympathise with - such an exquisite and accomplished 'artificer in verse'² as J.E. Flecker, he reserved his warmest admiration for Robert Frost whose North of Boston³ typified the kind of poetry - 'a unique type of eclogue' - which Thomas himself felt impelled to write. Thomas's broad aims were: to achieve the simplification of diction; 'a resolute refusal to inflate the currency of emotion'⁴; a 'sober regard for truth', or, as Thomas himself put it:⁵ to combine the 'inevitable imitation of the forms and tones which he admired in his contemporaries and the older poets' with 'an exceptional fidelity to his own thought, feeling, and observation'. The link between Thomas's and Frost's aims as 'contemporary' poets and the shared 'plain-ness' of the appearance and tone of their poetry, was acknowledged in a letter from Thomas to Gordon Bottomley, stoutly defending Frost against Sturge Moore's claims that he was too 'colloquial'. Like Thomas himself, Frost:

...insists on what he believes he finds in all poets - absolute fidelity to the postures which the voice assumes in the most expressive intimate speech.... In fact, I think he would agree that if these tones and postures survive in a complicated and learned or subtle vocabulary and structure the result is likely to be better than if they survive in the easiest form, that is in the very

-
1. Cf. the common attitude of pre-War reviewers of verse described in Chapter I.
 2. Letter to W.H. Hudson, 9.10.15, J. Moore, The Life and Letters of Edward Thomas, (1939), p.331.
 3. Reviewed enthusiastically by E.T., E.R., Vol. xviii, No.1, pp. 142-3, August 1914: ' [The language of Frost's poems] is free from the poetical words and forms that are the chief material of secondary poets These poems are revolutionary because they lack the exaggeration of rhetoric' and pierce 'through fidelity to the postures which the voice assumes in the most expressive intimate speech'. Cf. E.T.'s review in The New Weekly, 8.8.14, 'Mr Frost has gone back...through the paraphernalia of poetry into poetry again.... There are no show words or lines'.
 4. Scannell, Op.cit., p.13.
 5. In his description of Keats's first book of poems.

words and structures of common speech, though that is not easy or prose would be better than it is and survive more often.... As to my own method I expect it to change if there is anything more than a dotting replica of youthful eagerness in this unexpected ebullition. But although it is a plain look, it does so far, I think, represent a culmination as a rule, and does not ask or get much correction on paper.

In an even more candid letter to John Freeman¹, early in 1915, Thomas made his objective as a poet still more specific and applied to himself the same keen criticism as he demonstrated in his critical analyses of other poets²:

... [the poems] I have done so far have been like the quintessences of the best parts of my prose books - not much sharper or more intense, but I hope a little: since the first take off they haven't been Frosty very much³ or so I imagine and I have tried as often as possible to avoid the facilities offered by blank verse and I try not to be long - I even have an ambition to keep under twelve lines (but rarely succeed).

Thomas's anxiety to condense his poetry probably resulted from his background of bulky prose through which he felt his poetry filtering, having rid itself of 'the last rags of rhetoric and formality which left my prose so often with a dead rhythm'.⁴

Since F.R. Leavis was one of the first critics to pay homage to Thomas's originality as a 'poet of rare quality, who has been

-
1. 8.3.15, Moore, Op.cit., p.326.
 2. The efficacy of the measured judgement which shaped Thomas's penetrating critical analyses can be gauged from this extract from his assessment of Rupert Brooke in E.R., June 1915, just when R.B. was beginning to be lionized: 'No poet of his age was so much esteemed and admired, or was watched more hopefully. His work could not be taken soberly whether you liked it or not ... [it displayed Shelleyan eagerness and despair, though it didn't attain Shelleyan altitude but] perhaps no poet better expressed the aspiration towards it, and all the unfulfilled eagerness of ambitious self-conscious youth He stands out clearly against that immense dark background, an Apollo not afraid of the worst of life'. Quoted Hassall, R.B., A Biography, p.524.
 3. Although E.T. regarded Frost as his most intimate friend and kindred spirit, he was extremely sensitive to any suggestion that his work was derived from that of Frost, and when W.H. Davies inadvertently exclaimed that some lines of E.T., presented anonymously to him, must have been written by Frost, E.T. was mortified to think that his poetic voice was indistinguishable from that of Frost.
 4. Moore, Op.cit., p.238. It was this same distaste for rhetoric which caused E.T. to spurn the traditional patriotic and imperialist strain in poetry in 1914 as R.P. Eckert, E.T., p.163, testifies.

'associated with the Georgians by mischance'¹, and to demand a re-assessment of Thomas's work to endow him with the recognition it deserved, his definition of Thomas's particular 'distinctively modern sensibility' deserves some comment. Leavis was particularly impressed by Thomas's 'great technical subtlety' and the ability he exercised in presenting his poems as though they were ' [random jottings down] of chance impressions and sensations, the record of a moment of relaxed and undirected consciousness'. He also applauded Thomas's diction and movement, reminiscent of 'quiet, ruminative speech' and the subtle relationship between the 'outward scene' and the poet's 'inner theatre'², in his handling of which Thomas shares some similarity - in his use of the 'associative' technique - with Virginia Woolf. Thomas unobtrusively shifts the focus from the scene observed to the 'inner life which the sensory impressions are notation for', just as Mrs Woolf invests her characters with a 'private code, a secret language'³, by means of which they can identify their individual thoughts and emotions according to some aspect of their environment.⁴ In the case of Thomas's poetry, he never seems able to make the complete identification between sensory impressions and the 'shy intuition on the edge of consciousness', but rather he is always:

1. New Bearings in English Poetry, p.61.

2. Cf. H. Coombes's comments in 'Hardy, de la Mare and E.T.', Pelican Guide to English Literature, VII, p.158 on E.T.'s 'way of seeing and feeling that has depth and innerness while still remaining fresh and physical', and the subtle organization of E.T.'s poetry which sounds like 'the poet speaking easily but with beautiful precision, revealing an inner life by a remarkably sensitive account of the outer world'.

3. To The Lighthouse, p.5: ' [to such people] even in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallize and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests'.

4. E.g. James Ramsay 'endows' the picture of a refrigerator 'with joy' because he happened to be cutting it out when his mother agreed that the long-anticipated visit to the lighthouse would take place on the following day.

...listening, lying in wait
For what I should, yet never can remember.¹

Although, as Leavis admits, there is a feeling of directionlessness in Thomas's poetry ('How dreary-swift, with naught to travel to, /Is Time'²) and a certain pervasive melancholy, it is no way to be compared with the 'flaccidity' and 'vacuity' which characterize the mainstream of Georgian Poetry in Leavis's view. In fact, Thomas's exquisite sincerity and sensitivity were directing him towards a depiction of the representative modern sensibility several years before Eliot and others had formulated their images of sterility to symbolise twentieth century disintegration.

Yet, for all the 'minute particularity and fidelity'³ of Thomas's poetry, what distinguishes him from the majority of his contemporaries is not so much 'his keen observation and familiar knowledge of nature as his attitude towards it',⁴ expressed through 'colloquial phrasing, speaking cadences, the plain almost casual epithets and the quiet approach often culminating in an epigram which seems to take the poet, as much as the reader, by surprise:

Tall nettles cover up, as they have done
These many springs, the rusty harrow, the plough
Long worn out, and the roller made of stone:
Only the elm butt tops the nettles now.

This corner of the farmyard I like most:
As well as any bloom upon a flower
I like the dust on the nettles, never lost
Except to provide the sweetness of a shower.⁵

-
1. 'Old Man'.
 2. 'The Glory'.
 3. H. Coombes, Op.cit., p.156.
 4. C. Day Lewis, 'Edward Thomas', Stand, Vol.4, No.3, p.39.
 5. 'Tall Nettles'.

In common with Leavis, C. Day Lewis pinpointed the astonishing, often awkward, absolute sincerity which characterized Thomas's poetry and Thomas's personality as 'a shy, reticent man, with great personal charm and an honesty that could at times be ruthless'.¹ Yet although the poetry is intensely personal it is as devoid of 'emotionalism' as its language is free 'from stale poeticalities'.² Although Thomas uses words common to 'romantic' poetry of nature, love and disillusion³ they are not simply exploited for their accumulated connotations but are positively used as an 'essential item, modifying and modified by other items'.⁴ Thomas gives the impression of the poet carefully regulating every statement to achieve maximum exactness while controlling the 'subtle intermingling of diverse sense-impressions and delicate observations' which contribute to the total effectiveness of his poetry. Similarly, he boldly includes phrases dismissed by more self-consciously fastidious poets as unbecoming for poetry: the thrushes in 'March', for instance, 'pack into an hour' their 'hoard of song'.⁵ On many occasions, Thomas combined this robustness with shrewdness and a certain implicit humour⁶ - particularly in his portrayal of character, as in 'Lob' ('He is English as this gate, these flowers, this mire') and 'Up in the Wind':

I could wring the old thing's neck that put it here!
A public house! it may be public for birds,
Squirrels, and such-like, ghosts of charcoal-burners
And highwaymen....

-
1. C. Day Lewis, Op.cit., p.39.
 2. Coombes, Op.cit., p.160.
 3. Ibid.
 4. E.g. 'solitary', 'once', 'vainly', 'happy'.
 5. My underlining.
 6. As V.Scannell, Op.cit., p.16 comments: 'Thomas's poetry is often sharpened by a mordant wit, an astringent irony, and, at times, it is illumined by a real gaiety'. Cf. Day Lewis's appraisal, Op.cit., p.40, of such lines as 'But earth would have her sleep out, spite the sun', 'Whatever is for ever to a bird' which express the countryman's 'humour, homeliness, pithiness: there is a smack of folk-lore about them, but no earnest, bespectacled folksiness'.

The finest of Thomas's poems, however, present the poet's self-questioning. A notable feature of Thomas's poetry is the way in which his ceaseless and complex inner conflict is made explicit through a deliberate opposing of contrasting moods and attitudes between which Thomas attempts to achieve a reconciliation. Generally, the only tranquillity reached is a 'stormy rest', a 'roaring peace', like an uneasy and short-lived truce between rival factions, as in the significantly titled 'Interval'¹. The symbolic landscape - representing the indifference of nature to the struggles of man and providing a theatre in which the poet's dichromatic tensions can be depicted - is frequently featured in Thomas's poetry, never contrived but always actually and vividly realised. In the carefully delineated 'Digging', as in 'Old Man', Thomas is stimulated to think, to make explicit his contrasting experiences of sadness and mirth, putridity and sweetness, by evoking scents: 'scents dead leaves yield'; 'odours that rise /When the spade wounds the root of tree'; 'the smoke's smell', culminating in the oxymoron of the robin singing 'sad songs of Autumn mirth'. The dichotomy is even more emphatic in 'The Owl' where the poet arrives - 'hungry, cold and tired' - at the inn to be shortly revived by 'food, fire and rest'. But, apart from the simple contrast between hunger/food, cold/fire and tired/rest, there is a further ironic juxtaposition between the poet's quick 'escape' from exhaustion and the prolonged sufferings of those lying 'under the stars ... unable to rejoice'.

1. Once again, the title recalls the technique of Virginia Woolf who drew out of the 'myriad impressions' received by an ordinary mind on an ordinary day, those isolated moments of understanding and illumination when a total vision of harmony is suddenly but ephemerally perceived: 'little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark... making of the moment something permanent', To the Lighthouse, p.183.

There is a suggestion in some of Thomas's poems of a quest, a search for his own identity, an ultimate reconciliation of his divided self. In particular, in 'The Other', this 'inner conflict which was central to Thomas's doubting, lonely personality is objectivized quite unequivocally'.¹ Although the poem is an allegory, it has its roots firmly in the earth and the imagery is relayed, as always, specifically through the senses:

I sought then in solitude.
The wind had fallen with the night; as still
The roads lay as the ploughland rude,
Dark and naked, on the hill.
Had there been ever any feud
'Twixt earth and sky, a mighty will
Closed it: the crocketed dark trees,
A dark house, dark impossible
Cloud-towers, one star, one lamp, one peace
Held on an everlasting lease

But Thomas's tentative self-searching is altogether different from Thomas Hardy's expressions of solid views and attitudes although there are other similarities between their respective uses of diction² and their general approach to Nature. Both Thomas and Hardy were aware of the difficulty of fulfilment in human relationships but, equally, both sensed the impact of new knowledge and the destructive effects of certain new attitudes on many of the things they cared for - notably their natural environment.³ Fundamentally, Thomas - like Hardy⁴ - deals with

1. Scannell, Op.cit., p.25.

2. Both poets use certain archaisms (''twas', inversion of subject and verb, for instance), and both are prone to moments of whimsy or maudlin (as in E.T.'s 'April') but both showed great resourcefulness in adapting traditional metres to the rhythms of contemporary speech and in devising a plain, sometimes curiously knotted diction appropriate to their subject matter (with E.T. achieving an even more advanced colloquial idiom best observed in the longer narrative poems).

3. Cf. R.S.Thomas, Selected Poems of E.T., p.14: 'Those who are mindful of the vanishing features of the English countryside and anxious to preserve them, will find in E.T. one who loved them as they do.'

4. Cf. Hardy's 'eternal question of what Life was, /And why we were there, and by whose strange laws/that which mattered most could not be'. Similarly, E.T.'s preoccupation with the transience of things and his sense of mortality attests to Hardy's influence.

permanent things in human nature, rather than with the composition of decorative pastoral vignettes.¹

Thomas also had in common with Hardy, the fact that he came to the writing of poetry rather late in life after having established a reputation as a writer of prose. Perhaps it was appropriate that Thomas should not begin writing poetry until his mid-thirties for it was unlikely that he could have ever written the type of poetry - optimistic, ecstatic, affirmative² - generally expected of young poets: his 'poetic personality' - melancholy, self-probing, pessimistic and poignantly conscious of the transitoriness of human and animal life - shaped his attitude towards his subject, principally nature, and caused it to be 'unsentimental, ironic and profoundly sad'.³ It also invested his poetry with 'the quality of bread or tweed, or a ploughed field; strength, simplicity and a natural delicacy that together can express the most complex and mysterious moods - what he called "melancholy" - and at the same time convey a tremendous reality, both of place and time and mind'.⁴

Even in his prose work, however, there are many instances where the subtle, minute natural description verges, in its lyric-

-
1. Interestingly, E.T. himself acknowledged his sympathy with Hardy when he wrote to W.H.Hudson of 'Men Who March Away', published in The Times, 5.9.14, that he thought it the 'only good [poem] concerned with the war', quoted Silkin, Op.cit., p.51.
 2. As far as the corpus of I W.W. poetry is concerned, it is completely inappropriate to place E.T. - as some anthologists (e.g. I.M.Parsons, Men Who March Away, E.L.Black, 1914-18 in Poetry) have done - in the first 'idealistic Visions of Glory' section, for E.T. is not at all representative of the idealistic > realistic I W.W. poet's progress: 'he had no illusions to shed', W.Cooke, Edward Thomas, p.212.
 3. Scannell, Op.cit., pp.9-10.
 4. Alun Lewis, Review of The Trumpet and Other Poems (Faber, 1940), in Horizon, Vol.III, No.13 (January 1941), p.80.

ism, on poetry¹ - as in The Heart of England², where Thomas particularizes his portrait of high summer in his delineation of the blossom falling:

The chestnut blossom is raining steadily and noiselessly down upon a path whose naked pebbles receive a mosaic of emerald light from the interlacing boughs. At intervals, once or twice an hour, the wings of a lonely swallow pass that way, when alone the shower stirs from its perpendicular fall. Cool and moist, the perfumed air flows, without lifting the most nervous leaf or letting fall a suspended bead of the night's rain from a honeysuckle bud. In an indefinite sky of grey, through which one ponderous cloud billows into sight and is lost again, no sun shines: yet there is light - I know not whence; for the brass trappings of the horses beam so as to be extinguished in their own fire.

It does not require much adjustment to translate this approach into verse in 'Haymaking' where the poem appears as a refined 'quintessence'³ of the prose:

The mill-foot water tumbled white and lit
With tossing crystals, happier than any crowd
Of children pouring out of school aloud.
And in the little thickets where a sleeper
For ever might lie lost, the nettle creeper
And garden warbler sang unceasingly;
While over them shrill shrieked in his fierce glee
The swift with wings and tail as sharp and narrow
As if the bow had flown off with the arrow.

A similar correspondence exists between the prose of In Pursuit of Spring⁴ and the poem 'March':

All the thrushes of England sang at that hour, and against that background of myriads I heard two or three singing their frank, clear notes in a mad eagerness to have all done before dark; for already the blackbirds were chinking and shifting places along the hedgerows. And presently it was dark, but for a lamp at an open door, and silent, but for a chained dog barking, and a pine tree moaning over

-
1. Cf. Robert Frost's comment on E.T.'s prose: 'Right at that moment he was writing as good poetry as anybody alive, but in prose form where it did not declare itself and gain him recognition. I referred him to paragraphs in his book In Pursuit of Spring and told him to write it in verse in exactly the same cadence'. Quoted in Harold Roy Brennan, 'The Poet of the Countryside: E.T.', The Cardinal, Vol. I, No. 4, January-February 1926, p. 25.
 2. 1906.
 3. Thomas's own word used in the letter to John Freeman quoted on P. 206 above.
 4. 1914.

the house. When the dog ceased, an owl hooted, and when the owl ceased I could just hear the river Frome roaring steadily over a weir far off:

What did the thrushes know? Rain, snow, sleet, hail,
Had kept them quiet as the primroses.
They had but an hour to sing. On boughs they sang,
On gates, on ground; they sang while they changed perches
And while they fought, if they remembered to fight:
So earnest were they to pack into that hour
Their unwilling hoard of song before the moon
Grew brighter than the clouds....

One of the most frequently¹ documented comparisons between the prose and the poetry which has been filtered and crystallized through the earlier medium, is that which juxtaposes the passage on Death and Rain in The Icknield Way² and the poem entitled 'Rain'. The prose, although sincere in its effort to correlate the physical presence of the rain which 'put out summer like a torch' and the writer's psychological state of isolation, terror and despair, as he compares the physical darkness to the oblivion of death, tends to repeat and over-indulge itself and it needs the constriction of poetic form and a severely self-critical poetic diction to compress, sharpen and focus the diffuse prose evocations into a taut, almost metaphysical entity:

There was no good and no evil. There was life and there was death, and you chose. Now there is neither life nor death, but only the rain. Sleep as all things, past, present, and future, lie still and sleep, except the rain, the heavy, black rain falling straight through the air that was once a sea of life. That was a dream only. The truth is that the rain falls for ever and I am melting into it. Black and monotonously sounding is the midnight and solitude of the rain:

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain
On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
Remembering again that I shall die
And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
For washing me cleaner than I have been
Since I was born into this solitude.
Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:

1. E.g. W.Cooke, Op.cit., p.179; Scannell, Op.cit., p.11; Silkin, Op.cit., pp.91-2.

2. 1913.

But here I pray that none whom once I loved
Is dying tonight or lying still awake
Solitary, listening to the rain,
Either in pain or thus in sympathy
Helpless among the living and the dead,
Like a cold water among broken reeds,
Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,
Like me who have no love which this wild rain
Has not dissolved except the love of death,
If love it be for what is perfect and
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

William Cooke, in his critical biography of Edward Thomas, has coined a particularly apt phrase to describe Thomas's poetry when he refers to it as 'the harvest of more than thirty books of prose'.¹ With particular reference to the two renderings of Rain (in prose and poetry), this idea of Thomas gleaning the kernel of meaning and emotion from the disordered swathes of attempted elucidation in the prose, would appear especially appropriate. The reader is impressed by the change of emphasis from the prose passage, where the writer was obsessed with his private afflictions, to the compassion for the suffering of others in the poem: the 'myriads'² of broken reeds all still and stiff' that the 'helpless' poet can do nothing to succour. A similar compression - and subsequent intensification of feeling - can be detected in other instances where Thomas filters a poem through an extended prose passage.

Thomas is undeniably always in 'close and vitalizing touch with the natural world' and that it happens to be the English natural world is of subordinate concern - which distinguishes him from those Georgian poets whose work during the First World War is characterized by a more aggressive and strident patriotism.³ There is no sense in Thomas's poetry of the pre-

1. Op.cit., p.163.

2. The expression 'myriads' recalls C.H. Sorley's last sonnet beginning: 'When you see millions of the mouthless dead....'; also Pound's 'There died a myriad'.

3. John Freeman's 'Happy is England Now', G.P.III, p.138, e.g.

destined rightness of the 'Mother Country', but rather an exquisite appreciation of nature and the countryside for their own sake and for their enabling Thomas to explore and present 'his mood and character as a whole mode of experiencing'¹ through their agency. Thomas was, indeed, 'English in a profound sense'.² His standard anthologized war poem 'This is No Case of Petty Right or Wrong' - although often placed in the same section as Grenfell's 'Into Battle' and Brooke's 1914 Sonnets - presents an attitude and an awareness somewhat different from those demonstrated in these other poems. The patriotism offered in this poem (and in his editing of the anthology This England : An Anthology from her Writers³) is an organic part of the countryside Thomas 'observed, knew and felt'. As he stated in his Preface to the Anthology, Thomas was searching for an 'inevitable' English quality in compiling the book:

... excluding professedly patriotic writing because it is often bad I wished to make a book as full of English character and country as an egg is of meat. If I have reminded others, as I did myself continually, of some of the echoes called up by the name of England, I am satisfied.

When Thomas was asked by Eleanor Farjeon whether he knew what he was fighting for when he decided to enlist, he picked up a pinch of earth - according to her account of the incident - and answered 'literally, for this'.⁴ He interpreted 'England'

1. H. Coombes, Op.cit., p.157.

2. Ibid.

3. 1915.

4. The Last Four Years (1958). Robert Frost had this incident in mind when he wrote: '[Thomas's] concern to the last was what it had always been, to touch earthly things and come as near them in words as words would come', Selected Letters of Robert Frost, p.217.

to mean not a national, political state but the actual land - a particular known territory with a 'culture and way of life which, ironically, he knew was disappearing, even before the war'.¹ His primary compulsion for enlisting (and at the time Thomas was seriously considering the alternative course of accompanying Robert Frost on his return to America) was simply that he could not reject this territory and the past, a concept which suggested to Thomas 'not merely his long apprehension of nature but, mixed with it, his own self-perceived melancholy and darkness, his apprehension of the past itself, and what it must lead to: "Only an avenue, dark, nameless, without end"², which he had anticipated in 'Old Man'.

The same unflinching honesty which distinguished Thomas's personal poems prevented his poetry in honour of his native land from becoming sentimentalized or from presenting 'England' as an 'abstract, ideological attitude'. Thomas loved the 'physical body of England; he loved her moods, seasons, hills, flowers, trees, animals and birds'.³ Thomas's apprehension of nature sprang from astute observation of this 'physical body of England', as illustrated by the particularity of these lines from 'But These Things

Also':
The shell of a little snail bleached
In the grass; chip of flint, and mite
Of chalk; and the small bird's dung
In splashes of purest white.

Thomas differentiated himself from the conventional Georgian poet of the English countryside⁴ by his technique of presenting 'minute

1. Silkin, Op.cit., p.88.

2. Ibid., p.89. When E.T. actually enlisted, he described his decision as 'not a desperate nor purposed resolution but the natural culmination of a long series of moods and thoughts'. Moore, Letters of E.T., p.330.

3. Scannell, Op.cit., p.20.

4. See Chapter I.

'details of natural phenomena with microscopic clarity'.¹ Such details are never described for their own sake but - once noted - are 'interrelated and modified' in what Vernon Scannell labels Thomas's 'strange, haunted consciousness' to re-impinge on the mind as memories and introduce other associations, as in 'Old Man', for example:

I, too, often shrivel the grey shreds,
Sniff them and think and sniff again and try
Once more to think what it is I am remembering,
Always in vain I sniff the spray
And think of nothing; I see and hear nothing;
Yet seem, too, to be listening, lying in wait
For what I should, yet never can, remember:
No garden appears, no path, no hoar-green bush
Of Lad's Love, or Old Man, no child beside,
Neither father nor mother, nor any playmate;
Only an avenue, dark, nameless, without end.

In the characteristically low-toned passages in Thomas's poetry, as in 'Aspens' for example, 'object and subject interpenetrate ... fact and mood are composed into a whole where neither predominates: the glorious morning, the aspen trees grieving, carry equal weight with the moods of the man responding to them'.²

Similarly, in 'October', the selection of natural detail -

'The green elm with the one great bough of gold'; 'the wind' travelling 'too light /To shake the fallen birch leaves from the fern'; 'The gossamers' wandering 'at their own will' - presents an 'objective world which is, at the same time, indifferent to and yet a reversed image of the poet's private mood of melancholy which has, at its centre, a paradoxical seed of possible joy'.³

1. Scannell, Op.cit., p.7.
2. C.Day Lewis, Op.cit., p.41.
3. Scannell, Op.cit., p.15.

Although Thomas was a consciously self-absorbed poet who might have escaped the influence of the War altogether, the War actually entered his poetry as an undertone¹ which is integrated into the very structure of the way of life Thomas was recreating and is absorbed into the natural environment which is Thomas's 'theatre'. It also had a very positive material effect upon his personal circumstances, since it was likely to curtail severely 'his precarious literary existence'.² In fact, shortly after the Declaration of War on Germany, Thomas set off on a country-wide tour to gather impressions for three commissioned essays about the War and the reactions of an 'Imperial people' to fighting it. Interestingly, some of Thomas's investigations provoked surprisingly un-belligerent responses from ordinary working-people:

... 'I wouldn't enlist for anything', said a man with his cheese waiting on his knife-tip, '...I would if it was a fair war. But it's not, it's murder....'
'That's right', said the post-man. '...I reckon we want a little peace. Twentieth century too'.³

Early in 1915, Thomas was also working on another military subject: his last hack book, a Life of the Duke of Marlborough - commissioned because it was thought to have topical interest (as a previous campaign fought on 'Flanders fields'). Throughout this book, Thomas's tone was 'coolly and consistently disenchanted'⁴ and he did not flinch from recording with laconic, Sassoon-like frankness the 'hundreds at a time' who 'mined and countermined, and blew men into the air or were blown up'.

1. Cf. Blunden - with whom E.T. is often compared (see Part ii of this section) and whose concept of nature resembled Thomas's in several respects - entitled his War-recollections Undertones of War.

2. Cooke, Op.cit., p.74.

3. The Last Sheaf, p.147.

4. H. Coombes, Edward Thomas, (1956), p.42.

When Thomas was finally accepted for military service in July 1915 in the Artists' Rifles, he spent the first months as a private soldier employed on mundane tasks. In November he was promoted to lance-corporal status and became a map-reading instructor; simultaneously Thomas was engaged on some of his finest poems - 'October', 'Liberty' and 'Rain' - in spite of being constantly harassed by interruptions. In April 1916 Thomas was made a full corporal and by November of that year he was commissioned Second Lieutenant with No.244 Siege Battery - having transferred in the summer to Artillery ('to get a better pension for [his] wife'¹). Thomas volunteered to go to France in the next draft and arrived at Arras on 9th February 1917, having made final arrangements with Roger Ingpen, the brother-in-law of de la Mare, who was to publish sixty-four of Thomas's poems in Poems (1917). Thomas had specifically insisted that Ingpen should 'not...make use of my situation, as a publisher might be tempted to, now or in the event of any kind of accident to me, to advertise the book'.²

Through the spring of 1917, Thomas was involved in the massive build-up for the Arras Offensive, longing for the battle to begin - not because of any naive enthusiasm but 'because then it will be nearer over'. According to Thomas's letters to his wife and to Frost at this period, he was so physically overwhelmed by his tasks as a junior officer that he had little time

-
1. G. Bottomley, The Welsh Review, p.177.
 2. Quoted in a letter from Ingpen to Frost, 17.4.17, Dartmouth College Library Collection, New Hampshire. The effect of Thomas's request is to separate any consideration of his poetry from the welter of Slim Volumes of Verse (See Chapter V) posthumously (in most cases) published and shamelessly advertised as 'the extant work of the late 2nd. Lt. _____'

for reflections about home and still less for any composition of poetry,¹ although he managed to keep a diary² from 1st January to 8th April 1917 (the day before he was killed while directing the fire of his battery during the opening barrage of the Battle of Arras), and in this small notebook he kept a cryptic account of his soldiering activities as well as the inevitable observation of his natural environment. In the midst of desolation in the trenches, Thomas retained his keen awareness of the countryside: 'his ear and mind were receptive to the birds he had always loved, the blackbird "singing in the quiet of the battery" and the larks in no man's land whose song he was intent on hearing in spite of the shelling as he went above ground in the early light'.³ Interspersed with comments on military matters in the diary, typical countryman-notes are to be found: 'black-headed buntings talk, rooks caw, lovely white puffs of shrapnel round planes high up'; 'ploughing field next to orchard in mist - horses and man go right up to crest in full view of Hun at Beaurains', and the half-humorous conjecture, on a sunny, warm morning with moles busily engaged on the surface - 'Does a mole ever get hit by a shell?' Nevertheless, Thomas certainly took his responsibilities as an officer seriously and much to the surprise of his friends became an efficient soldier. According to the record of his Commanding Officer, Franklin Lushington,⁴ who was considerably

1. E.T. was, however, pleased to read a moderately enthusiastic review of An Annual of New Poetry - in which some of his poems had appeared under the pseudonym 'Edward Eastaway' - in the T.L.S. 29.3.17, which indulgently noted that Mr Eastaway is 'a real poet, with the truth in him'.

2. Recently found by E.T.'s grandson and published by The Whittington Press, Spring 1977 as The Diary of E.T., with a Foreword by Myfanwy Thomas, Introduction by Roland Grant and 7 woodcuts by Hellmuth Weissenborn, who served on the W.F. in 1917 in the German trenches.

3. Ed. Roland Grant, Intro., Edward Thomas on the Countryside (1977) p.13.

4. Author of The Gambardier, in which E.T. featured as T. Tyler.

younger than Thomas, he was an example to the other subalterns with his reliability and helpfulness, his quiet calm and patience:

His serene and kindly presence and quiet dry humour did much to alleviate the squalid miseries of life for his companions.

Thomas does not appear to have indulged in such recollection of rural England as perhaps Blunden initially did, in order to derive that 'therapeutic and sanative value [achieved by] placing war and its effects within an English rural context'¹; in fact, he seems to be far more conscious of the actual war-environment than many other poets in the Georgian idiom whose poetry is characterized by nostalgia for their particular home-region. Certain critics have suggested that war exists only as a 'brooding but deliberately excluded presence' in Thomas's poetry, while there is a 'loving concentration on the unchanging order of natural and rural society'²; or he has been dismissed as an insignificant War Poet, comparable with Ledwidge, who refused to let the War 'interfere with his nostalgic rural visions'.³ Yet it cannot be denied that the War obtruded⁴ significantly in Thomas's poetry (all of which was written during the War - from December 1914 to December 1916 - but before Thomas actually arrived in France). Moreover, Thomas probably found the War an 'objective corroboration of some of his earlier less identifiable feelings'⁵

1. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.85. Cf. Athalie Bushnell, 'E.T.', P.R. XXXVIII, No.4 (1947), p.251: 'Although the background of his writing was an army hut or trench, yet very little of his poetry actually takes war or war incidents as its subject. His poetry is nature poetry, taking simplicity, wonder and longing as its keynotes'.

2. Ibid. 3. Johnston, Op.cit., p.128.

4. Such references in E.T.'s poems as 'Tall reeds/Like criss-cross bayonets' ('Bright Clouds'); 'Now all roads lead to France /And heavy is the tread /Of the living; but the dead /Returning lightly dance' ('Roads') prove that Bergonzi and Johnston have underestimated the extent to which the War permeated E.T.'s poetry. According to Frost, Selected Letters of R.F., p.217: although E.T. 'never thought of his poetry as war poetry, that is what it is. It ought to be called Roads to France'.

5. Silkin, Op.cit., p.89.

- notably the sinister suspicion that the old rural order was already besieged and under such pressure that it was questionable for how much longer it could survive.

A variety of opinions¹ have likewise been proffered as to how many of Thomas's total one hundred and forty-one poems in the Collected Poems volume could be considered 'war poems', although it can be ascertained that quite a few of them were 'explicitly impinged on by the War' and many had a particular relationship with the War, offering more 'subtle, indirect ways of reflecting the nature of war' than those poems more overtly designated as 'war poems'. Nevertheless, there are many direct references to the War, refuting the charge that Thomas was too absorbed with the production of purely nature-poetry to be affected by the presence of the War.

Thomas recalled in his essay, 'This England', his response to the outbreak of War in August 1914 which occurred while he was staying with Frost in Ledington. The impact of the War on Thomas was immediate: perhaps it constituted the 'revolution' or 'catastrophe' or 'improbable development' he had hoped for since 1905. It certainly liberated him from his hack work which was no longer so much in demand in these 'perilous times' and provided him with the necessary stimulus to experiment in verse as so many of his friends had been urging him to do. It also helped to crystallize his profound but 'nameless' love of country as

1. E.g. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.85 declares that 'very few' of E.T.'s poems are strictly concerned with the War and cites only 2 by title: 'This is no Case...' and 'A Private'; Silkin, Op.cit., p.86, by contrast, contends that 'twelve poems are explicitly impinged on by the War'.

he confessed in 'This England':

Something, I felt, had to be done before I could look again composedly at English landscape ... at the purple-headed wood-betony with two pairs of dark leaves on a stiff stem, who stood sentinel among the grasses or bracken by the hedge-side or wood's edge. What he stood sentinel for I did not know, any more than what I had got to do.¹

According to Robert Frost, writing to Abercrombie in 1915, the chief virtue of the War had been that 'it has made some sort of new man and a poet out of Edward Thomas'.² John Lehmann³ is even more explicit in pinpointing the influence of the War on Thomas, stating that it was 'as if, in the last years of his life, under the stress of war and the desperate sense of urgency it gives to the creative artist who is threatened with annihilation by it, he had recovered the whole range of his inspiration over twenty years, so that he could resume and concentrate it in the new medium'.

Perhaps Thomas's reaction to the outbreak of War (and the almost simultaneous deluge of patriotic verse) can be best gauged from his review in December 1914 of 'War Poetry' in Poetry and Drama.⁴ Thomas quickly came to realise that the poetry of the First World War - in common with that of most previous conflicts - would rapidly slip from public acclaim: 'No other class of poetry [as the patriotic] vanishes so rapidly, has so

-
1. The Last Sheaf (1928), p.221. C. Day Lewis acknowledged a similar response during the 2 W.W., when he was translating Virgil's Georgics: 'As I worked on into the summer of 1940, I felt more and more the kind of patriotism which I imagine was Virgil's - the natural piety, the heightened sense of the genius of place, the passion to praise and protect one's roots....' The Buried Day (1960) p.97. E.T., The South Country, p.7, himself defined the country as a kind of home... more than any other to those rootless people who belong nowhere'.
 2. Selected Letters of R.F., p.193. 3. 'E.T.', The Open Night (1952) p.80.
 4. P.D.II, No.8 (Dec.1914), 341-5. In another review in the same issue E.T. continued: 'The worst of the poetry being written today is that it is too deliberate, and not inevitably, English. It is for an audience: there is more in it of the shouting of rhetorician, reciter or politician than of the talk of friends and lovers'.

'little chosen from it for posterity'. Real patriotism - such as the 'settled mystic patriotism' of Blake in 'War Song to Englishmen' - should evolve independently of wars and should be based on a deep understanding by the individual of his native land, having nothing in common with the rampant nationalism excited by political or militaristic issues, Thomas had no time for the writer of patriotic verse who was emerging through 1914:

...a man who feels himself always or at the time at one with a class, perhaps the whole nation, or ... a smart fellow who can simulate or exaggerate this sympathy It is the hour of the writer ... who picks up popular views or phrases, or coins them, and has the power to turn them into downright stanzas. Most newspapers have one or more of these gentlemen, They could take the easy words of a statesman, such as 'No price is too high when honour and freedom are at stake', and dish them up so that the world next morning, ready to be thrilled by anything lofty and noble-looking, is thrilled. These poems are not to be attacked any more than hymns. Like hymns, they play with common ideas, with words and names which most people have in their heads at the time. Most seem to me bombastic, hypocritical, or senseless....

It was with bitterness that Thomas asserted how 'experience, reality, truth, unless suffused or submerged by popular sentiment, are out of place' in the atmosphere of public euphoria fuelled by the popular patriotic - even jingoistic - writers. The rather unusual attitude adopted by Thomas in 1914 was restated in 'This is No Case...':

I hate not Germans, nor grow hot
With love of Englishmen, to please newspapers,

where Thomas openly condemns such unstable nationalism as murderous and ultimately futile, but accepts that there may be a cause worth upholding, according to his private code of patriotism. Possibly Thomas's rather reticent love of his country accounts for the fact that his poetry was neglected by publishers - in 1915 and 1916 - who had no 'room for such quiet meditative verse,

'in which the profound love and knowledge of his country were too subtle in their patriotism for the nation's mood'.¹ Thomas's patriotism was more of the instinctive kind:

The ages made her that made us from dust:
She is all we know and live by, and we trust
She is good and must endure, loving her so,

and, in 'Lob' Thomas celebrated the traditional English spirit manifested in the character of wide, old 'Lob-lie-by-the-fire' whose qualities recall those of other ancients depicted by Kipling² and whose function was to sustain the English heritage.

In another significant prose passage - an essay simply called 'England' - Thomas threw further light on his particular feeling for his country when he analysed the connotations of the word 'home' which has a wider reference than usual: 'in war-time or coming from abroad...the whole land is suddenly home'.³ Such a perception inspired 'Adlestrop', 'Home' and 'Goodnight', where the conception of home extends beyond normal geographical boundaries: in 'Adlestrop', the single blackbird at the little station proliferates into 'all the birds /Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire'; in 'Home', the poet shares a single nationality and memory with the birds that sing, and in 'Goodnight', the 'friendless town is friendly', its homeliness represents the familiar character of every English town, so that although the poet is 'homeless', he does not feel 'lost' in the unknown town briefly visited.

1. Helen Thomas, World Without End, p.165.

2. E.g. 'Mus' Hobden' in 'The Land', Marghanita Laski, Kipling's English History, pp.114-6.

3. The Last Sheaf, p.108.

The fact that, in general, Thomas's poetry is characterized by a far greater concentration and a much larger empathy than were evident in the prose, is partly due to the impinging influence of the War. This can be clearly apprehended in a comparison between the prose Rain and Death passage, from The Icknield Way, and the poem 'Rain'.¹ In the poem the insistence on the approach of death - with the reference to those 'dying tonight' or those already dead, 'myriads of broken reeds all stiff and still' - indicates that Thomas's response has been intensified by the War. Not only that, but the self-indulgence apparent in the prose passage, the preoccupation with the individual's anticipation of death is far more muted in the poem: in fact, the pity has become compassion and the focus of the poet's attention has switched from considering himself to involvement in the sufferings of others. The ominous approach of death - whose cleansing and annihilating features Thomas presages in his use of the rain image - is no longer regarded as solely an all-exclusive personal torment but as a circumstance to be shared with others, particularly those confronted by the reality of sudden death on the battlefield.

Thomas admits his helplessness to relieve the sufferings of others, but he actively projects himself among the dead - and the living - on the battle-field, extending to them the same kind of compassion, though not underlined with quite the same insistence and intensity, as that which characterizes Wilfred Owen's attitude

1. A distinct similarity of approach and attitude to the pastoral environment permeates 'All Day It Has Rained', written under much the same circumstances in the 2 W.W. by Alun Lewis (an ardent devotee of E.T. and his poetry). The last lines of A.L.'s poem are directly related to his tribute 'To Edward Thomas', composed after a visit to E.T.'s Memorial Stone above Steep in Hampshire, in which A.L. exhibited an acute understanding of E.T.'s 'striving / To make articulate the groping voices / Of snow and rain and dripping branches' and divined that what led E.T. to possess ultimately the 'hinted land' at Arras was the English landscape with its 'soft and neutral' and 'grey horizon'.

in his poetry.¹ In Thomas's prose passage, where he describes how 'everything is drowned and dead, all that was once lovely and alive in the world, all that had once been alive and was memorable though dead is now dung² for a future that is infinitely less than the falling dark rain', he is contemplating an abstract concept of mankind but in the poem, 'the tragic sense of mortality is sharpened by being directed towards living individuals'.³

In 'The Owl', a similar desire to share the suffering - and in this case, the deprivation - of others is expressed when Thomas begins from a description of his 'sweet tiredness' and is then directed through the owl's melancholy cry to consider those who could not escape hunger, cold and fatigue as easily as himself, and through his consideration of them, Thomas becomes somehow conscious of that 'eternal reciprocity of tears' which has the effect of 'salting and sobering' his own enjoyment of the physical comforts which he can derive when others 'lay under the stars ... unable to rejoice'.

Reference has already been made to the affiliations between Thomas and Hardy, Frost, Owen and the Georgian Movement as a whole, but the wry humour evident in some of Thomas's poems - particularly those directly concerned with the War - is reminiscent, at times, of Housman. In 'A Private', for instance, the ironic humour lies

-
1. Mrs Mary Gray, who knew Owen at Craiglockhart, asserted that his 'sensitiveness, his sympathy were so acute, so profound, that direct personal experience and individual development can hardly be said to have existed for him. He could only suffer or rejoice vicariously', quoted Silkin, *Op.cit.*, p.96. Blunden, *Collected Poems of W.O.*, p.29, cites a friend's account of Owen's chief characteristic as 'an intense pity for suffering humanity - a need to alleviate it...and an inability to shirk the sharing of it, even when this seemed useless'.
 2. Cf. E.T.'s reference to young men turned to dung by the War in 'Gone, Gone Again': 'And when the war began /To turn young men to dung'.
 3. Silkin, *Op.cit.*, p.94.

in the discrepancy between sleep and death (a motif whose ironic implications were extensively exploited by other combatant-poets¹):

'... where now at last he sleeps /More sound in France - that too, he secret keeps'. A similar use of the sleep/death analogy is to be found in 'Man and Dog', where one speaker tells another that "'many a man sleeps worse tonight /Than I shall". "In the trenches": "Yes, that's right...". Probably the most moving expression of Thomas's belief that 'sleep is a novitiate for the beyond',² appears in 'Lights Out', in the last poems, where Thomas resolutely but quietly faces the possibility of his own death, tentatively suggesting that only through death could his warring, divided self be completely reconciled:

I have come to the borders of sleep,
The unfathomable deep
Forest where all must lose
Their way, however straight,
Or winding, soon or late;
They cannot choose ...

The tall forest towers;
Its cloudy foliage lowers
Ahead, shelf above shelf;
Its silence I hear and obey
That I may lose my way
And myself.

Thomas makes use of another Housmanesque technique (the ironic juxtaposition of young men as lovers and as soldiers, prevalent throughout A Shropshire Lad) in a stanza from 'In Memoriam (Easter, 1915)':

The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood
This Eastertide call into mind the men,
Now far from home, who, with their sweethearts, should
Have gathered them and will do never again,

1. See Section 2 (c), p.186, foot-notes 3 and 4 in particular,
2. Rose Acre Papers, p.105.

and from 'The Cherry Trees':

The cherry trees bend over and are shedding,
On the old road where all that passed are dead,
Their petals, strewing the grass as for a wedding
This early May morn when there is none to wed.

The concept of War's impinging on Man's activities in the natural environment is developed further in 'Fifty Faggots', 'Gone, Gone Again' and 'As the Team's Head Brass', where the absence of the young men at the Front has a definite detrimental effect on the place of man in the natural world. In the first poem, the War - it is implied - is responsible for the failure to collect in the faggots to 'light several Winter's fires'; to the wild creatures, especially the birds, however, this neglect is a cause for rejoicing since the piled wood provides cover for nesting. In 'Gone, Gone Again', on the other hand, nothing benefits from the intrusion of the War: even the 'Blenheim oranges / Fall grubby from the tree'; but in 'As the Team's Head Brass' the War has positively interfered with man's care of nature and the blizzard-felled elm has not been removed as it should have been had the ploughman's mate not gone to France and been killed. The slow conversation in the poem which is timed - 'one minute and an interval of ten' - to coincide with the turn of the plough at the end of the furrow nearest the narrator, seems to embody the steady cycle of nature:

Every time the horses turned
Instead of treading me down, the ploughman leaned
Upon the handles to say or ask a word,
About the weather, next about the war.

There is an ominous suggestion in the 'treading me down' phrase of the crass brutality of war and, when the ploughman begins the conversation, he considers it as natural to discuss

the War as the weather. As the two men talk, they assess realistically the cost of the War: to the ploughman it means the loss of his friend and fellow farm-worker and the bitter realization that "if /He had stayed here we should have moved the tree"; to the narrator, who has not yet 'been out', it means the grim jest of calculating the risk to his person (he decides he 'could spare an arm') in War; and to both of them it means a fundamental change in the 'old order' and the veiled suggestion, as the narrator watches the furrow being ploughed 'for the last time', that the harmonious relationship between Nature and Man has been irreparably severed by the presence of War which has accelerated the decline of a disintegrating process already under-way before 1914. Any suggestion of the 'nostalgic rural vision' or 'pastoral calm' in the poem is certainly overshadowed by the evident sterility in the scene ('charlock', 'fallow', 'the fallen elm') for which the War is directly responsible. Thomas's poem is far less confident about the certain continuity of the natural cycle than Thomas Hardy's 'In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"' which contains many of the same constituents - the archetypal ploughman, the lovers 'whispering by' - but which resolutely affirms that 'this will go onward the same /Though Dynasties pass' and 'War's annals will cloud into night /Ere their story die'. Although the ploughman and lovers are what really matter to Hardy, in Thomas's poem these "great eternal sanities" are shown to be under pressure and actually disappearing'.¹

1. W. Cooke, Op.cit., p.241.

Altogether, it can be inferred that Edward Thomas had a highly complex personality which is manifested through his prose-writing and is most clearly delineated through the more compressed medium of poetry. He was by no means the typical Georgian Poet - in the pejorative sense in which the term 'Georgian' is (or has been) used - although the qualities of honesty, accuracy in the presentation of detail observed or emotion felt and an intuitive love of country are all present in Thomas's poetry and were the very qualities admired by and cultivated by the Georgian Poets, On the other hand, although Thomas went to France and was involved in the Arras Offensive of Spring 1917, he cannot be categorized as a trench poet, neither can he be associated with the 'noble fallen' whose slim volumes of verse were prematurely rushed into print after the officers' demise on the battle-field. Nevertheless Thomas was a war poet, in the profoundest sense, who - having detected the conflict of his own divided self - could appreciate, from the outset, the agony of the much larger confrontation between warring nations. He was also aware of the threat implicit in war to natural beauty and the subsequent disruption of the balance of nature and the harmonious relationship between Nature and Man, which was already under siege before the War.

It is hoped that this survey had been able to redress the mis-informed view of Thomas as a poet of the nostalgic / regional school¹ who, oblivious of his environment at the Front, was securely cocooned in 'nostalgic, rural visions' of an idealized pastoral

1. See above, Section 2 (b).

England. Thomas's primary theme in his poetry, which justifies his consideration as a War Poet, is his treatment of the impact of War on Nature. This subject is by no means peculiar to Thomas: it is also circumscribed, somewhat differently, by Blunden and certain elements in Thomas's poetry are reminiscent of other nature poets or protectors of the English tradition - namely, Hardy, Housman and Kipling. But the theme of War's impact on Nature and its influence on man's relationship with nature resounds as the obbligate in Thomas's poetry, permeating and colouring his attitude to his subject and intensifying his naturally sombre appreciation of nature. In war, man's puny mortality - of which he is constantly reminded, is ironically contrasted with the ageless cycle of nature and, in Hardy-esque style in 'February Afternoon', Thomas further dissociates man's suffering from any benign intervention from the deity:

Time swims before me, making as a day
A thousand years, while the broad ploughland oak
Roars mill-like and men strike and bear the stroke
Of war as ever, audacious or resigned,
And God still sits aloft in the array
That we have wrought him, stone-deaf and stone-blind.

But on a less explicit level, the uncertainty of war and its unexpected convulsions are used by Thomas to underline subtly the precariousness of age-old traditions and to reflect the changes already apparent in the pre-1914 natural environment: Thomas's interpretation of the pastoral is no whimsical dream of an improbably idyllic English countryside conceived in the trenches, but a thorough and earthy understanding of the reality of the natural environment assimilated from actual experience and endowed with 'the lifetime's experience of a writer, an assured critical instinct, and seasons of observation'.¹

1. W. Cooke, Op.cit., p.163.

ii. Edmund Blunden

Blunden is indubitably the best example of an English poet of the First World War writing poetry of a specifically rural nature, according to the precepts of the pastoral tradition. Various critics¹ have designated John Clare, William Cowper, Thomas Gray, William Barnes, Wordsworth² and, more recently, Thomas Hardy as his direct antecedents and the pastoralism whose influence pervades much of Blunden's poetry would appear, on occasion, to be itself distinctly retrospective and redolent of 'an earlier ruralism peopled with deities and pietistic shepherds'³:

Here be rural graces, sylvan places,
Bright-hearted brooks that chanting fall,
Leys and fallows, reedy rustling shallows,
Colours and music rustical.⁴

Not that it should be overlooked, however, that below the surface of Blunden's nature-poetry, 'dreamlike and sensuous and interlaced with archaic words as it is, there lurks a perception of sinister forces at work'.⁵ Blunden's evaluation of rural life is neither simple nor simple-minded⁶ and his awareness of the haunting and fearful aspect of nature can be illustrated by the

1. E.g. Pinto; Bullough, Op.cit., who quotes the assessment of E.B. as 'a picturesque interpreter of the English countryside', p.71; Michael Thorpe, The Poetry of E.B., p.10, whose study seeks to place Blunden 'in the continuing stream of native English poetry'; Leavis, Op.cit., p.59, who accuses E.B. of relying too blatantly on 'eighteenth century echoes, imitations and reminiscences' (although Leavis acknowledges the effectiveness of the 'stress behind the pastoral quiet' manifested in poems of mental conflict, hallucination and war-experience); Silkin, Op.cit.; Ian Carr, 'E.B. and the 1914-18 War', Stand IV, 3; Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.68: 'Blunden's world of nature [offers] an image of civilization, the pattern of pastoral, pre-industrial society'.

2. The critics appear to set E.B. either in the tradition of eighteenth century pastoral poets or that of early nineteenth century Romantic poets.

3. Silkin, Op.cit., p.103.

5. Ian Carr, Op.cit., p.44.

4. 'Wild Cherry Tree'.

6. Although Leavis, Op.cit., p.60 cites E.B.'s 'poetry of simple pieties'.

often-anthologized 'The Pike' which represents - in the description of the sinister, dark fish lurking below the untroubled surface - Blunden's 'conception of endemic destruction as part and parcel of life':¹

...Else round the broad pool's hush
Nothing stirs,
Unless sometime a straggling heifer crush
Through the thronged spinney where the pheasant whirs;
Or martins in a flash
Come with wild mirth to dip their magical wings,
While in the shallow some doomed bulrush swings
At whose hid root the diver vole's teeth gnash.

And nigh this toppling reed, still as the dead
The great pike lies, the murderous patriarch
Watching the waterpit sheer-shelving dark,
Where through the plash his lithe bright vassals thread....²

One can detect in Blunden's poetry - as in that of Edward Thomas - elements of tension between 'the old Romantic "cosmic consciousness" - sometimes really felt but often only willed or desired - and the disenchanting, modern mind'³; both are 'transitional poets', aware that the old rural order is already threatened but worth clinging on to nonetheless. More than Thomas, however, Blunden was an essentially rooted poet, very closely connected to the rural areas of Kent and Sussex, imbibing his love of the local environment from his upbringing in Yalding, Kent. As Jon Silkin has remarked, Blunden has been extensively influenced by 'his counties' and reflects in the quality of his poetry this area of 'few dramatic contours and ... quietness'.⁴ Yet there is no 'studied homeliness of expression', no 'easy sentiment' about Blunden's attitude to his pastoral surroundings: he does not approach his

1. Ian Carr, Op.cit., p.44.

2. Dated, significantly, 1919.

3. M.Thorpe, Op.cit., p.11.

4. Silkin, Op.cit., p.103.

subjects with excessive Romantic languor, nor observe them with a careless, imprecise 'eye on the object'¹. In fact, later in Nature In Literature², Blunden prided himself on his 'good sense' as an Englishman which debarred him 'from heartiness without particularity, particularity without experience, and mysticism without plainness', and which enabled him to translate intensely-known and felt experience of Nature into faithfully-observed poetry.

To some extent, Blunden's aim can be aligned to that of Wordsworth in his Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, 1802, for he too strives in poetry to touch:

... the general passion and thoughts and feelings of men [connected] with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow.

Just as Blunden's essential themes were supplied by 'intimately known local rural life', so the texture of his language was 'nourished upon' and enriched by 'muscular dialect words'³ - a characteristic which further underlines his kinship with Hardy, as well as with the actual physical life of the English countryside.⁴ Thus, for Blunden already entrenched in a strong tradition of nature-poetry (of a deeper vein than that used to succour the mainstream

1. Phrases taken from Blunden's own comments on the qualities of Ivor Gurney's poetry in his Introduction to Poems by I.G. (1954).

2. 1929.

3. Roberts, Op.cit., p.19, who quotes E.B.'s use of 'drudges', 'skulking', 'shrubbed', 'fluster', as examples of local colloquialisms. Robert Bridges offered a piece 'On the Dialectal Words in E.B.'s Poems', to Society for Pure English, Tract v, 1921. Blunden himself appended a 'Glossary of a Few Local or Dialect Words' to The Waggoner and Other Poems.

4. Cf. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.68: 'When dealing with Blunden it is hardly appropriate to talk of the "rural scene" with all that that implies of a background or mere setting: he knows the country with a deep knowledge and a deep love and it pervades the whole structure of his mind and feelings', and also Alec M. Hardie, Edmund Blunden (British Council Pamphlet, 1958) p.16: 'E.B. was never just the "pastoral" poet; he knew too well the harshness of country life'.

of Georgian Poetry) and enjoying a particularly fruitful contact with Nature, the War was to impinge on his consciousness with a specific disruptive force, almost to the point - as Silkin has suggested¹ - of exiling the poet from his familiar environment (mentally as well as physically). Blunden's awareness of the sinister aspect of nature which had already been evident before the War, was intensified by its advent and the 'relation between war and malign nature' was thereafter made more complex. The War's approach cast an obliterating shadow over an already-threatened Arcadia and, during the course of the War, not only were 'humanitarian visions' exploded but also 'the pastoral fairy-tale'.² The sinister presence suspected by Blunden under the placid surface could no longer be contained in unfrequented dark pools, for it manifested itself across the 'fair face of nature' in the palpable scars and ravages inflicted upon the landscape. The pastoral was to be irretrievably tarnished:

And all the old delight is cursed,
Redoubling present undelight.
Splinter, crystal, splinter and burst;
And sear no more with second sight.³

Nature herself was estranged and sacrilegiously violated:

The pollards glower like mummies when
Thieves break into a pyramid.

Such was the impact of the War's devastation on Blunden that, although only in his late teens when War broke out, and characterized throughout the War as the archetypal 'boy-officer', he was to recall later in 'War Autobiography' that the transition from the pre-War idyll⁴ to involvement in the holocaust resembled a sinking

1. Op.cit., p.102.

2. 'The Sunlit Vale'.

3. 'In Festubert, 1916'.

4. Cf. Fussell's comment on the summer of 1914 : it was 'the most idyllic of summers for many years. It was warm and sunny, eminently pastoral', Op.cit., p.24.

'from joy /To shrivelled age'. In 'A Country God'¹ the estrangement from Arcadia and the subsequent immersion in the imbroglia of Armageddon was reflected in the 'flinging by' of 'all my murmuring pipes', poignantly associated with 'summer not to come again' and the bitter image of the hitherto life-giving 'sower's hand' now 'writhed /In livid death': the joyous celebration of the pastoral has been transmuted into 'a dull-voiced dirge and threnody'. As in Thomas's 'As the Team's Head Brass', where the War has an obvious effect on the natural environment, in that the fallen tree is not removed because the crucial farm-worker has been killed at the Front, so in 'A Country God', Blunden envisages a landscape devastated by the neglect occasioned by war:

The gold grain flatted and unscythed,
The boars in the vineyard, gnarled and sullen,
Havocking the grapes....

Blunden acknowledged - in a modest aside in his pamphlet on the War Poets² - that his chief predicament as a poet at the Front was how to come to terms with this appalling 'bedevilled world', and how to 'make poems about the grimness of War which had devastated his notions of the pastorals of peace'³, as thoroughly as it had laid waste the French and Belgian countryside. From being a poet of secluded rural haunts, Blunden had to adjust himself to becoming 'a poet of the shell-holes, of ruin and of mortification',⁴ and - in so doing - provided, perhaps more closely than any other well-known English poet, 'those inarticulate battalions pitchforked roughly from the ordered furrow to the incomprehensible fields of France'⁵, with a voice.

1. The Waggoner and Other Poems, pp.24-5.

2. War Poets 1914-18 (British Council Pamphlet, 1958).

3. Ibid., p.27.

4. Ibid.

5. Roberts, Op.cit., p.21.

Little wonder, therefore, that such a poet as Blunden, whose natural affinities tended towards the writers of the eighteenth century, turned 'in extremis' to these authors whose work 'offered an oasis of reasonableness and normality, a place one could crawl into for a few moments' respite from the sights, sounds and smells of the twentieth century'.¹ As Blunden was to acknowledge in his prose account of his War experience, Undertones of War², recalling a period of intense shelling at Passchendaele:

My indebtedness to an eighteenth century poet became enormous. At every spare moment I read in [Edward] Young's Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality, and I felt the benefit of this grave and intellectual voice, speaking out of a profound eighteenth century calm, often in metaphor which came home to one even in a pill-box. The mere amusement of discovering lines applicable to our crisis kept me from despair.

Blunden's 'indebtedness' also extended to another eighteenth century poet - William Cowper - on whose poem ('The Castaway') his 'inverted sardonic pastoral appropriate to the new kind of "harvest"³ being reaped by the War - 'Rural Economy' - was based, using the same metre and stanza form as in Cowper's poem. The essential idea of abandonment, focusing in 'The Castaway' on an individual who considers himself an irredeemable social outcast, is picked up in Blunden's poem and applied to a group of soldiers - heavily shelled in a copse, but within sight of peaceful farming country where the harvesting is in progress - who feel themselves to have been cynically marooned from the human norm. A further dimension to Blunden's poem can be achieved if the reader

1. Fussell, Op.cit., p.162.

2. (1928,) pp.222-3.

3. Fussell, Op.cit., p.167. See also discussion of the 'harvest'-image in Section 2 (c).

appreciates the resemblance to the Cowper original and can make the subtle distinction between Cowper's consciously dying castaway¹ and the hopeless, uninvited plight of the soldiers bombarded in their shell-ploughed wood. The primary effect of the poem derives from the ambiguity of the title and the sardonic play on the word 'harvest': the juxtaposition of the traditional gleaning of corn and the indiscriminate 'planting' of 'iron seeds' in flesh and the mass 'harvesting' of the fruitful acres after the deadly 'husbandry' of war has ministered to the 'crops':

In sight, life's farms sent forth their gear
Here rakes and ploughs lay still,
Yet, save some curious clods, all here
Was raked and ploughed with a will.
The sower was the ploughman too,
And iron seeds broadcast he threw.

What husbandry could outdo this?
With flesh and blood he fed
The planted iron that nought amiss
Grew thick and swift and red,
And in a night though ne'er so cold
Those acres bristled a hundredfold.

Why, even the wood as well as field
This ruseful farmer knew
Could be reduced to plough and tilled,
And if he'd planned, he'd do;
The field and wood, all bone-fed loam,
Shot up a roaring harvest home.

While admitting that many of the literary metaphors suggested by his favourite eighteenth century writers might be literally appropriate to the War situation², Blunden did recognize that his environment, overall, 'outfiended' all the fiends imaginable in literature. Of the place - at Richebourg - where a man who drama-

-
1. E.g. such phrases as: 'such a destin'd wretch as I /....Of friends, of hope, of all bereft'; 'But waged with death a last-ing strife, /Supported by despair of life'; 'Yet bitter felt it sti-ll to die /Deserted, and his friends so nigh', The Poems of William Cowper, O.U.P., pp.231-2).
 2. E.g. Young's 'Dreadful post /Of observation! darker every hour', which Blunden applied to a dug-out near Zillebeke.

tized himself as the rugged Robert Service died, Blunden remarked that it was 'a hell more sardonic and sunnily devilish than ten thousand Robert Services could evolve, or wolves and grizzlies inhabit'.¹

Nonetheless, Blunden makes frequent use throughout both poetry and prose of the 'demonic anti-pastoral'² - whereby verdant natural vegetation is metamorphosed into 'vegetation of iron'³, the 'metal brambles' of which 'have no flowers or berries'. Blunden has evidently recognised in this ironic use of pastoral imagery that 'useful as pastoral allusion is for purposes of comfort or of implicit description through antithesis, it has a more basic function of assisting ironic perception',⁴ an appreciation which is made all the more pungent if it is assumed that 'a clarifying or restorative force ... has always been associated with pastoral'.⁵ It is quite common to find in the corpus of First World War literature such 'out-of-joint' references to the pastoral⁶: for example, the transmutation of Brooke's 'swimmers into cleanness leaping' into the mud-flounderers of the Somme and Passchendaele. But nowhere is the poignancy of such allusion so fully realised as in Blunden's writing, where he could exploit both his pre-War intimate experience of Nature and his post-War opportunity (particularly explicit in Undertones of War) to 'generate coherence'⁷ and intensify the ironic juxtaposition.

1. Undertones of War, pp.9-10.

2. A technique which was to be exploited later by Keith Douglas (whose poems were significantly introduced by E.B.) as well as by Eliot in The Waste Land.

3. 'Cairo Jag', Collected Poems of Keith Douglas, p.115.

4. Fussell, Op.cit., p.238.

5. David Kalstone, 'Conjuring with Nature: Some Twentieth Century Readings of Pastoral', Twentieth Century in Retrospect (Camb. Mass., 1971), p.249.

6. See Section 2 (c) for further examples.

7. Fussell, Op.cit., p.310.

The definition of the 'perverse pastoral' of the Western Front in terms of the normal, everyday life of the countryside is one of Blunden's finest achievements. He was assisted in this rendering of his War experience by 'the perception of an amateur botanist sharpened to a pitch of visual artistry and refinement'.¹ He achieved a 'direct description of the mechanical nightmares of war' by 'suppressing the ordered world of nature'² and using, as images, objects with benign connotations in the normal, rural context: by this means, Blunden strove to 'naturalize' scenes and weapons of War. Bullets became 'whizzing gnats', 'steel-born bees' or 'gouts of lead'; trenches comprised 'a maze' of 'earthy lanes', 'sown with jagged iron', or 'mere pitiful hedges of brushwood, hurdles, work for a sheep-fold'; shells approached as 'a whirring covey' and the earth exploded in 'fountains'; the 'thunder-throated' Bombardment was likened to a 'fiend automaton'; the 'brute guns [lowed] at the skies'; flares appeared as sinister 'withered suns' and the summer battles gave a terrifying new dimension to that symbol of rustic harmony: the harvest; a bi-plane resembled 'a great transparent dragon-fly'; in an extended metaphor, 'stand to!' only tenuously reminded the poet of morning at home:

Morning, if this late withered light can claim
Some kindred with that merry flame
Which the young day was wont to fling through space!

and the moonlight was positively vindictive, hurting the eyes
'With gouged and scourged uncertainties /Of soul and soil in agonies'. The exploding shells - incongruous 'false dawns' - 'fan-flash' to East and West; the whole morass of No Man's Land is 'a dead sea of mud' into which one brilliant hope after another sinks; the barbed wire 'rattles like rusty brambles or dead bine'; men

1. Hussey, Poetry of the I.W.W., p.29.
2. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.69.

lurk in craters which are 'water-holes'; the day itself is a malevolent force 'noisy and horrid with sudden death' and no soldier dares to look beyond the 'sky-line of immediate orders'.

Blunden is most articulate in his description of the shattered trees in the 'most lonely World's End' of the battle area: 'the bony remains of Oskar Copse and Wilde Wood' - woods 'like confused ship-masts where amateur soldiers, so many of them, accept death in lieu of war-time wages' - Dantesque trees emerge like 'spikes' from the waste-land: 'Ember-black the gibbet trees like bones or thorns protrude /From the poisonous smoke - past all impulses'¹ and individual relics, 'one stunted willow tree at which the track changed direction', are indelibly seared on the consciousness of many soldiers.

A further poignant effect is achieved by observing the vestiges of normality to which the soldiers cling in their alien trench existence:

They made themselves comfortable in cellars, and went to and fro in the exact and ordinary manner of the British working man. One, by turns, stayed at home to cook; the others kept the line tidy, and left no stair-case, recess nor buttress unbeautified. They enjoyed this form of active service with pathetic delight - and what men were they? - willing, shy, mostly rather like invalids, thinking of their families.

Similarly, in his survey of Potijze Road, just behind the Line, Blunden is struck by how appreciatively it could have been exploited by an 'East Anglian huckster' who could 'have made a fortune with a pony and van', by hawking the abandoned domestic paraphernalia: mahogany beds, bassinets and sewing-machines.

1. 'Thiepval Wood' (September 1916). Cf. Chapter IX, Undertones of War, where E.B. describes a ridge of 'naked tree trunks or charcoal, an apparition which I found was called Thiepval Wood'.

Another distinctive characteristic of Blunden's poetry and prose is the underlying dichotomy: the strict division of time into 'then' and 'now'¹ and the rigid distinction between the pre-War 'idyll', the War's savagery and devastation, and the post-War feeling of isolation and subliminal guilt, at having survived. Perhaps 'Report on Experience', which - as the title suggests - offers a different perspective from which to regard a hitherto-unchallenged faith in Nature, best juxtaposes, with sad irony, the idyllic and the actual:

I have seen a green country, useful to the race,
Knocked silly with guns and mines, its villages vanished,
Even the last rat and last kestrel banished -
God bless us all, this was peculiar grace.

I knew Seraphina; nature gave her hue,
Glance, sympathy, note, like one from Eden.
I saw her smile warp, heard her lyric deaden;
She turned to harlotry; - this I took to be new.

Similarly, many of the poems of The Shepherd² and Retreat³ are distinguished by these dichotomies, all of which issue from Blunden's central realisation that he could no longer trust in the benignity of Nature but must now regard the landscape with a more circumspect and 'unquiet eye'.⁴ The contrast between his pre-War and War approach to Nature can be illustrated by 'Entanglement',⁵ where recollection of the 'shower-silvery grass where the damson flower drifted', and the 'rustling of wrens in the ivy' by the

1. Cf.: 'I am here and I am now, / But there and then bedew my brow', 'A Morning Piece', Retreat, p.25.

2. The Shepherd and Other Poems of Peace and War, 1922.

3. Retreat, 1928.

4. Retreat, p.54. As Fussell, Op.cit., p.258, points out: 'Rural life itself is now forever tainted by awareness of "the enemy"; forever one will be conscious in a new way of adversary hazards'. E.B. is now complying with Middleton Murry's dictum that 'the unforgettable horror of an inhuman experience can only be rightly rendered by rendering also its relation to the harmony and calm of the soul which it shatters. In this context alone can it appear with that sudden shock to the imagination which is overwhelming... the quality of an experience can only be given by reference to the ideal condition of the human consciousness which it disturbs...'.
5. Retreat, p.60.

leafy lane Blunden trod then, only serve to underline the desolation of the present landscape:

But now the grey age passes by my faint senses
And charm lies wing-shattered or dead;
No orchard bough blossoms above these steel fences,
The clay-coloured clouds overhead
Neither speak in proud thunder, nor let the sun smile
On the dust-track unsigned mile after mile.

In the same volume, amid plentiful occasional verses which testify to Blunden's long-standing affection for a century when Nature lived in concord with herself, in a landscape where:

...hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
...earth and water seem to strive again;
Not chaos-like together crush'd and bruised,
But, as the world harmoniously confused:
Where order in variety we see,
And where, though all things differ, all agree,¹

verses which are written to commemorate such innocent subjects as Birket Foster's landscapes², the Wartons, various poets: Herbert and Vaughan³, Collins and Chatterton⁴, there is evidence of the profound influence which the War had on Blunden's perception of Nature - once a sanctuary of 'old safety' but now threatened by 'strange menace'. Envisaging the return of his spirit to the Arcadian past of rippling wheat, endless sunshine, 'nymphal rills' and melodious shepherds enjoying a prospect of 'warm miles /Of pastoral blue', Blunden regretfully concludes:

This was my country, and it may be yet,
But something flew between me and the sun;
The gnawed reeds blacken, the thinned poplars fret
Leaves loll, would wake, and with a thrill are gone.⁵

-
1. 'Windsor Forest', The Collected Poems of Alexander Pope, p.23.
 2. 'A Favourite Scene', Retreat, pp.42-4.
 3. 'The Age of Herbert and Vaughan', Ibid., p.26.
 4. 'Nature Displayed', Ibid., pp.18-9, which includes a particularly joyful paean to Nature - 'maker, mother!', 'this country-mother of grace' - and fully acknowledges E.B.'s pastoral heritage with a first stanza which quite unself-consciously depicts 'hazelled purlieus', 'the lawny glade', 'white sylvandom' and 'the wild sylph'.
 5. 'Resignation', Ibid., pp.36-7.

In several poems in Retreat, Blunden's War experience obtrudes more conspicuously than as a shadow between himself and the sun: in 'Ruin', for instance, the atmosphere of the front line emanates from the lonely tower¹ in the vividly-recalled 'blood-streaks and matted hair, /The stone skull-eyes [which] look down most dreamily, /And poisonous mood [which] floats from the elder-tree'. As Blunden looks down, he finds an image of No Man's Land imposed upon the actual scene:

Where snouts of tree-anatomies toad-brown
Pierce the green-scurfed pond, and waters lurch
To the submerged fury and fiery-tortured search
Of knife-like shapes, that only famine find.

The most impressive reconstruction of front-line experience in this volume occurs in 'The Infantryman',² where a finely-particularized evocation of the War terrain - 'those homeless uplands'; 'trampled clay'; 'the masked guns like autumn thunder [which] drummed the outcast year away'; the 'mule-beat track'; 'half-dug trenches' brimming like troughs - culminates in an appreciation of the archetypal infantryman whose 'health and youth [went] brightening to the vortex' and whose courage irradiates the poet's trauma of 'that spectral avenue' as sunnily 'as a May-day dance'.³

In the same year as the Retreat volume was published, Blunden's 'extended pastoral elegy in prose'⁴, Undertones of War⁵, also appeared.⁶

1. The tower-motif, possibly based on the ruined tower of the Ypres Cloth Hall, appears to have been inextricably associated in E.B.'s mind with the War for it recurs in the final stanza of 'In My Time' as 'an uncouth, shot-torn tower' in conjunction with 'a column crossing a field, /Bowed men, to a dead horizon' which together constitute that crucial image 'touched with a certain silver light' in E.B.'s deepest retrospection. In 'On a Picture of Dürer', the tower re-appears as the place where Dürer stood to view the battle-field with the same 'dumb but eloquent trees' as E.B. saw in France.

2. Retreat, pp.34-5.

3. Cf. "'Can You Remember?'" Poems 1930-40, p.152: 'And some [recurring] new-old shapes are sparkling, laughing, singing, /Young, heroic, mild; /And some incurable, twisted, /Shrieking, dumb, defiled'.

4. Fussell, Op.cit., p.254.

5. Right up to the time of his death in January 1974, E.B. confessed how much his I.W.W. experiences had 'haunted' him and it seemed that in old age he was living in 'that world rather than this'.

6. Though, initially, only briefly, as the first edition was sold out in a day.

Blunden obligingly aligns himself with the literary, pastoral tradition¹ by assuming the persona of 'a harmless young shepherd in a soldier's coat'.² Believing that the countryside is an active force, peopled with 'the gods beneath'³ and 'alive' with naiads and hamadryads, Blunden was appalled to see it menaced - just as thoroughly as human beings were - by the War. The brutal ravaging of the French countryside - topologically so much akin to his native Kent and Sussex Weald⁴ - scandalized Blunden no less than the overt murder of men, and the destruction of the countryside was all the more pathetic and shocking because it so ruthlessly conflicted with the purpose to which such country was normally put: 'The greensward suited by nature for the raising of sheep, was all holes, and new ones appeared with great uproar as I passed'.⁵ As a later reviewer of Blunden's achievement in Undertones of War was to observe: 'It was the countryman [in Blunden] ... who saw "a whole sweet countryside amuck with murder", for whom the sight of rich and fruitful land, much like his own, laid waste was an additional torment'.⁶

Blunden approached the writing of his War Autobiography as though he were physically re-tracing the actual terrain: 'going over the ground again' to render more acutely 'the image and the

-
1. Or the 'native English tradition', as defined in a recent review of C. Day Lewis's poetry, T.L.S., 4.2.77: 'a tradition with many variations, but its constants seem... to be these: it is English, and it is primarily concerned with actual nature in the English countryside, and with man's relation to it; it is physical, not transcendental; it is descriptive, not symbolic; it is rooted in time, not in history; it is retrospective, often regretful and melancholy, but also ironic and stoic... The line after Hardy in this tradition is clear enough: E.T.... Lawrence, Graves, Blunden....'
 2. U.W., p. 314.
 3. 'The Gods of the Earth Beneath'.
 4. Spiritually E.B. had sympathy for France occasioned by his knowledge of, and affection for, French literature. As early as 1914, he had privately printed at Horsham, Poems Translated from the French.
 5. U.W., p. 220.
 6. T.L.S., 9.2.51, reviewing Kenneth Hopkins, Edmund Blunden: A Selection of his Poetry and Drama.

'horror of it'. The book traces the fortunes of the 11th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, from the spring of 1916 to the opening of the Passchendaele Campaign in late 1917, monitoring the steady loss of innocence and illusion and bitter awareness of the futility and wastefulness of all human effort.¹ From his initiation to life on the Line, Blunden recorded his astonishment at the violation of the pastoral landscape:

In the afternoon, looking eastwards..., I had seen nothing but green fields and plummy grey-green trees and intervening tall roofs; it was as though in this part the line could only be a trifling interruption of a happy landscape.

Further experience of the sector convinced Blunden that the trench-scene was a travesty of nature which he could best describe by referring to the familiar literary pastoral as model and measure:

On the blue and lulling mist of evening, proper to the nightingale, the sheep-bell, and falling waters, the strangest phenomena of fire inflicted themselves,

and again:

It was the weather when leaves begin to turn, and sing a little drily in the wind; when spiders apparently spend the night in making webs on fences; and when the distances dare assume the purple as the sunset dislimns. As far as battalion head-quarters, one might notice these nocturnal effects. Beyond that point, facts and probabilities of war obscured them....

Nature is used 'by way of contrast and as the basis for all judgements. In such contrasts it is the troubled intelligence that communicates its message to the senses, and causes a seemingly permanent distress, as it is apprehended emotionally':²

And yet its stream ran through my heart;
I heard it grieve and pine,
As if its rainy tortured blood
Had swirled into my own,
When by its battered bank I stood
And shared its wounded moan,

1. Indicative of this movement is E.B.'s comment after the failures of the opening attack in the assault on Passchendaele: 'Our minds receded ... with actual joy to the 1916 war and particularly that season when we were within the kindly influence of Béthune'.
2. Silkin, Op.cit., p.106.

where the critical emphasis is on the poet's 'sharing' nature's distress.

A similar example of the joint helplessness of both nature and man is to be found when Blunden describes the soldiers with 'slouching feet' crossing the foot-bridge over the Ancre by Aveluy, 'where a sad guard of trees ... dripping with the dankness of autumn had nothing to say but sempiternal syllables, of which we had our own interpretation. The shadows on the water were so profound and unnavigable that one felt them as the environment of a grief of gods, silent and bowed, unvisitable by breeze or star'.

After luxuriating in the pastoral interlude of 'country-rectory quietude and lawny coolness'¹ on a gas training-course behind the lines, Blunden's perception of the War 'gnarling the scenery' is intensified when he returns to the Front: he has an acuter awareness of the insensate destruction of unbearable beauty:

Over Coldstream Lane, the chief communication trench, deep red poppies, blue and white cornflowers, and darnel thronged the way to destruction; the yellow cabbage-flowers thickened here and there in sickening brilliance Then the ground became torn and vile, the poisonous breath of fresh explosions skulked all about, and the mud which choked the narrow passages stank as one pulled through it Much lime was wanted at Cuinchy.²

As Field Works Officer, Blunden's duties in reconnoitring the terrain constituted a 'parody of rural daily work'³ which he himself designated 'honest labour'.⁴ His job necessitated the closest possible study of his surroundings and gave him the opportunity to refine his already-astute countryman's eye and gauge the

1. U.W., p.37.

2. Ibid., p.47.

3. Fussell, Op.cit., p.262.

4. U.W., p.132.

degrees of devastation¹ in the Front-Line environment. One communication trench near Hamel in August 1916, began amid 'leafy bushes and great green and yellow weeds' where 'the aspect of peace and innocence was as yet prevailing' but:

...the trenches were curious, and not so pastoral. Ruined houses with rafters sticking out, with half-sloughed plaster and dangling window-frames, perched on a hill-side, bleak and piteous...; half-filled trenches crept along below them by upheaved gardens telling the story of wild bombardment.²

Such conjunctions of previous pastoral calm - the earlier 'sweet village' of Engelbelmer³, for instance - and the present, daily 'gougings' by high explosives, abound throughout Undertones of War, culminating in the poignant contrast between the 'we' of the 'golden dusty summer' of relatively-Arcadian 1916, and the 'we' of late 1916, emerging from the grotesquely-distorted 'verdant valley', now become 'Nature's slimy wound'. With his critical eye for detail,⁴ Blunden even notices the demise of the earlier-abundant eels, bream, and jack after being subjected to the same shelling and gassing which wrought havoc among the troops.

The final irony for Blunden: the knowledge that even Picard country-side as yet untouched by the War, was to be ravaged, effected his ultimate 'Fall from Innocence' and utterly dispelled the pastoral ideal of a 'sweet country' unassailably entrenched in sweetness and unmolested quietude:

-
1. Cf. E.B.'s remarks on the route march to 'once-famous Dickebusch': 'It was strange to pass freely beside buildings which had once been familiar and dangerous....It was also the pathetic evidence of a warfare which, in comparison with the present fury, was almost Arcadian. There are many degrees of mutilation'.
 2. U.W., pp.104-5.
 3. 'Its green turf under trees loaded with apples was daily gouged out by heavy shells; its comfortable houses were struck and shattered, and the paths and entrances gagged with rubble, plaster and wood-work', Ibid., pp.122-3.
 4. Commended by H.M.Tomlinson, Out of Soundings, (N.Y. 1931), who remarked that 'This poet's eye is not in a fine frenzy rolling. There is a steely glitter in it'.

Could any countryside be more sweetly at rest, more alluring to naiad and hamadryad, more incapable of dreaming a field-gun? Fortunate it was that at the moment I was filled with this simple joy No conjecture that, in a few weeks, Buire-sur-Ancre would appear much the same as the cataclysmal railway-cutting by Hill 60, came from the innocent greenwood.¹

The poems appended to Undertones of War - 'A Supplement of Poetical Interpretations and Variations' - were regarded by Blunden as an integral and necessary part of the whole: 'keys ...to the fuller memory'. Many of these poems establish 'pastoral oases as an ironic gauge of things to come'², as in the case of the sentry, with obvious pastoral proclivities, whose temporary lapse from military duty in 'The Guard's Mistake', is savagely arraigned by the bellicose staff officer. The whole incident is so devised - perhaps a trifle glibly - as to emphasize the insistent ravaging of innocent and unpretentious houses and trees³ by the omnipresent War which relentlessly re-imposes itself on any deviant's recollection of the pastoral world:

The cherry-clusters beckoned every arm,
The brook ran wrinkling by with playful foam.
And when the guard was at the main gate set,
Surrounding pastoral urged him to forget ...
...out upon the road, gamekeeper-like,
The cowman now turned warrior measured out
This up-and-down 'sans' fierce 'bundook and spike',
Under his arm a cudgel brown and stout;
With pace of comfort and kind ownership,
And philosophic smile upon his lip...
... a flagged car came ill-omened there;
The crimson-mottled monarch, shocked and shrill,
Sent our poor sentry scampering for his gun,
Made him once more 'the terror of the Hun'.

1. U.W., p.314. Cf. 'Premature Rejoicing' where E.B. recognizes the danger of planning too soon the restoration of 'Titania' to 'Thiepval Wood' which is likely to be further devastated because of its strategic importance: 'All the same, it's a shade too soon /For you to scribble rhymes /In your army book /About those times; /Take another look; /That's where the difficulty is, over there'.
2. Fussell, Op.cit., p.269. Cf. Silkin, Op.cit., p.107: 'nature and war ironically co-exist; thus emphasizing the disparity between them'.
3. Cf. 'A House in Festubert', 'La Quinque Rue' ('lined with trees bitterly bare or snapped in two') and U.W.: 'musically sounded the summer wind in the trees in Festubert' (before the bombardment).

Generally, all Blunden's War Poems - not only those appended to Undertones of War - are 'undertoned' by his War experience. The poems seem to fall into a definite sequence: firstly, those dealing with the impact of War on a countryman fresh to the trenches; secondly, those which articulate the horror of war as it is being either physically or mentally experienced; and lastly, the poems of retrospection - mostly elegiac in tone - which figure largely in Retreat and Poems 1930-1940, volumes which testify to the lingering influence of the War which has seared itself on Blunden's psyche. A brief examination of Poems 1930-1940 indicates the profundity of this influence, constantly re-asserting itself in 'after-refrains'. As Blunden explained in the Preface¹, written during another World War, 'It is not a case of morbidly wishing to go back that road, or of want of anxious interest in current events; but those who saw that tremendous time will know that it does not easily give up its hold'. Even in 1931, Blunden could feel temporarily disoriented in the heart of Oxford: 'mistaking Magdalen for the Menin Gate' and the War landscape needs but an instant's recall to manifest itself:

... turn sharp right,
And the instant war spreads gray and mute in sight.²

Blunden appears to be perpetually haunted by images of the Front which have been permanently etched:

The moment stays; the twisted gate,
The well, the chateau wall;
And one green tree, profuse, elate,
Still canopies the moment great
With nothing or with all;³

-
1. Poems 1930-40, p.viii. This volume comprises selections from Halfway House, 1932; Choice or Chance, 1934 and An Elegy, and Other Poems, 1937.
 2. 'The Lost Battalion', Poems 1930-40, p.102. -
 3. 'Nearing the Ancre Battle-field', Ibid., p.161.

This potent image of the hill also seems to invite man to consider the possibility of a renewed relationship with Nature even though it is recognised that the unholy ghosts of 'a sweet countryside amuck with murder' are unlikely to be easily exorcised. In the poem significantly entitled 'Exorcized' and written in October 1938, twenty years 'since the War called Great had roared its last', survivors still talked of 'echoes, shadows, hauntings not so easily exorcized'. One central spectre looms above the rest - 'Now the hideous thing /Is loose again, the ready death-forms rise' - once more against the perfidious pastoral background:

The lilac sunlight plays like sweet desires,
The new leaves melodize, and the winds tune well,
The far tower's bell answers the browsing-bell.

The twentieth year
Is now fulfilled, the lands of nourished strength
Warm-bodied give us welcome with their yield
Of flax blue-flowered and white....¹

Blunden devotes a whole section in Poems 1930-1940 to 'Echoes from the Great War'², wherein he revives the War landscape: 'The shabby, shattered zones of fire /With barbed wire webbed, with burnt scars pitted'³; he marvels again at the juxtaposition of 'such beauty...neighbouring so much slaughter'; he visualizes once more the as-yet-undevastated 'corners behind a great war / Where nature had skulked like a spider or mouse, /Appalled but persisting'⁴; he recalls the sense of exhilaration at the prospect of 'some days ahead /Of life in quiet country' after 'Front-

1. Poems 1930-40, p.221.

2. Ibid., pp.201-221.

3. 'In May: Near Richebourg St.-Vaast', Ibid., pp.201-2.

4. 'Near Albert-sur-Ancre' (1916), Ibid., p.204.

'lines high-explosive-scourged'¹; and he recreates an awareness of the frailty of man's works in war - 'houses as yet unhurt' but vulnerably 'awaiting death' - and the ultimate horror of domestic ruin² 'that farm menaced so .../...the blast /Of war at length laid low /Each tile and lath, each pane and latch /Of the quietest farm I know'.³

It is clear that the War has thoroughly impinged upon Blunden and is so forceful an influence on him that twenty years after the Armistice and with the prospect of another European holocaust imminent, he seems to live more vividly in his moments of recollection - when his whole consciousness is suffused by an evocation of his War-experience - than in any consideration of the present or contemplation of the future:

When I am silent, when a distance
Dims my response, forgive;
Accept that when the past has beckoned,
There is no help; all else comes second;
Agree, the way to live
Is not to dissect existence.⁴

In the earlier Poems 1914-1930, it is by no means surprising to discover a similar section to 'Echoes from the Great War', here entitled 'War: Impacts and Delayed Actions', which is evidently concerned with the first and second categories of Blunden's War Poems: those reflecting the impact of War on the initiate and those endeavouring to analyse the nuances of War's horror during and just after the first shock - and, most characteristically,

1. 'To A Nature-Lover', Poems 1930-40, pp.206-7.

2. Cf. Chapt. XVII, U.W., marching past Poperinghe: '...past hop-gardens and...past shattered estaminets and withered fields and battery shelters and naked hearths dripping with rain - perhaps the most significant and sad of all domestic ruin'.

3. 'Farm behind the Battle Zone', Ibid., pp.208-9.

4. 'In My Time', Ibid., pp.151-2. E.B. seems to be appealing in the last line for a kind of time-continuum whereby past, present and future co-exist but the past has the dominant voice in the sub-conscious.

reflections of the few poignant and precarious moments of respite¹ from the horror of trench warfare.²

In these poems, man is depicted - with great compassion³ - as 'a sentient suffering creature, a soldier-slave condemned to drudgery or extinction'⁴, as much a victim of the War's inhuman ravages as his environment⁵, through the filter of whose spoliation he might recognise those relics of rural life which have survived the onslaught:

'And I will mark the yet unmurdered tree,
The relics of dear homes that court the eye,
And yet I see them not as I would see.
Hovering between, a ghostly enemy
Sickens the light, and poisoned, withered, wan,
The least defiled turns desperate to me'.
The body, poor unpitied Caliban,
Parches and sweats and grunts to win the name of Man.⁶

Subjected to such outrages, Nature expresses her disapproval of men's action by presenting a more hostile aspect than hitherto apprehended by writers in the pastoral idiom:

Look, we lose;
The sky is gone, the lightless drenching haze
Of rainstorm chills the bone; earth, air are foes.

Again, in 'Zero', Blunden makes ironic play on the associations of the colour red and the Romantic conception of dawn which he

-
1. Such moments were often deceptively calm, e.g. 'Gouzeaucourt : The Deceitful Calm'- 'many of you soon paid for /That false mildness'. Nature has duped men into forgetting that interludes of calm usually preface redoubled fury of combat; cf. 'Spring Offensive' of Wilfred Owen.
 2. Cf. Press, Op.cit., pp.140-2: 'Blunden's achievement was to crystallize these moments into poetry, to make us aware of the contrast between the evil destructiveness of war, and the human warmth and happiness which somehow managed to survive in the trenches. Ian Carr, Op.cit., p.46, similarly notes: 'His best poems, with only one or two exceptions, are about the tiny breathing spaces or static moments between one action and the next'.
 3. E.g. Chapt. XXII, U.W., 'the sun shone with autumn light on the kind round faces, and dun uniforms, and sack-clothed helmets....'
 4. Silkin, Op.cit., p.108.
 5. According to Johnston, Op.cit., E.B.'s poetry finds inspiration in the ravaged landscape 'which seems to reflect man's hapless commitment to the destruction of all he has created'.
 6. 'Preparations for Victory'.

hails with elaborate mock-rhetoric¹:

O rosy red, O torrent splendour
Staining all the Orient gloom,
O celestial work of wonder -
A million mornings in one bloom.

The dénouement occurs when Blunden dismisses this manifestation of 'the old cosmic fire', this 'artist's joy' as an anachronistic detail beside the real agony of 'poor Jock with a gash in his poll' whose wound gives savage new meaning to the celestial red of the sun-rise and whose 'red blood' obliterates - at least temporarily - any appreciation by the poet of the crimson sky. A similar juxtaposition of the Romantic image, with its connotations of luxury and hedonism (damask / vermillion) and the actual horror, with its palpable consequences of suffering and death² (the dull red of shed blood), is evident in 'Vlamertinghe: Passing the Chateau, July 1917'; where Blunden exposes the weakness in the 'pathetic fallacy' of which his War experience has made him aware:

Such a gay carpet! Poppies by the million;
Such a damask! Such vermillion!
But if you ask me, mate, the choice of colour
Is scarcely right; this red should have been duller.

In 'Third Ypres', acclaimed by many critics³ as Blunden's most sustained and central war poem and defined by the poet himself as 'one of the most comprehensive and particular attempts to render war experience poetically', Blunden develops his preoccupation with the painfully irreconcilable contrast between War and Nature. The summer day on which the battle opens is not intro-

-
1. Cf. a similar denunciation of the blatantly Romantic in the first two lines of 'Vlamertinghe' when E.B. begins by quoting Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and subtly substitutes the soldiers for the urn's sacrificial heifer in answer to Keats's 'Who are these coming to the sacrifice?': '...we are coming to the sacrifice'.
 2. A process defined by Silkin, *Op.cit.*, p.111 as the 'ability to locate, zeugmatically, the contrasting modes of nature and war in a word (or its synonym)'.
 3. E.g. Silkin, Johnston (who describes the poem as 'embryo-apocalyptic', approaching 'the epic cry of defiance against insuperable odds' resonant in The Battle of Maldon and The Dynasts).

duced in joyful eulogy but is described as waking anew 'from its grey grave-cloths'; even the neighbouring 'copse' appears to have been invested with its own malevolence towards the soldiers as it 'clacked and suddenly hissed its bullets by' and the sky - far from offering hope of redemption, spiritual or physical - oppresses the waiting men with its 'mute misery' before '[lapsing] into trickling rain' which is 'all heaven's answer'. The accoutrements of war are apparently inter-changeable with the features of the natural landscape:

The wire stood up like an unplashed hedge, and thorned
With giant spikes.

and, as his companions stumble along the 'mule-strewn track', the poet's country-man instinct is stimulated to imagine the usual function of this path, which only re-inforces the unnaturalness of its present maltreatment:

Dizzy we pass the mule-strewn track, where once
The ploughman whistled as he loosed his team;
And where he turned home - hungry on the road
The leaning pollard marks us hungrier turning.
We crawl to save the remnant who have torn
Back from the tentacled wire, those whom no shell
Has charred into black carcasses.

When the poet's mind has been saturated by the enormity of the pervasive horror, it is only just saved from disintegration by a commonplace rural sight:

... - through the great breach above me
The light comes in with icy shock and the rain
Horridly drips O, I'll drag you, friends,
Out of the sepulchre into the light of day:
For this is day, the pure and sacred day.
And while I squeak and gibber over you,
Out of the wreck a score of field-mice nimble,
And tame and curious look about them. (These
Calmed me, on these depended my salvation.)

1. Even though there is in that purity 'destruction and every thing that profanes life', Silkin, Op.cit., p.114.

But this image of the redemptive power of Nature can do little either to blot out the profounder anguish of the country-man's realisation of 'A whole sweet countryside amuck with murder': the ultimate 'uncreation', all coherence gone, or to relieve 'the dead men from that chaos, or my soul'.

The poems which make up the 'Delayed Actions' section recollect the courage, suffering and death of Blunden's contemporaries with whom he shares a more positive understanding than with those among whom he now lives and, as might be expected, the background of blighted nature persists:

Tired with dull grief, grown old before my day,
I sit in solitude and only hear
Long silent laughs, murmurings of dismay,
The lost intensities of hope and fear;
In these old marshes yet the rifles lie, ... and I
Dead as the men I loved, wait while life drags

Its wounded length from the sad streets of war
Into green places here, that were my own

But now what once was mine is mine no more,
I look for such friends here and I find none.
With such strong gentleness and tireless will
Those ruined houses seared themselves in me,
Passionate, I look for their dumb story still,¹
And the charred stub outspeaks the living tree.

Blunden cannot receive any succour from those 'green places' upon which he had previously relied; Nature in fact 'fails him' and this failure re-inforces his personal desolation since he had unequivocally trusted in the essential sanative character of Nature but he now believes this trust to have been betrayed.² Not only is

1. '1916 seen from 1921'.

2. 'What he regarded as inalienably benign, things sacred in nature, the womanliness of women, became distorted', Silkin Op.cit., p.119.

Blunden isolated from those companions who shared his experience of the War, but he is also exiled by memory and feeling from the sanctuary he had assumed to be inviolable:

These after-pieces will not now dispel
The scene and action that was learned in hell ¹

an idea amplified in 'War Autobiography' where Blunden traces his disillusionment from an initial optimism which 'saw bright day through the black wood', to final rejection of nature's potential benevolence: 'The last green tree was scourged to nothing, /The stream's decay left senses loathing'.

In 'Return of the Native', Ypres, 1929, Blunden ironically portrays himself as an habitué² of Ypres and the War, irrevocably cut off from the innocent pre-War pastoral.³ Such an attitude as this gives credence to Sassoon's assessment of Blunden as the poet most obsessed with the War.⁴ The sinister menace Blunden detected in the landscape of the Western Front haunts even the apparently simple nature-study already mentioned,⁵ 'The Pike'. Phrases such as 'doomed bulrush' and 'chub unsuspecting'⁶ belie a predatory element in Nature and it is this idea of omnipresent lurking death which similarly pervades 'The Midnight Skaters' where the thin layer of ice provides only a fragile 'crystal parapet'⁷ between the 'heedless' skaters and the rapacious 'en-

-
1. 'War's People', Ypres, 1919, Cf. '11th R.S.R.': 'The land i.e. [War landscape] lies like a jewel in the mind /And featured sharp shall lie when other fades /And through its veins the eternal memories wind /As that lost column down its colonnades'.
 2. Cf. Gurney, Section 2 (b), pp. 150-159, especially.
 3. Cf. 'The Avenue': 'And I a stranger in my home pass by /To seek and serve the beauty that must die'.
 4. Cf. Thorpe, Op.cit., p.22: 'But in none of the I W.W. poets is the theme of warring man's devastation so pervasive as in Blunden's war poems' and Observer, 6.2.66: 'experience of the I W.W. ... remains the great salient in E.B.'s life'.
 5. See page 235, above.
 6. Silkin, Op.cit., p.118 associates the unsuspecting chub with new recruits to the Front, innocently introduced to the fray.
 7. The term 'parapet' itself testifies to how profoundly E.B. has assimilated 'trench nomenclature'.

gines' of death.

One of the most poignant denials of nature's intrinsic benignity is 'Report on Experience' where Blunden 'inspects the ravaged land ... the image of righteousness forsaken and chastity reduced to prostitution'¹, and an 'acute criticism' of the pastoral ideal is implicit in the final line of each stanza: 'This is not what we were formerly told'; 'God bless us all, this was peculiar grace'; 'She turned to harlotry; - all this I took to be new'. The pre-War pastoral is definitely suspect and all the more to be distrusted because the central figure of the poem - Serpahina - has such an eminently pastoral name, but in prostituting herself she has not only demeaned the pastoral lyric, but also the whole 'pastoral fairy-tale'; 'The Sunlit Vale'² re-inforces this idea of Nature the Deceiver³ which Blunden had earlier suggested in poems describing the treacherous interludes in the bombardment and which he confirmed in 'Report on Experience'. The enticing verdure of the sunlit valley temporarily bemuses the poet - 'never have I seen such a bright bewildering green' - but he is not to be fooled for long: charms cannot 'blind the eye' which has seen 'nature smile and feign where foul play has stabbed and slain' and the stern judgement prevails: 'it looked like a lie', even if the lie was 'kindly meant'.⁴

It would seem then that for Blunden 'a belief in nature as a permanent repository of goodness cannot be fully recovered. A

-
1. Hussey, *Op.cit.*, p.30.
 2. The idea of deceptive nature is tentatively confirmed further (Silkin, *Op.cit.*, p.119 suggests), in 'Report on Experience'.
 3. Cf. G.S.Fraser, *The Modern Writer and His World*, p.255: 'The guns in France had ripped off the green surface of the world'.
 4. Cf. Chapt. XIV, *U.W.*, ' [the divination of] the devilish truth beyond the peaceful veil'.

'kind of religious disillusionment remains. If this "green" is a lie, it may be God's "kindly" invention, but we cannot make do with untruths'.¹ Blunden's War experience had shown him that it was no longer tenable to present 'a belief in nature as an antidote for what men inflict upon one another'.² His belief had been undermined as relentlessly as the front-line trenches, and 'the pastoral framework' he had cherished had been 'shattered by contemporary experience'. The best one could now expect from Nature was occasional consolation but she had betrayed her role as 'man's preceptress'.

Nevertheless, although Blunden's faith in nature's goodness had suffered a serious re-appraisal, he did try to retrieve something of his earlier innocent appreciation of the countryside in those poems which suggest an underlying sense of continuity, such as 'Bleue Maison', 'Battalion in Rest', 'At Senlis Once', 'Zillebeke Brook' (April, 1917) and 'The Unchangeable'. In 'Zillebeke Brook', the sight of a choked stream, infested 'with rusted iron and shards of earthenware', which still manages to trickle through the village 'battered into dross', reminds Blunden of a certain Kentish stream which he recalls in an exquisite pastoral cameo:

...glassy burn
Ribanded through a brake of Kentish fern,
From some top spring beside a park's gray pale,
Guarding a shepherded and steepled dale,

1. Silkin, *Op.cit.*, p.120.

2. Cf. 'The Estrangement' (1919) *Waggoner...*, p.54: 'A hounded kern in this grim No Man's Land, / I am spurned between the secret countersigns / Of every little grain of rustling sand / In these parched lanes where the gray wind maligns; / Oaks, once my friends, with ugly murmurings / Madden me, and ivy whirs like condor wings: / The very bat that stoops and whips askance / Shrills malice at the soul grown strange in France'.

Wherefrom the blue deep-coppiced uplands hear
The dim cool noise of waters at a weir.¹

At this point Blunden abruptly interrupts his 'fancy's' ruminations and continues on his way to Sanctuary Wood (no doubt appositely named in this case), having received some therapeutic value from his recollection of a familiar, un-menaced country-side.²

A similar spirit prevails in 'The Unchangeable' (1917) which, as its title implies, reflects upon an ageless fascination, with moving water, and derives some solace from the thought that untainted streams and fairy-peopled woods by 'willow waterbreaks' eagerly await the return of the poet from his two years' trauma during which he witnessed:

... bright Ancre scourged to brackish mire,
And meagre Belgian becks by dale and chace
Stamped into sloughs of death with battering fire.

In his post-War poetry, Blunden has made some attempt to 'steep himself', like the 'Veteran',³ in nature's opulence, to rekindle his belief in the 'boon earth', provider of 'leisure and loving-kindness' manifold,⁴ by immersing himself in 'golden-age beckonings, olden pastoral things', redolent of tranquillity, but the War landscape, ^{is} ingrained in his mind constantly and grimly asserts itself, disturbing the 'sunny autumnal calm' with 'shouting storms' which will 'flood /The purblind hollows /With a leaden rain /And flat the gleaning-fields to choking mud /And writhe the groaning

-
1. Similarly, when E.B. went to rest camp before the Third Ypres Campaign, he tried to recapture a fragment of the 'ancient peace,... to attune my dull soul if I can /To the contentment of this countryside, /Where man is not forever killing man'
 2. Cf. 'The Forest', The Shepherd, pp.50-1: 'Without a word I've found the hid world at last /In the woods deeps drowned, after so long past / I lay in a green shade of Aveluy Wood /And with those hours allayed the fever in the blood'.
 3. Waggoner, p.59.
 4. 'Leisure', Ibid., p.39.

'woods with bursts of pain'.¹

Even when Blunden makes a concerted effort² to forget images of 'the forlorn days':

... where by the dripping alien farms,
Starved orchards with their shrivelled arms,
The bitter mouldering wind would whine
At the brisk mules clattering towards the Line -

or:

... The jests old time could steal
From ugly destiny, on whose brink
The poor fools grappled with drink,
And snubbed the hungry raving guns
With endless tunes on gramophones -

and urges himself to rejoice in 'the old fields' and Music's 'ancient voice'³; he is simultaneously conscious of the impossibility of such denial of his War experience: he will continue 'muttering on /Over the shades of shadows gone'.

The shadow of France intervenes between the poet and his love at their reunion for, as they kiss, 'we stood estranged / With the ghosts of war between'⁴ and the insistent reminder from the War that "'Love's but a madness, a burnt flare; /The shell's a madman's bride'". Again, the 'wilderness where little's green', 'this golgotha' impresses even the spirit⁵ sent by God who recognizes the beauty behind the desolation in the companionship of the combatants:

-
1. Cf. 'The Avenue', Shepherd, p.53, where the familiar colonnade of trees is transmogrified into the 'great monolith trees', lining the night-mare route along which the soldiers march: 'These trees are jagged with worse than lightnings' flame, / These fields were gouged with worse than ploughs, a moan /Worse than the winds with every wind went on'.
 2. 'Behind the Line', Ibid., p.51.
 3. Thorpe, Op.cit., p.21: 'An obliterating shadow was cast over that dead Arcadia ...by the Great War, which exploded not only humanitarian visions but also the "pastoral fairy-tale".'
 4. 'Reunion in War', Shepherd, p.55.
 5. 'The Troubled Spirit', Ibid., p.60.

There joy triumphs, from such danger snatcht,
And there we'll sit and make our sad selves merry,
Nor reckon up tomorrow and its fate.

The theme which pervades Blunden's poetry immediately after the War, is the poet's dilemma: now he is free to return to the familiar rural environment, how can he accommodate his changed conception of Nature and his suspicions of her alleged benignity in the very setting which - through its unspoilt mellowness - had nurtured his pastoral ideal?

How shall I return and how
Look once more on those old places!
For Time's cloud is on me now
That each day, each hour effaces
Visions once on every bough.

The solution Blunden ventures to the problem is judicious: 'the shepherd's gear' is to be 'whirled away' and the 'sunset wildfire [coursing] the West' is to '[Cry] Armageddon near'. There is no escaping the experience of the War and the attendant modifications the War has effected on Blunden's attitude to Nature. Although in his later poetry, Blunden occasionally reverts to the traditional eclogue form, his central purpose remains the same: to underline the extent to which his War experience necessitated a re-alignment of his response to the natural world, in order to accommodate the 'barbed wire and concrete' which have superseded the shepherd-pipes of the pre-War pastoral idyll - regrettably, in his view:

In sun-bright years
When ...
Shepherds would play
On artful pipes and sing some roundelay
To her who charmed that countryside,
How I had tried the music to express
Madeline's comeliness,
Bright-tressed, ready-smiling, April-eyed.
But now the shadows and north-easters strike
Along the vallies; kite and hawk and shrike
Are all our nightingaledom; shepherds stand
And with barbed wire and concrete mete the land,
So flageolets are silent.

2 (e) THE THIRD GEORGIAN POETRY ANTHOLOGY

Although this Chapter has been concerned mainly with those poets who, on active service during the War, wrote poetry in the Georgian idiom, some reference should be made to the nucleus of original, and affiliated, members of the Georgian 'brotherhood' who continued to write on the Home Front (with a few notable exception) and selections of whose work comprised Georgian Poetry III in 1917. While most of these poets wrote at some geographical distance from the War, they were not entirely immune from its influence. The outbreak of the War had been as devastating a shock to the Georgian Poets, and as final and bitter a severance from youth as it was to most young people at the time - or so it certainly seemed in retrospect:

...To us, who were thirty or less, it came as an end
....Our youth went prematurely, we were scarred before
our time by the griefs of age, we had to face a new world
when we were just beginning to be acclimatized to an old
one....¹

Some of the 'founder' Georgians emulated the example of Rupert Brooke and enlisted, believing that: 'if Armageddon's on, I suppose one should be there'.² Although Brooke was ready - according to the 1914 Sonnets - to be matched with God's 'hour' on any battlefield, his destiny was decided otherwise, and it is a cliché of literary history of this period to point out that Brooke, dead in the Aegean and buried on 'the island of Achilles', was to have more effect on the course of a particular kind of

-
1. J.C. Squire, Water-Music (London, 1939), p.131. Cf. the corresponding awareness of premature ageing described in Erich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front, p.62: '...We were eighteen and had begun to love life and the world; and we had to shoot it to pieces....We are not youth any longer'.
 2. New Statesman, III (1914), pp.638-40, written in the impersonal by R.B. but obviously representing his own thoughts.

'second generation, stay-at-home' Georgian Poets who somehow escaped active service: W.J. Turner, John Freeman and J.C. Squire. As Marsh's aim in compiling the third volume of G.P. was the same as in the first - namely, to demonstrate that English poetry was continuing to put on 'new strength and beauty' - he would have to place the emphasis in the proposed new volume decisively on the work of the younger poets.

By and large, the core of regular contributors to G.P. did not take the War directly as their subject but clung to their remembrance of the things of peace. Nevertheless, as Robert H. Ross has suggested¹, in 'holding up before wartime England the poetry and the values of peacetime, the work of such poets as de la Mare, Lawrence, Davies and Hodgson made an indirect but devastating commentary upon the degradation of the human spirit and the loss of aesthetic standards in war which was the more effective because it was more subtle than the hammer blows of the patriotic versifiers'. A more direct approach to the War was attempted, however, by W.W. Gibson who - while one of the key figures in the Georgian network at home² - also experienced a brief spell of life in the Line, where he served in the ranks, although well into his thirties.

Gibson's volume Battle, published in 1915 - from which three pieces were selected for G.P. III - achieved some success and by 1917 four thousand copies had been printed, Yet, of all Gibson's verse available to Marsh in 1917 - Battle, Friends, Livelihood and

1. Op.cit., p.167.

2. Especially in his association with Abercrombie and R.B. in producing New Numbers (1914). Gibson's 'The Old Nailshop', almost adjacent to Abercrombie's home in Ryton, was a focal point to all those associated with the Georgian Poetry Movement, e.g. Marsh wrote the (long-awaited) Memoir to R.B.'s Poems there in 1918.

Whin - he chose to feature Gibson (as he did Rosenberg) through a comparatively unrepresentative selection. The Gibson section in G.P.III begins with the standard eulogy to that 'flame of ecstasy', Rupert Brooke,¹ moves on through two fairly innocuous pieces, celebrating Gibson's happy, recently-contracted marriage² and one romantic fantasy³, to the three short poems from Battle⁴ and is concluded by 'Lament',⁵ from Whin, which forms a convenient link with the Rupert Brooke paean and, at the same time, refers to the idea (which seems to have had increasing credence extended to it through the War) of the dead soldiers - irrevocably identified with nature - investing the sun, rain, 'birds and winds and streams' with a certain 'holy' quality, signifying to the survivors 'the heart-break in the heart of things'.⁶

The three pieces from Battle are probably the most inoffensive, of all the poems in that volume, to what Marsh imagined the typical G.P. reader's sensibility to be, and suggest tentatively three stages undergone by the initiate to War: firstly, the farewell to his father who cannot help speculating 'What stranger [would] come back to [him]'; secondly, the incongruity of the soldier 'fighting here in France /As in a senseless dream' while the 'dainty demoiselles - /The peacock dragon-flies' hover above the 'dreamless dead'; and, thirdly, the weary soldier's day-dream of a characteristically idyllic scene of home ('watching lazily /

-
1. 'Rupert Brooke', G.P.III, p.117.
 2. 'Tenants', 'For G.', Ibid., pp.118-9.
 3. 'Sea-Change', Ibid., p.120.
 4. 'The Return', 'The Dancers', 'Hit', Ibid., pp.121-2.
 5. Ibid., p.123.
 6. This tendency of identifying the dead with their natural environment (probably derived from R.B.'s seminal 'The Soldier') has been investigated more fully in Section 2 (b).

'White sails in Falmouth Bay') which is to be punctured by the War's 'reality', depicted in such cautious terms as 'a sudden trench - /A trickle of warm blood', to signify that the soldier has been hit.

In the context of G.P.III, where Gibson's work precedes the contribution of John Freeman, a pleasant but somewhat insular poet whose verse blithely ignores the débâcle abroad¹ in order to contemplate quietly the 'lovely' grey November skies, the 'lovely moon' and 'Beauty' walking over the hills and making them bright - Gibson's Battle verses may have seemed daringly 'modern' though the 'realism' Marsh believed them to manifest is still essentially literary and characteristic of a Georgian poet's early responses to the War environment. Looking at the volumes of Gibson's verse available to Edward Marsh in 1917, the impression is given that a much more interesting and representative selection could have been made which would have done more justice to Gibson's stature as a poet, though it would probably have upset the balance of Marsh's third volume.

As early as October 1915, Gibson was being hailed as 'An Ironist of the Trenches'² with considerable insight into the War-
psychology, who spoke for the perplexed private soldier with his 'incorrigible fatalism, pathetic patience, sidelong humour', who was alarmed to find himself no longer an individual but a 'sport of chance, puller of trigger, bewildered fulfiller of instructions, cynical acceptor of destiny'. Gibson was similarly applauded for constructing in Battle, a 'monument to the wanton-ness of it all,

1. Except for the grossly inappropriate (to 1917) 'Happy is England Now'.

2. T.L.S., 14.10.15, title of the review of Battle.

'the cheapness of life in war, the carelessness as to individuals, the disregard of promise and performance and the elimination of personality'. Little of this very real exertion on Gibson's part to identify with the ordinary private - just as he had done with the industrial poor in Daily Bread (1910) and Thoroughfares(1914) - is transmitted through the G.P.III selection. Marsh ignored those poems, such as 'Breakfast', 'The Joke' and 'The Father', which relied for their effect upon a laconic style, colloquial diction and phlegmatic response to omnipresent sudden death in the trenches:

Ginger raised his head
And cursed, and took the bet, and dropt back dead;

... but as he spoke
A rifle cracked....
And now God knows when I shall hear the rest;

and: They got the range
And cut him short -

where Gibson is evincing, quite effectively, by means of simple language, supplemented by direct speech in parts, an ironic attitude which is remarkable in that it anticipates Sassoon and others in the 'bitter-satire' mode by two years.

Neither was Marsh apparently impressed by Gibson's 1917 volume Livelihood, with its well-observed 'vivid and arresting little dramas'¹ of ordinary working life, such as the closely-detailed evocation of the claustrophobic mine-gallery in 'The Shaft'. Gibson's contribution to G.P.I had been warmly praised by both The Nation² (which described 'The Hare' as illustrative of 'the perfection of colloquial poetry') and by Abercrombie in The

1. T.L.S. review of Livelihood, 25.2.17.
2. 8.3.13.

Manchester Guardian¹, who congratulated Gibson for most fully illustrating the aims of the Georgian Movement in verse which dealt 'frankly and uncompromisingly with familiar workaday life, using a language which is charged indeed with the race of common speech, but severely indifferent to the supposed requirements of customary ornament effecting the transformation of reality into art by the extraordinary certainty of its whole formality - formality comparable to that of classical music'. Bearing in mind therefore, that Gibson was one of the original exponents of simple, colloquial diction and laconic understatement who is capable of Housmanesque fatalism and Sassoon-like ironic tone, it is perhaps a measure of Marsh's slackening of control over the selection of material for the third volume, as well - paradoxically - as an indication of the entrenchment and stultification of the original principles which had guided his choice of verse for G.P.I in 1912, that he presented such an insipid sample of Gibson's current work for inclusion in G.P.III.

In his approach to the second main group of poets - those young men who were actually participating in the War: Graves, Sassoon, Nichols and Rosenberg², Marsh showed rather more sympathy than he had bothered to lavish on his 'old stager' Gibson. He was concerned to know how they would respond when subjected to the devastating impact of war on the Western Front and, for their part, these young aspirants made a point of corresponding regularly with this distinguished patron of the arts (and artists) who had befriended them in the pre-War years.

²2. More detailed reference to these poets is made elsewhere in this Chapter and see Section 3 (a) for an appraisal of Rosenberg's poetry.

¹1. 8.1.13, quoted in Hassall, Edward Marsh, Appendix I.

Through their letters, the young combatant-poets pinpointed the basic problem for the poet in the trench-environment: how could he retain his sensitivity to beauty in a world suddenly stripped of all loveliness? Frequently this could be achieved by assuming a kind of spiritual objectivity to all the violence going on¹, but this might also entail spiritual isolation from fellow officers who adopted aggressively contemptuous attitudes towards artists in general. Graves and Sassoon were fortunate to be quite often thrown into each other's company throughout the War and could offer mutual encouragement to compensate for their feeling of intellectual isolation from their fellows.

In the case of both Sassoon and Graves, their awareness of the new landscape was transmitted through the descriptions of the minutiae of trench life which they relayed in letter and personal records of their daily experience. Neither of them allowed their emotions to flow spontaneously into poetic form on whatever piece of paper came to hand: first, they stored both physical detail and emotional reaction in their memories and note-books, before embarking on the strenuous labour of tentative suggestion, constant correction, insertion and emendation inherent in the composition of poetry and rendered more arduous because of their unprecedented physical circumstances.

Sassoon somewhat self-consciously wrote² to Marsh that on his next period of trench duty, he meant to deliberately 'suck in all I can when I get up there. I am always trying to impress

1. Such as Graves described in a letter to E.M., 22.5.15, Marsh Letter Collection (M.L.C.).

2. Letter to E.M. (probably dated) 16.3.16, M.L.C.

'things on my memory, and make as many notes as I can'¹, and he concludes his particularized description of the terrain near Albert with the significant comment that War and the paraphernalia of War have chased away the 'rural spirit' of the place: even the sky has been disfigured and its 'bird-held supremacy of whiteness and clarity' usurped.

If Graves and Sassoon felt spiritually alienated from their brother officers, Isaac Rosenberg found his fellow soldiers even less sympathetic company (not least because of his Jewish origin) and suffered continuous hardship, further burdened by frequent field punishments meted out for his untidiness and forgetfulness, and because he was a private he could enjoy none of the mitigating privileges due to commissioned officers. Rosenberg adopted a flip-pant, self-deprecating style of understatement which characterized his letters to Marsh and he also retained a severe critical attitude to his own work.² Yet Marsh chose to represent Rosenberg in G.P.III by a piece which was not entirely indicative of the poetry he was writing during the War, or of the Youth and Moses volumes. 'Ah Koelue', one of the more lyrical speeches from his play Moses, was most probably chosen by Marsh simply because it appealed to him with its graceful, central conceit of 'two amorous sculptures' endlessly 'passioned'.

Although the War-Poet contributors attract most attention from the casual student of the G.P. Anthologies now, for these poets endeavour to show that serious poetry could be sustained

-
1. Cf. the earnestness of Rosenberg's letter to Binyon, Collected Works of I.R., p.373, 'I will not leave a corner of my consciousness covered up, but saturate myself with the strange and extraordinary new conditions of this life, and it will all refine itself into poetry later on'.
 2. E.g. the draft of 'Dead Man's Dump' was accompanied by the comment: 'I don't think what I've written is very good...[but] when I work on it I'll make it fine', letter postmarked 8.5.17, to E.M., M.L.C.

even in 'the most forbidding conditions'¹, it was the third group of young poets - the Freeman-Turner-Squire school - whose contribution to G.P.III was more momentous for the immediate future of Georgian Poetry, for it was their brand of verse which was to dominate the final two volumes of the Anthology and their influence caused G.P.III to be designated the 'watershed volume', differentiating between 'early' and 'late' Georgianism (or Georgians and neo-Georgians).

Both Marsh and Harold Monro hesitated over the proposition of compiling the third volume of G.P. in 1917. Marsh, aware that 'an acrid and Dantesque wilderness of cratered mud lay between the present age and the crusade of 1914'², doubted whether the calibre of recent poetry merited another anthology and Monro - from the more practical standpoint of the publisher - affirmed that materials and advertising costs would be expensive and paper, especially, was scarce: furthermore, he questioned whether the public was ready for another G.P. volume (although he was amazed to discover that orders for G.P.III were coming into the Poetry Bookshop three months before proposed publication). Nonetheless, Marsh, impelled by the thought that 'Georgian Poetry was entering its second phase'³ with a new and vital element [the contributions he was receiving from Graves, Sassoon, Turner and Squire] which made it once more contemporary'⁴, determined to go ahead with the third volume.

1. Ross, Op.cit., p.177.

2. Hassall, E.M., p.420,

3. Though this assumption is questioned by J.Liddiard, I.R.:The Half Used Life, p.242 when she asserts that 'Marsh had lost his sense of direction with this volume...the freshness of the early Georgians had decidedly faded'.

4. Hassall, Op.cit., p.420.

The principles behind the compilation of G.P.III were much more catholic than in the previous two volumes. Marsh even allowed himself to be influenced in his choice of poets according to the judgement of their supporters - although he obdurately refused all importuning from de la Mare, Freeman and Turner to include Edward Thomas¹ in G.P.III.² The representativeness of the volume was disputed by Marsh's friend and fellow anthologist Maurice Baring, who - assimilating the characteristically botanical Georgian idiom - warned that:

...if you try to have a specimen of every single remarkable flower you will find that your bouquet is impossibly big, and in that case it is much better not to pick the flowers at all but to leave them in the garden and the conservatories.³

The critics received G.P.III without the furore which had attended the publication of G.P. II and accepted it as adequate and uncontroversial: 'it contained little to provoke discussion and less to provoke argument'.⁴ The T.L.S. reviewer⁵ appeared to be quite surprised at the conservative nature of the volume and indulgently coined a suitable bucolic metaphor to remark that what : '[the Georgian Poets] are found for the most part to be doing is pouring their new wine into old bottles; or - to use a more homely and perhaps more "Georgian" simile - thrusting their proud young feet into old boots and finding them good to march or to dance in'. The reviewer was comforted to note that 'our young singers':

...most of them probably torn from the old decent ways and thrown willy-nilly into a welter of dirt and death, sing out their hearts to us; and sing them by the old

-
1. Although Edward Thomas is normally associated with the Georgian Poets in literary surveys of this period.
 2. E.M. never appreciated E.T.'s quality as a poet and after E.T.'s death, Marsh could justify his exclusion from G.P. because it was a strict rule 'never to represent any writer for the 1st time post-humously'.
3. Letter to E.M., August 1917, M.L.C.
 4. Ross, Op.cit., p.180. 5. T.L.S., 27.12.17.

means of stanza and metre and rhyme ... the old means abide. Where, in the restlessness that heralded the war strange experiments were tried and the old means were contemptuously or angrily thrown away, the new conditions, enforcing sincerity, have maintained the old ways.

The T.L.S. reviewer continued by categorizing the poets into those who belonged to the 'old world' (of before the War) - Masefield, represented by five sonnets in Shakespearean form; Drinkwater, complimented on his 'charming, graceful, accomplished impression of old country scenes' (of which 'Reciprocity' is an excellent example); de la Mare, characterized by four poems of 'intimate remoteness'¹; W.H.Davies, commended for his four poems² in 'absolutely Daviesian' vein; Harold Monro and James Stephens - and the 'newer names', writing out of their War experience.

Robert Nichols's 'Assault' received scant attention as a poem although the reviewer acknowledged its value as the report of a 'war correspondent'. Nichols's 'Fulfilment', couched in far more conventional terms - on the other hand - was regarded as an exemplary treatment of 'war in poetry' while, at the same time, being consistent with the 'Georgian' principles governing 'vocabulary, rhythm, actuality'. Having quoted this poem in full, the reviewer applauded in particular its 'so sincere, so direct, so Georgian' qualities and recommended it to the reader in preference to the 'many true, beautiful, but less intensely-realized things from A Faun's Holiday'.

Out of Siegfried Sassoon's contributions, the reviewer deftly concerned himself only with 'The Kiss' and 'To Victory' whose 'weariness, regret, home-sickness, high pride' suggested both

-
1. 'The Scribe' of which the T.L.S. reviewer noted that there 'was no other poet living who could be at once so playful, so minute and so profound'; 'The Remonstrance', 'The Ghost' and 'The Fool Rings his Bells'.
 2. 'The White Cascade', 'Easter', 'Rapture', 'Cocks and Larks' (of the Mendip Hills, not the Western Front).

'flying banners and long sighs'. He studiously overlooked the realistic and 'dashing, or more elaborately "creepy" poems' and discreetly omitted any mention of '"They"', with its scandalous reference to an 'unmentionable' casualty of the War: syphilitic Bert. Of the other 'War Poets' in the volume, Rosenberg was ignored and Graves congratulated for his gallantry and 'hearty chants of War'. The reviewer reserved a special word of praise for Gibson's 'Lament', the 'natural diction' of which seemed to crystallize 'what we've all been trying to say'.

The review was brought to a close with a fleeting survey of W.J. Turner (who tended to respond over-readily 'to the thrill of strange names'); Gordon Bottomley (that 'skilful craftsman in verse'); Herbert Asquith (worthily 'fine thought on "The Volunteer"'); Maurice Baring (with a 'thoughtful memorial poem to Lord Lucas') and rather more discussion of John Freeman and J.C. Squire, whose work stood a 'little taller than the general' and who contrived to combine Georgian freedom with individual aesthetic restraint.

The overall impression which the T.L.S. reviewer gleaned from G.P. LII was of the comforting conservatism of the majority of its contributors in such 'woeful times'; he was relieved that for all their unprecedented surroundings and conditions, the young poets clung to their 'heritage', did not 'turn their backs on tradition' and ensured the continuation of 'poetry and all that poetry stands for' (at least in the parlance of this reviewer) by their adherence to traditional forms.

To T.S. Eliot, ('Apteryx')¹ the fact that G.P. III followed

1. Pseudonym adopted by Eliot in The Egoist, March 1918.

in the same tradition as that set by the first two G.P. volumes was cause for censure not celebration. He deplored the fact that G.P.III was characterized by the same fatal 'pleasantness' - the 'insidiously didactic' or the 'decorative, playful or solemn' - which prompted the Georgians to 'caress everything they touch'. This comment may indeed apply to the Turner-Squire-Freeman contingent, but it is hardly justified for Sassoon's "They" ('... George lost both his legs; and Bill's stone blind; / Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die') or Graves's 'It's a Queer Time' or Nichols's 'Assault': '...Bullets a stream..../Men, crumpled, going down....'

The War Poetry of Sassoon, Graves and Nichols in G.P.III is in the tradition of the 'realistic' pieces from G.P.I and II: 'Channel Passage', 'King Lear's Wife', 'End of the World', but replaces their rather contrived literary realism with the deliberately anti-sentimental and horrific - a surfeit of which can render the poet liable to the charge of gratuitous violence and manipulation of the facts, even though in the case of these three poets their brutality sprang from experience of the genuine horror of modern war. The debt of the War Poets to Rupert Brooke was acknowledged by Graves in an interesting admission to Marsh:¹

How wrong about Rupert: we all look up to him as to our elder brother and have immense admiration for his work from any standpoint, especially his technique on which we all build. I know it is fashionable in some quarters to pretend to dislike him; but nobody does really, least of all R.N. [ichols,] S.S. [assoon,] or R.G. [raves.]

But if it is accepted that late-1917 is the age of Counter-

Attack: ...Lines of gray, muttering faces, masked with fear,
They leave their trenches, going over the top,
While time ticks blank and busy on their wrists,
And hope, with furtive eyes and grappling fists,
Flounders in the mud. O Jesu, make it stop!

1. Letter to E.M., 18.3.18, M.I.C.

such poems as Freeman's 'Happy is England Now', Squire's 'Lily of Malud' and Turner's 'Romance' appear pitifully unrealistic, although they did represent a certain vein in current poetry which sought to ignore or escape from the brutality of an over-protracted war. Harold Monro's dictum that: 'Our objective and triumph [in] G.P.III should no doubt be to pursue a clear and level course through all tribulations and show as clearly as possible that English poetry does not allow itself to be distracted by such a passing event as war'¹, seems to have been accepted, in the main, by Marsh - judging by the general timbre of the third volume. Freeman's 'Happy is England Now', for instance, exchanged the real War for a 'meditative rusticity' which instated 'the western front among the lanes and fields of England'²:

...Happy is England in the brave that die
For wrongs not hers and wrongs so sternly hers;
Happy in those that give, give, and endure
The pain that never the new years may cure;
Happy in all her dark woods, green fields, towns,
Her hills and rivers and her chafing seas.

'The Lily of Malud' was even more defiant in its rejection of the War, finding beauty in the exotic moon-drenched landscape of the jungle. The 'secret mud' in which the lily grows is in no way similar to the glutinous morass of Flanders:

The lily of Malud is born in secret mud.
It is breathed like a word in a little dark ravine
Where no bird was ever heard and no beast was ever seen,
And the leaves are never stirred by the panther's velvet sheen.

When J.C. Squire looked at the War, it was with a furtive and oblique glance in the poem 'To a Bull-Dog' apparently prompted by

1. Letter to E.M., June 1917, M.L.C.

2. David Daiches, Poetry and the Modern World (Chicago 1940)p.58.

the death in action of W.H.S., the 'Willy' who 'won't be coming here any more'. The poem lurches from one bathetic stanza to the next and there is far more interest evinced in the annotation of the life-history of the bull-dog than in the shadowy, uniformed figure who waved goodbye at the station and 'went for good'.

Squire has taken refuge here in the Georgian predilection for animals¹ (preferably domestic) which he finds a far more amenable subject than the War experience which he is unable - not surprisingly - to appreciate vicariously.² The work of both Squire and Turner³ faintly recalled the Eastern exoticism of Flecker or the legerdemain of de la Mare but lacks the originality and vitality of their antecedents: ' [the verse of Squire and Turner] seems too cultivated, too obviously unreal, their beauty too lush, too patently contrived'.⁴

By contrast with Squire's contribution to G.P.III, the section of Sassoon's poems which follow is characterized by a genuine attempt to present the actuality of Front Line experience although the first four poems⁵ were written early in the War and are infused with the 'zeitgeist' then prevailing, and thus the shock of juxtaposing such disparate poets as Squire and Sassoon is minimized.

There is no such anaesthetizing arrangement available in the actual

1. Comparable with Squire's poem are a number of interesting anomalies, characterized by bathos and a sentimental attitude towards babies and animals, roughly contemporaneous with G.P.III's publication: e.g. H. Asquith, 'To a Baby Found Paddling Near the Lines', M.I.A., p.65; Mackenzie Bell, 'Goodbye Old Man', Poetry of the I.W.W., p.45; Geoffrey Dearmer, 'The Turkish Trench Dog', Paths of Glory, p.44 and Rags: The Diary of a Doggie at the Front, T.L.S., 5.10.16.

2. The T.L.S. reviewer, 27.12.17, delighted in this 'Work of true emotion' which he thought did ample justice to the dead soldier commemorated in the title.

3. E.g. 'Romance', 'Ecstasy'.

4. Ross, Op.cit., p.186.

5. 'A Letter Home', 'The Kiss', 'The Dragon and the Undying', 'To Victory'.

selection of Sassoon's poems and the reader is abruptly jerked from the laughter of 'the blither wind on the hills'¹ to the astringency of '"For George lost both his legs; and Bill's stone blind"'². The contrast between the familiar pastoral landscape of pre-War England (and pre-War Georgian Poetry) and the malevolent, (un)natural world at the Front is even more immediate in the subsequent poems - '"In the Pink"' and 'Haunted': in the latter, Nature - far from being a kindly presence - has been transformed into a grotesque mockery of its former benevolence.

A similar distinction between pre-War poetry and that written out of the War experience (however limited) pertains to the section representing Robert Nichols where the extracts from A Faun's Holiday³ are so placed as to reassure the reader who may have been somewhat unnerved by the explicit detail, epigrammatic structure, hysterical tone and experimental (even if not very successful) form of 'Assault'. Nichols, a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery, and one of the young generation of Georgian Poets - designated by the Sunday Times as 'midway in spirit between Charles Sorley and Rupert Brooke' and welcomed by the T.L.S. as 'one of the most authentic of younger poets in wealth of fancy and ardour of emotions'⁴ - had achieved an im-

1. 'To Victory', G.P.III, p.44.

2. '"They"', Ibid., p.45.

3. E.g. the extract in the mellow tradition of Georgian nature poetry from 'The Philosopher's Oration': 'Though all these be, yet grows not old /Delight of sunned and windy wold, /Of soaking downs aglare, asteam, /Of still tarns where the yellow gleam /Of a far sunrise slowly breaks, /Or sunset strews with golden flakes /The deeps which soon the stars will throng'.

4. T.L.S., 21.6.17.

mediate success earlier in 1917 with Ardours and Endurances, which was regarded as having a 'special authority' by one reviewer¹ since it had been largely composed 'under fire' (a necessarily false assumption for Nichols was only in the Front Line for a few weeks in late 1915). The overall achievement of the Endurances section of this volume is extremely variable, tracing as it does, the soldier's 'baptism of fire' from 'The Summons', through 'Battle' to 'The Aftermath'. Certain of the poems are distinguished by a couple of interesting lines or an apt turn of phrase: 'Night Bombardment', for instance, evokes quite successfully the abnegation of Nature - 'The last gleam is gone. /It is not day or night' - and the sense of horror that the wind has been transformed into the 'oozed breath of the slain' blowing onto the poet's 'clammy face'. 'Comrades: An Episode', exploiting actual dialogue and attempting to reconstruct the reality of the Front Line experience by references to Verey lights and Maxims, offers a clumsy but evidently sincere contribution to the 'camaraderie-genre'² of First World War poetry, while in 'Eve of Assault: Infantry Going Down to Trenches', Nichols emulates The Everlasting Mercy in his introduction of quite restrained soldier slang:

'Back us up, mates!' 'Gawd, we will!...'
'Ip 'urrah!' 'Give Fritz the chuck'.
'Good ol' bloody Yorks!' 'Good-luck!'
'Cheer!'

-
1. T.L.S., 12.7.17. The reviewer went on to quote the axiom: 'Truth sits upon the lips of dying men', using R. Brooke and J. Grenfell to verify the appropriateness of this dictum to soldier-poets.
 2. R.N. also touches upon other characteristic themes: e.g. regional/nostalgic: 'At the Wars' and 'Out of Trenches: the Barn, Twilight'; the men/cattle equation: 'Noon'; the soldier/Christ identification: 'Battery Moving up to a New Post'; and homoeroticism: 'The Burial in Flanders'.

So it can be said Nichols owes his allegiance firmly to the Georgian School of poets, most particularly in his use of the countryside as an essential touch-stone against which to measure all experience. Similarly, Nichols adopts other Georgian characteristics in his use of colloquial language; in his efforts to confront his subject directly in order to register the immediacy of his experience, and in his attempt to liberate the actual verse-form from the constriction of regular stanzas and regimented rhyming schemes. No-where are these tendencies more apparent than in 'The Assault' - variously described as an 'essay in impressionistic free verse in the Vachel Lindsay manner'¹ and as a 'vers librist rendering of the stream of consciousness'² - which apparently appealed to Marsh as definitely 'in the new manner' but less nakedly embarrassing to the Georgian Poetry readership³ than some of Sassoon's poems emphasizing the brutalizing effect of combat.

'The Assault' makes use of a genre adopted by a number of Front Line poets: the documentary style which incorporated the realistic rendering of dialogue and the sensations of sound and excitement in a random verse form. Although unquestionably flawed aesthetically, the poem does have a value in graphically recording the transmutation undergone by the Georgian idyll:

Black earth, fountains of earth rise, leaping,
Spouting like shocks of meeting waves...
Shells like shrieking birds rush over ...
A stream of lead raves
Over us from the left ... a hurricane of shell.

-
1. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.63.
 2. Ross, Op.cit., p.182.
 3. Although Douglas Goldring makes this trenchant comment in Reputations (1920), on the much-acclaimed 'The Assault': 'it was characteristic of our war-time criticism that this masterpiece of drivel, instead of exciting derision, was hailed as a work of genius and read with avidity'.

The effect of horror is enhanced by the particularly sinister use to which the previously innocuous elements of Georgian Poetry: earth, birds, streams, are put in this new landscape. There is no continuity with the rural past: the image of home - 'house on a sunny hill' - has vanished as irrecoverably as a 'flickered page'. Just as the force of the bombardment threatens to obliterate nature altogether, so even the natural progress of time is distorted and made subservient to the menacing ticking of the 'pale wrist-watch' which abruptly signals the moment of impact as the men advance over the parapet.

Whatever the deficiencies of 'The Assault' - and they are legion - particularly towards the end where the verse reaches the pitch of hysteria, it is noteworthy in its context as a sincere attempt to put into practice the tenets according to which Georgian Poetry was conceived: to register as accurately as possible in verse an intensely-realised experience. Nichols's next poem in G.P.III, 'Fulfilment', does not convince the reader to the same extent. The feeling seems to flow unchecked beyond the limits of the form and although the theme - of camaraderie between poet and fellow soldiers - is an intrinsically, intensely poignant one, it is buried beneath the fervent apostrophes to 'fading eyes' and the 'loved, living, dying, heroic soldier'.

In general, the neo-Georgians who had made their mark already in G.P.III, were but pallid shadows of the best of the original Georgians and under their influence, Georgian Poetry became trivial, unreal and irrelevant to the violence of the late War and post-War period, by which time it had become almost irretrievably discredited. The decline of the Anthology can be attributed, in part, to the less rigid principles Marsh applied

in compiling the third volume as a 'potpourri', but more probably the responsibility for its eventual demise lay in the fact that from G.P.III onwards, the Neo-Georgians drifted out of touch with their age: they no longer reflected the mainstream of contemporary verse but languished in an isolated backwater.

The extreme conditions imposed upon poetry by the War militated against any fusing of the two principal Georgian qualities: 'agreeableness' and 'truth', so the Neo-Georgians, choosing the less exacting path flagrantly substituted 'agreeableness' for 'truth' and compromised the integrity of the Anthology as a whole. Whereas the term 'Georgian' had 'implied vigour, revolt, and youth' in 1912 and 1915, after 1917, 'it was to imply retrenchment, escape and enervation'¹ and was assumed to be the preserve of merely 'Week-end Poets'. The notorious Monro poem, 'Weekend' (which appeared in G.P.III) was seized upon by all detractors (oblivious of distinctions between the original and Neo-Georgians) as representative of the Georgian Movement, in toto.

To all intents and purposes, Georgian Poetry could be henceforth dismissively equated with effete, simplistic, fundamentally retrospective verse on the country-side, couched in mildly archaic diction and presented in disappointingly conservative form. It has taken some forty years to rehabilitate - in the mainstream of modern verse - those Georgian Poets who manifestly strove (especially in the first two volumes of the Anthology) to revitalize contemporary verse and, thereby, rekindle a positive and vigorous appreciation of poetry in the English reading public.

1. Ross, Op.cit., p.187.

2 (f) CRITICAL RECEPTION OF POETRY IN THE GEORGIAN IDIOM

Although later critics of the Georgian Poetry Anthologies, in particular, and poetry in the Georgian idiom, in general, may have seen practitioners of such poetry as 'poets of retrenchment'¹, too much tied to the English pastoral tradition² and too ready to conform to accepted convention in the matter of diction and form, this was not the view taken by the contemporary critics 'of retrenchment', who saw this movement among young poets as dangerously progressive and a threat to the Poetry Establishment. William Watson voiced their anxiety when he firmly denounced³ the tendency among Georgian poets to assume a deliberately cacophonous tone in their verse and to consciously defy the 'noble tradition' in which he himself had been nurtured:

Certain of our Georgian singers, and even one or two poets whose roots go down into late-Victorian antiquity, are so haunted by a dread of smoothness that they have very nearly erected cacophony into a cult. They pursue it as an end in itself laudable.⁴

Another reaction typical of the contemporary reactionary critic came from Arthur Waugh who repudiated⁵ the Georgians for producing poetry 'of experiments and moods' rather than 'of ideas', and for substituting 'individual whims and fancies' for 'firm

-
1. David Daiches, Poetry of the Modern World, p.40. Daiches's comment is representative of this trend in criticism of the Georgian Poets which has already been discussed in Chapter I, and 2(e).
 2. Cf. W.H. Auden's remark, Introduction to A Choice of de la Mare's Verse (1963): 'As the work of some of the Georgian Poets can witness, the danger of the English landscape as a poetic ingredient is that its gentleness can tempt those who love it into writing genteely' (although he did not ascribe this fault to de la Mare).
 3. Pencraft: A Plea for the Older Ways (1916), p.50.
 4. As a later T.L.S. review of D.H. Lawrence's New Poems, 6.2.19, pointed out, just as the older sentimentalists were hampered by an excess of 'pleasant feelings', so D.H.L. overindulged his 'unpleasant feelings'.
 5. 'The New Poetry', Quarterly Review, October 1916.

'philosophical ideals'. Waugh could not differentiate between the Georgian Poetry Anthologies and Ezra Pound's Catholic Anthology (which included work by Pound himself, W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot), categorizing them both as exemplars of the 'new rebellion' and singling out the Georgians' predilection for examining 'every aspect of life' in the 'language we use every day', for special censure on the grounds that life as experienced is not 'philosophic', 'things as they are', not beautiful and ordinary language not 'poetic'.

Nevertheless, after two further years of war and continuous exposure to old-style patriotic poetry which became increasingly anachronistic with each day's publication of the War Casualties List, Waugh achieved a remarkable 'volte face' in his article on 'War Poetry',¹ which actually condemned such patriotic verse for ' [philosophizing] the situation but...not [embodying] it realistically' and praising the poetry of the 'younger generation' which had found the pre-War tendency towards 'crude realism',² the only acceptable path to follow in coming to terms with 'the vital moments of life and death'. Waugh not only applauded the present determination of poets in the Georgian idiom to 'speak the truth about the ugly things of life and to strip suffering bare of all concealing veils of sentimentality and pretence', but he also anticipated that poetry of the future would never again dare to 'sentimentalize an experience which can prompt so sincere and so overwhelming an indignation' and - to a large extent - Waugh

1. Quarterly Review, October 1918.

2. Still an over-estimation of the quality of 'newness' in Georgian Poetry.

suggests that the 'particularization of experience' in the Com-
tant Poets and the movement towards a more honest evaluation of
the subject and of their own responses to the War experience, can
be attributed to the influence of the first Georgian Poetry Anthol-
ogies and the interest in poetry (writing and reading) which these
volumes substantially fostered.

Other critics and reviewers - notably those associated with
the 'voice of Imagism': The Egoist - were more chary with their
approval of poetry in the Georgian idiom through the War years.
Initially, in 1914, The Egoist was disparaging of the efforts of
the Georgian Poets who were considered to be working in the
tradition of 'effete Victorianism', but individual cases which
merited distinction from the usually pejorative term 'Georgian'
were selected for approbation: Richard Aldington, for instance,
made a point of championing the cause of Robert Frost (who was
closely associated with the nucleus of Georgian Poets) and com-
mended¹ North of Boston for avoiding the pitfalls of most con-
temporary verse which was 'cosmic, sentimental, patriotic and
imitative'.² Although, on first impression, Frost's poems seemed
dull, with a 'monotonous cadence', Aldington detected that Frost
was trying to liberate American poetry from the restrictions of
excessive formality of diction, content and form through simpli-
city of speech and direct treatment of particular incidents, moods
or episodes, an objective of which he approved as an Imagist though,
characteristically, The Egoist was inclined to look to Europe or

1. 'Reviews', 1.7.14.

2. Cf. a similar review of the work of a poet whose individuality
distinguished him from the central Georgian School: D.H. Law-
rence's Amores reviewed by J.G. Fletcher, December 1916, which
commended Lawrence's Latin rather than English temperament, his
naked honesty and his struggles as a poet to 'express his inner
vision in terms of tortured revolt'. Several of D.H.L.'s poems
were published in Ego at different times to underline how un-
essentially uncommitted D.H.L. was to any one major group.

America for kindred spirits to overthrow the bastions of literary conservatism, and to ignore the efforts of the Georgians whose principal tenets were in essence very similar to those of the Imagist Group.

As might be expected, the Imagist reviewers in The Egoist deplored the wave of patriotism which erupted through the summer of 1914, designating it as symptomatic of 'mob psychology'¹ and condemning it as positively damaging to the artist who relied so heavily on the individual's inviolable freedom which was immediately in jeopardy with the outbreak of War. The Imagists, proud of their associations with Continental and American poets and intellectuals, shared little of the intense nationalism and awareness of corporate identity which impelled thousands of young men to flock² to the recruiting stations and neither were they aware of that distinctive 'holy' quality in the English earth which seemed to sanctify the Georgian Poet's enlistment and infuse his subsequent verses on his Home Land.³ Thus, the characteristic tone of The Egoist during the febrile months after the Declaration of War on Germany was cool, distanced, unaffected by popular hysteria except in so far as the mass patriotic impulse might swamp the artist struggling to concentrate on the problems of creativity. To the Imagists, the individual and his art were 'all important' and such 'composite games'⁴ as War, which depended

1. 'Notes on the Present Situation', Ego., 1.9.14.

2. A poignantly appropriate expression in the circumstance.

3. See Section 2 (b).

4. Editorial Article, 'Quid Pro Quo', Ego., 15.8.14 - the first Egoist issued after war had been declared - and Huntly Carter in his article 'The War and Some Scientists', 1.10.14, elaborates on the idea of War as a game in his comment: 'War is no longer a fight for survival, but a form of political sport'.

on the 'esprit-de-corps' inculcated especially by the public-school ethos¹ and which encouraged the individual to surrender his identity to the mass, was strongly deprecated and the verse which celebrated such an attitude was correspondingly censured.

J.G.Fletcher's article, 'War Poetry',² for example, was highly critical of the recently-published and prematurely-titled Poems of the Great War³ with its 'peerless assembly' of offerings from Watson ('Duty') who demanded that all must give physically and spiritually 'For the weal of [their] country'; Bridges ('Wake Up England!') who, uncharacteristically, departed from his usual reticence and refined, cerebral verse in a patriotic effusion which urged:

Thou careless, awake!
Thou peacemaker, fight!
Stand, England, for Honour,
And God guard the Right!

and Newbolt who reiterated the sentiment 'that God defend the Right' (England, without question). Fletcher had no sympathy with either these conventional patriotic appeals or with various 'cannonading sentiments', such as Binyon's assertion - echoed by Rupert Brooke and others - that England 'In the hour of peril [has been] purified', and R.E.Vernède's excited anticipation in 'England to the Sea' that 'sea-ducks, sea-wolves, sea-rovers, and sea-men' would go 'forth to share [the sea's] fierce embraces' in the inevitable naval engagements of the War. The best prospect for this abysmal anthology, in Fletcher's view, was for copies of it to be sent to the Kaiser for free distribution to the German

1. See Chapter V for further discussion of the public-school ethos.

2. Ego., 2.11.14.

3. Rushed into publication by Chatto and Windus.

Army, which would ensure the immediate end of hostilities since the German soldiers would collapse with laughter over the banalities of this purportedly 'patriotic verse', proving that 'poetry, or at any rate verse, is of some use after all' if it can end wars.

A little later, Fletcher applied similarly astringent criticism¹ to the 'fifty soul-stirring ditties' which comprised Songs and Sonnets for England in War Time, dismissing Hardy's 'Men Who March Away' as 'inane driveltry!' and waspishly denouncing Watson as the poet whose 'clarion call rouses the sleeping soul of Empire'. A similar denunciation is extended to De La Mare's contribution in Lord God Of Battles:² 'Happy England', which is labelled 'the most deadly war poem' Fletcher had yet come across, with its catalogue of clichés - 'the sleep of death', 'dread array', '[England's] bright cause' - which gave Fletcher the impression that de la Mare 'must have dipped his pen in a watering-pot and taken a cold shower-bath before sitting down to his desk'. Elsewhere in his review, Fletcher affects to be shocked by the passion of other verse: the dithyrambic 'Farm-hand' which promises that even the humble may win honour in this War:

From hearts like this where the Divine
Inviolable fire had dumbly burned,
Their honour soared....

and the awe-inspiring 'Smite England, to the tramp of marching men...' where the poet eagerly seeks out 'the Field' where he must 'play the man on' and prepares to embrace gladly the dastardly enemy's 'steel or can-non', since 'immortal beauty' is to be won through 'death with duty' in his country's honour.

1. Ego., 16.11.14.

2. The title is derived from Horatio Bottomley's popular rhetoric.

A review of 'War Poems and Others' from Aldington in the last number of The Egoist in 1914¹ questioned the validity of the whole process of writing about ^{the} War while it was still in progress, recalling Wordsworth's dictum about 'Emotion recollected in tranquillity' and the journal's distrust of War Poetry in general, as manifested by the out-pourings of the first four months of war, was humorously portrayed in 'Herbert Blenheim's'² 'Song: In War-time'³, the rhythm, facile rhyming scheme and refrain of which seem strongly reminiscent of Kipling's least successful verse:

At the sound of the drum,
Out of their dens they come, they come,
The little poets we hoped were dumb,
The little poets we thought were dead,
The poets who certainly haven't been read
Since heaven knows when, they come, they come,
At the sound of the drum, of the drum, drum, drum.

At the sound of the drum,
O Tommy, they've all begun to strum,
With a horrible tumty, tumty, tum;
And it's all about you, and the songs they sing
Are worse than the bullets' villainous 'ping',
And they give you a pain in your tumty-tum,
At the sound of the drum, of the drum, drum, drum.

At the sound of the drum,
O Tommy, you know, if we haven't all come
To stand by your side in the hideous hum
It isn't the horrors of war we fear,
The horrors of war we've got 'em here,
When the poets come on like waves, and come
At the sound of the drum, of the drum, drum, drum.⁴

During the first half of 1915, The Egoist was primarily occupied with an assessment of Imagism and its origins, although in June⁵ Aldington's review, 'New Poetry', included a slighting

-
1. 15.12.14.
 2. Pseudonym adopted, most probably, by Aldington, using the initials of Horatio Bottomley and Harold Begbie - an archetypal practitioner of the 'rousing-patriotism' genre particularly characteristic of the early months of war, e.g. Fighting Lines, with some Re-inforcements, reviewed T.L.S., 8.10.14.
 3. Egoist, 1.12.14.
 4. Quoted by R.H. Ross, Op.cit., pp.164-5 as the 'earliest satiric poem to come out of the war...making exquisite use of the very metre, versification and diction of the correspondence-column poets'.
 5. 1.6.15.

reference to Edward Shanks's Songs - 'not exceptional at all: sing-song sort of stuff and rather dull' - distinguished only by 'Drilling in Russell Square', which juxtaposes the situation of the new recruit drilling in autumnal London, thinking about the inevitable posting to France, and the same man's recollections of pre-War France and Germany: 'a singing place'. Frances Cornford's Spring Morning receives very short shrift for its 'pathetic devotion to rhyme and kind of sentimental mock simplicity' and the emphasis seems to lie, for the most part, in The Egoist at this time on either developments in Imagist Poetry or reviews of contemporary French and German poetry¹ and developments in America², with an ever-increasing number of memorial articles on artists affiliated with the Imagist Group who have been killed in action.³

Margaret Storm Jameson managed a short tirade⁴ entitled 'England's Nest of Singing Birds', directed against the 'flabby-minded' poetasters of the first two decades of the century, 'jobbing versemakers', among whom the Georgian Poets might be numbered, who have degraded all aspects of literature which must now rely upon the young Imagist poets for its salvation. The attack on the continuing effusions of the patriotic poets was renewed early in 1916⁵ criticising those who 'still hold that war is a good thing for the arts' and who 'may still be found

-
1. A.W.G.Randall's 'Notes on Modern German Poetry', for example, and the regular 'Passing Paris' Column.
 2. Aldington, 'Young America', Ego., 1.11.15, for instance.
 3. E.g. John Cournos, 'Gaudier-Brzeska's Art', Ego., 1.9.15.
 4. Ibid., 1.11.15.
 5. A.W.G.Randall, 'Poetry and Patriotism', Ibid., 1.2.16.

'writing to The Times letters full of panegyric nonsense on young heroes such as Rupert Brooke whose death was a far greater poem than his life'. The argument then focuses upon the Georgian Poets' response to war, relating it to the national tradition of glorifying war which resulted in about 50,000 poems being written per day during the early months of war, culminating in about six million poems being produced in the first year - according to The Egoist's statistics. The reviewer, Alec Randall, hastened to add that comparatively few poems were actually published however. The bulk of this early war verse - 'patriotic jingle, melodramatic rant' - was only of ephemeral interest and a new strain of poetry of the 'grim realities' of trench warfare, emanating from combatant-poets was steadily filtering through, though the reviewer doubted whether such a movement of restoring actual experience to poetry was yet underway in England.

The most direct discussion of the Georgian Poets as a group was undertaken by T.S. Eliot, instated as Assistant Editor since Aldington's departure to France in June 1917, in his two-part assessment of the current poetry scene: 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry'.¹ In his evaluation of the Georgian Poets' achievement in moving away from the 'rhetorical, the abstract, the moralizing' in order to recover the 'accents of direct speech' Eliot criticized their preoccupation with the trivial and their insistence upon the English countryside in their verse - indicative of a positively patriotic, Wordsworthian strain - as well as their tendency to use the diminutive 'little' wherever possible, 'not merely as a piece of information, but with a caress, a conscious delight'. While Eliot approved - on the whole - of the Georgian

1. Ego., September 1917.

Poets' love of nature which seemed less vague than Wordsworth's philosophical approach, he was alarmed by the Georgians' careless lapses when they allowed their eyes to wander from specific, natural objects into 'lapses of rhetoric', as in the case of Rupert Brooke's 'The Fish' where, after 'lines of amazing felicity and command of language', he descends to:

O world of lips, O world of laughter,
Where hope is fleet and thought flies after....

Of Harold Monro's Strange Meetings, Eliot commented that Monro had made the best of a limited but legitimate genre and although no individual poem was distinguishable, the overall impression of the volume was very satisfactory. In the third part of his 'Reflections...',¹ Eliot examined Harriet Monroe's The New Poetry: An Anthology² from the point of view of how closely the volume adhered to Miss Monroe's statement in the Introduction that the Anthology 'strives for a concrete and immediate realization of life; discarding the theory, the abstract, the remoteness found in all the classics not of the first order'. Among the contributors to the Anthology was Ford Madox Ford whose 'Antwerp' Eliot considered 'the only good poem I have met with on the subject of the War', plus poems from Amy Lowell, H.D., Aldington, Fletcher, Pound, Monro, D.H. Lawrence and Rupert Brooke. Even among this generation of assorted new poets, however, Eliot could detect 'rhetoric' although much less pronounced than in an anthology of the last generation.

1. Egoist, November 1917.

2. Edited by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson (N.Y. 1917).

Already, by 1917, the policy adopted by future critics of Georgian Poetry - of dissociating from the Movement those poets who wrote in the Georgian idiom, but whose achievement surpassed that usually expected from 'enfeebled Georgians' - was in evidence¹, reinforced by a review of Alan Seeger's Poems² which admired his 'impeccable poetic dignity' and emphasised that he 'was certainly not Georgian'. Similarly, the reviewer of Edward Thomas's The Tenth Muse³ applauded his taste and direct honesty but sternly disregarded the suggestion that Thomas might be affiliated with the Georgian Movement.

T.S.Eliot's review of Georgian Poetry III⁴ has already been mentioned⁵ and in the review - entitled 'Verse Pleasant and Unpleasant' - he juxtaposes G.P.III and Wheels: A Second Cycle.⁶ Georgian Poetry is accused of insularity: 'it is inbred [having] developed a technique and set of emotions all of its own', substituting 'Georgian' emotions for 'human ones'. Although Eliot admitted that the poems varied slightly from the point of view of syntax, nearly all share the quality of 'pleasantness'. Even when

-
1. E.g. the 'Short Notice' of Alec Waugh's Resentment, July 1918 commends his stark realism - 'Route march...field day...church parade.../Wondering would it ever end, /Wondering what the hell it meant /Picking girls up in the street /Rather than face the empty tent' - but deprecates his coining of the Brookean idiom.
 2. Introduced by William Archer, reviewed December 1917.
 3. The volume traces the influence of women upon various English poets.
 4. Egoist, March 1918.
 5. See Section 2 (e) above, pp. 278-9.
 6. A similar contrast between Georgian Poetry and the Wheels Anthology appeared in J.M.Murry's review of G.P.IV and Wheels:4th Cycle: 'The Condition of English Poetry', The Athenaeum, 5.12.19, in which Owen's 'Strange Meeting' in Wheels is commended beyond the 'finest things' in G.P.IV for its 'awe,...immensity, [and] adequacy to that which has been most profound in the experience of a generation'. By comparison with the 'confused' G.P.IV which seems to have drifted out of touch with reality, Owen's poem epitomizes for the reader the essential quality of poetry: 'it should be rooted in emotion, and...it grows by the mastery of emotion, and...its significance finally depends upon the quality and comprehensiveness of the emotion'.

deliberate brutality is introduced - as in Rupert Brooke's 'Channel Passage' (the 'disgusting sonnet') - this unpleasantness springs from the same root as the pleasantness¹: a self-conscious desire to stimulate a positive reaction from the reader, of either pleasure or shock. It is this self-consciousness and fatal subjectivity - the opposite process to that recommended by T.S. Eliot in his 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' articles² and later refined in his discussion of the 'objective correlative' - which forces the 'personality' of the poet constantly before the reader and necessarily impairs the efficacy of the poet's 'raid on the inarticulate'.

Altogether, The Egoist reviewers regarded poetry in the Georgian idiom with little enthusiasm during the War years, and their general indifference can be explained - in part - by the fact that they were committed to the advancement of the Imagist mode and therefore had little occasion to discuss the progress of a contemporaneous poetry-movement, except when it impinged directly on Imagist interests. A much fuller critical assessment of poetry in the Georgian idiom from 1914 to 1919 is to be found, however, in The Times Literary Supplement of those years, which took a particular interest in the work of 'our [young] singing birds', judging by a lengthy review of three Anthologies of young University poets in January 1914. The review found the work of these alumni symptomatic of the 'new renaissance of poetry in England' - even if their choice of subject matter

-
1. Whether it be the 'insidiously didactic, or Wordsworthian (rainbow and cuckoo song)' or the 'decorative, playful or solemn, minor-Keatsian too happy, happy brook or lucent sirops' brand of 'pleasantness'.
 2. September and December 1919 : 'Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality', Ego., Dec. 1919.

were a trifle unrestrained.¹

A similar survey, appropriately entitled 'New Numbers'² and occupying two full columns, investigated the latest work of four aspiring poets, concluding with a review of New Numbers itself - that 'brave and bold venture' - containing four sonnets by Rupert Brooke, five lyrics by John Drinkwater, W.W. Gibson's Bloodybush Edge and Abercrombie's The Olympians. This general interest in young poets' work was sustained up to the outbreak of war, after which the bulk of the reviews and general articles concerned themselves with 'Books on the Crisis'³ of a political or historical nature (including war-maps of the 'likely theatres of War' which traced the 'historic battle-ground of Briton, Gaul and Teuton'); the hastily-compiled anthologies of suitable patriotic verse from the 'old retainers' such as Hardy, Kipling, Newbolt and the Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges (in R.M. Leonard's collection, Patriotic Poems, and Chatto and Windus' Poems of the Great War⁴); leaders devoted to such philosophical subjects as 'Men and Marionettes'⁵, a comparative analysis of the British and German national character, designed to help the readership face 'the vicissitudes of war' in the appropriate spirit; and miscellaneous articles all having some relevance (however tenuous) to the War situation: such as a two-and-a-half column survey of 'French Poetry of the Franco-Prussian War'⁶, a plethora of War pamphlets⁷

-
1. Review, 15.1.14, of Oxford Poetry 1910-13, Gilbert Murray; Cambridge Poets 1910-13, Aelfrida Tillyard; Manchester University Verse 1868-1912, Preface by Sir Alfred Hopkinson.
 2. Review 19.3.14, of J. Griffyth Fairfax, The Horns of Taurus; Lady Margaret Sackville, Songs of Aphrodite; M.A., Early Poems; J. Drinkwater, Cromwell and Other Poems.
 3. Leader, 6.8.14.
 4. Reviewed 27.8.14.
 5. 10.9.14.
 6. Ibid.
 7. The review 'War Pamphlets', T.L.S., 15.10.14, praises the propaganda value of such pamphlets compiled by writers 'who set forth in clear popular language reasons why we went to war'.

and a review of a recently-issued Selection of Hymns from the English Hymnal for Use in this Time of War¹, (with tunes).

With the exception of a brief review of John Masefield's Philip the King and Other Poems², including 'August, 1914' - 'one of the finest achievements and one of the few true poems evoked by the last few weeks of storm' - and a similarly cursory reference to Gibson's Borderlands and Thoroughfares³, there is little critical comment on the younger poets in the T.L.S. up to the end of 1914. The discussion of 'War Poetry' at this time - of which the review, 'War and Poetry'⁴, which examines three anthologies: Poems of the Great War, Songs and Sonnets for England in War-time, and Lord God of Battles, compiled by A.E. Manning Foster is quite representative - revolved around strictly patriotic poetry from the seers of the literary establishment, strongly supported by copious references to Wordsworth's War-Sonnets and the more stirring speeches from Shakespeare's plays, notably Henry V, in the belief that 'The past is in our blood, and should be in our minds as we face the present'. This was not the time for ruminative, gently reflective lyrics in the W.H. Daviesian manner, although later on - after the tempests of patriotic fervour had subsided - there would indeed be a place for the quietly-contemplative, wistfully-nostalgic vein of verse.

When attention was again focused on poetry in the Georgian idiom, it was largely due to the impact evidently made by Rupert Brooke's 1914 Sonnets, published in New Numbers⁵ and reviewed

1. Mentioned in T.L.S., 17.9.14.

2. 1.10.14.

3. 15.10.14.

4. 8.10.14.

5. Vol.I, No.4, reviewed T.L.S., 11.3.15.

under the heading "'Thoughts by England Given'", where the reviewer is relieved to find that the young poets have not been swamped by the colossal wave of traditional, patriotic verse characterized by the stentorian trumpetings of Watson, Newbolt and others. Brooke's Sonnets receive the premier accolade and 'The Soldier' and 'The Dead II' are quoted in full since 'it is impossible to shred up this beauty for the purposes of criticism'. Not only do these highly personal sonnets recall Sir Philip Sidney and his willing consecration of his life for England, but they express the 'very blood and youth of England', thus forming a convenient link between the patriotism of the heroic past¹ and the present aspirations of the young volunteers:

They [the sonnets] speak not for one heart only, but for all to whom her call has come in the hour of need and found instantly ready. The words pause and break, as thought and feeling falter for very fullness, like the song of a bird faced with all a summer's loveliness and with but one brief dusk wherein to sing. No passion for glory is here, no bitterness, no gloom, only a happy, clear-sighted, all-surrendering love.

Shortly after Brooke's death on St George's Day, 1915, the T.L.S. announced that the 1914 Sonnets would be published 'at the earliest possible moment'² (by Sidgwick and Jackson) together with everything Brooke had written since Poems, 1911 (now in its 4th impression) anticipating the surge of verses from combatant-poets, stay-at-home patriots and amateur versifiers in the Brookean idiom.

-
1. Which provided the subject-matter for several dissertations on the place of poetry in times of national crisis, e.g. English Poets and the National Ideal - 4 Lectures by E. de Sélincourt - discussed in the Leader: 'The England of the English Poets', T.L.S., 24.4.15.
 2. In fact, the first mention in the T.L.S. of 1914 and Other Poems is in the 17.6.15 number.

One month after 1914 and Other Poems was published, the T.L.S. review¹ of the volume - as well as underlining Rupert Brooke's representativeness as a young man whose death was caused by the War (however indirectly) - emphasized in particular the Georgian qualities (honesty of approach and truth 'to the moment') in his verse: most especially, the sheer rapture of being 'even for a moment alive in a world of real matter ... and actual people'. The review concluded, however, that Brooke was by no means a complacent observer of life (unlike some Georgian Poets): 'His poetry is not the harvest of a quiet eye' but is concerned more with 'the fruits of existence' than 'the flowers' and both his life and his poetry 'reached their fitting zenith when, in the peace and happiness of self-surrender, he gave that youth for England'.

Similarly, in the review of J.E. Flecker's The Old Ships², the rest of the volume is disregarded in the concentration on 'The Burial in England' (quoted in full) which is seen by the reviewer as 'a rallying-cry and adjuration to youth to follow the young soldiers of France to glory':

What chain shall hold you when the trumpets play
Calling from the blue hill behind your town;
Calling over the seas, calling for you! ...³

-
1. 'A Peace Unshaken', T.L.S., 22.7.15. Just 2 months later in the T.L.S., 30.9.15, the 9th impression of 1914... was being advertised together with R.B.'s Letters from America, Preface from Henry James. Even after one year the potency of the Brooke-charisma was in no way diminished, judging from the citation of the Howland Memorial Prize, awarded posthumously to R.B.: 'On an isle in the Aegean under olives by the sounding sea lies buried a young Englishman, poet and soldier, dead on his way to Gallipoli'.
 2. Review entitled 'Spell-Swept Rhymes', T.L.S., 27.5.15.
 3. The emphasis is still on Flecker's patriotic and nostalgically-inclined pieces ('The Burial in England', 'Oak and Olive') in the Leader on him, based on The Collected Poems of J.E.F., T.L.S., 28.9.16. Quoting such lines as 'Yet is not death the great Adventure?', the leader-writer contends that the War inflamed J.E.F.'s love of 'old familiar things and made him England's heart and soul', urging young English patriots of 1914 to go out and embrace this wild adventure for their country's sake.

In a July 1915 number¹ of the T.L.S. the first mention is made of an important new series - published and edited by Erskine MacDonald - of 'Little Books of Georgian Verse'², selected by S. Gertrude Ford³ (represented by Mona Douglas, Manx Song, Maiden Song and Lt. C.A. Macartney, Poems) which appears to be characterized by similar features to those of Georgian Poetry, in particular a propensity for rural subject matter; the series was heralded by the T.L.S.⁴ as 'yet another illustration of the modern zest for poetry, unabated by the War'.

The first example of verse in the Georgian idiom from 'the very trenches in Flanders' was celebrated by the T.L.S.⁵ with hearty approval of the fact that Eric Thirkell Cooper had managed to assemble, in his 'trench-volume', poems which were 'unmistakably "the real thing"'. Whether 'cheery' or 'pathetic', the poems in his Soliloquies of a Subaltern were 'always actual' and publication of the volume was justified according to the reviewer because it expressed the thoughts of the average subaltern in and out of the trenches. A trench-elegy 'The Cost' was particularly noted for its touching sincerity which deflated the aura of glory and

1. 8.7.15.

2. Welcomed as 'a brave new publishing adventure', although Owen later referred disrespectfully to 'the Georgy-Porgy Verse Books', in a letter to his sister, Mary, 8.5.17, Collected Letters of W.O., p.455. The 'Little Books...' Series seemed to favour women poets in particular: e.g. Violet Tweed-dale, Odds and Ends, Ianthe Jerrold, The Road of Life (T.L.S., 7.10.15). Commenting on 2 new additions to the 'Little Books...' Library in the T.L.S., 21.9.16, the reviewer noted: 'these slight booklets are full of graceful little pieces showing the technical facility now possessed by many ready verse-writers, but the "realms of gold" have no place for them'.

3. Miss Ford's Introductory comment - 'a rather superficial commonplace of literary criticism now', according to the review of 'Little Books...', T.L.S., 29.7.15 - declared that 'the cataclysmic war has overtaken us, precipitating an epoch that cannot be a mere artificial term. Most certainly poetry will be tremendously affected....'

4. 22.7.15.

5. 23.9.15. Typical entries in Soliloquies... were: 'Night in the Trenches', 'Corporals in Clover', 'Lines to a Rise in Pay'.

honour surrounding the death of his friend - in the eyes of the civilian patriots - with its appeal for the young man's revivification, no matter what 'the cost':

Take back the honour and the fame,
The victory we've won,
Take all the credit from my name,
If this can be undone -
Let him my friend that used to be,
Somehow be given back to me.

From September 1915 - approximately one year after the War had begun - onwards, the emphasis in reviews of current poetry seemed to veer away from the non-combatant patriotic poets to the 'trench poets' - the typical 'young officers on active service' - whose verse appeared to afford the T.L.S. reviewers a good deal of vicarious excitement, as the review of W.W.Gibson's Battle¹ (already briefly mentioned²) betrays. Gibson's pre-War volumes of verse had prepared the reviewer for his 'sincerity and naturalness' and occasional 'flashes of strange penetrating vision', but the War and Gibson's experience of fighting had supplied an extra vividness and gave authority to his interpretation of War-psychology. Gibson was one of the first poets to treat seriously different aspects of front line fighting: the impact on the individual psyche of immersion in trench warfare; the duality of the young soldier conscious of the great divide between life before the War and actual War experience; the exploration of what it felt like to be alive in an environment where the dead were all the time conspicuous; and the grim humour characteristic of the troops' fatalistic approach.

Having illustrated the individual aspects dealt with by Gibson, the reviewer concluded that Battle was significant

1. Review entitled 'An Ironist of the Trenches', T.L.S., 14.10.15.
2. See Section 2(e), p. 270.

principally as a reminder of 'how many different ways there are of considering things'. Gibson provided the Georgian Poet's response to the War experience which was totally divorced from the patriotic passion of Bridges and Kipling or the ecstatic fervour of Julian Grenfell whose 'Into Battle' was considered the 'finest expression of joy in battling'; but in his sober or ironical recording of particular situations, his direct honesty and plain diction, Gibson indicated to the reviewer that he had sustained the qualities which had distinguished the first Georgian Poetry Anthology, and he deserved credit on that account.

On the home front, however, the reviewer of Poems¹ of another Georgian Poet - Ralph Hodgson - cautioned that the 'unrelaxed strain of reading of war-horrors will obsess the mind' and advocated that his readers should turn to poetry of peace, such as Hodgson's which does not 'argue, dissect, explore, teach or moralize', in order to revive their spirits and to remember the things of peace for whose preservation and recovery the War was being fought 'to the death'.

Throughout 1915 sales of Georgian Poetry I were continuing at a steady rate and at the time of G.P.II's publication² the first volume was in its thirteenth edition. The T.L.S. Leader of 9th December, 1915 - based on G.P.II and Poems of Today. An Anthology (Published for the English Association by Sidgwick and Jackson) - was devoted to a consideration of the young poets who had finally achieved the ultimate severance from their Victorian antecedents and established a Georgian style of poetry. While

1. T.L.S., 7.10.15.

2. Noted in T.L.S., 25.11.15.

applauding the independence of the poets of G.P.II, the leader-writer explained, however, the dangers of mechanical reaction against the fashions of the immediate past and deplored the crude ugliness of Bottomley's King Lear's Wife and Abercrombie's The End of the World. He likewise disapproved of Rupert Brooke's 'smiling scepticism' which signified the modern trend towards insecurity of emotion and the questioning of traditional values and suggested that the 'new poetry', ^{and poets,} would have to reconcile 'the abstract with the concrete' and turn their scepticism into a 'new faith' in order to justify their emphasis on simple expression and their conscious confrontation of 'actual experience'.

Of the 'Oxford Poets' of 1915 who might well have been expected to adopt the general Georgian idiom, and who comprised Oxford Poetry : 1915¹, the reviewer had less to say - possibly because of the conspicuous movement away from the gentility he had associated with many of the poets of the G.P. Anthologies, towards a more overt bitterness, directed in particular against the elder generation who had promoted the War's cause with 'drums and sentimental songs' and who were destined to be the target of the returning youth's anger. As H.C. Harwood aptly - if defiantly - declared:

We tread a new untrodden way.

A music terrible, austere
Shall rise from our returning ranks
To change your merriment to fear,
And slay upon your lips your thanks.

1. The annual anthology was edited in 1915 by G.D.H.C. and T.W.E. and published by Blackwell. It was reviewed in the T.L.S., 30.12.15.

The last T.L.S. of 1915 also focussed on two palpably Georgian Poets: Robert Nichols, Invocation: War Poems and Others, and Herbert Asquith, The Volunteer and Other Poems, both of whom illustrated certain characteristic weaknesses of Georgian Poetry. Asquith, with the exception of the title poem, moved altogether away from the War, descending at times into bathos,¹ while Nichols impressed the reviewer as 'promising', but still searching for the true means of expression in his verse which faltered 'not in weakness but in endeavour [through having] too much to say'. In his quest for 'bare truth', Nichols had achieved an often vivid but essentially disjointed² reflection of 'all that direct expression means to a mind which has cast aside the past', although the reviewer was reassured by Nichols's assertion - echoing Rupert Brooke - that with the skies filled with new and noble flame against the chorus of the guns of war:

The Soldier and the Poet now are one
And the Heroic more than a mere name.

It would seem from a perusal of the T.L.S. of the early months of 1916 that reviewers³ had become aware of a new trend in contemporary verse, directly attributable to the War's influence: People who wrote about nothing much in particular before, now write with feeling and purpose, and those who never wrote before find themselves stirred to expression. Literature is now thriving, growing, taking new heart and range, building ... a foundation of sincerity and universality [which the Georgians had helped to excavate] for a great new poetry to come into being after the War is over.

-
1. Of which 'To a Baby found Paddling Near the Lines' is illustrative.
 2. Cf. Robert Graves, Over the Brazier, reviewed T.L.S., 25.5.16, where an uneasy combination of the world of fancy ('The Knight and the Fauns' and 'Willaree') and the - occasionally repellent - rawness of the realities of trench life ('It's a Queer Time') is essayed.
 3. For example, the review of Edmund Gosse, Inter Arma, T.L.S. 27.4.16.

War Poetry was not expected to be of the highest order of literary excellence since its objective was to 'nerve men and nations to a practical purpose' and, provided it was 'simple, easy and hearty',¹ it did not matter if 'its rhymes [were] slack, its metres sloppy and its thought humble': if the reader required spiritual elevation, he should turn to the work of past masters - Wordsworth, Hugo and Swinburne, for example. By mid-1916, therefore, it would appear that War Poetry had been recognised by critics and reviewers as a distinct form, requiring its own particular mode of critical analysis which assumed even more lenient standards than the general undemanding criteria applied to conventional verse of the pre-War and early War years.

At the same time as acknowledging the efflorescence of War Poetry of a 'positive' kind - designed to inspire to action and to invigorate - the reviewers also observed a steady movement away from overt celebration of 'The Pageant of War',² to a more compassionate or embittered attitude to those who fought in the War and those who looked on, such an approach as had already been detected in Oxford Poetry: 1915,³ for example. Representative of this new mood was an ironically-titled volume from the first President of the Poetry Society, Lady Margaret Sackville: The Pageant of War, which set out to describe the ruin and horror of war after a glut of verse glorifying war. Although such verse had been of value, initially perhaps, in stirring a 'true enthusiasm and courage' and enlivening a good cause, it was too often

-
1. E.g. Mackenzie MacBride, For Those we love at Home! and Other War Songs and Ballads, reviewed T.L.S., 27.4.16: 'spirited Highland verse ringing with the great deeds of Scottish history and the rush of the wind on Scottish sea and mountain'; also 'Observer, R.F.C.', Oxford and Flanders, with its 'graceful knack of verse turning', which made explicit the dichotomy between pre-War and War experience (T.L.S., 11.5.16).
 2. Title referred to below of volume of Lady Margaret Sackville's poems, (T.L.S., 18.5.16).
 3. See above, p.306.

to illustrate Blunden's direct expression of mood and particularized observation of 'peaceful rivers travel [ling] mossy weirs' and roach with 'silvern sides and [gleaming] red fins', all indicative of Blunden's commitment to the English pastoral heritage. Such development within the traditional framework did not suit every young poet, however, and Arthur Stringer¹ - for one - urged the 'singer of today' to express his feelings with more direct open-ness, deprecating the fact that the young modern poet's apparel 'remained Medieval. He must still don mail to face Mausers and wear chain-armour against machine-guns'. In response to Stringer's protest the T.L.S. reviewer contended that if the 'ancient fashions' were still durable, what was wrong with adapting them to modern lines?

Such an 'adaptation' had been undertaken by W.N. Hodgson - 'Edward Melbourne' - in his Verse and Prose in Peace and War.² The combination of conventional stanzaic form, orthodox rhyming scheme and martial rhythm ('Death whining down from Heaven, / Death roaring from the ground, / Death stinking in the nostril, / Death shrill in every sound') with characteristic Georgian qualities (awareness of the natural environment, simplification of diction and an eye for individual detail³) met with the enthusiastic approval of the T.L.S. reviewer . He found such a poem as 'Returning to Rest Camp' exquisitely poised between tradition and modernity, with the actual violence of the recent 'severe

-
1. Open Water, reviewed T.L.S., 20.7.16; Arthur Stringer was later the author of Red Wine of Youth, another tribute to Rupert Brooke, (N.Y. 1948).
 2. T.L.S., 30.11.16.
 3. 'Clean cut against the morning / Slim poplars after rain', for example.

'fighting at Loos' discreetly masked by such euphemisms as 'the grime of battle' and 'cleanest hands defiled'.

The 'Georgian idiom', in the view of one T.L.S. reviewer,¹ was best exemplified by the work of Willoughby Weaving in The Star Fields and Other Poems² (introduced by the Poet Laureate) in which Weaving exhibited 'the right spirit' among young poets: he evinced feeling (but never ungovernable passion) and observed detail (without probing beneath the external physical surface). The absence of strong emotion was interpreted as evidence of a 'mood both elegiac and universal' and general disdain for the "Georgian" black art [which startled] Truth and [made her] stammer', while a strong and deep perception of Nature was purportedly detected in such lines as:

... the ledgy spaces
Below the cropping crags,
Where winds have eagle-faces
And fetlocks like a stag's.³

Altogether it is Weaving's 'neutrality' which wins him the most fulsome praise from the reviewer: that 'rich quietness [which] neither recriminates nor revolts' and which represents to the reviewer the best in Georgian Poetry - though at present Weaving was 'uncatalogued' in the annals of that Movement.

W.H.Davies, on the other hand, featured prolifically in the Georgian Poetry Anthologies and, not surprisingly, the distinctive Georgian qualities - familiarity of subject matter and companionability of tone - pervaded his Collected Poems⁴ and endeared his verse to the reviewer, in particular, on account of his facility. Davies was not perplexed, as Wordsworth

1. 'An Uncatalogued Georgian', T.L.S., 7.12.16.

2. Comparable with John Drinkwater's Olton Pools, reviewed T.L.S., 21.12.16, which similarly comprised thoughtful verse on the War and England at peace.

3. 'Sea'.

4. 'A Companionable Poet', T.L.S., 4.1.17.

had been, with philosophical considerations in his nature-poetry, rather was he a 'child of Nature' who knew 'Difficile est proprie communia dicere', and who sometimes found himself deserted by the Muse - 'My mind has thunderstorms / That brood for heavy hours: / Until they rain me words' - but who tried to convey, through his verse, his own uninhibited joy in Nature, with freshness and without affectation.¹

A review² of the Poems of Davies's Georgian colleague, Ralph Hodgson, is made the excuse for an extensive examination of the effect of the War on the work of young poets who had been on the verge of making a name for themselves in 1914, especially those affiliated to the Georgian School. Whereas before the War, new volumes of verse had been looked forward to with keen interest, this innocent pleasure was swamped in the 'tremendous excitements and enlightening revelations' of the War, when the quality of new poetry was of less importance than the numbers of 'young spirits of our race' who would be stimulated to activate the 'springs of poetry'. Of this new race of combatant-poets upon whom critical attention was focussed (once the initial surge of patriotic verse from the 'old school' had subsided), many were 'destined to be on earth never otherwise than young', and with the recollection of so many dead young combatant-poets in mind, how would the reviewer respond to such work as that of Hodgson - 'poems of a different day ... containing no reference to the war'? Not only was Hodgson's volume of Poems overshadowed by the 'slim volumes' of those killed in action, but it was physically denuded in that the exigencies of War-time economy necessitated the removal of the attractive wood-cuts that had earlier enhanced its pages.

1. Though Davies's simplistic manner exposed him to easy parody, e.g. by J.C. Squire in Tricks of the Trade (1917).
2. T.L.S., 14.6.17.

The reviewer believed that Hodgson's Poems had stood the test of three turbulent years of war quite well and were now fully characterized by the 'savour and colour' of an age already labelled 'Georgian' in their:

... unfastidiousness in regard to the choice of image and of phrase, frank admission of plain everyday thought and word, their determination to consider any and every impression and image poetical so long as it is only real and vivid.

Furthermore, Hodgson had avoided most of the atrocious faults of 'ultra-modernism: the commonplace material was never tame, flat, startling or repulsive and the metre and rhyme was not ugly or tuneless'; in other words, as far as the reviewer was concerned, Hodgson had managed to effect a successful reconciliation between traditional modes of verse and a new and adventurous spirit which varied and re-animated the old forms. Georgian Poetry would therefore seem to have been already aligned with compromise, in the opinion of at least one T.L.S. reviewer.

Another early 1917 T.L.S. review¹ drew an interesting distinction between the older and younger generations of Georgian Poets in a comparison between John Drinkwater's Olton Pools and W.W.Gibson's Livelihood: Dramatic Reveries. The reviewer noted with approval the dignified title poem of Drinkwater's volume:

Now June walks on the waters,
And the cuckoo's last enchantment
Passes from Olton Pools.

Now dawn comes to my window
Breathing midsummer roses
And scythes are wet with dew

but found little else to recommend this 'unremarkable selection of nature lyrics' - 'Sunrise on Rydal Water', for example - and 'two or three little war pieces', most of which had already appeared in newspapers.

1. 'The Old Way and the New', T.L.S., 15.2.17.

Gibson's Livelihood, conversely, was heralded with interest and enthusiasm, as the 'very best sort of journalism'¹, by means of which 'vivid, arresting little dramas' were presented which had the virtue of immediacy but lacked permanent substance, rather like a photograph 'which can never be art'. Nevertheless the reviewer, under the influence of War Poetry - which he had grown accustomed to examining to ensure that it represented 'la vraie vérité' and 'what it's like to be in a "scrap"'² - approved of Gibson's attempts to capture the temper of contemporary life. He considered the 'Dramatic Reveries' a definite improvement on Drinkwater's anaemic verses which would seem to suggest that against the persistent background of War, a tendency in poetry criticism was gradually evolving whereby the first criterion on which to judge a poem was its fidelity to the actual experience - although the reviewer was still his own judge of what constituted 'actuality'.

With this condition in mind, the reviewer was inclined to be generous in his estimation of an unknown combatant-poet - such as Ronald Gurner, War's Echo³ - who, in normal circumstances, would have probably gone unnoticed if he had bothered to write and publish verse at all. Gurner, who wrote his poems during 'spare moments at the Front', made 'no pretence to explain the mystery or throw the veil of optimism over [the War's] tragedy' and the fact that he had recorded in his verse 'certain impressions gained during experiences in and behind the Line' was considered feat enough by the T.L.S. reviewer.

1. A comment also applied to Nichols's war verses in Ardours and Endurances.

2. Cf. the comment, T.L.S., 3.5.17, on the 'War Pieces' in Eliot Crawshaw-Williams's Songs on Service, which 'have the impact of reality, give some of the reverberation of battle'.

3. T.L.S., 1.3.17.

In a similar case, however, discussing J.Griffyth Fairfax's The Temple of Janus: A Sonnet Sequence¹, the reviewer finds less satisfactory those pieces where this 'polished and scholarly artificer of verse' has surrendered meaning to his fascination with the sound of words and displays a 'too obvious toilsomeness in [elaborately battering out] his rhyme-puzzles'. More convincing are verses where 'fresh emotion' has dictated both the content and the form, as in 'Charles', written on 21st August, 1916 during the Somme Battle, and the sonnet 'Conquistadores', scribbled on a fly-leaf of the Wykehamist War Service Roll and reprinted from The Wykehamist, which depicts Death as no longer inscrutable and terrifying but fearlessly embraced by the 'flashing eyes and limbs erect' of the 'proud adventurers beyond the bourne' who:

Go, glad like swimmers breasting a strong sea,
Into the sun's light and winds blowing free.
The cliffs of home rise up to meet the morn;
True dreams come to them from the 'Gates of Horn',
And they have sight of larger Life than we.

Overall, it would appear from scrutiny of the T.L.S. reviews of the first three years of war that by 1917 something approaching the stern realism earlier² advocated by D.H.Lawrence, (himself loosely associated with the Georgian Poets) was increasingly demanded by reviewers of verse, aware that a cataclysmic change in society was underway which was likely to induce a corresponding upheaval in the arts - and nowhere more so than in the verse of combatant poets confronted by the starkest and

1. T.L.S., 8.3.17.

2. D.H.L. letter to Catherine Carswell, 11.1.16, The Collected Letters of D.H.L. (N.Y. 1962) I, p.413: 'The essence of poetry with us in this age of stark and unlovely actualities, is a stark directness, without a shadow of a lie, or a shadow of deflexion anywhere. Everything can go but this stark, bare, rocky directness of statement, this alone makes poetry today'.

most unlovely actualities:

... life is not an experience to be trusted too far. The old-seeming stability has been shaken In the experience we are all of us old now. Against the sense of uncertainty and precariousness it brings with it, consciousness, for its own sanity reacts in different ways. It may find in action an opiate, in philosophy or faith its refuge.

Unless we recognise and welcome an unceasing novelty in the things of every day, we are half-dead already. We must unlearn all childhood experiences and lessons - realizing that our hard-worn categories, habits of mind and points of view are but a veil which, when withdrawn, leaves us face to face with the utterly unknown and yet with the preternaturally familiar.¹

It is Siegfried Sassoon's faculty for confronting the stark reality of certain Front Line situations - such as sudden trench death in 'A Working Party' - which was commented upon in the synopsis of The Old Huntsman and Other Poems², and which was seen as the logical development from the direct approach to the subject matter of the Georgian Poets of the first two Anthologies.³ Similarly, the reviewer of Robert Nichols's Ardours and Endurances⁴ found this volume altogether 'stronger' than his 1915 offering, Invocation, in spite of the nebulous A Faun's Holiday and various etiolated 'Poems and Phantasies'. Nichols - according to The Sunday Times, 'The finest of all our soldier poets, midway in spirit between Charles Sorley and Rupert Brooke' - was saluted by the T.L.S. reviewer as 'a genuine and authentic' young poet, both in 'wealth of fancy and ardour of emotions', who, it was anticipated, would 'live to be a major poet of the new generation'.

-
1. From the review of Harold Monro's Strange Meetings, T.L.S., 24.5.17; the best of H.M.'s poems went beyond 'mere realism' in their effort to reach 'the truth of things'.
 2. In the morgue of T.L.S., 24.5.17. One week later, Virginia Woolf's review of The O.H...., Ibid., 31.5.17, designated Sassoon as 'a sincere artist' and advised readers to look below the jaunty cynicism to the crude emotion which impelled each 'moment of vision' to be expressed in 'a realism of the right, of the poetic kind'.
 3. 'Poetry, War, and a Young Poet', T.L.S., 12.7.17.
 4. Quoted in the morgue-synopsis of Ardours and Endurances, T.L.S., 21.6.17.

Judging by the length of the T.L.S. review of Ardours and Endurances, Nichols was very highly regarded and appears to have been treated as archetypal of the young poets - the 'wonderful boys' - of the mid-War years. In his philosophical introductory comments, the reviewer pointed out that war had not made heroes or saints out of all combatants, neither had it eradicated from the human spirit all 'our habitual pettiness, poverties and vile-ness' but it had seriously threatened traditional standards in ordinary life as well as in the arts and poetry's function in the War had been, according to the reviewer, to 'deliver us' from insidious depression and hopelessness by reminding 'us how big the whole is and how very small we or any other part of it: how little we matter'. Some of the poets most able to give the required sustenance were to be found among the combatants themselves for:

... we yield a special authority to the poet who has been under fire. The words of Rupert Brooke or Julian Grenfell do gain a peculiar authority from being the words of men who have ventured not a part but the whole of their share in this world's interests.

What the reviewer respects in the combatant-poets is not so much their dying but their 'despising death' and their living at such a pitch of intensity while constantly 'in extremis'. Nichols - 'unquestionably one of the poets directly given us by the War', in that his War experience transformed him from a 'writer of verses' to a poet - was able to involve his readers directly in the soldier's approach to death by tracing his own 'pilgrimage' from the brave response to 'the Summons', through the Battle sequence to 'the Aftermath'. A corresponding change in the poetic form and diction accompanied the combatant-poet from England to France: from the formal, Brookean sonnet, 'The

'whole world burns, and with it burns my flesh...', to the colloquial 'Is Death so near then?... /Do I plunge suddenly /Into vortex? Night?'

Nichols's interpretation of the actual battle was tentatively commended by the reviewer as 'full of episode and detail' but the danger that the documentary style could 'fall below poetry into realism or triviality, into the pseudo-pathetic' was not discounted. The reviewer reminded Nichols - with some justification¹ - that 'prose does not become verse merely by being divided into lines' and although there are many references to 'The Assault' and 'The Last Morning' in the review, the last poem in the Battle section - 'Fulfilment' - which is quoted in full, was obviously more amenable to the reviewer's taste. 'Fulfilment', with its combination of the old - regular stanzas, rhyme, judicious use of refined 'poetic' diction ('full of whimsical mirth', 'enraptured by the abounding earth') - and the modern - conversational tone, carefully-judged 'realistic' detail giving the impression of actuality without offending the reader's sensibility ('And any moment may descend hot death / To shatter limbs! pulp, tear, blast /Beloved soldiers', 'O the fading eyes, the grimed face turned bony, /Oped mouth gushing') - satisfies exactly the criteria² applied by mid-1917 reviewers when assessing literary excellence in contemporary verse.

-
1. The 'Revolver levelled quick!...' sequence, for example, while endeavouring to transmit the sense of panic and hysteria, does sacrifice the poetic integrity of 'The Assault' in order to achieve a somewhat self-conscious immediacy.
 2. The judicious welding of traditional and modern elements, most especially.

Nominal reference to war's 'horror of waste and ugliness, noise and pain and death' is made in 'Fulfilment' but these unpleasant aspects are included partly to give the impression of topicality and partly to show, by contrast, the 'pure heights' to which the (English) spirit could rise in War. The 'loved, living, dying, heroic soldier' - although physically decaying - is still assured of receiving due tribute from the survivors, as well as implied spiritual reward, because he is in the tradition of Rupert Brooke's glorious sacrificial dead, rather than that of Wilfred Owen's war-victim¹ whose 'thin and sodden head / Confuses more and more with the low mould' and who is by no means certain of resting 'on calm pillows of God's making / Above these clouds'.²

Although the reviewer of Ardours and Endurances considered Robert Nichols distinctive enough to merit a very full analysis of his achievement, cursory synopses of the work of 'lesser' poets in the Georgian idiom abound in the pages of the T.L.S. morgue, throughout the summer and autumn of 1917. Such comments as: 'quiet competent verse of which so much is now being written'³ 'quiet unambitious little collection of verses'⁴; 'turns out verses on soldier experiences and on the Sussex country-side of an obvious kind skilfully enough and escapes doggerel'⁵ and 'sureness and accomplishment in voicing thoughts and emotions which are abroad in the nation today'⁶, are fairly representative of the

-
1. See Chapter V for further development of the sacrifice > victim transmutation in I W.W. verse.
 2. 'Asleep', Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen, p.57.
 3. The Heavenly Tavern and Other Poems by Harold Hastings, T.L.S., 9.8.17.
 4. William E. Barnard, Post-Meridian (Little Books of G.V. Ser.) Ibid.
 5. F.W. Smith, The Great Sacrifice and Other Poems, T.L.S., 13.9.17.
 6. R. Gorell Barnes, Days of Destiny: War Poems at Home and Abroad, T.L.S., 4.10.17.

critical response, in the morgue, to the 'remarkable poetical and spiritual efflorescence' currently under-way, as the proliferation of new volumes testified. If the poet mentioned in the T.L.S. morgue happened to have been killed in action recently - as in the case of Francis Ledwidge, Songs of Peace - this fact would be emphasized (presumably in the hope of boosting sales of his 'Slim Volume'¹); accompanied by some such little homily as 'we have to sacrifice our young poets, like our other youth, even though all poets are born for a life of peace'.²

An interesting instance which paralleled the development of English verse in the Georgian idiom, was noted in a lengthy review entitled 'A French Poet-Soldier'³ which dealt with Henri Dérieux's En Ces Jours Déchirants (Paris: Payot) and which opened with the reviewer making the comment that while young English soldiers exhibited a preference for poetry, the 'great bulk of the French soldiers' work is in prose.⁴ Initially Dérieux (already established as a poet before the War) had been driven back for refuge 'into the depths of the Muses' garden', where he expressed himself very rigidly and was in danger of being 'overwhelmed in poetic ceremony'.⁵ However, as his involvement with the War intensified, Dérieux's verse - like Sassoon's in The Old Huntsman which similarly began with an un-informed attitude towards war ('they are fortunate who fight /For gleaming landscapes swept and

-
1. See Chapter V for discussion of the 'Slim Volume' genre and, in particular, the civilian and critical response to those poets killed in action.
 2. Reference to Songs of Peace, T.L.S., 16.8.17; F.L. had been killed in action one week previously.
 3. T.L.S., 27.9.17.
 4. The reviewer accounts for this phenomenon by suggesting that French poetry was unable to accommodate satisfactorily the War experience, whereas French prose - with its inherent richness and variety - was a perfectly adequate medium through which the combatant could approach the truth of his experience of war.
 5. Ironically, the reviewer can detect and censure archaisms in the French poet's work which totally elude him when examining English verse similarly imbued with anachronistic rhetoric.

'shafted /And crowned by cloud pavilions white';) - loses its characteristic 'poetic' quality and sounds a sharper note, especially when inveighing against:

Ces héros qui, le dos au feu, le ventre à table
Vous crieront: En avant,
Mais, comme un talisman pour être invulnérable
Portent leurs cinquante ans.¹

The reviewer encourages Dérioux to adopt a much less disciplined approach to his subject than he would probably have advised an English poet to do and he applauds Dérioux's effort in this direction, especially when he manages to involve the reader in the suffering of the individual 'poilu', plodding through the 'hectic' colours of autumn to the Line:

Et lui marche, ébloui, dans ces effluves d'or,
Accordant, prodiguant des caresses craintives
A ce monde sans prix qu'il pourrait perdre encore.

Returning to the English poets in the Georgian idiom in a joint review of F.W. Harvey's Gloucestershire Friends² and R.E. Vernède's War Poems and Other Verses, the T.L.S. reader finds that the reviewer has reverted to his habitual caution in his commendatory appraisal of the two poets. In Harvey's case, the reviewer selects those poems for comment - 'Loneliness', 'Prisoners', 'The Bugler' - which seem to express the intensest 'depth of feeling' but he also commends other characteristically nostalgic poems which celebrate the Gloucestershire countryside. Of the two, Vernède is considered to be the greater poet by the reviewer: his verses 'strike a deeper note' and he appears to have been considerably affected by the War's influence, judging by the differences

-
1. Cf. E.A. Mackintosh's 'Recruiting': 'Fat civilians wishing they / "Could go and fight the Hun". / Can't you see them thanking God / That they're over forty-one?'.
 2. T.L.S., 4.10.17; see Section 2(b) for discussion of this review as it affects Harvey in particular.

which the reviewer detected between the 'Other Verses' at the end of the volume and the War pieces - though such a confident differentiation between the two groups of poems is hardly apparent to the modern critical eye.

A much clearer illustration of the impinging influence of the War on poetry in the Georgian idiom is provided by an elated advertisement for Erskine MacDonald's 'Little Books of Georgian Verse' (all at one shilling a volume) in the T.L.S. of 25th October 1917. The 'brave new publishing venture' which had 'given effect to the poetry renaissance' and which had originally featured a preponderance of young female poets, now boasted verse from actual combatants: Percy Haselden's In the Wake of the Sword, for example, which combined verse on the War and Devon¹ and which opened with a piece entitled 'Belgium 1914-15' where the eventual victory of the 'Cross of Wood' over 'this creed of Iron and Blood' was anticipated.

The companion series, 'More Soldier Poets', also published by Erskine MacDonald, and brought into being by the 'miracle [whereby] Poetry was reborn in the throes of War',² was - of course - wholly concerned with the work of those combatant poets who 'have given a new impetus and significance to poetry': for example, Sgt. Leslie Coulson, the 'insurpassably beautiful' From an Outpost; Pte. H. Smalley Sarson, C.I.F., From Field and Hospital; the late Lt. E.F. Wilkinson, M.C. West Yorks, Sunrise Dreams; Colin Mitchell, Rifle Brigade, Trampled Clay; Sub.Lt. Paul Bewsher, D.S.C., R.N.A.S. The Dawn Patrol and Other Poems of an Aviator; Lt. G. Du Cann, Trio-

-
1. Cf. the general dichotomizing tendency discussed in Section 2(b) and epitomized by Graves, Fairies and Fusiliers: 'a brave attempt to link [Graves's] nursery days in fairyland with campaigning experiences with the Royal Welch Fusiliers on the W.F.' (T.L.S., 6.9.17).
 2. Comment from the Daily Telegraph on the 'Soldier Poets' Series.

lets from the Trenches; Capt. J.C. Stewart M.C., Border Regt.,
Grapes of Thorns; Lt. Newberry Choyce, Crimson Stains, and
Sgt. J.W. Streets, Yorks and Lancaster Regt., The Undying Splen-
dour.

At the same time, following the great success of S.P.I:
Songs of the Fighting Men¹, A Second Series of Soldier Poets:
More Songs of the Fighting Men was in preparation. The Daily
Telegraph reviewer absorbed a good deal of vicarious excitement
from both S.P.I and the individual volumes from the soldier poets:

They never fail for want of strength. The best of them
come hot from excited brains and are written by those
who have a vivid and actual experience of what modern
warfare means, who know its squalor and hideousness,
and yet are able to throw round it a kind of forlorn
fascination and charm,² thanks to the energy of their
imagination and fancy,² -

and thanks to their literary background derived mainly from their
reading of the Georgian Poets, many of whom relied closely on
recourse to the pastoral. A case in point, of this latter category,
was Robert Graves who frequently reverted to his home environment,
or to a consideration of the beloved dead,³ in Fairies and Fusiliers.
Nearly all of his verses exhibit the intensely poignant 'delight
in life under the shadow of death'⁴ characteristic of the 'Georg-
ian Poet' under fire. Ivor Gurney's Severn and Somme is likewise
set in the 'Georgian Tradition' and is distinguished in the re-
viewer's eyes for the 'burning love for Gloucestershire, Severn
and Cotswold' which the volume evinces.⁵ The reviewer⁶ delights in

-
1. 'The most significant literary volume connected with the War: a revelation and an inspiration of great individual and historic interest and value', 1st Edition September 1916: reprinted November 1916, December 1916, August 1917; Trench Edition Sept. 1916. Cf. G.P. Anthologies' sales: by November 1917 when G.P. III was launched, G.P. I was in its 9th Thousand and G.P. II, its 8th.
 2. Quoted in Erskine MacDonald Advertisement, T.L.S., 25.10.17.
 3. E.g. 'David'. 4. Review of F. and F., T.L.S., 15.11.17.
 5. E.g., preparing for an attack, I.G. reflects how sweet the air must be 'down Framilode Way' that morning.
 6. T.L.S., 22.11.17.

Gurney's inclination towards beautiful Cotswold names which 'chime sweetly through the book like the bloom on fragrant freshness of verse' and quotes 'June-to-Come' in full, for its fervent anticipation of the eventual return home of the soldiers with the War intruding only peripherally. Also categorized in the genre of Georgian nature-poetry was Edward Thomas's volume, Poems (now in its third edition) which was particularly conspicuous for its 'exceptionally vivid spirit of love' and '[saturation] with English country life and tradition'.¹

There was some indication that the reviewer himself was becoming 'saturated' with the preponderance of combatant-verse dealing with the exile's love of England, as the review of Willoughby Weaving's second volume, The Bubble and Other Poems, makes clear. The review² is prefaced by the somewhat tetchy remark that 'war sweeps the thoughts and feelings of all men into one channel[We] now have one hundred poets where previously we had one, and most of them are saying the same things' - a comment which is only marginally redeemed by the reviewer's assurance that these are the 'things' which 'every one is thinking and feeling'. The Bubble... manifests its topicality in another way by including the required quota of 'Laments' for dead friends, including one maudlin effort - couched in archaic diction - ('Thou lover of fire, how cold is the grave? / Would I could bring thee fuel and light thee a fire as of old...') which the reviewer quotes in full. The direct nature poems - 'May-Blossom', for instance - are included as a foil to the more sombre elegies and Weaving's facility

1. J.C.Squire's comment in The New Statesman which was cited in the advertisement for E.T.'s Poems, T.L.S., 29.11.17.
2. T.L.S., 13.12.17.

in producing quite acceptable nature lyrics suggested to the reviewer that Weaving could improve his status from that of a 'minor poet', though he stressed that 'much work is required' if Weaving was to achieve distinction as a poet.

The review¹ in the last number of the T.L.S. for 1917, on Georgian Poetry III has already been discussed² in some detail and its essential substance can be summed up in the reviewer's gratified comment that in this latest G.P. volume, new wine has been successfully poured into old bottles, without impairing the flavour, and proud young feet have been comfortably thrust into old boots. In spite of their unprecedented circumstances, the young Georgian Poets have not been disorientated by the War experience - in the reviewer's opinion - and are content to accommodate their feelings within the 'old means', using regular stanzas, metre and rhyme. A few exceptions to this general rule exist - notably, Robert Nichols's journalistic³ approach in 'The Assault' and Sassoon's 'realistic or more elaborately "creepy" poems' - but 'Georgianism' at its best is illustrated in more typical pieces, such as Nichols's 'Fulfilment',⁴ Asquith's 'The Volunteer', and the work of John Freeman and J.C. Squire. The reviewer's judgement of what constitutes the 'best' Georgian verse would seem to suggest that he is anxious to accentuate the rural associations of Georgian Poetry, rather than the experimental

1. T.L.S., 27.12.17.

2. See Section 2 (e) above.

3. The T.L.S. review, 27.6.18, of Alec Waugh's Resentment (a volume of verse which rebels against the 'whole business of war') similarly repudiates Waugh's verses for not constituting poetry but 'prose in lines'. Waugh is criticised for writing in verse 'just because others have written verse' and the reviewer could find nothing to commend in his casual, energetic collection of 'newspaper phrases'.

4. Described by the T.L.S. reviewer as 'so sincere, so direct, so Georgian'

quality of certain pieces, and to ignore the satirical verses altogether - presumably because he did not find them amenable reading, when he expected poetry to provide either a suggestion of the actuality of Front-line existence, or to offer an anodyne to these 'woeful times'.

Conversely, however, while the T.L.S. reviewer was expressing his delight at the Georgian Poets' continuing in the tradition of English 'poesy':

... They do not turn their backs on the tradition, these young poets, most of whom are living lives that no poet lived before. They take up their heritage, as an heir takes his estate, and make what changes they will. But poetry goes on; and, with poetry, all that poetry stands for....

Edward Shanks, in an article in The New Statesman¹, contended that G.P.III made 'something of a break in the continuity of the series', with its renderings of 'battle, murder and sudden death' (especially from Graves, Nichols and Sassoon). Even so, Shanks acknowledged that the combatant-poets represented in G.P.III had derived some of the features which characterized their War verse from their earlier intimacy with Georgian Poetry, which is manifested in their:

... curiosity, restlessness, impatience, [their] determination to be honest and to see clearly and to avoid the use of subjects and diction which appear suitable only because they have been used before.

What was clear, by early 1918, in reviews of poetry in the Georgian idiom, was that the individual poet's treatment of war in his verse comprised a significant portion of the reviewer's evaluation of the volume as a whole. Two of the elder generation

1. 'Georgian Poetry', N.S., 22.12.17.

of Georgians who published new volumes of verse quite early in 1918, met with a varying reception from the T.L.S. reviewer. W.J.Turner's The Dark Fire¹ was reproved for being too self-absorbed in that he deliberately held aloof from the War's influence² - 'it has not altered his outlook in any respect' - which was regarded by the reviewer as a point of censure, not commendation. In Walter de la Mare's case, on the other hand, in Motley and Other Poems³, the War had impinged upon him - albeit to an unfavourable extent - in the uncharacteristic 'Happy England' which stands out with unhappy notoriety in a volume of poems otherwise 'whimsical and fantastic' in which the 'poet of dreams' is able to contrive a connection between the reader and some 'intangible feeling of mystery, wonder or fear'.

Siegfried Sassoon's approach in Counter-Attack and Other Poems on the other hand, was much more direct and uncompromising - uncomfortably so, in the reviewer's opinion⁴ - in that Sassoon rejected any amelioration which might have been offered, and his poems were 'too much in the key of the gramophone at present, too fiercely suspicious of any comfort or compromise, to be read as poetry'. The Counter-Attack review gives an interesting insight into the dilemma of the reviewer who (by mid-1918) would have looked at scores of volumes from young combatant-poets - 'Slim Volumes of Verse' which (as Richard Aldington had remarked) ought

1. T.L.S., 6.6.18.

2. In the review of W.H.Davies's Forty New Poems, T.L.S.: 14.11.18, the point is made that out of 40 new poems, only 7 make some reference to the War, which renders W.H.D. liable to the charge of deliberate 'abstraction'. The 'charge' is mitigated in part by W.H.D.'s 'apologia': 'riddles are not made for me, /My joy's in beauty, not its cause: /Then give me but the open skies, /And birds that sing in a green wood /That's snow-bound by anemones'.

3. T.L.S., 30.5.18.

4. Ibid., 11.7.18.

never to 'have passed the home circle':

It is natural to feel the impulse of charity towards poems written by young men who have fought or are still fighting.¹

In Sassoon's case, however, there was no need for such critical indulgence, as he was so evidently able-bodied in his poetic capacity, but it was considered nonetheless important to judge Sassoon solely as a poet for 'he is seemingly indifferent whether you call him a poet or not in his insistence that he should be recognised as writing as a soldier'. More than any other contemporary poet, Sassoon seemed to the T.L.S. reviewer to have shown effectively the 'terrible pictures behind the colourless newspaper phrases'. From the self-deprecatory title itself, the volume systematically dealt not with the grand offensive and heroic action - alive only in the minds of armchair strategists and bellicose civilians in 'Blighty' ('Poor father sitting safe at home, who reads /Of dying heroes and their deathless deeds'²) - but with the counter-attack (which failed), the wiring party, suicide in the trenches, the neurasthenic survivors and the aching monotony of trench-duty.

The T.L.S. reviewer of Counter-Attack... selected 'The General' as indicative of Sassoon's method which was governed by his determination to articulate his bitter cynicism:

... He can only state a little of what he has seen and turn away with a stoical shrug as if a superficial cynicism were the best mask to wear in the face of such incredible experience.

-
1. E.g. the reviewer's charitable comment on P.H.B. Lyons's Songs of Youth and War, T.L.S., 5.9.18: 'Grave or gay, Mr Lyons's war poems are fine utterances of true and general feeling and his little book will be treasured by all lovers of pure English poetry'.
 2. 'Remorse', Collected Poems of S.S., p.91.

While the reviewer found it difficult to reconcile himself to Sassoon's unrelieved realism, he nevertheless had to admit that in the extremity of the War-situation 'any expression save the barest is intolerable' and Sassoon's contempt for 'palliative or subterfuge gives us the raw stuff of poetry'.

The volume of Geoffrey Dearmer's Poems, reviewed together with Counter-Attack, certainly offered a different perspective on the War which the reviewer made use of when comparing the two volumes. Where Sassoon described the soldiers - preparatory to a raid - 'waiting, stiff and chilled, /Or crawling on their bellies through the wire'¹, Dearmer - who, after all, fought at Gallipoli and the Somme - describes the waiting soldiers as:

... like a storm bespattered ship
That flutters sail to free her grounded keel,

which prompts the reviewer to comment that Dearmer is obviously 'Involved in dreams not reality', but while he unfolds his metaphor, the scene he is describing is over and done with:

Only my dreams are still aglow, a throng
Of scenes that crowded through a waiting mind.
A myriad scenes: for I have swept along,
To foam ashriek with gulls, and rowed behind
Brown oarsmen swinging to an ocean song
Where stately galleons bowed before the wind.

The reviewer urges Dearmer to supplement these vapid imaginings with some realistic detail and to adopt more appropriate diction in his trench poems than 'laughter of the main' and 'jewelled'. The 'slack, numb longer poems', which every so often assume a rhetorical tone, such as 'Gommecourt', give the reviewer the impression that they have been brought out by the War 'before their time' and only in the sonnets where Dearmer had tried to approach the reality of life in the Line does he come anywhere near 'writing poetry'.

1. 'Trench Duty', Collected Poems of S.S., p.81.

By mid-1918, therefore, both the poetry-reading public and the reviewers of verse in the T.L.S. had come to expect a modicum of realism in combatant-poetry. As for the poets themselves, their minds having been so ravished by their War-experience by this time, even those - such as Willoughby Weaving - who had been wont to compose poems of a mildly reflective pastoral nature, could not deny the presence of the War-dead, 'The lovely /Pride of brief days' and the ultimate manifestation of war's reality, in their verse. In Weaving's Heard Melodies¹ - dedicated to 'Friends among the Heroic Dead' - a new strain of War-verse was evolving, already anticipated by other poets in the Georgian idiom²: the lament of the lone survivor, constantly haunted by the ghosts of his friends killed in the War: 'the dear dead within my heart'. Far from finding such obsession maudlin, the reviewer sympathised with Weaving's predicament which he considered archetypal. He understood that, having lived at such a pitch of intensity for so long, the soldiers who survived the War would have done so at the expense of their youth: 'young, and yet older than the oldest men', unable to relieve 'The dead men from that chaos, or their souls'.³

Naturally enough, interest in the work of the combatant-poets did not vanish with the conclusion of hostilities and, in fact, a considerable number of new volumes of verse (especially from those recently killed in action), not to mention second and

1. Reviewed T.L.S., 26.12.18.

2. E.g. E.A. Mackintosh, 'Before the Summer': '... a worse thing than it is to die, /Live ourselves and see our friends cold beneath the sky'.

3. These lines from Blunden had been anticipated by a remark, attributed to the Prince of Wales, and included at the end of the W. Weaving review: 'You surely don't expect any of these men to be young again'.

third editions of the most popular volumes of verse, flooded the market throughout 1919, but especially during the early months. One of the first volumes to be reviewed¹ in January 1919 was Edward Thomas's Last Poems, where the reviewer stressed the 'beauty, peace, content, oblivion' characteristic of the volume and the poet:

No other English poet expressed in such profound quietude, his longing for 'home' and passion for solitude, - where 'home' meant that 'remoter, changeless England' which, 'for those who fought and suffered should be the inheritance of their peace', and 'solitude' referred to that rural quiet which might 'soothe the troubled, divided hearts and busy, restless minds' which doubtless proliferated as a result of the War.

Paying tribute to Thomas's originality as a critic and prose-writer, the reviewer was a little disappointed not to find the same 'genius' shaping his poetry which was more the product of reverie than vision. Unlike the Romantic Poets' work, which the reviewer had selected as a suitable antecedent, Thomas's poems do not 'as do Coleridge's, rarefy, or as Keats's, enrich, or as Shelley's, exalt', but, even though they are 'not distillations, or exotics', they do have value for the reviewer in that they are 'quiet, faithful transcriptions of what to [Thomas] was reality'. Such an assessment suggests that the reviewer is again applying the criterion - namely, the poet's ability to convincingly 'show things as they really are' - in his evaluation of contemporary verse, even though his review is prefaced by a survey of the modern poet's 'resemblance to the great masters

1. T.L.S., 2.1.19.

'of the past'.

Another case in point where the emphasis in the review was on verisimilitude, was the assessment of Ivor Gurney's War's Embers and Other Verses¹, which the reviewer welcomed with enthusiasm as 'another of those fascinating, ever-disturbing revelations of what the young men who did the dreadful work thought and felt in the doing of it'. Although determined to be sympathetic to Gurney's work, simply because it was written 'in the thick of it', the reviewer cannot help challenging the literary validity of:

...this now fairly common [journalistic habit of] flinging down ... impressions in rhyme For the present, no doubt, that is the only way in which a jumble of inconsistent impressions of war can be noted. But this kind of pointillism has not, in most cases, the proper effect of pointillism, the points do not merge into vibrating but unified colour.

Consequently, the reviewer categorizes some of Gurney's work as 'good journalism' but not poetry; even so, he admits that Gurney has many of the qualities necessary in a poet and believes that Gurney's sensitive and passionate mind has been - prematurely perhaps - 'forced into ... bloom by the fires of war'. The essential duality of Gurney's personality, epitomized in the dichotomous subject matter - Gloucestershire beauty and Somme 'hell-fire' - was acknowledged by the reviewer, but he did not attempt to probe the more ambiguous poems in the volume, feeling more comfortable with Gurney's more conventional work, most notably 'The Volunteer' which he quoted in full - in spite of its uninviting metre and rhyming scheme - as a 'very striking poem ... [in which] the glory and the grief of soldiering find poignant expression'.

1. T.L.S., 7.8.19.

The suggestion that the War might have been responsible for the premature publication of some poetry appeared again in a review of four¹ young combatant-poets' work. The reviewer suspected that the War had been more responsible for 'bringing into print' these (and many other) volumes of verse, than for 'bringing [them] into being', which consequently threw into question the quality of such verse, although it was likely that this present efflorescence of poetry - engendered by the War - would provide the foundation for a continuing and flourishing interest in poetry in subsequent years:

Has the War brought into being, or merely brought into print, the great quantity of poetry by young men like Mr Jenkins and Mr Woolf - the poetry of questing, of adventure, of love of the country,² of straightforward sympathy? It has brought into print merely, we believe. It has revealed what was in the old days slyly kept hidden. And in the existence of this frequent practice of poetry by 'amateur' poets lies the source of strength for English poetry now and in the future. He that loves poetry will - at all events in his youth - try to write it for himself; and thus poetry is rescued from the jealous pride of the few to become the impression and aspiration of all.

Of the abundance of nostalgic-tending verse, based on 'love of the country',³ the reviewer remarks elsewhere - in his appraisal⁴ of Griffyth Fairfax's Mesopotamia, J.Redwood Anderson's Walls and Hedges and E.Hilton Young's A Muse at Sea - that each volume is characterized by comforting recollection of 'the old sweet way', but this retrogressive tendency - while providing some form of psychological relief for the war-weary combatant - is unlikely to stimulate a sufficiently positive poetic response:

1. T.L.S., 23.1.19, review of George Rostrevor, Escape and Fantasy; A.H.Sidgwick, Jones's Wedding and Other Poems; A.L.Jenkins, Forlorn Adventurers, and C.N.S.Woolf, Poems..

2. E.g. W.G.S.Whiting, 'Cometh the Song', one of the 'numerous people who is quite competent in the art of turning what he has to say into rhyme and metre; but he has really little to say that can come under the category of poetry....' (T.L.S., 19.6.19).

3. See Section 2(b).

4. T.L.S., 4.12.19.

The War ... justified for a time the crippling of one memory by the manipulation of another. The soldier learnt to forget either by a recollection of the past or a vituperation of the present; of the one process Francis Ledwidge is a notable example, of the other Mr Siegfried Sassoon. But although a reaction from circumstances can explain the energy of many a great poet, much war poetry suffered because its wistful retrospect was relieving jarred senses, rather than casting, with creative indignation, a new heaven in the face of a new hell.

Altogether, in spite of the mild censure of this 1919 T.L.S. reviewer, on the subject of nostalgic verse, and certain guarded remarks in other reviews, the critical reception awarded to poetry in the Georgian idiom over the years from 1914 to 1919 was a favourable one. As the War years passed and the initial response of the established elder poets to the War - in the form of jingoistic, occasional verses on the iniquities of 'the Hun' and rapidly-compiled anthologies of rousing patriotic verse - had dwindled, greater space in the editorial and reviewing columns of literary journals could be devoted to the younger poets, many of whom were on active service abroad, and the majority of whom had adopted the Georgian idiom in their verse.

Reviewers who had - in the main - welcomed the first Georgian Poetry Anthology for its vigour and freshness, and who enjoyed rural subject-matter and less pretentious diction, were gratified to find several of these distinctively 'Georgian' features in the work of young combatant poets also, and - in the first years of the War - looked very sympathetically at verse which relied upon plenty of natural description or recollections of the mellow aspects of the English countryside. By 1917, however, a definite re-adjustment of critical focus seems to have taken place among the reviewers of the T.L.S., in particular, with much greater insistence upon poetry's describing 'things as

'they really are'. The combatant poet could no longer rely upon receiving a generous review simply because he had been 'in the thick of it'; the reviewer wanted to see evidence in his verse, in the form of realistic detail, to support the poet's contention that he really had been 'in the Line'.

A careful distinction was attempted, however, by the reviewers, between poems which had grown out of the actuality of War-experience to make some universal statement of value, and 'journalistic' verse which merely described a series of impressions of trench-life too specific to be related to the general human condition - the investigation of which was thought to be the essential concern of poetry. Consequently, the reviews of late-1918, 1919, of volumes of verse in the Georgian idiom, while still recognising ^{the} significance of authentic, personal experience relayed in poetic form, expected more from combatant verse than 'reflexes from sensation', penned out of the excitement of battle. The War had certainly encouraged a multitude of young combatants - and civilians - with no previous experience of writing poetry into verse and into print, which reviewers interpreted as evidence of a continuing post-War interest in poetry. But the principal lesson of the War as far as poetry in the Georgian idiom and its critical reception were concerned was firstly, to remind those writing verse that 'the true Poets must be truthful' - as some of the finest poets in the Georgian idiom certainly were - and, secondly, to convince reviewers that, in an age of 'stark and unlovely actualities', the barest statement and most honest, even brutal, interpretation of reality could constitute the 'raw stuff of poetry'.

CHAPTER III

IMAGISM UNDER FIRE

In order to achieve a reasonably fluent transition from a discussion of war poetry in the Georgian idiom to that in the Imagist mode, the work of Isaac Rosenberg is examined at the head of Chapter III since these two, not altogether compatible, approaches coalesce in his poetry. Isaac Rosenberg recommended himself particularly on this account for, although he is a poet of undoubted individual stature, he had close connections with several elder contributors to the G.P. Anthologies (not to mention with Edward Marsh himself), as well as pursuing a policy of experimentation in his own poetic technique (especially in the area of imagery) which aligns him more with the Imagists - at least in retrospect, for at the time, Rosenberg was only peripherally involved with the Imagist Group. Since Imagist-inclined verse on the War is much less prolific than was the case with poetry in the Georgian idiom, the rest of the Chapter is divided into just two sections: one of which examines war poetry in the Imagist mode (dealing in some detail with the work of Richard Aldington and Herbert Read), while the other examines the predominantly unenthusiastic response from critics and reviewers to experimentation in the arts in general. A synopsis of critical opinion on Vorticism (the movement in painting and sculpture which corresponded to Imagism in poetry) serves to underline this impression that, with the exception of the Imagists who promulgated their doctrine through the pages of The Egoist, literary commentators of the time - together with the poetry-reading public - found 'striving after new or bizarre effects' in the arts, in time of War, an irrelevance (in England at least) even if this could result in a more truthful depiction of the starkness of actual War experience.

3 (a) THE ROSENBERG CONNECTION

Although, according to his most sympathetic biographer¹, Isaac Rosenberg was 'too much of an individual to join any movement'², he certainly appears to have been susceptible, at different stages in his development as a poet before the War, to both Georgian and Imagist influences, which accounts for his present position as a tenuous link between these two 'schools'. Such an intermediary status, however, is in no way intended to detract from Rosenberg's acknowledged stature as a poet of considerable potential who - more than any other poet writing during the War - tried 'to feel in the War a significance for life as such, rather than seeing only its convulsion of the human life he knew'³ and managed to 'mould war into his thinking'⁴ rather than be himself swamped by its enormity and unparalleled destructive force.

Since his death in action on April Fools' Day, 1918 - a poignantly fitting day for the demise of a man whose 'luck was ever bad' - Rosenberg's reputation as a poet has been intermittently acclaimed by a range of critics, most of whom have categorized him according to their own predilections in poetry. F.R. Leavis⁵, Denys Harding⁶ and V. de Sola Pinto⁷, for example,

1. J. Cohen, Journey to the Trenches, (1975), the composition of which Cohen admits to being his own 'personal odyssey' as much as a lovingly-detailed itinerary of Rosenberg's journey.

2. In his 1925 analysis of the literary politics of English poetry Robert Graves went even further when he singled out I.R. as a 'born revolutionary'. Contemporary Techniques of Poetry, p.7.

3. D.W. Harding, quoted Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight, pp.112-3.

4. Jon Silkin, Out of Battle, p.274.

5. New Bearings in English Poetry, pp.72-3.

6. 'Aspects of the Poetry of I.R.', Scrutiny III, No.4 (March 1935)

7. Crisis in English Poetry 1880-1940, pp.150-1.

discuss Rosenberg's achievement as a 'war poet' in the context of war poetry; to Edouard Roditi¹ and Jon Silkin² he is quintessentially a Jewish poet; while in David Daiches' view³ the predominant tone in his poetry derives from a vein of 'rich romanticism'. A few of Rosenberg's admirers have contended that his work is altogether too distinctive to allow for his classification as a member of any one 'school' or coterie⁴, but over the past sixty years many doyens of the English literary scene have made some attempt to probe his poetic lineage.

Just over a year after Rosenberg's death, in the summer of 1919, Art and Letters (edited by Frank Rutter and Osbert Sitwell, who had themselves been influenced by the general principles of the Imagist Group) published five poems, a pencil study and Annie Rosenberg's abridged memoir of her brother. Publication in this journal could well have implied that Rosenberg was affiliated with the Imagist poets and in 1920 T.S. Eliot⁵ unconsciously reinforced this impression by a passing remark which linked Rosenberg's name with that of T.E. Hulme as examples of excellent young poets who - because of the abominable standard of contemporary literary criticism and the untutored public's taste - seemed doomed to obscurity.⁶

Conversely, the editing of Rosenberg's Poems, published in 1922, by Gordon Bottomley (principally) and Laurence Binyon

1. 'Judaism and Poetry', Jewish Review, No.2 (Sept.-Dec. 1932)p.39.

2. 'The Poetry of I.R.', World Jewry XI, No.8 (Nov. 1959)pp.23-4 and Silkin's extensive chapter on I.R., Out of Battle, pp.249-314.

3. 'I.R. : Poet', (Review of Collected Poems) Commentary X, No.1 (July, 1950), pp.91-3.

4. J.Cohen, 'I.R. : From Romantic to Classic', Tulane Studies in English, X, 1960, p.130, for example, emphasizes that I.R. was 'in no sense a coterie poet'.

5. 'A Brief Treatise on the Criticism of Poetry', Monthly Chapbook, No.9 (March 1920), p.2.

6. The Manchester Guardian had entitled its review of the 1922 Poems 'An Obscure Poet'.

seemed to suggest that Rosenberg should be aligned with Georgian and 'mainstream' contemporary poetry. The T.L.S.¹ review of the 1922 volume contributes to this impression by remarking that '[Rosenberg] was at once generously received and welcomed by [Binyon] into the brotherhood of poets' and his poetic gifts were readily understood by the same 'brotherhood' although the reviewer has to confess to perplexity over the 'strangeness' of some of Rosenberg's work, (comparing 'Daughters of War' to 'one of the obscurer passages from Blake's prophetic books') and similarly pleads mystification when confronted with his definition of 'simple poetry', ('where an interesting complexity of thought is kept in tone and right value to the dominating idea so that it is understandable and still ungraspable'). Although the reviewer believes Rosenberg's sporadic gift - 'for the vivid phrase, for illumination in flashes' - to have been occasionally alarming in its unorthodox expression, he takes comfort in the thought that Rosenberg has been 'sponsored' by two reassuringly staid writers² and closes his review with a generous extract from Rosenberg's 'rhapsodic' 'Our Dead Heroes', his most conventional war poem - conforming to the Brookean ideal - and doubtless quoted in order to prove that, for all his 'oddities', he could be admirably fitted into the general 'Georgian tradition' of war poets 'whose promise was cut short by the War'. It was this easy dismissal of Rosenberg as just another 'poet of promise killed in

1. T.L.S., 15.6.22.

2. Though, of course, Bottomley had incensed a number of conservative critics and reviewers with his contribution to G.P.II - the 'outrageous' King Lear's Wife - in 1915.

'defence of his country' which so irritated the handful of energetic Rosenberg-admirers in the late 1920's - such as Laura Riding and Robert Graves - who insisted on his recognition as 'one of the few poets who might have served as a fair challenge to sham modernism'¹. In general, during the decade after the War, Rosenberg was largely overlooked, firstly, because it was less easy to relate to his poetry than to that of Sassoon and Owen which expressed 'a more straightforward antipathy to war and its values' and, secondly, because - paradoxically - at a time when the literary world acclaimed poetry that was 'sparse, intellectual and vigorous', Rosenberg's richness of language seemed 'lush, old-fashioned and therefore limited'.²

Throughout the 1930's, although Owen's reputation was becoming still more firmly established following Edmund Blunden's edition of the Collected Poems in 1931 and an ardent eulogy from C. Day Lewis in A Hope for Poetry, Rosenberg was largely ignored until 1937 when a new Rosenberg-enthusiast, Denys Harding, fired by F.R. Leavis' energetic support for the poet, emerged to collate all extant Rosenberg material and prepare for its publication as The Collected Works in June. The publication coincided with a Memorial Exhibition of Rosenberg's paintings and drawings at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, the opening address of which was given by Edward Marsh who once more ' [paraded] ...all his old ambivalences'³ about Rosenberg's achievement, acknowledging that he

1. A Survey of Modernist Poetry (1927), pp.220-1.

2. Jean Liddiard, I.R. : The Half-Used Life, (1975), p.249.

3. Cohen, Journey to the Trenches, p.183.

was an 'inheritor of unfulfilled renown' but also describing him as an 'Aladdin whose lamp...lit up now and then, but only for a moment, some jewel in the cave of darkness in which he groped'.

The Collected Works was overall well received by reviewers in The Spectator¹, The Criterion², Scrutiny³ and the T.L.S.⁴ in 1937. This last review showed a much more pronounced interest in Rosenberg's technique than the review of Poems fifteen years earlier had done; apart from a vague reference to the magnificent kaleidoscopic effect of 'Daughters of War' (obviously an unapproachable poem for T.L.S. reviewers), the reviewer gave a more cogent and sympathetic appraisal of Rosenberg as a serious poet whose 'name and work' deserved 'a lasting appreciation', quite different from the depreciatory tone of the earlier 1922 review. Altogether the Collected Works had succeeded in giving Rosenberg 'a kind of official niche in English literary history which the Poems had failed to achieve'⁵ but the degree of interest in Rosenberg which the publication of the Collected Works had stimulated was scarcely sustained.

During the Second World War, Keith Douglas resuscitated some interest by acknowledging Rosenberg in 'Desert Flowers'⁶ finding Rosenberg's 'classical pessimism' appropriate to his own war situation where the war's 'vastness...range and speed forced upon them, officers and enlisted men alike, the same immobility of

1. William Plomer: I.R. was 'a highly imaginative artist ...more concerned with love than war'.

2. Herbert Read found the book 'in every respect (except the exasperating text arrangement)...a worthy memorial'.

3. F.R.Leavis warmly applauded the publication of C.W., declaring that 'genius is the word for Rosenberg, who has all the robustness of genius'.

4. 3.7.37.

5. Cohen, Journey to the Trenches, p.181.

6. 'Living in the wide landscape are the flowers - /Rosenberg, I only repeat what you were saying...'

'choice over their own fate that Rosenberg experienced as a private in the trenches, an immobility not yet known to the officer class in 1917-18'.¹ Rosenberg was also featured - sparingly - in the rash of war poetry anthologies produced from 1940 onwards (though, significantly, he was excluded by Robert Nichols², who had been very closely associated with the Georgian Movement³ and who possibly ignored Rosenberg in the belief that he was outside the mainstream of Georgian principles and practice).⁴

In 1950 another attempt was made to secure for Rosenberg the reputation he deserved with the assembling together of all his poems (including juvenilia and fragments) for publication as the Collected Poems - which was quite well received in America. David Daiches reviewed the Collected Poems very favourably in Commentary, remarking upon Rosenberg's 'mythopoeic manner'. He speculated that 'had Rosenberg lived to develop further along the lines on which he had already moved, he might have changed the course of modern English poetry, producing side by side with the poetry of Eliot... a richer and more monumental kind of verse, opposing a new romantic poetry to the new metaphysical brand'.⁵ The 'lush romantic' aspect of Rosenberg's poetry was detected also by the T.L.S.⁶ reviewer of Collected Poems who, while conceding that Rosenberg's

-
1. J.Cohen, 'The War Poet as Archetypal Spokesman', Stand IV,3,p.23.
 2. Anthology of War Poetry 1914 - 1918, (1943).
 3. See Chapter 2, Section (e), especially.
 4. Perhaps the same conviction influenced Blunden to dismiss I.R. from his discussion in the British Council monograph War Poets 1914-1918, (1958) with a very cursory reference to 'the remembrance and...the passionate idea of I.R.',p.39.
 5. Quoted Cohen, Journey to the Trenches,p.185
 6. 28.7.50.

distinctive characteristic was his 'visionary originality', compared the 'traits of luxuriance' in his verse to a similar lushness in Owen's work. Of the two however, the reviewer contended that Rosenberg was the less significant poet, unable to match Owen's 'comprehensive design and unification'. While it may be true that Rosenberg never achieved a complete unification of his apocalyptic vision of war, his aspirations were considerably larger than those of Owen as The Unicorn illustrates, where the War is absorbed in the overall epic design rather than focused upon exclusively.

Throughout the 1950's, Rosenberg's poetry and painting received favourable attention - usually in Jewish periodicals - culminating in the 1959 Memorial Exhibition, opened by Sir Herbert Read, at Leeds University which turned up some new verse-fragments as well as the important correspondence between Rosenberg and Sydney Schiff, quoted in the Catalogue with Letters.¹ Following this exhibition, which can be said to have positively established Rosenberg as a name to be reckoned with in the context of twentieth century poetry, interest in his work has intensified with chapters on him in the major 1960's critical assessments of First World War poetry²; more lavish anthological selections³, and - more recently - an extraordinary 'Rosenberg Revival'⁴ in 1975 with the publication of three biographies.⁵

1. 300 copies of the Catalogue were produced containing brief essays by Jon Silkin and Maurice de Saumarez (who organized the Exhibition with the help of the indefatigable Annie Wynick, I.R.'s sister) plus the new material.

2. Johnston, English Poetry of the 1 W.W. (1964); Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight (1965); Frederick Grubb, A Vision of Reality (1965) and a little later the tortuous but most closely-detailed evaluation of I.R.'s poetry in Silkin, Out of Battle (1972).

3. e.g. Gardner, Up the Line to Death (1964) - 5 poems; Parsons, Men Who March Away (1965) - 8 poems.

4. W.W. Robson, 'The poet from Cable Street', T.L.S., 29.8.75.

5. Cohen, Journey to the Trenches, Liddiard, I.R.: The Half-Used Life, J. Moorcroft Wilson, I.R.

Professor Robson's closely-researched and highly informative review in the T.L.S. of these three biographies traces carefully Rosenberg's social and literary background and discusses him more in terms of an idiosyncratic contemporary figure than a long-dead 'war poet'. Rosenberg's relationships with Binyon, Bottomley and Edward Marsh are fully charted and - while recognizing Rosenberg's early allegiance to the Romantics - Robson also acknowledges other possible influences upon his poetic development such as T.E. Hulme - with his theory of the superseding of the Romantic epoch by a Classical era of 'hard, dry' verse - and the Imagists. The review pays tribute to Rosenberg's efforts to secure some kind of a responsible readership and, more especially, his attempts to overcome the technical difficulties he encountered in trying to reconcile the inevitable dichotomies in his work. In many cases the only result was a 'shattering unevenness' but it is suggested that it is those same dichotomies which provide the tension intrinsic to the strength of Rosenberg's poetry. One of Professor Robson's principal preoccupations in this lengthy review is the same problem which has taxed most of Rosenberg's critics: the problem of definition.

Since Rosenberg was acquainted with the dogmas of both Marsh and Hulme, can he be designated as belonging more particularly to the Georgian or Imagist camp? Or, more broadly, is he in the Romantic or Classical tradition of poets? The interpretation Professor Robson extends, based on an acceptance of the undeniable ambivalence at the root of Rosenberg's work, is that he was a 'truly original' poet who defies classification but who nevertheless did assimilate certain features of both 'schools' of pre-War

poetry in order 'to work out his own conception of poetry' and it is the extent to which Rosenberg was influenced by the two rival dogmas which will be considered in this present analysis of Rosenberg's work.

Probably the most feasible explanation for Isaac Rosenberg's occasional¹ classification as a Georgian Poet was the fact that he was first encouraged by poets with Georgian affiliations, such as Bottomley, Abercrombie and Trevelyan; in addition, the architect of the Georgian Poetry anthologies - Edward Marsh - became his 'mentor and patron'² and a stern paternalistic critic of the work Rosenberg sent him for comment. Understandably, Marsh, whose criteria for judging the excellence of a poem have been mentioned before³ - 'intelligibility, music, raciness' and, preferably, some discernible formal principle - found much of Rosenberg's poetry incompatible with his own taste and obscure.⁴

Marsh had been first attracted to Rosenberg by his painting which had sufficiently interested him to suggest its inclusion in the Georgian Drawings anthology he had hoped to launch as a companion volume to G.P. I in 1912. This project was never realized but Marsh had continued, nonetheless, to extend his literary tutelage to Rosenberg even though this resulted in a number of acrimonious exchanges of correspondence with the defiant aspirant

1. For as J.Press, Map of Modern English Verse, p.105, points out, many critics who were suspicious of the connotations of the term 'Georgian' were at pains to deny the title to any poet of merit believing that 'if [the poet's work] is good it cannot be Georgian; if it is Georgian it must, inso facto, be feeble'.

2. Cohen, 'I.R.: From Romantic to Classic', T.S.E., p.129 n.

3. See Chapter 1.

4. Obscurity being E.M.'s 'poetic bête noire' as he testifies in A Number of People, pp.322-3: 'I hold strongly that poetry is communication, and that it is the poet's duty, to the best of his ability, to let the reader know what he is driving at'; it was I.R.'s failure to comply with this dictum in Moses that led to E.M.'s dismissal of it as a 'farrago'.

on occasion.

Clearly Rosenberg was not an orthodox Georgian Poet, chiefly because he lacked the strong sense of an English rural tradition¹ which impelled the poets of the first three (at least) of the G.R. anthologies: he was isolated from this dominant English pastoralism both spiritually (because he was a Jew born of poor Russian immigrant parents) and physically (because his pre-War life was spent principally in three great cities: Bristol, London and, briefly, Cape Town. Nevertheless, certain aspects of his early poetry and of his general outlook recommended him to the Georgian brotherhood: in particular, the strong vein of romanticism - which is still in evidence in his more mature poetry - derived, in part, from his love for and reading of the Romantic poets (especially Keats and Shelley) and also from his rugged upbringing which may have imprinted upon him the necessity for political change and social realignment², while at the same time imbuing him with the conviction that hope eternal would sustain him even in the most desperate circumstances. As Rosenberg wrote to Gordon Bottomley in the

1. As Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight, p.110, points out, 'Because of his upbringing, I.R. had no English pastoral nostalgia to set against front-line experience and for him war was a totally embracing way of life'. I.R. admits in correspondence with Miss Seaton (15.11.16, C.W. p.372) that the English countryside beloved of most post-Romantics did not mean much to him for whom London was the important centre and even in France he turned for revitalization to the positive comforts of the French villages rather than to nebulous recollections of a non-existent English rural haven: 'London may not be the place for poetry to keep healthy in, but Shakespeare did most of his work there, and Donne, Keats, Milton, Blake ... Most of the French country I have seen has been devastated by war, ... our only recollections of warm & comfortable feelings are the rare times amongst human villages'.

2. A point developed at some length by Silkin in his essay 'I.R. :: The War, Class, and the Jews', Stand IV,3, pp.33-6: 'What I.R. got from the War was a deepening sense of physical reality through which he perceived the problem of change which he transposed into the problem of man's realignments'. Similarly in Out of Battle, p.272, Silkin points out that I.R. treats the War as an 'intensification [though not a culmination] of the pre-War social struggle'.

summer of 1917, when his personal survival was very much in question: 'However, I live in an immense trust that things will turn out well'.¹ Paradoxically, as well as being buoyed up by such optimism, Rosenberg also experienced the gloom and melancholia associated with the romantic who bitterly recognizes the contrast between his aspirations and his actual attainments and there are several instances in Rosenberg's life of severe depression (notably in 1913 when he was approaching the end of his Slade School studies and was both 'rattled and disoriented'² at the uncertain future ahead).

The romantic strain in Rosenberg's early poetry evinces itself firstly in poems asserting his view of man as 'an infinite being seeking celestial perfection'³ and challenging God⁴:

For say! what can God do
To us, to Love, whom we have grown into?
Love! the poured rays of God's Eternity!
We are grown God - and shall His self-hate be?

and, secondly, in his rebellion against any form of restriction - 'oppressive order' - being imposed upon the imagination:

...And in might
Our song shall roam

Life's heart, a blossoming fire
Blown bright by thought,
While gleams and fades the infinite desire,
Phantasmed nought.

Can this be caught and caged?
Wings can be clipt
Of eagles, the sun's gaudy measure gauged,
But no sense dipt

1. Letter post-marked 20.7.17, C.W., p.376.

2. Journey to the Trenches, p.88.

3. 'I.R. : From Romantic to Classic', T.S.E., p.134.

4. 'God Made Blind', C.P., p.41 : I.R. used the central idea in this poem as the basis for the arrangement of Youth, the pamphlet privately published in 1915.

In the mystery of sense.
The troubled throng
Of words break out like¹ smothered fire through dense
And smouldering wrong.

But Rosenberg had too much regard for form and the impassioned yet controlled expression of Donne's poetry to abandon himself totally to such unrestrained enthusiasm. His imagination, characterized by 'a sinewy and muscular aliveness'², was not suited to mere decorative effusion and Rosenberg found himself drawn towards certain aspects of the 'ancient classical restraints' as he struggled to impose order on his poems. Classicism also appealed to Rosenberg since he was attracted to his own historical - as opposed to narrowly religious - Jewish background which had in turn made him aware of Hebraic fatalism and resignation, governed by a malign 'cosmic machinery' from which there was no escape and of which the War was just one more illustration. Thus the confrontation developed in Rosenberg's psyche, which he endeavoured to resolve in his poetry, between romanticism, with its exuberance, aestheticism and emphasis on Man's spiritual capacity; and classicism, with its restraints, 'dry hardness' and concentration upon the finite world and the necessary limitations to human endeavour.

The influence of classical principles is seen most clearly in Rosenberg's work from about 1915 onwards when - possibly as a result of repeated strictures from Marsh that he should make his subject matter and form less esoteric and convoluted - he made a concerted effort to achieve lucidity of expression and greater

1. 'Expression', C.P., p.44.

2. Siegfried Sassoon, Foreword, C.P., p.vii.

unity of form and design. Rosenberg's objective was the attainment of a poetic style whereby 'an interesting complexity of thought is kept in tone and right value to the dominating idea so that it is understandable and still ungraspable'¹. At the same time he was anxious to mould the overall 'unity of a poem', conscious of the validity of Binyon's and Marsh's criticism in this particular when they advised him against 'working on two different principles in the same thing'.² The 'thing' in question here was the ambitious 'Daughters of War' which is an excellent example of Rosenberg oscillating between dry, hard language and precise images expressive of the finite character of the classical approach (in order to convey 'that sense of inexorableness the human - or unhuman - side of war has'³) and the vague, sensuous phrasing, 'clouding the wild - the soft lustres of our eyes', associated with the romantic outlook (to describe the soldiers' spirits transcending the finite to consort with the immortal Amazons).

When Rosenberg discussed the poem with the dubious Marsh, he assured him that he shared his belief that 'poetry should be definite thought and clear expression, however subtle; ... there should be [no] vagueness at all; but a sense of something hidden and felt to be there'.⁴ The crucial difference between Marsh's poetic principles and Rosenberg's lies in the last two phrases: Marsh certainly disapproved of vague and 'woolly' phraseology and would have no doubt agreed with W.B. Yeats' remark about

1. Letter to G. Bottomley, 23.7.16, C.W., p.371.

2. Letter to E.M., C.W., pp.316-7.

3. Next letter to E.M., post-marked 30.7.17, C.W., p.319.

4. Ibid.

Rosenberg's 'windy rhetoric'¹, but equally, he demanded complete intelligibility with none of the subtle complex of under-tones Rosenberg was seeking to suggest in his work; such implications made Marsh uncomfortable and laid the poet open to the charge of 'obscurity' since he was - in Marsh's view - deliberately concealing from the reader what exactly he was 'driving at'.

The classical strain in Rosenberg's poetry is more acute in his trench poems chiefly because he saw the War as the prime manifestation of Man's finiteness. In addition he was himself subjected to the odious regimentation of the Front which caused him to suffer countless irritating and uncomfortable field punishments because of his incorrigible untidiness; yet, at the same time, the discipline of army life ironically benefited his poetry:

The War forced on him an orderliness and a continuity his life had lacked. His earlier romantic flights of the imagination gave way to the somber consideration of the finite, his trench poems offering testimony to the changes.²

Unlike Sassoon and Owen whose poetry springs from a spirit of rebellion - against the incompetence of the H.Q. Staff and the futile waste of human life - Rosenberg, whose outlook was coloured by his service in the ranks, is resigned (though not defeated): 'classically composed, resolute, disinterested, one of the impersonal many who suffer';³ his poems are 'simply acknowledgements of Man's particularly unfortunate situation on the Western Front' - a

1. Yeats excluded Rosenberg from The Oxford Book of Modern Verse (1936) on the grounds that he was 'all windy rhetoric'.

2. Cohen, 'I.R. : From Romantic to Classic', T.S.E., p.138.

3. Similarly, Silkin in his essay in Stand, Op.cit., p.36 comments: 'What I.R. offers us is an experience he is entirely, and thus impersonally, involved with; his pity is there, but his personal self is immersed in the experience....'

'predominantly classical memorial to the war-dead rather than a romantic protest'.

Significantly there is a movement in Rosenberg's last trench poems¹ towards classical subject matter and Biblical themes, with his most ambitious undertaking, the unfinished drama The Unicorn, based on the 'Rape of the Sabine Women' story. This Roman myth is fused with Hebraic and Egyptian elements all subjugated to an inexorable fatalism in order to 'symbolize the war and all the devastating forces let loose by an ambitious and unscrupulous will',² and Rosenberg's amalgamation of these fundamentally classical materials - fatalistic philosophy, awareness of Man's finiteness, emphasis on resignation rather than rebellion, carefully visualized objects and taut language - constitutes his 'most convincing demonstration of the classical approach to the composition of poetry'.

Chronologically, however, whatever Rosenberg's later inclinations, his first association with any formal group of poets was with the Georgians, following his introduction to Marsh by Mark Gertler, at that time one of Marsh's artist-protégés, at the Café Royal on 10th November, 1913. Admittedly the same evening Rosenberg also met T.E. Hulme but, although intrigued by Hulme's pronouncements upon the parlous state of contemporary verse and the rival claims of Romanticism and Classicism, he was never so intimate with any of the Imagist aficionados as he was to become with Marsh and his associates - notably the 'first generation' of elder Georgian poets

1. e.g. 'The Destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian Hordes' and 'A Worm fed on the Heart of Corinth'.

2. Letter to Winifreda Seaton, C.W., p.379.

Bottomley, Abercrombie and Trevelyan. Not that Rosenberg ever succeeded in achieving the same easy familiarity with Marsh that Rupert Brooke, for example, enjoyed, largely because of the social gulf which separated this son of an impoverished Russian-Jewish family living in the East End, and the son of a Cambridge Professor, Private Secretary to the First Lord of the Admiralty, steeped in the English literary tradition, friend and patron to many of the principal artists and writers of the day, who indulged his taste for their company in the comfortable surroundings of his flat at 5 Raymond Buildings.

Consequently, Rosenberg felt a sense of inadequacy in his dealings with Marsh where he was 'all too well aware of his lack of a traditional literary education'¹ even though his range of reading was extensive (from Shakespeare through the Metaphysical and Romantic poets to American and modern European poets²), perhaps more in keeping with the cosmopolitan sympathies of the Imagists who despised the 'parochialism' of the Georgian poets. Rosenberg encountered similar difficulties in his relationship with Marsh as D.H. Lawrence had done, finding Marsh intractable over any experimentation which diverged from the Georgian 'norm' and somewhat patronizing in his approach.

The epithets 'poor little...'³ constantly preface any remark

1. Liddiard, I.R. : The Half-Used Life, p.105. I.R. admitted to E.M. early in their association that he valued Marsh's views particularly because 'in literature-I have no judgement - at least for style'.

2. Cohen, Op.cit., p.156, cites I.R.'s reading interests as: Shakespeare, Milton, Donne, Keats, Shelley, Blake, Flint, Pound, Masefield, the Georgian Poets, including Brooké, Sassoon, Lawrence; Yeats, Hardy, Shaw, Poe, Whitman, Ibsen, Flaubert, Balzac, Cammaerts, Verhaeren.

3. In 1937 when E.M. opened the Whitechapel Exhibition, he still saw I.R. as 'poor little Rosenberg'- 'one of the most futile sacrifices of the War' who 'never came into his kingdom'.

made by Marsh on Rosenberg in his correspondence with others in his circle (and even Marsh's biographer Christopher Hassall lapses into this depreciatory tone, referring to the 'natural genius of unassuming little Rosenberg'¹) which naturally suggests that Marsh mis-judged the true extent of Rosenberg's potential as a poet - just as he had under-estimated Edward Thomas. Instead of congratulating Rosenberg on the width of his imagination and encouraging him to probe further his apocalyptic vision, he complained that Moses, for example, lacked totally any 'architectonics' - both the shaping instinct and the reserve of power that carries a thing through² - and perpetually reminded Rosenberg of the need for simple, clear expression where there was no room for any vagueness, obscurity or reverberation of meaning: 'Marsh could not accept the complexity of Rosenberg's approach; his Georgian preference for easy diction and clear images that could be grasped immediately hampered his understanding of Rosenberg's work'.³

Although Marsh was not the best judge of Rosenberg's poetry, it must be admitted that there is some core of justification in certain of his criticisms of Rosenberg's work - namely, the need for more structuring of design and less heavily-charged imagery - and his financial and other assistance to Rosenberg deserves to be recognized. From May 1914 when Rosenberg first visited Marsh with a selection of his paintings and poems, Marsh sustained his

1. E.M., p.381. In fact, even Hassall allows himself a rare moment of direct criticism when he declares: 'It was a pity that M., who ministered to R.'s creature comforts, never considered him more than a genius in the making. If 'Dead Man's Dump' had appeared in G.P.III... the third issue might have farèd better with some...critics'.

2. E.M. letter to Bottomley, quoted E.M., p.402.

3. Liddiard, Op.cit., p.196. Silkin, Out of Battle, p.258, remarks with some acerbity that it was just as well E.M. did not like I.R.'s work for had he done so he would only have encouraged the weaknesses in his poetry and I.R. 'was not in any case a Georgian'.

interest in his work and did his best to ameliorate Rosenberg's personal circumstances also: he facilitated Rosenberg's application to the Emigration Office to visit his sister Minnie in South Africa; provided the money needed to print Youth in 1915; corrected the proofs of Moses (much as he disliked the title poem) in 1916 and tried to distribute copies and, once Rosenberg had joined up, not only did Marsh write to him almost every week but, under pressure from Annie, Marsh did what he could to get Rosenberg examined in the hope that he might be returned home as unfit for military service overseas. But probably the greatest service Marsh did for Rosenberg was the least conscious: he put him in touch with the exponents of one of the most important developments in poetry of the day and introduced him to the general ideas and principles of the Georgian Movement where, hitherto, Rosenberg's experience had been confined to his circle of young Jewish friends - John Rodker, David Bomberg, Joseph Leftwich - who shared the same background as himself and whose sympathies (especially in the case of Rodker) were firmly aligned with those of the Imagist Group.

Just before embarking for South Africa in 1914 - a trip primarily undertaken because of Rosenberg's weak lungs - Marsh presented him with a copy of G.P. I. Rosenberg was particularly impressed by the Georgians' 'personal vision and simplicity of expression', two qualities he was striving for in his own poetry of this period; so it was all the more exciting when - on his return from South Africa - he discovered that both Abercrombie and Bottomley were willing to enter into correspondence with him and volunteer their opinions on his work. Rosenberg found them - and later R.C. Trevelyan also - rather more encouraging than Marsh

had been, although Bottomley's criticism - which Rosenberg appeared to value more highly than any one else's - 'did reflect Georgian reservations similar to Marsh's; he was unhappy about the young poet's lack of "definition" for instance. Yet being more flexible than Marsh, he could avoid the impasse that the latter and Rosenberg were always reaching.... Marsh, however, seems to have taken Rosenberg's persistent non-Georgian tendencies personally'.¹

As practising poets, Abercrombie and Bottomley sympathised with the technical difficulties Rosenberg faced and, under their influence, he was drawn more and more to the verse-drama² form, especially since 'he was already absorbed with the composition of Moses. In fact Rosenberg's Moses almost caused a rift between the Georgian group in that Marsh strongly repudiated Rosenberg's 'lawless and grotesque manner' of writing with scant attention paid 'to form and tradition'³ while Bottomley was quite impressed by the poem:

...it has the large fine movement, that ample sweep which is the first requisite of great poetry, and which lately has dropped out of sight in the hands of exquisite lyricists who try to make us believe there is great virtue in being short of breath I value still more the instinct for large organization which holds the whole together.⁴

He suggested to Marsh that here was 'a poet "de longue-haleine" amongst the youngsters; [who] has paid the customary allegiance to Poundisme, Unanisme and the rest with an energy and vividness

1. Liddiard, Op.cit., p.198.

2. Bottomley having stimulated a furore in literary circles with King Lear's Wife (G.P. II) and Abercrombie having ventured into the verse-drama genre with The Sale of St. Thomas (G.P. I).

3. E.M. to Bottomley, 1916, Marsh Letter Collection, (M.L.C.), New York Public Library.

4. Bottomley to I.R., 1916, M.L.C.

'which distinguishes him from the others'¹ although he conceded that perhaps Rosenberg could 'swerve [marginally] towards the Centre'. Rosenberg was also advised and supported by another poet 'of the Centre' - Laurence Binyon - and, encouraged by his correspondents, he continued to develop his own 'un-Georgian' ideas on poetry, arguing out his beliefs and defending them in his discussions with members of the Georgian movement.

When it came to Rosenberg's response to the War, however, although he reacted strongly against German militarism, he did not share the upsurge of patriotic fervour and euphoria at the anticipated spiritual expurgation² experienced by the majority of young Georgian poets. Not only was Rosenberg deeply affected by his parents' 'Tolstoyan' principles of pacifism (his father having emigrated from Russia in order to escape conscription) but he thoroughly abominated war himself, as he made clear in a letter to Marsh from South Africa in August 1914: 'Know that I despise war and hate war'.³

Rosenberg thus had no direct motive for rushing to the recruiting station especially since he was not emotionally committed to England as the Georgian poets were through their love of the English country-side: 'His experience of English civilization, as a Jew brought up in the East End of London, was naturally very

1. Letter from Bottomley to E.M., 1916, M.L.C.

2. Though Rosenberg did allow the possibility that although 'one might succumb, be destroyed ... one might also ... be renewed, made larger, healthier'. (Letter to Sydney Schiff, late 1915, Leeds Exhibition Catalogue, p.12. Schiff, a wealthy middle-aged English Jew who fulfilled a function similar to that of E.M. - patron to I.R. - had his own extensive range of friends including T.S.Eliot, K. Mansfield and Marcel Proust.)

3. 8.8.14.

'different [from Rupert Brooke's]. His allegiances were to individuals - to English poets rather than to a tradition of English poetry - to his family and friends rather than to an abstract conception of England',¹ and yet Rosenberg shrank from the publicity of declaring himself a conscientious objector and the subsequent ridicule and resentment such a stand attracted. Quite suddenly, in late 1915, after he appeared to have convinced himself not to volunteer, he joined up; but nothing could be further removed from Brooke's discovery of the essential 'holiness' in the English soil which necessitated his almost instantaneous application for a commission in the Royal Naval Division in September 1914, and Rosenberg's casual, half-ironic announcement that he had enlisted, written on Y.M.C.A. notepaper to Schiff in the autumn of 1915:

... I could not get the work I thought I might so I have joined this Bantam Battalion (as I was too short for any other) which seems to be the most rascally affair in the worlds I am ²looking forward to having a bad time altogether.

Looking back over those of Rosenberg's pre-enlistment poems - the unpublished pieces and fragments, as well as the two privately-printed pamphlets Night and Day (1912) and Youth (1915) - which can be broadly categorized as romantic rather than classical, several influences can be detected: Rosenberg's reading of the Romantic poets; his fascination with fin-de-siècle aestheticism; his interest in the Georgian Movement's principles of simple expression and 'personal vision'. The overall tone in these early poems is one of lush sensuousness, every so often redeemed from romantic excess by a striking image or closely-packed conceit. The poet Rosenberg

1. Liddiard, Op.cit., p.182.

2. Leeds Exhibition Catalogue, (L.E.C.), p.10.

envisages in the first two of his poems so entitled¹ corresponds to the traditional concept of the 'romantic singer', bearing 'alone ... the burden of alienated days' as he wanders, suffering, along 'his tear-bewildered ways', aspiring beyond the finite world of Man to commune with the elements:

He takes the glory from the gold²
For consecration of the mould,
He strains his ears to the clouds' lips,
He sings the song they sang to him
And his brow drips
In amber that the seraphim
Have held for him and hold,

afterwards returning to energize an impoverished world: '... the master, [the poet] speaks and lo! / The dead world's shed, / Strange winds, new skies and rivers flow / Illumined from the hill'.

Rosenberg also seems to have been attracted, in his early poems, to certain quintessentially romantic subjects - dawn, twilight, night - though he eschews those specifically 'rural'³ topics - English farms, villages, woods and verdant pastures - beloved of the Georgian poets. A sensuous lushness, characteristic of young Keatsian-influenced poets, overlays these poems concerned with the particular diurnal transitions: night is realized in terms of 'nestling hair' that 'strays on my cheeks' stirring, 'with sleek lascivious velvety caresses'⁴, erotic fancies ; while dawn is apo-

1. 'The Poet' I, 1912, C.P., p.177 and 'The Poet' II, 1913, C.P., p.155. The autobiographical quality in the 3 'Poet' poems corresponds to I.R.'s preoccupation in his art with self-portraits: in both media it would appear that he is searching for his own identity.

2. The 'gold' leit-motiv recurs throughout I.R.'s work: it seems to have its origins in romantic poetry as a generalized term suggestive of warmth, luxury & deep colour, and evolves into a clearly-visualized image of poetry as a whole.

3. Preferring the vitality of his particular 'genius loci' in such pieces as 'A Ballad of Whitechapel' and 'Fleet Street'.

4. 'Night', C.P., p.133.

And I have tried to hold in net like silver fish
the sweet starbeams,
But all these things are shadowed gleams of things¹
beyond the firmament,

but it is the last of the triad which shows the most promise.

Although the dominant tone is still romantic and the diction is unquestionably luxuriant, the poet suggests he is capable of more than is achieved here if he can succeed in fusing - in a tightly-compressed whole - linguistic facility with clearly-visualized imagery:

A sumptuous splendour of leaves
Mumuroously fanning the evening heaven;
And I hear
In the 'soft living grey shadows,
In the brooding evanescent atmosphere,
The voice of impatient night.

... the golden glory of day [shall]
Give birth to the lambent face of the twilight,
And she shall grow into a vast enormous pearl maiden
Whose velvet tresses² shall envelop the world -
Night.³

Rosenberg's evident concern to move towards a more concentrated poetic style was similarly mirrored in his painting of the 1914 - 1915 period which was characterized by 'a simplification that moves towards compression of experience rather than towards the schematic' while still ensuring that 'the symbol always retains the sensuousness of the original experience'.⁴ His preoccupation with greater compression can also be gauged from his comments,

1. 'Twilight' II, C.P., p.162.

2. The hair-image is another recurrent motif in I.R.'s poetry: hair is often associated with danger or trapping - as in the case of Absalom caught by the hair to 'hang from implacable boughs' ('Chagrin') and sexual betrayal - which underlies the Nubian's reference in The Amulet to 'girls whose hair is like heights of night ringing with never-seen larks / Or blindness dim with dreams' and culminates in 'Returning, We Hear the Larks'.

3. 'Twilight' III, C.P., p.153.

4. Leeds Exhibition Catalogue, p.29.

in a letter to Mrs Herbert Cohen early in June 1916¹, on a recent issue of the Poetry Review, certain items from which he criticised for being 'too breathless' and lacking sufficient 'packing'. As well as seeking to achieve a more compact form, Rosenberg was also anxious to avoid the 'commonplace' in his struggle for the original, the elemental and it was for this reason he repudiated Rupert Brooke's 'begloried 1914 sonnets' with their 'second-hand phrases' which detract from the 'reality and strength' of the actual poems. It is perhaps this stringent 'eye towards his own verse'² which separated him from those run-of-the-mill Georgian poets who did not exercise such close intellectual scrutiny over their work, being satisfied with mellifluousness.

Whereas most of Rosenberg's contemporaries, 'formed in the Georgian mould ... had to adapt their basically conventional verse forms to sustain a weight of new [War] experience Rosenberg was from the beginning an experimenter, or perhaps an explorer, in his use of poetic language'.³ In addition, he was differentiated from most of his contemporaries because he was a painter as well as a poet and probably it is this circumstance which intensified Rosenberg's awareness of the potential vitality of the image⁴ and pre-disposed him towards the ideas and practice of the Imagist school.

Having been introduced to T.E. Hulme, the spokesman for the Imagists, on the same evening as he met Marsh, Rosenberg attended

1. E.W., p.348.

2. R.H.Ross, The Georgian Revolt, p.172.

3. Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight, p.110.

4. As J.M.Wilson, I.R.: Poet and Painter, p.209, points out in her biography which concentrates on I.R.'s development as a painter, it is the 'strong visual element in his poetry which helps to make up his unique quality'.

a number of Hulme's Frith Street 'soirées' but he appears to have regarded himself as observer¹ rather than active participant at these - often rumbustious - meetings and, apart from a later brief correspondence with Ezra Pound over some poems from Youth, which Pound promised to send to Harriet Monroe for inclusion in her influential Chicago magazine Poetry, Rosenberg's personal contacts with the Imagists were very limited. Nonetheless he was conversant with their principles - for he was constantly questioning 'his own assumptions in a way which brought him close to Imagist theory'² - and he particularly approved of their interest in new rhythms, their predilection for free verse rather than conventional forms, the lack of restriction in the choice of subject matter, the use of precise images to 'render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities'³, the emphasis on hard, clear poetry, and the overall impulse towards concentration - though Rosenberg was less convinced of the advantage of telescoping subject matter into a few lines as the Imagists, who popularized such forms as the exquisite Japanese 'haikai' and 'tanka', advocated.

The Imagist influence is manifested in Rosenberg's 'concentration on more precise imagery, less abstract language and use of free verse, as well as in his willingness to handle subjects he would once not have considered strictly "poetic"'⁴ but Rosenberg is seldom content with just a clearly-visualized image; he makes a practice of extracting the maximum connotative power from his images

1. J. Liddiard, Op.cit., p.119, describes I.R.'s characteristic pose in literary circles as that of one who enjoys 'hovering and listening' in the region of vociferous groups.

2. Wilson, Op.cit., p.103.

3. Preface to Some Imagist Poets, 1915, pp.vi-viii, written principally by Richard Aldington.

4. Wilson, Op.cit., p.114.

'reworking [them] again and again'¹ - seeming 'to leave every idea partly embedded in the undifferentiated mass of related ideas from which it has emerged'² - in order to suggest the multifarious layers of symbolism³ which give Rosenberg's best work its characteristic 'multi-layered subtlety'.⁴ Rosenberg's difficulty was to restrict the agglomeration of metaphors, stimulated by his fertile imagination, from getting out of control and swamping the original idea by 'over-abundant expression'. Indirectly, his army-service might have helped him in this respect by imposing a certain physical discipline upon him which both limited the amount of time he could devote to the mechanics of writing and induced his urgent re-appraisal of his earlier verbal luxuriance: a pruning back of the 'earlier loosely-evolved images, complete in themselves, shorn of inessentials'.⁵

At the same time as his interest in Imagism was fostered, Rosenberg appears to have embraced - briefly - some of the spirit and bombast of Vorticism, as his essay on 'Art'⁶ suggests: 'Violence and perpetual struggle - this is life ... and this can only be expressed by lines that are violent and struggle, that are mechanical and purely abstract'. Although Rosenberg undoubtedly had an icono-

1. D.W.Harding, quoted Cohen, Journey to the Trenches, p.143.

2. Harding, Experience into Words (1963), p.100.

3. I.R. analysed in his essay on the American poet Emerson in 1912, C.W., p.254, what his objective was in his own poetry: 'That ebullition of the heart that seeks in novel but exact metaphor to express itself, the strong but delicate apocalyptical imagination that startles and suggests, the inward sanity that controls and directs...'

4. Cohen, Op.cit., p.143. Liddiard, Op.cit., p.97 also comments on the curious inter-dependence of I.R.'s images whereby 'out of a simple analogy...has grown a set of images that interlock, moving from the visual...to the abstract'.

5. Cohen, Op.cit., p.152

6. Based on the Lecture on Art which I.R. gave during his visit to South Africa, first printed in S.African Women in Council, late 1914.

clastic *strain* in his personality which appears to some extent in the longer poems, it is unlikely that he would have been satisfied for long with the 'pure abstraction' he is proclaiming here which leaves little room for his distinctive sensuous diction and that 'ebullition of the heart' integral to 'true poetry'.

On the other hand, Rosenberg resisted the temptation of succumbing to the extreme Romantic effusion of the Futurists which 'glamorized violence'¹, even though in the same essay on 'Art', he characterizes their aims quite sympathetically and gives the impression that he approves in principle of the radical social and political upheaval their gospel postulates:

Theirs is an ideal of strength and scorn. The tiger must battle with the tiger. The world must be cleansed of the useless old and weak; for the splendour of battle must rage between the strong and the strong. Theirs is the terrible beauty of destruction and the furious energy in destroying. They would burn up the past; they would destroy all standards. They have wearied of this unfair competition of the dead with the living.

The Futurists celebrated an essentially literary violence which, certainly in England, did not survive the actual destructive shock of war, and because Rosenberg had 'kept his head in peace, he was able to keep it in war Never having committed himself to that kind of extreme he was not irrevocably shocked and thrown into disarray by its fulfilment in reality as other artists and poets were'².

In several of Rosenberg's pre-War poems there is evidence of an Imagistic technique in practice. Fragment XXXVII³ is a case in point:

1. Liddiard, Op.cit., p.149.

2. Ibid.

3. C.P., p.225.

Green thoughts are
Ice block on a barrow
Gleaming in July.
A little boy with bare feet
And jewels at his nose stands by.

This exercise proves that Rosenberg was quite capable of '[paring]' down his verse to the stringent demands of Imagism,¹ but he would have surely designated such efforts as only 'experiments in versification'.² More characteristic of Rosenberg's complex handling of images are two poems, the first of which, 'Spiritual Isolation',³ 1912, pre-dates his involvement with Imagism but derives strongly from Rosenberg's reading of Donne, and the second, 'Midsummer Frost',⁴ which appeared in Youth (1915). The first of these pieces is notable for the last stanza where the poet - shunned by his Maker as 'a wretch stricken with leprosy' - strives to find some relief for his abandonment by a pretence of gaiety which he cannot sustain:

... In my great loneliness,
This haunted desolation's dire distress,
I strove with April buds my thoughts to dress,
Therewith to reach to joy through gay attire;
But as I plucked came one of those pale griefs
With mouth of parched desire
And breathed upon the buds and charred the leaves.

Although the association of spring with hope and the prospect of spiritual regeneration constitutes one of the most hackneyed images in poetry, Rosenberg's variation on the 'April-buds' theme has a certain freshness and indicates a mind engaged on the 'intolerable wrestle /With words and meanings' in the search for its own distinctive character, using images compact with meaning.

1. Liddiard, Op.cit., p.118.

2. Phrase used to describe F.S.Flint's poems in the Imagist mode in a letter to Miss Seaton, 1912, C.W., p.326.

3. C.P., pp.26-7.

4. C.P., pp.34-5.

'Midsummer Frost', the first draft of which Rosenberg sent Marsh in the spring of 1914, is indicative of this next stage in Rosenberg's development: it is a more mature and carefully-wrought piece where the central idea develops through a chain of interlocking metaphors, as in an Imagist poem, but the 'density of texture' is unmistakably Rosenberg's own:

See, from the fire-fountained noon, there creep
Lazy yellow ardours towards pale evening,
To thread dark and vain fire
Over my unsens'd heart,
Dead heart, no urgent summer can reach.
Hidden as a root from air or a star from day;
A frozen pool whereon mirth dances;
Where the shining boys would fish.

Later the same year, Rosenberg's conversance with the Imagist mode facilitated his response to news of the declaration of war. In South Africa, he was already geographically removed from the immediate vortex of frenetic excitement and War-mania but the technique of objectivity he had absorbed from the Imagists intensified the sense of distance from the events at home and in France and, through the assimilation of ideas and images in relative tranquillity, an exceptional clarity and universality of vision (for 1914) was glimpsed. Although the last stanza unconsciously anticipates Brooke's image of 'swimmers into clean-ness leaping / Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary' and the references to the return of 'Holiness' and 'Honour' to this spiritually moribund earth, Rosenberg's impulse is more elemental and the language crisper and more suggestive of a number of interpretations:

Some spirit old
Hath turned with malign kiss
Our lives to mould.

Red fangs have torn His face.
God's blood is shed.
He mourns from His lone place
His children dead.

O! ancient¹ crimson curse!
Corrode, consume.
Give back this universe
Its pristine bloom.²

A less distinguished poem, prompted by the general interest in the affairs of war but bearing little resemblance to the actuality of the battle-dead, is 'The Dead Heroes'³ which appeared in Youth. The poem is couched in disappointingly conventional diction and uncharacteristically grandiose sentiment:

Flame out, you glorious skies,
Welcome our brave,
Kiss their exultant eyes;
Give what they gave.

England - Time gave them thee;
They gave back this
To win Eternity
And claim God's kiss.

Although Rosenberg did not impatiently rush to offer himself 'for England' as his stylized heroes - and Brooke - did, he was very conscious on his return to London of the War's insidious influence. During 1915, the Imagist contingent - including T.E. Hulme, Aldington, Gaudier-Brzeska - had left, or were in the process of leaving for France and Rosenberg became increasingly restless, unable to concentrate on his primary objectives of finding

1. The term 'ancient' is characteristic of I.R.'s scriptural quality and underlines the fact that his conception of war is primordial, apocalyptic and linked with his Hebraic heritage.

2. 'On Receiving News of the War', Cape Town, 1914, Earlier Poems Unpublished, 1914-5, C.P., p.124. The last stanza is echoed in I.R.'s letter to Schiff after his enlistment: 'One might succumb, be destroyed - but one might also (and the chances are even greater for it) be renewed, made larger, healthier'.

3. C.P., p.42. A similar conventionality infects I.R.'s rendering of the Sir Philip Sidney story in 'The Dying Soldier' which concludes with the banal line: 'He moaned and swooned to death'.

conducive employment and continuing work on his poems, deeply depressed by his persistent poverty which necessitated his dependence upon the already over-stretched family-resources, he found himself irresistibly drawn towards the maelstrom:

There is always behind or through my object some pressing sense of foreign matter, immediate and not personal which hinders and disjoins what otherwise have coherence and perhaps weight.¹

Once enlisted and resigned to 'a bad time altogether', Rosenberg settled down to the army routine which he found irksome and often petty² but, after all, only 'a further aspect of a life which had always been harsh and unrewarding'.³ Although he had warned his correspondents not to expect 'proper continuity or even coherence' in his writing, he nevertheless determined to persevere with his poetry believing that 'if [poetry] at this time is no use, it certainly won't be at any other'.⁴ Rosenberg considered the first poems he wrote after joining up - 'Spring, 1916' and 'Marching'⁵ - his 'strongest work' to date and hopefully circulated them to different papers 'as they are war poems and topical' but without success. This fruitless exercise in promoting his work led to Rosenberg's rueful conclusion that his public must be 'still in the womb'⁶, but, far from being cast down, he convinced himself that the very fact that his poems had been rejected was itself a vindication of their literary

1. Letter to E.M., late 1915, C.W., p.303.

2. In a particularly rebellious mood I.R. wrote that 'The army is the most detestable invention on this earth and nobody but a private in the army knows what it is to be a slave'.

3. Liddiard, Op.cit., p.193.

4. Letter to E.M., 30.6.16.

5. Later published in Moses, 1916.

6. Letter to Schiff, early 1916, Leeds Exhibition Catalogue, p.14.

worth.¹

'Spring, 1916'² is in the tradition of Rosenberg's earlier Romantic-inspired and Georgian-influenced verse (of which 'Spring'³ with its conventional subject-matter - birds, pink blossoms, fair maiden - and unadventurous rhyming scheme - 'sing/Spring', 'year /near' - is a prime example) and its interest as a poem is much enhanced if the previous 'exercise in versification' is borne in mind: the juxtaposition of the two poems is quite startling. The original, limpid sketch of a vernal scene awaiting the arrival of the maiden without whom the Spring is not complete has been brutally transmogrified into a 'masquerade' over which the 'ruined Queen' presides, 'so altered from her May mien'. The final stanza attempts to articulate the inevitable question: how did this horrific transformation come about? And what has happened to those men whose faith in the benignity of nature has been betrayed? One assumes they met the same fate as Wilfred Owen's soldiers for whose blood 'earth set sudden cups / In thousands'⁴:

Who lured her vivid beauty so
To be that strained chilled thing that moves
So ghastly midst her young brood
Of pregnant shoots that she for men did grow?
Where are the strong men who made these their loves?
Spring! God pity your mood!

One can see why the poem was not approved of by the popular press which was looking for simple and immediately-accessible subject

1. Since I.R. evidently had a very low opinion of the current taste in verse of public and critics alike.

2. C.P., p.46.

3. Earlier Poems 1913, C.P., p.150.

4. Perhaps this also explains what Spring 'has...fed on': she has 'consumed' the dead soldiers and still requires 'fuel for a coming spring'.

matter; regular beat and rhyming scheme and, above all, an expression of contemporary sentiment or, rather, an expression of what the public expected 'soldier-boys' to^{be} thinking and feeling.

Whereas 'Spring 1916' illustrates Rosenberg's Romantic affiliations - even if they are masked by the awkward inversions and sometimes incongruous juxtapositions of adjectives - 'Marching (As Seen from the Left File)',¹ is composed according to Rosenberg's version of Imagistic technique. The first stanza in particular demonstrates this style, revolving as it does around two central colours: red and khaki, and the mechanical quality of all the human faculties mobilized to kill, reflected in contemporaneous Vorticist painting², is also suggested in the rhythmic swinging arms, and 'automatic' feet of the marching men:

My eyes catch ruddy necks
Sturdily pressed back -
All a red brick moving glint.
Like flaming pendulums, hands
Swing across the khaki -
Mustard-coloured khaki -
To the automatic feet.

It is in the second stanza that Rosenberg's distinctive 'voice' asserts itself in the highly-compressed complex of images - harvest; forging of iron; horse of death; 'blind fingers'³; deadly shower of missiles - which are so charged with symbolic suggestion that it is impossible to achieve the level of intensity sustained by the images in the context of the poem if any paraphrase is attempted:

1. The very specific title is reminiscent of the artist's approach to his work where the scope of the painting is scrupulously defined and the angle from which the subject is approached is carefully delineated. 'Marching' is essentially a painter's poem.

2. J.H. Johnston makes the comment that this poem 'illustrates the painter's eye for symmetry and colour' and represents I.R.'s general technique in which the 'painter's visualization is heightened by the poet's perception of ironic contrasts', English Poetry of I W.W.

3. Comparable with the sinister disembodied hand in Dylan Thomas' 'The Hand that Signed the Paper' which also ordained indiscriminate slaughter.

We husband the ancient glory
In these bared necks and hands.
Nor broke is the forge of Mars;
But a subtler brain beats iron
To shoe the hoofs of death
(Who paws dynamic air now).
Blind fingers loose an iron cloud
To rain immortal darkness
On strong eyes.

The London magazine editors would probably have looked even more askance at this offering from Rosenberg with its strictly metaphysical appeal and the mystifyingly condensed imagery of the second stanza - although relatively straightforward if judged by the standards of the more abstruse The Unicorn - but Rosenberg met with more success in America, for Harriet Monroe agreed to print 'Marching' in Poetry and it eventually appeared in the December 1916 issue.

By the time Rosenberg embarked for France at the beginning of June, 1916, he had succeeded in getting Moses into print - again at his own expense - and left his sister Annie in charge of the distributing of the pamphlet and Marsh as overall executor. He wryly described to his mentor the King's inspection of his Battalion just before they departed for the Front, introducing a strain of mordant humour - not unlike that of Graves, but all the more surprising considering the harsher conditions of Rosenberg's War service - which punctures more succinctly than lengthy treatises on the 'changing character of the War' the initial naive and hopelessly idealistic response to 'the Call'.

Rosenberg and his fellow privates were no statuesque, 'golden-haired Apollos' fired by the purest patriotism to 'answer the Call', and most of whom had been wiped out in the Gallipoli Campaign or the abortive offensives in Flanders in 1915. Neither could they be numbered among the sturdy ranks of the Citizen Army, trained to

perfection and eager to be among the first doomed waves of attackers to be hurled against the barbed wire and German machine-guns on 1st July, 1916. The infantrymen of A Company, 11th Battalion, King's Own Royal Lancasters were physically unprepossessing; their mental outlook was generally cynical and tough, hardened by years of pre-War deprivation; and they were spiritually destitute, devoid of any idealistic and imaginative perceptions: in short 'a horrible rabble' reminiscent of Falstaff's scarecrows and open to ridicule on account of their size:

The king inspected us Thursday. I believe its the first Bantam Brigade been^{visc. 1} inspected. He must have waited for us to stand up a good while. At a distance we look₁ like soldiers sitting down, you know, legs so short.

Even on the Channel crossing, however, Rosenberg was anxious to keep some control over his immediate surroundings by articulating his impressions in verse and not surprisingly the contorted shapes of the soldiers, uncomfortably huddled on the troop-ship's deck, in attitudes of attempted repose, appealed to his artist's eye, particularly since his flirtation in his own painting with the principles of the Vorticists and Cubists had intensified his awareness of the relationship between disparate shapes and intersecting planes:

Grotesque and queerly huddled
Contortionists to twist
The sleepy souls to a sleep,
We lie all sorts of ways
And cannot sleep.
The wet wind is so cold,
And the lurching men so careless,
That, should you drop to a doze,
Winds' fumble or men's feet₂
Are on your face.

-
1. Letter to E.M., late May 1916.
 2. 'The Troop Ship', Trench Poems, 1916-1918, C.P., p.70.

Rosenberg has adapted the Imagistic technique here with his finely-visualized 'pictorial' pattern, describing a specific scene in order to emphasize the physical incongruity of this situation which in itself presages the misery of the trenches: the 'grotesque...contortionists' struggling to sleep in positions of extreme discomfort and constantly harassed by both the elements and the stumbling feet of their comrades. Even though Rosenberg proved himself competent in this particular poetic style which combatant Imagists, like Richard Aldington,¹ assumed, recording exact impressions of his surroundings by means of a few carefully-selected physical details or images, he did not find this mode totally satisfying. Rosenberg preferred to take a wider, more objective view of his situation, trying to 'assess the significance of the experience as a whole'² rather than confining himself either to one particular scene and set of circumstances, or one particular emotional response to the War.³

Nevertheless, Rosenberg did make use of this impressionistic technique again in 'Louse Hunting'⁴ which is also, overtly, an artist's poem - 'See the silhouettes agape, /See the gibbering shadows /Mixed with the battled arms on the wall' - deftly evoking the scene in which the men, driven mad by the 'verminous brood' (their persistent personal reminder of the War's menace) engage in the visually-exciting 'demons' pantomime' of lice-incineration. The poem is reminiscent in its wit ('oaths /Godhead might shrink

1. See next Section.

2. Liddiard, *Op.cit.*, p.203.

3. Unlike, for example, Sassoon whose response was largely conditioned by his anger, or Owen whose chief stimulus was his compassion derived chiefly from his sense of responsibility as an officer.

4. *C.P.*, p.79.

'at, but not the lice') and in the discrepancy between 'gargantuan hooked fingers /Pluck in supreme flesh /To smutch supreme littleness', of Donne's 'The Flea' and Rosenberg certainly acknowledges elsewhere, through his approach in his poems¹ and through discussions with his correspondents², his indebtedness to the Metaphysical poet. Paradoxically, Rosenberg concludes 'Louse Hunting' with a sensuous Romantic image, testifying once again to the fact that he is constantly being drawn in several directions at once and does not always achieve the complete assimilation of these rival influences:

See the merry limbs in hot Highland fling
Because some wizard vermin
Charmed from the quiet this revel
When our ears were half lulled
By the dark music
Blown from Sleep's trumpet.

Rosenberg tackled the lice-problem again in the mock-heroic 'The Immortals'³ - 'I killed them, but they would not die' - which brilliantly evokes the exasperation of the poet engaged not in any Homeric combat with some enemy champion (as the title at first suggests) but in this most ignoble contest with the basest form of trench-life:

I killed and killed with slaughter mad;
I killed till all my strength was gone.
And still they rose to torture me,
For Devils only die for fun.

The first poem Rosenberg composed actually in the trenches was 'August 1914' which he subsequently sent 'red from the anvil' to Mrs Cohen, in the belief that by sending all his poems (and sketches)

1.e.g. 'Spiritual Isolation'.

2. 'I have only taken Donne with me and don't feel for poetry much in this wretched place...' (Letter to E.M. from hospital, late 1915, after a characteristically carelless injury: a clumsy fall in front of the Colonel, Poetry of I.R., p.27.)

3. C.P., p.78.

home he would ensure their safety at least, irrespective of whatever fate might befall himself. On the surface, 'August 1914' - and Rosenberg with his regard for the value of perspective has waited almost two years to effect his interpretation of the first month of war - is a tightly-compressed poem in the Imagist mode, but the three central images of iron, honey and gold, with their origins in Rosenberg's earliest poetry¹ are already overlaid with too much symbolic significance to operate on only one level of meaning. Although Rosenberg can only hint in the first stanza what toll the War will exact from those who participate in it - will it consume 'The heart's dear granary' only? - he has no illusions about the scale of destruction and the inevitable violence - manifested in 'Iron are our lives' - which he has already glimpsed in the 'burnt space through ripe fields / And fair mouth's broken tooth' : a perception he shares with Rainer Maria Rilke in Fünf Gesang, even if he does not subscribe to Rilke's unreserved glorification of the War 'as an irruption of ancient gods, a return to primeval energy':²

We are others, changed into resemblance; for each
there has leapt into the breast
suddenly no more his own, like a meteor, a heart.
Hot, an iron-clad heart from an iron-clad universe.

Unlike the majority of Georgian War poets, whose cultural background he does not share, Rosenberg is very little concerned with the violated landscape and nostalgic reminiscences of an idealized English countryside; he is much more interested in

1. See discussion of the 'three lives...' in Chapter 2, Section (e).
2. Sir Maurice Bowra, Poetry and the First World War, 1961 Tylorian Lecture, p.11.

trying to estimate the total significance of the War. The hostility of the natural elements - which Owen was to analyse in 'Exposure' and 'Spring Offensive' - was certainly acknowledged by Rosenberg in a letter to Binyon in late 1916¹: 'Winter is not the least of the horrors of war'², but as he goes on to explain to Binyon, he does not want to dwell on only one aspect of his situation, he wants to absorb the experience totally:

...I am determined that this war, with all its powers for devastation, shall not master my poeting; that is, if I am lucky enough to come through all right. I will not leave a corner of my consciousness covered up, but saturate myself with the strange and extraordinary new conditions of this life, and it will all refine itself into poetry later on.

It is this voluntary 'saturation' which particularly distinguishes Rosenberg from any of his contemporaries, especially those with allegiance to a particular 'school' which encourages adherence to the special principles which it advocates. Even so, 'From France'³ with its mildly didactic approach and direct treatment of the subject matter, testifies to Rosenberg's appreciation of certain Georgian qualities - though, not surprisingly this is not one of his most successful poems, primarily because it is devoid of that 'multi-layered subtlety', deriving from his manipulation of imagery, which characterizes Rosenberg's best work.

The poem is arranged in three stanzas: the first depicts the gaiety of pre-War France represented by the sparkling café lights

1. C.W., p.373.

2. As neither were the minor irritating discomforts (chilblains; ill-fitting boots; inadequate clothing as a result of 'dumping' lousy under-garments) whose cumulative effect was to render I.R. 'crotchety' throughout the winter of 1916/7 as he tells Bottomley, letter 8.4.17, C.W., p.374. By January 1918 the situation had deteriorated to the point that in the forward trenches 'We spend most of our time pulling each other out of the mud' and I.R. was literally 'bogged down' in a quagmire when he first read G.P. III.

3. C.P., p.72.

and lively café society; the second suggests the gravity of war with the empty café and the groaning 'broken men'; and the third stanza draws the moral with the usual 'memento mori' :

Heaped stones and a charred signboard show
With grass between and dead folk under,
And some birds sing, while the spirit takes wing.
And this is Life in France.

The poem operates on one level only: the purely descriptive; the diction is simple and unadorned and the subject is familiar and presented in an unexceptional manner, comparable with W.W. Gibson's subdued technique in 'Raining'¹ and 'Deaf',² for example, which similarly centre on the juxtaposition, within a short space of time, of the pre-War 'norm' and the actual battle experience. Interestingly Rosenberg had applauded Gibson's Battle volume for the 'naturalness' of the poems but qualified his approval by a remark, in an undated letter of 1916 to Marsh, that 'the Homer for this war has yet to be found - Whitman got very near the mark fifty years ago with Drum Taps'.

Rosenberg's interpretation of the feeling of nostalgia - that most popular of subjects for poets of the Georgian idiom³ - is more distinctive than 'From France'. As one might deduce, bearing in mind Rosenberg's austere background, alienated from the English rural tradition, there is no regional base to which the poet can refer for reassurance. He has to rely in his 'Home Thoughts'⁴ on a visualization of his family - wanly smiling and distant -

1. Battle, Collected Poems, p.322.

2. Op.cit., p.321.

3. See Chapter 2, Section (b).

4. 'Home-Thoughts from France', C.P., p.74.

representative of the fragility of his own tenuous hold on life and reminding him of the futility not only of such home thoughts but also of the war situation as a whole:

Wan, fragile faces of joy!
Pitiful mouths that strive
To light with smiles the place
We dream we walk alive.

To you I stretch my hands,
Hands shut in pitiless trance
In a land of ruin and woe,
The desolate land of France.

Dear faces startled and shaken,
Out of wild dust and sounds
You yearn to me, lure and sadden
My heart with futile bounds.

One other war poem which, in part, derives from a style adopted by such Georgians as Robert Nichols in 'Comrades, an Episode' - the dramatic 'documentary' set against the realistically-described trench-scape, the principal function of which is to evoke the authentic front-line ambience - is 'In War'¹ which is compounded, a little clumsily, of several poetic styles. The first five stanzas, couched in Rosenberg's characteristic 'clotted' diction, compact with meaning, attempt to see the War in perspective: '... In the old days when death / Stalked the world / For the flower of men, / And the rose of beauty faded / And pined in the great gloom...' But then the focus narrows to one specific incident, presumably intended to represent the grotesque irony of the War: a burial party - 'We whom Chance kept whole - / But haggard, / Spent' - set about preparing 'a place for them who knew / No pain in any place'; the priest intones the words of the funeral service and the indifferent burial party, more concerned with assuaging their thirst, half-listen until one of them is jerked into horrified - but melodramatically-expressed - alertness

1. C.P., pp.76-7.

at the sound of his brother's name among the dead:

I sank -
I clutched the priest.
They did not tell me it was he
Was killed three days ago.

The final stanza attempts to restore the equanimity of the first five - 'What are the great sceptred dooms / To us, caught / In the wild wave?' - and suggests the more objective view of the War and his own involvement in it which Rosenberg is to project in 'Dead Man's Dump', for example. 'In War' which, as its title implies, considers the war situation from an essentially subjective viewpoint inside, is a useful illustration of Rosenberg's experimentation with different styles within the same poem, and of his uneasiness in the conventional narrative idiom - the 'shilling shockers',¹ mode - presaging his concentration on the apocalyptic approach to the War, 'more abstract, with less of the million feelings everybody feels'.²

Probably the most successful stage in Rosenberg's Trench Poems is that between the purely graphic Imagistic-style pieces or those incorporating Georgian characteristics and such ambitious undertakings as The Unicorn (planned on an epic scale) and 'Daughters of War'. This intermediate stage - comprising 'Break of Day in the Trenches', 'Returning, We Hear the Larks' and 'Dead Man's Dump' - blends together all the influences operating on Rosenberg before and during the War in a general coalescence of Romantic subject-

1. I.R. was certainly well-acquainted with the War's atrocities as he told Bottomley, February 1917, C.W., p.275: 'I think I could give some blood-curdling touches if I wished to ...but I will spare you all this' for I.R. was conscious that an excess of horror could become just as hackneyed, if uncontrolled, as an excess of innocuous pleasantness.
2. Letter to Mrs Cohen, summer 1916, C.W., p.348, commenting on Rupert Brooke's too-subjective approach.

matter, Imagistic technique and Rosenberg's idiosyncratic 'weltanschauung'.

'Break of Day in the Trenches', which Rosenberg sent to Marsh¹ in August 1916, was a re-worked version of the mundanely-titled 'In the Trenches' previously addressed to Sonia Rodker and recognized by Rosenberg as being 'a bit commonplace I'm afraid'.² The development - in the space of a month or so - between this first essay, which goes no further than the hackneyed juxtaposition of death and blood-red poppies, and the published poem³ which explores the secondary and tertiary implications of language in order to subtly exploit this common fantasy of the collective imagination (and, by implication, the conventions of English pastoral elegy) is truly remarkable and testifies to Rosenberg's admirable determination - under appalling conditions⁴ of constant fatigue and mental anxiety - to work on his poems, constantly revising them whenever possible, to 'make [them] fine'.

'In the Trenches' posits the blood / poppy association

-
1. Letter to E.M., 6.8.16.: 'I am enclosing a poem I wrote in the trenches which is surely as simple as ordinary talk...', C.W., p.31.
 2. Letter to Sonia Rodker, Summer 1916, C.W., p.352.
 3. According to Professor Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory, p.55, 'B.D.T.' is the 'most sophisticated' poem of the War achieving its subtle effects by 'looking back on literary history... and it also acutely looks forward, in its loose but accurate emotional cadences and in the informality and leisurely insouciance of its gently ironic idiom, which is, as I.R. indicated to E.M. "as simple as ordinary talk"'. (p.250)
 4. I.R.'s letters home are full of requests for chalk, pencils, paper and the recent presentation of 200 manuscripts and 15 paintings and drawings to the Imperial War Museum (17.1.78) indicates the paucity of writing materials (for 'the ranks') in the line with many items scribbled on the backs of envelopes and cigarette packets, while R.'s remarks on G.P.III were written on toilet-paper. I.R. made a practice of sending home rough drafts for Annie to type & return to him for revising but, as a private, I.R. had to face the hostility of his fellows who despised unusual literary activity and could only avoid their scrutiny 'when we get a bit of rest and the others might be gambling or squabbling' in which case he could 'add a line or two, and continue this way', letter to E.M., 27.5.17, C.W. p.31.

against the back-ground of a typical trench-situation:

I snatched two poppies
From the parapets ledge
Two bright red poppies
That winked on the ledge.
Behind my ear
I stuck one through,
One blood red poppy
I gave to you.

The sandbags narrowed
And screwed out our jest,
And tore the poppy
You had on your breast ...
Down - a shell - O! Christ,
I am choked ... safe ... dust blind, I
See trench floor poppies
Strewn. Smashed you lie.

The diction here is undistinguished and the poem does not seek to make any 'universal' statement about the War beyond its simple relation of one specific event. Nevertheless some of the ideas which Rosenberg is to expand in 'Break of Day in the Trenches' are present: the fragility of human life in war and the sudden annihilation expected every moment; the vulnerability of the human frame ('Smashed you lie') and the idea that even the survivors 'dust blind' do not escape physically or spiritually untainted - their 'safety' is ephemeral for they, too, have been reminded of their own mortality by the dust.

In 'Break of Day in the Trenches'¹ the quiet irony of the situation - 'where rats may live and thrive, but men, like poppies, must die'² - is intensified by the poem's setting at morning stand-to where the description of dawn has been reduced from the lavish pre-War invocation 'O tender first cold flush of rose' newly 'budded', to a mere 'crumbling away' of the darkness. The principal element, lacking in the first 'In the Trenches' poem, is the rat

1. C.P., p.73.

2. Cohen, Journey to the Trenches, p.154.

around which the poem centres¹ and through whose 'cosmopolitan sympathies' Rosenberg suggests the 'other side' subjected to the same indignities and dangers and also 'less chanced' than the rat for life, since bound to 'the whims of murder'. By using the rat as a symbol of this central irony that a base form of animal life continues to flourish while the strong-eyed, fine-limbed 'haughty athletes' perish hourly, Rosenberg is deliberately linking his war-experience with a wider sphere of Shakespearean tragedy as he aligns his 'queer sardonic rat' with the lowly creatures listed by Lear as having life whilst the exquisite, soft-voiced Cordelia 'hath no breath at all'. While the soldiers lie 'sprawled in the bowels of the earth, / The torn fields of France', the rat can wander with impunity across the 'sleeping green' between the lines to fraternize with both adversaries and wonder at the communal expression of terror in each man's eyes as he gazes 'at the shrieking iron and flame / Hurlled through still heavens'. Thus, through the medium of the rat, Rosenberg universalizes his war-experience, translating the isolated incident of plucking the 'parapet's poppy' - common to both poems and reminiscent of the Georgians' predilections for presenting a particular moment or mood - into a symbol of the frailty of human kind at the mercy of war's massive destructive potential, yet still able to aim a small gesture of defiance against those gargantuan inhuman forces before being inexorably crushed:

Poppies, whose roots are in men's veins
Drop, and are ever dropping;
But mine in my ear is safe,

1. According to J.M.Wilson, Op.cit., p.178, 'B.D.T.' was first called 'The Neutral Rat', indicating the importance of the rat-image in I.R.'s eyes.

Just a little white with the dust.¹

'Returning We Hear the Larks'² closely resembles 'Break of Day in the Trenches' in its structure and inextricable blend of beauty and danger, Romantic and mechanistic images, and it too has its origins in a particular, finely-visualized moment: the return of weary troops at night from a spell of duty in the line, comparable with the situation in Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est' which makes an interesting parallel with Rosenberg's poem.

As already discussed³, the poppies in 'Break of Day in the Trenches' and the skylarks in 'Returning We Hear the Larks' were common features of the Front and their presence during bombardments was 'a recognized image of the absurdity of war'⁴; redolent of home and safety perhaps or simply symptomatic of the indestructibility of the life of the shattered countryside. Rosenberg is aware of all the possibilities suggested by the experience he presents so that what begins as a particularized description of routine troop-activity becomes 'the focus for an examination of the power and danger of beauty'.⁵ Although the soldiers are destined for 'a little safe sleep', just as Owen's men anticipate their 'distant rest', they are well aware of their vulnerability to sudden attack as they toil along the 'poison-blasted track':

-
1. The last 8 lines of 'B.D.T.' comprise an excellent example of I.R.'s revising-technique for, in the type-script of the poem presented to the I.W.M., the hand written alterations are responsible for the emphatic 'What quaver - what heart aghast' after 'What do you see in our eyes?' and the most important emendation 'Poppies, whose roots are in men's veins / Drop, & are ever dropping' in place of the weaker 'What rootless poppies drooping'.
 2. C.P., p.80.
 3. See Chapter 2, Section (c).
 4. Liddiard, Op.cit., p.227.
 5. Ibid.

And though we have our lives, we know
What sinister threat lurks there.

But whereas Owen, who seeks to emphasize the incongruity between the traditional, (mainly) public-school approach to war - 'It is sweet and fitting to die for the fatherland' - and the reality of trench warfare, in order to prove the fallaciousness of the old Latin tag and to articulate his own sense of angry helplessness as the officer watching the poison-gas victim 'floundering like a man in fire or lime', needs to instigate an actual attack from the air (in the form of the gas-shells) and witness the victim's subsequent agony in order to fulfil his satirical purpose, Rosenberg extends the range of response to his poem beyond that awarded to satire by substituting the 'strange joy' of music from unseen larks for dropping gas-shells and by devoting his entire last stanza to other archetypal images of danger in beauty outside the immediate war-experience. Beneath the relief felt that though 'Death could drop from the dark / As easily as song - /... song only dropped', Rosenberg hints that next time it could very well be the gas-shells.

To underline the point that war has intensified his appreciation of the beauty / danger analogy, Rosenberg concludes the poem with two sensuous but compressed evocations of menace in the guise of sexual attraction:

Like a girl's dark hair for she dreams no ruin lies there,
Or her kisses where a serpent hides.

Thus Rosenberg has equated the treachery of war with the treachery of women by means of this sublime 'evocation of the profoundly intricate relationship between death and sex'.

With 'Dead Man's Dump'¹ Rosenberg achieves a substantial degree of success in his attempt not to eulogize, not to rage over, not to mourn, but to analyse the phenomenon of death, in this instance in battle, and to probe its significance. The poem has a loose, narrative structure: Rosenberg detailed to a wiring party accompanies the 'plunging limbers over the shattered track' while the bundles of barbed wire rattle and stick out 'like many crowns of thorns' from the wagons; the wagon wheels crush the already-dead as they precariously advance towards the line, bombarded by shells, with dead and wounded littering the track and the stretcher-bearers struggling to carry the casualties back down the line.

The agony of the dying is epitomized in the fate of one mortally-wounded man who tries to sustain himself until Rosenberg's limber arrives but - with a sense of timing which Thomas Hardy would have approved - the wheels of the wagon 'crash round the bend' just in time to extinguish the man's last breath as they run over him:

We heard his weak scream,
We heard his very last sound,
And our wheels grazed his dead face.

Although apparently based on one particular incident, the close texture of the poem suggests that Rosenberg is using a plethora of impressions of front line existence to communicate 'the complexity of experience which he was strong enough to

1. Enclosed with a letter to E.M. post-marked 8.5.17, with the apologetic comment: 'I don't think what I've written is very good but I think the substance is, and when I work on it I'll make it fine!'

'permit himself and which his technique was fine enough to reveal'.¹

Rosenberg's main concern in the poem is not descriptive but philosophical²: he is speculating what happens to the 'dark souls' of the dead in the moment of death and after they have been clutched, 'Suspended - stopped and held' by the predator, Earth:

What fierce imaginings their dark souls lit?
Earth! have they gone into you!
Somewhere they must have gone,
And flung on your hard back
Is their soul's sack
Emptied of God-ancestral essences.
Who hurled them out? Who hurled?

Rosenberg gives the impression that he would have been pre-occupied with these considerations regardless of the War's presence; the effect of the War environment is, of course, to concentrate his mind more directly than usual on the subject of death simply because death is a constant prospect for the living and the battle-area is festooned with the dying, the newly-expired (such as the man waiting for Rosenberg's limber) and the 'older dead / Stretched at the cross roads'. In such an ambitious project as 'Dead Man's Dump', which offers an interpretation of the immensely complex questions of human existence and the sudden extinction to which men are susceptible (especially in war) Rosenberg's main problem is to effect as complete a reconciliation as possible between the various elements from which the poem is constructed: sensuous imagery and repellent physical description³; specific narrative

-
1. D.W. Harding, 'Aspects of the Poetry of I.R.', Scrutiny, March 1935, p.363.
 2. As J.Liddiard, Op.cit., p.222 confirms: 'Here as in all his longer poems he is trying to bring to bear on the immediate experience his insights into the wider nature of creative and destructive power'.
 3. Of which this verse is a good example: 'A man's brains splattered on /A stretcher-bearer's face; /His shook shoulders slipped their load, /But when they bent to look again /The drowning soul was sunk too deep /For human tenderness'.

framework and vague philosophical speculation; spasmodic regular rhymes and free verse - bearing in mind the limitations imposed on Rosenberg by the war condition which inevitably meant that there would be some areas of 'unrefined' material in the poem which he would hope to improve upon later. This accounts for Rosenberg's anxiety to explain to Marsh the 'absolute necessity of fixing an idea before it is lost, because of the situation its conceived [sic] in...' ¹ and to justify the urgency which impels Rosenberg to jot down on any available paper the ideas which 'ideally [you should] let a skin grow naturally round and through' but if there is no time for such a process 'you can only, when the ideas come hot, sieze [sic] them with the skin in tatters, raw, crude, in some parts beautiful in others monstrous, Why print it then? Because these rare parts must not be lost. I work more and more as I write into more depth and lucidity, I am sure'. ² Rosenberg was obviously aware that the different components were not always harmoniously fused but the overall achievement is much less flawed than in 'In War', for example, and much more satisfying for the reader than the more uniformly-conceived but (understandably) haltingly-executed The Unicorn.

The title, 'Dead Man's Dump' is first of all of some interest in its suggestion that defunct and damaged human fighting machines can be legitimately discarded in the same way as obsolete or useless military equipment. Alternatively in the military sense of a dump meaning a 'temporary depot of munitions at the front'

1. Letter to E.M., 27.5.17, C.W., pp.316-7.
2. Letter to E.M., 6.8.16., C.W., pp.310-1.

the title could imply that the 'soul's sacks' of the dead are deposited temporarily across No Man's Land preparatory to the removal of their 'God-ancestralised essences' for service elsewhere.

Certainly there is none of the confidence noted earlier¹ in several 'In Memoriam' Georgian-inspired poems that the dead are to regenerate the earth with which their corpses mingle for Rosenberg does not subscribe to this view of nature and deliberately deleted from his final version of the poem four lines from the third stanza which obviously suggested the seasonal cycle of death and rebirth:

Now let the seasons know
There are some less to feed of them,
That Winter need not hoard her snow,
Nor Autumn her fruits and grain.

Rosenberg's dead - as opposed to those of Brooke, for example - are realistically described as inert, senseless bodies immune to the lurching wheels and careless of the fact that 'friends and foeman' lie side by side while the shelling continues unabated. The particular moment which fascinates Rosenberg is that split second 'When the swift iron burning bee / Drained the wild honey of their youth'²: that critical point between full consciousness of human existence and oblivion, the spirit's sack reduced to less 'motion' than 'the grass and coloured clay.../ Joined to the great sunk silences'; the crucial juncture between the human conception of time and eternity:

Timelessly now, some minutes past,
These dead strode time with vigorous life,
Till the shrapnel called 'An end!'

1. See Chapter 2, Section (b).

2. Significantly, these 'exquisite romantic lines' and the 3 previous were among the first I.R. composed and was satisfied in the poem, according to P.Fussell's reading of the typescript of 'D.M.D.' ('The Regalia of the Trenches', T.L.S., 3.2.78) proving that even in the more intellectually demanding and sophisticated material of his later poems I.R.'s incipient romantic strain could not be denied expression.

In the case of the mortally-wounded man whose 'dark hearing caught our far wheels, / And the choked soul stretched weak hands / To reach the living world the far wheels said, / The blood-dazed intelligence beating for light', the transition from life to death is slightly more prolonged and his last moments as he wills the limber to arrive with its fragile chance of saving him are so fully-realized by Rosenberg that as a statement about the agony of facing imminent death these lines transcend the immediate war environment and take on a wider, more universal application. Rosenberg has particularized the horror and taken it 'without losing its presence, to a further stage of consciousness'.¹

This, therefore, is the value of 'Dead Man's Dump' - as of 'Break of Day in the Trenches' and 'Returning We Hear the Larks' where philosophical perceptions are always rooted in the concrete - that it can suggest the universality of experience rather than simply evoking a particular moment which has meaning only within the terms of its immediate environment (one of the principal Georgian traits) or presenting an accumulation of images which may make a limited appeal to the senses (in the Imagist idiom).

In his last long poems, The Unicorn and - to some extent - the fragmentary 'Daughters of War', Rosenberg is attempting a project of epic dimensions which will try to set the Great War (while still in progress) decisively in historical perspective by relating this war to the great mythological panorama of struggle and combat. In 'Daughters of War'² Rosenberg returns in his portrayal of these Amazon figures to one of his persistent

1. Jon Silkin, Out of Battle, p.275.

2. C.P., pp.85-6 . J.H.Johnston, Op.cit., admires 'D.W.' for its supra-human personification and large visionary scale, comparable with Hardy's The Dynasts.

themes: the relationship between women and treachery, for the 'mighty daughters' conspire here to 'blow to a live flame / To char the young green days / And reach the occult soul; they have no softer lure - / No softer lure than the savage ways of death'. Like the Norse Valkyries they swoop upon the 'doomed earth' of the battle-field to inveigle the 'soul aghast from [each] crimson corpse'. This jealous feminine principle (perhaps derived from the strongly matriarchal direction of his own family and the Jewish domestic culture in general) usurps some of the malevolence earlier associated with Rosenberg's conception of the traditional tyrannical Hebraic God ('this miasma of a rotting God' whose 'body lodged a rat where men nursed souls'¹) and can be compared, in turn, with the projection of a fiercely possessive earth demanding, like the pockmarked greensward of 'Spring Offensive', blood restitution from its violators.

A suggestion of this female jealousy can be traced also in the two poems Rosenberg wrote on his last leave in September 1917, 'Soldier : Twentieth Century'² and the re-worked version 'Girl to Soldier on Leave'³ where the girl is aware of an aura of strangeness surrounding her 'Titan lover' who has become isolated from her because of his war experiences and desperately tries to bind him once more 'with the old, old gyves' - the implication perhaps being that if the soldier dies, he will in some respects 'belong' to her again.

Certainly in 'Daughters of War' the impression is given of Rosenberg 'loading each line too heavily, running the risk of

1. 'God', Moses, C.P., p.63.

2. C.P., p.87.

3. C.P., p.88.

'distracting the reader rather than enriching the poem'¹ with the concentrated intensity of the images, offering interpretation at a number of levels. The overall effect is diminished by this emphasis on 'a wholly symbolic mode' with none of the 'counter-pointing of symbolic against realistic'² which gives 'Break of Day in the Trenches' and 'Returning We Hear the Larks' and 'Dead Man's Dump' their particular power, and although Rosenberg himself considered the poem his best piece of work its value lies more in its potential than real achievement.

The same strictures could be applied to the even more ambitious The Unicorn, on which Rosenberg was working for about a year before his death³ and which had begun life as The Amulet. Although much of his trench experience⁴ was absorbed in this projected examination of the impact of the savage Unicorn and the terrifying giant, Tel, (representative of any unprecedented destructive force of which the War was but the most recent manifestation⁵) suddenly unleashed upon unprepared, ordinary people (comparable with the bewildered rank and file in the trenches) Rosenberg set the poem in some unspecified Biblical period in order to achieve a degree of objectivity unusual in an actual combatant, and give the impression of the

-
1. Liddiard, Op.cit., p.231. Binyon made a similar criticism when he described I.R.'s poetry too often coming out 'in clotted gushes and spasms'. C.W., p.312.
 2. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.119.
 3. I.R. completed the final remodelling of The U. in March 1918 and sent the final draft to Bottomley who received it a few days before R.'s ^{death} so he never learnt of its safe arrival in England.
 4. Illustrated in such phrases as 'death's land'; 'The slime clung / And licked and clawed and chewed the clogged dragging wheels / Till they sunk right to the axle'; a 'Tower of skulls, / Where birds make nests / And staring beasts stand by with many flocks / And man looks on with hopeless eyes'.
 5. As I.R. described in a letter to Miss Seaton, 14.2.18, C.W., p.378, 'Sometimes I give way and am appalled at the devastation this life seems to have made in my nature. It seems to have blunted me. I seem to be powerless to compel my will to any direction, and all I do is without energy and interest'.

continuity of human experience.¹

Rosenberg made the same use of Biblical and specifically Jewish settings in a number of shorter poems seemingly stimulated by his desire to assert his Jewish identity in the face of hostility from many of his trench-fellows who, in spite of the principle of human consanguinity expounded by another Jew - Shylock - in The Merchant of Venice,² and described by Rosenberg as 'keep[ing] tide' with 'the same heaving blood',³ sneered at him.

'The Burning of the Temple'⁴ and 'The Destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian Hordes'⁵ with their characteristic Hebraic subject-matter both testify to Rosenberg's attempts to distance the present conflict in which he is engaged by describing historical incidents of comparable violence in which the recognized 'civilizations' of the time are overwhelmed by the 'barbarians' representing the anarchic forces of ruthless, faceless destruction:

...And shadowy [Babylonian] sowers went
Before their spears to sow
The fruit whose taste is ash
For Judah's soul to know.

...Sweet laughter [of Judaeen girls] charred in the flame
That clutched the cloud and earth
While Solomon's towers crashed between,
The gird of Babylon's mirth.

-
1. In his apologia for discussing The U. at length, Silkin, Op.cit, p.314, acknowledges the potential of the piece and suggests that its very fragmentation could be interpreted as an appropriate image of the War's influence on the poet: '...incomplete though this is, perhaps an undesigned incompleteness also provides a way of understanding the War'.
 2. III, sc.i : 'Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?...If you prick us, do we not bleed?...'
 3. 'The Jew', C.P., 71.
 4. C.P., p.89.
 5. C.P., p.90.

The range of reference is broadened still further in "'A Worm fed on the Heart of Corinth"' ¹ - which is invested with the same prophetic quality as Owen's 'Strange Meeting' - where Rosenberg synthesizes Biblical experience and classical mythology in his delineation of the insidious post-War consequences which will threaten to overthrow ^{the} British - as Babylonian, Greek and Roman - Empire.

Similarly, Rosenberg's last poem, "'Through these Pale Cold Days"' ², 'just a slight thing' ³ though Rosenberg had been contemplating a battle song for the Jewish Battalion to which he had hoped to be transferred in Mesopotamia, forges a link between his own war experience, shivering in the early spring of 1918 in the Western Front and that of the dark-faced Judains, three thousand years previously whose 'spirits grope / For the pools of Hebron again - / For Lebanon's summer slope'. In his final poem, as in so many of the others, Rosenberg - more than any other poet ⁴ serving in the Great War - attempts to come to terms with the War's enormity, to 'originate a symbol / Out of the impact' by ambitiously relating it to previous human experience instead of concentrating on a particularized description of those aspects of the War which directly affect him.

Characteristically Rosenberg, for whom the War 'was indeed a cosmic event', let his vision 'pierce beyond the actual carnage

1. C.P., p.74.

2. C.P., p.91.

3. Letter to E.M., 28.3.18, C.W., p.322, which continues: '...I've seen no poetry for ages now so you mustnt be too critical. My vocabulary small enough before is impoverished and bare'.

4. As Liddiard, Op.cit., p.210, points out: 'War did not close off [I.R.'s] peace-time experience as it did for other war poets - it extended it'.

'to divine, with an apocalyptic clairvoyance, its meaning in the scheme of things'¹: perceiving the timeless within the finite, historical reality, Rosenberg was able to reconcile the immediately realized sensuous experience with the visionary mode, as he strove to emulate in his own poetry the 'humanity and amplitude' of Walt Whitman in 'Beat, drums, beat'. Unlike most of his contemporaries, - Sassoon, for example - who had been 'formed in the Georgian mould, and had to adapt their basically conventional verse forms to sustain a weight of new experience', Rosenberg, quite apart from his feeling of cultural alienation, had kept his independence as an artist from any group - 'following none of the critical dicta offered either by groups of poets or by individual critics'² - and was from the beginning an innovator, 'an experimenter, or perhaps an explorer, in his use of poetic language'³. He gives the impression of having mastered the War, not been mastered by it, whereas the majority of Georgian Poets were obsessed by it and were 'permanently influenced by war's trauma'.⁴

The War had less impact on Rosenberg's work than upon Owen's, for example, for it merely confirmed Rosenberg in the idiosyncratic direction he had already taken, defined by Professor Harding⁵ thus: 'Instead of the emerging idea being racked slightly so as to fit a more familiar approximation of itself, and words found for that, Rosenberg let it manipulate words almost from the

-
1. Bowra, Op.cit., p.19. Bowra goes on to compare I.R.'s Imagist tone with that of Georg Trakl, 'Im Osten'.
 2. Silkin, Op.cit., p.258.
 3. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.110.
 4. Op.cit., p.120.
 5. Quoted Silkin, Op.cit., p.259.

'beginning, often without insisting on the controls of logic and intelligibility'.

Bearing in mind the everyday rigours of war existence and the fact that Rosenberg served as a private, alienated from his fellows by his Jewishness and his artistic predilections, for twenty months in the trenches - with a respite of only ten days' leave in September 1917 - it is little short of miraculous that he managed to produce any work at all (never mind revise what he wrote) having lived for so long in such an 'elemental way'.¹ At the beginning of his sojourn in the trenches in 1916, Rosenberg had written to Binyon a characteristically hopeful letter declaring his personal challenge to the War's inexorability and asserting that he would 'saturate' himself with the conditions of this new life. When he came to assess his achievement over a year later, Rosenberg dismissed his 'few war poems' as 'absurd' by the side of Whitman's Drum Taps, but he had every confidence that he might 'get a pamphlet printed' if he could rely upon selling about sixty at one shilling each, since only by 'securing' his poems in print could he be sure they would not be lost if he '[got] a tap on the head'.

Rosenberg's own estimate of the value of his poems centred on his modest hope that they 'may give some new aspects to the people at home'² and it is this peculiarly personal response to the War situation which distinguishes Rosenberg from the other War Poets, most of whom can be ascribed to one particular social or literary

-
1. I.R.'s own term used in a letter to Bottomley, September 1917, in which he contrasts the life of the trenches to which he had become accustomed, with his 'unanchored' feeling of restlessness at home on leave where 'things...don't look quite right'.
 2. Letter to Joseph Leftwich, December 1917, C.W., p.358.

group. In several respects Rosenberg's work offers an epitome of the whole English poetry scene in the second decade of the twentieth century in that he began writing under the influence of the Romantic and 1890's Poets; he adopted certain tenets of the Georgian School while, at the same time, moving towards the Imagist idiom in his use of language; he strongly admired the Metaphysical Poets, in particular Donne, and was widely read in European, Russian and American literature - two characteristics similarly applicable to the young T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Rosenberg also presages certain developments in English poetry after the War - Eliot's Waste Land, for example - in his use of a mythopoeic framework and historical or Biblical allusions in such pieces as "A Worm fed on the Heart of Corinth" and The Unicorn, and his attempts to objectify the experience of war by considering it in a wider human perspective anticipates, by more than fifteen years, Herbert Read's The End of a War¹ and David Jones' In Parenthesis².

In summing up Rosenberg's remarkable achievement as a poet undergoing all the usual privations of War of the standard 'P.B.I.', in addition to his innate awareness of his Hebraic back-ground and his spiritual and ethnic isolation from the traditional English culture shared by his fellow 'rankers', reference must be made to the respective forces which shaped his character and influenced the development of his particular 'poetic voice'. His Jewishness and working-class origins certainly contributed to his outlook while his best poems illustrate a fusion between the various literary influences - Romantic, Georgian, Imagist - evident throughout his work. But the outstanding quality which distinguishes

1.1933.

2.1937.

Rosenberg's response to the War is his ability to assimilate the War and all its attendant horrors by shifting the focus from the idea of war as an unnatural operation quite alien to its protagonists who can only understand that fraction of the battle experience which directly impinges upon them, to a perception of war as a 'peculiarly human activity'¹ : an integral part of the cosmic pattern and, although the War eventually overwhelmed Rosenberg physically, it never mastered his 'poeting' for he emerges as the only poet capable of accommodating 'the strange and extraordinary new conditions of this life' into his total vision, while the War was still going on.

1. Frederic Manning, Author's Note, Her Privates We, (1930).

3 (b) WAR POETRY IN THE IMAGIST MODE

Writing some years after the event, Herbert Read assessed the reaction of the Imagist Poets to the advent of war as follows:

The War came, but that did not make any essential difference to our poetry. I myself wrote imagist poems in the trenches and did not see or feel any inconsistency in the act. War was one thing, and poetry was another; and if war was to be expressed in poetry, the imagist technique was as adequate as any other.¹

The validity of Read's last point concerning the capability of the Imagist technique for accommodating the war experience can best be judged by reviewing the Imagists' response to the War, with particular reference to the work of Richard Aldington and Herbert Read himself, who had affiliations with the Imagist Group.

By 1914, the Imagists had already achieved a certain level of success² with the publication of Des Imagistes.³ Ezra Pound had been instrumental in organizing a group - though not an 'exclusive artistic sect' - of young poets who shared his enthusiasm for 'breaking free from stereotyped forms',⁴ concentrating on the quintessential image in 'hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite',⁵ poetry, insisting upon preciseness and exactness in language and new rhythms in order to 'register [their] own times in terms of [their] own times'.⁶

Even after Pound's abandonment of Imagism for the more rumbustious Vorticist Movement, in mid-1914, and Amy Lowell's determined attempt to marshal the Imagist Poets into a cohesive school

1. 'The Present State of Poetry', Kenyon Review I, Autumn 1939, p.360.
2. See Chapter I.
3. Which included poems by Aldington, H.D., Flint, Skipwith Cannell, Amy Lowell, W.C. Williams, James Joyce, Pound, Ford, Allen Upward, John Cournos.
4. T.L.S., 28.5.14. 5. Preface, Some Imagist Poets, 1915, p.vi.
6. Ford Madox Ford, Preface, Collected Poems, 1913, p.13.

by contracting the nucleus of the group - Aldington, H.D., John Gould Fletcher, F.S. Flint and D.H. Lawrence - to produce three annual Imagist Anthologies, which appeared under the title Some Imagist Poets in 1915, 1916 and 1917, the Imagist Poets continued to flourish collectively, and - at the same time - preserve their individuality. They were supported by the sympathetic offices of Harriet Shaw Weaver and The Egoist, through the columns of which they were able - from 1914 to 1919 - to discuss the principles and practice of Imagist Poetry; advance the reputations of other Imagist Poets by careful reviews of their work; print examples of the most recent developments in Imagist verse; keep abreast of contemporary European and American poetry movements, and stimulate lively debate - chiefly among themselves - in the Correspondence Column - on current literary controversies.

In theory, at least, the Imagists saw themselves as 'the first poets of a demythologized world, concerned to make poetry from the naked, isolated object, stripped of all outworn, mythical accretions',¹ and nothing could have been more naked than the landscape of the Western Front: 'earth stripped of living vegetation and turned into heaving mud, trees stricken and decapitated ... a world that would have disgraced the moon itself ... with the howitzer and machine-gun in charge, doggedly served by human robots'.² Yet, for all their assurance that they would 'render the particulars [of modern life] exactly', by translating reality into artistic terms, the Imagists were as unprepared as the poets

1. Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight, p.198.

2. Eric Newton, 'Art and the First World War', The Guardian, 27.2.64, referring particularly, here, to Paul Nash's 'We Are Making a New World'.

writing in the Georgian idiom, when it came to formulating their initial response to the unprecedented conditions of the War situation. Where many of the Georgian Poets found it less taxing to write of the known English countryside than of their new landscape - at the same time achieving a psychological relief from the exigencies of confinement in a trench in an alien environment - the Imagists could take refuge in their literary retreat where they were still able to derive inspiration from their classical motifs.

Although it could be considered a laudable aim to 'maintain an abstract aesthetic ideal in the midst of terrifying and inhuman events' and a salutary one, in that this 'devotion to abstract notions and intellectual reveries saved [the Imagist Poet] from a raw reaction to these events, it became necessary - as the War progressed - to achieve 'some compromise between dream and reality' and the most effective 'synthesis', attained by only a very few poets, was that reconciliation between the 'freedom of the mind and the necessity of experience' outlined by Herbert Read in The Contrary Experience.¹

In general, the Imagist Poets became physically involved in the War somewhat later than was usual among the bulk of combatant-poets writing in the Georgian idiom, or - as is the case with D.H. Lawrence - they did not undertake active service at all. An interesting example of the imagistic technique applied to a non-

1. The C.E., pp.176-7. Jon Silkin, Out of Battle, p.170, cites the development from H.R.'s Eclogues (1914-18) to War Poems (1916-32) - according to the grouping of the 1953 Collected Poems of H.R. - as evidence of the progression from purely imagistic pastorals to poems which still use imagistic technique but take the War as their principal subject.

combatant war poem is Lawrence's 'Bombardment', where the town - on the verge of dawn, unfolding 'Like a flat red lily with a million petals'- is subjected to an aerial attack and the lily, transmuted into a 'sinister flower', traps the doomed inhabitants in its labyrinthine folds and crevices, as they try to escape the ominous aeroplane:

A dark bird falls from the sun.
It curves in a rush to the heart of the vast
Flower: the day has begun.¹

F.S. Flint, one of those closely associated with the evolution of the Imagist Movement, whose verse is often characterized by a self-conscious intellectual quality, had some experience, at first hand, of the War zone - which prompted several of the poems he submitted to the S.I.P. Anthology of 1917. 'Searchlight'² - rather like Lawrence's 'Bombardment' - presents an impression of the War as it impinges upon one civilian woken, not by the roar of guns or exploding bombs, but by the eerie sensation of something unnatural in the silence which draws him to the window where he discovers the search-light 'dividing the night into two before him, / still, stark and throbbing' and investing the snow-covered houses with a strange purple glow and a sinister air of watchfulness. In 'Lament'³ and 'Soldiers'⁴, on the other hand, a rawness of emotion intrudes when Flint considers the plight of the 'young men of the world / ...condemned to death' because of the 'crime of their fathers', or the frustration of two friends, separated by the regi-

1. The Complete Poems of D.H.L., p.166. Similar instances of D.H.L.'s imagistic technique applied to the real or imaginary War situation - 'life surging itself into utterance at its very well-head' ('Poetry of the Present', New Poems, 1918) - are 'Winter-Lull', 'Tommys in the Train' and 'Noise of Battle'.

2. Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones (1972), pp.77-8.

3. Ohne Hass und Fahne, (1959), p.33.

4. Sub-titled 'To R.A.', presumably Richard Aldington, The Egoist, September 1916.

mentation of war - so bitterly resented by the subversive Imagist spirit. Flint profoundly regrets the decimation of so many young men in his 'Lament':

The growing, ripening fruit,
Have been torn from their branches,
White the memory of the blossom
Is sweet in women's hearts;
They have been cast for a cruel purpose
Into the mashing-press and furnace.

More than the physical destruction, Flint laments the subjugation of the spirit of youth to some 'new terror' which has encompassed the young men in a 'circle of fire and bayonets', rendering them of less consequence than the earth which now 'inherits them'.¹

'Soldiers' describes an incident - whether real or imaginary - when two friends from two separate squads of soldiers, welded by army discipline into a corporate mass, recover their awareness of their individual identities as they pass each other on a 'muddy road /In France'. This moment of intimacy vanishes 'into the darkness', leaving the narrator disorientated - like Lawrence's 'Tommyes in the Train'² - by the enormity of the war-situation and with an intensified feeling of isolation and insignificance.

A chance encounter on a Flemish road - similar to that focused upon in 'Soldiers' - is the subject of a poem by May Sinclair in the extended May 1915 number of The Egoist which was devoted to the Imagist Poets. 'After the Retreat' concentrates upon the impression registered by May Sinclair, of a particular low house, typical of the Flanders landscape, which she passes on

-
1. Cf. Rosenberg, 'Dead Man's Dump': 'Earth has waited for them, / All the time of their growth /Fretting for their decay: /Now she has them at last! /In the strength of their strength /Suspended - stopped and held'.
 2. Complete Poems of D.H.L., pp.162-3: 'What are we /Clay-coloured, who roll in fatigue /As the train falls league after league / From our destiny?'

her way to the coast during the Autumn 1914 evacuation of Antwerp and the image of which haunts her even in England:

But somewhere
In the fields
Where the high slender trees are small under the sky -

If I could only see again
The house we passed that day.

Several other poems published in the pages of The Egoist deserve mention, in passing, although their relevance is in most cases too specific, as in the May Sinclair poem which seems somehow constricted within two dimensions: the house is perceived directly as an object but there is no attempt to make it into a symbol of vulnerable domesticity¹ and it remains a static image, studiously delineated but remote from emotion. The reverse is the case in Richard Aldington's 'A Life' which appeared exactly one year after the May Sinclair poem in The Egoist. It is apparently an Imagist 'In Memoriam' tribute to the dynamic Gaudier-Brzeska killed in France in 1915, or in Vorticist² terms, 'consumed by the greater Vortex of War':

... shot in the head.
Quenched that keen, bright wit,
Horribly crushed the wide forehead,
Limp and useless the able hands
Of our one young sculptor.³

The uselessness of the sculptor's limp hands is emphasized by the earlier reference to his genius for ' [making] you see something fresh - /An unsuspecting beauty, a new strength, /The clear line of a naked woman's body, /The lightness of a stag, /A new grotesqueness or hideousness'. Aldington turns with the same misanthropic

-
1. Cf. R.H. Mottram's treatment of the Vanderlynden Farm in The Spanish Farm Trilogy, or Blunden's compassionate depiction of 'ruined houses with rafters sticking out... bleak and piteous', Undertones of War, p.104, on the way to Beaumont Hamel.
 2. See Chapter I. Just before his death, G.-B. explained his rejection of artistic theorizing in the extremity of war: 'it is all stupid vulgarity and I prefer the fresh wind in the leaves with a few songs from the birds'. Pound, G.-B.: A Memoir, p.69.
 3. 'A Life', The Egoist, 1.5.16.

savagery which distinguished several of his pre-War poems¹, to denounce the other 'artists' - 'muffs, poseurs, pifflers' - who will survive the War, while Gaudier-Brzeska wholesome in his 'dirt and ... genius' has been destroyed, and the poem ends with an outrageous generalization derived - appropriately in Aldington's case - from a classical source, which underlines the point that what began as a generous appraisal of one man who died, deteriorates into the poet's embittered haranguing of those who survive:

I sit here, cursing over my Greek -
Anacreon says:
'War spares the bad, not the good'.

I believe him.

In the December 1916 issue of The Egoist, two poems² appear from N.G.Kapp, confined in Ruhleben Concentration Camp and offer a striking contrast to any two, similarly representative pieces from another Prisoner-of-War, F.W.Harvey.³ Although the technique each poet uses is strikingly different: 'packed, concentrated observation', slightly self-consciously presented in Kapp's 'Testing', recording carefully - even clinically - every sensation perceived; and insistence upon regularity of rhyme and metre ('littered - twittered', for example) and a tendency towards refined diction ('azure', 'sward') in Harvey's poems, both poets share the inability to fuse satisfactorily thought and feeling. Harvey expatiates on the breathless beauty of Autumn in Gloucestershire while Kapp catalogues his physical impressions in the hope that thereby a vibrant poetic response can be achieved:

1. 'In the Tube', for example.

2. 'Testing' and 'Existence'.

3. See Section 2 (b). Two typical poems are 'An Autumn in Prison' and 'The Hateful Road', Gloucestershire Friends, pp.15 and 19.

Pin-points of light penetrating the choking dust.
Half-naked, sweating forms melting into massive black
machinery,

and again:

A line of lights creeping away
To end suddenly in blackness....

Around me noises,
Babble of incessant, senseless chatter
And ghastly drifting ...

A greater degree of intensity is evinced in one of Conrad Aitken's poems¹, cited in a review² of Nocturne of Remembered Spring and Other Poems, which approaches the subject of trench-boredom and interprets quite convincingly the poignant frustration of two soldiers in the line who would risk - or even embrace - death in their efforts to escape not only from their trench-prison but also from a more general feeling of claustrophobia inherent in the human condition in the twentieth century, and the awareness of which is intensified by physical confinement in the trench:

We are tired, we have fought all this before,
We have seen it all, and thought it all
Let us climb out and end it, then,
Lest it become immortal
This is the same night, still, and you and I,
Struggling to keep our feet in a chaos of sound.
And the same puffs of smoke
Passes, to leave the same stars in the sky.

John Rodker's 'Hymn to Death, 1914 and On'³, again using the Imagist technique, proposes another response to the colossal War casualties accumulated over four years. His adaptation of the metaphysical concept of the 'dance of death'⁴ incorporates satirical references to a Negro spiritual ('O the "bones", the wonderful "bones" - Gods the "darkey"); contemporary American idiom - 'Hi

1. 'The Trenches'.

2. 'Two American Poets: J.G. Fletcher and Conrad Aitken', The Egoist, April 1918.

3. The Egoist, November-December, 1918.

4. Cf. Roger McGough's 1960's interpretation of this motif, entitled simply 'A Square Dance': 'In Flanders field in Northern France/
They're all doing a brand new dance / It makes you happy and out of breath/
And it's called the Dance of Death'.

'there - /take your wired toes out o' me ribs'; skeletal medical terminology ('femur rattles skull - /epiphyses shriek, grate - / Brain /a shrunk pea'); and an ironic reversal - in the final three lines - of the pursuit of Honour celebrated in such a poem as Richard Lovelace's 'To Lucasta, Going to the Wars', where the war-bound twentieth-century lover is likely to return, not with the bays of victory, but reduced to the elemental bone:

My sweetheart's bouquet at this ball
the sweet skull of this lover -
(he went to war).

Apart from these poems appearing from time to time in The Egoist, two other poets connected - albeit loosely¹ - with the Imagist Movement, Ford Madox Ford and Frederic Manning, made some contribution to poetry in the Imagist idiom, during the War years, although their achievement in rendering their War experience through the medium of prose² is generally more highly regarded. Ford, whose volume of War verse On Heaven and Other Poems, was first published in 1915 when he was forty-two, had been respected by Pound and the avant-garde of the literary world in his capacity as editor of The English Review and had contributed to the first Imagist Anthology, though his style was less compact than was usual in Imagist verse.

Ford served in France as a subaltern with the Welch Regiment having responded to the War in 1914 with the 'outlook of the Public School-boy'³, according to Douglas Goldring⁴, and there is

-
1. On one occasion when Ford attended a dinner given by the Imagists, he shocked all present by declaring that he did not know what an Imagist was and he did not believe anyone else knew either, which seems to suggest his proudly independent spirit.
 2. Ford, Parade's End, (1924-8) and Manning, The Middle Parts of Fortune: Somme and Ancre, 1916, (1929) recently re-issued (August 1977) which appeared with 'certain prunings and excisions' in a slightly-revised version as Her Privates We, (1930).
 3. Ford was commissioned to write 2 books under the Government Propaganda Scheme, promulgating the doctrine of ultra-patriotism.
 4. Reputations, p.113. Partly as a result of his patriotic zeal, Ford substituted the stoutly English 'Ford' for his German surname, 'Hueffer'.

certainly a strain of unexpected¹ patriotism and reverence for the nobility and grandeur of War in his verse. In answer to the question he subtly poses: 'Are we dying for the filthy London pavements and the unsavoury dregs of urban society?' Ford replies with assurance to this deliberately enfeebled anti-patriotic argument that soldiers must fight to preserve the essentially English, - 'ipso facto', rural-tradition:

... because our land is beautiful and green and comely,
Because our farms are quiet and thatched and homely,
Because the trout-stream dimples by the willow,
Because the water-lilies float upon the ponds....

Ford's determination to 'endure the swift, sharp torture of dying' in order to preserve the lovely land of England is more reminiscent of poetry in the Georgian idiom than the Imagist, and the Georgian predilection for nostalgic and regional verse is recalled also in 'The Iron Music' where a certain ironic tension is first attempted between the rumbustious rhythm and the gravity of the subject-matter:

Dust and corpses in the thistles
Where the gas-shells burst like snow,
And the shrapnel screams and whistles
On the Bécourt road below, ...
But I'm with you up at Wyndcroft,
Over Tintern on the Wye²

Rather than confronting reality, Ford seems to be regarding it self-consciously in his verse, with the result that his poems tend to be stilted, where the Imagist mode is adopted:

The white strips of sky
At the sides, cut by the poplar trunks...

-
1. 'Unexpected' in the conventional Imagist poet but Ford proves himself to be at heart a 'romantic Tory' with respect for tradition who mourned the pernicious effect the War would have on the age-old patterns of English life, in Parade's End.
 2. This Georgian tendency can perhaps be explained by the fact that in his youth, Ford passionately loved the Kent countryside which he celebrated in The Heart of the Country, comparable - according to John Wain, in his review of Arthur Mizener's biography of F.M.F. The Saddest Story, The Observer, 7.5.72 - with the 'similar work done by Edward Thomas'.

or sentimental, when he describes the War to an ingénué at home: 'I wonder, my dear, can you stick it? /As we should say: "Stick it, the Welch!" /In the dark of the moon /Going over', or when he concentrates on 'the men'¹, as in 'Foot-sloggers': 'What is love of one's land?.../ I don't know very well. /It is omnipotent like love; /It is deep and quiet as the grave'. Occasionally, as in 'That Exploit of Yours', which anticipates Owen's 'Strange Meeting' in the exchange between two soldiers on opposite sides meeting 'in the vaulted and vaporous caverns of Hell', a sardonic note leavens Ford's verse when he ironically explains that both soldiers have been impelled by the same cliché: to do their duty 'to Society and Fatherland', and he concludes: 'I will bet my hat that you who sent me here to Hell /Are saying the self-same words at this very moment /Concerning that exploit of yours'.

Admittedly Ford does not disguise the fact that War itself is not intrinsically fine, and death in war is often degrading and undignified - an 'uncomely man with a smoking gun /... Digging a hole in the mud and standing all day in the rain by it /Waiting his doom', in the tradition of countless other soldiers in the Punic, Lacedaemonian and Napoleonic Wars, each defending what he holds dear until that 'doom' arrives 'in a sudden scrimmage', reducing the soldier to 'an unsightly lump on the sodden grass .../ An image that shall take long to pass!'

Similarly, elsewhere in his long poem Antwerp, Ford describes with muted sympathy the wretched plight of the Belgian refugees,

1. There is no trace of sentimentality, however, in Ford's prose rendering of the degradation suffered by his men - victims of 'cynically carefree intrigues' in the corridors of power, dumped along the Western Front 'as if they were nuts wilfully picked and thrown over the shoulder by magpies', whose human identities - 'Each man a man with a back bone, knees, breeches ... passions ... pals, some scheme of the universe, corns, inherited diseases' - have been wilfully disregarded, No More Parades, Part I.

arriving in London in the Autumn of 1914:

These are the women of Flanders.
They await the lost.
They await the lost that shall never leave the dock;
They await the lost that shall never again come by
the train
To the embraces of all these women with dead faces;
They await the lost who lie dead in trench and barrier
and foss,
In the dark of the night.
This is Charing Cross; it is past one of the clock;
There is very little light.

There is so much pain.

Even though this may be considered 'imagism of a kind'¹, with its 'vers libre' and direct, simple statements, by virtue of its very length Antwerp could better be described as a series of impressions, carefully recorded, than an Imagistic 'tour-de-force' and although T.S. Eliot had a high regard for the poem² - which, in his opinion, offered an objective, panorama of War experience - Antwerp and Ford's service-poems in general do not really succeed in coming to terms with the actuality of War experience.

Ten years later, in Parade's End, Ford managed to accommodate his War-recollections in a well-balanced interpretation of these crucial years by adjusting the focus to view the War in the framework of the wider English tradition. The more leisurely medium of prose was not only more suited to his temperament, but also offered him room in which to expatiate on a multiplicity of themes - nostalgia for the old aristocratic order of England; passion for the English soil ('heavy-leaved, timbered hedgerows slowly creeping plough-lands'); appreciation of the soldiers' alienation from civilians, and the eclipse of the 'hero'-ideal - more lavishly than would have been possible within the confines of the Imagist poem.

1. Silkin, Op.cit., p.195.

2. 'The only good poem I have met with on the subject of the War', 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry', The Egoist, November 1917.

By contrast, Frederic Manning was a far more economical writer who resembled Isaac Rosenberg in certain aspects of both his physical situation - he served with the King's Shropshire Light Infantry throughout the War (in spite of asthma) in the ranks, rejecting a commission - and his work. 'A Shell', for example, from Manning's 1917 Collection Eidola¹, recalls Rosenberg's 'Louse Hunting' in its lurid choice of subject matter - 'Here we are all, naked as Greeks /Killing the lice in our shirts' - but Manning's poem suggests an elegant aestheticism redolent of the '90's Poets - 'Suddenly the air is torn asunder, /Ripped as coarse silk' - which characterizes his other poems about the War and emasculates them to 'literary exercises rather than renderings of terrible experience'²:

We are reaped, who were thy reapers, and slain our songs;
We are torn as Iason, beloved of thee, Mother:
Heavy the clay upon our lips,
The gray rats fear us not, but pass quickly, sated,
Over prone trunks, rent limbs, dead faces.

This 'literary quality' - detectable in the deliberate Classical references³, the staid inversions ('fear us not') and the tendency to archaic diction ('slain', 'thee', 'rent') - imbues also 'The Face' which concentrates upon Manning's fleeting impression of 'A boy's face white and tense, /Convulsed with terror and hate', exactly at the moment when he has been hit. After the event, Manning tries to penetrate the 'mist of blood' which obscures his vision of the boy to recover his impression of the boy's face: 'delicate and blonde, /The very mask of God. /Broken'. Similarly

1. Literally 'images'.

2. Julian Symons's comment in his review of The Middle Parts of Fortune, 'The Bon Times and the Bad', T.L.S., 19.8.77.

3. Cf. 'Reaction', addressed to Aphrodite who comes 'among us, / With sleepy eyelids, and a sleep-soft smile, /Ere we have scraped our boots of the mud /That is half a human.../You come, though we are killing the lice in our shirts, /To fill our eyes with the wine of your vision'.

'Grotesque' ironically compares the soldiers huddled over a brazier in a dug-out raucously chanting their patriotic songs, to a 'choir of frogs' against a background which has come straight from Dante¹ -

These are the damned circles Dante trod,
Terrible in hopelessness....

The effect of the classical allusions and refined technique, however brutal the subject matter, is not to offer a wider perspective with which to apprehend the actual War-scene, but to distance the War-experience by means of a calm detachment of mind. Exactly the opposite effect is achieved, however, in Manning's prose rendering of his Western Front experiences: The Middle Parts of Fortune,² 'a book about the full experience of war, which for most soldiers much of the time is trivial rather than terrible, boring rather than bloody'.³ The Middle Parts of Fortune is not a novel, as are All Quiet on the Western Front, A Farewell to Arms and Death of a Hero, neither can it really be categorized in the genre of semi-fictionalized autobiography - The Memoirs of George Sherston, for instance - or conventional autobiography: Goodbye to All That, Undertones of War and The Contrary Experience. In its hermetic all-inclusiveness, with nothing happening outside the area of war where 'civil life had been obliterated'⁴; no contrast attempted between the 'realities of battle and a nostalgically-recalled England' and the protago-

-
1. Cf. Blunden's comment in Undertones of War: 'Trees in the battle-field are already described by Dante'.
 2. According to Ernest Hemingway, 'the finest and noblest book of men in war that I have ever read'.
 3. J. Symons, Op.cit.
 4. Her Privates We, p.43.

nists immersed 'in a totally self-contained world with its own laws and values';¹ and in its direct confrontation of reality, The Middle Parts of Fortune not only puts into practice in prose two of the principal tenets of Imagist Poetry, but supersedes the limitations necessarily imposed by these basic principles to present an admirable blend of the particular and the universal, the humorous, the 'pitifully repulsive' and the humane, which has - at times - an epic flavour, hardly to be expected in a mildly talented Imagist poet with aesthetic proclivities:²

A kind of impersonal bad temper, which could not find any very definite object, developed among them; ... the general effect was one of a recalcitrant acquiescence in the dispensation of an inscrutable providence ... they were now mere derelicts in a wrecked and dilapidated world, with sore and angry nerves sharpening their tempers, or shutting them up in a morose and sullen humour from which it was difficult to move them Men had reverted to a more primitive stage in their development, and had become nocturnal beasts of prey, hunting each other in packs: this was the uniformity, quite distinct from the effect of military discipline, which their own nature had imposed on them. There is an extraordinary veracity in war, which strips man of every conventional covering he has, and leaves him to face a fact as naked and inexorable as himself.³

Whereas The Middle Parts of Fortune is imbued with this extraordinary universal quality, Richard Aldington's Death of a Hero⁴ concentrates upon one 'single exacerbated sensibility' (that of the central figure George Winterbourne) and one pervasive theme (the 'savage debunking of the whole concept of

1. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.191. There is another point of contact here between F.M. and I.R., in that both of them accepted the War as a total and inescapable experience which could be best faced directly, rather than through any intervening veils of ironic juxtaposition or comforting sentimentality.
2. Exemplified in M.P.F. /H.P.W. by such an observation as: 'A thin stalk of silver shot up in the sky, curved over, and flowered into a sphere of light, which expanded, pulsating, to flood the pocked earth beneath it', H.P.W., p.251.
3. Ibid., pp.42-3.
4. Envisaged as a large-scale development of the main themes and emotions already expressed in the war-poems.

'heroism'¹) and Richard Aldington, incensed and embittered, has none of the coherence of focus which distinguishes Manning's prose. Death of a Hero has considerable documentary interest nonetheless and presents several important insights into the various relationships between serving soldiers and their families, and serving soldiers and the general civilian populace at home.² Although Aldington won considerable acclaim in 1929 for his War novel, his significance, as far as the present study is concerned, centres upon the poetry in the Imagist idiom which he wrote during the War while on active service on the Western Front from 1916 to 1918. As one of the original poets designated 'Imagist' by Pound, Aldington made a substantial contribution to the Des Imagistes Anthology and the three S.I.P. volumes, as well as being actively involved - as Assistant Editor - in critical discussion of contemporary verse and promotion of the Imagist Poets' work in The Egoist, 1914- 1916.

Aldington's first volume of verse as an individual Imagist, Images, 1910 - 1915, with a cover designed by John Nash, was published in 1915 with Images, Old and New appearing in America one year later. In June 1917, poems originally published in The Little Review were collected under the title The Love Poems of Myrrha and Konallis, and only two months afterwards, Reverie: A Little Book of Poems for H.D.³ - of which the title poem is fairly representative in its juxtaposition of trench reality and Aldington's

1. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.182.

2. An area also very well-documented by Henry Williamson in his Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight, culminating in the savage exchanges between the combatant-officer, Phillip Maddison, and his recalcitrant civilian-father, in A Test to Destruction.

3. Reviewed by Harriet Monroe, 'Refuge from War', Poetry (Chicago) XII, No.1 (April 1918), who compares the Reverie poems with 'Choricos' in R.A.'s first volume, with its 'Greek-marble like beauty', commenting that the 'contrast of moods... bridges the gulf between youth and manhood'.

concept of ideal love:

It is very hot in the chalk trench
With its rusty iron pickets
And shell-smashed crumbling traverse,
Very hot and choking and full of evil smells
So that my head and eyes ache
And I am glad to crawl away
And lie in the little shed I call mine.

But these things pass over, beyond and away from me,
The voices of men fade into silence
For I am burned with a sweet madness,
Soothed also by the fire that burns me,
Exalted and made happy in misery
By love, by an unfaltering love, -

characterized as comprising 'love poems rather than War poems'¹,
appeared in print.

In 1919, Images of War: A Book of Poems², embellished by a
cover designed - this time - by Paul Nash (who also supplied
various wood-cuts to illustrate the poems³) was published, incor-
porating nearly fifty War-poems, 'the gleanings from the little
War notebook'.⁴ Images of War revolves around Aldington's three
principal themes, the first two of which - memory of love⁵ and
sensitivity to nature⁶, even when devastated - also prompted
poems in the Georgian idiom⁷, and the third theme - the sustain-
ing of the Greek ideal - betrayed both Aldington's own tendency
towards classicism in his War verse and his admiration of his
wife's phil-hellenism. Illustrative of this Hellenic style is

1. Alec Waugh, R.A.: An Intimate Portrait, ed. Kershaw and Temple, p.163.
2. Of which the dominant image is that of the corpse in 'Apathy', the last poem, with its fingers pointing in reproach at the deep wound through which the skull is visible.
3. E.g. the first poem, 'Proem, May 1917', was followed by a wood-cut of a I.W.W. battle-field.
4. Norman T. Gates, The Poetry of R.A.: A Critical Evaluation and An Anthology of Uncollected Poems (Pennsylvania U.P., 1974).
5. As in 'Leave-Taking' where the soldier asks his beloved: 'Will the straight garden poppy / Still spout blood from its green throat / Before your feet?'
6. Interestingly, in 1923, R.A. having retired temporarily to a cottage in the Kennet Valley, produced a pastoral poem of 108 lines, The Berkshire Kennet, indicating his competence in tackling rural themes.
7. See Section 2 (b) and R.A.'s 'A Village' ('This poor drab village, lovely in our eyes' because a place of rest) and E.B.'s 'At Senlis Once' (where he 'found an honest glass all manner of riches' for the same reason) complement each other extremely well.

'Daughter of Zeus', in which the moon is still identified with Artemis and far removed from the sadistic whore of Edgell Rickword's 'Moonrise over Battlefield':

... though she be pale and yet more pale
Gazing upon dead men
And fierce disastrous strife,
Yet for us she is still a frail lily
Floating upon a calm pool - still a tall lady
Comforting our human despair.¹

Also in 1919, Images of Desire (twenty-four love poems) was published and War and Love 1915-18, an amalgam of Images of War and Images of Desire, came out in America in the same year. As Aldington had written earlier to Amy Lowell, in 1918, he intended to collect his War poems which he knew were 'not popular ... not like Brooke or Noyes or anybody like that'² into a book, where he hoped the anguish and realism would convince the reader that they were indeed the 'stern truth'. Aldington recognised that he would have to sacrifice delicacy of technique to accommodate such veracity in his verse, but he also hoped that the 'direct appeal' of writing honestly 'what I've seen, what I've felt' with 'no lie, no sort of pose', would recommend him to a wider audience, not necessarily 'enthusiasts for poetry'.³

Aldington's first response to the War in November 1914⁴ was to regard it as a minor irritation, of no consequence beside the activities of the classical hierarchy:

Even now,
With the war beating in great waves overhead,
Beating and roaring like great winds and mighty waters,

-
1. Cf. 'An Earth Goddess' which refers to Jocasta and the Tragedy of Thebes.
 2. Letter of 2.1.18, in Amy Lowell Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
 3. Letter of 2.2.18, Ibid.
 4. 'War Yawp', Poetry, V, No.2 (November 1914).

The sea-gods still pattern the red seaweed fronds,
Still chip the amber into neck-chains
For Leucothea and Thetis

Similarly, even in Aldington's trench-poems, arranged under the general title 'In France, 1916-18', Li-Tai-Pe, 'the sage', Sappho and Abou-Nawas, 'the friend of Khalifs', people Aldington's dreams in 'a chilly dug-out'¹ and the ungainly soldiers sprawled asleep or hunched in silence in the mess ante-room revive - for Aldington - the memory of 'Odysseus and the noble Menelaus' in the Trojan War, 'resting from the toils of war'.² Just as Aldington finds relief in remembrance of the heroes of myth, so he succumbs to the escape offered through nostalgia, prompted by the mundane activity of humping hay-bales which stimulates Aldington to a painstakingly particularized annotation of characteristic English grasses, of which any poet in the Georgian idiom would have been proud:

... But look! last June those heavy dried
bales waved and glittered in the
fields of England.
Cinque-foil and clover, buttercups,
fennel, thistle and rue, daisy and
ragged robin, wild rose from the
hedge, shepherd's purse, and long
sweet nodding stalks of grass.
Heart of me, heart of me, be not sick
and faint, though fingers and arms
and head ache; you bear the gift
of the glittering meadows of
England. Here are bundles from
Somerset, from Wales, from
Hereford, Worcester, Gloucester -
names we must love, scented with
summer peace.³

Aldington makes no attempt to disguise his longing to escape, as is made clear in those verses which are simply entitled 'Escape'⁴ and dated 'Loos, 1918', for the poem closely

-
1. 'Compensation', Poetry, XIV, No.4, July 1919.
 2. 'Valhalla', Newhaven, 1918.
 3. 'Fatigues', Base Camp, Calais 1916, Images of War.
 4. The Love of Myrrhine and Konallis.

examines the extent of outrage suffered by Aldington's refined sensibility:

Escape, let the soul escape from this
insanity, this insult to God, from this
ruined landscape, these murdered
fields, this bitterness, this agony,...
Let the soul escape and move with
emotion along ilex walks under a
quiet sky. There, lingering for awhile
beside the marble head of some
shattered Hermes.... Or perhaps by
some Homeric¹ sea, watching the
crisp foam blown by a straight wind,...²

Apart from this loose-rhythmed form of verse, Aldington produced a number of specifically Imagist trench-poems which conformed - more or less - to Imagist notions of 'vers libre'. Using a more condensed form, such poems concentrated on the description of a specific incident, object or impression, as in 'Picket' ('Three soldiers huddled on a bench /Over a red-hot brazier /And a fourth who stands apart /Watching the cold rainy dawn'), 'Bombardment' ('We left our holes /And looked above the wreckage of the earth /To where the white clouds moved in silent lines /Across the untroubled blue'), 'Field Manoeuvres' ('In my nostrils is the smell of crushed grass, /Wet pine-cones and bark ... /The flutter of a finch's wings about my head /Is like distant thunder'), and 'Battle-field' ('But in this fruitless land, /Thorny with wire /And foul with rotting clothes and sacks, /The crosses flourish'). The three Imagist poems which show most directly a line of descent between Aldington's pre-War verse and the

-
1. As the 'Proem' to I.W. indicates, R.A. finds the enormity of the War too vast to comprehend and longs to return to sedate contemplation of the Ancient Greek landscape in his verse: 'I would gather something of repose, /Some intuition of the inalterable gods.../Each day I grow more restless,.../Gaze impotently upon a thousand miseries/And still am dumb'.
 2. Several other pieces of 'polyphonic prose', to use Amy Lowell's term, (e.g. 'The Road' and 'Dawns' published in The Egoist) were also arranged in this very loose verse-form.

War poems are 'Sunsets', appearing in S.I.P., 1916:

The white body of the evening
Is torn into scarlet,
Slashed and gouged and seared
Into crimson,
And hung ironically
With garlands of mist.
And the wind
Blowing over London from Flanders
Has a bitter taste;

'Insouciance', in which Aldington compares his admittedly 'delicate ... little poems' to a flock of white-winged doves, and 'Living Sepulchres', which presents, quite effectively, Aldington's dilemma: leaning against the trench wall, companioned by 'huge rats / Swollen with feeding upon men's flesh', yet still able to make "'hokku" / Of the moons and flowers and of the snow'. Occasionally, Aldington deliberately parodies the delicate Imagist form, as in 'Trench Idyll' - "'the nastiest job I've had / Was last year on this very front / Taking the discs at night from men / Who'd hung for six months on the wire"' (and whose corpses disintegrated at a touch); or 'Soliloquy I', where he assumes the pose of a war-hardened veteran, stocially munching his sandwich until 'it' has passed - 'it' being the dead man, not austere and beautiful¹ but 'wobbling carrion roped upon a cart'. What gives such piquancy to Aldington's resentment is his insistence that the response of revulsion has been imposed by the War, for his spontaneous reaction - judging by his pre-War verses and certain of his trench-poems - is one of sensitive aestheticism, particularly where the classical deities are concerned, which still inhabit Aldington's imagination and his surroundings: Demeter, 'our Mother' earth, for

1. Like the dead English soldier, 'more austere and lovely in repose / Than Angelo's hand could ever carve in stone', 'Soliloquy, II'.

instance, for whom 'the spring will drop flowers /And patient
creeping stalk and leaf /Along these barren lines /Where the huge
rats scuttle /And the hawk shrieks to the carrion crow'.¹

But there is an essentially self-regarding quality about
Aldington's work, even when he is protesting on behalf of his
whole generation, as in 'The Blood of the Young Men', about the
useless sacrifice of large numbers of young men in order to bene-
fit the women and old men at home. This concern with registering
his own sensations, offers too narrow a framework to comprehend
fully the intractability of the War-situation, and renders the
poem susceptible to bathos and hysteria:

The horror of it!
When a woman holds out a white hand
Suddenly to know it drops black putrid blood....
Old men, you will grow stronger and healthier
With broad red cheeks and clear hard eyes -
Are not your meat and drink the choicest?
Blood of the young, dear flesh of the young men.

A more humane,² less embittered approach to the War Dead has been
arrived at by September 1918, in 'Deaths of Common Men'³ where
Aldington appeared to have come to terms - in a somewhat similar
way, once again, to the Georgian Poets - with the 'good flesh cut,
the white bone shattered', in that he identifies the dead with the
earth and justifies their death as necessary to promote the continu-
ation and enrichment of the natural cycle:

Moist crumbly loam, dark, odorous -
This is the bodies of our forefathers
We are - not the salt -
But the earth of the earth, earth itself,
And we die that life may be richer.

-
1. 'In the Trenches', II.
 2. Cf. Mikhail Urnov's opinion of George Winterbourne which could
equally as well be applied to R.A.: 'a new feeling of humanity was
coming to life in him.... The War makes the... artist and aes-
thete feel the falsity of his position in relation to ordinary
people', R.A.: An Intimate Portrait.
 3. The Egoist, November-December, 1918.

Also, by 1918, Aldington had a clearer conception of the extent to which the War experience had necessitated a radical re-definition of terms and attitudes. The word 'landscape', for example, was no longer applicable exclusively to the untouched English countryside or to the idyllic vision of 'the marble /rock of some Greek island, piercing /its sparse garments of lavenders and /mints', for Nature was now associated in Aldington's psyche with the 'waste and /garbage of armies', phosgene's 'pungent exotic odour' and huddled 'corpses with blue horrible faces /and foam on their writhed mouths'.¹ Likewise, the idea of 'song', earlier linked with the voices of Sappho's nightingales, 'has come to have a new/meaning - more common but more / pathetic...' on the Western Front:

... No longer the sharp edge of Attic
song, but the immeasurable pathos
of the song of common men,
patient under disaster.²

Returned to London and his old literary circle, in 1919, Aldington was even more conscious of the chasm existing between his pre-War and post-War situation. It was not possible to drink from the waters of Lethe to forget, for even that old myth had been exploded for him, and the 'old pain, old terror, old exasperations/ crowd upon [him]' of the shivering trench-nights, interminable marches, constant deluge of shell-fire and permanent 'menace - / annihilation'.³ Even in the Library, reading Greek, Aldington questions: 'What does /Greek matter?'⁴ - the ultimate sacrilege for a

-
1. 'Landscape', The Love of Myrrhine and Konallis, Loos, May 1918.
 2. 'Song', Ibid., Divisional Camp, 1918.
 3. 'Lethe', Ibid., London, 1919.
 4. 'In the Library', Ibid.

classicist poet - for his mind is constantly occupied with impressions of the trenches 'under the rain, under the shells', and he feels spiritually drained:

... weary as the lost Argonauts beating
hopelessly for home against the
implacable storm.

The same exhaustion, sharpened by a sense of injustice and bitterness, infuses 'The Faun Complains'¹ - ten years after the War has ended - when Aldington protests (as do others among the survivors²) about the indelible and insidious effect of the War which cannot be prevented from invading his sub-conscious:

They give me aeroplanes
Instead of birds and moths;
Instead of sunny fields
They give me mud-holes;
And for this my day-long, night-long sacred hush, ...
For this they give me noise,
Harsh clangours of breaking metal,
Abrupt huge bursts of flame

Characteristically, Aldington's War Poems tend to oscillate uneasily between 'retreats into Greek legend and idealized Mediterranean imagery and determined attempts to face the present facts of mass slaughter'³, without ever achieving the consistent concentration and tautness⁴ of Herbert Read's poetry in the Imagist idiom, although in his most effective pieces, Aldington does manage to pin down the moment of experience and 'render particulars exactly'.⁵

Out of all the poets categorized as 'writing in the Imagist mode during the War', Read is certainly the most significant and

-
1. Collected Poems (N.Y., 1928), p.71.
 2. Most poignantly Ivor Gurney, but the Western Front features invade E.B.'s post-War verse too, e.g. 'Pastoral to Madeline'.
 3. Bergonzi, Op.cit., p.82.
 4. Cf. Silkin's remark, Op.cit., p.191: 'It is as though Imagism was more viable to synoptic uses than in a recreation of close, localized experience', and R.A. himself was quoted as saying that he abandoned the virtue of 'extreme expression and essential significance of every word' as the 'narrow path that leadeth to sterility'.
 5. Preface, S.I.P., 1915, p.vii.

successful who had been prompted - as he explained in a later poem on another war¹ - by a simple resolve:

to tell the truth without rhetoric
the truth about war and about men
involved in the indignities of war,²

an objective which he amply fulfilled in many of his War Poems in Eclogues³ and Naked Warriors⁴ and - on a larger scale - in The End of a War.⁵ Not only was Read a fairly prolific poet of the War period, but he also recorded his War-experience in prose-form in A War Diary 1915-18, 'The Impact of War', 'The Raid', and 'In Retreat' in The Contrary Experience⁶, and Ambush⁷, but - unfortunately - there is not scope in the present study to examine Read's total response to the War in the detail which his work most assuredly merits and only that aspect of his poetry can be considered here which relates to the Imagist mode (although, at the time, Read was not one of the 'founder' Imagist Poets⁸).

John H. Johnston lists⁹ as Read's 'Imagist War Poems': 'Villages Démolis', 'The Crucifix', 'The Refugees', 'Fear', 'Liedholz', 'The Happy Warrior', to which may be added: 'Champs de Manoeuvres', 'Movement of Troops', 'Winter Grief' and 'Promenade

-
1. 'Ode' (1940) written during the Battle of Dunkirk, May 1940, Collected Poems, p.157.
 2. Cf. The entry for 28.iv.18 in A War Diary, Contrary Experience, p.127: 'But nowadays to be false to the reality would choke me'.
 3. 1919, though most of the poems were written between 1916 and 1918.
 4. 1919. After N.W., war 'recurred constantly in his poetry, as a theme; it helped to shape his political and social thought, and even his view on art', George Woodcock, H.R.: The Stream and The Source (1972), p.23.
 5. 1933. Reluctantly, in the cause of economy, this work must be excluded from the present study even though it is 'Read's main act of justice in poetry to his war experience', Francis Berry, H.R., (British Council Pamphlet, 1953, revised 1961), p.10.
 6. 1963, re-issued in 1973, with a Personal Foreword by Graham Greene.
 7. 1930.
 8. H.R. acknowledged the Imagist Poets as 'my immediate mentors', part of the 'essence of XXth century' who helped him evolve his own 'philosophy of composition'. 9. 'The Higher Reality', Op.cit.

'Solemnelle'. In each of these poems, Read struggled to resolve the problem which confronted many War Poets: how to objectify the profound and bitter truths of the intense range of human experience encountered in War in a form that would encompass the universal as well as particular aspects of those truths, in order to 'present the universal aspects of a particular event'¹? Read approaches this dilemma by relating the poem's rhythm to the 'inner feeling' so that the rhythm captures the feeling and holds it 'in a crystal cage', where it 'remains as an image, sealed and immortalized for our contemplation'. Thus, according to Read's definition, a poem comprises 'a structure of words whose sound constitutes a rhythmic unity, complete in itself, irrefragable, un-analyzable, completing its symbolic references within the ambit of its sound effect'²

Where Read significantly differed from the mainstream of Imagist Poets was, firstly, in his rejection of their obsession with static form - 'Rhyme, metre, cadence, alliteration, are various decorative devices to be used as the vision demands, and are not formal qualities pre-ordained'³ - and, secondly, in his search for a 'higher reality' beyond the pursuance of an 'abstract, aesthetic ideal', with which the majority of Imagist Poets were satisfied. Similarly, Read believed that the 'quality of hermeticism'⁴ inherent in Imagist principles, which were assumed to be both 'the means and the ends of [Imagist] poetry', was likely to impose a restraint or barrier between the experiences of war and

1. End-Note to The End of A War, Poems 1914 -34, p.75.

2. 'What Is a Poem?', Collected Poems, p.273.

3. 'Definitions Towards a Modern Theory of Poetry', Art and Letters, I, January, 1918, p.73.

4. Silkin, Op.cit., p.171.

and the writing of Imagist poetry, and for that reason the Imagist concern with form is subservient, in Read's poetry, to his attempt to synthesize the particular and the universal through the image itself.

Read had endeavoured to reach his own compromise between 'dream and reality' in a form of poetry which would 'represent [his] aesthetic ideals and yet at the same time deal with the experience that threatened to overwhelm [him]',¹ and most of the resultant series of War poems appeared in Naked Warriors in 1919: a 'protest against all the glory camouflage that is written about the War',² although Read regretted the necessity of being brutal and ugly in order to tell the truth as he saw it. He described in his War Diary how - in particular during the German Spring Offensive of 1918 - he had seen 'humanity very naked and life both precious and pitiful',³ and the Imagist mode seemed to recommend itself as the most appropriate for the poet who wanted to come to terms with this 'naked reality of life' as experienced in war.

Although most of the War poems in the Imagist manner were published in Naked Warriors, four are also featured in Eclogues, indicating that even these pastoral reflections of early country upbringing⁴ are not immune from the impinging influence of Read's War-experience. 'The Orchard', with its particularized detail, juxtaposition of ideas ('pale blossoms'/'black twigs'), and concentration upon the carefully-delineated image, is fairly typical of these eclogues of the remote Yorkshire country-side:

-
1. 'The Discovery of Poetry', C.E., p.177.
 2. 'Extracts from a Diary', 14.iii.18, C.E., p.122.
 3. Ibid., 1.iv.18, C.E., p.123.
 4. Mirrored in prose by The Innocent Eye, Annals of Innocence and Experience (1940), pp.17-62.

Grotesque patterns of blue-gray mould
Clung to my barren apple-trees:
But in Spring
Pale blossoms break like flames
Along black wavering twigs:
And soon
Rains wash the cold frail petals
Downfalling like tremulous flakes
Even within my heart.

There is no sharp division between these evocations of childhood in remote Yorkshire and Read's expression of his War-experience and in 'Champ de Manoeuvres' - probably written during his period of training - looking across the field of action from the hill he has recently assailed, Read finds himself lulled, as is Aldington in 'Field Manoeuvres',¹ by the benevolent ambience, into an identification of himself with the natural elements:

I dwell
In the golden setting of the sun, ...

The empty body broods
One with the inanimate rocks,

until the setting of the sun shocks him again into awareness of the requirements of the military operation:

Then my body wakes on the lonely hill,
Gathering to its shell my startled soul.

Perhaps, however, Read had some chronological development in mind in his precise arrangement of the 'Eclogues' for the next poem focuses upon the entrainment of the troops in France as they are carried by the relentless rails 'Down dark avenues of silent trees' to some sinister destination, with the truck-loads of men only perceptible to an observer by an intermittent - easily extinguishable - red light. 'Winter Grief' which could justifiably claim to be compounded from Read's accumulated impressions of

1. E.g. 'My spirit follows after the gliding clouds, /And my lips murmur of the mother of beauty /Standing brest-high, in golden broom /Among the blue pine-woods'.

mass slaughter and suffering after an 'era of grief', in other words, a winter in the line where any re-affirmation of natural vitality is sadly out of place:

The earth unveils
a sad nakedness
And her hills
droop round my sorrow.
Into the stillness
living things scream,
And only the nerveless dead
get tranquillity.
From the funereal mould¹
Late asters blaspheme.

The last of this group of four poems, 'Promenade Solennelle', proffers a more oblique interpretation of War-experience as it fixes upon the mute trudging of two victims of the War through a 'super-realistic' desolate landscape. Their situation is made only slightly more explicit in the final stanza where the suffering soldier/Christ analogy, developed in 'My Company',² is suggested and the reference to 'solemnity' in the title is substantiated:

We passed black altars of rock:
Two mute, processional, docile Christs
Amid the unheeding
Bleakness.

In the Collected Poems of 1966, Read reprints four poems from the First World War period which were excluded from earlier editions of his poetry on the grounds that they either presented too naive and unrealistic a picture of war - 'Ypres' - or such undiluted emotion as to obscure the aesthetic value of the poem, rendering it 'too raw for publication' - 'Auguries of Life and

-
1. The last line possibly prefigures the mood of 'Logos' where inescapable obsession with 'The carnage at the Menin Gate ... / the Morse code of a boot and crutch' induces the War-ravaged subject to savage the most accessible manifestations of natural beauty which - fortuitously - are the colour of blood: 'Suddenly he began to torture the flowers/...red winter tulips /faced by the behemothian jaws/ for which there is no inevitable IN and OUT'.
 2. Cf. 'My men, my modern Christs, /Your bloody agony confronts the world'.

'Death', in memory of his brother Charles, killed in France 'by a stray bullet' in the last days of the War. Read explains the genesis of this poem in 'The Impact of War'¹ when, having heard the news of his brother's death, he sought seclusion in the park near the Middlesborough Barracks - where he was stationed at that time - and with the 'emblems of death and grief' around him 'the lines of an elegy came spontaneously to [his] mind', making the death of his brother a symbol of all those 'beauties that adorn / tragically the earth with flowers / heroes and valiant hearts'. Even in this poem, with its unmistakable subjectivity, the Imagist mode asserts itself in such lines as 'In the park / Old men swept the dead things in a heap to burn: / Their last fragrance / Floated about the naked trees'; 'The sun / Was a silver pervasion across the sky', and 'A chrysanthemum was / A pale dishevelled emblem of death', though the second and third sections of the poem introduce a degree of philosophical speculation, which resembles the form of 'My Company'.

By contrast, 'Ypres' - with its rather self-conscious references to 'the rat-locks of Maenades', its personification of brooding Desolation, its archaic diction ('swills / thy ruins', 'vermeil flames') and unsubstantiated abstraction ('the wan harmonies of ruin', 'the dusking sky') - represents an early response by the poet to the War-situation², where observation from a distance predominates. 'The Autumn of the World' similarly luxuriates in a riot of decorative diction ('a host of blood-flecked clouds ... / melt into the vermilioned vastness', 'The last yellow leaves fall/

1. The Contrary Experience, pp.218-19.

2. 'Ypres' appears in prose form under the heading 'January - Two Impressions of Ypres', 1916, in Read's 'Extracts from a Soldier's Diary', The New Age, 12.10.16, p. 567. By January, 1916, H.R. had been at the Front for 2 months and his keenest impression was still 'the inexplicable unreality of it all'.

'on the iridescent sward') so that the intention of the poem which - judging from the title - is to draw an analogy between the holocaust in France and the 'dank wafture of decay' borne from the 'infinite womb of chaos' in the cosmos, is confused beneath the welter of aesthetic exuberance. Of this group of poems¹, only 'Aeroplanes' can be said to truly comply with the canons of the Imagist Movement and successfully sustains the dragon-fly-metaphor of the plane, ending with an ironic juxtaposition between the idea of a dragonfly floating over a lily-pond and the aeroplane soaring over the burst of anti-aircraft fire:

A dragonfly
in the flecked grey sky.

Its silvered planes
break the wide and still
harmony of space.

Around it shells
flash
their fumes
burgeoning to blooms
smoke-lilies that float
along the sky.

Among them darts
a dragonfly.

Naked Warriors, however, certainly offers the most comprehensive selection of Read's War Poems in the Imagist mode, in addition to three longer pieces: 'Kneeshaw Goes to War', 'My Company' and 'The Execution of Cornelius Vane', all of which testify to the depth of the incision made by the War's 'jagged blades' in Read's psyche. 'The Scene of War' comprises a series of eight poems, six of which follow the characteristically incisive Imagist form. 'Villages Démolis' makes a general comment on the domestic ruin endemic to war, with the dismembered houses

1. 'Ypres', 'The Autumn...' and 'Aeroplanes' all appeared in the Leeds University student paper, Gryphon, in 1916.

reduced to rubble:

Here and there
interior walls
lie upturned and interrogate the skies amazedly,

and can be interestingly compared with another poem on the same topic, though in a very different style, Laurence Binyon's 'The Ebb of War'.¹ 'The Crucifix' is an Imagist poem derived from an actual image - the Christian 'emblem of agony' - which the First World War had proved to be both inadequate as a representation of mass-suffering, and futile in that the Christian ethic can do little to protect men who are 'bonds to the whims of murder'. 'Fear' investigates the subtle divide between simulated composure - tuning the 'vibrating chords' of the nervous system to control the wave of fear 'beating through the air' - interpreted by the civilian reporter as the behaviour of a 'gallant gentleman', and plain animal terror when control is lost and 'you will grovel on the earth /and your rabbit eyes /will fill with the fragments of your shatter'd soul'.

In 'The Happy Warrior', the falsity of another common assumption and literary motif - bearing in mind Wordsworth's poem of the same title - is revealed. The Happy Warrior 'That every Man in arms should wish to be', whose 'high endeavours are an inward light /That makes the path before him always bright' and who is 'more able to endure, /As more exposed to suffering and distress' is portrayed in twentieth century terms as a terrified animal, demented both by fear and blood-lust, who follows the most basic impulses of survival with no regard to the 'generous Spirit' and 'self-knowledge' which imbued Wordsworth's warrior, even in the most 'awful moment' of battle:

1. See Section 2 (c), p. 179.

His wild heart beats with painful sobs,
His strained hands clench an ice-cold rifle,
His aching jaws grip a hot parch'd tongue,
And his wide eyes search unconsciously

He cannot shriek.

Bloody saliva
Dribbles down his shapeless jacket.

I saw him stab
And stab again
A well-killed Boche.

This is the happy warrior,
This is he

Sardonic humour is introduced in 'Liedholz' to describe the ludicrous situation often encountered in war¹, when two opponents recently trying to kill each other, discover that - as individuals - they have many interests in common:

Liedholz shot at me
and I at him;
in the evening tumult he surrendered to me.

Before we reached our wire
he told me he had a wife and three children.
In the dug-out we gave him a whiskey

In broken French we discussed
Beethoven, Nietzsche and the International....

But the real point of contact between the narrator and his prisoner is Read's cork-blackened face, which amuses Liedholz as it seems to sum up the total incongruity of the War-situation: highly-educated men stalking each other at dead of night in No Man's Land, suddenly surprising each other and changing - in an instant - from aggressors to intellectual equals who manage to communicate in halting French on subjects which they probably never discussed with their fellow-officers in their respective trenches.

A more sombre approach to the War-situation is presented in 'The Refugees', still using the Imagist mode, the versatility of

1. H.R. gives a more detailed account of the circumstances leading to his prisoner's capture in A War Diary, C.E., p.101 and 'The Raid', Ibid., pp.226-7.

which is ably demonstrated, in the hands of such a skilful practitioner as Read. He manages to achieve a much greater comprehensiveness in the space of sixteen lines than Ford who similarly dealt with the subject of refugees, in the more discursive Antwerp, for Read selects the essential features of these displaced persons - their silence, their age, the urgency of their flight, their poverty, their stoicism ('They do not weep: /their eyes are too raw for tears') and their dignity - to present a picture of the innocent victims of war which is both objective and humane, in this 'record of a movement glimpsed in the midst of action, a fragment of imagist immediacy, whose sharp concreteness is deepened by the shadow of recollected compassion'.¹

Read himself adopts the more discursive approach in 'My Company' where he appears to be attempting a synthesis of his War experience and, particularly, an appraisal of the bond of camaraderie, which made an indelible impression on him from the War. Read's experience of camaraderie - the 'comitatus' spirit - deeply influenced his future political thinking (as his prose accounts testify) and he seems anxious to preserve the intensity of the remembered emotion, without sentimentality, from his post of safety in England, while his men are still menaced in France.

Even so, there are several instances where the characteristic Imagistic technique impinges - 'My men go wearily /with their monstrous burdens. /They bear wooden planks /and iron sheeting / through the area of death', and 'A man of mine /lies on the wire;/ And he will rot /and first his lips /the worms will eat' - where

1. Woodcock, Op.cit., p.50.

Read's principal aim is to convey, with a sense of immediacy, the Front Line experience. 'The Execution of Cornelius Vane', which concludes 'The Scene of War' Section, maintains the Imagist mode throughout, and although there is a basic narrative linking the individual stanzas, each stanza could be detached from the whole and examined as an individual Imagist poem. Cornelius Vane, who had already shot off his right index finger to avoid Front Line duties, is eventually forced to join the combatants when every man is needed - presumably to stem the advance of the Germans in Spring 1918. Having protested his disability - 'Cornelius held out his fingerless hand /And remarked that he couldn't shoot. /"But you can stab", the sergeant said' - the unfortunate Vane approaches the battle zone and is terrified by the sight of the 'wounded stragglers' and the increasing number of shells, one of which explodes near him while he is relieving himself. In a moment of blind panic - 'he willed nothing, saw nothing, only before him /Were the free open fields' - Cornelius obeys a primitive animal instinct and runs to the fields. From their tranquillity, the battle loses its fearsomeness and manifests its presence in harmless-seeming 'smoke-puffs of shrapnel', and Cornelius, without any plan of escape except to put as much ground as possible between himself and the Front, keeps a course behind the lines, refreshing himself at a farm-house and re-awakening his appreciation of natural beauty away from the devastation of the battle-zone:

Cornelius perceived with a new joy
Pale anemones and violets of the wood,
And wished that he might ever
Exist in the perception of these woodland flowers
And the shafts of yellow light that pierced
The green dusk.

Paradoxically, Nature, while offering him beauty, lulls Cornelius into a false sense of security which makes him careless and leads to his arrest:

... the peace of the fields
Dissipated the terror that had been the strength of
his will....

The poem concludes with Cornelius about to be shot but questioning the justice of such a punishment which will permanently deprive him of 'The bright sun rising /And the birds that sing', and the reader takes the point that in war, the individual is subservient to the will of the war-machine - 'A cog in some great evil engine' (as Kneeshaw is) - and perfectly normal human responses in such a situation may be summarily punished by death.

In 'Kneeshaw Goes to War', however, the poem's form and its subject are altogether more complex. Kneeshaw, occasionally described as a 'Prufrock-in-khaki', is the archetypal soldier, not troubled by too much imagination - 'content to contemplate /His finger-nails and wrinkled boots' - who laconically 'goes to war' and, after a period of back-straightening training, disembarks at Boulogne for the Front Line. At Boulogne an unusual mood of reflection overtakes Kneeshaw, stimulated by the sight of the assembled masts - 'This forest ... congregated /From various climates and strange seas' - with their aura of romance and heroic endeavour. These imaginative musings are curtailed and the heroic image deflated by Kneeshaw's transportation to the Front:

Then, with many other men,
He was transported in a cattle-truck
To the scene of war.

At the Front, although Kneeshaw is physically spared for a while, his mind - so recently stirred - is subjected to the 'inevitable

'searing', and he is plunged into the 'black horror' induced by the ghastly surrounding desolation. Read provides a horrifying example of the ghastliness of the Front-Line situation where:

The earth was scarr'd and broken.
By torrents of plunging rains;
Then wash'd and sodden with autumnal rains,

in his evocation of the scene where Kneeshaw's companion hesitated in the mud and - dragged down by the weight of his military impedimenta - slowly drowns in 'the viscous ooze'. Brutal as it may seem afterwards, the most humane solution is for the officer to shoot the man, but even this is mismanaged: 'An officer shot him through the head: /Not a neat job - the revolver /Was too close'. The metaphor of the men acting as cogs in the War-machine is sustained in the attack in which Kneeshaw 'finds himself':

Kneeshaw found himself in the second wave:
The unseen springs revolved the cog
Through all the mutations of that storm of death.

Combined with this comment on the inexorability of the War-machine and the enforced passivity of its component parts, is direct expression of Kneeshaw's responses to the battle situation: his fumbled reaction to the order 'Dig in!' and his terrible confrontation with the skull of a buried man, cleft by his trench-pick. In the moment of revulsion when he is unconscious of the dangers of the battle-field, he is struck by a shell-fragment and the ensuing unconsciousness is welcomed as a release from the battle-trauma:

Then mercifully
A hot blast and riotous detonation
Hurled his mangled body
Into the beautiful peace of a coma.

The final part of the poem focuses on Kneeshaw, 'minus a leg, on crutches', but restored to his 'native land', with a mind no longer ' [reflecting] things' merely, but able to formulate his

own 'war-song'. Kneeshaw regrets delivering his body to fear, in allowing the War to dictate terms to him, when the more honourable course would have been to reject the War-machine, but - at the same time - he is grateful that although 'Chance ... gave [him] a crutch', it also allowed his life to be spared to enjoy 'The flowers at my feet and the deep /Beauty of the still tarn'. The individual consciousness has eventually triumphed over the War, but to preserve its integrity, it must tell the truth about war - 'truths that lie too deep for taint' - so that others may understand.

Altogether, most particularly in 'Kneeshaw Goes to War' and, in general, in all the Naked Warriors poems, Herbert Read has proved both himself and the Imagist mode capable of a viable exposition of the War-experience, reconciling 'the contradictions derived from our senses on the one hand and our imagination on the other'¹, in a series of clearly-defined images 'unclouded by rhetoric or sentiment'.² Read proved that the imagistic technique was indeed adequate for the expression of war in poetry, proving that a balance between objective observation and subjective involvement were sustained; a ruthless concision were practised, and the form were adjusted to complement the subject matter.

Largely as a result of his experiments in the Imagist idiom, Read was able to achieve the particular reconciliation between the freedom of the mind 'and the necessity of experience' for

1. The True Voice of Feeling : Studies in English Romantic Poetry (1953), quoted Woodcock, Op. cit., p.159.

2. 'The Image in Modern English Poetry', Tenth Muse(1954).

which he had been searching from before the War. The War situation, however, with its stark antitheses had imposed upon him the urgency of devising such a compromise, perhaps rather earlier than would otherwise have been the case, and - looking back on the 1914-1918 period - Read was able to assert:

I think I may say that by the end of the War I had discovered myself and my style - that is to say, I had made an equation between emotion and image, between feeling and expression. So long as I was true to this equation, I need not be afraid of influences or acquired mannerisms. Poetry was reduced to an instrument of precision. ¹

1. 'The Discovery of Poetry', The Contrary Experience, pp.178-9.

3 (c) CRITICAL RESPONSE TO WAR POETRY IN THE IMAGIST MODE

Since the Imagist Poets comprised a comparatively small - albeit vociferous - group, and their output of verse on the War was proportionally rather restricted, war poetry in the Imagist mode tended to receive less sustained attention from the critics of the day. Initially, in 1914, the section of the 'avant-garde' which claimed more critical interest than other progressive, contemporary movements, was the 'artistic wing' of Imagism - Vorticism.¹ Some reference should perhaps be made, therefore, to the reception awarded to the Vorticists and their periodical Blast, for which the dynamic energy of Wyndham Lewis was largely responsible.

In common with many combatants, Wyndham Lewis recorded his more distanced (in terms of time) view of the War some years after its conclusion, in Blasting and Bombardiering², 'a gunner's tale, [written] under conditions of siege warfare, in the commissioned ranks'³. Looking back, Lewis saw the War in almost cinematic terms, using such expressions as 'the romance of battle' or 'an epic of mud' where 'titanic casts of dying and shell-shocked actors, ... charged [the] stage with a romantic electricity'. The infantry were said to resemble 'gladiators' while the preparations for the Third Battle of Ypres were described as 'a poem in mud cum blood-and-thunder', appropriate to the Passchendaele 'battle-bog' with its poignant connotations of 'splashiness and passion'. Wyndham Lewis was able to appreciate

1. See Chapter I for a fuller discussion of the principles and practice of the Vorticist Group.

2. 1937.

3. Blasting and Bombardiering, p.126.

the basic theatricality of the War from his stand-point as an artillery officer¹ where he found himself removed from the 'titanic casts' of actors to the production-staff, technically involved in the proceedings but able, nonetheless, to take an objective view. This ability to objectivize the War experience while he was still undergoing it was derived partly from Lewis's position behind the Front Line and partly from his acquisition of the Vorticist 'weltanschauung', which had anticipated - on a much smaller, literary scale - the inordinate violence of the War situation.²

In the first number of Blast - 'the puce monster' - of July 1914, Wyndham Lewis designated the Vorticists as the 'Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern World', those 'troops' whose function^{it} was to rout and take by surprise the forces of conservatism³. Consequently, Vorticism gained a reputation for excessive energy and aggression which Lewis's definition of the Vortex - as the centre of the whirlpool where all energy is concentrated - reinforced. When Ezra Pound transferred his loyalties from Imagism to Vorticism, his aim was to apply this explosive, creative vitality to literature (especially poetry) as well as art, so that the rival movement - Futurism, that 'effete Europeanism' - would be isolated on the one hand, with Vorticism, 'which is, roughly speaking, expressionism, neo-cubism, and imagism gathered together in one camp', on the other.

-
1. W.L. served with the Royal Field Artillery (as did fellow Vorticist William Roberts) and his war experience certainly affected his painting. 'A Battery Shelled' painted in 1919, was considered by Eric Newton, 'Art and the I W.W.', The Guardian, 27.2.64, to offer perhaps the 'completest summing up of factual record and personal comment that the War produced; making use of 'emotional, romanticized cubism' whereby the 'mud is carved by a sculptor, the officers wear metal macintoshes, the men who serve the guns^{are robots}'.
 2. E.g. W.L.'s 'The Plan of War', which depicted in cubist terms a massive conflict, was painted 6 months before War was declared.
 3. The Royal Academy, Burlington House and the New English Art Club.
for example, in the field of art.

It was in the belief that a Vorticist strain of poetry could be developed that Pound published several of his poems in Blast I, beginning with 'Salutation the Third' with its abusive attack on the 'smugness of The Times' and its 'gagged reviewers'. H.D.'s 'Oread', already cited as the essence of Imagism, also appeared in Blast I and was referred to in Pound's essay on Vorticism as a putative example of verbal - as opposed to pictorial - Vorticism.¹ In his Fortnightly Review² essay on 'Vorticism', Pound struggled to reconcile the two movements with which he had been -and still was - associated: 'the image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing'.

For all Pound's earnest pronouncements and Wyndham Lewis's driving energy, Blast I failed to make much impression on the impregnable bastions of the artistic and literary establishments and its appeal to the public at large was similarly muted: 'Both critics and public alike were constantly alienated by the anarchic presentation of its material'³, and P.G. Konody's comment in The Observer⁴ was representative of the mildly amused tone of other contemporary commentators⁵ on the arts:

Blast is a strange mixture of seriousness and facetiousness, common sense and obscurity Much of it reads like the product of naughty boys who are impelled by the love of mischief.

-
1. E.P. contended that where the essential pivot of all art is the VORTEX, 'the primary pigment of poetry is the IMAGE', Blast I. 'Oread' was then quoted as illustrative of the amalgamation of Vorticism and Imagism in verse.
 2. 'Vorticism', Fortnightly Review, XCVI (1914).
 3. Richard Cork, Vorticism and Abstract Art in the Machine Age, (1976), p.262.
 4. 5. 7. 14.
 5. Cf. The Morning Post review of Blast I (reprinted in Bl. II): 'Blast... the first futurist quarterly... full of irrepressible imbecility'.

Wyndham Lewis himself was regarded not as 'the courageous pioneer of English abstraction', but as a celebrity, an eccentric who produced an extraordinary magazine whose principal achievement was to divide all life into subjectively-formulated categories of benediction and condemnation.

The second number of Blast¹, one year of war later, attracted even less response from the general public whose attention was entirely absorbed by the War-news and who had no time - even if they had previously noticed such issues - for challenging new developments in the arts. The strident Anglo-Saxon emphasis in Vorticism was construed in some quarters as dangerously Teutonic, and The Times's review² of The London Group Exhibition of March 1915, headed 'Junkerism in Art', went on to censure the Movement as 'Prussian in spirit'. Overall interest in developments in the arts in England dwindled as the second year of War began, as the demise of many of the pre-War 'little magazines'³ which had contributed so enthusiastically to national cultural vitality, testified:

The mental temperament of London fell imperceptibly but rapidly. Business as usual, so popular a slogan among merchants, did not apply to intellectual activities. Literary papers quietly disappeared, literary articles were not wanted, poems had to be patriotic. The old camaraderie disappeared, and along with it the old simplicity⁴

-
1. Described as the 'War Number' and sporting a cover by W.L., 'Before Antwerp'. Other illustrations included 'Combat', 'War-Engine', 'On the Way to the Trenches' and various contributions from Dorothy Shakespear (Pound's wife).
 2. 10.3.15. Similarly the T.L.S. leader, 'Process or Person?', 5.10.16 devoted to C.R.W. Nevinson and the Cubist technique in painting, while acknowledging that in war 'Man behaves like a machine... [and] is not treated as a human being but as an item in a great instrument of destruction' disputes Nevinson's view that the War centres upon a struggle between 2 machines for, according to the leader-writer, Germany may be a mechanical state but England is fighting for a set of values which come from 'the sense of a person as being more real than a process'.
 3. See Chapter I.
 4. R. Aldington, Life for Life's Sake, pp.150-1.

Paradoxically, in the midst of international upheaval, the 'collective aims of the [Vorticist] group were beginning to cohere'¹ after a year of external chaos, as the Vorticist Exhibition² at the Doré Gallery of Summer 1915 illustrated, with the majority of the paintings distinguished by an 'absolute unity of purpose', moving away from Cubism, Futurism and Expressionism to a uniform 'Vorticist style', more ruthlessly abstract³ than the former tendencies. Although most reviewers either ignored or misunderstood the Group's efforts, The Athenaeum's reviewer⁴ did attempt a fair appraisal of the Vorticist Exhibition, commending the artists for '[filling] their canvases with systems of inter-acting movement, the co-ordinations and antagonisms of which are admittedly stressed by a use of colour very similar to that of any other capable designer'. Vorticism was no longer a mystification to this reviewer at least, although Wyndham Lewis's definition of the Movement as an amalgamation of activity, significance, and the essential movement and energy of a mind confirmed the suspicion of many critics that:

... the whole movement was rooted in mumbo-jumbo, cooked up by a gaggle of publicity-seeking phonies who disguised their lack of ideas in a cloud of obscurantist prose.⁵

-
1. Cork, Op. cit., p.276.
 2. W.L.'s note to the Exhibition Catalogue illustrated the Vorticists' disapproval of the general trend in art: 'Artists today have an immense commercialized mass of painting and every form of art to sanctify or destroy. There has never been such a load of sugary, cheap, anecdotal and in every way pitiable muck poured out by the ton - or, rather, such a spectacle socially had never been witnessed before'. W.L.'s suggested programme of reform was to distribute posters in various London sites in the hope that thus 'Public taste could be educated in a popular way to appreciate the essentials of design better than picture-galleries have ever done'.
 3. 'Staking all on the unrepresentational rendering of energy', according to The Glasgow Herald, 10.6.15.
 4. 19.6.15.
 5. Cork, Op.cit., p.280.

The War impinged personally upon the Vorticists through the death, in a charge at Neuville St. Vaast, of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska.¹ In keeping with the strangely patriotic tone of the 'War Number' of Blast, Gaudier-Brzeska's obituary notice² was printed in a black border under the heading 'Mort Pour la Patrie'. Wyndham Lewis acknowledged the War's presence elsewhere in the editorial, where he confessed that the violence of the Vorticists had been outfaced by the 'multitude of other Blasts of all sizes and descriptions', but he optimistically anticipated that 'this puce-coloured cockleshell [would] , however, try and brave the waves of blood, for the serious mission it has on the other side of World-War'.³ Ezra Pound continued to publicize his dedication to the Vorticist cause: a series of lengthy articles, 'Affirmations', which appeared in The New Age⁴, described the Vorticist search for a certain precision - 'a lost reality and a lost intensity' - 'in a refusal to define things in the terms of something else'.

Pound continued his contributions of poems to Blast II, pre-
faced by his experimental equivalent of a Vorticist painting:

-
1. A photograph of Gaudier-Brzeska's bust of Pound and his last 'Vortex' (written in the trenches) were featured in Blast II. In The Ego. (2.8.15), John Cournos's appreciation of G.-B. emphasized the appropriateness of G.-B.'s death, caused by a small vortex of materialism (i.e. a German bullet) crashing into his skull so that Vortex interpenetrated Vortex.
 2. Gaudier-Brzeska was also commemorated in Pound's biography, G.-B.: A Memoir, which the T.L.S. reviewer, 27.4.16, described as 'half a memoir of G.-B. and half an exposition of... the principles [of that] fierce little sect', the Vorticists. The review (one of the more enlightened in matters of examining the work of new painters) judiciously suggested that 'We should not criticize new forms of art because they are not like Nature' (i.e. representational) and applauded G.-B.'s attempt to 'unlock the subconsciousness' in his sculpture.
 3. W.L. anticipated that this 'mission' would be to supply 'an opposing vehemence' to the expected 'ardent gaiety' in the arts after the War, Blast II, p.5.
 4. 11.2.15.

'Dogmatic Statement on the Game and Play of Chess', subtitled 'Theme for a series of pictures' ('"Y" pawns, cleaving, em-banking, /Whirl, centripetal, mate, King down in the vortex...') where the effect of the plunging rhythms is to evoke a conglomeration of clangorous sensations. This was probably the nearest Pound ever got to writing a Vorticist poem, but he returned to a slightly more conventional format in his other poems in Blast II, one of which¹ is reminiscent of 'Salutation the Third' in its condemnation of the 'cowardly editors' who resent Pound's admiration of the Vorticists and threaten that if he voices his regard for Vorticism with 'open mind':

Then they will have my guts;
They will cut down my wage, force me to sing their cant,
Uphold the press, and be before all a model of literary
decorum.

Merde!

Inevitably, however, the War not only destroyed certain Vorticists physically,^{but also} it consumed the creative impulses of the Group as a whole in the rigours of soldiering to which most of the Group eventually submitted. Isaac Rosenberg has testified to the practical difficulties of painting in the Front Line and all that most artists - Vorticists included - were able to achieve on active service, was an occasional hasty sketch. In addition, the War was responsible for the disintegration of Vorticism as a Movement just at the time when the Group's common purpose and interests were beginning to cohere, because, by exposing them to 'a far more savage blasting than the one originally inflicted on English art by the Vorticists themselves'² their creative impetus

1. 'Et Faim Sallir le Loup des Boys', Blast II, p.22. T.S.Eliot's 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' also appeared in the same 'War Number'.
2. Cork, Op.cit., p.295.

was sapped. According to John Cournos in The Egoist,¹ who found talk about 'the blast of war' all too real in 1917, the idea of the Vortex had been converted by the War from an aesthetic concept to a military weapon: first 'sucking in millions of German young men, when it was sent spinning like a huge top through Belgium and France, where in its momentum it "dispersed" millions of other young men'. Quoting from the testament of the Russian, Mayakovsky, whose movement - Futurism - had contributed substantially to the mood for change in the arts in Europe, Cournos concluded that 'today [when] all are Futurists', the 'literary' violence of both Futurism and Vorticism had 'proved to be a diabolic intuition incarnated in the stormy today'. It was perhaps fitting that this Vorticist Movement, with its emphasis on dynamic energy and violent expression in the arts, should be cancelled out by the inordinately greater force of the Western Front artillery bombardments, and it was likewise peculiarly appropriate that the explosions from these 'kettledrums of death' should be regulated (in part) by the very man who had been the editor of Blast.

Just as Vorticism failed, as an artistic movement, to respond fully to the challenge of full-scale violence in the War, so Imagist principles applied to poetry - although advocating that directness of approach and expression seemingly so appropriate to the conditions of twentieth century warfare - could not comprehend a completely satisfactory interpretation of the War experience in verse. When a strain of poetry designated 'Imagiste' had first appeared, it had been regarded with a mixture of amusement and

1. 'The Death of Futurism!', The Egoist, January 1917. The article was not confined to Futurism and discussed the 'death' of Vorticism and all 'brother' arts as well.

suspicion, to judge by the critical reception awarded to Richard Aldington in Poetry¹: 'one of the "Imagistes", a group of ardent young Hellenists who are pursuing interesting experiments in "verse [sic.] libre"; trying to attain in English certain subtleties of the kind which Mallarmé and his followers have studied in French'. More decoratively, Rebecca West described the 'Imagistes' as a group who wanted to 'discover the most puissant way of whirling the scattered stardust of words into a new star of passion'², and Pound, in his discussion of what constituted the serious artist, presented a stringent code of ethics which was adopted by the original Imagist poets who disparaged the current low standard of public taste:

If an artist falsifies his report as to the nature of man, as to his own nature, as to the nature of his ideal of the perfect,... if the artist falsifies his reports on these matters or on any other matter in order that he may conform to the taste of his time, to the proprieties of a sovereign, to the convention of a preconceived code of ethics, then that artist lies ... and he should be punished or despised in proportion to the seriousness of his offence.³

Aldington's Images 1910 - 15 provoked an interesting definition of what constituted an 'Imagist' (now without an 'e') in The Spectator: one who 'endeavours to show to the reader with scrupulous exactness how the subject of the poem affected his mind at the time of writing', which does not entirely do justice to the three basic principles which the early Imagists hoped their work would abundantly display: direct treatment of the thing itself; rhythm complementing the subject matter (which should be arranged according to the musical cadence, not the

1. 'Notes and Announcements', Poetry I, 2, November 1912.

2. 'Imagisme', The New Freewoman, I, 5, 15.8.13.

3. E.P., 'The Serious Artist', (1913), Literary Essays of E.P., edited by T.S.Eliot, pp.43-4.

strictly regulated syllabic beat); and emphatic concision with no words used which do not contribute to the meaning. As might be expected, Imagist poetry had a mixed reception from critics and reviewers - except, of course, for those of The Egoist who could always be relied upon to give the most generous assessment of the poetic experimentation of the Imagists.

The T.L.S. of 1914 evinced a generally uncompromising attitude towards the 'moderns', censoriously warning that 'free instinctive expression of individual emotion untrammelled by formal or symmetrical shaping may be of no value whatever'¹; designating 'vers libre' as 'prose cut into lengths'², disjointed and 'lacking a sense of humour'³; and prophesying the disintegration of the whole medium of verse if 'words at liberty without syntax, punctuation, orthography, embracing "the wireless imagination", absolute freedom of images, and analogies drawn between the remotest and most contradictory objects, the use of the wildest onomatopoeia, mathematical signs and numbers, the free and expressive use of types', can be dignified by the appellation 'poetry'.⁴ Des Imagistes was disdainfully dismissed as a collection of 'little pieces... many, extraordinarily slight and thin' where the aim seemed to be to embody the poetic 'fancy' in 'lines aiming not at symmetry but harmony with the flow of emotion'.⁵

After such an unpropitious reception in peace-time, it was unlikely that the reviewers of Imagist-inclined poetry would

-
1. Max Weber, Cubist Poems, reviewed T.L.S., 30.4.14.
 2. E. Scotton Huelin, Poems, reviewed T.L.S., 29.10.14.
 3. T.L.S., 22.7.15.
 4. Marinetti, Zang Tumb Tumb, reviewed T.L.S., 7.5.14.
 5. Des Imagistes, reviewed T.L.S., 28.5.14.

modify their opinions later in 1914, when patriotic verse was swamping the market and receiving adulatory reviews in The T.L.S. The unfortunately-timed publication of John Rodker's Poems resulted in a highly disparaging review¹, where the reviewer treated the volume as representative of the 'new school which writes in jerks' and whose only slight merit lay in the recording of sense impressions. Overall, 'much of [Rodker's] verse is rubbish', concluded the reviewer and promptly rushed on to an ecstatic appraisal of Rudyard Kipling's A Song of the English, a new edition of which had just come out. Amy Lowell's Sword Blades and Poppy Seed received similar short shrift in a note in the T.L.S. morgue² where it was doubted whether she wrote poetry for her verses were without inspiration, 'thin and arid, artificially verbose' and 'devoid of the thrill and pulse of genuine emotion or any pervading sense of the beauty in language and fancy' which 'usually distinguishes poetry'.

Herbert Read's Songs of Chaos were, likewise, casually dismissed as 'mere scraps of thought or fancy' in a morgue-note of July 1915³ and although the reviewer of Some Imagist Poets (1915) and three other Imagist-inclined volumes⁴, later the same month, made an effort to explain the aims of the Imagist Poets ('to represent an "image" with precise particulars exactly worded and with perfect freedom as to rhythm and choice of subject'), he did so rather to illustrate the shortcomings of the volumes under review - 'limited and partial poetic endeavour with a good deal of aridity and insignificance' - than to educate the public

1. T.L.S., 15.10.14.

2. Ibid., 17.12.14.

3. Ibid., 1.7.15.

4. J.G. Fletcher, Irradiations; Geoffrey Faber, Interflow; Japanese Lyrics, translated by Lafcadio Hearn, T.L.S., 22.7.15.

taste towards an appreciation of Imagism's poetic potential.

Only F.S. Flint's Cadences met with an approving response from the T.L.S. reviewer who quoted 'A Solemn Rhyme' in full, as indicative of 'the true ring' of 'poesy'. This poem in undistinguished rhyming couplets deals with the idea of England sanctified by the sacrifice of the dead - a theme more characteristic of the Georgian¹, than Imagist, idiom:

The English orchards' holy mirth
Has heralded the glad rebirth;
And in the autumn ruddy fruit
Will tell how spring glowed at the root....

We only have inherited
The memory of all the dead,
And thus, my love, we pay for this
Our human art and artifice.

By contrast, the reviewer² of H. D.'s Sea Garden spitefully commented that 'the reading of these compositions involves a good deal more labour than enjoyment'. A more patient appraisal of Pound's Lustra was undertaken in the T.L.S. of November 1916³: the reviewer applauded Pound's translations of Chinese poems but was less complimentary about Pound's original work. The reliance on loose verse 'made poetry too easy' and the use of ordinary speech could again be made to disguise the paucity of the poet's imagination. Even Pound's unconventional poetic form and ironic idiom were seen as merely negative reactions against exhausted forms and rhetoric rather than innovations which promised to assist modern verse in new directions, and the reviewer drily commented that 'nothing can be made of mere reaction or a habit of irony'. He believed that a positive 'seriousness' of approach and emotional commitment were needed to achieve 'true poetry' and

1. See Section 2 (b). Cf. John Freeman, 'Happy is England Now':
'Whate'er was dear before is dearer now, / There's not a bird
singing upon his bough / But sings the sweeter in our English
ears' (because of 'those that fight').

2. T.L.S., 5.10.16. 3. T.L.S., 16.11.16.

unless Pound were prepared to adopt a graver mode, 'he can only decline into mere exclamations of no interest to anyone but himself'. In defence of his advocacy of 'free verse', Pound responded stoutly in The Egoist¹, at the same time taking the opportunity to abuse the 'opposition reviewers' who dismissed progressive elements in modern poetry: 'I have never claimed that "vers libre" was the only path of salvation. I felt that it ... had its place with other modes. It seems that my instinct was not wholly heretical and that the opposition was rather badly informed. Old gentlemen who talk about "red riot and anarchy", "treachery to the imperium of poetry" etc., etc. would do well to "get up their history" and peruse the codices of their laws'.

The second S.I.P. Anthology of 1916, impressed the T.L.S. reviewer² for being of a higher quality than the previous one and for establishing the credibility of 'vers libre' as a 'true and vital medium of poetic expression': in marked contrast to earlier more disparaging remarks about the inadequacy of 'vers libre'. Imagist-inclined verse was still, however, likely to be dismissed as trivial or artificially verbose, and the reviewer³ of Dorothy Sayers's Opus I (in the Imagist mode) coined a particularly succinct term of censure - 'strained preciousity'⁴ - for her less successful experiments in the application of imagistic technique. Frederic Manning's Eidola, on the other hand, was apparently not 'refined' enough: 'Gaunt little poems of war seeking to give by plain hard enumeration of the horrors, the

¹ Vers Libre and Arnold Dolmetsch,
1. Egoist, July 1917.

2. T.L.S., 4.1.17. The reviewer committed himself still further: 'If Imagist Poetry can open our literature to all things that a poet would say and think naturally, and if at the same time it can give him a form ... then it will have justified itself'.

3. T.L.S., 25.1.17.

4. Cf. The Pall Mall Gazette's opinion of Wheels: 'conceived in morbid eccentricity and executed in factitious gloom'.

'sense of horror that the author has felt. They are sincere, but do not reinforce what is actually said by anything implied'.¹

One of the most interesting reviews of poetry in the Imagist mode in 1917 is that which discusses T.S. Eliot's Prufrock and Other Observations.² Eliot is reproved for referring to his analytical method and arrangement of feelings in a catalogue³, 'untouched by any genuine rush of feeling', as poetry. To the reviewer, Eliot's 'Observations' are inarticulate and insignificant 'reminiscences' which Eliot is under the misapprehension of believing 'the public should know about'. To the reviewer, however, such sense-impressions as 'dust in crevices', 'smells of chestnuts in the streets', merely comprise an inconsequential list of sensations which 'certainly have no relation to "poetry"'.⁴

It was to be expected that the T.L.S. reviewer would not respond sympathetically to a new quarterly of the arts, particularly one which set out to express the spirit of modernism in the arts, and this was indeed the case with Art and Letters.⁴ The editors, Frank Rutter and Charles Ginner, had anticipated the objections to a new periodical at a time when both paper and labour were scarce, but they were impelled by the desire to present an alternative to the standard periodicals which 'give vulgar and illiterate expression to the most vile and debasing

1. T.L.S., 5.4.17.

2. Ibid., 21.6.17. A very different assessment of Prufrock... is made in E.P.'s 'Drunken Helots and Mr Eliot', Ego., June 1917, which takes its title from Arthur Waugh's alleged description of T.S.E. as a drunken helot. After a vituperation of Waugh's 'torrent of elderly words, splenetic, irrelevant', appropriate to a typical elder-generation reviewer, E.P. supplied liberal quotation from T.S.E.'s poems and pinpointed his 'distinctive cadence, a personal modus of arrangement' as T.S.E.'s characteristic qualities as a poet.

3. 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' was cited as illustrative of this 'cataloguing' method.

4. Art and Letters I (July 1917), reviewed T.L.S., 28.6.17.

'sentiments'. The new quarterly was very grudgingly received and the illustrations were described as having 'unconventionality as their most conspicuous quality', but the reviewer showed more fervour in lamenting the most conspicuous omission in Art and Letters: any contributions from the 'very large number of soldier poets of high quality' (Herbert Read, apparently, not qualifying in this category, in the reviewer's opinion).

A far more detailed review of a contemporary French movement evinced a much more sympathetic¹ response than that awarded by the T.L.S. reviewers to similar developments in English poetry and art. The article, 'Phantastes and the War'² discussed three 'Fantaisiste' volumes: Pierre MacOrlan, Les Poissons Morts and Les Bourreurs de Crane, and Francis Carco, Les Innocents, where the War is described as the ultimate fantasy and 'bizarrerie' which defies description - even by those who have experienced it. MacOrlan outlines the basic difficulty encountered by all who tried to describe their War experience:

On ne racontera jamais très bien cette guerre, parce que la memoire garde mal les traces de cette vie intense, en somme inimaginable. Une éponge abolit les souffrances dès que le repos apparait a l'horizon. Le tir de barrage le mieux réglé et le plus dur ne laisse qu'un souvenir imprécis chez ceux qui le traverserent. L'important est de le traverser.

In war, the worlds of imagination and reality merge for the 'Fantaisistes' - soldiers returning from battle 'n'avaient plus figures d'hommes ... ils nous paraissaient irréels' - and the individual finds himself deprived of his individuality: 'a

-
1. Cf. Section 2 (f) where reference was also made to the various T.L.S. reviews where Continental experimentation in the arts was encouraged and English movement away from Tradition deplored. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis to pursue
 2. T.L.S., 5.7.17. further this interesting comparison between reviews of contemporary English and Continental literature.

'fragment of the chaos in which even the great and beautiful roads of France are swallowed up' and become a symbol of beauty more intensely perceived since now under threat from the War:

Autrefois, quand nous étions des civils, cette route nous l'avions parcourue en auto, mais sans la connaître. Ce n'était qu'un truchement entre deux villes. Aujourd'hui pour nous, soldats de la ligne, c'est un rosaire dont les arbres sont les grains que nous égrenons pas à pas.

The reviewer appreciates that the enormity of the War situation can be most fully accommodated in a variety of media, which accounts for the drawings accompanying and complementing the text in the three 'Fantaisiste' volumes; but what particularly distinguishes this T.L.S. review from the standard dismissive synopsis of the inadequacies of Imagist verse, is its length; its careful analysis of what the 'Fantaisistes' were attempting to achieve before and during the War; the patient assessment of how far such experimentation had been successful; lavish quotation from the texts, and the consistently sympathetic tone¹ which is so obviously lacking in comparable appraisals of contemporary British developments in the arts.

F.M. Ford's On Heaven and Poems Written on Active Service is quite charitably received with the reviewer making allowances for its having been written 'under fire', and 'Footsloggers' (which described the patriotic appeal of the English countryside) is singled out as 'one of the finest celebrations of the pathetic beauty of the English countryside as a thing worth

1. Cf. the review of André Spire, Le Secret, T.L.S., 15.5.19, which is similarly lengthy and well-researched, discussing the background to modern French poetry and complimenting Spire on his skilful use of 'vers libre' in evoking scenes, emotions, moods with a 'sense of the fragility of life' and applauding his reaction against the 'grand manner' and rhetoric of Hugo.

'dying for'.¹ By 1918, 'vers libre' seems to have been considered almost respectable by the T.L.S. reviewers as the 'form which our soldier poets find suitable for the chaotic impressions of war',² and its value as the medium through which mood can be most readily evoked is acknowledged; but, at the same time, reviewers remained sceptical of attempts to evolve a positive poetic and the reviewer³ of Pound's Pavannes and Divisions questions whether it is worth-while to write prose about the evolution of a governing aesthetic and deliberately misinterprets Pound's 'credo' of placing the emphasis on the adoption of a 'normal natural tone of voice', and the acquisition of an individual rhythm 'uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable'.

The review in April 1919⁴ of Herbert Read's Naked Warriors is fairly indicative of the standard assessment of poetry in the Imagist mode, and does not appear to have become any less hostile over the years of war. The reviewer begins with an indictment of Art and Letters (in which 'Kneeshaw Goes to War' first appeared) and which is described as a periodical of which 'the leading characteristic may not unfairly be described as a negative one ... "a callous indifference to the falsely artistic prettifying of life"⁵'. The reviewer warns that this 'fashionable war-cry' often leads to a narrowness quite equal to that of the old 'pretty' school. Naked Warriors is concluded by Killed in Action - a 'prose episode ... a chapter from an unfinished novel' - and the reviewer questions why 'Kneeshaw...' should

1. T.L.S., 18.4.18.

2. Daniel J. Roberts, Poems, reviewed T.L.S., 22.8.18.

3. T.L.S., 19.9.18.

4. Ibid., 3.4.19.

5. Quoted from the Preface to Naked Warriors.

have been 'cut up into "free" metre' when it would read just as well in prose, or - alternatively - Killed in Action could have been 'cut up' into free-verse form - a suggestion which further illustrates the reviewer's disregard for the distinction between 'vers libre' and prose. The remaining poems in Naked Warriors - 'some glimpses of war too slight to be worth publishing' - were commended for their 'keen sincere feeling and observation', though the reviewer did not specify what he meant by these qualities and he finished his review with a disapproving comment on Read's awkward 'muscular' rhythm and choice of vocabulary which do nothing to facilitate understanding of the 'hard stark tales' presented. Other reviews of Naked Warriors, quoted in an advertisement for the volume, were more forthcoming but no less vague, ranging from: 'The right stuff ... none can deny [its] bitter sincerity and ability',¹ and 'few poets have struck so intelligent a note',² to: 'Here with great sincerity and force we are brought into contact with the elemental horrors of the conflict'.³

When the T.L.S. reviewer approached⁴ T.S. Eliot's Poems, he condemned the 'aridity and fatally impoverished subject matter' which resulted from Eliot's 'phobia' of sentimentality and determination to eschew any 'literary' echoes. The reviewer warned - perhaps with some justification here - that poetry could not be propagated from reaction against the follies of earlier poets alone, though he spoils the effect of this sensible comment by concluding that Eliot was 'very laboriously writing nothing'.

-
1. Pall Mall Gazette.
 2. Cambridge Magazine.
 3. The Sphere.
 4. T.L.S., 12.6.19.

The T.L.S. review¹ of Richard Aldington's Images² drew the analogy between his work - particularly such 'experiential' poems as 'In the Tube' and 'Cinema Exit' - and certain poems of T.S. Eliot, similarly imbued with an 'intransigent disgust with life', and, while admitting Aldington's delicate craftsmanship in the 'artificial' poems - 'detached, elaborated pieces of art' in the Imagist mode - the reviewer found more 'understandable and lovable' such a poem as 'Childhood', with its distinctly whimsical theme.

A fuller assessment of Aldington's combined War and Love poems³ (from Images of War and Images of Desire) was afforded in three other periodicals. While Aldington admitted himself that some of the war poems written in the trenches were clumsily composed - 'Often I had no real time to put down what I wanted and it is now too late to tinker with these poems'⁴ - and stressed that the volume was designed 'for the kind of men I lived with in camp and in the line this is a book by a common soldier for common soldiers'⁵, The American Review of Reviews⁶ considered that War and Love 'contains the finest poetry of its kind published since the War', encompassing (as it did) 'the thoughts and emotions of the infantrymen of the line'. Marjorie Allen Seiffert, on the other hand, discussed War and Love in Poetry⁷ and found the war poems

1. T.L.S., 2.10.19.

2. A compilation of the 1915 volume of R.A.'s poems and some of his contributions to the S.I.P. Anthologies; published by The Egoist Ltd.

3. Published in Boston, 1919.

4. Unpublished letter to the Rev. Charles C. Bubb, 22.6.17, Univ. of California Research Library.

5. Foreword to F.S. Flint, February 1918.

6. 'Volumes of Poetry', A.R.R., Vol 60, No.4 (October 1919).

7. 'Soldier and Lover', Poetry, Vol. 14, No.6 (September 1919).

less satisfactory: 'Only bitter, muffled complaints of rebellion'; in her view, 'Aldington's genius could not use the crude, painful and bitter experiences he was made to undergo', and, looking at Aldington's trench-poems, there does indeed seem to be some justification for this judgement. The most generous appraisal of the war poems in War and Love was voiced by the reviewer of The Dial¹ who believed that the War had exercised a 'humanizing' influence on potentially sterile Imagist verse, enabling Aldington to combine the honesty of his direct assault on the subject matter with an ecstasy reminiscent of Donne:

Whatever he has lost of the cold fire and chiselled form of the Images is richly returned in a warmer passion, a new humanity. Always the honest artist, he is now the honest reporter of war - and of love in war-time, though it drives him to meter and rhyme and an intensification of sex that recalls Donne. There is an ecstasy and exquisite suffering in these poems, but not sentimentality. The War has produced no more genuine poetry.

The publication of a series of Poets' Translations, in which Aldington, H.D. and Edward Storer translated the work of various classical poets, occasioned a T.L.S. review² which took the opportunity to air the reviewer's more general reflections on the progress of modern verse. He detected a rapid acceleration in the 'Risorgimento' of English poetry, already begun before the War, and a continuous and ever-increasing output of poetry of all kinds: 'Poetry had become, one might say, the daily and customary speech of the new generation'. Much of the poetry which sprang up quickly, in the early War-months, had already withered 'because it had no deepness of earth' and the revolutionary fever in poetry, burning itself out, leaves the ground 'thickly strewn with ashes'. The most durable poems, in

1. 'Books of the Fortnight', The Dial, Vol.66, No.791, 31.5.19.
2. 20.11.19.

the eyes of the reviewer, were those written by the older generation of poets in the old tradition, and he interpreted this enthusiasm among the 'avant-garde' for the classical poets of Greece and Rome as an indication of their essential reverence for Tradition. To the reviewer, the poets of Ancient Greece and Rome seemed 'more alive, more essential, more human than anything we can find in contemporary English literature', and even though some of the Imagist translations were 'rather wild' and imperfectly understood, the 'vital inspiration' of the ancient poets had been captured - particularly well by H.D.¹, whose translations of Euripides, although technically inferior to those of Professor Murray came much closer to the spirit and imagination of the original.

The reviewer commented that the 'modern spirit seems to be searching for the language of some new Impressionism - something crisp, acute, discontinuous', which it attempted to achieve by a 'curious, "pointillé" treatment ... or by the swift race and flicker of films'. Aldington's Greek Songs in the Manner of Anacreon² - which he referred to as his 'war book' - had been finished in camp with the aid of 'a small and imperfect dictionary', testifying again to that 'intense if ignorant thirst for the classics' in this seething, 'formula-swallowing new world', where the classics remain to counteract the artificiality of 'the lie in the soul' and to establish a standard of excellence where so many inferior 'substitutes' abounded in the arts. The fact that the

-
1. Choruses from the Iphigenia in Aulis and The Hippolytus of Euripides, translated H.D.
 2. The other volumes by R.A. which were mentioned in the review were: The Poems of Anyte of Tegea and Latin Poems of the Renaissance.

three poets involved with the translations belonged to the Imagist Movement and Aldington and H.D. had recently produced volumes of original verses, was nowhere mentioned in the review, where the reviewer was more concerned to develop his argument that all poetry is inevitably connected with tradition and even in a period of change and revolution in the arts, the impatient, self-confident young poet retained his allegiance to the classics.

Altogether, the T.L.S. reviewers approached poetry in the Imagist mode with suspicion and the expectation that the poet's work would probably be either too intellectually taxing or imaginatively arid and, almost inevitably, presented in the apparently random form of 'vers libre'. Although it was occasionally conceded that 'vers libre' could be used to great effect in the evocation of particular moods or emotions, the reviewers could seldom find any other feature to commend in Imagist verse and the impressionistic technique was, in general, disapproved of for encouraging the poet to believe that new art could be created 'by allowing the spectacle of modern life to pour pell-mell through [him] without selection or arrangement'.¹

Not surprisingly, a completely different attitude pertained among the reviewers of The Egoist who were either Imagist poets themselves or closely associated with the Movement and were anxious to disseminate the most favourable opinion possible of poetry in the Imagist mode. Richard Aldington's defence of the

1. Quoted in a review, 'A New Decadence', of Blaise Cendrars, Dix-Neuf Poèmes Élastiques, T.L.S., 25.12.19, not so much criticising Cendrars' poetic technique as censuring the deplorable tendencies in contemporary verse. In retaliation for the censorious tone of the T.L.S., The Ego reported occasional 'Inconsiderable Imbecilities' from the T.L.S., as, e.g. the comment of 1.10.15 that in its current reviews 'even the lush fatuity of sentimental pedantry has now subsided into degenerated dulness in the T.L.S.'

first Des Imagistes Anthology¹ set the tone for future reviews of Imagist poetry with his defiant justification of the title - which 'cuts us off from the "cosmic" crowd and ... the "abstract art" gang' - his proud catalogue of the Group's doctrines, and his enthusiastic presentation of the poems which epitomized, most nearly, the qualities of 'Imagisme'. In The Egoist immediately following the declaration of War, Aldington translated an article² on 'The New Poetry of France' by Nicholas Beauduin, which anticipated with zest the strident new movement in poetry which was about to sweep Europe: 'This is the hour of virile creations, of joyous audacities; this is the era of fertile affirmations'. At the same time, Aldington was aware of an imminent explosion of art and literature of great sentimentality:

We shall have endless sentimental novels, novelettes, stories, pictures and patriotic music, all warlike, and all damned.³

The poetry reviews⁴ of The Egoist for the rest of 1914 were largely occupied with surveys of the first patriotic anthologies of 'soul-stirring ditties' - Poems of the Great War, Songs and Sonnets for England in War Time, Remember Louvain! and Lord God of Battles - which were, spiritually, dramatically opposed to the ideals and practice of Imagism, being characterized by the 'stale ideas of twenty, fifty or seventy years ago ... the cliché, the stale, flat and profitable in art which still find ready acceptance and eager purchasers'.⁵

1. The Ego., 1.6.14.

2. Ibid., 15.8.14.

3. 'Notes on the Present Situation', Ibid., 1.9.14

4. E.g. J.G. Fletcher, 'War Poetry', 2.11.14, and 'More War Poems', 16.11.14.

5. R.A. 'Some Reflections on Ernest Dowson', Ibid., 1.3.15.

Aldington did, however, have occasion to comment upon contemporary war poetry in his review¹ of Harold Monro's Children of Love, where he strongly advocated that poetry on the War should be written after its conclusion, as Walt Whitman had done, for Aldington reasoned: 'How can one be interested in poems about a war when the War is going on?' The general opinion among the Imagist poet/reviewers of The Egoist was to ignore the War for as long as possible, and the May 1915 number which is devoted to the evolution of the Imagist Movement, makes very little reference to the external War-situation, except for such isolated - though illuminating - comments as J.G. Fletcher's:

What will teach us most is our language and life. Never was life lived more fully, with more terrible blind intensity than it is being lived at this moment. Never was the noble language which is ours surpassed in either richness or concision. We have the material with which to work and the tools to do the work with.²

Perhaps the fullest and most tolerant assessment of the Imagists is that offered by Harold Monro³ in the same 'Imagists Issue' of The Egoist, where Monro explores the achievement of the Group - whose first anthology he had published at the Poetry Bookshop - but also points out the failure of the Group to communicate satisfactorily with the general public: '[the very term] "Imagist" is sufficiently mystifying to alienate the sympathies of the general public'. Monro traces the origins of the Imagist Poetry Movement by explaining that the Imagists had set out to present a different form of poetry from that of the 'Cosmic Poet', or of those feeble poets who continued to foster that 'false public impression' that poetry in the Victorian manner

1. 'War Poems and Others', The Ego., 15.12.14.

2. Quoted in Ferris Greenslet's review, 'The Poetry of John Gould Fletcher', Ego., 1.5.15.

3. 'The Imagists Discussed', Ibid.

was still the accepted norm. The characteristic quality of poetry in the Imagist mode was that it no longer professed to 'sing':

The word Song is abandoned, "cliché", swept out with Ode, Sonnet, Quatrain, and other similar verbal lumber,

for the 'test of intellect is more important to [the Imagists] than the tests of prosody or tradition', and they are more concerned 'effectively to describe their rapid impressions than faithfully to record their abiding sentiments'.

The next review, an appreciation by Aldington of the 'Poetry of F.S. Flint', made an interesting aside on the current tendency, in Georgian-inclined verse, towards 'poésie nostalgique', still 'one of the maladies of our time'. Aldington did not advocate escape from reality but suggested that Imagist Poetry offered an 'escape from artificiality and sentimentality' by 'rendering the moods, the emotions, the impressions of a single, sensitized personality confronted by the phenomena of modern life, and by 'expressing these moods accurately, in concrete, precise, racy language'.

The Imagists certainly saw themselves as the hope for future English poetry, and in her assessment of 'England's Nest of Singing Birds', Margaret Storm Jameson stoutly contended¹ that there had not been 'one poem worthy the name from any of England's poetasters of the century'. The only prospect for the re-vitalization of English poetry was the Imagist Group, for all other so-called poems were merely 'jobbing verse-makers', lacking the abrasive quality necessary for the poetic interpretation of these 'stark and unlovely' times.

1. The Egoist, 1.11.15.

The Imagists, although roughly bound by certain common principles and practices, nevertheless respected individual development and adopted a fairly tolerant attitude to those of their number who moved away from the central Imagist philosophy - such as J.G. Fletcher - who defined himself in his Preface to Irradiations as a 'rhythmist' rather than an 'Imagist'. He accentuated the value of rhythmic musical appeal, maintaining that 'poetry is capable of as many gradations in cadence as music is in time'¹, and used images as though they were musical themes in a symphony², of secondary importance to the substance of the poem: the interlocking, repetitive rhythms - 'Guns crashing, / Thudding, / Ululating, / Tumultuous', which reappears later as 'Guns booming, / Bellowing / Crashing / Desperate'. In keeping with his strong individuality, Fletcher produced a forceful article,³ urging a speedy re-valuation of life and art in the hiatus provided by the War. Not only does the War offer the nations which endure 'an opportunity for taking stock of [their] resources, physical and spiritual', but it also operates as a symbol ('the War Machine') of mechanical power triumphant:

We live in an age when the machine is triumphant. When we speak of destroying the German military machine, we are forced to admit that we cannot attain our desired end save by constructing greater and more powerful machines. There is the War Loan - a machine to empty our pockets. There is the National Service Scheme - a machine to set us all to work. There is the 'tank', a machine to destroy machine-gun emplacements. There is the extended line - a mechanical obstacle. There is the aeroplane - a machine for spying out the nature of that obstacle. Everywhere mechanical power, and the end is not yet.

-
1. R. Herdman Pender, 'J.G. Fletcher', The Ego., November 1915.
 2. 2 of Fletcher's longest poems are entitled 'Blue Symphony' and 'Orange Symphony'.
 3. 'The Death of the Machines'. Fletcher's 'The New God', Ego. March 1918, was concerned with the Tank, the new form of religion and the ultimate dehumanized weapon of war: 'The toil and struggle of a great age of mechanized invention have culminated at last in devices of supreme destruction and annihilatory power'.

Paradoxically, the devastating power of the War Machine is accompanied - in Fletcher's view - by a corresponding awareness of the individual identity and interest in the arts among the general public at home:

... people are now thinking harder than ever before. People are not reading novels as they did, They are reading biography, history, criticism, poetry. There is actually a reading public for poetry now, a fact unheard of before. People are actually going to concerts and operas, actually crowding the theatres. It matters little if what they get from these sources is nine-tenths rubbish. The fact remains that they want to get something,

and Fletcher suggests that this surge of interest should be stimulated to produce, after the War, 'such a rebirth of art as the world has seldom seen', without the restriction of the artist having to comply with the stereotyped formulae of one particular movement - Futurist, Vorticist, Cubist or Imagist - but returning to the idea of the artist responding to an 'instinctive emotional impulse' of his own, not another man's, for any other art 'is merely mechanical adaptation leading to a re-establishment of that very rhetoric' which the various pre-War coteries had striven to erase, and which T.S. Eliot's injunctions in 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry'¹ sought to eradicate permanently. That is not to say that Eliot wished contemporary poetry to dissociate itself from tradition: rather he deplored the fact that 'contemporary poetry was deficient in [this respect]'.² This appeared to be the case in Herbert Read's Naked Warriors which Eliot nonetheless reviewed with enthusiasm as being 'on a very high level of war poetry':

It is the best war poetry that I can remember having seen. It is better than the rest because it is more honest; because it is neither Romance nor Reporting; because it is

1. The Ego., Oct. and Nov. 1917, July 1919. Since June 1917, T.S.E. had succeeded H.D., who had taken over from R.A. as Assistant Editor on The Egoist.

2. 'Reflections...', The Egoist, July 1919.

unpretentious; and it has emotion as well as a version of things seen. For a poet to observe that war is ugly and not on the whole glorious or improving to the soul is not a novelty any more: but Mr Read does it with a quiet and careful conviction which is not very common.

It is the 'extinction of personality' on Read's behalf in Naked Warriors and the deliberate unpretentiousness, which recommend the volume to Eliot, for, in his efforts to surrender himself to something more valuable than his own identity at the present moment, Read was conforming to the ideal described by Eliot in his corollary to 'Reflections...', 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'.¹ As Read himself acknowledged² in his War Diary, his association with the leading exponents of Imagism and Vorticism - Pound, Eliot and Wyndham Lewis - all of whom he met in one memorable week in October 1918, was to prove immensely valuable to him in the formulation of his own poetic, particularly since he considered the Imagists the most vital literary movement of the day³ and held that to be reckoned among their ranks was no ordinary distinction.

All in all, to both poets and critics of the period, Imagism was seen as a progressive movement in poetry - complemented by Vorticism in the visual arts - interpreted, depending on where

-
1. The Ego., September 1919. The crux of T.S.E.'s argument lay in his contention that the poet has 'not a "personality" to express but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living' ('Tradition and the Individual Talent', Ego, Dec. 1919.)
 2. The Contrary Experience, pp. 138-42.
 3. As his 'Definitions towards a Modern Theory of Poetry', Art and Letters, I, Jan. 1918, testifies, H.R. considered that the Imagists were the group who came closest to applying in their verse those dicta which he outlined in his article: 'To express the exquisite among the poet's perceptions, achieving so a beauty as definite and indicative as the prints of Hokusai, or the cold grace of immaculate cameos'.

one stood on the poetic or critical spectrum, as either an insidious, subversive movement undermining the respected conventions in the writing of poetry, or an exciting and vigorous association of energetic reformers who hoped to 'break with tradition' - in other words, 'desert the more obvious imbecilities of [their] immediate elders'¹ - and associate English poetry more closely with developments in contemporary European verse.

The faults of Imagist poetry were principally its aridity, its intellectualism (which prevented most of the Imagist Poets from dealing satisfactorily with their War experience in verse), and its vulnerability (on account of the facility of writing 'free verse') to base imitations. In addition, the Imagists tended to concentrate on the image as an end in itself, 'as though the image had an existence of its own which was isolated from experience and the external world'. As a consequence, those poets who were not aware of the 'profound significance and meaning' of their imagery were liable to devise images which were 'still lifes to be hung on walls' rather than 'visions of the history of the race and of life and death'², which those poets who recognized that 'imagery is the urgent medium by which experience holds our attention' sought to attain. Probably the most judicious assessment of the Imagist achievement comes from Herbert Read who not only wrote purely 'Imagist' poems himself in the War, but was familiar with the essential principles of the Imagist Group:

-
1. E.P., 'Elizabethan Classicists', The Ego., September 1917.
 2. Stephen Spender, 'Epilogue', The Destructive Element.

Imagism was too limited in its ideals to survive as a poetic 'movement', but it was a necessary stage in the evolution of English poetry, and Aldington, H.D. and Flint purified the literary atmosphere between 1910 and 1915 and prepared the way for the emergence of greater poets like Pound and Eliot.¹

Although War Poetry in the Imagist mode largely failed to accommodate the enormity of the War-experience, it did encourage the continuation of those lively controversies - especially in the pages of The Egoist - which deliberated upon the direction contemporary poetry should take and which, in turn, helped to determine the search of Eliot and Pound for a 'new poetic'. Furthermore, in the hands of a skilful practitioner, such as Herbert Read, and - on occasion - Richard Aldington, the Imagist mode could be adapted to apprehend some aspect of the 'stark and unlovely actualities' of the Western Front, just as - later - it could be modified to confront the debilitated post-War society of Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberley and Eliot's The Waste Land.

1. Article by H.R., quoted Richard Aldington: An Intimate Portrait, edited by Kershaw and Temple, p.132.

CHAPTER IV

THE HOME FRONT : 1914 - 1918

This Chapter will concern itself principally with the response, from the Home Front, of the non-combatant poets to the War and to the poetry of the War. An analysis of the civilian response as manifest through the poems printed in newspapers or periodicals, the multitude of anthologies, and the volumes of verse of individual non-combatant poets will be presented, in conjunction with critical comment from The Times Literary Supplement, The Egoist and The Nation. Since the non-combatants' verse and its critical reception by reviewers of roughly the same age and background constituted an integrated civilian response, the material in this Chapter will be presented, without division into sections, to sustain the impression of a concerted, organic development. The gradual shift of emphasis away from 'public', patriotic verse to elegiac lament 'for the fallen' will be traced, and any illustrations of outstanding sympathy with or compassion for the plight of the combatants will be specially noted. This aspect of 'In Memoriam' verse is also featured in more detail in the final Chapter, and so an effort has been made to consider here only such tributes as arise in the course of the general appraisal of non-combatant verse. The response to the War of certain established elder poets - Watson,

Newbolt and Kipling, for example - is examined in some detail as representative of various trends in non-combatant verse. Some reference will also be made - in passing - to issues which concerned the civilian population (most notably the pacifist tendency of a small minority and the more emphatic, international calls for a negotiated peace in late 1916) and which had some influence upon certain non-combatants' verse. The Chapter concludes with a synopsis of combatant opinion towards the Home Front and non-combatant verse which should furnish an appropriate transition to the next Chapter.

The initial response of the non-combatant poets to the War can be amply gauged by perusing the Prefatory Notes to any of the anthologies of patriotic poetry which flooded the market in the Autumn of 1914. John Lane, introducing one of the first, Songs and Sonnets for England in War Time¹, which contained fifty suitably martial poems of 1914 by such stalwarts as Hardy, Kipling, Newbolt, Watson and Chesterton announced:

What can so nobly uplift the hearts of a people facing war with its unspeakable agony as music and poetry? The sound of martial music steels men's hearts before battle. The sound of martial words inspires human souls to do and to endure. God, His Poetry and His Music are the Holy Trinity of War.

With this noble ideal in mind, Songs and Sonnets prof-
fered to a public, allegedly just waiting to be uplifted, a

1. First mentioned in T.L.S., 27.8.14, together with Poems of The Great War (a term coined very early, it would seem) as 'two shilling-volumes of selections from war poems contributed to the Press by various authors [Kipling, Newbolt, Noyes] and published in aid of the Prince of Wales' Fund'.

number of poems, most of which had already appeared in various newspapers and journals in the first weeks of war: H. de Vere Stacpoole reminded 'foemen and the fools /Who dreamt that Drake is dead'¹ that Britannia still ruled the waves, while Coulson Kernahan assured 'Little Belgium' that all would be well, now that Britain had given her pledge - 'Honour's own diadem ... /God's arm, their surest guarantee'² - to protect Belgium from her 'violators'. W.L. Courtenay, the Daily Telegraph reviewer who had been Ezra Pound's particular 'bête noire' in the field of literary criticism, lumbered portentously into a 'Battle Song' directed at the country's young men who had not yet presented themselves at their nearest recruiting station (three weeks after the Declaration of War):

Ye who call yourselves the sons
Of Marlboroughs and Wellingtons -
Claim your heritage of strife,
Strike for liberty and life.³

Apart from stressing the heroic British tradition, Songs and Sonnets also emphasized - in such a poem as R.M. Freeman's 'The War Cry' - the righteousness of the British cause, and implied in the line 'We the sword reluctant drew' that Prussia, with her mechanical obedience to the militaristic ideal, was (by contrast with judicious British hesitation⁴) the aggressor,

1. 'Britannia', Daily Express, 7.8.14.

2. 'To "Little" Belgium', Daily Chronicle, 10.8.14.

3. 'A Battle Song', Daily Telegraph, 27.8.14.

4. Rudyard Kipling in 'The Beginnings' stresses the British reluctance to exercise the ultimate sanction of war against Germany, for G.B., with her sense of responsibility, does not take up arms lightly: 'It was not part of their blood, / It came to them very late /With long arrears to make good, / When the English began to hate. /'They were not easily moved, / They were icy-willing to wait /Till every count should be proved / Ere the English began to hate....'

spoiling for a fight, irrespective of the 'morality' of the situation which it was left for Britain to redeem:

For a Europe's flouted laws
We the sword reluctant drew,
Righteous in a righteous cause:
Britons, we WILL see it through!¹

Another important early reaction to the War which Songs and Sonnets illustrated in the work of the elder versifiers (though it was shortly afterwards adopted by the younger spirits also²) was the recognition of the redemptive and purgative power of fighting for a just cause: the appeal of consecrating one's life consciously on behalf of 'Nobleness and Honour', so that the suspected tendency towards Decadence among the pre-War young, and the corresponding national debility, might be totally 'redeemed in one brief ecstasy of fire'.³

Admirable though this quality of voluntary expiation might - at least, in theory - appear, the 'old guard' of rhetorical 'public' poets assumed the responsibility of sternly admonishing the public at large on a rather less creditable aspect of the general response to war by inciting their readers to mass-vilification of the German 'aggressors'. William Watson⁴ was probably the leading exponent in this practice of venting vituperative spleen against this iniquitous nation which:

-
1. 'The War Cry', Truth, 12.8.14. Cf. F.W. Bourdillon's more impatient call to arms, 'The Call', A Treasury of War Poetry: 'Prate not of peace any longer.../Quick every hand to the hilt!/ Who striketh not - his the guilt!.../Is Life worth living? - I know not: /Death is worth dying, I know'.
 2. E.g. R. Brooke, 'The Dead, I'. Through their 'red /Sweet wine of youth' unstintingly poured out, the English volunteers restored the 'Holiness lacked so long' to their country, enabling their compatriots to 'come into [their] heritage'.
 3. Harold Goad, 'Redemption', Times, 26.8.14.
 4. See Chapter I, pp.14-16.

Out of the gutters and slums of Hell -
Disgorged from the vast infernal sewer -
Vomited forth from a world where dwell
Childhood, maidenhood, wifehood pure -
She arose and towered on earth and sea,
Clothed in her green putridity.¹

Enraged by the German 'Sack of Louvain'², Watson directed his venom against the Kaiser himself as representative of, and responsible for such reported abominations as: babies spitted on bayonets; women (nuns included) violated by drunken German soldiers; homes looted and destroyed, all of which had been given extensive coverage in the British Press, following the German invasion of Belgium.³ In his characteristic bombast, Watson denounced the Kaiser for his very existence and then paralleled his 'crimes against humanity' with those of his 'orient peer' (probably a reference to Ghengiz Khan, though Watson could also have had in mind the savagery of Attila the Hun in this castigation of all things Teutonic):

Wherefore are men amazed at thee, thou Blot
On the fair script of Time, thou sceptred smear
Across the Day? Thou wert divulged full clear -
Hell's sponsor - long ago! Has earth forgot
Thy benison on a monster reeking hot
From shambles bloody as these - thy orient peer,
Thy heart's mate, and infernal comrade dear?
His red embrace do men remember not.⁴

Having identified, in no uncertain terms, the Enemy, Watson set about exhorting the 'Sons of Britain' to 'Give [England] all the manhood that is in [them]', in order to repay their native land for her gift of 'limb and nerve ... [and] iron sinew'. It was the obligation of England's youth to 'rise and rally to her

1. English Review, December 1915.

4. 'To the German Emperor after the Sack of Louvain', The Man Who Saw and Other Poems Arising out of the War (1917)p.27.

2. The 'outrage' prompted an anthology of 'heroic pieces', Remember Louvain! which was so popular it had to be reprinted within one month of publication in September 1914.

3. In England the subsequent Germano-phobia took the form of attacking German shops; shunning German waiters in restaurants; renaming 'Bierwurst'; and stoning at least 1 unwary dachshund.

'standard/ ... and face the brutal foe', for the alternative is to sit at home and 'watch and ponder, /While the warriors agonize and dare'. Ironically, considering his own sedentary contribution to the War effort, Watson recommends that the sons of Britain take the 'glory yonder' and its attendant 'hero's share', confident that the love of England 'who bore and did conceive us /Shall for ever crown'¹ their deeds and themselves.

Watson was not prepared to brook any interference from any neutral power as he indicated in his snub² to the United States' offer of arbitrating between the two warring factions:

Nor shall St. George of England stay his spear
In parley, while you ravening Shape accurst
Ramp over Life and treads down art and laws.

The only response to German aggression, according to Watson, was for the English forces to blast the German navy from the seas, at the same time invoking the outstanding admirals of the past ('The Battle of the Bight'), and to sweep the Hun before them in one all-conquering cavalry charge ('The Charge of the 9th Lancers') - irrespective of the fact that by the autumn of 1914 the cavalry charge was discovered to be as much an anachronism as Watson's poetic rhetoric:

Then their dauntless remnant came
Out of the hurricane, out of the flame,
Covered with smoke and dust and fame.

Even so, Watson assures the soldiers of 1914/15 that they too shall 'o'ercome as these [past heroes] o'ercame', to 'winnow the earth with the flail of Heaven', simply because of their

-
1. 'Sons of Britain', Poetry of the I.W.W., p.141. Significantly, Watson was awarded his knighthood in 1917 for his services to the propaganda campaign.
 2. 'To A Would-be Umpire'.

English birthright: they are born to win. As late as 1918¹, Watson describes, in the ineptly-titled 'The Fields of the Future', how the British soldiers respond with the 'ancient war-rage' to the bugles sounding 'a charge' and acknowledges with some regret that modern soldiers 'Fight not with axe and mace, and clanging targe' (though he might have been appeased on this point had he seen some of the barbaric trench weapons used for hand-to-hand combat). The full extent of Watson's lack of sympathy with the conditions and moods of the fighting men of the War is amply illustrated in the banal paean to the 'Three Alfreds' - Alfred the Great, Alfred Tennyson and Alfred Harmsworth (Lord Northcliffe) all of whom contributed significantly to national life, but none more so than Northcliffe who waged a persistent and forceful campaign through the Daily Mail, sustaining and inflaming anti-German feeling, demanding the introduction of conscription and railing against the crises in the munitions factories² which delayed the production of shells for the Western Front.

Certainly for Watson, who believed that 'The true function of the poet today is to keep fresh within us our often flagging sense of life's greatness and grandeur'³, the War must have come as a timely stimulus when it seemed that the very 'rhetoric' for which he was celebrated had fallen into disrepute to be super-

1. Watson was by no means alone in his anachronistic view of the War and the spirit of the combatants in its latter years: Arthur Waugh still talked of the 'cleansing fire of the War' in Oct. 1916 and 2 years later, Newbolt was still enthusing over the 'greatness' of the Age with 'Chivalry victorious'.
2. Cf. A pamphlet poem, 'Munitions' by "Junius Redivivus" (T.L.S. 12.8.15) who laments that instead of the War being over, 'we're at a standstill - no advance, I fear, /And all for want of shells with high explosive force /The blow to bring the Kaiser perpetual remorse'. The same view is taken by R.K. in his bitter couplet 'Batteries out of Ammunition' where the gunners in France feel betrayed by their own mates from the same class and background.
3. 'The Poet's Place in the Scheme of Life', The Muse in Exile (1913).

seded by a more colloquial idiom in contemporary verse.¹

Two other established poets of the 'Old School' who responded with alacrity to the Declaration of War were Henry Newbolt² and Laurence Binyon, both of whom produced poems entitled 'The Fourth of August'. Newbolt approached the subject³ in an elaborate Masque, complete with Elves, Spirits and Aurora who surround a languid 'Mortal Youth' as he reclines on a green bank, luxuriating in the summer's mellowness. His idle reflections are interrupted by a stern Veiled Figure who urges him to rouse himself and 'live for something greater'. He ignores this suggestion and falls asleep during which time a tableau is enacted in which a mother relinquishes her young sons (reluctantly at first and then with pride) to a drummer-boy who leads them off to War. When the Youth awakes, he too is stirred by the 'call':

 Ringing with countless echoes of old wars:
 With tender pity, red indignant wrath,
 White cold resolve and hatred of the beast,
 Courage that knows not fear, courage that knows
 And knowing dares a hundred deaths in one,
 Freedom that lives by service, kindness
 That even in anger keeps men's brotherhood,
 And love of country these I heard, and all
 my blood remembers
 That so my fathers heard them.

Inspired by this new awareness of the spiritual nobility to be won by the ^{man} who consecrates his life to his country's service - 'that which makes the world /Of life enduring' - the Youth marches off to the martial strains of distant music.

1. As W.W. complained in Pencraft: A Plea for the Older Ways (1916): 'This once quite honourable word [i.e. rhetoric] is now become a term of rank abuse, a portable handy to be heaved at any obnoxious man of verse who has not founded himself altogether on "Mary, had a little lamb", or The Songs of Innocence [or similar]'.
2. A new illustrated edition of Drake's Drum and Other Poems was published at the beginning of Oct. 1914. In Dec. 1914, H.N. followed up his earlier success in republishing old work with a new edition of The Island Race (1898)
3. 'The Fourth of August', Poems New and Old, pp.115-22.

Binyon's treatment of the same theme¹ is less ostentatious in form though no less antique from the point of view of vocabulary and regulated rhythm:

Now in thy splendour go before us,
Spirit of England, ardent-eyed,
Enkindle this dear earth that bore us,
In the hour of peril purified.

'The Spirit of England' is defined as 'that which is not bartered / Which force can neither quell nor cage' and that which impels her people to fight 'the fraud that feeds desire on / Lies, in a lust to enslave or kill, / The barren creed of blood and iron, / Vampire of Europe's wasted will'. At least Binyon does suggest, however, more than Newbolt or Watson, in his final stanza what suffering is likely to follow in the path of this indiscriminate and 'dreadful winnowing-fan', but he believes that the sacrifice will be worth-while if the 'soul of divinely suffering man' can be thus freed of chaff.

Similarly, John Masefield in 'August 1914' and John Freeman in 'The Stars in their Courses' (August 1914) endeavoured to give substance to the 'English spirit': Masefield tenderly describes the Berkshire Downs 'loved to the death' by the countrymen who will soon be fighting out of sight of 'the dear outline of the English shore', yet able to justify their hardship because they are suffering for the sake of the English loam they dumbly love. Freeman's interpretation of the patriotic sentiment is rather more forceful:

England's wise thoughts are swords; her quiet hours
Are trodden underfoot like wayside flowers,
And every English heart is England's wholly

1. 'The Fourth of August', The Winnowing-Fan: Poems on the Great War, pp.9-10.

More insidious was the readiness with which Evelyn Underhill, for one, (representative of the type of female depicted on the infamous - to post-War generations - 'Women of Britain say go!' poster) consigned her 'dear ones'¹ to the slaughter, with the glib comment absolving herself from all further responsibility or guilt at their death:

Never of us be said

We failed to give God-speed to our adventurous dead.²
But the most reprehensible sentiment was surely that voiced by Miss C. Fox-Smith in 'St George of England'³ where she envisages a European conflict which is a strange combination of the English heroic tradition (St George and the Dragon); the medieval concept of chivalry ('While any wrong is yet to right', St George can be depended upon); the military terminology of the twentieth century ('strafing'), and she even applauds this bombardment of Germans as an act apparently sanctified by God:

St George he was a fighting man, he's here
and fighting still
While any wrong is yet to right or Dragon
yet to kill,
And faith! he's finding work this day to suit
his war-worn sword,
For he's strafing Huns in Flanders to the
glory of the Lord.

A little later in the War, Katharine Tynan takes up this idea, of God's presumed approval dignifying the mass-slaughter, in The Holy War.⁴ One of her poems⁵ is deliberately set in a nunnery where she describes the response of one particular nun

-
1. 'All whom we must send to seek and die for peace'.
 2. 'Non Combatants', A Treasury of War Poetry. Cf. Mary Aldington's sentiments in Love Letters to a Soldier (T.L.S., 4.2.15): 'Wounded are you, my soldier man? Well come home to me, and let me nurse you well and send you back again'.
 3. A Treasury of War Poetry.
 4. T.L.S., 8.6.16.
 5. 'The Convent Garden'.

to the sound of soldiers marching:

Under her robe her heart's a-beat
Her maiden pulses stir
At sound of marching in the street,
To think they die for her.

All day and night as a sweet smoke
Her prayer ascends the skies.
That all her piteous fighting folk
May walk in Paradise.

As an antidote to the general assumption that this was a holy war, undertaken by British soldiers who resembled 'the knights of old' (infused with the Crusade spirit and smiling 'bravely still when [they have received their] death wound'¹, Vera Brittain from her experience as a V.A.D., recommended² a period of nursing victims of mustard-gas which should convince the most ardent defender of the 'Holy-War' attitude that God could hardly have made the War 'when there are such inventions of the Devil about'.

Having now outlined the main areas of civilian response to the War's outbreak: weighty rhetoric from the established poets; clumsily-articulated demands for vengeance on the German violators of Belgium, from various sources; remonstrations to the country's youth to remember the heroic past and consecrate their lives to a glorious national future by rising to the challenge of 'The Call'³ and enlisting in the spirit of chivalric adventure and righteous crusade; and vigorous support pledged by English women to 'The Cause', in 'offering' their men-folk to the War with 'cheerful heart', an analysis

1. Elizabeth O'Neill, The War 1914: For Boys and Girls (Dec. 1914).

2. Testament of Youth, p.395.

3. 'The Call' (see W.N.Hodgson and R.E.Vernede) or 'The Summons' (as in the 1st phase of Nichols's Ardours and Endurances) was a popular title for a poem describing both the combatant's and non-combatant's response to the War, and The Athenaeum still referred to 'the stress of the great call' introducing 'a new chivalry', after a year of full-scale war.

of the evolution of these various aspects of the general civilian response will be undertaken.

The first reaction of the non-combatant poets to the Declaration of War - as far as the T.L.S. was concerned - appeared in the issue of 13th August, 1914 with Robert Bridges¹'s 'Thou Careless, Awake!'. The poem was appended, somewhat uneasily, to the leader which discussed the 'Two Kinds of Courage' - German (sternly militaristic) and British (nobly sacrificial) - and warned against Britons resorting to the same pitch of national hatred as that which purportedly characterized the German nation, intoxicated with its 'national romanticism'. The leader-writer further stressed that civilians, as well as combatants - must show courage in the future in order to sustain the nation's 'spiritual treasure' and their duty must be not to panic and to refrain from hoarding food and harassing the poor 'misguided Huns'. Bridges's exhortations to the 'careless'² English to sally forth against 'The monarch Ambition [who]/ Hath harnessed his slaves', confident that after much 'cleansing' suffering they would 'win to Salvation, /To Beauty through blood', appear somewhat extravagant after the mild tone of the leader itself, and it is left to ^{one of} the first unknown versifiers on the War to proffer a less overt brand of patriotism in a poem quoted in the morgue of the same issue of the T.L.S.:

-
1. The Poet Laureate took advantage of the patriotic temper of the time to send one of his experiments in prosody, 'Hell and Hate' ('Two demons thrust their arms out over the world, / Hell with a ruddy torch of fire, / And Hate with gasping mouth') written in Dec. 1913, for publication in the T.L.S., 24.9.14 in the belief that these verses were 'strangely apt to the present situation'.
 2. Cf. Kipling's contempt for the idle 'flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddled oafs at the goal' ('The Islanders', 1902) who had wilfully ignored the threats to national security at the beginning of the century.

I know no brave but the kingly brave who give their
lives for a land;
Who fight for a hope as the martyrs fought, but hide
with a silent band;
Who dare the world for a throne unseen, and welcome
death for a name.
Their home wherever the colour flies, their beings
with love aflame;
Heroes hidden in silent ranks, who fight for
another's fame.¹

The next issue of the T.L.S.² opened with another discourse on the subject of the German psyche, 'On the National Conscience', which was followed by an entertaining piece from Mary Duclaux³ based on the legend of Catherine Barlass. In the poem, Belgium is apotheosized as the 'Bar-lass of the Western world /Who, when the treacherous Prussian tyrant hurl'd /His hordes against our peace, thrust a slight hand, /So firm, to bolt our portals and withstand'; according to Mme. Duclaux, whoever is the ultimate victor, Belgium has essentially 'won the day' by temporarily stemming the onslaught of the German War-Machine. A more sober tone is evinced by the strategic placing of Walter de la Mare's 'Happy England', directly after the leader, 'Thoughts in Adversity', in the last T.L.S. of August 1914⁴, by which time a slightly more reflective note had crept into the leader-writer's prose, influenced perhaps by the early set-backs suffered by the British Expeditionary Force at Mons.

De la Mare reflects this anxiety:

Now each man's mind all Europe is:
Boding and fear in dread array
Daze every heart: O grave and wise,
Abide in hope the judgment day.

-
1. From Hammer and File, By a Son of the Workshop, T.L.S., 13.8.14.
 2. 20.8.14.
 3. 'Belgia Bar-lass', Melun, 9.8.14.
 4. 27.8.14.

At the same time, de la Mare presages the predilection among later combatant versifiers for nostalgic recourse to the English landscape¹:

Remember happy England: keep
For her bright cause thy latest breath;
Her peace that long hath lulled to sleep,
May now exact the sleep of death.

Her woods and wilds, her loveliness,
With harvest now are richly at rest;
Safe in her isled securities

The effusion of patriotic poetry was recognised by the T.L.S. leader² of 3rd September, which occupied five columns and was devoted to the general phenomenon, though reference was made to one recent anthology in particular, Patriotic Poems, selected by R.M. Leonard. The article prescribed a compassionate view to be taken to the subject of war - with a 'less barbaric, more chivalrous' poetic spirit - and considerable embarrassment was evinced in the use of the term 'patriotic poetry' which was regarded as 'slightly soiled and tarnished', since patriotism was defined, by this leader-writer at least, as an emotion 'roused more easily by a bad music-hall song than by a good cause'. The article further stressed that patriotic expression must not become 'cynical inhumanity', but patriotic writers should draw their inspiration from the country's sense of unified purpose (a unification which had not existed during the Boer War, it was implied).

The leader-writer considered that the function of explicitly patriotic verse should be to 're-ignite' the love of country, already absorbed by the poetry-reading public, from less strident poets of the English countryside (Gray, Keats and Housman) and

1. See Section 2(b).
2. 'Patriotic Poetry'.

warned that in this war - as in previous 'stirring times' - the 'truest poems' would necessarily be written after the event. R.M. Leonard in his Preface to Patriotic Poems had quoted the axiom: 'The song that nerves a nation's heart is in itself a deed' (which seems to have been adopted, at least by Newbolt,¹ as the justification for his rousing non-combatant poetry) but the leader-writer looks forward to poetry from those who actively participate in the fighting. In the meantime, he expresses his approval of the present anthology though he is uncertain about the value of some recent patriotic responses which 'must of necessity be limited to [the poet's] inward vision' - implying that they will only be of ephemeral interest. He concludes his survey of patriotic verse from the older poets by returning to Leonard's heartening words of consolation to the man whose age precludes him from 'joining up' and the leader-writer offers encouragement to civilian versifiers in general to continue their efforts:

To have given one mind confidence, if only one's own,
to have lightened, if for a moment, the darkness of
waiting, to have written one word of the sea that a
sailor would put to his service is slight enough
achievement, but yet might console a man even for
his incapability to take up arms against these pre-
sent troubles and, by opposing, end them.

In view of this evidently humane approach to the interpretation of war in verse, it is a little surprising to find "Charitessi"'s 'August 1914' following the leader-article with its appeal to England 'in thine hour of need' to accept the obligation of 'sons and brothers' for the English 'armoury'. The following week in the T.L.S., Thomas Hardy's 'Song of the Soldiers' - which had already appeared in the Times of 9th September - was

L. See, in particular, below, pp. 514-21.

given pride of place at the end of the leader,¹ 'Men and Marionettes' which discussed (once more) that preoccupation of T.L.S. leader-writers and other contemporary commentators, namely the contrast between the 'docile' conditioned response of the Germans to military discipline, and the cheerful individuality of the British 'Tommy', who was fighting without compulsion for the restoration of human dignity to every nation (even the German). Evidently Hardy's poem with its alliterative emphasis on the 'faith and fire' of the English soldiers ('England's need') committed to a cause which they understood ('We well see what we are doing') and spurred on by the thought that 'Victory crowns the just / And ... braggarts must / Surely bite the dust', was meant to epitomize that independent British fighting-spirit celebrated in the preceding leader. Hardy does, however, concede the view of the less convinced bystander in the second stanza with the reference to the 'friend with the musing eye' who watches the soldiers depart in their exuberance 'with doubt and dolorous sigh', but Hardy leaves no doubt that his sympathies lie with the brisk ranks of marching soldiers, rather than with the 'dalliers', as the insistent rhythm sweeps inexorably on through the remaining stanzas.

'Song of the Soldiers' was accompanied by John Drinkwater's 'Nocturne', a stately metrical exercise - formal and restrained - which provided an appropriate foil to the more boisterous Hardy poem. The chief purpose of 'Nocturne' seems to have been to suggest the night-sleep-death analogy (later developed much more effectively by the combatant-poets):

1. In the Correspondence Columns of the same number of the T.L.S. (10.9.14) an appreciative reader complimented the leader-writer, contending that 'no man can do a higher service to his country than to help his fellows to face the vicissitudes of war in the spirit which animates the writer of these [leading] articles'.

O royal night, under your stars that keep
Their golden troops in chartered motion set,
The living legions are renewed in sleep
For bloodier battle yet....¹

Another of Drinkwater's poems - 'We Willed It Not' - contributed to The Sphere and subsequently published in another of the early anthologies, Poems of the Great War, was quoted as one of its most striking contributions in the T.L.S. review of the anthology. Once again, the theme of German culpability is emphasized and the picture of England as the wronged nation 'slow to chide' and entering the conflict only after careful deliberation and intolerable provocation is sustained:

For this your pride the tragic armies go,
And the grim navies watch along the seas.
You trade in death, you mock at life, you throw
To God the tumult of your blasphemies

We rise, and, by the yet ungathered dead,
Not lightly shall the treason be atoned.

On a less exalted level, a good deal of 'peripheral verse' stimulated by the War was rushed into circulation in the August/September 1914 period, ranging from Hymns Selected from the English Hymnal for use in this Time of War, and such curiosities as Harry the Hero of the Victoria Cross (Mrs Clement Nugent Jackson's favourite ballad), recommended as a 'homely ballad of patriotic character suitable for recitation',² and Quaint Rhymes for the Battlefield from "A Quondam Cricketer"³, to Union Jack Lyrics (with a Foreword concerning The Flag) by F.J. Johnston-Smith, and such doggerel as E.V. Lucas's parody of Struwwelpeter:

1. The style here is similar to that of 'The Ships of Grief' which appeared at the end of the leader, 'Germany' (T.L.S., 8.10.14).
2. T.L.S., 24.9.14. A whole genre of 'recitation-verse' grew up through the War which was crudely divided into the patriotic and the elegiac.
3. 'Very blunt but sincere missionary rhymes' according to the T.L.S. of 5.11.14.

'Swollen-headed William', which denounces the ambitions of the Kaiser. In view of all this literary activity, and bearing in mind the French example¹, a proliferation of vigorous soldier marching-songs² was anticipated by the confident T.L.S. reviewers who were gratified to see how much poetry 'or at any rate verse'³, has poured forth in a copious flood in every quarter of the land ... all [distinguished by] one chief merit: that of sincerity'.⁴

A two-column review, 'War and Poetry', in the October T.L.S.⁵ examined in some detail four prominent anthologies, 'the first fruits' of the poets' response to the War: Poems of the Great War, Songs and Sonnets for England in War Time, Lord God of Battles and Remember Louvain!, a Little Book of Liberty and War. He also took the opportunity to expatiate on what he expected from war-poetry, both at the beginning of, and throughout, the War. To begin with, the reviewer paid tribute to previous 'War Poems', from the Siege of Troy to the Charge of the Light Brigade,

-
1. Review of Soldier Songs of France, T.L.S., 20.8.14. Chants Soldats (1525-1914) and Songs in Sabots (selections from the work of the popular poet Theodore Botrel) T.L.S., 30.9.14, with their depiction of the nonchalant 'poilu' on the march - 'insouciant et gai, il siffle / Avec son chapeau sur l'oreille' - further subscribed to this image in the T.L.S. reviewers' minds of happy soldiers lustily singing as they went to war.
 2. To encourage original composition, pamphlets such as Topical Tommy's Book o' the Words, Rhymes for Marching Tunes, and A.C.Ainger's Marching Song for Soldiers, were issued in late 1914, but, as E.B.Osborn points out in the Intro. to M.I.A. there was little development of the English marching-song (apart from the adaptation of well-known hymn tunes e.g. 'When this Lousy War is Over', to the tune of 'What a Friend we Have in Jesus'). E.B.O. attributes the lack of original I.W.W. marching-songs to the insidious influence of the music-hall.
 3. E.g. Harold Begbie, Fighting Lines with Some Reinforcements, War Songs of Britain, compiled by G.S. Maxwell Dibding, Maurice Hewlett's Singsongs of the War and John Fawside, The Flag of England
 4. Review of Songs and Sonnets for England in War Time, T.L.S., 24.9.14.
 5. 8.10.14.

acknowledging the centuries-old fascination of war as a subject for poets and reminding his readers that war can stimulate 'amazing heroisms', worthy of poetic expression, as well as inordinate brutalities. He admits that recent trends in the novel have been towards greater realism but 'it will take many Zolas to make poets cold to the call of war and, right as [Zola] is, they are even more right for its is the very essence of their business to be magnifying mirrors of that fraction of our life which is great and significant' (and which the extreme war situation highlights). The war poets most approved of by this reviewer¹ are those who ignore:

... the ugly and stupid side of the war ... insisting that for them the thing that matters in War is not the waste and loss of the body and goods of the body, but the escape of the spirit into that eternal world in which bodily death is as nothing compared with the triumph of an idea.

Consequently, he chooses Masefield's 'August 1914' and Bridges's 'Thou Careless Awake' as the finest poems of the war up to October 1914. The Poet Laureate is particularly commended for his Wordsworthian 'tranquillity' in managing to see 'passing events "sub specie aeterni"', without the hysterical rantings of some passionate 'Hun-Haters':

Thy mirth lay aside,
Thy cavil and play:
The foe is upon thee
And grave is the day.

Through Fire Air and Water
Thy trial must be
But they that love life best
Die gladly for thee.

1. J.G.Fletcher's review, 'War Poetry', Ego., 2.11.14, provides an interesting foil to the T.L.S. reviewer's comments and concentrates upon Poems of The Great War. Fletcher disparagingly describes 'Thou Careless Awake' as Doric or Mixo-Lyidian in tone, probably written by the Kaiser to discredit and demoralize England, and condemns both Bridges's and Newbolt's use of the line: 'God defend the Right'. He further deflates the 'cannonading sentiments and rhymes' of these 'bards' by quoting the least competent lines of their poems and finds the anthology deserving of all the magists' criticism of 'public' poetry.

By contrast, Newbolt's 'Vigil', Watson's 'Duty' and R.E. Vernède's 'Stanzas to the Sea' were considered not to have any particular distinction, although all qualified as 'competent verse written in a fine spirit'. The reviewer admitted that many of the pieces in Poems of the Great War did not constitute poetry, but it was suggested that they should be judged rather as 'sermons, speeches, leading articles in verse' which have inspiriting value for the present, but which are essentially transient and of little literary merit. This criticism was even more true of Songs and Sonnets, where the reviewer was dismayed to find 'some doggerel', but the anthology was redeemed in his eyes by Laurence Binyon's 'To Women' ('For you, you too, to battle go, /Not with the marching drums and cheers /But in the watch of solitude /And through the boundless night of fears'), Hardy's 'Song of the Soldiers' and Kipling's '"For All we Have and Are"', from which the line, 'Who dies if England lives?' was specially selected for the 'general stock of poetic quotations' contributed by the War.

Lord God Of Battles (taking its title from a phrase popularized in Horatio Bottomley's repertoire of patriotic addresses¹) included some poems already found in the first two anthologies, as well as favourite, stirring passages from Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Tennyson. The reviewer was a little concerned over the title, Remember Louvain!, feeling that if poetry is to strengthen and comfort the reader in time of war, it should not take its tone from the 'tub-thumping' rhetoric propagated by journalists; that reservation aside, the reviewer approved of the preponderance of nineteenth century verse which served to set the present conflict in perspective, 'helping us to see in the Battle of the Marne... the latest act in the eternal drama of the struggling, fighting, soaring, up-ward-working spirit of man'.

1. Though the phrase 'God of battles' originates from Henry V, Act III, sc. i. l. 295.

Having already made mention of the proliferation of anthologies of patriotic verse during the Autumn of 1914, it would seem appropriate to examine the standard features of such volumes and England, My England, edited by George Goodchild, and published in late October 1914¹, recommends itself as representative of this genre. It is dedicated to W.E. Henley (as the title would suggest) and is emblazoned with a design of shields and spears on the outer cover and spine, with an inside-cover decoration of a solitary British warrior, spear poised, about to stave off - single-handed - a horde of cowering invaders (presumably Huns). The contents of the anthology were in keeping with its archaic illustrations, with only ten poems 'inspired by the present War': Thomas Hardy's 'Song of the Soldiers', universally applauded² and featured in most anthologies, was followed by verses already printed in various newspapers by H.W.Bliss, J.B.Fagan, Edmond Holmes, A. Vivanti Chartes, W.E. Grogan, Iris Tree and F.W.Bourdillon. All these pieces were characterized by archaic diction: 'is it a boon too precious by far - /Too blest a fate - to die as I stand - /Death 'mid the press and clamour of war?'³, for example; they evinced an unrealistic appreciation of the type of warfare to be encountered⁴ ('Will a sword-blade cleave my skull asunder?'⁵, 'Lay

1. T.L.S., 29.10.14; reprint issued two months later.

2. A dissenting voice in all this approbation came from C.H. Sorley who with astonishing perceptiveness commented in a letter (30.11.14): 'I think that 'Men Who March Away' is the most arid poem...besides being untrue of the sentiments of the ranksman going to war. "Victory crowns the just" is the worst line he ever wrote - filched from a leading article in The Morning Post, and unworthy of him who had always previously disdained to insult Justice by offering it a material crown like Victory'.

3. 'Standing Still', E.M.E., pp.21-4.

4. Cf. W.Macneile Dixon, 'To Fellow Travellers in Greece' (T.L.S., 3.12.14) who conceived of the War in terms of Thermopylae and Marathon ('once more the Persian steel /The armies of the Greeks must feel').

5. 'Standing Still'.

'down thy shield ... /Cast down thy shining helmet, plant thy banner in the grass'¹), and they constantly referred to the heroic or mythological past of Drake 'beating his drum', Garibaldi liberating Italy, Napoleon's famous Legion brutally destroyed by Blucher at Waterloo (Wellington's contribution to the massacre was of course overlooked), Arthurian legend and Norse mythology: Thor and Odin ready to unleash 'Steely-crested waves of battle, breaking into crimson foam, /[To] drench with blood the smiling cornland, drown in tears the happy home'.²

The rest of the volume, some two hundred pages, was devoted to 'Historical and Patriotic' Poems by Byron, Wordsworth, Whitman, Longfellow, Scott, Lord Macaulay (extensive contribution), Shakespeare (the most rousing speeches from Henry V)³, Homer, W.E. Henley, anonymous pieces such as 'The British Grenadiers', and culminating in the National Anthem. Certainly some of the poems quoted - Byron's stanzas on 'Waterloo'⁴ and the substantial extract from Walt Whitman's Drum-Taps - have an unquestioned place in any anthology of war poetry, but the tenor of England, My England (and other anthologies of the time) was towards that very celebration of militaristic nationalism which the T.L.S. leader-writers⁵ found so abhorrent in the German character and which

1. A. V. Chartes, 'The Heart of Italy', E.M.E., pp. 25-6.

2. F. W. Bourdillon, 'False Gods', Ibid., pp. 31-3; first appeared in The Times, 4.10.14.

3. There is a considerable amount of duplication apparent in the first wave of anthologies with excerpts from Henry V, Wordsworth's 'The Happy Warrior', 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' ranking among the most popular of war pieces from earlier eras. Volumes of Wordsworth's sonnets on the Napoleonic crisis, With Courage, and Tennyson's Patriotic Poems, also flourished.

4. Of which the lines 'And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves, / Dewy with Nature's tear-drops, as they pass / Grieving - if aught n- animate e'er grieves - / Over the unreturning brave - alas! / E'er evening to be trodden like the grass' are among the most poignant in the whole corpus of war poetry.

5. 9 of A. Clutton-Brock's T.L.S. leaders (including some of those already cited) were reprinted as Thoughts on the War by Methuen (T.L.S., 26.11.14): an indication of their considerable popularity.

the War was supposedly being waged to dislodge¹. Paradoxically, a later review² of German propagandist pamphlets (such as Zeppeline Über England) denounced German propaganda³ in terms which could be applied equally well to certain patriotic verse from non-combatants: 'Destructive, fatuous, shrill, without art ... crazily and sentimentally priggish'.

A.E. Housman's 'Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries', written when the shrilly patriotic poetry of other non-combatants was at its most intense, introduces a note of dissension among the many mindless effusions of the early months of war, and suggests the direction which future combatant (and some non-combatant) verse was to take. Housman, whose A Shropshire Lad,⁴ with its irresistible association of youth, war, death and nature, was in constant demand throughout the War (judging by the number of different editions which were frequently advertised in the T.L.S.) put the emphasis on the serving soldiers rather than upon disembodied ideals and, from his humanistic standpoint, drew attention to the fact that in a world which 'God [has] abandoned', no-one has the right to complain if ordinary men expect to be paid for '[saving] the sum of things' - especially when they have hazarded their lives into the bargain.

-
1. As the review, 'A War against Militarism' (T.L.S., 12.11.14), which examines H.G.Wells's The War that will end War and Arnold Bennett's Liberty: A Statement of the British Case, set out to prove.
 2. T.L.S., 22.2.17.
 3. 'The German Gospel of Blood and Iron' and 'Might is Right's slogan which fuelled 'Germany's War Mania' (in popular editorial-jargon, T.L.S., 5.11.14). Cf. C.Sheridan Jones's political tract on The Unspeakable Prussian and G.K.Chesterton's The Barbarism of Berlin.
 4. See Chapter V for further reference to Housman's influence on the young combatants' poetry, particularly in intensifying the officers' tenderly protective instinct towards their 'lovely lads'.

Although insight such as Housman's was very rare, there was a tendency among the elder non-combatant poets towards the end of 1914 to address themselves with more restraint to their verse. The generally rather sombre mood among these poets following the heady exhilaration immediately after the Declaration of War and the confident assurances - supported by quotation from the poetic records of past military glory - that Britain would 'Right the Wrong' and restore Peace and Justice to a troubled Europe 'by Christmas', was captured in an anonymous poem, 'Winter 1914', in the last T.L.S.¹ of 1914. Written in the metre of a Horatian Ode, and with an odd Latinate idiom, the poem contrasted the Christmas of 1914 (from which so much has been expected in terms of military success by this date) - 'No merry rout, no blithe revel ... /The instruments of gladness ... neglected /... the tidings of renew'd Evangel / Now by War blotted out' - with previous Yuletides when 'dance's sprightly complications /Made manifest the delight that ruled within our bosoms rejoicing'. The poem concludes with the pious hope that, sustained by inner fortitude, those at home - and abroad - can:

Serenely wait the future, each determined
With brave front to oppose strife's worst bloody
outrage and triumphant
Recall the meek-eyed Peace to earthly mansions.

Laurence Binyon's The Winnowing Fan² - one of the first volumes directly inspired by the War from an established poet - received its first mention in the T.L.S. in December 1914.³

1. 31.12.14.

2. It was sub-titled 'Poems on the Great War'.

3. 3.12.14.

The poems which comprised the volume had been previously contributed to The Times, The Pall Mall Gazette, The Nation, The Spectator, The Westminster Gazette, The Fortnightly Review and The Sphere, and were evidently prompted by the initial events of the War in France and Belgium: Belgium's stubborn resistance to the invader, 'Though trampled, spoiled, and torn'¹; the sack of Louvain, which roused Binyon to an uncharacteristically hysterical vilification of the German Army:

Abortions of their blind hyena-creed,²
Who for 'protection' of their battle-host
Against the unarmed of them they had made to bleed,
Whose hearts they had tortured to the uttermost

Without a cause, past pardon, fired and tore
The towers of fame and beauty, while they shot
And butchered the defenceless in the door.
But History shall hang them high, to rot

Unburied, in the face of times unborn,³
Mankind's abomination and last scorn;

and the desecration of the ancient cathedral-city of Rheims, where Binyon's anger is directed against this barbaric despoiling of 'All ancient, high, heroic France'⁴. He can sympathize with the French demand for vengeance to be exacted, by killing the German prisoners (though he hastily introduces a French priest between the German prisoners and the 'levelled French guns', and the firing squad, not wishing to be as 'guilty' as their attackers, withdraw). In the last three poems of the volume, Binyon examines the essential areas of human life which will be affected by the War: the women, who surrender their men-

1. 'To the Belgians', The W.F., pp.15-17.

2. Binyon addresses the next poem to Goethe, inquiring whether this sage's influence could have saved the German people from their subjugation to iniquitous Nietzschean philosophy and their wholehearted embrace of the Bismarckian policy of 'feud and force' ('To Goethe', Ibid., pp.20-1).

3. 'Louvain', Ibid., pp.18-9.

4. 'At Rheims', Ibid., pp.22-4.

folk in 'splendid sacrifice', and the 'common man of common earth ... a man of no renown' and yet 'The battle winner ... / Where "food for cannon" pays a nation's debt', whom 'The pride of Empire tosses careless to his doom'. Binyon swiftly qualifies what could have been interpreted as one of the earliest satirical comments on the wanton disposal of human lives by asserting that:

Radiant the spirit rushes to the grave.
Glorious it is to live
In such an hour, but life is lovelier yet to give,

and assuring his readers that 'The world shall travail in that cause' to overcome the arid German philosophy of naked aggression: '... the tale /Of Earth is strewn with Empires heaped in dust /Because they dreamed that force should punish and prevail'.¹

The most-anthologized poem in The Winnowing-Fan (and probably in the whole of Binyon's poetry), 'For the Fallen'², similarly dealt with a subject which was to become an increasingly difficult one to accommodate: the fitting commemoration of the War-dead. Considering how early in the War it was written, the poem presents a rather precipitate view of those killed in action and the solemn reading from it on every subsequent Armistice Day can hardly be justified, considering how much attitudes to death changed during the War itself - not to mention sixty years later, after the cauterizing experience of a second world war. Perhaps what recommends the poem to the popular imagination is its stately Biblical rhythm and august, slightly archaic vocabulary which give the impression of the poet's having captured the appropriate tone of

1. 'Ode for September', The W.-F., pp.30-36.

2. First appeared in The Times, 21.9.14.

weighty respect due to those 'straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow' who faced the innumerable enemy-hosts and 'fell with their faces to the foe'. Binyon is expressing here that idealized view of heroic death 'in the field' so excellently parodied by Sassoon in 'How to Die', where he probably had 'For the Fallen' in mind¹ as representative of that hopelessly unrealistic conception of death in battle, characteristic of most non-combatant poets throughout the War?²

Dark clouds are smouldering into red
While down the craters morning burns.
The dying soldier shifts his head
To watch the glory that returns;
He lifts his fingers toward the skies
Where holy brightness breaks in flame;
Radiance reflected in his eyes,
And on his lips a whispered name.³

'For the Fallen' relies for its effect (right from the euphemistic title) upon a surface solemnity and rhetorical style which converge in his consideration of certain key ideas: the dead conceived of as 'flesh of [England's] flesh', now 'sleep[ing] beyond England's foam' and somehow mystically associated with the natural elements; the perpetual youth of 'the fallen' ('They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old'); and the 'proud thanksgiving' of the Mother Country for the noble sacrifice of her children, 'Fallen in the cause of the Free'.⁴ However remote from the reality of actual war experience 'For the Fallen' may now appear, in the light of so many more honest interpretations in poetry and prose of death in battle from the comba-

1. As well as his own naive epitaph to his brother, killed at Gallipoli, 15.8.15: 'We have made an end of all things base... /And through your victory I shall win the light' ('To My Brother').
2. Cf. De la Mare's 'How Sleep the Brave' appended to a Leader, 'Mourners of the Dead' (T.L.S., 25.2.15) which urges 'Nay, nay sweet England, do not grieve! /Not one of these poor men who died /But did within his soul believe /That death for thee was ^{glorified} was'.
3. Collected Poems of Siegfried Sassoon, p.72.
4. 'For the Fallen', The Winnowing Fan, pp.28-9.

tants themselves¹, at the time, it was applauded as 'the noblest war poem that has yet appeared in English'² and Binyon's crowning poetic achievement:

Beauty of word and cadence and an austere elevation of mood are combined with a curious and most comforting tenderness, as if the singer's voice broke suddenly in the midst of his flight.³

The T.L.S. reviewer⁴ of The Winnowing-Fan commended Binyon for fulfilling so amply the function of the poet in war-time and considered that the volume as a whole testified to the beneficial effect upon English poetry which the War was having, rendering it 'more impassioned and more manful' than the pre-War verse had been. The reviewer did, however, administer a mild rebuke to Binyon for his use of invective in 'Louvain': 'everyone can utter indignation; our poets must reveal to us other emotions and thus create Pride in Country', as Binyon managed to do in 'The Fourth of August':

Among the nations noblest chartered,
England recalls her heritage.
In her is that which is not bartered
Which force can neither quell nor cage.

Overall, Binyon was considered to have responded with the appropriately lofty tone to the War and to have adopted, with admirable composure, the mantle of the seer who 'looks ... above and beyond the battlefield to keep high in the hearts of men the

-
1. Who often described death in more mundane situations than an outright attack on the enemy: eating breakfast and discussing news from home (W.W.Gibson, 'Breakfast'), or just simply sitting in a trench, brewing tea (E.B., U.W., p.74: a sudden, unexpected shell-blast destroys the trench 'where 3 minutes ago the lance-corporal's mess-tin was bubbling over a little flame. For him, how could the gobbets of blackening flesh, the eye under the duckboard, the pulpy bone be the only answer?').
 2. Morning Post comment.
 3. Quote from The Spectator.
 4. 7.1.15.

'faith nearly crushed'.

By 1915, after their initial effusions in various organs of the Press, the older non-combatant poets readjusted their response to the War with fewer immediate publications in the form of single poems in newspapers and journals.¹ A less overt application of poetry in the cause of propaganda was underway, in the form of further patriotic anthologies² - Pro Patria et Rege³, a principally Edwardian anthology, and Lest We Forget⁴, for example - and individual collections of War-time verse, such as Mary E. Dawe's Patriotic and Other Poems (some of which had been resurrected from the Boer War period) and Bertram Dobell's Sonnets and Lyrics ('A Little Book of verses on the Present War'⁵), all of which were supplemented by ennobling editorial comment from the older literary journals.⁶

A T.L.S. leader of May 1915⁷, entitled 'Our Literature and the War', was distinguished, however, for its thoughtful analysis of the question: 'What will the long-term effect of the War be?' The leader-writer was unimpressed by the arguments that the heroic deeds of the War had stimulated imaginative writers to an unaccustomed epic plane: such heroism could be always found in domestic

-
1. The next single poem in the T.L.S. did not appear until 10.6.15, when L. Abercrombie's 'The Lover in War Time' graced the first page. There was no rumbustious patriotic note in L.A.'s poem, rather it celebrated love's durability even in War: 'higher love holds his head.../The more his feet must tread/The bloody madness down'.
 2. Also An Anthology of Patriotic Prose, selected by Frederick Page was favourably reviewed by T.L.S., 20.5.15.
 3. 'Poems on War, Its Characters and Results', selected in aid of the Belgian Relief Fund, by Prof. W.A. Knight and dedicated to Lord Roberts. A second series of the anthology came out in October, 1915.
 4. 'A Collection of War Verses', ed. H.B. Elliott, including poems from Noyes, Binyon, Hardy, Watson, Owen Seaman (editor of Punch).
 5. T.L.S., 6.5.15 review quotes Dobell's comment: 'I have been scarcely able to think of anything else [than the War]... Age having disqualified me from taking any active part in the struggle, I have occupied myself with writing verses on it'.
 6. E.g. Clutton-Brock, England at War (T.L.S., 5.8.15) and F.M. Ford, Between St. Dennis and St. George (T.L.S., 26.8.15). 7. 13.5.15.

tragedies and there was a danger that the glut of heroic accounts in the War would leave the artist suffering 'a lassitude, a recoil, a sense of surfeit' afterwards. The leader-writer anticipated that any masterpieces of the War would come from a combatant involved in the fighting:

... some eager mind innocent hitherto of creative powers, for whom actual experience of war sights and feelings may be a baptism into art.

Nevertheless, this shrewd literary commentator presaged T.S. Eliot's comment in 'A Note on War Poetry'¹:

It seems just possible that a poem might happen
To a very young man: but a poem is not poetry -
That is a life,

when he qualified his remark by pointing out that 'all this intensely actual violence, ... cannot have the permanent, deepening, clarifying influence that long personal experience or suffering have had on some of the world's greatest writers'. The leader-writer was also somewhat suspicious of the civilian creative writer who (momentarily, and doubtless intensely, identified with the struggles of the War) offered a spasmodic, feverish and probably false response to the war drama, but 'deep down recoiled from it'. Looking beyond the immediate situation where the War had a very positive influence in 'crushing all delight at the present time', the leader-writer envisaged that after the War, England would pass through a period of great internal stress which would be more likely to affect literature than the War itself, although that period of tension could be directly ascribed to the experience of several years of war. Such a far-sighted and balanced view as this offered by the leader-

1. The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot, p.202.

writer of 'Our Literature and the War'¹ is unusual for a T.L.S. leader-writer or reviewer of the time, but it is of value not only in itself, but because it qualifies (even if it does not exactly explode) the myth that all reviewing and literary criticism of the War years was 'barbarous' and misinformed.

The general trend in the early months of 1915 among anthology-compilers was still, however, somewhat retrogressive: while admitting the value of topical verse, the editors of anthologies² of familiar, heroic war-poetry also insisted upon the efficacy of their particular miscellanies for raising the spirit in times of national stress, reminding their readers that the 'old poems have a sympathy that perhaps may be lacking in lines written under the instant stress of the hour'.³ It was in the belief that 'man is a spiritual being' whose mind should be occupied with interpreting the world 'according to his higher nature' that the Poet Laureate prepared throughout 1915, his most substantial and ambitious contribution to the corpus of non-combatant poetry: The Spirit of Man⁴ ('An Anthology in English and French from the Philosophers and Poets').

-
1. Cf. a similar leader, 'Poems in War Time' (T.L.S., 1.7.15) which also showed some interesting insights into current war-verse. This leader-writer stated bluntly that 'with a few exceptions, rhetoric and invective, loftiness of aim and inadequate expression of it, have been the mark of the verse that has been poured out in such abundance' (e.g. Owen Seaman's ponderous use of 'we' in his War Time volume). The writer found Katharine Tynan's Flower of Youth much more acceptable with its sentimental treatment of the 'dead boys' called to Heaven by God, and applauded the trend away from patriotic to elegiac verse: 'The things that once we deemed of price / Consumed in smoke of sacrifice'.
 2. E.g. W. Rhys Roberts, Patriotic Poetry: Greek and English, published on the 500th Anniversary of Agincourt (T.L.S., 25.11.15). The current standard school text of poetry, Poems of Today (Aug. 1915) reflected the preoccupation with the War and included a number of poems 'directly inspired by the present War' e.g. Binyon's 'England'.
 3. 'The War Sonnets of Wordsworth', T.L.S., 4.2.15.
 4. 'Dedicated by gracious permission to H.M. the King', January 1916.

Irrespective of the Gallipoli débâcle and the disaster of the ill-planned Battle of Loos of 1915, which Bridges vaguely terms the 'miseries, the insensate and interminable slaughter', he preserved intact, in the Preface to The Spirit of Man, the temper of the elder civilian's initial response to the War from the early autumn of 1914. Such expressions as 'the progress of mankind on the path of liberty and humanity has been suddenly arrested and its promise discredited by the apostasy of a great people', or 'how far [the various Teutonic States] are deluded or tempted by a vision of world-Empire... we can only surmise', illustrate the intransigence of Bridges's contention that Prussia was wholly responsible for the War and all its attendant catastrophes. In the face of such 'national follies', Bridges, with his fastidious intellectuality, turned to the 'seers and poets of mankind, whose sayings are the oracles and prophecies of loveliness and lovingkindness', as the most mellifluous distraction 'from a grief that is intolerable constantly to face'.

Since the British Cause - 'the high cause of Freedom and Honour' - has been sanctified by the Allies fighting to uphold the 'desire for brotherhood and universal peace', Binyon confidently assures his readers at the end of his Preface: 'We can therefore be happy in our sorrows, happy even in the death of our beloved who fall in the fight; for they die nobly, as heroes and saints die, with hearts and hands unstained by hatred or wrong'. In the hope of promoting this conviction among the general reading-public, Bridges has gathered together this wide range of inspiring verses and prose translations from Homer and Thucydides, to Rupert Brooke, Willoughby Weaving and Julian Grenfell; from Rimbaud and Montaigne to Rabindranath Tagore and W.B. Yeats, in this appositely-titled anthology.

After the Autumn 1914 and mid-1915 Anthologies of Patriotic Poetry, however, there was a general move away from the consciously patriotic¹ towards the compilation of anthologies of verse either from the work of those who 'have fallen in war', or from the corresponding elegies (some of which had already appeared in the press) composed by non-combatant poets in memory of the dead. Probably the first of this genre was The Crown of Amaranth², published on 1st September 1915, to be followed three weeks later³ by A Book of Sorrow: An Anthology of Poems compiled by Andrew Macphail in the same idiom. Consolatory verses of a slightly different kind, appeared from John Oxenham in November 1915⁴, in his volume All's Well! complacently sub-titled 'Some Helpful Verse for these Dark Days of War'⁵, but an increasing number of elegiac volumes from non-combatant poets (generally with no established literary reputation) cropped up in the morgue of the T.L.S. towards the end of 1915, and during the first half of 1916.⁶

A robust Colonial tribute to the dead came from an Australian older civilian-poet (who had earlier served 'with the Colours'), Henry Lawson, in his volume My Army, O My Army!. Lawson's evident

1. Though reprints of 'old favourites', such as The Fiery Cross 'An Anthology of War Verse', compiled from living writers by Mabel C. Edwards and Mary Booth, (T.L.S., 20.1.16) were still quite common and the occasional new anthology e.g. Poems of English Heroism: Shakespeare - Tennyson, ('a rich treasury recommended for a friend at the front', T.L.S., 4.5.16) might appear.
2. Sub-titled 'A Collection of Poems to the Memory of the Brave and Gallant Gentlemen who have given their Lives for Great and Greater Britain'. The Anthology was revised, with additional poems, in 1917 (T.L.S., 14.6.17).
3. 23.9.15.
4. T.L.S., 25.11.15.
5. Oxenham's The King's Highway, 'More Helpful Verse...' (T.L.S., 14.9.16) was also welcomed as 'wholesome, spirited, workmanlike with an undercurrent of religious feeling', which would no doubt prove as popular as the earlier volume, even if it did give the impression of being 'a personified Boys' Magazine'.
6. E.g. A.E.G.'s Mater Dolorosa; In Honour: An Elegy by "A Father"; A.O. Pughe, Cypress and Amaranth. All of these volumes focussed upon the 'young knights of Heaven.../Legions of heroes ever young'.

aim was to record, through vigorous, rhythmic verse reminiscent of Kipling or Robert Service, the achievement of the Australian Contingent at Gallipoli:

The sea was hell and the shore was hell
With mine, entanglement, shrapnel and shell,
But they stormed the heights, as Australians should,
And they fought and died as we knew they would.
Knew they would -
Knew they would;
They fought and died as we knew they would.¹

The T.L.S. reviewer² of these 'colourful and high-spirited' verses, applauded their 'characteristic Colonial freedom and independence', which lends 'significance and truth' to their vigour, and reassures the reader that the 'spirit of Empire' speaks as confidently as does the 'Mother Country' from which so much 'fine poetry' has already been drawn by the War. Although non-combatant verse seemed in general to be tending towards a less stridently jingoistic mode of utterance, there was the anxiety in some quarters that a more accommodating and compassionate view of the War and its tragedies might be interpreted as promoting a 'pacifist' (or even pro-German) attitude, aligned with the pacifism advocated in certain political circles and among intellectuals such as Bertrand Russell, H. Granville-Barker, J.M. Keynes and Philip Morrell and his wife Ottoline.³

To counter this 'pernicious influence' such a volume as A. St. John Adcock's Songs of the World War was recommended as 'the songs of a pacifist, but not of a man who yearns for peace at any price'.

-
1. Cf. another 'Dominions Poet', Warneford Moffatt, whose Ode on the Canadian Soldiers who fell near Ypres, was mentioned in T.L.S., 25.5.16.
 2. 'Australian War-Songs', T.L.S., 27.1.16.
 3. This pacifist group worked energetically to support Conscientious Objectors, and were to exercise considerable influence on Sassoon at the critical time when he was already beginning to question seriously the reason for the War's prolongation.

Such a man 'who is now crying for peace' is not a 'true pacifist', according to the logic of Mr Adcock, but rather 'a simple involuntary warmonger who foolishly imagines there is a virtue in postponing an evil day'.¹ In the same spirit (though in prose form), Mrs Humphrey Ward's England's Effort² - six letters to an American friend - assesses the current situation on the Home, and Fighting, Front, and roundly rebukes the United States for her continued obstinate neutrality. The book was the product of Mrs Humphrey Ward's visit to America at the invitation of Theodore Roosevelt, and was intended to 'defend the English against accusations of idleness, drunkenness and profiteering'.³ Mrs Humphrey Ward was much gratified to be told that her book was largely instrumental in bringing the Americans into the War. However, although Mrs Humphrey Ward was irrevocably identified with the War⁴ in the eyes of the munition workers and wounded soldiers whom she visited in hospital, and the (as yet) able-bodied soldiers she passed in her tours of the trenches⁵, what the 'angry and defrauded' young who were enraged by her imperturbable serenity in these 'shattered times' did not notice was that she had been deeply affected by the loss of three nephews (killed in action) and she was simply responding to the unprecedented conditions of the time in the only way she - 'as an ageing Victorian ... picking her way through life's ruins'⁶ - knew how: through a grim sense of duty.

-
1. T.L.S., 30.3.16. A further accolade for Adcock's Songs was given by a T.L.S. reviewer (of 25.5.16) who described it as: 'the most original volume of new poetry that the year^{has} brought - prized by the ardent lover of verse and by thoughtful and patriotic men and women of all classes'.
 2. T.L.S., 15.6.16. 3. Enid Huws Jones, Mrs Humphrey Ward (1973) 161.
 4. And viewed with almost as much distaste as William Beach Thomas, the Daily Mail's 'notoriously fatuous War correspondent' (Fussell, G.W.M.M., p.28).
 5. According to Enid Huws Jones, Ibid.: 'By the end of 1917, this writer in her late 60's had twice visited the British Military Zone in France, once before and once after the Battle of the Somme'.
 6. Ibid.

A more enlivening visitor to the French and Belgian lines was the Breton non-combatant poet, Théodore Botrel,¹ who appears to have operated as a kind of French Harry Lauder², travelling along the Front, singing and reciting patriotic songs to the soldiers and arranging concerts, indicating a degree of vigorous involvement by a civilian versifier unequalled among British poets. Quite a lively non-combatant response is evinced, however, in E.W. Fordham's Songs of the Specials and Other Verses,³ where this special constable humorously describes the shortages suffered by the Home Front and the self-denial required on the part of the civilian population:

Beef-Steak and buttered eggs
Well-devilled chicken legs
 Send to Gehenna.
Furnish for hungry throats
Nothing but Quaker Oats:
... Asquith and Edward Grey
Eat only once a day
 Just for the present.
Last Monday night I saw
Balfour and Bonar Law
Eating tomatoes raw,
 Rather than pheasant.⁴

Among the young combatants, the grouching of the Home Front over such relatively trivial matters as the difficulty of hiring servants in War-time, or of finding adequate supplies of paraffin, or of reducing the consumption of meat, (and even the more disturbing problem of what to do in case of a zeppelin raid, in

-
1. Songs of Botrel: Chansonnier des Armées, Prefaces from T. Botrel and Anatole le Bras (T.L.S., 20.7.16).
 2. Lauder's recruiting speeches were said to have sent thousands of men to the Front where he continued to entertain them (singing at hospitals, or on Vimy Ridge to the accompaniment of Whizzbangs, while the men joined in the choruses and begged for more songs - always liberally sprinkled with 'laddie' and 'bonnie'). After the death of his son, Capt. John Lauder, H.L. wrote A Minstrel in France partly as a tribute to him and partly to raise money for the 'H.L. Million Pound Fund for Maimed Men, Scottish Soldiers and Sailors'. H.L. was obviously a popular performer: 'The soldiers liked his simple songs about sweethearts and home, for he voiced the thoughts of their own minds' (T.L.S., 26.9.18).
 4. 'Economy Triumphant'. 3. T.L.S., 27.6.16.

London and along the East Coast¹), was regarded with scepticism and bitterly disparaged as another illustration of the chasm between 'them' and 'us', where a whole different set of values seemed to apply to the two situations.² Even the Soldier Poets I Anthology, published in November 1916 and not distinguished for its conciliatory tone, addresses the non-combatant versifiers in a deprecating tone:

The soldier poets leave the maudlin and the mock-heroic, the gruesome and fearful handling of Death and his allies to the neurotic civilian who stayed behind to gloat on imagined horrors and inconveniences and anticipate the uncomfortable demise of friends.³

By late 1916 / early 1917, ^{however,} the more enlightened non-combatants had some conception of the reality and extent of the fighting on various fronts, looking beyond the glib newspaper-reports, of 'break-throughs' and 'ground consolidated', to the truth of the situation: huge losses for negligible progress; advances eroded by counter-attacks, and a general stale-mate prevailing, enlivened by fruitless sallies into No Man's Land to reconnoitre or take prisoners (according to the seemingly arbitrary whims of the Head Quarters Staff). The movement towards a negotiated peace which had been struggling to make itself heard since the War began, gathered momentum after the catastrophic losses sustained in the Somme Campaign of the summer and autumn of 1916, and by January 1917 a number of pacifist texts came on to ^{the} market - for

1. As Zeppelin raids became a more familiar hazard, the publishing house, Herbert Jenkins, always alive to topical issues, adapted the jargon associated with such raids in its advertisements: 'Take cover! An air raid loses its terror if you have an interesting book: a H.J. book is an insurance of the mind against imaginary fears'. (November 1917).
2. On the Home Front, posters issued by the Min. of Food stressed the need for economy: 'Mobilize the jamjars! / Put up the Potato Barrage! / Keep the Home Crust turning': but a combatant such as O. Sitwell bitterly disparages such contrivances and compares the comfortably-off at home rationing themselves to 1 meat-meal a day and giving up spirits, with the enforced economies of the W. Front ('Armchair').
3. S.P.I., pp.8-9.

the first time since the War began.¹

Even in August 1914, a small group of civilian intellectuals had resisted the national war-hysteria which was manifested in the speeches of such immoral demagogues as Horatio Bottomley, ('the most successful of recruiting orators'²), and through the pages of the national Press. Vera Brittain testifies³ to the 'heart-ravishing' Daily Mail leader, 'The Agony of Belgium', which so affected her brother and thousands of other young men that they rushed to volunteer themselves for Army service, thus 'saving the face of a Foreign Secretary who had committed his country to an armed policy without consulting it beforehand'. Similarly, Ottoline Morrell deplores the newspapers' glorification of 'all that is vulgar and brutal in life'⁴ and carefully analyses her own horrified response to the advent of war when 'the whole of Europe [threw] aside the moral and humane code that [had] been built up by years of civilized life' so that now, death by another man's hand, 'is called glorious bravery and valour'.

Where Arnold Bennett faced with equanimity the prospect of 'becoming militarist'⁵ and looked with disfavour on some young men 'idling in the lanes' on the Sunday after the Declaration of War, Ottoline Morrell mourned the fact that 'young men leading lives of probable use and creativeness, men that might lead human-

1. Examples of such pacifist texts include: G.C. Armstrong's Peace With Security (T.L.S., 11.1.17) which strongly opposes the idea of a military 'knock-out' and urges a negotiated settlement; and Harold F. McCormick's Via Pacis: How Terms of Peace Can be Automatically prepared while the War is still going on (T.L.S., 1.2.17) which had been sent to all the belligerent nations in July 1916.
2. A.J.P. Taylor, The I.W.W., p.56. Taylor sardonically continues: '[H.B.'s] peroration varied with the size of the "take" - simple patriotism for less than £100; bringing in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, at more than that; leading his audience to the foot of the Cross when they had paid more than £200'.
3. Testament of Youth, p.99.
4. Ottoline - The Early Memoirs of Lady Ottoline Morrell, edited by Robert Gathorne-Hardy (1963), p.262.
5. The Journals of Arnold Bennett: 1911-1921, (1932), p.98.

'-ity forward and build up great things are to be mowed down and cast away'. Again, Bennett commenting on a particularly callous incident in the Dardanelles Campaign when the stiffened corpses of Turkish soldiers were rammed into the ground in place of stakes and wire was attached to their heads, records with utmost dispassion his answer to the anxious question: "What will the youths of nineteen be like afterwards, who have been through this kind of thing, and got used to it?" I should say that in most respects, and to all appearance, they will be like others who have not been through it'.¹ Such calm indifference to the future of the War survivors would have been inconceivable to Ottoline Morrell², who was already questioning with considerable apprehension in August 1914, the fallacy of the patriotic argument:

Above all is it patriotic to coarsen and brutalize thousands of men who go to fight or to send mad those who are forced to go unwillingly? If they survive, [war and killing] will make them violent and brutal, or nerve-shaken, degenerate men. It is inevitable if men are impregnated with the war attitude, even for a year, that they should be unable to throw it off. It must make a mark on their psychology.³

Just as the combatants were aware of a mental as well as physical divide from their families and civilian life in 'Blighty', so there was a pronounced division between the majority of the civilian population for whom the anticipation of carnage was delightful⁴ and the pacifist-inclined minority who supported conscientious

1. Entry for 4.10.15, The Journals of A.B., p.146.

2. Or, presumably, Henry James, who wrote to a friend (5.8.14, The Letters of H.J., ed. Percy Lubbock (1920, N.Y.) p.384: 'The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness... is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be...gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years were, all the while, really making for and meaning, is too tragic for any words'.

3. Ottoline..., p.263.

4. Bertrand Russell's comment (quoted Ottoline, p.264). Ostracized by his Cambridge associates, B.R. was undeterred from his commitment to protest: 'As a lover of truth, the national propaganda of all the belligerent nations sickened me. As a lover of civilization, the return to barbarism appalled me. As a man of thwarted parental feeling, the massacre of the young wrung my heart'.

objection, campaigned vigorously against conscription, and - as the War progressed - insisted upon the necessity of concluding peace and organizing the inevitable, radical reconstruction of society occasioned by the War:

The whole world seemed intoxicated, drunk with a mysterious primitive emotion that stimulated people to deeds of noble self-sacrifice, enabled them often to endure great suffering and privations, but even acts of cruelty and intolerance were transformed, in their eyes, into a sacred duty. We and our friends seemed like a wretched little shivering humiliated group of people who alone remained sober, but despised, disgraced.¹

While T.L.S. leaders were denouncing the mechanized obedience of the Prussian national spirit to the military ideal, Ottoline Morrell, voicing the fears of other intellectuals², unaffected by the intoxication of the war-mongers, and hinting (from a very different standpoint) at the mechanistic interpretation of the War offered by the Vorticist painters, described with horror the inexorability of the juggernaut of war which levelled young lives effortlessly and insatiably:

All that soldiers can say of it is that it is "Hell" - that is the one and only word they use for it, and that, after all, is all that can be said. And yet they submit and go, and obey the mysterious will of a few cabinet ministers and military authorities who are quite callous about human suffering. The great machine turns round and round - and rolls on blind and deaf to any voice of protest or any anguish and pain. Most people seem to become partially indifferent and numb to it, or they become curiously reckless, knowing that any serious life or work apart from the War has ceased and that they had better catch at the joy as it flies.

1. Ottoline..., pp.264-5.

2. Leonard Woolf's references to the War are also of interest in this respect for, as a humane, liberal-minded man, he recoiled from the prospect of war and recalled 1914-18 as a time when 'nothing seemed to happen...except the pitiless, useless slaughter in France' (Beginning Again, p.197). Some intellectuals, Prof. Gilbert Murray, e.g., responded more equivocally to the War and subscribed to the Propaganda Pamphlet Series which popularized the Holy Crusade aspect of the War, with his pamphlet 'How Can War Ever be Right?'. Murray reasoned that in some circumstances (such as those pertaining in Europe in 1914) it could, but he admittedly reached this conclusion with a good deal of reluctance.

Once again, when the tendency seemed to be away from the bellicose and patriotic (in prose at least), an established poet was called upon by the T.L.S. to restore proper, patriotic fervour and revitalize those flagging spirits which looked with longing to a possible peace, or with dismay at the Conscription Laws. Thomas Hardy's 'National Service', judiciously placed in the issue of 15th March, 1917, was intended to serve just this purpose, with its emphasis on general national service - not only military involvement.

Up and be doing, all who have a hand
To lift, a back to bend. It must not be
In times like these that vaguely linger we
To air our vaunts and hopes; and leave our land

Untended as a wild of weeds and sand.
- Say then, 'I come!' and go, O women and men
Of palace, ploughshare, easel, counter, pen;
That scareless, scathless, England still may stand.

Would years but let me stir as once I stirred
At many a dawn to take the forward track,
And with a stride plunged on to enterprize,

I now would speed like yester wind that whirred
Through yielding pines; and serve with never a slack,
So loud for promptness all around outcries!

Apart from his earlier published poem, the 'recruiting song'¹ 'Men Who March Away', Hardy appears to have been a remote figure² during the War.³ Surprisingly, considering the skilful irony which characterizes The Dynasts, and the bitter awareness of life's crass

1. Jon Silkin, Out of Battle, p.51.

2. As was W.B. Yeats, who was too absorbed in the turmoil in Ireland to make more than a passing reference to the War in 'The Irish Airman Forsees His Death'. Possibly Yeats chose an airman as the central figure to underline the distance he felt between himself and the War in France and the airman's own sentiments are profoundly non-patriotic: he is more interested in philosophical contemplation of the fine divide between life and death which his precarious situation emphasizes than with the morality/immorality of the War itself and he has none of those special concerns of the combatant which were to tax the committed soldier-poets in their verse.

3. Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses, published in August 1917, contained the Poems of War and Patriotism section, but this barely detracted from the emphasis of the volume which was concerned with very much the same subjects as Satires of Circumstance (1914) had been.

cruelty and the apparent malevolence of Fate towards Man, evident in his Satires of Circumstance and the novels, Hardy responds somewhat flatly and conventionally to the War¹, seeming to invest his poems with conspicuous public appeal. Furthermore, although he appears convinced of war's inevitable presence in the human condition, there is little sign of regretful resignation to the unavoidable national conflict in his Poems of War and Patriotism. Hardy produced a few poems on the Belgian refugee problem of late 1914, more from a sense of duty than emotional compulsion, and it could be argued that Ford Madox Ford's Antwerp evinces more pity and passion than are to be found in either the staid 'On the Belgian Expatriation' or 'An Appeal on Behalf of the Belgian Destitute'. In the main, the patriotic poems are characterized by archaic diction, and cumbersome phrasing ('Empery's insatiate lust of power', 'Lords of war whose sanctuaries enshrine /Liberticide') which contribute to the overall impression that Hardy felt obliged as a 'public' poet to make some reference to the War in his poetry but did not find his broader philosophical outlook on life conducive to such 'occasional verse'.

Only a few of the Poems of War and Patriotism admit of the compassion which distinguishes his poetry and prose in general: 'A New Year's Eve in War Time', dated 1915-16, indicates Hardy's awareness of the probable length of the War with 'More Tears! - / More Famine and Flame - / More Severance and Shock!' destined for 'pale Europe'; "'I Looked up from my Writing"' suggests Hardy's

1. The T.L.S. leader-writer in his assessment of T.H. based upon his Selected Poems, 'The Poetry of Mr Hardy' (T.L.S., 23.11.16) also makes the point that T.H.'s larger scope in The Dynasts was more appropriate to his style in dealing with the subject of war and his individual war verses had none of the timeless quality of his 'panoramic' epic treatment.

reluctance to discuss the welter of tragic episodes occasioned by the War and the inappropriateness of 'writing a book /In a world of such a kind'; 'Then and Now' draws the comparison between the past 'When battles were fought /With a chivalrous sense of should and ought... /'In the open they stood, /Man to man in his knightlihood / ... Knowing that practise perfidy no man durst /Who in the heroic schools /Was nurst', and the present where 'Sly slaughter [rules]'. 'Before Marching and After' (In Memoriam F.W.G.) loses its effect with the final couplet which promises that the dead man's name would 'borrow /A brightness ... not to fade on the morrow'; but perhaps the most characteristically Hardy-esque of the Patriotic Poems is 'In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"¹, with its stalwart old certainties (human love and procreation, and the cycle of Nature) still intact, regardless of the passage of Dynasties or the influence of Wars.

The degree of Hardy's unawareness of the enormous repercussions likely from the War, and its unparalleled powers of devastation can be gauged to some extent by comparing 'In Time...' and Edward Thomas's 'As the Team's Head Brass', which is based upon the same elements - the ploughman and the lovers - but which acknowledges (most especially in the key phrase 'for the last time') the unprecedented nature of this First World War. However, when Hardy applies the combination of compassion and objectivity, which distinguishes The Dynasts, to the First World War situation, (as he does in "And there was a Great Calm", on the signing of the

1. Another T.L.S. leader on T.H.'s poetry (Moments of Vision) 13.12.17, which discusses the war-based verses in particular, commends 'In Time...' as T.H.'s finest war poem as it puts 'in the simplest way, the simplest and most fundamental things', and the poem is quoted in full at the end of the leader.

Armistice) he touches the essential irony in life, which the War has simply intensified, with an understanding which no young combatant embroiled in the fighting can hope to achieve. His evocation of the actual moment of cease-fire illustrates the power of his imagination which reconciles the immediate realization of no more fighting with a profounder awareness of the absurd theatricality of life, where human beings are the marionettes jerked into motion by some Sinister Spirit whose wanton cruelty nearly always defeats 'the quality of Pity':

Breathless they paused. Out there men raised their glance,
To where had stood those poplars lank and lopped,
As they had raised it through the four years' dance
Of Death in the now familiar flats of France;
And murmured, 'Strange, this! How? All firing stopped?'

Aye; all was hushed. The about-to-fire fired not,
The aimed-at moved away in trance-lipped song.
One checkless regiment slung a clinching shot
And turned. The Spirit of Irony smirked out, 'What?
Spoil peradventures woven of Rage and Wrong?'

Thenceforth no flying fires inflamed the gray,
No hurtlings shook the dewdrop from the thorn,
No moan perplexed the mute bird on the spray;
Worn horses mused: 'We are not whipped today';
No left-winged engines blurred the moon's thin horn.

Calm fell. From heaven distilled a clemency;
There was peace on earth, and silence in the sky;
Some could, some could not, shake off misery:
The Sinister Spirit sneered: 'It had to be!'
And again the Spirit of Pity whispered, 'Why?'¹

Less than a mile away from Hardy's 'Max Gate', May O'Rourke, at the Old Vicarage in Dorchester, composed a poem entitled 'In England', which was published in the T.L.S. of 29th March, 1917, in reply to the anonymous 'Crocuses at Nottingham'² which had appeared the previous week. Although it would be absurd to suggest

1. The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy, pp.557-8.

2. See Section 2 (b), pp.116-7 above.

any comparison between Hardy and Miss O'Rourke, in terms of poetic quality, her verses do have merit in putting forward a civilian response to the concept of the 'glorious Dead' who died 'in pain' for England and they indicate a degree of concern and compassion¹ absent from the first feminine outpourings² on the War and the possibility of death in battle. Miss O'Rourke recognizes that there are many 'silent homes in England now' while the 'laughing hearts lie dumb ... /In other fields, in other earth', and the new Spring-buds in England are 'memory-sad', haunted by the ghosts in the crying winds which constantly remind those at home of the young men's 'wasted lives and powers', for 'none forget in England now /That redder seed than England's now /In Flanders earth is sown'. This poem seems to reflect an awareness of the futility of any death in war, however noble the original cause may have been; not only does Miss O'Rourke recognize the tragedy of losing the best of a generation but she also knows the frustration of the non-combatant 'who cannot even die', but only mourn the 'broken lives' of those who 'dropt in Hell',

It is this last point - the frustration of the non-combatant who can do nothing but observe and mourn - which Edward Shanks takes up in his poem 'On Account of Ill Health',³ where he describes

1. Qualities also evident in May Wedderburn Cannan's In War Time, written in Oxford but based upon her experiences as a V.A.D. in France. 'Rouen, April 26 - May 25, 1915', e.g., evokes in 13 stanzas of Longfellow's Hiawatha metre, the atmosphere of the Rouen Base Hospital: the weariness of night watches and the 'all-in-glorious labour', and the striking contrast between the Drafts straight out from England 'the youth and pride of England, from the ends of all the earth', and the sober 'white-bedded Aid Post' awaiting the consignment from the Front of wounded, arriving in 'the long sun-blistered coaches of the khaki Red Cross train'. Women versifiers also tried their hand at short, ironical verses on certain aspects of trench-warfare (in the W.W. Gibson manner) e.g. May Herschel-Clarke's 'Nothing to Report' in Behind the Firing Line and Other Poems of the War (T.L.S., 14.6.17): 'One minute we was laughing, me an' Ted, /The next, he lay beside me grinnin' - dead. /"There's nothing to report", the papers said'.

2. See above, pp. 476-478.

3. The Muse in Arms, p. 281.

the humiliation experienced by the combatant who has been invalided out of the Army¹ and who has now to content himself with the 'ignoble peace' of an office job, while his 'brave friends' return to the Front: Asquith's 'Volunteer' in reverse, as it were:

The spring is coming on, and with the spring you go
In countries where strange scents on the April breezes blow;
You'll see the primroses marched down into the mud,
You'll see the hawthorn-tree wear crimson flowers of blood,
And I shall walk about, as I did of old,
Where the laburnum trails its chains of useless gold,
I'll break a branch of may, I'll pick a violet
And see the new-born flowers that soldiers must forget,
I'll love, I'll laugh, I'll dream and write undying songs,
But with your regiment my marching soul belongs.²

In the same spirit of longing for active involvement in the War, Henry Bryan Binns in November: Poems in War Time³, expresses the feeling of exhilaration experienced by an older civilian⁴ who, with the age of enlistment gradually extending upwards as well as down, has taken the decision to participate as an actual combatant instead of languishing as an 'arm hair patriot' on the Home Front:

At last, today
It is not any longer
'You must go, for you are younger;
I can stay'.
I have heard the voice that's stronger
Than the other voices say
'It's your turn today'.⁵

Although a committed patriot, Binns resists the brash jingoism which pervades Lord Gorell's ostentatiously-titled Days of Destiny which should be mentioned - not for its literary excellence, but for its presentation of an attitude which persists after three

-
1. Shanks joined the 8th South Lancashire Regt. in 1914 but was invalided out the following year and spent the rest of the War in the War Office.
 2. As well as feeling humiliated at staying behind in the comparative peace of 'Blighty', Shanks laments the severing of the bond of camaraderie between his company and himself (see Chapter V for further discussion of the camaraderie-theme).
 3. T.L.S., 26.7.17.
 4. Not one of those who '[thank] God / That they're over forty-one' (E.A. Mackintosh, 'Recruiting').
 5. 'The Decision'.

years of war and which, by 1917, is deprecated by most T.L.S. reviewers and commentators as naive, anachronistic and 'rather common-place':

British soldiers, once again
You are marshalled on the plain
By your fathers' blood renowned:
You are treading sacred ground!
Harken, harken as you pass,
To the voices in the grass!
On the Belgian soil it waves
O'er the lone, unnumbered graves
Where immortal warriors lie,
Devotees of Liberty,
Nobly fallen in the fray,
Ramillies and Malplaquet,
Quatre Bras and Waterloo
Yield their legions up to you.¹

The sentiments presented by Lord Gorell here, and the heroic references to the victories of the Dukes of Marlborough and Wellington are strongly reminiscent of Sir Henry Newbolt's characteristic 'poetic voice'. As one of the pillars of the Poetry Establishment before the War, Newbolt would have been expected to follow a certain 'formula' in his response to War in verse, and - since he endeavoured never to disappoint his readership - he took care to sustain in his initial 'The Fourth of August' Masque,² the exalted tone expected of him and which characterized his verse throughout the War: sedate, fervently nationalistic (inspired by love of 'alma mater'³ as well as 'patria') and weighty, depending for its effect upon anachronistic diction and cumbersome or exorbitant expression.

1. 'You' being the B.E.F. and the poem as a whole being directed at 'The Landing of the B.E.F.'. A single poem printed in the T.L.S., (11.10.17) 'The British Wounded' by "Καλον Χωλον" once again directs the reader to the glorious British military (and naval) heritage, at a time of national stress with the first 9 lines depicting the plight of the 'myriad wounded men'. /The maim'd in the war... /... many a lad with a limb foredone' who 'loll' in the sun in Trafalgar Square; the next 2 stanzas describe Nelson's achievement and draw the moral that if Nelson can 'Sail the sky with one arm and one eye', what need have the wounded (even the poet with his gammy leg) to regret their disabilities? Physical maiming is the emblem of national service, it would appear, or in Stephen Crane's terms: 'The Red Badge of Courage'.
2. See above, p. 474
3. H.N.'s special contribution to the public school ethos, strongly associated with the games spirit, will be further discussed in Chapter V.

Newbolt was to discover, however, that the inflexible assumptions with which he had screened himself from reality before and during the War, would be eventually found wanting, both by the reviewers and by the reading public. In spite of early acclaim, critical opinion of his work turned - in the last months of the War - from approval of his 'firm and noble' principles (which testified to the value of unflinching courage) to irritation with his obdurate ideals, representing a 'stubborn fixity of purpose' (no longer regarded as an unqualified virtue) in defiance of the profoundly different circumstances pertaining at the War's close.

The first of Newbolt's poems to achieve a wide circulation¹ after the Declaration of War was 'The Vigil', first published in 1898, and later included in Newbolt's 1918 collection, St George's Day and other Poems.² The piece was couched in the ornate Newboltian idiom - 'sacred flame', 'banners of the dead', 'watch beside thine arms tonight', 'the trumpet's call', 'how should this be knighthood's end?' 'Hatred's meed' - and appeared to depict some heroic pageant of shadowy figures, compounded of the dead and the new knights who were being urged to consecrate 'their hopes' upon the shrine of England, preparatory to girding themselves with 'ancient might' and sallying forth against the 'foeman', convinced that 'God [will] defend the Right' (and 'the Right' being of course synonymous with the English Cause).

Nationalistic sentiment is thus dignified by the approval of the deity and by reference to the chivalric past of Holy Crusades and 'the High Order of Knight-hood'. Where Newbolt's fellow 'public'

-
1. It was estimated that 70,000 copies of this poem alone were sold by 8.8.14, and it was 'quoted, sung, recited and reprinted from one end of the country to the other' (Later Life and Letters..., p. 190).
 2. T.L.S., 23.5.18; amalgamated with other poems in Poems New and Old, (T.L.S., 23.1.19).

poet, Rudyard Kipling, at least attempted to sustain a responsible attitude towards his elevated position as national bard, Newbolt makes no such effort: his war-verse is distinguished by a dangerous lack of seriousness¹ which stems from his complete unawareness of what modern warfare entails: war at sea is 'fun'; the Germans are 'pirates' and the English, supported by the shades of Nelson and Drake, are the 'jolly sea-dogs' recklessly embracing 'one crowded hour of glorious life, whether it is battle or the ride for Elf Land';² most ludicrously inappropriate of all, the massive Spring Offensive of 1918 is interpreted by Newbolt, with his obsessional interest in games, as merely 'the bowling of the other side'. Since Newbolt's concept of war could not be separated from his understanding of heroism, which he upheld in stubborn defiance of every indication (even in the newspapers) to the contrary, he saw no reason to amend the traditional diction and metres - and myths - which had sufficed up to 1914: 'The great thing greatly said and sung / In this heroic English tongue'³ (according to another of his contemporaries, William Watson).

Newbolt probably shared Watson's contention that the typical poetry-reader 'is not so tired of the great writers of the past as to resent any natural and inherited resemblance to them in their successors. Rather is he pleased to see the ancient, ancestral lineaments reappear, and to think that the noble tradition in which he was nurtured is being nobly perpetuated'.⁴ It is with great

-
1. As exemplified by 'The Toy Band', A Song of the Great Retreat: "Rubadub! Rubadub! Wake and take the road again, /Wheedle-deedle-deedle-dee, Come, boys, come!..."
 2. Later Life and Letters of Sir H.N., p.190.
 3. 'Retroggression', 1915, Selected Poems of William Watson (1928).
 4. The Poems of W.Watson, II, p.95.

reluctance, bearing in mind this noble heritage, that Newbolt is forced to identify himself with the 'weakling' non-combatant, among this race of 'Sea-rovers, conquerors, builders in the waste', but he prides himself upon keeping 'alive /The eternal fire ... not in vain' for, from his chanting of 'The old heroic names', a new generation of the 'strong of heart' have gone 'their way' and 'Hummed his music on the march to death'.¹ Similarly, moved by a film of soldiers (presumably marching with hearty comradeship to the trenches) 'lads [going] forth in line', Newbolt regrets again his civilian status and assures the reader:

Thou knowest my heart is bowed in me
To take their death for mine.²

Elated by the prospect of death in battle, as he conceives it from his literary imagination:

We are no longer names, but one desire;
With the same burning of the soul we thirst,
And the same wine tonight shall quench our fire,³

Newbolt envisages with equanimity the last night of carousing before the 'long parting', and in 'The Volunteer',⁴ 'The Only Son',⁵ and 'The Grenadier's Good-bye',⁶ he stresses the necessity of dying a 'good death', preferably after 'a great fight' but certainly without being harried out of the trench at the point of the sergeant's bayonet because of being paralysed with fear:

Curse on the reckless daring
That could not wait the call,
The proud fantastic bearing
That would be first to fall!

-
1. 'The Non-Combatant', Poems: New and Old (1919), p.87.
 2. 'The War Films', Ibid., p.88.
 3. 'Sacramentum Supremum', Ibid., p.92.
 4. Ibid., p.104.
 5. Ibid., p.105.
 6. Ibid., p.106.

Such a stupid and unnecessary waste of life is no cause for censure or satire in Newbolt's eyes, but calls for the fullest approbation, and a press telegram describing a Lt. Murray's demise in No Man's Land with the words "'Forward, Grenadiers!'" on his lips, affords Newbolt the opportunity to construct a 'gripping' poem of the lieutenant's dying moments:

Here they halted, here once more
Hand from hand was rent;
Here his voice above the roar
Rang, and on they went.
Yonder out of sight they crossed,
Yonder died the cheers;
One word lives where all is lost -
 'Forward, Grenadiers!'

This alone he asked of fame,
This alone of pride;
Still with this he faced the flame,
Answered Death, and died.
Crest of battle sunward tossed,
Song of the marching years,
This shall live though all be lost -
 'Forward, Grenadiers!'¹

Paradoxically, Newbolt falls furthest short of a satisfactory description of a real battle (Ypres, 1915) when he attempts to incorporate a few actual facts into his narrative, together with those sentiments to which the last three poems cited have shown that he is particularly prone. 'St George's Day', the title poem in the 1918 volume of the same title, centres upon the archetypal Newbolt situation: a 'thin red/Khaki line' of British troops ('Four hundred to a four-mile front /Unbacked and undismayed'), an indubitably more numerous foe, certain death in battle ('What men are these^[who] /... /Run with such goodwill to face /Death on a Flemish down?'), and the young public-school boy who tautens the 'quivering rank' and bids them grit their teeth and bear the inevitable with

1. 'The Grenadier's Good-Bye', Poems: New and Old, p.106.

pride and - if possible - 'England' on their dying lips:

Who under those all-shattering skies
Plays out his captain's part
With the last darkness in his eyes
And domum in his heart?¹

Newbolt declines to name the young hero for human identities are insignificant by comparison with the hallowed name of 'England', especially on 23rd April:

Land of his love! the fame be thine,
It is St. George's Day.²

Newbolt contributed enthusiastically to the war-effort, as he believed the non-combatant should, through the publication of inspiring prose as well as verse: Tales of the Great War, the suggested Christmas Book of 1916³, was designed as an 'excellent present for a boy' and was guaranteed to make the recipient 'proud he is a Briton' and determined to emulate the example of the heroes whose exploits were colourfully described. In the same mode, The Book of the Happy Warrior⁴ of Autumn 1917, laid the emphasis on ancient chivalry, beginning with the Song of Roland, 'the oldest soldier's pocket-book in Europe' and worked its way through the British heroic tradition, culminating in the present-day heroes 'who prefer death and defeat to having to use German foul means'. As is to be expected with Newbolt, the main chivalric principles advocated are all traceable to the public-school and its philosophy of 'games' which breeds the 'sporting amateur view'⁵ and the

1. 'St. George's Day', Poems: Old and New, pp.89-90. Cf. once again, Sassoon's 'How to Die'.

2. On the opposite page, 'Hic Iacet Qui in Hoc Saeculo Fideliter Militavit' (p.91) Newbolt hastens to assure any reader concerned at the young captain's death that between the public-school ethos and the family tradition, England will continue to be defended, for the particular man who 'fought so faithfully' has 'left in keeping / His sword unto his son'.

3. T.L.S., 28.12.16. The Tales included Gen.-Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien's alleged 'saving' of the British Army at Mons and Le Cateau in 1914.

4. T.L.S., 20.9.17.

5. Ibid., 13.12.17.

'tournament'-idea, with its chivalric rules of war, so characteristic of the British fighting man. The Book of the Long Trail, advertised¹ as the 1919 Christmas Book, kept up the Newbolt heroic tradition by describing the lives of great British explorers, and in addition to these three Christmas Books, Newbolt published at different stages in the War other 'stirring tales' - The Book of the Thin Red Line, The Book of the Blue Sea, Submarine and Anti-Submarine - all imbued with the 'right spirit' as approved of by the quintessential 'homo newboltiensis': Earl Douglas Haig.

Reading St. George's Day and Other Poems, the T.L.S. reviewer² was evidently somewhat taken aback by the calm detachment and inviolable certainties which Newbolt could apparently still sustain in spite of the unstable 'zeitgeist':

Never before in the experience of the living has human existence seemed so dubious, so broken and inscrutable. Even the hope of peace brings forebodings. The shibboleths, battle cries of a few months ago, no longer intoxicate at every sip. Some of us are inclined to brood, a little uncompanionably, and with a frigid access of rationality, on the emptying bottle.

In view of such tenuous stability, the reviewer had come to expect some modification of earlier ideas, some compromises, a few complete 'volte faces', in the recent volumes of writers established before the War³ but he can detect no change in New-

1. T.L.S., 12.6.19.

2. Ibid., 26.9.18.

3. Laurence Binyon is a good example of a civilian poet (with some experience of action in an auxiliary capacity) who did adjust his verse to suit the changing circumstances of the War. L.B.'s The Four Years, War Poems. Collected and Newly Augmented, was very carefully reviewed in the T.L.S., 18.9.19. The reviewer admitted it would take some time to 'collate [from] a thousand diverse experiences' both the definitive War-history and War-poem, but he believed 'we cannot be too grateful to any one who can now give us if only a summary and transitional expression of the poetry whose life was action'. He therefore approved of L.B.'s 'sheaf of spiritual memoranda', recording his 'passage through the great fire'. The reviewer shows L.B.'s progression by contrasting an early piece 'Gallipoli' which makes every Australian and Briton 'who landed on the historic beaches a Homeric hero', with 'Fetching the Wounded' which testifies to those powers of quiet observation which enable L.B. to come much closer to 'the truth' of the war-situation.

bolt's verse. He charitably interprets such intransigence as evidence of a 'stably balanced' personality, capable of expressing a 'faith rather than a mood' and oscillating 'only with the tides of a nation's consciousness'. Confronted with 'Sacramentum Supremum' (1905) and 'Farewell' (1910), the reviewer labours to justify their appearance in a supposedly contemporary collection of verse. By the time he reaches 'The Fourth of August', he has discarded the respectful tone T.L.S. reviewers tend to adopt when approaching the work of the Poetry Establishment and questions irritably why, when every reader should be by now at least aware of 'Death's [horror, fear and agony] in the foulness of "the front"', should such a poet as Newbolt 'hide and hush up the reality beneath this shimmering romantic veil of the ideal and incite to this vicarious sacrifice?' After this lapse of literary protocol, the reviewer makes a few ambiguous comments about Newbolt's 'consistency' and finishes his appraisal by quoting 'The War Films' in full, apparently heartened by Newbolt's suggestion at the end of the poem that he is a little more aware of the suffering of young combatants in modern warfare than he had been before, and he longs to experience physically with them the reality behind 'the living pictures'.

The trend among literary commentators (which the 1918 review of St. George's Day highlights) against the upholders of the Imperialist tradition in verse, would seem to have been prompted by a certain public disenchantment with insensitive, jingoistic sentiment among the civilian population, which can be detected some time before the War's conclusion. By mid-1917, in fact, the vogue for overtly patriotic civilian verse which had abounded - particu-

larly in anthologies of various kinds - just after the Declaration of War, had largely¹ passed. More representative of the non-combatant response in the second half of 1917 was such an anthology as The Old Country: A Book of Love and Praise of England, compiled by Ernest Rhys with the exiled 'Nation in Arms' particularly in mind in his selection of the less rumbustious verse and prose of Belloc, Kipling, Masefield, Blake, Ruskin and Browning. Rhys's intention seems to have been to strengthen the local patriotism² of the soldiers in the Line, and his efforts were apparently appreciated for, within two months,³ the whole first edition of the Anthology had been sold out.⁴ In general the interest of both the poetry-reading public and the literary critics and reviewers was transferred from the Nation at Home's poetic response to War, to the reaction of the young soldiers, or 'civilians in khaki', faced with the exigencies of the War-situation, who were reportedly experiencing 'an efflorescence of the spirit' in their verse. To accommodate this manifestation of a 'renaissance in poesy', E.B.

1. From late 1916, a number of optimistic tracts on the possibility of an early peace and the need for careful national and international 'reconstruction' appeared in the T.L.S. Book Notices Column. These steadily proliferated through 1917 - pointing to a more conciliatory national spirit - (with titles such as A League of Nations, After-War Problems, Organize for Peace, The Terms of Industrial Peace) so that by 1918 a distinct genre of 'Reconstruction Literature' had emerged. Titles such as The Greater Patriotism (plea for international union), Democracy at the Cross Roads, The Reconstruction Handbook and The Meaning of Reconstruction had overtaken - in terms of numbers - the propagandist pamphlets and nationalistic demands for retribution against Germany, by late 1918/early 1919, and there is little reference in the Book Notices Columns or body of the T.L.S., of this period, to the strident newspaper catch-phrases of 'Hang the Kaiser' and 'Make Germany Pay!'.
2. See Section 2 (b).
3. 6.9.17 - 8.11.17.
4. The proceeds (£1,000) were sent to the Y.M.C.A. for the establishment of more recreational facilities - designated 'Tommy's Triangle' in France - for Front Line Troops.

Osborn compiled one of the most influential of war-time anthologies, The Muse in Arms (1917) which, in spite of the curiously-phrased Preface, does endeavour to offer a representative selection of the verse of young combatants and to present 'the first coherent picture of the British warrior's moods and emotions in war-time... painted by himself'. Osborn comments disparagingly upon the 'huge harvest of war poetry by civilian verse-makers' who initially 'had a tremendous innings' with their countless 'high-explosive canticles' and who - deprived of the 'safety-valve of action in arms for [their] tumultuous feelings'¹, must resort to invective. But now, the function of the non-combatant poet should be defined within certain prescribed limits, according to Osborn:

Mr Kipling and the Poet Laureate² and other established poets, it is true, [have] manfully resisted this strange 'scabies scribendi' and so earned the gratitude of their admirers, not so much for the few pieces they put forth, as for the many they left unwritten. Of all the vast mass of civilian war-verse, very little indeed will survive; with the exception of Mr Laurence Binyon's noble valedictory 'To The Fallen', and perhaps a dozen other poems as simple and sincere, it has nearly all been cast ere now into the waste-paper basket of oblivion. The making of verse memorials is perhaps the only task to which the non-combatant poet may address himself without fear of losing his sincerity, and with some hope of posterity's approval, if only he will try to imitate the simplicity of the antique models. The famous epitaph on Waggon Hill, above Ladysmith -

'Tell England, you who pass this monument,
We died for her and rest here well content',
rivals the immortal tribute by Simonides of Cos to Leonidas and his comrades in brevity and restraint, if not in beauty of musical diction. In the making of epitaphs for the fallen, the non-combatant poet, though he may

-
1. Preface, M.I.A., p.xvi.
 2. Ironically, in the same issue of the T.L.S. (3.5.17) in which the leader-writer (probably Osborn) discusses M.I.A., ('The Soldier Patriot'), Bridges's poem, 'To the U.S.A.' written on 30.4.16, is printed with its reversion to the 1914 attitude (referring to Americans as 'Brothers in blood!' and urging them to answer 'the high call to work the world's salvation').

not work in Latin, which is so truly 'marble's language', could find a fitting occupation during war-time.¹

Bertram Lloyd adopted an even more conciliatory approach (than did E.B. Osborn in M.I.A.) in the compilation of his anthology, Poems written during the Great War 1914-18². Contributors included George Russell ('A.E.'), representing the 'older school' of civilian poets, Siegfried Sassoon, J.C. Squire, Lady Margaret Sackville, W.W. Gibson, Edward Carpenter, Capt. Crawshay Williams and Miss Eva Gore-Booth, but Lloyd caused a sensation in literary circles by including translations from German, as well as French and Russian poets.³ The Ploughshare reviewer⁴ relished the 'rare literary banquet of many and various dishes, plentifully seasoned with the red pepper of revolt or the white pepper of satire'⁵, but one indignant correspondent wrote to Allen and Unwin, the publishers, that their 'Anthology of War Poems is a crime' and vowed never again to buy any of their books now that their reputation had been 'fouled by the guilt of this sinister booklet'.⁶ Undeterred by such criticism, Lloyd produced another anthology, The Greater Kinship, An Anthology of Humanitarian Poetry from Andrew Marvell to Thomas Hardy, after the conclusion of hostili-

1. Preface, M.I.A., pp.xiv-xv. Some non-combatant poets certainly took Osborn's point, judging by the number of 'In Memoriam' tributes appended to the 'slim volumes of verse' of those who 'perished on the field of mortal combat' (see Chapter V), but whether they illustrated the 'brevity and restraint' of Simonides's "ἐπιταφικός" is another matter.

2. T.L.S., 25.4.18.

3. The only common point upon which all the contributors agreed was their 'hatred of the cant and idealized and false glamour where-with the conception of war is still so thickly overlaid'.

4. Quoted on the back-cover of Lloyd's 1919 anthology, Paths of Glory.

5. Conversely, when R.B.'s Cambridge contemporary J.L. Crommelin Brown in Dies Heroica (T.L.S., 7.11.18) continued to volunteer the idealistic view of the nobility of death, the T.L.S. reviewer is gratified that Brown at least 'has not allowed the great bitterness and ever-increasing burden of these sacrificial years - years that the locust is devouring - to dim his faith in all the ancient verities'.

6. Paths of Glory back-cover.

ties,¹ and - with the emphasis still on humanity rather than nationality - The Paths of Glory was also published in 1919².

Quoting from Herbert Read's Preface to Naked Warriors (1919):

We who in manhood's dawn have been compelled to care not a damn for life or death, now care still less for the convention of glory and the intellectual apologies for what can never be to us other than a riot of ghastliness and horror, of inhumanity and negation,

Lloyd warns that 'the hate so violently formented by the silver-haired swash-bucklers, journalists, and poetical armchair-warriors of the various nations, naturally finds little place in the poetry [of his contributors]'³. To emphasize that the 'armchair-patriot' mentality was applicable not only to England, Lloyd goes still further by citing the example of Lissauer's Song of Hate, which a German combatant officer, Walther Reinhardt, had pointed out in his 'Tagebüch' - Sechs Monate Westfront - 'could only have been composed by a man living far away from the Front Line'. Altogether, The Paths of Glory can be said to represent the complete antithesis of such 1914 anthologies as Songs and Sonnets and Poems of the Great War, in that concern for^{the} universal brotherhood of man (crystallized in Heinrich Lersch's poem 'Brüder') has superseded the narrowly patriotic sentiment of the first response to war which had been, nonetheless, sustained to some extent on the Home Front, throughout the War.

-
1. Cf. The first post-Armistice anthology advertised in T.L.S. (21.11.18), The Poetry of Peace, ed. by R.M. Leonard who had been similarly 'quick off the mark' in autumn 1914 with Patriotic Poems.
 2. T.L.S., 13.11.19. In the same issue, a revised and enlarged edit. of M.I.A. was advertised and Jacqueline Trotter's Valour and Vision was announced.
 3. Preface, Paths of Glory, p.8.

It could perhaps be argued that Rudyard Kipling's verse from 1914 to 1918 represents a microcosm of the general development of the non-combatants' poetic response to the War¹, as reflected in the various anthologies from Poems of the Great War to The Paths of Glory, already discussed. Kipling's initial reaction to the Declaration of War took the form expected of a 'public' poet: grave and portentous utterance, after which he appears to pass through a phase of doubt and disillusionment with the military establishment², and sums up his response to the War in 1918 with a series of bitter epitaphs which not only pointed out (as did the poetry of Sassoon, Owen and other combatant poets) the uncaring attitude of the politicians and generals to their men ('gaps for filling; /Losses, who might have fought /Longer'), but suggested a more serious division in society, as a consequence of the War: between people of the same class and between members of the same family. As Jon Silkin acknowledges³, with some reluctance, having examined Kipling's pre-War verse and found it uncomfortably Imperialistic: 'Even so, before the War, few English poets ... had anything approaching Kipling's sense of the realities of combat', and it is with this comment, and the substantial corpus of Kipling's pre-War soldier-verse⁴, in mind that an assessment of Kipling's response to the Great War can possibly be best attempted.

-
1. A similar, more simplistic development can be detected in G.K. Chesterton's war-verse, by comparing 'A Song of Defeat' ('But the old flags reel and the old drums rattle /As once in my life they throbbed and reeled /I have found my youth in the lost battle, /I have found my heart on the battle-field') and 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' where he takes a very cynical view of political incompetence in England and regrets that 'they that rule in England /In stately concave met' have no graves as yet.
 2. Though R.K. had very few illusions about the Army before the War, as such poems as 'The Lesson 1899-1902' (Boer War) and 'The Islanders', 1902, illustrate.
 3. Out of Battle, p.65.
 4. See Chapter I, pp.23-5.

In keeping with his status as an established and respected 'public' poet,¹ Kipling responded to the War through the medium of a poem in The Times. "'For All We Have and Are"' appeared in The Times of 2nd September, 1914, and summed up quite conclusively the current mood, as well as illustrating certain of Kipling's particular preoccupations, such as the state of national unpreparedness and the pre-War tendency towards moral decadence:

For all we have and are,
For all our children's fate,
Stand up and take the war,
The Hun is at the gate!

Our world has passed away,
In wantonness o'erthrown.
There is nothing left today
But steel and fire and stone!
 Though all we knew depart,
 The old Commandments stand:
 'In courage keep your heart,
 In strength lift up your hand'.²

Kipling stresses that Germany as the demented aggressor - 'A crazed and driven foe' - has forced War upon the English and they now have a universal responsibility to uphold civilization, for:

What stands if Freedom fall?
Who dies if England live?

There is very little prospect of excitement or glamour in Kipling's poem, and he does not underestimate the testing period ahead:

Only ourselves remain
To face the naked days
In silent fortitude,
Through perils and dismays
Renewed and re-renewed.

Most probably what alienates the modern reader (as it did the young combatants of 1916 onwards) from this poem, is the fact that these stoical sentiments come from a civilian poet who is unlikely himself to have to 'meet and break and bind' the 'Hun at the gate',

1. Cf. the responses of Thomas Hardy, Robert Bridges and William Watson.

2. A Choice of Kipling's Verse (ed. T.S.Eliot), p.140.

and the defence of England by her youth is taken for granted and callously dismissed with no appreciation (or so it seems) of the probable attendant sacrifice of the young.¹ Although a case can be made for this poem on the grounds that it crystallized the general mood of August / September 1914, without that brash patriotism which distinguishes so many, less balanced responses to the War, little recommendation can be given to Kipling's 'The Beginnings' of the following year which describes the process by which the English nation came to be involved in the War:

It was not suddenly bred,
It will not swiftly abate,
Through the chill years ahead,
When Time shall count from that date
That the English began to hate.

Having accounted for the British presence on the battlefield, it cannot however be denied that 'The Beginnings', which accompanied Kipling's short story Mary Postgate (1915) did have a disturbing similarity² to Lissauer's Song of Hate, generally considered by the English to illustrate the worst aspects of the German pathological state of mind.

Another of Kipling's less amenable (to the modern poetry-reader's taste) war-pieces is 'The Holy War', written some time at the beginning of 1917, for his concern in the poem is to put a speedy stop to the moves towards peace, initiated by certain prominent politicians in the belligerent nations, and supported by the American President³ and the Pope, both of whom had offered

1. Though, as 'The Children' (see below, p. 537) amply illustrates, R.K. had a very profound awareness of what all these young deaths would mean.

2. As Bergonzi, H.T., p.138 points out: "'The Beginnings" though possibly more controlled in its sentiments, is not a dissimilar phenomenon'.

3. R.K. had already addressed 'The Question' to the Americans who had stubbornly refused to become involved in the War, following Pres. Wilson's celebrated comment: 'There's such a thing as being too proud to fight'.

to mediate between the warring nations. Basing his poem on John Bunyan's severe disapprobation of the Doubters and the Shirkers who tried to divert Christian from his appointed, difficult path, and the weak townspeople who would be prepared to lower the defences of 'Mansoul', Kipling launches into a vigorous denunciation of those who accept 'Peace at any Price':

The Perseverance-Doubters,
The Present-Comfort Shirks,
And brittle intellectuals
Who crack beneath a strain
The Pope, the swithering Neutrals,
The Kaiser and his Gott.¹

To all of these Kipling would vouchsafe the same, unequivocal reply: 'No dealings with Diabolus
As long as Mansoul stands!'

In addition to the moral condemnation of the Enemies (without and within) which was a standard feature of the older non-combatant's response to the War, Kipling wrote a number of ballads², celebrating the British naval presence which was confidently expected to rout utterly the self-assertive Kaiser's fleet, and two of the best sea-verses describe the para-naval forces: the minesweepers and the wild, piratical 'Lowestoft Boat', which appears to have been licensed by the Government to terrorize German vessels off the seas. 'Mine Sweepers'³ is a simple, straightforward poem with a ballad-like measure and a jaunty refrain which is reminiscent of Masefield's Saltwater Ballads:

-
1. 'The Holy War', Twenty Poems from R.K., pp.18-20.
 2. E.g. 'The Verdicts' (i.e. the verdict of history on the Battle of Jutland). In addition 3 volumes of R.K.'s prose on sea-warfare (Fringes of the Fleet, Tales of the Trade, Destroyers at Jutland) remained 'classics' throughout the last years of the War, from their first appearance in T.L.S., 2.11.16, to the end of the War.
 3. Cf. 'The Trade', which is also concerned with the dangerous task of the mine-sweepers whose work was cloaked in secrecy and who were denied any public accolades for their achievements.

Dawn off the Foreland - the young flood making
Jumbled and short and steep -
Black in the hollows and bright where it's breaking -
Awkward water to sweep.
'Mines reported in the fairway,
'Warn all traffic and detain.
'Sent up 'Unity', 'Claribel', 'Assyrian', 'Stormcock',
and 'Golden Gain'.

Noon off the Foreland - the first ebb making
Lumpy and strong in the bight.
Boom after boom, and the golf-hut shaking
And the jackdaws wild with fright!
'Mines located in the fairway,
'Boats now working up the chain,
'Sweepers - 'Unity', 'Claribel', 'Assyrian', 'Storm-
cock' and 'Golden Gain'.

Dusk off the Foreland - the last light going
And the traffic crowding through,
And five damned trawlers with their syreens blowing
Heading the whole review!
'Sweep completed in the fairway.
'No more mines remain.
'Sent back 'Unity', 'Claribel', 'Assyrian', 'Stormcock',
and 'Golden Gain'.

'The Lowestoft Boat' uses the same stirring rhythms and ballad-form and describes with a good deal of humour the ramshackle crew of this strange vessel, originally a herring-trawler but now transformed by a 'Q.F. gun at bow and stern' into a naval raider, whose function is to pursue any stray German ships in the North Sea:

Her cook was chef in the Lost Dogs' Home,
Mark well what I do say!
And I'm sorry for Fritz when they all come
A-rovin', a-rovin', a-roarin' and a-rovin',
Round the North Sea rovin',
The Lord knows where!

A short and somewhat uncharacteristic poem, 'A Drifter off Tarentum'¹, also deserves to be mentioned for its well-sustained imagery and its powerful description of a mine-sweeper which was not as successful as the 'Unity', 'Claribel' and the rest:

1. A Choice of R.K.'s Verse, p.166.

He from the wind-bitten North with ship and companions
descended,
Searching for eggs of death spawned by invisible hulls.
Many he found and drew forth. Of a sudden the fishery
ended
In flame and a clamorous death known to the eye-picking
gulls.

In certain of his less explicit War-poems, Kipling relies quite heavily on his understanding of the Bible - the Old Testament in the case of 'Zion', and the New Testament in 'Gethsemane' - to provide a less specific background and to set the Great War into a wider historical perspective. 'Zion' contrasts the volunteer-spirit of the 'Doorkeepers of Zion' who smilingly undertake their duties, ready to accept whatever 'cup /Is offered to [their] lips', because they chose to serve, with the harassed 'Gatekeepers of Baal', who 'dare not sit or lean, /But fume and fret and posture/ And foam and curse between', because they have been compelled to enlist and Kipling even sympathises with their bitter frustration at being obliged to 'mouth and rant for Baal, /For Baal in their pain'. Strangely, however, the image of the bitter cup voluntarily tasted in 'Zion' by the men of Kitchener's Army, undergoes a significant change in 'Gethsemane', in keeping with the move from the Old Testament spirit to the Christian ethic of compassion.

In 'Gethsemane', the young soldier-narrator compares his situation prior to the battle with Christ's agony² in the Garden of Gethsemane, when (in His agony of anticipation at the coming test) He prays that God might yet spare Him:

Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away
this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but
what thou wilt.³

-
1. E. Hilton Young in 'Mine-Sweeping Trawlers' (U.L.D., p. 77) also makes use of the fishing-image, but with less original force than R.K.: 'We sift the drifting sea, /and blindly grope beneath; /obscure and toilsome we, /the fishermen of death'.
 2. Cf. instances of the soldier/Christ analogy in Chapter V.
 3. St Mark's Gospel, Chapter 14, § 36.

As the soldiers halt in a Picard village, the narrator - intensely aware of the value of life, and attracted by the 'pretty lass' - prays that 'his cup might pass'. According to the cruel irony of war, however, whereby it is often those who are 'desperate keen to live' who are the first casualties, the narrator faces the fate he dreaded:

It didn't pass - it didn't pass -
It didn't pass from me.
I drank it when we met the gas
Beyond Gethsemane!¹

Kipling is also able to exercise considerable sensitivity on behalf of those who did not die in the War, but who returned from it suffering from neurasthenia or more permanent mental damage, as is the case with 'The Mother's Son' who was also forced to drink from a bitter cup:

What with noise, and fear of death,
Waking, and wounds and cold,
They filled the Cup for My Mother's Son
Fuller than it could hold.²

The victim, in this case, like Ivor Gurney, was consigned to a mental Home, not because of disease or crime, but because in the course of serving his country 'They laid on [him] More than a man could bear' and now he is forced to undergo the indignity of years of Institutional confinement:

They broke his body and his mind
And yet they made him live
And They asked more of My Mother's Son
Than any man could give.

-
1. Charles Carrington in his notes to R.K.'s B.R.B., p.176, quotes R.K.'s writing to a friend explaining that 'Gethsemane' referred to 'the horror that overtakes a man when he first ships his gas-mask. What makes war most poignant is the presence of women with whom he can talk and make love, only an hour or so behind the line'.
 2. 'The Mother's Son', Kipling's English History, (1974), pp.112-3.

In general, however, those among Kipling's poems most appreciated by modern readers tend to be the ones which have a satirical impact and which identify a clear and justified target for the poet's sense of outrage. 'Mesopotamia', written a year or so after the dismal failure of the 'Mespot. Campaign', in late 1915, is more astonishing and devastating than even Sassoon or Sitwell's outbursts against military incompetence, since it comes from an established elder poet, a respected member of the Establishment (in many people's eyes) whose denunciation is likely to be rather more objective and disinterested¹ than is generally found among combatant poets. The butt of Kipling's anger is General Townsend and his Staff, who rashly allowed their men to be trapped and besieged in the 'filthy mud-heap' of Kut-el-Amara on the River Tigris. After an appalling five-month siege, when many soldiers died from dysentery, the British forces surrendered unconditionally to the Turks and according to the historian Cruttwell:

The men were herded like animals across the desert, flogged, kicked, raped, tortured and murdered. More than two-thirds of the British rank and file were dead before the War ended.²

The key phrase here is 'rank and file', for General Townsend was interned and the officers were tolerably well looked after in prison-camps, but it was the ordinary soldier's plight which roused Kipling to this savage vilification of the 'idle-minded overlings who quibbled while they died' and left 'the resolute, the young, /The eager and whole-hearted', ('given' in good faith by their parents) to 'die in their own dung'. Kipling's

-
1. Though it should be borne in mind that R.K. lost his only son, John, aged 18, in the Battle of Loos, 1915, where he was reported as 'missing' which caused the Kipling family the added pain of hoping that he might still be found, or have been taken prisoner.
 2. Quoted by Marghanita Laski, Kipling's English History, p.102.

fear is that the incompetent Staff will, in time, '[sidle] back to power' by means of the 'Old Boy Network' ('the favour and contrivance of their kind') and 'confirm and re-establish' their original careers, thrusting for 'high employments as of old'. Kipling acknowledges that vengeance-executions will not restore the soldiers who died, neither will they alleviate the shame laid upon the English nation by the bungled campaign, but what Kipling does demand is that the civilian population will not 'only threaten and be angry for an hour', but will insist on justice being done, so that the 'slothfulness that wasted and the arrogance that slew', be not left 'unabated in its place'.

Where Kipling agrees with the young combatant poets is in his censure of incompetence and military unpreparedness, wherever they occur; but whereas Sassoon, Owen and the others, question the morality of war under any circumstances, Kipling is still convinced of the necessity of waging war where civilized values are threatened, provided that a concerted effort is made by politicians and military authorities alike to ensure that the British fighting forces are well-equipped, adequately trained and carefully deployed in battle, to minimize losses. This perhaps explains the otherwise anomalous situation of Kipling writing forceful satire on the weaknesses of the British High Command, and his continued campaigning for the war-effort, on the Home Front (in the form of speech-making to energize national support). His address at Folkestone, for example, in February 1918, was incorporated in an advertisement¹ for Savings Bonds, where the investor

1. T.L.S., 4.4.18. The central theme of R.K.'s speech was the comparison between the German Thuggee and the Indian who was nowhere near so dastardly, in R.K.'s view: '[he] did not torture or rape or enslave people; [he] did not kill children for fun, and [he] did not burn their villages'.

was assured that his security would be:

Not only the whole of the British Empire, but also the whole of civilization.

Kipling warned that the consequence of defeat would be that 'every relation, every understanding, every decency upon which civilization has been so anxiously built up will go - will be washed out because it will have been proved unable to endure' and Democracy, discredited, will be supplanted by the 'Hum creed'.¹

This conviction of the urgency of the British cause did not deflect Kipling from satirical or compassionate expression in his poetry, however, as The Epitaphs of War² and perhaps his most moving poem, 'The Children', testify. The thirty-five Epitaphs range from the sardonic humour of 'The Refined Man' who 'stepped aside for [his] needs' and was picked off by an enemy sniper, and the irony of 'The Beginner': 'On the first hour of my first day /In the front trench I fell', or 'Bombed in London': 'On land and sea I strove with anxious care /To escape conscription. It was in the air!'; to the heroic celebration of 'Ex-Clerk' who, like H.H. Asquith's Volunteer, found nobility and comradeship in War and in Death 'lies content', and the dispassionately calm 'The Bridegroom', which describes the young warrior-lover, torn from his human bride's 'scarce-known breast' to Death's consummatory embrace. The last stanza is particularly moving where the

-
1. Right to the end of the War, R.K. remained a staunch 'Hum-hater' as his rather austere poem 'The Death-bed' with its references to someone (apparently the Kaiser's father) dying of cancer of the throat seems to indicate. The poem is of interest for R.K.'s awareness of the multiplicity of deaths in action: 'Some die silent, by shell and shot. /Some die desperate, caught on the wire;... 'Some die, pinned by the broken decks ... 'Some die eloquent, pressed to death /By the sliding trench....'
 2. Carrington, Intro. B.R.B., p.13, suggests that R.K. may have had Edgar Lee Masters's Spoon River Anthology in mind; an earlier model might very well have been The Greek Anthology. R.K.'s post-War epitaphs for the Flanders War-Cemeteries were cast in the more conventional mould e.g. 'By little towns in a far land we sleep; /And trust that world we won for you to keep'.

soldier disclaims his human bride and urges her to forget him now that he has succumbed to this irrevocable union with Death.

Live, then, whom Life shall cure,
Almost, of Memory,
And leave us to endure
Its immortality.

Apart from the Epitaphs mentioned so far, 'A Dead Statesman' is effective in its depiction of the fearful elderly politician (Osbert Sitwell's toothless 'grand old man' in 'ArmChair') who is eventually forced to loose his hold on life and faces meeting his 'angry and defrauded young' whom he had duped into enlisting through his lying propaganda. Perhaps the two most poignant of these Epitaphs are two of the shortest: the couplet which comes from the gunners who died because they were short of ammunition, as a result of the munition-workers' demand for holidays to be observed; and the formidable indictment, 'Common Form', which the young soldiers (of all ranks and classes) direct against their elders within their families:

If any question why we died,
Tell them, because our fathers lied.

Whether Kipling considered himself in any way responsible for sharing in the deception practised on the young by the elder generation, he certainly suffered considerably from the thought of the children defending the parents, engaging 'on the breasts that they bared for us, /The first felon-stroke of the sword [the Barbarian] had long-time prepared for us - /Their bodies were all our defence while we wrought our defences'. Kipling was in no doubt that the young did indeed, as Rupert Brooke had anticipated, restore Honour and Nobleness to a decadent world, expiating with their deaths the mistakes of their parents:

They bought us anew with their blood, forbearing to
blame us,
Those hours which we had not made good when the
Judgment o'ercame us.
They believed us and perished for it. Our state-craft,
our learning
Delivered them bound to the Pit and alive to the
burning
Whither they mirthfully hastened as jostling for
honour -
Not since her birth has our Earth seen such worth
loosed upon her.¹

Nor is Kipling only concerned with those who died dramatically
on the battle-field:

Nor was their agony brief, or once only imposed on
them.
The wounded, the war-spent, the sick received no
exemption:
Being cured they returned and endured and achieved
our redemption,
Hopeless themselves of relief, till Death, marvelling,
closed on them.

Few combatant poets have approached the realism of Kipling's
final stanza where he visualizes the grotesque indignities suffered
by the dead who went to France at the instigation of their elders
'jostling for honour', believing implicitly that they were really
fighting to uphold the civilized values which the iniquitous Hun
was hell-bent on subverting:

That flesh we had nursed from the first in all clean-
ness was given
To corruption unveiled and assailed by the malice of
Heaven
By the heart-shaking jests of Decay where it lolled
on the wires -
To be blanched or gay-painted by fumes - to be cin-
dered by fires -
To be senselessly tossed and retossed in stale muti-
lation
From crater to crater. For this we shall take expiation.
But who shall return us our children?

1. Laski, Kipling's English History, pp.107-8.

Just as Owen's question: 'Was it for this the clay grew tall?' crystallizes the total compassion of the combatant-poet for the futile waste of youth, so Kipling's 'But who shall return us our children?' embodies the poignancy of the thoughtful civilian's response, sadly aware after all the jingoistic excitement and martial exhortation that nothing can restore the 'eager and whole-hearted whom [they] gave', perhaps too readily.

In view of Kipling's considerable popularity with his soldier verses before the War¹ (Barrack-Room Ballads, in particular) and his humanization of the ordinary private soldier, 'Tommy Atkins'², it might be expected that even if Kipling himself did not sustain his Cockneyes@ballads of military life, when the War began, his example might have stimulated a number of imitations in the B.R.B. and Soldiers Three tradition³, but this was not really the case. E.B. Osborn in the Preface to M.I.A. explained that the 'strange, literary convention whereby the rank-and-file of our fighting men, by land and by sea, are made to speak a kind of Cockneyese of which no real Cockney is capable'

-
1. Not to mention the didactic 'If' (1910), 'propounding the Emersonian doctrine of self-reliance, an inspiration to the whole generation that fought in the First World War', Carrington, B.R.B. p.8.
 2. In the view of Major-General Sir George Younghusband, A Soldier's Memories in Peace and War (1917), quoted M.I.A., p.xiii: 'R.K. made the modern soldier. Other writers have gone on with the good work, and they have between them manufactured the cheery, devil-may-care lovable person enshrined in our hearts as Tommy Atkins'.
 3. The T.L.S. reviewer assessing the style of the cartoonist Capt. Bruce Bairnsfather (T.L.S., 2.12.16) 'The Soldier who Made the Empire Laugh', contended that Kipling had created the British soldier in the shape of Private Ortheris, with the result that, just as Bairnsfather had standardized the British soldier in the design of his 'Ole Bill' character, so now young soldiers imitated Ortheris's vices ('plenty of the worst swear-words') and overlooked his virtues.

was attributable jointly to Kipling's influence through his soldier songs and stories, and to the music-hall song. Osborn even went so far as to assert that while Kipling's version of soldier-talk may have been appropriate to the Regular Army, the 'men of the New Army deeply resent the literary fashion which makes them talk like Chevalier's Cockney types....'¹ If a war poet wished to capture the real quality of the New Army parlance, he was advised by Osborn to 'stop imitating the diction of Barrack-Room Ballads and listen to the soldiers talking'.

Although Osborn may have disparaged Kipling's approach from the point of view of poetic technique and authenticity in the present war of Citizen Armies, Kipling's prose and poetry continued to be assured of good sales. Arnold Bennett recorded in his Journal² that at a 'War Fair' in June 1916, the Book Stall which he was supervising, was constantly besieged with enquiries for books by Chesterton, Conrad, Bennett himself and, for the most part, Kipling. The T.L.S. advertisement for the eight volumes of Kipling's verse in the 'Service Edition' quoted sales³ of 182,000 for B.R.B., 132,000 for The Seven Seas, 110,000 for The Five Nations and 81,000 for Departmental Ditties. The success of the Service Edition of Kipling's verse encouraged Methuen to publish, in February 1918, a small paper-back volume of Twenty Poems from R.K. (including "'For All We Have,.."' and 'The Holy War') at a shilling a copy, and it was evident from the size of the

1. Preface, M.I.A., p.xii.

2. Journal of A.B., p.165.

3. The figures certainly seem to disprove Prof. Fussell's contention, G.W.M.M., p.163, that in 'producing a multi-volume "Service" Edition, the publishers badly misestimated the literature inclinations of those on the line'.

book that it had been designed to fit the regulation tunic-pocket. The Years Between which included The Epitaphs of War, did not come on to the market until after the War ended ¹, so its popularity with the front-line troops cannot be hazarded², but the Inclusive Edition of Rudyard Kipling's Verse, 1885-1918, published in September 1919, in three volumes, was prominently featured for the rest of the year, which would seem to testify to Kipling's continued popularity as a 'public' poet who managed to pass through the War, without obviously offending any area of his usual readership - as he had done in his Service Songs on the Boer War.

Whatever his present standing among literary critics, or even his status at the end of the War and during the post-War period, Kipling was undoubtedly instrumental in shaping the attitude of a substantial portion of the poetry-reading public to: England, poetry, the Empire before 1914 and the common soldier. There are many examples throughout the War of amateur versifiers using Kipling's ballad-form and imitating his curious 'poetic voice' - a combination of Biblical diction and phrasing, colloquial idiom and music-hall refrain - believing that by so doing they were adapting the style appropriate to a national 'seer' and conductor of public opinion. Such imitators miss, however, the essential Kiplingesque quality: his versatility of response and poetic-form. The War verses range from the solemn "'For All We Have...'", reminiscent of 'Recessional', and the mysterious 'Gethsemane',

1. T.L.S., 23.1.19.

2. The volume was, however, reviewed (T.L.S., 10.4.19) by a man who had recently been demobilized and who approved of the 'new R.K.': 'The poetry of R.K. has long been anathema [to the combatants] with its field-sports, Imperialism and public schools' and there were examples of this strain in Years Between, but the reviewer was most impressed with Epitaphs of War and quoted copiously from them, suggesting that this element of R.K.'s verse would indeed have met with approval from the combatants.

through the boisterous 'Lowestoft Boat', the cynical Epitaphs of War to the outraged 'Mesopotamia' and the compassionate 'The Children'. While Kipling remained convinced of the necessity of waging War in a justified cause (as he saw it) against overt aggression, he was alive to the suffering War entailed, particularly for the young, and from his civilian standpoint, where he was very much aware of his responsibility as a possible influence (through his verse) upon the youthful volunteers, he could respond at times with more sensitivity than any other non-combatant to the plight of the 'resolute, the young /The eager and whole-hearted', who - too often - returned either maimed (physically, mentally or emotionally) or not at all.

Kipling's intense realization of the colossal casualties sustained by the young during the four years of war was reflected to a rather lesser extent in the tone of the T.L.S. leaders of the latter months of the War, when several sober references to the numbers of the War-Dead suggested that the only 'memorial worthy of their sacrifice' was the institution of a League of Nations whose function would be to safeguard future peace. The Lesson of the War for the non-combatants should have been a realization of its inherent evil. The argument that war should be gladly embraced by the nation because it operated as a purgative force on its young participants and prompted extremes of courage and endurance which somehow had an ennobling effect upon literature, had been disputed in many quarters. Likewise, some elder non-combatant poets recalled, with something approaching remorse, their eager efforts to instil a sense of urgency in their younger compatriots, by calling upon them to consecrate their lives in the name of England, Freedom - or whatever. Advocates of 'Reconstruction,

and 'The League of Nations' in 1918 / 1919, heartened by the example of camaraderie between the opposing sides in the trenches and by the development of a 'comitatus-spirit' between different classes, which seemed to promise so much in terms of social and industrial peace when the troops returned home, stressed the importance of ensuring that - to prevent domestic or international strife - spiritual advance should accompany technological development; social awareness must follow industrial progress, and the pernicious influence of 'nationalism' must be replaced by 'internationalism' : 'the greater patriotism'.

Unfortunately, however, this conciliatory spirit from the Home Front had come too late for the majority of combatants who had become aware, as the War dragged on, of an immense schism between the Nation in France and the Nation at Home. The soldiers had become deeply suspicious of any kind of propaganda whether it take the form of verse, recruiting-poster or newspaper article. A Citizens' Army was quite literate enough to realize from the papers¹ that towards the end of 1916, after the Somme débâcle, a certain amount of discussion had taken place in the Press and in Parliament over the possibility of negotiating a peace with Germany - with American mediation - and they understood, when the Peace Moves came to nothing, that certain areas of civilian influence must have a vested interest in the War's prolongation, even at the cost of thousands more young lives.

1. E.g. The Nation, XX, Oct. 1916: 'The pronouncement of Mr Lloyd George that any step on the part of the U.S. or any other neutral in the direction of peace would be construed by England as an un-neutral pro-German move, though acclaimed by many, brings deep regret to others who truly love their country's renown. If the U.S. or any other neutral power is ready to lead the way in negotiations for peace in the name of civilization, in the name of humanity let the belligerents hold themselves ready to give due consideration to their proposals for establishing public right in Europe'.

This resentment against the politicians found expression in certain soldiers' songs:

Oh, see him in the House of Commons,
Passing laws to put down crime,
While the victims of his passions
Trudge on in mud and slime,

while their disillusionment with the non-combatant population at large was sometimes very effectively articulated - as is the case with this extract from B.H. Tawney's 'Some Reflections of a Soldier'¹ - in the Press:

We used to blaspheme and laugh and say, 'Oh, it's only the papers. People at home can't really be like that'. But after some months in England I've come to the conclusion that your papers don't caricature you so mercilessly as we supposed. No, the fact is we've drifted apart. We have slaved for Rachel, but it looks as if we've got to live with Leah.... Between you and us there hangs a veil. It is mainly of your own unconscious creation.... It is not ignorance.... It is falsehood. I read your papers and listen to your conversation and I see clearly that you have chosen to make to yourselves an image of war, not as it is, but of a kind which, being picturesque, flatters your appetite for novelty, for excitement, for easy admiration, without troubling you with masterful emotions. You have chosen, I say, to make an image, because you do not like, or cannot bear, the truth.²

The contribution of the non-combatant poets to the prolongation of a false idea of War had been noted with disapproval two years before Tawney's protest: J.C. Squire, assessing their rallying calls to action in late 1914³, accused them of writing to a formula based on their 'ready-made set of conceptions, of phrases, of words, and of rhymes Put England down as "knightly", state her honour to be "inviolable" and her spirit "invulnerable", call her enemies "perjured and branded with

1. The Nation, XX, 21.10.16. B.H. Tawney, who reproduced this essay in The Attack and Other Papers (1953), accused the Nation at Home of 'escape': 'it retained myths while the soldier confronted reality in the unspeakable agonies of the Somme'.

2. My under-lining.

3. New Statesman, III (1914), p. 737.

'the "mark of cain", refer to "Trafalgar" (which has always done good service as a rhyme to "war"), summon the spirits of Drake and Grenville from the deep, introduce a "thou" or two, and conclude with the assertion that God will defend the Right - and there's the formula for a poem'.

Considerable bitterness developed between the young men at the Front, immured in the reality of trench warfare, and the armchair-versifiers - Harold Begbie, for instance - able to sustain effortlessly their callous admonitions to the young to 'Lift high the banner', while protesting their inability to join up themselves on account of their age. In an early example of combatant satire,¹ E.A. Mackintosh rebukes with equal vehemence the bloated, elderly civilians who exhort the young to 'go and fight the Hun', the propagandists who 'pen' the recruiting posters, the journalists who exploit the 'drama' and glamour of battle for their newsworthiness, and the white-feather brigade of viragos who waged their own campaign against likely 'dalliers':

'Lads, you're wanted, go and help',
On the railway carriage wall
Stuck the poster, and I thought
Of the hands that penned the call.

Fat civilians wishing they
'Could go and fight the Hun'.
Can't you see them thanking God
That they're over forty-one?

Girls with feathers, vulgar songs -
Washy verse on England's need -
God - and don't we damned well know
How the message ought to read.

'Lads, you're wanted! over there'.
Shiver in the morning dew,
More poor devils like yourselves
Waiting to be killed by you.

1. 'Recruiting', 1914 - 18 In Poetry, pp.45-6.

2. Cf. Hardy's expression in 'Song of the Soldiers': 'We well see what we are doing, /Though some may not see - /Dalliers as they be - /England's need are we'.

Go and help to swell the names
In the casualty lists.
Help to make a column's stuff
For the blasted journalists.

Help to keep them nice and safe
From the wicked German foe.
Don't let him come over here!
'Lads, you're wanted - out you go'.

A lesser-known combatant-versifier, V.A. Purcell, took as the subject for his 'I Can't Be A Soldier', the particular 'washy verse' of Harold Begbie, an example of which Purcell had just read in the Daily Chronicle of 2nd October, 1916. Paradoxically Purcell was even older than Begbie and he adopts a bantering tone in his poem which disguises his evident distaste for 'Harold B.':

Old Buffers of Forty, so dear Harold says,
Are finished and done for - they've seen their best days;
But though they can't fight they can tune up their lyre,
And think of the younger men facing gun-fire.

But though they can't fight, they can write lots of stuff,
And thank their 'old age' that this writing's Enough,
Whilst boys are fast falling and dying for all,
The Pen of the Buffer is ans'ring 'the call'.

And Harold sends yards of this blether to press,
And thinks his bit done with - could Harold do less?
The ink (not red blood) that he spills must be great
To find him employment both early and late.

The man who writes this is just fifty and three,
And since the War started he's served, Harold B.
He did not write asking for others to fight,
He serves, and he thinks that so doing is right.

He doesn't ask others to think of his age,
And now isn't done, - that he'll stoutly engage.
So, Harold, buck up, you're a young patriarch,
Join up with us oldsters and share in the lark....¹

A similar spirit imbues the anonymous 'Any Soldier to His Son'² (though the tone is less jaunty here) and a more sardonic humour suggests that the poet is a younger man than V.A. Purcell:

1. The New Age, 12.10.16.

2. The Nation, XXIV, November 1918.

And I read the Blighty papers, where the
warriors of the pen
Tell of 'Christmas in the trenches' and 'The
Spirit of our men'.
And I saved the choicest morsels, and
I read them to my chum,
And he muttered, as he cracked a louse
and wiped it off his thumb:
'May a thousand chats from Belgium crawl
their fingers as they write;
May they dream they're not exempted till
they faint with mortal fight;
May the fattest rats in Dickesbusch
race over them in bed;
May the lies they've written choke them
like a gas cloud till they're dead;
May the horror and the torture and
the things they never tell
(For they only write to order) be
reserved for them in Hell.

Another Nation poem,¹ this time from "Eques", looks beyond the War to the future and considers the appalling possibility that after all this suffering, the 'same old game' (of youth exploited by worldly experience, and the naive and idealistic misled by the shrewd rhetoric of their elders) will persist and another cabal of 'little men' will conspire together to 'send out' the young and brave. Although 'Soldier's Testament' does not achieve the width of reference and profundity of compassion of Owen's 'Strange Meeting' (which also considers the post-War problems) it does treat the theme of the suffering combatant faced by an insensitive civilian populace with real - if crudely expressed - feeling, producing an overall effect of some poignancy:

If after I am dead
On goes the same old game,
With monarchs seeing red
And ministers aflame,
And nations drowning deep
In quarrels not their own,
And peoples called to reap
The woes they have not sown;...

1. "Eques", 'Soldier's Testament', Nation, XX, p.261.

If all we who are slain
Have died, despite our hope
Only to twist again
The old kaleidoscope -
Why then, by God! we're sold!
Cheated and wronged! betrayed!
Our youth and lives and gold
Wasted - the homes we'd made
Shattered - in folly blind,
By treachery and spite,
By cowardice of mind,
And little men and light! ...
If there be none to build
Out of this ruined world
The temple we have willed
With our flag there unfurled
If rainbow none there shine
Across these skies of woe,
If seed of yours and mine
Through this same hell must go,
Then may my soul and those
Of all who died in vain,
(Be they of friends or foes¹)
Rise and come back again
From peace that knows no end,
From faith that knows no doubt,
To haunt and sear and rend
The men that sent us out.

Various individual elements of the civilian populace were singled out for separate censure by the combatant-poets, in addition to the more generalized castigation of 'the men that sent us out'. Osbert Sitwell was a fairly prolific satirist of the Nation at Home, starting with 'Armchair' which derides the contribution of the middle-aged and elderly civilian to the war effort. The comfortably-off man of 'handsome middle-age' would 'help the prosecution of this war' by sending his sons 'if old enough, to France' and by 'digging for victory' on his lawn, or writing letters to the Press; the 'great man in his prime' (the seventy-year-old general or politician), enjoying the opportunity given to him by the War to have men once more 'at [his] command' would make his contribution by sacrificing his grandsons, and by making uncompromising martial speeches in the

1. A comment which plainly suggests that the 'Enemy' now, in the eyes of soldiers of all nations, is the Nation at Home.

Houses of Parliament, applauded by an ecstatic Clergy. In order to keep the power which they so much covet these 'grand old men' of politics are prepared to 'sacrifice each other's sons each day' and will not hear of peace till 'all the younger men of martial mien /Have enter'd capitals; ... /... are cripples, on one leg, or dead!'. Sitwell goes on to castigate the War profiteers in 'Judas and the Profiteer' and 'The Modern Abraham'¹ who made a fortune out of 'maiming men with sword and shell' and whose personal sacrifice for the War effort constituted 'giving' a son, and in 'The Next War', he envisages the 'kindly old gentlemen', who are meeting to discuss how best to commemorate the dead, proposing that the most 'fitting memorial for the fallen' would be for the next generation to 'fall in the same cause'.

~~Siegfried~~ Siegfried Sassoon, as well as directing his bitter satire against the General Staff responsible for mishandling so many campaigns, examines the civilian population in his poems with a very jaundiced eye. He is extremely critical of the part women have played in promoting the War:

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.
You make us shells,²

and he is even more astringent in his denunciation of the civilian theatre audiences and 'prancing ranks /Of harlots'³ who 'mock the riddled corpses round Bapaume' by their patriotic sing-songs at the music-hall. All his anger and outraged sense of pity on behalf of the 'doomed, conscripted, unvictorious ones' who have been duped or bullied into sacrificing their lives, often quite

1. The Abraham / Isaac motif will be discussed further in Chapter V for several of the soldier-poets made use of the Old Testament account of Abraham's preparing to sacrifice his son.
2. Collected Poems of S.S., p.79. 3. 'Blighters', Ibid., p.21.

needlessly, culminate in his indictment of all 'Great Men':

The great ones of the earth
Approve, with smiles and bland salutes, the rage
And monstrous tyranny they have brought to birth.
And great ones of the earth
Are much more concerned about the wars they wage,
And quite aware of what those wars are worth.

You Marshals, gilt and red,
You Ministers, and Princes, and Great Men,
Why can't you keep your mouthings for the dead?
Go round the soldiers' Cemeteries; and then
Talk of our noble sacrifice and losses
To the wooden crosses.

Although a definite movement away from the intransigence of the first non-combatant response to War in verse can be traced from 1914 to 1918/19, and the poetry of such an Establishment-figure as Rudyard Kipling illustrates this shift from certainty to puzzled questioning, from bland, formulaic phrases to real indignation or profound compassion, the soldiers had absorbed a cumulative impression of callous indifference, on the part of the Nation at Home, to the real situation in which the combatants struggled to survive. This image of an alien civilian ethos where 'Young blood's its great objection', had been initiated by the patriotic effusions of the non-combatants in verse, and in the Press, and was reinforced whenever the soldiers went home on leave and saw - at first hand - the overt profiteering from the War's continuation (rife in certain commercial and political areas) and, within their own homes, the essential incomprehension of their families over what it meant to be a combatant in this first world war.

L. Cf. Marcel Martinet's 'Celui-là' from Les Temps Maudits: 'On leur a envoyé sa croix - Légion d'Honneur; / Son père, qui a les yeux perdus dans un songe affreux, / Dit - "Leur croix! / Il a sa croix de bois, là-bas, avec les autres"'.

The most obvious confrontation between the Nation in Arms and the Nation at Home occurred with Demobilization, when the survivors returned to find - all too often - that they were not wanted: the whole of society which had appealed to them to go, appeared to have reconciled itself so satisfactorily to their absence that it was loath to receive them back:

'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!'
And they forget
How others stayed behind and just got on -
Got on the better since we were away.
And we came home and found
They had achieved, and men revered their names,
But never mentioned ours;
And no one talked heroics now, and we
Must just go back and start again once more.
'You threw four years into the melting-pot -
Did you indeed!' these others cry. 'Oh well,
The more fool you!'
And we're beginning to agree with them.¹

Whereas the civilian population had been relatively unaffected physically by the War, and had continued to nurture their illusions about the War - the reasons for waging it and the objectives they expected to be achieved by it - the combatants had found to their cost that the chivalric code and moral rectitude instilled in them by the non-combatants' propaganda and poetry, were little protection against Maxims and 5.9's. Their justified resentment at not having been better prepared by their elders for the holocaust they jostled to embrace, formulated itself in savage condemnation of their fathers who preferred (or so it seemed) to sacrifice their sons before their principles:

1. Vera Brittain, 'The Lament of the Demobilised', Oxford Poetry (1920). The poem also headed Chapter X of Testament of Youth, entitled 'Survivors Not Wanted'.

... Behold,
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.¹

In view of the chasm between the generations and between the Two Nations, the combatants found themselves driven 'to grope together through hell'. They had believed their elders when they told them that to sacrifice themselves for England was noble and to fight against Prussia was to push back 'the Powers of Darkness' which had threatened to overwhelm Civilization, but, faced with the reality of War, they had found their fathers' code wanting, and the ethics by which they had been brought up, facile. Far from being able to volunteer the conscious gesture of self-sacrifice for what they had been taught to believe in, they discovered that they were mere 'bonds to the whims of murder'. From seeing themselves as 'drafts of volunteers', answering 'The Call' with all the noble resolution expected of them, they became aware of their real status as 'droves of victims', in which capacity they cursed their non-combatant compatriots, not only for promulgating an absurdly anachronistic code of ethics, but for their unforgiveable 'insensibility' to the suffering of combatant soldiers:

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
Before the last sea and the hapless stars;
Whatever mourns when many leave these shores;
Whatever shares
The eternal reciprocity of tears.²

1. Wilfred Owen, 'The Parable of the Old Man and the Young',
Collected Poems of W.O., p.42.
2. 'Insensibility', Ibid., p.37.

CHAPTER V

'THE UNRETURNING ARMY THAT WAS YOUTH'

With few exceptions, the response to the Declaration of War among the young, prospective combatants was no less animated and their expression in verse of 'the elation, the exaltation with which [they all] greeted it'¹ hardly less elevated than that of their elder compatriots. This was, at least, the general reaction in the initial stages of the War, and it was given poetic utterance by that stratum among the volunteers who were later to comprise principally the line-officer corps: the ex-public-school boys who rose, as if by instinct, to 'The Call'. To the survivors of the War, most particularly their sisters and mothers, these ^{young men} were crystallized thereafter in their memories as 'young, radiant figures ... set in their context of youth' whose 'bright Promise, withered long and sped', nevertheless, was to overtake the human identity when the men themselves were dead.

In 1914, as memoirists of the period are fond of recalling, there was a particularly glittering galaxy of young men - Julian and Billy Grenfell, Patrick Shaw-Stewart, Edward Horner, Charles Lister, for example - whose 'wild thirst for adventure' caused them to hazard everything (and they certainly had a good deal to lose²) in order to join the 'New Crusade'. Even a rather older member of this brilliant company of 'Olympians', Raymond Asquith, although thirty-seven in 1914 and a highly sophisticated

-
1. Violet Bonham-Carter, 'The Missing Generation', Sunday Times, 11.11.62. Cf. Ottoline Morrell's comment on Edward Horner, Ottoline..., p.177: 'His beauty [of a Greek athlete] was indeed too perfect to be more than transient. It was fated never to fade, for early in the War he was one of its thousands of victims'.
 2. 'They had perfect health, beauty, riches and good intellects' and Death was simply 'the last joy-ride to still more glorious Elysian Fields', Ibid., p.159.

intellectual, not an idealistic youth caught up in the general euphoria, immediately volunteered and was apparently grateful for the opportunity of thus 'simplifying' his life:

I have never been happier in my life just to know that there is only one thing to be done.

A similar singularity of purpose, occasioned by the advent of the War, coupled with a sense of obligation to volunteer to which the individual surrendered himself, impressed Rupert Brooke who responded to the news that the Naval Division was to go to Gallipoli, in the genuine belief that his life would henceforth be fulfilled and purposeful:

I have never been quite so happy in my life, I think not quite so pervasively happy, like a stream flowing entirely to one end.¹

Younger men, adolescents such as Vera Brittain's brother Edward, destined to 'go up' to Oxford in the autumn of 1914, decided instead to 'join up', overwhelmed by the desire to 'do something'. Bred in the public-school tradition, such young men, usually enthusiastic members of the O.T.C. and possibly influenced also by older relations who had made the Army their career, had had the ideal of military heroism, undiluted by any exercise of reason, and a sense of obligation to God, King and Country, inculcated into them, making them easy prey to their elders: parents, headmasters, statesmen and newspaper editors, who promulgated the policy of youth flocking to the Flag (and to the defence of 'little Belgium').

Indubitably, the public-school ethos in which most of these young men had been brought up, facilitated the alacrity of their response to consecrate themselves to 'service for the Nation'. Such was their respect for the moral guidance offered by their

1. Letter to Violet Asquith, February 1915, quoted Haasall, Rupert Brooke, p. 488

'alma mater' that very few of them thought of challenging its efficacy, or of probing why exactly they should risk their lives in a cause which did not really support too searching an examination.¹ The institution of the public school had consistently influenced the boys of the upper-middle and upper classes, through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to adopt certain prejudices as a result, partly, of the choice of subjects offered on the public-school curriculum (plenty of classics² to train the mind and games to train the body, with little time spent on European languages, the learning of which was **discouraged** by the innate British suspicion of and arrogance towards foreigners), and, partly, through the rigid hierarchy and system of

punishments, rigorously enforced. Most importantly, the public school imbued its boys with a notion of 'fair play' ('what was and was not cricket') through its preoccupation with games. Also, by encouraging absolute loyalty to the House and School, it developed stronger national loyalties:

... school patriotism, house patriotism, spread out, rousing national patriotism, became one with it and both, ... grew steadily more exalted, fierce and explicit.³

Through the genre of the public-school novel⁴ (of which there is a good First World War example in the form of Ernest Raymond's Tell England⁵) it is possible to detect how the 'schools managed

-
1. E.g. Edmund Gosse's account of R.E. Vernède's attitude to the War: 'when once the problem of the attack of Germany on the democracy of the world was patent to him, he did not hesitate for a moment. He accepted, completely and finally, the situation'. Introduction, War Poems and Other Verses, p.8.
 2. According to Nicholas Mosley, Julian Grenfell: His Life and the Times of His Death, p.94, 'The Iliad was considered edifying for boys and parents - a hymn to slaughter and betrayal'.
 3. Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, The Public-School Phenomenon (1977), p.193.
 4. E.g. Horace Annesley Vachel, The Hill, A Romance of Friendship, (1905).
 5. 'A Study in a Generation', 1922, of which the following is fairly representative: '"Yes, Roop, living through War is living deep. It's crowded, glorious living.... If I'm Knocked out, it's at least the most wonderful death. It's the deepest death".'

'to whirl school loyalty, patriotism, games, God, the [King], the head-master, team spirit and nostalgia into the great, intoxicating, sentimental, muddled and inflaming brew'¹ which prompted the instinctive response to 'rally to the Flag' in times of national danger. Accordingly, through the proliferation and popularization of literature about the public school², the attendant ethos was not confined to its place of origin:

... the ideals, ideas, taboos, and standards of the public schools - that thin wafer of privilege - had become national ones, they had sunk deep into the unconsciousness of the nation. This was especially so by the years 1900 - 1914.³

When the public-school boys (of whatever age) articulated their response to the First World War, they had forgotten the embarrassment which had resulted from adhering to the public-school spirit in the Boer War⁴, and heightened, to some extent, the already rampant bellicosity of the nation by thundering into patriotic verse (if they were too old to 'serve with the colours') and volunteering themselves for active service if they were not already in the Army. In discussing the developments in the various theatres of War, or considering the iniquities of the Hun, the public-school idiom of 'the game' was exploited to the full. War, first of all, was itself 'The Great Game' and when Old Boys at the Front wrote their barrage of letters to the Head Masters and house-masters (a tendency which continued throughout the War

1. Gathorne-Hardy, Op cit., p.193.

2. A phenomenon investigated by George Orwell in his fascinating piece of social commentary, 'Boys' Weeklies' (1939), Inside The Whale and Other Essays, p.175.

3. Gathorne-Hardy, Op.cit., p.219. Cf. Newbolt's injunction in 'Clifton Chapel': 'Henceforth the School and you are one /And what You are, the race shall be'.

4. As Michael Howard, 'Officers and Gentlemen', ⁱⁿ a review of Gwyn Harries-Jenkins's The Army in Victorian Society points out (T.L.S., 5.8.77) 'A good young officer was one who rode straight at his fences and saw that his mounts and men were fed, not one who spent his evenings swotting up Clausewitz and studying for the Staff College. Staff officers as a result were little more than industrious, agreeable and obedient courtiers until the débâcle in South Africa revealed their complete inadequacy....'

though it dwindled in proportion to the soaring number of officer casualties) they inevitably used sports language to describe¹ the action, 'jolly good sporting fun'.

In 1914, however, the prospect of entering the War as a chivalric contest between evenly matched 'sides' with a good deal of pride at stake, in the manner of a 'somehow safe, bloodless, deathless' cricket match between Eton and Harrow, invited a dangerously facile and uninformed idea of modern warfare to be adopted. The astonishing feature of this ethos was that it managed to survive at all once the young officers reached the Front and realised the full implications of a sedentary trench war which allowed no (or very little) scope for death-defying cavalry-charges, and little opportunity for individual distinction in massed attacks on the enemy (though these were nevertheless *occasionally* instigated by Staff Officers whose military strategy had evidently itself been influenced by the notions of valour promulgated by the public schools they had attended).

Letters from the Front to public-school masters make a point of illustrating how the senders have not 'let the school or house down' and how they would relish the opportunity to die for school and country. In turn:

... these themes are echoed again in the school obituaries². The public-school ethos had gone beyond the grave. Games too got caught up in this passionate confusion. To play well for your school meant to die well for your country In the bloodiest struggle of them all, one

-
1. E.g. Capt Nichols, 'The German Football Club is the only part of that degraded nation's military machine which "plays the game"', and Gen. Lord Horne: '... we had outplayed Germany at all points of the game, certainly we were slow to adopt, in deed our souls abhorred, anything unsportsmanlike' (quoted Gathorne-Hardy, *Op.cit.*, p.198). Reginald Grant, *S.O.S. Stand To!* (N.Y. 1918) p.32, sardonically remarked, 'It was a new device in warfare [chlorine gas] and thoroughly illustrated the Prussian idea of playing the game'.
 2. As Newbolt assures the 'School at War', '"Come you again or come no more, /Across the world you keep the pride, /Across the world we mark the score"'. ('The School at War' *Poems*, p.110).

platoon of soldiers was led, not by an officer carrying a sword or a revolver, but a subaltern kicking a football.¹ Perhaps Waugh² was right. There is a sense, because of the blithe, almost carefree heroism with which they went to such terrible slaughter, in which the battle of the Somme was lost on the playing fields of Sherborne.³

Among the English poets, Henry Newbolt was largely responsible for sustaining the games-spirit and general public-school ethos in verse as his pre-War work illustrates, embodying as it does all the classic features of contest and honour, the school-name and moral code in circumstances of physical peril:

He saw the School Close, sunny and green,
The runner beside him, the stand by the parapet wall,
The distant tape, and the crowd roaring between
His name over all;⁴

or spiritual wavering:

To set the cause above renown,
To love the game beyond the prize,
To honour while you strike him down,
The foe that comes with fearless eyes;
To count the life of battle good,
And dear the land that gave you birth,
And dearer yet the brotherhood
That binds the brave of all the earth.⁵

The most spectacular evocation of the public-school spirit is 'Vitai Lampada',⁶ where the school and war situations are paralleled in the first two stanzas and fused in the third. The tension in the Close while the last man, strengthened by his Captain's injunction to 'Play Up!', struggles against such obstacles as a 'bumping pitch and a blinding light' to score the necessary ten runs to secure the School's honour, is contrasted with the ex-

1. The Capt. W. Nevill episode on 1st July, 1916. The 'gallantry' of Capt. Nevill who died instantly as he launched his football across No Man's Land, was commemorated in a poem by 'Touchstone': 'On through the hail of slaughter, /Where gallant comrades fall/Where blood is poured like water, /They drive the trickling ball..../True to the land that bore them - /The Surreys play the game'.
2. Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth (1917), one of the dissenting voices in the general approval of the public-school system.
3. Gathorne-Hardy, Op.cit., p.199. Another 'sporting' example is cited in the T.L.S. (29.6.16) where one officer meets another with a mutilated leg who masks his pain beneath the kind of look 'a fellow wears when he's out at cricket - walking back to the pavilion'.
4. 'He Fell Among Thieves', Poems: New and Old, p.82.
5. 'Clifton Chapel', Ibid., p.93.
6. Ibid., p.95

public-school boy, now an army officer, in some far-flung corner of the Empire who urges his men to stand firm and give substance to that word, 'Honour':

The sand of the desert is sodden red, -
Red with the wreck of a square that broke; -
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
"Play up! Play up! and play the game!"

while, in the final stanza, Newbolt reminds all public-school boys that they too must 'Bear through life like a torch in flame' that determination learnt from their 'alma mater' to apply the code of the cricket-pitch to the extremest of emergencies and, at all times, "'Play the game!'"¹

Newbolt's War verse², written from the point of view of the elderly non-combatant who sees his function in War as that of the 'seer', ensuring that the nation is constantly aware of the national danger and the officer-corps is particularly conscious of its responsibility to uphold, and if necessary to make the 'supremum sacramentum' on behalf of, the chivalric code, consistently protests the validity of the games-mentality, in particular, and of the public-school ethos in general. There are echoes of the Newboltian idiom in other poems of the early War period from those who went on to participate in the conflict and R.E. Vernède's 'The Call' is a case in point, in August 1914, where - although no 'youthful paladin' himself - he urges all his 'brothers'³

1. An attitude which Capt. Bruce Bairnsfather, for example, adopts, in sustaining throughout the War the 'cheerfulness of a school-boy in a disagreeable football match', (T.L.S., 14.12.16).

2. See Chapter IV, pp. 515-21.

3. Perhaps the expression 'brother-officer' is itself derived, in part, from the 'comitatus'-spirit of the public-school where it was expected that only public-school boys would furnish the commissioned ranks of the armed services.

(from St Paul's School¹, presumably) to answer the 'clarion call' sounded by Nelson who 'deathless died':

Lad, with the merry smile and the eyes
Quick as a hawk's and clear as the day,
You, who have counted the game as the prize,
Here is the game of games to play.
Never a goal - the captains say -
Matches the one that's needed now:
Put the old blazer and cap away -
England's colours await your brow.²

Among the younger combatants who responded to the 'call to duty' and embraced that 'conscriptio[n] of the spirit' which promised to test their manhood, three poets - Julian Grenfell, Rupert Brooke and Charles Hamilton Sorley - suggest themselves for special consideration as representatives of the public-school syndrome whose response to the War was directed, in part, by the chivalric code they had absorbed, but even more conclusively was shaped by their own intellectual analysis of the modern world.

Judging by 'Into Battle' and certain popular selections from Grenfell's Letters about the War being a 'glorious picnic', 'the best fun ... ever dreamed of' and a champion opportunity for a spot of 'Hun-Hunting'³, he would appear to be the archetypal public-school boy, carrying into his military career the attitudes prescribed by his Eton masters. But Grenfell's love of sport was allied with a general admiration for all wild creatures: 'bringing the elemental barbaric forces in ourselves into touch with the elemental barbaric forces of nature'⁴, which entailed a solitary pursuit of his hunting activities and a sensitive appre-

1. According to Edmund Gosse's biographical note at the front of War Poems and Other Verses (1917), Vernède attended St. Paul's, before going to St. John's College, Oxford, to read Classics.

2. 'The Call', Ibid., p.27.

3. By analogy with 'Bagging Boers'. In a letter to J.G., Lord Kitchener, writing from South Africa, had described the good sport to be had 'catching ... Boers.... I got 80 today, rather a good bag'.

4. Letter of J.G., quoted Mosley, Op.cit.

ciation of his natural environment quite different from the team-spirit advocated by the public-school. Similarly, Grenfell committed some of his carefully-reasoned arguments about the structure and mores of aristocratic life, in the first decade of the century, to paper in the form of a collection of unpublished essays, written in 1909 when he was at Oxford, which would certainly have proved difficult to reconcile with the 'cult of Julian as a dead hero' (instigated by admirers of 'Into Battle') in 1915.

Grenfell's decision to leave England for India with the Royal Dragoons in 1910, had been largely determined by his desire to get away from the artificiality of the upper-class social round and to forge a closer link between himself and the primitive natural world which fascinated him and to which his adventurous spirit responded, as his poems 'The Hills' (on the Himalayan Foot-hills) and 'Hymn to the Wild Boar' illustrate. After India, Grenfell went to South Africa with his Regiment, exchanging wild boars for lions, and the Himalayas for the Veldt, but his intellectual concerns (just before the War he contemplated standing for Parliament) occupied more of his time and energy, and had the War not come when it did, he might very well have left the Army. As it was, Grenfell saw the War as an opportunity for physical valour and sacrifice (the nobility of which he still believed in), and a simple response to 'The Cause' was just what he needed to postpone the difficult personal decision he was on the verge of making, and revive his flagging patriotic sense:

[The War] reinforces one's failing belief in the Old Flag and the Mother Country and the Heavy Brigade and the Thin Red Line and the Imperial Idea which gets rather shadowy in peace time.¹

Grenfell was in France by October 1914, and his letters home, to his mother mainly, whom he was anxious to impress by his mixture of 'sang-froid' and recklessness, although lapsing into the games-idiom have an ironic under-current which implies Grenfell's awareness that a whole generation found themselves doomed on the Western Front to expiate the 'sins of their fathers':

Isn't it luck for me to have been born so as to be just the right age and just in the right place ... to enjoy it the most? ²

It was plain from Grenfell's letters of the Winter of 1914/15 however, that a new note had entered his assessment of the War which he could not - or did not want to - conceal from his family. He was extremely impatient, as a vigorous man of the Line, of the tardiness and incompetence of the Staff and the hysteria and facile optimism of the British newspapers, when the Spring Campaigns of 1915 were underway, and although his satire is less mordant than that of Sassoon or Sitwell later in the War, it nonetheless makes the point with some wit that while the H.Q. Staff could afford to be over-manned and occupied with trivial matters of cuisine, the men in the trenches - where 'horrid scenes and sight of blood' were commonplace - waited the dictates of the apparently frivolous 'Upper Ten':

-
1. Letter home, August 1914, quoted Mosley, Op.cit., p.230.
 2. Letter to Ettie Grenfell, 17.10.14, quoted Ibid., p.237. Ettie sent a number of J.G.'s letters to the Editor of The Times who printed them as an anonymous young cavalry officer's impressions of the Front and the phrase 'Isn't it Luck...?' was used as a heading to a Times Leader which enthused over the revival of conscience and faith, occasioned by the response of the young to the War, and, of course, any ironic motive behind the phrase went unnoticed.

Fighting in mud, we turn to Thee,
In these dread times of battle, Lord,
To keep us safe. if so may be,
From shrapnel, snipers, shell and sword.

But not on us, for we are men
Of meaner clay, who fight in clay,
But on the Staff, the Upper Ten,
Depends the issue of the Day.

The staff is working with its brains,
While we are sitting in the trench;
The Staff the universe ordains
(Subject to Thee and General French).

God help the staff - especially
The young ones, many of them sprung
From our high aristocracy;
Their task is hard, and they are young.

O LORD, WHO MAD'ST ALL THINGS TO BE,
AND MADEST SOME THINGS VERY GOOD,
PLEASE KEEP THE EXTRA A.D.C.
FROM HORRID SCENES, AND SIGHT OF BLOOD.

See that his eggs are newly laid,
Not tinged as some of them -with green;
And let no nasty draughts invade
The windows of his Limousine.

When he forgets to buy the bread,
When there are no more minerals,
Preserve his smooth well-oiled head
From wrath of caustic Generals.

O LORD, WHO MAD'ST ALL THINGS TO BE,
AND HATEST NOTHING THOU HAS MADE,
PLEASE KEEP THE EXTRA A.D.C.
OUT OF THE SUN AND IN THE SHADE.¹

To complement the exuberant letters home, Grenfell began to keep a spasmodic diary of his thoughts and emotional responses to the War, which indicates a movement away from the conventionally heroic to an occasional admission of fear and strain, never confessed in his letters home:

1. 'Prayer for Those on the Staff', 1914 - 18 In Poetry, p.102.

February 6th: Funny how tired the war feeling and the sound of guns makes one. Nerves? No, just strain of excitement.....

and again:

February 15th: Night when I heard noise of bomb dropping on top of dug-out, Petrified. Lost self-control - lay still, clenching my hands, for twenty seconds. Asked what it was. "Rum jar thrown away".¹

But with the arrival of spring and the prospect of military activity, Grenfell's longing to be 'up and doing something' took the form of a poem rather than a lengthy diary-entry, although he cursorily acknowledges its existence in his field note-book: 'Wrote poem - "Into Battle".' Afterwards, having sent 'the verses' to Ettie, and given her permission to send them on to The Times, Grenfell admitted to the poem's being 'slightly meretricious' but he nevertheless 'liked [it] a lot'. He was pleased with it, not so much because it advocated vigorous military action but because it expressed a profound awareness of the intensity of life, of which Grenfell had been conscious previously but which the battle situation intensified. While the poem takes for granted the necessity of fighting, patriotic fervour is not its stimulus; rather it represents the culmination of a life of adventurous activity which assumes the attitude to War and the test to manliness in battle associated with the public-school ethos, but imposes on top of this assumption, Grenfell's own identification of himself with the vibrant forces of nature which constituted his 'credo':

1. Quoted Mosley, Op.cit., p.252.

The naked earth is warm with Spring,
And with green grass and bursting trees
Leans to the sun's gaze glorying,
And quivers in the sunny breeze;
And light is colour and warmth and light,
And a striving evermore for these;
And he is dead who will not fight;
And who dies fighting has increase.

The fighting man shall from the sun
Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth;
Speed with the light-foot winds to run,
And with the trees to newer birth;
And find, when fighting shall be done,
Great rest, and fullness after dearth.

All the bright company of Heaven
Hold him in their high comradeship,
The Dog-Star, and the Sisters Seven,
Orion's Belt and sworded hip.

The woodland trees that stand together,
They stand to him each one a friend;
They gently speak in the windy weather;
They guide to valley and ridge's end.

The kestrel hovering by day,
And the little owls that call by night,
Bid him be swift and keen as they,
As keen of ear, as swift of sight.

The blackbird sings to him, 'Brother, brother,
If this be the last song you shall sing,
Sing well, for you may not sing another;
Brother, sing.'

In dreary doubtful, waiting hours,
Before the brazen frenzy starts,
The horses show him nobler powers
O patient eyes, courageous hearts!

And when the burning moment breaks,
And all things else are out of mind,
And only joy of battle takes
Him by the throat, and makes him blind,

Through joy and blindness he shall know,
Not caring much to know, that still
Nor lead nor steel shall reach him, so
That it be not the Destined Will.

The thundering line of battle stands,
And in the air death moans and sings;
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands,
And Night shall fold him in soft wings.¹

The day after Grenfell's death (from a head wound) in which he comported himself with the quiet dignity and 'radiance' expected of his class, The Times published news of his death and 'Into Battle', a combination of circumstances which guaranteed the popularity of the poem for the rest of the War, and went a good way towards establishing Grenfell as one of the first 'modern Sidneys', 'New Elizabethans' and 'knight crusaders' of the War. Winston Churchill, among other distinguished men¹, framed his tribute in his characteristically weighty prose:

... He was all that you could have desired and all that our race needs to keep its honour fair and bright.... He at any rate lived and died as he would have wished,

and, with the help of Ettie's privately circulated Family Journal, a mythologizing process was initiated which was to obliterate the lineaments of the man himself and transmute Grenfell's personality into that of the idealized 'Happy Warrior', around whose 'sublime young image, a noble and exquisite legend will flower'.²

A similar canonizing process, on an even larger public scale, was to follow the demise of Rupert Brooke in the fitting surroundings of the Aegean Sea, which lent credence to the idea of him as a young Greek god, 'golden-haired Apollo' who represented (and still represents) in the popular imagination the archetypal soldier poet:

When Rupert Brooke died at Skyros in the Aegean Sea, ... he was immediately canonized in the popular imagination as St Rupert of England, and by the influence of his

-
1. Maurice Baring, a friend of Ettie's, wrote a sonnet In Memoriam of J.G., published in The Times which began: 'Because of you we will be glad and gay, /Remembering you, we will be brave and strong; /And hail the advent of each dangerous day, /And meet the last adventure with a song....'
 2. Comment from Henry James, quoted Mosley, Op. cit., p.266.

personality rather than his poetry he became a figure of importance in contemporary literature. In the tragic stress of the early months of the World War, the nation needed a human symbol to keep attention fixed upon the professed idealistic aims for which it had been led into battle. After eight months such a symbol was revealed in the dead poet, Rupert Brooke - remembered not as a figure of death, but as he was while alive: young, quick and eager.... His early death while on War-service, his physical beauty, his intellectual gifts, his genius for friendship - these were accepted as marks of 'one who seemed to have every thing that is worth having'. So, out of proportion to his merits as a singer, Brooke became the sign and symbol of his age - even as, three centuries earlier, another handsome and accomplished young Englishman, Sir Philip Sidney, had been the sign and symbol of the Elizabethans.¹

In addition to his physical beauty, Rupert Brooke had been endowed with a considerable intellectual capacity which his education (through Rugby School to Cambridge) had helped to train.

His interest in the Metaphysical Poets and Seventeenth Century Drama, points to an imagination rather unusual for the period, when young poets and men of letters were expected by the public to court their Romantic antecedents. This sinewy intellectual toughness and keen eye for detail evinced through Brooke's Letters and Essays of literary criticism ~~were~~, however, largely ignored and his reputation with the poetry-reading public was based upon his 1914 Sonnets, which seemed to capture the essential quality of what the young soldier-poet should be and what attitude he should adopt towards the prospect of death in battle, on behalf of his country. The Sonnets assumed a diction and form accessible to a wide public, and the tone acknowledged the solemnity of the occasion without hectoring the reader.

The substance of the five Sonnets commended itself to public attention because it took account of the principal themes

1. A.C.Ward, Twentieth Century Literature (1928), pp.131-2. Ward's views are of interest in having been written at a time when the reaction against R.B. was at its most vehement.

of interest to the readership at large: the voluntary consecration of the young to the Cause ('These laid the world away; poured out the red /Sweet wine of youth¹):

Now, God be thanked who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping...
To turn as swimmers into clean-ness leaping;²

the fearless acceptance of death ('And the worst friend and enemy is but death; 'Safe shall be my going, /Secretly armed against all death's endeavour; /Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men fall; /And if these poor limbs die, safest of all'³); expiation for past ignominy:

... They bought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain ...
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;⁴

the conscious surrender of a future full of promise:

These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,
Washed marvellously with sorrow, swift to mirth...
All this is ended;⁵

and, most emotive at the time, identification of the soldier dead, with the English countryside:

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air, ⁶
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

This was the image which was to be henceforward associated in the popular imagination with the concept of soldier poetry: a young man, graced with almost every physical and mental attribute

-
1. 'The Dead, I', The Collected Poems, p. 7.
 2. 'Peace', Ibid., p.5.
 3. 'Safety', Ibid., p.6.
 4. 'The Dead, I', Ibid., p.7.
 5. 'The Dead, II', Ibid., p.8.
 6. 'The Soldier', Ibid., p.9.

yet prepared to melt¹ into 'a white / Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance' in the service of his country, confident that in death his sacrifice would be acknowledged and he would be somehow spiritually reconciled with England as 'a pulse in the eternal mind'. Hardly surprisingly, Brooke's death stimulated a plethora of all kinds² of tributes and (as with Grenfell) the lively personality, of whose whole corpus of poetry the 1914 Sonnets comprised a relatively small part, and whose gifts and wide-ranging interests seemed to fit him, ironically, for a future in the public field (of politics, perhaps) rather than in the role of poet, was submerged beneath a welter of imposed impressions of the idealized man of letters turned man of action, which the often-used Sidney-analogue facilitated. The T.L.S. review of March 1915³ exemplified this trait with its declaration that 'These sonnets are personal' and yet:

... the very blood and youth of England seem to find expression in them. They speak not for one heart only, but for all to whom her call has come in the hour of need and found instantly ready. The words pause and break, as thought and feeling falter for very fullness, like the song of a bird faced with all a summer's loveliness and with but one brief dusk wherein to sing. No passion for glory is here, no bitterness, no gloom, only a happy clear-sighted, all surrendering love.

1. Cf. Michel Dreher's testament In the Fire of the Furnace (T.L.S. 26.10.16): 'Of my own free will I was sacrificing my paltry individuality. I was melting, a wan unit, into the collective consciousness of the beings of my country'.
2. As well as innumerable imitations of his 1914 Sonnets, e.g. Eliot Crawshay Williams, The Gutter and the Stars: 'If I come to die in this inhuman strife...'; Alan Seeger, 'Ode in Memory of the American Volunteers Fallen in France': 'Now heaven be thanked, we gave a few brave drops; / Now heaven be thanked, a few brave drops were ours!...'
3. 11.3.15. Two years later, the T.L.S. reviewer of Drinkwater's New Crusade (T.L.S., 27.12.17) indicated his regret that R.B. should have been so canonized and hoped Drinkwater's robust tribute would 'help us to remember that volatile, irreverent, and extraordinarily vivacious spirit before the romantic public take possession of his fame'.

Had the poetry-reading public of the time paid as much attention to the Fragments written by Brooke on his way to Gallipoli, they would have deduced, perhaps, that had he survived that Campaign, his War poetry (had he continued to write any) would have taken a different direction from that prescribed in the 1914 Sonnets. The Fragment, 'I Strayed about the Deck...' for example, suggests rather the approach of the third ^{ex-}public-school boy **to be considered** here, C.H. Sorley, in its attempt to balance the poet's necessary objectivity and his equally essential compassion for the men whose bodies might soon be blown to smithereens by a high explosive shell, and there is significantly no reference to Honour or Nobility here:

I strayed about the deck, an hour, tonight
Under a cloudy moonless sky; and peeped
In at the windows, watched my friends at table,
Or playing cards, or standing in the doorway,
Or coming out into the darkness. Still
No one could see me.

I would have thought of them
- Heedless, within a week of battle - in pity,
Pride in their strength and in the weight and firmness
And link'd beauty of bodies, and pity that
This gay machine of splendour 'ld soon be broken,
Thought little of, pashed, scattered....¹

Sorley, whose background (Marlborough, ~~from where he was about to~~ 'go up' to Oxford) and remarkable critical perception² had marked him out for a career of academic distinction similar to that of his father, had not acclaimed Brooke's 1914 Sonnets, as was the general pattern of response from the poetry-reading public as well as from literary critics. He considered, with some

1. The C.P., p.149.

2. Sorley's comments on the crudely popular appeal of T.H.'s 'Men Who March Away' and the insidious charm of 'the voice of our poets and men of letters' have already been quoted as evidence of his astonishingly mature understanding of literary values.

justification that Brooke had been:

... far too obsessed with his own sacrifice, regarding the going to war of himself (and others) as a highly intense, remarkable and sacrificial exploit, whereas it is merely the conduct demanded of him (and others) by the turn of circumstances, where non-compliance with this demand would have made life intolerable.... He has clothed his attitude in fine words; but he has taken the sentimental attitude.¹

Sorley's experience of the Front (and ~~by contrast with~~ Brooke who had never visited the trenches and Grenfell whose sojourn in them was not extensive, it should be remembered that Sorley had a reasonable amount of time in which to make a considered judgement on the unprecedented nature of trench warfare) had taught him that in this environment there was no room for 'false pity' and certainly no opportunity to strike the sentimental attitude if one wished to communicate the truth of the situation. Consequently his two sonnets on the dead, conveniently comparable with those of Brooke, have a strangely dispassionate quality and a noticeably broader appeal than Brooke's since Sorley does not specify the nationality of the Dead. He appreciates the 'levelling' influence of Death, a popular conceit of the Elizabethans, as well as its ubiquity:

We stand among the many millions who
Do hourly wait to pass your pathway down.

There is no flamboyant gesture of sacrifice here, rather a quiet acceptance of Death's presence leading to a 'homeless land and friendless' which the poet is prepared to visit, without fuss:

Such, such is Death: no triumph: no defeat:
Only an empty pail, a slate rubbed clean,²
A merciful putting away of what has been.

-
1. Letter to Mrs Sorley, 28.11.14, The Letters of Charles Sorley, (1919), p.263.
 2. 'The Dead, II', 1914 - 18 In Poetry, p.40.

Sorley seems to be deliberately redressing the balance here from the thoughtless anticipation of glorious death envisaged by the older, conventionally patriotic poets, and the extravagant assessment of the 'radiance' left behind by the Brookean dead, to a more sober realisation of the 'millions of the mouthless dead' which the War will claim and who should not be glorified by their survivors (as this is tantamount to approving of the War condition). In 'To Germany', Sorley goes a stage further by insisting that, contrary to popular opinion, Germany was not solely responsible for the War for she too was 'blind' and the protagonists have been seemingly brought together, to stand 'in each other's dearest ways... /And hiss and hate', by some malignant force which relishes the spectacle of the 'blind fighting the blind', as Matthew Arnold had presaged in 'Dover Beach' with his image of 'Ignorant armies clash[ing] by night'. Sorley briefly allows the prospect of reconciliation and peace to intervene, but it is only casually mooted, and in the meantime the forces of chaos will hold sway:

But, until peace, the storm
The darkness and the thunder and the rain.¹

What Sorley's poems do suggest is a rather different conception of death from that outlined in the Brooke Sonnets or 'Into Battle', and a radically altered concept of heroic crusaders making the 'Supreme Sacrifice' on the 'fields of Valour', envisaged by Newbolt and the masters of the public schools who inculcated upon their pupils an awareness of the traditional ethos. Implicit in Sorley's Sonnets is the idea of man, not as the author

1; 'To Germany', Poetry of the I.W.W., p.128.

of his own destiny but as the victim, not yet of incompetent generals, but of an uncaring, Hardy-esque, supernatural force which denied those involved in battle the consolation of knowing that their sacrifice would benefit England or would somehow preserve and enhance the ancient heritage of the noble institution of the public-school and the standards of moral courage and 'fair play' attendant upon it.

To the general public and the literary critic or reviewer, however, the Brookean image of the young soldier-poet offering himself up as an oblation to atone for previous national dishonour, and responding with fervour to a great cause which could 'touch and make active the springs of poetry in so many high-hearted young spirits of our race ... destined to be on earth never otherwise than young'¹ ~~was firmly rooted in the popular consciousness~~ Now that the time had come to at-
test to the values on which English society prided itself:

... men must be ready to give their lives for what makes life worth living, to sacrifice themselves for a future in which they will have no part; and the readiness to do that is the supreme virtue without which all the others avail nothing.²

In fact, death in battle (following the example of Rupert Brooke) was regarded as the crowning achievement of both the young man's life and his poetry, 'when in the peace and happiness of self-surrender he gave that youth for England'.³ The Crown of Amaranth, an anthology of elegies for those who had 'fallen in the War', referred to the dead as the 'brave and gallant gentle-

-
1. Reviewer of Ralph Hodgson's Poems (T.L.S., 14.16.17).
 2. Leader 'The Two Kinds of Courage', T.L.S., 13.8.14. In March 1915, the first collection of memoirs of 'all British officers killed in action' up to that time, was published under the title The Bond of Sacrifice (T.L.S., 8.3.15).
 3. T.L.S., 17.6.15.

'men who have given their lives for Great and Greater Britain, 1914-15',¹ and a later collection For Remembrance: Soldier Poets who Have Fallen in the War, arranged by A St. John Adcock² similarly celebrates the 'heroic spirit in which they transfigured their self-sacrifice into a thanks-giving and a crown of glory'.

The same tone imbued the various tributes to the dead individuals whose poems appeared shortly after their deaths in 'Slim Volumes of Verse'. The Poems of Robert W. Sterling³, a young Oxonian killed in action on St George's Day, 1915, whose book comprises 'Early Poems from School Magazines' and 'lines written in the trenches', is a case in point and he is acknowledged as 'one of those many finely gifted spirits whose youth's promise has been sacrificed in his country's service'.⁴ Relatives of the dead also subscribed their own 'In Memoriam' tributes - sometimes in verse, as is the case with 'In Honour' from "A Father" which urges a prolongation of the fighting to hasten the return of peace, even though he has lost his own 'young knight of Heaven':

What of the night? - The Foeman comes.
Count not the cost - to Arms! - Obey!
Like Lightning dart from thunderous drums,
Day breaks, the shadows flee away.⁵
Down, down with dusty shibboleths,
All mean hypocrisies and greeds!
Life's cause outweighs a million deaths.
This day hath only room for deeds.
Quit you like men, nor battle cease
Till back returns the affrighted Peace....

1. T.L.S., 1.9.15.

2. Published 22.8.18, the anthology was equipped with biographical notes, extracts from the poems and portraits.

3. T.L.S., 2.12.15.

4. Cf. the tribute to C.H.S. 'ranked with R.B. for promise...waiting in the outer court of the temple of literary fame' (T.L.S., 28.10.15); Leslie P. Jones, 'one of the many keen and skilful lovers of what is fine and beautiful in life whose promise the last year has untimely cut off' (T.L.S., 3.2.16); and Leslie Coulson, 'One of the brilliant young writers whose voice the War has hushed for ever' (T.L.S., 22.3.17).

5. Cf. the popular epitaph taken out of context from The Song of Solomon, IV, 6 'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away'.

The youth mourned here¹ is taken as representative of all the 'Legions of Heroes ever young', and the reviewer of these rather conventional lines extends the hope that "A Father's" tribute will be of value to other bereaved parents as the casualties continue to soar and the vogue for 'In Memoriam' verse becomes established. A popular tendency evolved whereby the dead soldier was identified with Christ², either in His Passion or at the actual Crucifixion. Lance Corporal Joseph Lee³, basing his poem on an incident when a soldier died with the word 'Finished' on his lips, draws an analogy between the combatant and Christ with His 'Consummatum Est':

A soldier's cross stood in the corn,
A simple cross as one might see;
Bethought me of that other morn
That broke o'er barren Calvary.

And of the word the Christ had cried
When His long agony was done:
The 'It is finished!' When He died
And His redeeming work begun....

And in the soldier's sacrifice,
I saw the Christ's in its degree:
A sinful life - let it suffice,
He laid it down for you and me....

Each died that mankind might be free,
Each gave a life for you and me.⁴

1. T.L.S., 16.12.15.

2. A volume of letters from Alfred Eugène Casalis, for example, is sub-titled 'A Young Soldier of France and of Jesus Christ' (T.L.S., 10.8.16).

3. Ballads of Battle, T.L.S., 20.4.16.

4. Cf. Cyril Winterbotham's 'The Cross of Wood', M.I.A., p.159, which first appeared in the Fifth Gloucester Gazette Trench Journal: 'For you no medals such as others wear / - A cross of bronze for those approved brave. / To you is given above a shallow grave / The wooden cross that marks you resting there, / Rest you content. More honourable far / Than all the Orders is the Cross of Wood, / The symbol of self-sacrifice that stood / Bearing the God whose brethren you are'; and Percy Haselden In the Wake of the Sword (T.L.S., 11.10.17) affirms that the 'Cross of Wood' shall prevail 'Against this creed of Iron and Blood!'

Roughly contemporaneous with Lee's piece is Siegfried Sassoon's 'The Redeemer' (initially published in The Cambridge Magazine¹) which also considers the soldier/Christ relation:

I turned in the black ditch, loathing the storm;
A rocket fizzed and burned with blanching flare,
And lit the face of what had been a form
Floundering in mirk. He stood before me there;
I say that He was Christ; stiff in the glare,
And leaning forward from his burdening task,
Both arms supporting it; His eyes on mine
Stared from the woeful head that seemed a mask
Of mortal pain in Hell's unholy shine.

Sassoon, however, deflates the association to some extent by causing ^{a soldier, possibly} the woolly-capped **one** who had seemed to represent suffering Christ, reeling under the weight of His Cross as he trudged to Calvary, to emit a profanity, which uses Christ's name as a curse:

And some one flung his burden in the muck,
Mumbling: 'O Christ Almighty, now I'm struck!'

Later usages³ of the soldier/Christ analogy - such as Isaac Rosenberg's letter⁴ to Marsh: 'What is happening to me now is more tragic than the "passion play". Christ never endured what I endure. It is breaking me completely' - suggest that the modern soldier's Golgotha is a more searing experience than Christ's Calvary. Herbert Read makes use of the soldier/Christ association in 'My Company' where he explains the bond of suffering which links himself as an officer with his men, 'My modern Christs', and the analogy appears more extensively in the work of Wilfred Owen where it is closely connected with his concept of 'the Greater Love' which, in turn, influenced Owen's distinctive, compassionate approach towards his men:

1. 15.6.16.

2. Collected Poems, 1908-56, p.16.

3. E.g. Evelyn Tollemeche, The New Crucifixion and Other Poems, T.L.S., 5.12.18.

4. 26.1.18.

For fourteen hours yesterday I was at work teaching Christ to lift His cross by numbers, and how to adjust his crown; and not to imagine he thirst till after the last halt. I attended his Supper to see that there were not complaints; and inspected his feet that they should be worthy of the nails. I see to it that he is dumb, and stands at attention before his accusers. With a piece of silver I buy him every day, and with maps I make him familiar with the topography of Golgotha.¹

'At a Calvary^f near the Ancre' and 'Le Christianisme' both depict frail effigies of Christ which decorate the French road-side and the Church and which have been^s smashed as effortlessly by the shrapnel explosion as a man's body could have been, underlining Owen's contention that in this War, the savage Old Testament 'Field Marshal' God, who bears a grudge against rosy youth until it has been 'white-washed' and who arranges for the weapons 'Kind Jesus has fouled' (in an effort to initiate a truce) to be repaired, has the ultimate authority.

Allied with the identification of the soldier's suffering with that of Christ was a deeper awareness of the common humanity extending between men of different classes and, eventually, of different nationalities, summed up by T.M. Kettle, in his sonnet to his daughter 'before Guillemont, Somme, 4th September 1916':

Know that we fools, now with the foolish dead,
Died not for flag, nor King, nor Emperor,
But for a dream, born in a herdsman's shed,
And for the secret scripture of the poor.²

A T.L.S. leader, 'The Army and the Nation', of about the same period³ makes the point that this 'Nation under Arms' (as distinct from the Regular Army) has initiated some notable social adjustments which might be applied to civilian life after the War: most notably

-
1. Letter to Osbert Sitwell, 4.7.16, on training troops in England prior to his return to the Front. Letters of W.O., p.562.
 2. Poems and Parodies, (T.L.S., 1.2.17).
 3. T.L.S., 7.9.16.

the bond of fellowship¹ existing between different ranks and effected by the common danger of facing death together² so that 'soldiers are now brothers in a common understanding', the old sense of status having disappeared:

Facing death they have seen the spirit of man in themselves and in their fellows, and they know that it is the reality behind all the illusions built up by class³ prejudices .

In such circumstances, Death's terror retreated, as the volume of one combatant, Richard Dennys, testifies, in its affirmation of the comradeship of the trenches, after which 'There is no Death':

My share of fourscore years and ten
I'll gladly yield to any man,
And take no thought of 'where' or 'when',
Contented with my shorter span.
For I have learned what love may be,
And found a heart that understands,
And human a comrade's constancy,
And felt the grip of friendly hands.

Come when it may, the stern decree
For me to leave the cheery throng
And quit the sturdy company
Of brothers that I work among,
No need for me to look askance,
Since no regret my prospect mars.
My day was happy - and perchance
The coming night is full of stars.⁴

Having made 'fellowships... /Wound with war's hard wire whose stakes are strong; /Bound with the bandage of the arm that drips'⁵, irrespective of different ranks and backgrounds, it was

-
1. 'That delightful camaraderie which, I suppose, is peculiar to a fighting army and which is something finer and manlier than anything I experienced either at School or College', Herbert Read, A War Diary (17.7.16) The C.E., p.72. Cf. M. Barrès' vision of social peace based upon 'l'amitié des tranchées' and the larger prospect of 'L'Europe unanime'.
 2. Cf. Frederic Manning, H.P.W., p.258: 'there was no bond stronger than that necessity which has bound us together'.
 3. And by certain national distinctions between the Allies, at least, as Notre Camarade Tommy, Henri Ruffin and Andre Tudesq (T.L.S., 8.11.17) suggests.
 4. Richard Dennys, There is no Death, (T.L.S., 17.5.17).
 5. W.O. 'Apologia Pro Poemate Meo', Cf. Graves, 'Two Fusiliers': 'By wire and wood and stake we're bound.../By friendship blossoming from mud....'

possible for two inter-related developments to evolve from this identification of a corporate spirit among the combatants. One involved the establishment of a special bond of responsibility on the part of the Line-officer towards his men, the 'lovely lads' of whom he was in charge; and the other concerned the soldiers' own re-definition of their status as no longer the 'propitiatory sacrifice', offered on behalf of the Motherland, but the martyrs massacred by their country's intransigence and the victims of an inhuman War where the old ideals of individual valour and conspicuous endurance no longer admitted of the heroic gesture which had distinguished previous human conflicts:

... this war is the appalling, supernatural fatigue with water to the waist, and mud and filth and infamous dirt. It is the mouldy faces and the ragged flesh, and the corpses which are not even like corpses, floating above the voracious soil. It is the infinite monotony of wretchedness interrupted by acute dramas, it is that and not the bayonet which glitters like silver, nor the cock-crow of the trumpet-blast in the sun.¹

French poetry and prose, through such work as Barbusse's Le Feu and Georges Duhamel's La Vie Des Martyrs, exemplified the second trend whereby the combatants interpreted their position in the trenches as that of 'Les Victimes', antagonistic to the Péguy pursuit of 'La Gloire': '[les blessés] eux, nos frères, so las d'être glorieux'. Georges Pioch in his volume of poems, Les Victimes,² proposed a censorship of all poets who celebrated martial glory in the hope that, thus, war would lose its attraction. The T.L.S. reviewer, on the other hand, totally repudiates this suggestion by re-affirming how necessary some degree of idealism is, even after three full years of War.

1. Barbusse, Le Feu.

2. T.L.S., 20.12.17.

Altogether, Pioch's book of verse was considered to have failed in its purpose to stir and direct opinion away from the conventional response to War, because it lapsed into such outbursts of anger that the reader became alienated.¹ A similar effect was noted by the reviewer² of Arthur Graeme West's Diary of a Dead Officer, which protested his 'pathetic rapture of love for his surroundings and his soldier comrades', but lost the reviewer's sympathy when he attempted to articulate his nihilist philosophy. West had been a Balliol scholar, killed by a chance bullet, after a period of profound unhappiness as a combatant. He had rejected the idea of God, just as he spurned the patriotic concept and hated the War particularly for its insistence upon the subjugation of individual free will to the herd instinct. In his misery, West's only consolation was the love of his friends whose comradeship sustained him in the pervading agony and it was in the hope of discouraging another full-scale conflict, that he had prepared his Diary and a few pieces of verse for publication.

'God, How I Hate You' denounced the 'young cheerful men, / Whose pious poetry blossoms on [their] graves / As soon as [they] are in them', and encourages others to follow their example of pointless sacrifice. West, speaking from bitter experience of France, presents a different picture of the war-scape where 'blood's the only coloured thing' and men die gruesome deaths ('his head / Smashed like an eggshell and the warm grey brain / Spattered all bloody on the parados') to gratify a blood-thirsty

-
1. The T.L.S. reviewer of Civilisation 1914-17, Denis Thévenin (13.6.18) admitted similar bewilderment in trying to follow all the strands of M.Thevenin's indictment of society for allowing 'civilisation' to collapse and prophesied that to future generations, this book would seem like the record of a fevered nightmare.
 2. T.L.S., 16.1.19.

God. 'Night Patrol' describes in a form of blank verse an excursion into No Man's Land, weaving between the 'archipelago /Of corrupt fragments' of the dead who 'stank through all', to reach the German wire. West notes with irony how one corpse has fallen in an attitude reminiscent of a Crusader's effigy on a knight's tomb, for nothing could be more incongruous, in West's opinion, than to see a relic from a Chivalric era in this twentieth century war-scape.

A similar appreciation of the incompatibility of an earlier heroic age with the present experience of modern warfare is indicated in an astringent little review¹ of E.B. Osborn's The New Elizabethans which disapproves of Osborn's coining of the 'falsely sentimental phrase' and the generally maudlin tone of the memorials which are unfavourably compared with the 'thousand private memoirs² in the process of being printed' by the friends and family of the Dead. The reviewer goes on to warn that The New Elizabethans' faults could very well pertain also to public memorials to the Dead, unless a sufficient understanding of the unprecedented character of this First World War which 'cost their lives', is achieved.

The T.L.S. reviewer responded³ with enthusiasm, however, to the 'terrible realism' of a German equivalent to Le Feu, a novel entitled Menschen Im Krieg, by Andreas Letzko, which deprecates the opportunist staff officer who uses the War to further his

1. T.L.S., 24.4.19.

2. Of which Prof. and Mrs Sorley's edition of The Letters of C.H.S. was particularly commended for its restraint and evocation of a young man's personality in a range of moods- 'cherubic, morbid, brilliant and rebellious'.

3. 19.9.18.

own ambitions, like the Commandant whom the War has brought from provincial obscurity to a chateau, with the power of life and death over one hundred thousand men, and who is obviously not anxious for peace to be speedily concluded:

Have you noticed the young men who come from the front? Sunburnt, healthy and cheerful! In peace-time most of them were crouching in some office or other, slack, pasty, backboneless. Believe me, the world has never before been so healthy as it is today.

The staff depicted in Rudolf-Jeremiah Kreutz's Austrian war-novel, Captain Zillner¹, are equally callous. They are either 'futile pedants' or 'heartless butchers', indifferent to the fate of their men, leaving them to struggle alone on the retreat down the 'via dolorosa', but the reviewer, while admitting the 'authentic smack' of Captain Zillner, betrayed a somewhat bored response to 'another painful book of international revolt against War', believing that it was now time to move from recrimination to reconstruction.

More tolerance was evinced in the reviews of recent French literature which arraigned the public at large for having allowed the inhumanity of trench warfare to continue when peace was several times in prospect. Barbusse's Clarté was applauded² for evoking, as Le Feu had done, the 'long distorted nightmare of day and night in and out of the trenches', and for his skilful characterization of the typical 'poilu':

... With Barbusse's soldiers, the reader feels the deadening weight of the pack, the grind of shoulder straps, the exasperation of obstacles in the trench, and all seemingly trivial miseries which pile up into the unpayable debt of hatred against the war-makers.... Up till now no one has rendered more truthfully and poignantly the tragedy of the 'common soldier' of all armies, the man who suffers most and gets least for it, 'Les soldats d'infanterie, les pauvres qui marchent toujours, les juifs-errants!'

1. Reviewed T.L.S., 15.5.19.

2. Ibid., 12.6.19.

Marcel Martinet's La Maison a l'Abri¹ was similarly selected as representative of the present trend for anti-War books (in France at least) though the reviewer had little sympathy with Martinet's convincing denunciation of 'the Monster, War', finding such unadulterated pacifism not conducive to his personal taste and designates ^{Martinet's} views: "'Défaitiste" propaganda'. While French prose had ^{been} organized ^{to articulate} an effective response to War, tending towards denunciation of aggressive militarism (not least in the early French poetry of the War), poetry had approached the subject of war very spasmodically² in France, with nothing approaching the 'spiritual efflorescence' among young soldier-poets remarked upon in English literary commentary. The whole corpus of French poetry was examined with admirable care, however, in the T.L.S. leader, and another review in November 1919³ discussed in some detail three volumes of 'Défaitiste' verse: Rene Arcos, Le Sang des Autres, P.-J. Jouve, Heures and Marcel Martinet (again) Les Temps Maudits. The three volumes had been published in Geneva since France had adopted a stern policy towards Conscientious Objection during the War, and the principal emotion in each volume was very palpably that of pity. This pity was directed not only towards the poets' compatriots but towards the Germans as, well, 'Nos Frères Ennemis'. Arcos' approach was characterised by contempt for national prejudice; Jouve was impelled by bitter indignation, and Martinet was compassionate but pessimistic. All

1. T.L.S., 25.9.19.

2. Judging by a Leader on 'French War Poetry', T.L.S., 2.10.19, Much combatant French verse appeared first in the Trench Journals, corresponding to the British Wipers and Somme Times.

3. 6.11.19.

three poets were agreed on the target of their 'défaitisme' - War, the 'ultimate crime against humanity'. Martinet mourned the slaughter of masses of working class people in the name of 'Patrie', 'Waterland' 'Mother Country', in a quarrel not theirs, and in 'Médailles' he addresses himself to the 'infirmes' who have misguidedly risked their lives for their 'rubans' and 'croix' and who 'n'accepter^z pas d'avoir pour rien souffert'. An even more searing indictment of the Socialist leaders who subscribed to the national propaganda programme is presented in Jouve's 'Danse des Morts' and all three poets evince their strong dissatisfaction with the peace terms agreed: 'Cette paix donne la certitude d'une guerre plus bestialement, haineuse, plus hypocritement, pharisaïque, plus impérialiste et anti-humaine'. Similarly the poets were agreed upon planning a programme of social and literary reform in which 'Les écrivains ont un rôle à remplir, un rôle de guide et d'éducation' in instituting 'L'Europe Unanime' delineated in René Arcos' 'Les Morts Fraternelles':

Serrés les uns contre les autres
Les morts sans haine et sans drapeau
Cheveux plaqués de sang caille
Les morts sont tous d'un seul côté.

In English poetry such a pronounced association with the dead of all the belligerent nations is less forthcoming. There is a definite movement among the bitter ironists, notably Sassoon, to channel anger away from the enemy and towards the incompetent General Staff, whose profligate disposal of thousands of young lives in futile attacks, raids or reconnaissance sorties had the effect of extinguishing any vestiges of patriotic ardour as is manifested in 'The General'¹:

1. C.P. of S.S., p.75.

'Good-morning; good-morning!' the General said.
When we met him last week on our way to the line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead,
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
'He's a cheery old card', grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.

* * * * *

But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

A similar disillusionment with the ideal of martial glory as disseminated by such establishments as the public school, infuses a multiplicity of individual poems: A.P. Herbert's 'After the Battle'; W.N. Ewer's 'Five Souls'; Osbert Sitwell's 'This Generation'; Edmund Blunden's 'Vlamertinghe', to cite but a few, all of which reaffirm the change which has taken place in the soldier's assessment of himself as victim of Fate, rather than conscious conductor of his own destiny. From considering himself as a crusader, medieval knight-at-arms, embodiment of the adventurous English spirit which embraced the challenge on his own terms, he had become Isaac who was slaughtered by an intransigent father; David who lost the fight with Goliath; and the chivalric Knight who found chain-mail no protection against the enfiling Mausers. Most particularly, he identified himself with Christ whom he called upon in anger: 'O Christ Almighty, now I'm struck!', or in desperation, 'O Jesus, make it stop!'

It was from this concentration upon humanity rather than a remote Deity that the 'comitatus'-spirit between men of all ranks and the sense of camaraderie shared by all front-line combatants was derived. Allied with this general comradeship was the specially intense relationship between the young officer and his equally youthful men, where the idiom of A Shropshire Lad - 'lovely lads', 'Soldiers marching all to die', 'bones of comrades slain'- had

been absorbed by the combatant-poets (who allegedly¹ had immediate access to Housman's poems) causing them to infuse their conception of the vulnerable, white bodies of 'The sure, the straight, the brave' with a particular passionate intensity, verging on the homo-erotic. The transmutation of the quick, lithe body into a red, wet thing, which ~~had to~~ be forgotten if sanity ~~were~~ to be preserved, provided the crucial **image** which was to symbolize the jarring dichotomy implicit in the War experience. Most examples of this intense visualization of the doomed 'soldier boys', 'beautiful suffering lads', whose frailty - like that of Poor Tom in King Lear - is emphasized by the presence of some gargantuan natural or manufactured destructive force, appear in the work of such poets as E.A. Mackintosh, who envisages himself as enjoying a closer relationship with his men than is usually experienced through the paternal-filial bond, and who prefers to die rather than to survive, friendless; Ivor Gurney whose 'quick body' / 'red wet thing' juxtaposition prompted the initial dichotomy; Robert Nichols, Herbert Read and Max Plowman, all of whom feel a special custodial responsibility towards their men; and - most particularly - Wilfred Owen. Owen makes the most sustained use of the Housman-esque 'lad' and frequently **employs** in his poems the sensuous imagery of conventional sexual love, *to suggest how much inferior such love is by comparison with the camaraderie-bond, with its inordinately 'greater love'*:

Red lips are not so red
As the stained stones kissed by the English dead.
Kindness of wood and wooer
Seems shame to their love pure.
O Love, your eyes lose lure
When I behold eyes blinded in my stead!

and again:

1. 'Housman was in every pocket', Anthology of War Poetry, p,29,

I have made fellowships -
Untold of happy lovers in old song.
For love is not the binding of fair lips
With the soft silk of eyes that look and long,

By Joy, whose ribbon slips, -
But wound with war's hard wire whose stakes are strong.

But it is ⁱⁿOwen's 'Strange Meeting', flawed as it may be technically, that the various aspects of camaraderie coalesce most convincingly with a reconciliation¹ between the protagonists only after they are dead. It is the tragedy of war that only then can they fully appreciate the effect their loss (and that of all the others who have died) will have, as they mourn together the 'undone years', the pursuit of beauty denied to them and their inability to transmit their understanding of 'The pity of war, the pity war distilled' which might have helped to influence the survivors of the War towards a rejection of another Armageddon.

1. Cf. Walt Whitman's poem of this title: 'For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead, /I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin - I draw near, /Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin' (1865-6); and also Sassoon's contribution from November 1918, which reminds the visitor to any English hero's grave that 'German soldiers ... were loyal and brave' also and in the Golgotha of battle 'perhaps you'll find /The mothers of the men who killed your son'.

EPILOGUE

Without doubt the England of late 1918 / early 1919 was a profoundly different place from the 'last' Summer, of 1914, the innocence of which could never be recaptured. Even by mid-1915, the reviewers of The Times Literary Supplement had put up a psychological divide between the pre-1914 world and the war-time situation, finding it difficult to assess publications which had been delayed in getting to the printers in 1914 and whose substance belonged to that irrevocable pre-War era. Looking back over sixty years, there certainly seems to be an abyss separating November 1918 from August 1914, but a week-by-week survey of the journals of the War years and the newly-published and reprinted work of the poets, indicates that, in reality, this supposed four-year hiatus is much less pronounced than it may have appeared from a distance. Certain poets - most notably of the 'old school', Newbolt and Watson, for example - rarely allowed themselves to be diverted from their customary mode of utterance (even by a European War which showed every sign of being a protracted affair), and Eliot and Pound and others of the Home-based Imagist Group were largely unaffected by the War (although they may have been irritated by the abundance of 'amateur' verse it prompted), but, these exceptions aside, the War impinged substantially on every aspect of normal life, including the arts, and its effect upon poetry was, overall, quite significant.

Such considerations as the availability of paper and the turn of events in the various theatres of War dictated the proliferation, or diminution, of certain types of poetry. The 'Slim Volume of Verse' genre, for example, principally derived from the phenomenally successful 1914 Sonnets of Rupert Brooke, was seized upon by the publishing houses which had to economize with their paper and which also saw the opportunity for making a considerable profit by charging quite a high price for such volumes. They reasoned that if Lady Pamela Glenconner had put out a little memoir of her son E.W. Tennant, it would probably be bought by customers from the same background who could afford 3 / 6 for a small volume (when the standard price for a soldier-poetry anthology was 1 / - or 1 / 6).

In general the years 1914 - 1919 can be divided, from the publishing point of view, into five periods. 1914-15 saw an immediate increase in the number of pamphlets (including verse broad-sheets) on war-related subjects, as well as the institution of a specific War Series of books from the different publishing houses - Erskine MacDonald's 'Soldier Poets' Series, for example. Most spectacularly, the first year of war was dominated by volumes of verse from the individual elder non-combatant poets and by anthologies of overtly patriotic verse, including stirring examples of the heroic poetry of previous centuries. In the second year of war (1915 - 1916) there was a slight re-alignment in the quantities of verse of different types with an increase in poetry in the Georgian idiom, while there was a perceptible reduction in the number of volumes from non-combatant versifiers. By 1916 - 1917, the aggressively martial anthologies of the first few months of War had been

practically superseded by collections of combatant verse, of which Galloway Kyle's Soldier Poets Anthology and E.B. Osborn's The Muse in Arms were representative, and a new trend of 'In Memoriam' verse (such as the compilation of elegies entitled The Book of Sorrows) was discernible. A bevy of 'Slim Volumes of Verse' appeared towards the end of 1917 and the emphasis on combatant poetry (particularly the extant verses of young officers who had 'fallen on the field of valour') was sustained during the last year of War. The final period from 1918 to 1919 included a vast number of war publications, held over ^{from} earlier in the War, when the paper shortage had precluded publication of various peripheral war-volumes.

As far as leading articles and reviews of poetry in the T.L.S. were concerned for the years 1914 to 1919, fluctuations naturally appeared in the degree of interest shown by the writer in the work under review, though, overall, literary commentators endeavoured to give a fair assessment of the volumes discussed, bearing in mind the current preoccupations of the reading public. From mid-1914 certain leaders or reviews were distinguished by a degree of sympathy for the text or the particular author which evinced a keener awareness of contemporary literary trends at home and abroad than had been the case in the established journals before 1914. During the War itself, several leading articles in the T.L.S. were impressive for their analysis of trends in contemporary verse (in particular the discussion of the 'Soldier Patriot' in May 1917, and the well-researched survey of 'French War Poetry' in October 1919) and a greater degree of competence in the discussion of verse was apparent throughout the pages of the T.L.S. as the War progressed.

Certainly there were some banalities, ill-judged opinions and curt dismissals of work which was deserving of deeper study, but these were on the whole balanced out by some excellent reviews of the work of young soldier-poets in which the hand of Virginia Woolf can be detected, from time to time.

Leading articles in the T.L.S. quite frequently drew attention to the 'spiritual efflorescence' among the combatants which usually took the form of verse and the efficacy of writing poetry (as opposed to prose) at a time of heightened intensity such as the War occasioned, was frequently commented upon. A June 1916 Leading article, 'Liberty and the War', based on an English Association Conference, held to discuss the effect of the war on the production and reading of books, explained that:

... a greater thing than sentiment has ... taken its place; a thing that needs poetry for its full expression: what we call emotion, the sorrowing, rejoicing, wrathful loving spirit of man. Only the highest sort of human writing can satisfy that ... and true instinct has made people turn to history and poetry during the last year.

It was alleged that officers in the trenches preferred to read poetry (Rupert Brooke, Wordsworth and such anthologies as Bridges' Spirit of Man) while the rank and file were said to prefer fiction, though other accounts of reading habits at the Front suggest that poetry - or at any rate verse - was generally popular among all the men of the New Armies, who were quite well grounded in the English literary heritage. The increase in the writing of poetry was ascribed to the natural tendency to turn to a shorter, more direct appeal to the emotions in time of stress, and the same logic was applied to explain the more widespread reading of poetry in war-time. In a largely sedentary trench war,

there was more time and inclination to read and jot down lines of poetry, or carefully-detailed observation of the natural environment or a particular mood, which accounts, perhaps, for the proliferation of Field Pocket Books, Carnets de Route and Fieldtagebüchen (although it was forbidden to keep a diary as such).

On the Home Front, a plethora of war books of all types claimed the attention of the public who had little incentive to go out for their entertainment, and who were recommended by the jolly Herbert Jenkins advertisements, in particular, to 'consume at least one book a week of prose or verse, 'to keep up morale'. Reports from war correspondents, Erskine MacDonald's 'Little Books of Georgian Verse', topical accounts of 'Life in the Line' were all enjoyed by the Nation at Home, but their most effusive acclaim was usually reserved for the 'Memoir' and 'Slim Volume of Verse' genre, for the fascination of the Gallant Company of soldier-poets (which conjured up the wraith of Sir Philip Sidney, the archetypal Poet Soldier) sacrificing themselves on behalf of their native land was irresistible, and many of the 'Slim Volumes' and 'Memorial Tributes' went into several impressions.

Throughout the War, new volumes of verse appeared on an average of five per week, of which three or four would have some connection with the War. The War condition undoubtedly, therefore, influenced the number of volumes of verse produced from 1914 to 1919 although it was realised at the time that much of this work would have only an ephemeral value. The reputation of certain War Poets however, Owen, Rosenberg, Sassoon and Blunden, most

particularly, gradually became established through the 1920's and 1930's, with J. Middleton Murry hailing Owen as the 'Poet of the War', and C. Day Lewis enthusiastically championing him as one of the pre-cursors of post-War poetry (together with Hopkins and Eliot).

Owen's poetry was particularly conducive to the Left Wing poets of the post-War decades, and was absorbed by certain of the young poets of the 1930's who became involved in the Spanish Civil War. To this generation, brought up on the Great War ethos of trenches, sand-bags and barbed wire, Catalonia and Andalusia must have come as something of a shock and most of the combatant-poets in the 1936 to 1939 Spanish War returned to England somewhat disillusioned, which may have contributed towards the generally rather arid response from young poets to the Declaration of a Second World War. C. Day Lewis's inquiry, 'Where are the War Poets?' went largely unanswered and unfulfilled, if he had expected a repetition of the Great War's association between 'The Muse and Mars'.

Some identification between First and Second World War Poets can be suggested: Day Lewis having been saturated in the Owen mystique; Alun Lewis adopting Edward Thomas as his poetic exemplar; and Keith Douglas, with his curious Metaphysical mind, finding some points of sympathy with Isaac Rosenberg. Because the very nature of the two world wars was so different, however, and the attitude of the combatants in 1939 (conscripts now, no eager jostling for places among the volunteers) fundamentally altered, a repetition of the First World War movement from idealism to cynicism, from Voluntary Sacrifice to ignominious slaughter, traced through the verse of its soldier poets could hardly have

occurred. There was none of the same shock and outrage to register at the beginning of the Second World War as there had been for the combatants of the Somme and Passchendaele Campaigns. As Alex Comfort had declared, his post-Great War generation had grown up 'from early adolescence in the almost complete certainty that we should be killed in action' and so the inordinate brutality of the Guernica bombings or the Jewish pogroms of the late 1930's could be more easily borne by a generation which had grown up with the experience of the ^{de}bâcles of the First World War absorbed into the national consciousness.

A fruitful field of future research in the whole area of twentieth century war poetry might be uncovered by comparing the critical and public reception awarded to poets of the Second World War and that given to the poets of the Great War, in order to test **why it should be** that whenever one thinks of War Poetry the names of Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Isaac Rosenberg come to mind, and whenever War is spoken of:

The war that was called Great invades the mind:
The grey militia marches over land
A darker mood of grey
Where fractured tree-trunks stand
And shells, exploding, open sudden fans
Of smoke and earth

APPENDIX 'A'

ETYMOLOGY OF THE TERM 'NO MAN'S LAND'

This term, which in its various forms - 'noman's land', 'No-Man's Land', 'No Man's Land' - immediately evokes the image of First World War trench-warfare in the modern consciousness, had a naval meaning prior to the twentieth century. The Oxford English Dictionary does not give a date although it traces the nautical use of the term ('the space amidships used to contain any blocks, ropes, tackles, necessary on the forecastle') to 1769.

In common usage, the term 'No Man's Land' is defined by the O.E.D. as originally meaning 'a piece of waste or unowned land and was in early use as the name of a plot of ground lying outside the north wall of London and designated as a place of execution'. In this respect, the First World War practice of binding recalcitrant Conscientious Objectors (who had been nevertheless drafted into the Army) to a stake in No Man's Land made singularly appropriate use of an area originally associated with the execution of alleged criminals.

The term does not appear in any military dictionaries during the first half of the nineteenth century although it is featured in various multi-language¹ dictionaries of military terms of the early twentieth century. John Brophy and Eric Partridge² volunteer the following definition of 'No Man's Land' which provides further insight into its historical background:

-
1. The German term, 'niemandsländ', is comparatively close to the English, but there are two seemingly contradictory variants of the term in French (dating from I.W.W. military usage): 'la zone neutre' and 'le terrain contesté'.
 2. The Long Trail (1965).

A strangely romantic name for the area between the front line trenches of either army, held by neither, but patrolled, at night, by both. Originally used for waste ground, barren stretches between two provinces or kingdoms - Defoe in Robinson Crusoe uses it to signify a border. The O.E.D. notes that an official Roll of A.D. 1320 uses 'nonnes mannes land'. Defoe spells it 'no man's land'; in the 1880's it was used in the form 'noman's land' and in the 1890's 'no-man's land'.

It would certainly appear from information received from the Imperial War Museum and the National Army Museum¹ that the term 'No Man's Land' became popularized in its military sense during the First World War, for the type of warfare and weapons used by the British Army up to the Great War did not call for a No Man's Land. Possibly it had been used as a military term in the American Civil War, where the weapons were of sufficient accuracy and fire power to make an unoccupied space between the front lines advisable, however, the First World War dating seems more likely. From autumn 1914 to summer 1918, No Man's Land was an inevitable barrier between the opposing front line trenches in this situation of largely static warfare. It became a common feature of both military jargon and colloquial soldier-parlance and while an attempt was made by the combatants to familiarize their trench-habitat, by giving such names as 'Piccadilly' and 'Hyde Park Corner' to certain areas, a sense of mystery always pertained to No Man's Land. A complete mythology evolved around the area where the ghosts of the dead were supposed to congregate and - equally terrifying - whole companies of men (presumably deserters of different nationalities) were rumoured to

1. I have been indebted, in the compiling of information for this note, to Jane Carmichael, Assistant to the Research and Information Officer of the I.W.M. and Miss E. Talbot Rice, Research and Information Officer of the National Army Museum for their helpful comments on the derivation of the term 'No Man's Land'.

live wild in the shell-holes, scavenging from the bodies of the dead and dying. Whether there was any truth in this rumour or not, No Man's Land was associated in the soldiers' minds with an eerie, non-human quality,¹ to which the very term subscribes.

Throughout the War, abundant references to the term appeared in accounts of war-experience (both factual and imaginative) and Wilfred Owen's description of No Man's Land, in a letter² to his mother written quite soon after his 'baptism of fire', is particularly memorable:

It is like the eternal place of gnashing of teeth; the Slough of Despond could be contained in one of its crater-holes; the fires of Sodom and Gomorrah could not light a candle to it - to find the way to Babylon the Fallen.

It is pock-marked like a body of foulest disease and its odour is the breath of cancer....

No Man's Land under snow is like the face of the moon: chaotic, crater-ridden, uninhabitable, awful, the abode of madness.

By the end of the War, the term 'No Man's Land' had become an accepted expression with reference to trench-warfare, and in the post-War decades slight modifications of the term - such as Herbert Read's coinage, 'no-man's-years between the wars'³ - extended its applicability to non-military situations. In the 1970's, instances have been noted where the term 'No Man's Land' has been used in a variety of environments: it has operated in its military sense as an alternative to the Americanized expression 'Demilitarized Zone'; its joint connotations (of contest and neutrality) have rendered it an appropriate term for use by the

-
1. The distinction between the strangeness of No Man's Land and the comparative familiarity of the trenches is underlined in a book by A.M. Williamson, entitled Crucifix Corner (T.L.S., 12.9.18, first mentioned) which refers to this notorious part of the Salient as 'Everyman's Land'.
 2. 19.1.17, The Collected Letters of Wilfred Owen, p.429.
 3. Preface to the 1962 Edition of The Contrary Experience, p.12.

media in reporting customarily-polarized industrial disputes (where other expressions from First World War trench-warfare: 'entrenched opinions', 'the two sides have dug themselves in...', 'we're back to the same old trench-warfare'¹, also apply); and, most recently, it has been intermittently used during sports commentaries² to refer to the crucial mid-field area (in soccer) the domination of which usually determines the eventual winner of the game.³

1. An expression used by a British Leyland shop-steward (I.T.N. News at 10, 25.8.77) after a fruitless round of discussions with the Management at the Longbridge Plant: the opponents here are, of course, the B.L. Management and the Trade Union officials, representing the Shop Floor.

2. Coverage of the 1978 World Cup is a case in point.

3. A not inappropriate illustration of the term's usage if one remembers the 'games spirit' in which many young officers approached the War and, in particular, Capt. W.P. Nevill's action in encouraging his men on the first day of the Somme Battle by kicking a football across No Man's Land towards the German lines.

APPENDIX 'B'

PAUL NASH PAINTINGS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER II

Key to Paintings

B. 1. Green Hill, 1913.

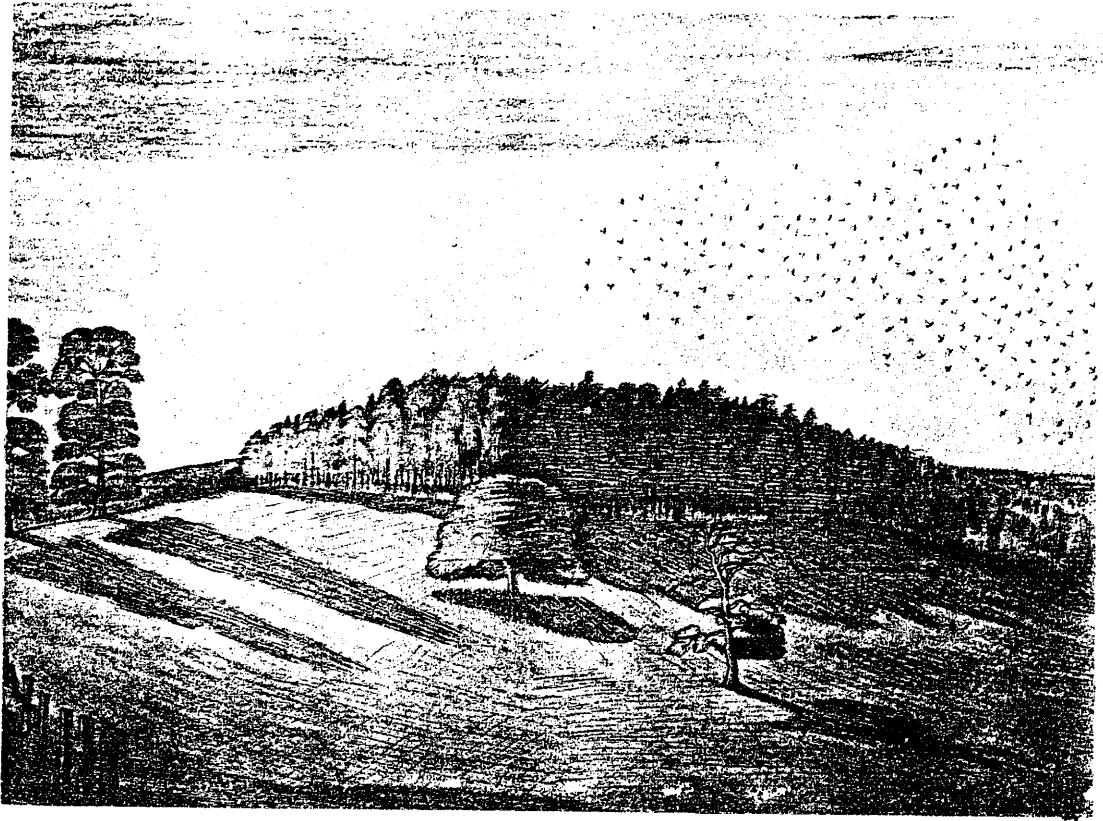
B. 2. Wittenham Clumps, 1912.

B. 3. Chaos Decoratif, 1917.

B. 4. Desolate Landscape, Ypres Salient, 1917.

B. 5. Spring in the Trenches, 1917/1918.

B. 6. We Are Making A New World, 1918.



B. 1.



B. 2.



B. 3.

B. 4.





B. 5.



B. 6.

APPENDIX 'C'

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. Names

L.A.	Lascelles Abercrombie
R.A.	Richard Aldington
A.B.	Arnold Bennett
E.B.	Edmund Blunden
G.B.	Gordon Bottomley
G-B.	Henri Gaudier-Brzeska
L.B.	Laurence Binyon
R.B.	Rupert Brooke
V.B.	Vera Brittain
J.D.	John Davidson
W.H.D.	W.H. Davies
T.S.E.	T.S. Eliot
J.E.F.	James Elroy Flecker
J.G.F.	John Gould Fletcher
F.M.F.	Ford Madox Ford
R.G.	Robert Graves
J.G.	Julian Grenfell
I.G.	Ivor Gurney
T.H.	Thomas Hardy
F.W.H.	F.W. Harvey
A.E.H.	A.E. Housman
R.K.	Rudyard Kipling
D.H.L.	D.H. Lawrence
F.L.	Francis Ledwidge
W.L.	Wyndham Lewis

E.A.M. E.A. Mackintosh
F.M. Frederic Manning
E.M. Edward Marsh
H.M. Harold Monro

H.N. Henry Newbolt
P.N. Paul Nash
R.N. Robert Nichols

W.O. Wilfred Owen

E.P. Ezra Pound

H.R. Herbert Read
I.R. Isaac Rosenberg

C.H.S. Charles Hamilton Sorley
S.S. Siegfried Sassoon

E.T. Edward Thomas

W.W. William Watson
A.G.W. Arthur Graeme West

2. Titles

A.H.R. A Highland Regiment
A.S.L. A Shropshire Lad
A.W.P. Anthology Of War Poetry : 1914-1918 (1943)

Bl. I Blast, 1914
Bl. II Blast, 1915
'B.D.T.' 'Break of Day in the Trenches'
B.R.B. Barrack-Room Ballads

C-A. Counter-Attack and Other Poems
C.E. The Contrary Experience
C.P. { Complete Poems (not specified)
Collected Poems " " "

- C.W. { Complete Works (not specified)
Collected Works " " "
- C.W.L. Isaac Rosenberg Catalogue with Letters (1959)
- 'D.M.D.' 'Dead Man's Dump'
'D.W.' 'Daughters of War'
- E.A.P. English Association Pamphlet
Ego. The Egoist (1914 - 1919)
E.M.E. England, My England
E.R. English Review
- F. & F. Fairies and Fusiliers
- G.P. I Georgian Poetry, 1911 - 12
G.P. II " " " 1913 - 15
G.P. III " " " 1916 - 17
G.P. IV 1918 - 19
G.W.M.M. The Great War and Modern Memory
- H.P.W. Her Privates We
H.T. Heroes' Twilight
- I.W. Images of War
- L.E.C. Leeds Exhibition Catalogue of Isaac Rosenberg's Work (1959)
- M.I.A. The Muse in Arms
M.I.O. Memoirs of an Infantry Officer
M.F.H.M. Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man
M.L.C. Marsh Letter Collection
M.P.F. Middle Parts of Fortune: Somme and Ancre 1916
- N.S. New Statesman
N.W. Naked Warriors
- O.H. The Old Huntsman

P.D. Poetry and Drama
P.P.E.R. Pro Patria et Rege
P.R. Poetry Review

Q.R. Quarterly Review

S.E.L. Studies in English Literature
S.I.P. I Some Imagist Poets, 1915
S.I.P. II Some Imagist Poets, 1916
S.I.P. III Some Imagist Poets, 1917

T.L.S. Times Literary Supplement
T.S.E. Tulane Studies in English

U.L.D. Up the Line to Death
U.W. Undertones of War

W-F. The Winnowing-Fan: Poems on the Great War
W.O.Y. The Weald of Youth

3. General

B.M. British Museum
G.W. The Great War
H.F. The Home Front
I.W.M. Imperial War Museum
N.M.L. No Man's Land
P.B. Poetry Bookshop
W.F. The Western Front
I.W.W. { World War One
 { The First World War
2.W.W. { World War Two
 { The Second World War

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. POETRY

(a) Individual Poets

- Aldington, Richard, War and Love
Boston, 1919.
The Love of Myrrhine and Konallis
Chicago, 1926.
Collected Poems
New York, 1928.
- Apollinaire, Guillaume, Calligrammes, Poèmes de la Guerre
et de la Paix, 1913-6
Paris, 1925.
- Austin, Alfred, The Lyrical Poems
London, 1891.
- Auden, W.H., A Choice of Walter de la Mare's Verse
London, 1963.
- Belloc, Hilaire, Complete Verse
London, 1970.
- Bewsher, Paul, The Dawn Patrol and Other Poems of an
Aviator
London, 1917.
- Binyon, Laurence, The Winnowing-Fan: Poems on the Great
War
London, 1914.
The New World
London, 1918.
The Four Years
London, 1919.
- Brooke, Rupert, Poems
London, 1911.
1914 and Other Poems
London, 1915.
Collected Poems, with a Memoir from E.M.
London, 1918.
The Poetical Works of Rupert Brooke
(edited by Geoffrey Keynes)
London, 1946.

- Blunden, Edmund, The Waggoner and Other Poems
London, 1920.
The Shepherd and Other Poems of
Peace and War
London, 1922.
Retreat
London, 1928.
Poems 1930-40
London, 1940.
After the Bombing
London, 1949.
- Bridges, Robert, Robert Bridges (ed. Donald Stanford)
London, 1974.
- Chesterton, G.K., Collected Poems
London, 1927.
- Cobber, Lance-Corporal, The Anzac Pilgrim's Progress
London, 1918.
- Coulson, Leslie, From an Outpost
London, 1917.
- Davies, W.H., The Collected Poems
London, 1940.
- Day, Jeffery, Poems and Rhymes
London, 1919.
- De la Mare, Walter, Collected Poems
London, 1942.
- Douglas, Keith, Collected Poems (intro. Edmund Blunden)
London, 1966.
- Drinkwater, John, Swords and Ploughshares
London, 1915.
Seeds of Time
London, 1921.
- Eliot, T.S. Complete Poems and Plays
London, 1969.
- Ford, F.M., Antwerp
London, 1915.
On Heaven and Poems Written on Active
Service
London, 1915.
- Gellert, Leon, Songs of A Campaign
London, 1918.
- Gibson, W.W., Collected Poems
London, 1933.
- Graves, Robert, Over the Brazier
London, 1916.
Fairies and Fusiliers
London, 1917.

- Grenfell, Julian Battle, Flanders
London, 1915.
- Gurney, Ivor, The Complete Poems of Ivor Gurney
London, 1954.
Poems of Ivor Gurney: 1890-1937
London, 1973.
- Hardy, Thomas, The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy
London, 1930.
- Harvey, F.W., A Gloucestershire Lad
London, 1916.
Gloucestershire Friends
London, 1917.
- Henley, W.E., Poems
London, 1898.
- Housman, A.E., The Collected Poems
London, 1939.
- Housman, Laurence, The Collected Poems
London, 1937.
- Jones, David, In Parenthesis
London, 1937.
- Kennedy, G.A. Studdert, Rough Rhymes of a Padre
London, 1918.
- Keyes, Sidney, Collected Poems (with a Memoir and
London, 1945. *Notes by Michael Meyer)*
- Kipling, Rudyard, Rudyard Kipling's Verse: the Defini-
itive Edition
London, 1940.
Twenty Poems from Rudyard Kipling
London, 1918.
A Choice of Kipling's Verse
(intro. T.S. Eliot)
Rudyard Kipling: Selected Verse
London, 1977.
- Lawrence, D.H., The Complete Poems
London, 1964.
- Ledwidge, Francis, Complete Poems (intro. Lord Dunsany)
(1919) London, 1955.
- Lewis, Alun, Selected Poetry and Prose
London, 1966.
- Lowell, Amy, Sword Blades and Poppy Seed
London, 1914.
- Mackintosh, E.A., A Highland Regiment
London, 1917.
- Masefield, John, Poems
London, 1948.

- Newbolt, Henry, Poems: New and Old
(1912 First Edition)
London, 1919.
- Nichols, Robert, Invocation
London, 1915.
Ardours and Endurances
London, 1917.
- Norman, Alfred Bathurst, Ditchling Beacon
London, 1918.
- Noyes, Alfred, Collected Poems
London, 1913.
- Owen, Wilfred, Collected Poems (ed. C. Day Lewis)
London, 1963.
War Poems and Others (ed. D. Hibberd)
London, 1973.
- Oxenham, John, All's Well! Some Helpful Verse for
the Dark Days of War
London, 1914.
- Pound, Ezra, Personae
London, 1909.
Hugh Selwyn Mauberley
London, 1920.
- Read, Herbert, Poems 1914 - 34
London, 1935.
Collected Poems
London, 1966.
- Rickword, Edgell, Collected Poems
London, 1947.
- Rosenberg, Isaac, Collected Poems
London, 1931.
Collected Works (ed. Gordon Bottom-
ley and Denys Harding)
London, 1937.
- Sassoon, Siegfried, Collected Poems, 1908-56
London, 1961.
- Service, Robert W., The Rhymes of a Red Cross Man
London, 1916.
- Sorley, C.H., Marlborough and Other Poems
Cambridge, 1916.
- Streets, Sgt. J.W., The Undying Slendour
London, 1917.
- Thomas, Edward, Collected Poems of Edward Thomas
London, 1949.
- Vernède, R.E., War Poems and Other Verses
London, 1917.

Watson, William, - 610 -

The Man Who Saw and Other Poems
Arising Out of the War
London, 1917.
Selected Poems of William Watson
London, 1928.

Weaving, Willoughby,

Star Fields and Other Poems
London, 1916.
The Bubble and Other Poems
London, 1917.
Heard Melodies
London, 1918.

Whitman, Walt,

Leaves of Grass and Selected Prose
San Francisco, 1949.

Williams, E. Crawshay,

Songs on Service
London, 1917.

Wilson, T.P. Cameron,

Magpies in Picardy
London, 1919.

(b) Anthologies

Adcock, A. St. John,

Songs of the World War
London, 1916.

Alvarez, A.,

The New Poetry
London, 1962.

Black, E. L.,

1914 - 18 In Poetry
London, 1970.

Bolt, Sidney,

Poetry of the 1920's
London, 1967.

Brereton, F.,

An Anthology of War Poems
London, 1930.

Clarke, George H.

A Treasury of War Poetry
Boston, 1917.

The Crown of Amaranth
London, 1915.

Ferguson, John,

War and the Creative Arts
London, 1972.

For Your Tomorrow: An Anthology of Poetry Written by
Young Men from English Public Schools who fell in the
World War, 1939 - 45.
London, 1950.

Gardner, Brian,

Up the Line to Death
London, 1964.
The Terrible Rain
London, 1966.

Georgian Poetry, 1911 - 12, London, 1912.
Georgian Poetry, 1913 - 15, London, 1915.
Georgian Poetry, 1916 - 17, London, 1917.
Georgian Poetry, 1918 - 19, London, 1919.

- Goodchild, George, England, My England
London, 1914.
- Hamilton, Ian, The Poetry of War, 1939-45
London, 1972.
- Hughes, Glenn, Imagist Anthology
London, 1930.
- Hussey, Maurice, Poetry of the First World War
London, 1967.
- Des Imagistes
London, 1914.
- Jones, Peter, Imagist Poetry
London, 1972.
- Knight, Prof. W.A., Pro Patria et Rege
London, 1915.
- Leonard, R.M., Patriotic Poems
London, 1914.
- Lloyd Bertram, Poems Written During the Great War: 1914 - 18
London, 1918.
The Greater Kinship
London, 1918.
The Paths of Glory
London, 1919.
- Lord God of Battles
London, 1914.
- Lynd, Robert, An Anthology of Modern Verse (Methuen)
London, 1921.
- Monro, Harold, Some Contemporary Poets
London, 1924.
- Nichols, Robert, An Anthology of War Poetry
London, 1943.
- Ohne Hass und Fahne: Kriegsgedichte des 20 Jahrhunderts
Hamburg, 1959.
- Osborn, E.B., The Muse in Arms
London, 1917.
- Parsons, I.M., Men Who March Away
London, 1965.
The Progress of Poetry: an Anthology of Verse from Hardy to the Present Day
London, 1936.
- Poems of Today : First Series
London, 1915.
- Press, John, A Map of Modern English Verse
London, 1969.

- Pryce-Jones, Alan, Georgian Poets
London, 1959.
- Reeves, James, Georgian Poetry
London, 1962.
- Rhys, Ernest, The Old Country: A Book of Love
and Praise of England
London, 1916.
- Roberts, Michael, Faber Book of Modern Verse
London, 1936.
- Some Imagist Poets (three Anthologies appeared in three con-
secutive years)
London, 1915 / 1916 / 1917.
- Skelton, Robin, Poetry of the 30's
London, 1964.
- Songs and Sonnets for England in War-Time
London, 1914.
- Squire, J.C., Selections from Modern Poet.
London, 1921.
- Symons, Julian, An Anthology of War Poetry
London, 1942.
- Thornton, R.K.R., Poetry of the 1890's
London, 1970.
- Wollman, Maurice, Poems of Twenty Years: 1918-38
London, 1938.
- Yeats, W.B., The Oxford Book of Modern Verse
London, 1936.

2. PROSE

(a) Fiction and Drama

- Aldington, Richard, Death of a Hero
London, 1929.
- Barbusse, Henri, Under Fire (trans. Fitzwater Wray)
London, 1917.
- Bruce, George, (ed.) Short Stories of the First World
War
London, 1971.
- Cummings, E.E., The Enormous Room
London, 1922.
- Faulkner, William, Soldier's Pay
New York, 1926.
- Ford, F.M., No More Parades
London, 1925.

- Harris, John Covenant with Death
London, 1961.
- Hašek, Jaroslav, The Good Soldier Schweik (trans.
Paul Selver)
London, 1930.
- Hemingway, Ernest, A Farewell to Arms
London, 1929.
- Hill, Susan, Strange Meeting
London, 1971.
- Jünger, Ernst, The Storm of Steel (English trans,
London, 1929.
- Littlewood, Joan, Oh What A Lovely War (play)
First produced on stage, in March
1963, by Joan Littlewood's Theatre
Workshop Group, at the Theatre
Royal, Stratford, East London.
Oh What A Lovely War (film)
Directed by Richard Attenborough
and released in 1969.
- Nanning, Frederic, The Middle Parts of Fortune:
Somme and Ancre, 1916
London, 1929; re-issued 1977.
Her Privates We (expurgated version)
London, 1930.
- Mottram, R.H. The Spanish Farm Trilogy
London, 1924-28.
- Raymond, Ernest, Tell England
London, 1922.
- Read, Herbert, Ambush
London, 1930.
- Remarque, Erich Maria, Im Westen Nichts Neues (trans. as
All Quiet on the Western Front)
London, 1929.
- Romains, Jules, Verdun (trans. from Les Hommes
de Bonne Volonté)
Paris, 1938.

(b) Autobiographies, Biographies, Letters and Journals

- Asquith, Lady Cynthia, Diaries, 1915 - 1918
London, 1968.
- Bennett, Arnold, Books and Persons
London, 1912.
The Journals of Arnold Bennett:
1911 - 1921
London, 1932.

- Blunden, Edmund, Undertones of War
London, 1928.
- Brittain, Vera, Testament of Youth
London, 1933; re-issued 1978.
- Brooke, Rupert, The Prose of Rupert Brooke
(Intro. Christopher Hassall)
London, 1956.
- Chapman, Guy, Vain Glory: A Miscellany of the
Great War 1914-18, written by
those who fought it on each side
and on all fronts
London, 1937.
A Passionate Prodigality
London, 1933.
- Coppard, George, With a Machine-Gun to Cambrai
London, 1969.
- De la Mare, Walter, Critical Essays
London, 1940.
- Edmonds, Charles, A Subaltern's War
London, 1929.
- Eliot, T.S., Selected Essays
London, 1961.
- Eliot, T.S. (ed.) The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound
London, 1954.
- Farjeon, Eleanor, Edward Thomas, the Last Four Years
London, 1958.
- Fletcher, J.G., Life is my Song
New York, 1937.
- Ford, F.M., Return to Yesterday 1894 - 1914
London, 1931.
- Gathorne-Hardy, Robert (ed.) Ottoline - The Early Memoirs of
Lady Ottoline Morrell
London, 1963.
- Gibbs, Philip, Now It Can Be Told
London, 1920.
- Gladden, E. Norman, Ypres 1917 : A Personal Account
London, 1967.
- Goldring, Douglas, Reputations
London, 1920.
- Grenfell, Ettie,
(Lady Desborough) Papers from a Family-Journal:
1888 - 1915
Privately printed, 1916.
- Graves, Robert, Good-bye to All That
London, 1929.

- Hassall, Christopher, Edward Marsh
London, 1959.
Rupert Brooke
London, 1964.
- Hay, Ian, The First Hundred Thousand:
Being the Unofficial Chronicle
of a Unit of 'K (I)'
Edinburgh, 1915; re-issued 1975.
- Housman, Laurence (ed.), War Letters of Fallen Englishmen
London, 1930.
- Kershaw, ^A and Temple ^{F.J.} (ed.), Richard Aldington: An Intimate
Portrait
Illinois, 1965.
- Keynes, Geoffrey (ed.), The Letters of Rupert Brooke
London, 1968.
- Laffin, John, Letters from the Front, 1914-18
London, 1973.
- Lawrence, D.H., The Collected Letters
New York, 1962.
- Lewis, Wyndham, Blasting and Bombardiering
London, 1937.
- Lewis, Cecil, Sagittarius Rising
London 1936; re-issued 1977.
- Marsh, Edward, A Number of People
London, 1939.
- McShane, Frank, (ed.) Critical Writings of F.M. Ford
London, 1964.
- Montague, C.E., Disenchantment
London, 1922.
- Moore, John, The Life and Letters of Edward
Thomas
London, 1939.
- Moore, T. Sturge, Some Soldier Poets
London, 1920.
- Moynihan, Michael, (ed.) People at War 1914 - 1918
London, 1973.
- Newbolt, Margaret (ed.), The Later Life and Letters of
Sir Henry Newbolt
London, 1942.
- Owen, Harold and Bell, John, Collected Letters of Wilfred Owen
London, 1967.
- Owen, Harold, Journey from Obscurity : 1893 -
1918
London, 1963 - 5.
- Paige, D.D. (ed.), The Letters of Ezra Pound
London, 1951.

- Pound, Ezra, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska
London, 1916.
- Plowman, Max, A Subaltern on the Somme
London, 1916.
- Read, Herbert, Annals of Innocence and Experience
London, 1940
The Contrary Experience
London, 1963.
- Sassoon, Siegfried, The Complete Memoirs of George
Sherston
London, 1937
The Weald of Youth
London, 1942.
Siegfried's Journey: 1916 - 20
London, 1945.
- Sitwell, Osbert, Before the Bombardment
London, 1926.
Those Were the Days
London, 1938.
Great Morning
London, 1948.
Laughter in the Next Room
London, 1949.
- Slater, Guy (ed.), My Warrior Sons: The Borton
Family Diary 1914 -18
London, 1973.
- Sorley, C.H., The Letters of C.H. Sorley,
(with a Chapter of Biography)
Cambridge, 1919.
- Swinerton, Frank, The Georgian Literary Scene 1910-35
London, 1935.
- Waugh, Alec, The Loom of Youth
London, 1917.
- The Wipers Times (Collected Edition of The Somme Times, etc.)
edited by Lt. Col. F.J.Roberts
London, 1930.
- Thomas, Edward, The Heart of England
London, 1906.
This England: An Anthology of
her Writers
London, 1915.
The Diary of Edward Thomas (ed.
Roland Grant)
Limited Edition, 1977.
Edward Thomas on the Countryside
(ed. Roland Grant)
London, 1977.
- Woolf, Leonard, Beginning Again, 1911-1918
London, 1964.
Downhill All the Way, 1919-1939
London, 1967.

West, Arthur Graeme, Diary of a Dead Officer
London, 1919.

Yeats, W.B., Essays
London, 1924.

(c) Periodicals

Blast I
London, 1914.

Blast II
London, 1915.

The Egoist
London, 1914 - 1919.

The Nation
London, 1916.

The New Age
London, 1916.

The New Freewoman
London, 1913 - 1914.

New Numbers
London, 1914.

Poetry and Drama
London, 1913 - 1914.

Poetry Review I
London, 1912.

Rhythm
London, 1912.

The Times Literary Supplement
London, 1914 - 1919.

3. CRITICISM

(a) Books, Monographs, Critical Biography

Bergonzi, Bernard, Heroes' Twilight
London, 1965.

Berry, Francis, Herbert Read
London, 1953.

Blunden, Edmund, War Poets : 1914 - 1918
London, 1958.

Bowra, Sir Maurice, Poetry and the First World War
(Taylorian Lecture)
Oxford, 1961.

- Bullough, Geoffrey, The Trend of Modern Poetry
Edinburgh, 1934.
- Carrington, Charles, Rudyard Kipling: A Biography
London, 1955.
- Cohen, Joseph, Journey to the Trenches
London, 1975.
- Coombes, H., Edward Thomas
London, 1956.
- Cooke, W., Edward Thomas: A Critical Biography
London, 1970.
- Corrigan, Felicitas, Siegfried Sassoon: Poet's Pilgrimage
London, 1973.
- Currey, R.N., Poets of the 1939 - 45 War
London, 1967.
- Daiches, David, Poetry and the Modern World
Chicago, 1940.
- Day Lewis, C., A Hope for Poetry
London, 1931.
- Deutsch, Babette, This Modern Poetry
London, 1936.
- Durrell, Lawrence, A Key to Modern Poetry
London, 1952.
- Falls, Cyril, War Books: A Critical Guide
London, 1930.
- Fraser, G.S., The Modern Writer and His World
London, 1953.
- Fussell, Paul, The Great War and Modern Memory
London, 1975.
- Gates, Norman T., The Poetry of Richard Aldington:
A Critical Evaluation and An
Anthology of Uncollected Poems
Pennsylvania Univ. Press, 1974.
- Grant, Joy, Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop
London, 1967.
- Graves, Robert, The Common Asphodel
London, 1949.
- Grecius, M.S., Prose Writers of World War One
London, 1973.
- Grubb, Frederick, A Vision of Reality
London, 1965.
- Hardie, Alec M., Edmund Blunden
London, 1958.

- Harding, Denys, Experience into Words
London, 1963.
- Hassall, Christopher, Eddie Marsh: Sketches for a
Composite Literary Portrait
London, 1953.
- Holloway, John, The Modern Age: Vol. VII Pelican
History of English Literature
London, 1961.
- Hughes, Glenn, Imagism and The Imagists
Stanford Univ. Press, 1931.
- Johnston, John H., English Poetry of the First World
War
Princeton, 1964
- Kenner, Hugh, The Poetry of Ezra Pound
Norfolk, Connecticut, 1951.
- Klein, Holger (ed.), The First World War in Fiction
London, 1977.
- Leavis, F.R., New Bearings in English Poetry
London, 1932.
- Liddiard, Jean, Isaac Rosenberg: The Half Used Life
London, 1975.
- Martin, Graham, English Poetry in 1912
London, 1975.
- Meynell, Viola, Julian Grenfell
London, 1917.
- Mosley, Nicholas, Julian Grenfell: His Life and The
Times of His Death: 1888 - 1915
London, 1976.
- Murry, J. Middleton, Aspects of Literature
London, 1934.
- Pinto, V. de Sola, Crisis in English Poetry: 1880-1940
London, 1951.
- Roberts, Michael, T.E. Hulme
London, 1938.
- Rogers, Timothy, Rupert Brooke: A Reappraisal and
Selection
London, 1971.
Georgian Poetry: The Critical
Heritage
London, 1977.
- Ross, Robert H., The Georgian Revolt: Rise and Fall
of a Poetic Ideal, 1910 - 1922
- Rutherford, Andrew (ed.), Kipling's Mind and Art
London, 1964..

- Scannell, Vernon, Edward Thomas
London, 1963.
- Scott-Kilvert, Ian, A.E. Housman
London, 1955.
- Silkin, Jon, Out of Battle
London, 1972.
- Simon, Myron, The Georgian Poetic
Univ. of California Press, 1975.
- Stallworthy, Jon, Wilfred Owen: A Biography
London, 1974.
- Stead, C.K., The New Poetic
London, 1964.
- Strong, I.A.G., John Masefield
London, 1952.
- Thorpe, Michael, Siegfried Sassoon,
Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1966.
The Poetry of Edmund Blunden
London, 1968.
- Ward, A.C., Twentieth Century Literature:
The Age of Interrogation
London, 1928.
- Watson, William, Pencraft: A Plea for Older Ways
London, 1916.
- Welland, D.S.R., Wilfred Owen: A Critical Study
London, 1960.
- Wilson, J.M., Isaac Rosenberg: Poet and Painter
London, 1975.
- Woodcock, George, Herbert Read: The Stream and The
Source
London, 1972.

(b) Articles, Reviews, Theses

The copious references to the T.L.S., 1914 - 1919, will be omitted here, as they have already been fully described in the foot-notes. The same applies to articles or reviews from The Egoist, 1914 - 1919.

Banerjee, Amitava,

The Muse and Mars: An Examination
of English Poetry Written during
the Two World Wars
Leics. Univ. Ph.D. Thesis, 1969.
(Published as Spirit Above Wars, 1975)

Bennett, Arnold,

'The Artist and the Public'
English Review, October 1913.

Binyon, Laurence,

'The Return to Poetry'
Rhythm I, 40, Spring 1912.

- Binyon, Laurence, 'Tradition and Reaction in Modern Poetry'
English Association Pamphlet, No. 63, 1926.
- Brooke, Rupert, 'An Unusual Young Man'
The Nation, 29.8.14.
- Carter, Violet Bonham, 'The Missing Generation'
Sunday Times, 11.11.62.
- Cohen, Joseph, 'Isaac Rosenberg: From Romantic to Classic'
Tulane Studies in English, X, 1960.
'Wilfred Owen's Greater Love'
Tulane Studies in English, VI 1956.
'The Three Roles of Siegfried Sassoon'
Tulane Studies in English VI, 1957.
- Connolly, Cyril, 'The Importance of F.M. Ford',
T.L.S., 7.5.72.
- Del Re, Arundel, 'Georgian Reminiscences'
Studies in English Literature XII, p.325.
- Dickinson, Patric, 'Poets of the First World War'
The Listener, 8.2.62.
- Douglas, Norman, 'Modern Minstrelsy'
English Review, January 1913.
'The Great Schism'
Quarterly Review, June 1917.
- Eliot, T.S., 'The Writer as Artist'
The Listener, November 1940.
'Commentary'
Criterion, July, 1932.
'Brief Treatise on the Criticism of Poetry'
Monthly Chapbook, No.9, March 1920.
- Fairfax, J. Griffyth, 'William Watson: the poet of public affairs'
Poetry Review, 1912.
- Flint, F.S., 'On Contemporary French Poetry'
Poetry Review, August 1912.
- Foot, Dingle, 'Death was the Inspiration for the Poets in the Trenches'
The Times, 3.8.74.
- Forsyth, Alexander, The Poetics of War 1914-18
Edinburgh Univ., Ph.D. Thesis, 1971.
- Harding, D.W., 'Aspects of the Poetry of I.R.'
Scrutiny, March 1935.

- Hope, Francis, 'Tommy's Tunes'
The Review, No.15, April 1965.
- Hulme, T.E., 'Romanticism and Classicism' 1913
Critiques and Essays in Criticism
1920-48, Sel. R.W. Stallman
New York, 1949.
Speculations, Intro. Herbert Read
London, 1924.
Further Speculations, Intro. Sam
Hynes
Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1955.
- Jackson, Holbrook, 'The Creation of Taste'
English Review, December 1913.
- Lawrence, D.H., 'The Georgian Renaissance'
Rhythm II, March 1913.
- Loiseau, J., 'A Reading of Wilfred Owen's Poems'
English Studies, XXI, 1939.
- Monro, Harold, 'The Future of Poetry'
Poetry Review, January 1912.
- Murry, J Middleton, 'The Poetry of Edward Thomas'
Aspects of Literature, 1920.
'The Poet of the War', (Wilfred Owen)
The Nation, 19.2.21.
- Newbolt, Henry, 'A New Study of English Poetry'
English Review X, January 1912.
- Newton, Eric, 'Art and the First World War'
The Guardian, 27.2.64.
- Parsons, I.M., 'The Poems of Wilfred Owen'
The Criterion X, 41, July 1931.
- Pocock, Tom, 'Strolling through the Valley of
Death'
The Evening Standard, 8.8.14.
- Pound, Ezra, 'Prolegomena'
Poetry Review I, 1912.
'A Note on Harold Monro'
Criterion, July 1932.
'Vorticism'
Fortnightly Review XCVI, 1914.
- Read, Herbert, 'Definitions Towards a Modern
Theory of Poetry'
Art and Letters, I, January 1918.
'The Present State of Poetry'
Kenyon Review I, Autumn 1939.
- Robertson, J.M., 'Substance in Poetry'
English Review, July 1911.
- Sitwell, Osbert, 'Wilfred Owen'
Noble Essences, 1950.

Stand IV, No.3, 1960: 'The War Poets' Issue

- Swinerton, Frank, The Blue Review I, 1. May 1913.
- Symons, Julian, 'The Bon Times and The Bad',
T.L.S., 19.8.77.
- Thomas, Edward, 'Reviewing: An Unskilled Labour'
Poetry and Drama II, March 1914.
- Wain, John, 'The Saddest Story'
The Observer, 7.5.72.
- Waugh, Arthur, 'The New Poetry'
Quarterly Review, October 1916.
- West, Rebecca, The New Freewoman I, No.5, 15.3.13.
- Widdowson, P.J., Illusion and Disillusion in the
English Poetry and Painting of
The First World War
Univ. of Nottingham, Ph.D.
Thesis, 1968.

4. GENERAL BACKGROUND

(a) Historical and Literary Background

- Belloc, Hilaire, The Four Men
London, 1912.
- Buchan, John, A History of the Great War
London, 1923.
- Cavafy, C.P., Complete Poems, (Trans. Rae Dalven)
London, 1961.
- Cork, Richard, Vorticism and Abstract Art in the
Machine Age
London, 1976.
- Crane, Stephen, The Red Badge of Courage and
Other Stories
London, 1895.
- Dangerfield, George, The Strange Death of Liberal
England, 1910-1914
London, 1935.
- Davidson, Mildred, The Poetry is in the Pity
London, 1972.
- Douglas, Keith, Alamein to Zem Zem
London, 1946.
- Duhamel, Georges, Récits des Temos de Guerre
Paris, 1949.

- Eates, Margot, Paul Nash: The Master of the Image
London, 1973.
- Ford, Hugh D., A Poets' War: British Poets and
the Spanish Civil War
Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1965.
- Forster, E.M., The Longest Journey
London, 1907.
Howards End
London, 1910.
- Gathorne-Hardy, Jonathan, The Public-School Phenomenon
London, 1977,
- Graves, R. and Hodge, A., The Long Weekend
London, 1941.
- Hemingway, Ernest, (ed.) Men at War
London, 1966,
- Houlihan, Michael, World War One: Trench Warfare
London, 1974.
- Jones, Enid Huws, Mrs Humphrey Ward
London, 1973.
- Keating, P.J. (ed.), Working Class Stories of the 1890's
London, 1971.
- Literary Life : A Literary Scrapbook, 1900 - 1922.
- Marwick, Arthur, The Deluge: British Society and
the First World War
London, 1965.
Women at War : 1914 - 1918
London, 1977.
- Masterman, C.G., The Condition of England
London, 1909.
- Masters, John, Fourteen Eighteen
London, 1965.
- Medlicott, W.N., Contemporary England 1914 - 64
London, 1965.
- Morrison, Arthur, Tales of Mean Streets
London, 1894.
- Muir, Edwin, The Present Age from 1914
London, 1939.
- Muller, Joseph Emile, A Century of Modern Painting
Paris, 1966.
- Nash, Paul, Outline
London, 1949.

- Palmer, Herbert, Post-Victorian Poetry
London, 1938.
- Read, Herbert, Paul Nash (Penguin Painters Ser.)
London, 1944.
- Scannell, Vernon, Not Without Glory
London, 1976.
- Shelley, P.B. Adonais
London, 1821.
- Taylor, A.J.P., The First World War
London, 1963.
- Tennyson, Alfred, In Memoriam
London, 1850.
- Thompson, Flora, Lark Rise to Candleford
London, 1945.
- Tomlinson, H.E., Waiting for Daylight
London, 1922.
- Wells, H.G., War of the Worlds
London, 1898.
The War in the Air
London, 1908.
- Wingfield-Stratford, Esmé, The Victorian Aftermath
London, 1933.
- Woolf, Virginia, Jacob's Room
London, 1922.
Mrs Dalloway
London, 1922.
To the Lighthouse
London, 1927.
- Wordsworth, William, Poetical Works of William Wordsworth
Oxford Univ. Press, 1969.

(b) Broadcasts, Exhibitions, Lectures, Catalogues

The items listed below are arranged in chronological order.

Charles Chilton, The Long, Long Trail, Radio Broadcast
December, 1961.

Tony Essex and Gordon Watkins, The Great War, Television
Series, 1964 (repeated
1974 /75).

British Academy, Chatterton Lecture, 'Wilfred Owen', Jon
Stallworthy, December 1970.

Tom Clarke, 'Mad Jack' (Sassoon), Play for Today, B.B.C. 1
March, 1971.

Something In Common: In Flanders Field, Radio Broadcast,
June, 1971.

The Day the Lambs Went Out, Radio Broadcast, July, 1971.

Imperial War Museum, Poets of the First World War Exhibi-
tion, 1974 / 1975.

Easthampstead Park, The Poetry is in the City, Week-end
Course, January 1975.

Tony Garnett, Days of Hope, Television Drama, September 1975.

Henry Williamson, No Man's Land, B.B.C. 2, December 1975.

A Summer Day on the Somme, Radio Broadcast, 27.6.76.

Battle of the Somme, B.B.C. 1, 29.6.76.

Birmingham Public Libraries, Catalogue of the War Poetry
Collection (presented in memory of Private W.J. Billington)
Autumn, 1976.

Women at War, Yesterday's Witness Series, B.B.C. 2,
25.4.77-30.5.77.

Sister Susie's War, Radio Broadcast, 8.8.77.

I Died in Hell: They Called It Passchendaele, Radio Broadcast,
26.10.77.

Where Are The War Poets? (i.e. of Second World War) Radio
Broadcast, 12.3.78.

Felicitas Corrigan, Poet's Pilgrimage: Siegfried Sassoon,
Radio 4, 9.5.78.
