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The experience of war: British war novels, 1919–1930

Shelton, Carole Lowery, D.A.

Middle Tennessee State University, 1989

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THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR
BRITISH WAR NOVELS, 1919-1930

Carole Shelton


A dissertation presented to the
Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Arts


August, 1989

THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR
BRITISH WAR NOVELS, 1919-1930

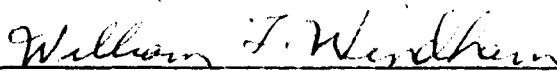
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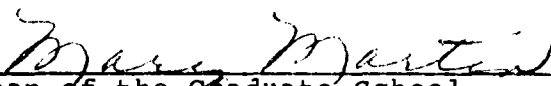
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ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR BRITISH WAR NOVELS, 1919-1930

Carole Shelton

The war novels written by British citizen-soldiers in the decade following the Great War offer unique opportunities for historians to trace how individuals structured their personal memories of the war experience and how their accounts affected public opinion. Their fictional accounts, however, have generally been dismissed as antiwar propaganda. No study has traced the relationship between the author's personal experiences and his fictionalized portrayal of the war or the impact on public consciousness.

This study focuses chronologically on the major war novels as expressions of the individual war experience, examines their impact on the public's perception of the war, and investigates the integration of the war novel into an instructional module. The following information is included for each novel: biographical information, especially concerning the author's war experience; analysis of the novel as an expression of individual experience; examination of individual themes and images; and measurement of public response through book reviews. Instructional usages are developed based on the above analysis.

Carole Shelton

The war novels are highly autobiographical reflections of the war's impact on the middle-class citizen-soldier. Fictionalized memoirs, they are realistic, rather than antiwar, expressions of the impact of the war on the individual. Reflecting the daily life of the soldier, both at the front and behind the lines, the novels reveal the routine, the horrors, the comradeship, and the relaxations of the front-line soldier. The novelists, most of whom suffered from shell-shock, treat the immense psychological stress of trench warfare on the individual soldier. Public willingness to consider the novelists' view of war is indicated by favorable reviews and sales figures. Because they are literary documents based on personal experience, their inclusion as source materials in the classroom provides insight into the war and its impact on the individual.

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Und wenn du lange in einen Abgrund blickst,
blickt der Abgrund auch in dich hinein.
[And if you gaze long into an abyss,
the abyss gazes back into you.]

Friedrich Nietzsche
Jenseits von Gut und Böse

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Trenches separated by rolls of barbed wire and no-man's-land, soldiers hunched over rifles climbing out of trenches and going over the top, machine guns mowing down lines of advancing men, a desolate wasteland of destroyed towns and bloated horse carcasses--the imagery of World War I has become part of the modern cultural heritage. Historically, the war was a watershed event separating the stratified Victorian world of the nineteenth century from the twentieth-century world of rapid technological advance. Militarily, the war was the first modern war requiring massive numbers of civilian-soldiers and exploiting the fruits of science and industry to increase the destructive power of weaponry, thus providing a foretaste of wars and nuclear weapons to come. The modern man of Kafka and the Existentialists, the individual at the mercy of an irrational world and an all-powerful state, was in the throes of genesis. Already the myth of Sisyphus, resurrected by Albert Camus after World War II, was personified by the British soldier of World War I.

Many of the British citizenry entered the war with a burst of enthusiasm and high ideals. With pride in empire and British might, England prepared to engage the barbaric Hun of the propagandists. Stirred by patriotism, lured by

the great adventure, and fearing that the war would be over by Christmas, thousands enlisted, believing that courage and bravery would see them through and that they would emerge as heroes. That the war they fought did not resemble the war they anticipated is perhaps no surprise. Nor is it any surprise that the century's first major war, foreshadowing events and trends to come, continues to exercise such fascination on public memory.

When Britain declared war on 4 August, the small professional British army numbered 247,432. Supplementing the regular army were the territorials, home guard units which trained in summer camps and whose service was restricted to England. With the announcement of war, volunteers overran recruiting stations, enabling the army to apply high medical standards in the early days of the war. The territorials expanded by creating additional battalions; most of its members agreed to overseas duty. Pals units were formed which allowed friends from one neighborhood or profession to serve together. After the early fighting in France, Lord Kitchener, who foresaw a war of several years' duration, announced the formation of the New Army or Kitchener's Army, a citizen's army to be created with those now volunteering.¹

¹In August 1914, 733,514 officers and men were in the regular army, Territorial Force, and other reserve formations. During the war 4,907,902 men enlisted. For additional information see Ian Beckett, "The British Army,

The early months of the fighting in France decimated the regular army. It fell back from Belgium, suffering devastating casualties at Mons. The territorials, who already had some training, were sent to France to hold the line while the regulars regrouped and the new civilian army was being trained. By 1915, the first units of the New Army were transported to France to serve as support units. They soon found themselves in the front lines. By December 1914 the war itself had settled into one of immobility along trenches which stretched from the Channel across northern France to Switzerland. Rather than being over by Christmas, the envisioned quick little war drug on until 11 November 1918. The early enthusiasm of volunteers lusting for adventure soon dulled under the regime of regimentation, boredom, and physical discomfort, compounded by the dangers and casualty rate of trench warfare. This modern war of industrial weaponry, of artillery, machine guns, and gas, evolved into a war of attrition. The projected breakthrough on the Somme did not occur; instead on the first day of battle, 1 July 1916, British casualties totaled approximately sixty thousand with twenty-one thousand in the

1914-19: The Illusion of Change," in Britain and the First World War, ed. by John Turner (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 99-116. See also Ian F. W. Beckett and Keith Simpson, eds., A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

first hour.² Entire battalions were decimated both during that five-month battle and other actions. Nor was it unusual for an individual to be wounded several times only to be returned to the front each time, sometimes to die, sometimes to be wounded again. By fall 1915, the war in France was devouring so many soldiers that Britain introduced conscription--first under Lord Derby's scheme in which men were deemed to have enlisted when they signed up as required by law, and later in a National Conscription Act.

The army's expansion required an increase in the number of officers; the high casualty rate necessitated numerous replacements. Traditionally the British officer came from either a country gentry or public school background. From fairly early in the war, standards had to be lowered and officers were soon being promoted from the ranks. Being an officer gave social standing and implied that one was a gentleman, thus the new officers were commissioned as "temporary gentlemen" for the duration of the war. Most of the new officers were subalterns, serving in the trenches at the front, caring for the men, overseeing trench maintenance, and leading their company in battle. They suffered the highest casualty rates.³

²John Keegan, The Face of Battle (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 255.

³See Keith Simpson, "The Officers," and Jay Winter, "Army and Society: The Demographic Context," in Beckett, A

After the war there was a continual flow of books about the conflict. Parliamentary committees investigated shell-shock and the field courts-martial and published their findings. The traditional official histories, regimental and divisional histories, and biographies and memoirs of statesmen and generals found their way into print as they do after every war. But the army which fought the Great War, unlike those of the century before, was highly literate, the result of state-supported education and the self-improvement movement. The non-professional soldier decided to have his say as well.

The first published writings of the British civilian-soldier appeared during the war in the form of war poems usually written while on active duty. The nature of the poems changed during the course of the war, revealing a change in attitude as the reality of the war penetrated early idealistic enthusiasm. The early poems celebrated patriotism and sacrificial death for one's country. But with the mounting casualties of continued fighting, the war's harsh realities intruded and the nature of war poetry changed. The agony and suffering of the soldier became the new subject matter--the image of death was drawn in harsh, ugly images rather than aesthetic symbols. The image of

Nation in Arms, 63-98, 193-210.

war was already changing, whether because of disillusionment or merely as the acknowledgement of what had always been suspected. With the end of the war, letters, diaries, reminiscences, short stories, and novels joined the slender poetry volumes. The civilian-soldier finally spoke for himself, describing the war as seen from the trenches by the fighting soldier who was intimately acquainted with its character rather than from command headquarters by those who knew little of its day-to-day realities.

War novels written by the participants began to appear as soon as the war ended and continued to be published throughout the twenties. In 1928, war novels dominated the publishing lists. From 1928 to 1930, the boom in war books flourished. Many were of the "horror" or "mud and blood" school of which Eric Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front became the standard. Most were labeled antiwar propaganda.⁴

The appearance of so many war novels in such a brief span, combined with the harsh realism and highly emotional tone of some, roused the enmity of a group who vociferously voiced their opposition to that image of the war in newspapers, magazines, and books. The soldier-novelists

⁴See Bruno Schultze, Studien zum politischen Verständnis moderner englischer Unterhaltungsliteratur (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1977), 133-34 on the dramatic increase in war novels during the 1928-30 period. The impression that Remarque's novel triggered the boom in war books is mistaken. The translation did not appear until 1929.

argued that they merely wanted to tell the truth about the war and hoped to prevent another one by dashing romantic notions about warfare. Their critics, led by ranking officers and former officers, attacked the novels for presenting a false image of the war and for demeaning the sacrifice of the soldiers at the front by questioning their bravery and morals. Many of the truisms about the war novels derive from the criticisms leveled at the genre during this period and would find their way into later interpretations.

An examination of a series of letters-to-the-editor in the April 1930 editions of the London Times is indicative of the tone and emotionalism of the arguments. The attack begins with a letter from Brigadier-General C. D. Baker-Carr who denounces a play, probably R. C. Sheriff's Journey's End, for depicting drunken officers and decries war literature for creating a false impression among the young. His letter and those which follow attest to the sobriety of officers during the war, although one writer does admit to knowledge of two cases of intemperance. Among the writers are a general, a lieutenant-colonel, a lance-corporal, and two officers of a service organization. As the argument expands to protest aspersions cast on the nerve and courage of the front-line soldier, a female civilian joins in. On 11 April the lead editorial addresses the issue, noting the difficulty of combating this false depiction of the horrors

of war. The editor contends that most war books were written either to gain revenge for the author's own sufferings or to horrify and revolt the reader. The public is directed to Douglas Jerrold's pamphlet about the war books. The editor concludes with what for him is the telling blow--that the novels are not about the war, but are based on personal experience. Occasional letters continue to appear with arguments along the previous vein, but attention on the editorial page shifts to the morality of holding sporting events on Good Friday.⁵ The letters denounce any portrayal of British soldiers which does not depict them as always being courageous, leading upright moral lives at the front (eschewing alcohol while protecting their virginity), and being prepared to die for their country--in other words the exact romantically sanitized version of warfare which at least some of the war novelists hoped to destroy. Any other version is a betrayal of the soldier and diminishes his bravery and sacrifice.

Even individuals who viewed the novels favorably expressed dismay at the depiction of drunkenness, sexual liberties, and fear among British soldiers. In an unsigned article in the Spectator the novels are praised as honest books, but although "fear, disease, lust, destruction and death are essential attributes of war," the writer is

⁵Times (London), April 1930.

concerned with some of the immoralities presented. He argues, as do their critics, that although the novels are truthful, they are not true because they create an exaggerated picture of the war by omitting the good.⁶

Every critic of the novels did not automatically condemn all which appeared during this two-year period. The 12 June 1930 Times Literary Supplement lead article presented a critical analysis of the works, arguing that many are intended merely to shock and "to pander the latent brutality of their readers." However certain ones do accurately represent the soldiers' own experiences. Among those cited are Frederic Manning's Her Privates We and A. P. Herbert's The Secret Battle which, although originally published in 1919, appeared in a reprint edition in 1929.⁷

Two major critics of the war novels were Cyril Falls and Douglas Jerrold, both former officers. In 1930 Falls, the official historian of World War I, published an annotated list of war books. In his introduction he analyzes the war fiction, using Remarque as the standard. According to Falls's interpretation, the writers intend to go beyond stripping the war of romance, which had already been done, to show that "the Great War was engineered by knaves or fools on both sides, that the men who died in it were driven like beasts to the slaughter, and died like

⁶"War Books and War," Spectator, 10 May 1930, 733.

⁷"The Garlands Wither," TLS, 12 June 1930, 485-86.

beasts, without their deaths helping any cause or doing any good." The novels depict execution for cowardice as a common occurrence, drunkenness among officers as the norm, and sexual debauchery as continuous. He argues that, although some scenes may be true, other aspects of the war are exaggerated or ignored. All men are killed or wounded by having their brains or entrails protrude from their bodies; there is no rest; there are no sporting events or periods of relaxation. The novels describe one attack after another. Although the war may have been a ghastly experience, Falls objects to the war novels because they are propaganda based on a distortion of the truth and an appeal to the emotions; they pander to a "lust for horror, brutality, and filth"; they belittle ideals and motives of intelligence; and they pretend that no good has come from the war. Falls concludes that those who died are not best served by such works nor are they fairly portrayed.⁸

Douglas Jerrold, historian of the Royal Naval Division and the Hawke Battalion, was so incensed by the war novels that he published a brief booklet on the subject, The Lie About the War. The work is an uncontrolled polemic replete with exaggerations, distorted logic, and questionable statistics. Concerned about the effect of the novels on the present generation, Jerrold moved quickly with a muddled

⁸Cyril Falls, War Books: A Critical Guide (London: Peter Davies, 1930), ix-xii.

indictment. His major charges against the war novels are that (1) they romanticize the war by presenting an unhistorical view; (2) they depict cowards and drunkards along with brave soldiers which is somehow unpatriotic; (3) they depict the war as being avoidable and futile when the war has changed the course of human history and the geography of Europe; (4) they contend that there is a difference between war and peace which is untrue with one exception--in wartime men of military age are given a dangerous occupation; (5) they concentrate on individuals, thus falsifying the war by ignoring the whole--wars are fought by divisions rather than individuals. The war novels falsify facts, a distortion which Jerrold corrects by presenting his own bizarre statistics. Denouncing high casualty rates as exaggerated, Jerrold, based on figures from some units of his division, announces that nine out of ten wounded who reached the base hospitals recovered. Even if Jerrold's own high rate (ten percent) is accurate, how many died on the battlefield, in the line, at the aid station, or at the field hospital? This statistic tells us nothing. Jerrold also contends that the death rate in war is similar to that in peace, merely accelerated, whatever this means. He attacks the novels for presenting a distorted picture of the dangers of the war. He estimates that no one ever faced more than a thousand hours of actively dangerous fighting--not very comforting when one

realizes that, assuming one lived long enough to complete the thousand hours, that equals a month and a half of danger. Another of his estimates, which partially contradicts the one just cited, is that for every ten thousand infantrymen, only one thousand bore the real burden of the fighting. For Jerrold, the prime example of the extreme militarist opponent of the novels, the war novels are obviously unacceptable, emotional exaggerations full of lies.⁹ If the war novelists were emotional and exaggerated, so too were their critics.

No adequate study of the British war novel exists. The two best studies appear as parts of a larger whole. Arthur Rutherford in a study of the heroic in war literature from Kipling to John Le Carrè devotes a chapter to the British war novel in which he argues against the simplistic interpretation of a naive enthusiasm for war followed by disillusionment, then protest and pacifism. Instead he points to the complexities of the novels and emphasizes their development of an heroic ideal stripped of romantic glamour. Bruno Schultze devotes one of three sections to the war novel in a study of popular British literature of the twenties as expressions of public and political opinion.

⁹Douglas Jerrold, The Lie About the War: A Note on Some Contemporary War Books (London: Faber and Faber, 1930).

In well-argued and well-documented chapters he develops the thesis that the war novels both reflected and influenced the developing anti-war views of the public and the British politicians. A major weakness is his tendency to label any novel which does not present the war in the romantic-sentimental mode as anti-war. Other studies of British war literature include those by Bernard Bergonzi who, although devoting one chapter to fiction, is mainly concerned with war poetry, and Paul Fussell whose main interest is in the imagery of the war and who also emphasizes poetry. The only study devoted solely to the study of the novels is M. S. Grecius's brief, forty-nine page analysis of their literary merits.¹⁰

¹⁰Arthur Rutherford, The Literature of War: Five Studies in Heroic Virtue (London: Macmillan Press, 1978); Schultze, Unterhaltungsliteratur; Bernard Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1980); Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); M. S. Grecius, Prose Writers of World War I, Writers and Their Work, no. 231 (London: Longmans for the British Council, 1973). Other studies include Sophus Keith Winther, The Realist War Novel (Seattle: University of Washington Book Store, 1930), a study of modern realism in the war novels which concentrates on German writings, discussing only one British novel; Holger Klein, ed., The First World War in Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), a series of essays by different authors on both themes and writers; Léon Riegel, Guerre et Littérature (n.p.: Editions Klincksieck, 1978), a thematic treatment within a political context of the war literature in France, Germany, the United States, and Britain as an expression of outraged conscience. Brief one chapter treatments appear in David Craig and Michael Egan, Extreme Situations: Literature and Crisis from the Great War to the Atomic Bomb (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) which discusses mostly the war poetry, and Ivan Melada, Guns for Sale: War and Capitalism in English Literature, 1851-1939 (London:

Most treatments of the British war novel are by literary scholars. Literary treatments of the period generally devote only one chapter to a general treatment of the literature about the war. Noting the conspiracy of silence which existed before 1929, the impression is given that no war novels were published until a decade after the war. Part of the general revolt of the twenties, the novels emphasized the horrors and carnage of the war and protested its waste and inefficiency.¹¹ Studies of the war novels by historians are even more limited, although the novels may be cited as source material in the same manner as memoirs or referred to in sections discussing the disillusionment of the post war period.¹² Certainly none of the studies

McFarland, 1983) which describes the novels as an attempt to explain the incomprehensible.

¹¹B. Ifor Evans, English Literature Between the Wars, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen and Co., 1951); William C. Frierson, The English Novel in Transition, 1885-1940 (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965); A. C. Ward, The Nineteen-Twenties: Literature and Ideas in the Post-War Decade, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen and Co., 1930; reprint, n.p.: Norwood Editions, 1976); D. J. Enright, "The Literature of the First World War," in The Pelican Guide to English Literature, vol. 7, The Modern Age, ed. by Boris Ford, 3rd ed. (n.p.: Penguin Books, 1973).

¹²Michael Howard, "Military Experience in Literature," in Essays by Divers Hands, ed. Brian Fothergill, Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, n.s. 41, (1980): 29-39 is a brief overview of war literature from Homer through World War II. The war novels are used as source material by Denis Winter, Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War (New York: Viking Penguin, 1979). A.P. Herbert's The Secret Battle is cited by William Moore, The Thin Yellow Line (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975) and Anthony Babington, For the Sake of Example: Capital Courts-Martial, 1914-1920, with a postscript by Major-General Frank

examines the war novels as examples of personal memory, although they may be used in studies as such.

An analysis of the war novels is more complex than simply labeling the writers as suffering from disillusionment, being embittered by the war, or rebelling against society. Each novelist was a civilian removed from his normal surroundings, family, and friends, placed in a unique or unusual situation, and forced to endure conditions of extreme stress. Each had to adjust psychologically, structuring reality into a bearable mode while suppressing the fight-flight syndrome. In many cases this situation lasted, not just for a few days or months, but for several years. Neither shirkers nor cowards, they were simply men of ordinary courage placed in an extraordinary situation by the war.

Being literate men, the generation which survived World War I decided to write about their experiences. They groped for words, images, and metaphors to explain and, using the structure of fiction to give some coherent form to their war memories, selected those aspects of their experience which seemed to be the most important and at the same time the most compelling and representative, in their attempt to "tell the truth about the war." Whatever their

Richardson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983) in their discussions of field courts-martial during World War I.

reasons for writing their novels--catharsis, propaganda, or simply to try to make sense out of the senseless--their truths and personal memories fed into the public consciousness, helping mold the public image of the war which was developing in its aftermath.

This study will investigate selected novelists and their war novels. Those chosen were most frequently mentioned in the literature. The first novel, A. P. Herbert's The Secret Battle, appeared in 1919; the middle of the decade is represented by the trilogies of Ford Madox Ford and R. H. Mottram; the 1928-30 boom in war books is depicted by several works--the first two volumes of Siegfried Sassoon's trilogy and the novels of Richard Aldington, Frederic Manning, H. M. Tomlinson, and Henry Williamson. All were ex-soldiers, except for H. M. Tomlinson, who was an official war correspondent in France; all served on the Western front in France, although A. P. Herbert first saw action at Gallipoli; all are British, except for Frederic Manning, a transplanted Australian who lived in England before and after the war.

Using a chronological organization, this study will investigate the experience of the war for each writer and how it is reflected in the novel. In addition to his later fictional depiction of the war, the author's life, social background, and war record will be analyzed. What was his individual war like and how does that compare to his later

interpretation? In writing the novel is he merely presenting his own experience through the selective structure of fiction rather than memoir or is he using his experiences, as writers sometimes do, for propaganda or literary purposes? This paper will also sample public reaction to the novels through book reviews and available sales information and investigate chronological changes in the works. Is there a progression or change during the decade in the types of works published and in the public's reaction toward them?

Literary documents based on personal experience which combine fiction and memoir, the war novels may be used effectively as resource material in the classroom. This paper will investigate methods of integrating the novels into the instructional module and suggest ways of effectively developing their use as teaching instruments.

The end result will be a combined study of the development of both personal and public memory about the war--the memories of which have been passed to future generations in studies of World War I and the mention of which so quickly conjures up images of trenches and desolation--and a generation lost on the battlefields.

CHAPTER 2

AN ASSAULT ON INJUSTICE: A. P. HERBERT

A. P. Herbert, knighted in 1945, achieved fame as a librettist for musical comedies and as a writer for Punch, joining the staff in the early nineteen-twenties. His published works, in addition to the librettos and reprints of articles and poems from punch, include several volumes of law case satires, two autobiographical works, and one novel about World War I. A Socratic gadfly, he argued for social reform and minority causes in more than five hundred letters to the Times and from the floor of the Commons as an independent member from Oxford University from 1935 to 1950. He entered Parliament to promote the reform of the divorce laws which was accomplished with the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Bill in 1936. During his Parliamentary career he also took up the cudgels on behalf of water buses on the Thames, reform of betting laws, limitation of taxation of authors and the theater, and the obscenity laws.¹

Herbert was a typical member of the educated upper middle class. The son of a resident clerk in the India

¹For general biographical information see A. P. Herbert's two autobiographical works, Independent Member (London: Methuen, 1950) and A. P. H.: His Life and Times (London: Heinemann, 1970). See also Reginald Pound, A. P. Herbert: A Biography (London: Michael Joseph, 1976).

Office, he was descended on his mother's side from a family of prominent lawyers, judges, and bishops of the Anglican Church. His early years were spent in their country home in Surrey, followed, at age eight after the death of his mother, by a move to a Kensington suburb. In the best tradition of the educated classes, he attended Winchester College where he pursued classical studies and Oxford University where he finished with a first in jurisprudence in the spring before World War I.

At the outbreak of the war, Herbert was working in the London slums as a volunteer at Oxford House Mission in Bethnal Green. He intended to devote a year to the project, but in early September the twenty-three year old Herbert volunteered for service, enlisting as an Ordinary Seaman in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. In his autobiography, he emphasized that he was not "duped" into volunteering by "damsels singing patriotic songs or bullied in by peremptory posters." He joined because he believed that England was fighting for a just cause and that he should be in it, especially with both brothers already serving.² His brother Sidney had already embarked on a naval career and was training aboard submarines; Owen was at Sandhurst. Herbert's choice of the navy was based on his hope of meeting his brother while on duty. Ironically, the two met ten months later when Herbert was with the expeditionary force at

²Herbert, APH, 36.

Gallipoli. Sidney's submarine surfaced along the shore and Herbert took him for a tour of the front lines. Sidney survived the war only to die in World War II while Owen, who became an artillery officer, was listed as missing, believed killed, at Mons in October 1914.³

The Reserve became part of the Royal Naval Division shortly after he joined. After Officers' Training Class, Herbert, now a sub-lieutenant, was posted to the Hawke Battalion, one of eight infantry battalions in the division. The Hawke Battalion was being reformed after all but three of its members had been interned at Antwerp in October. The battalion now consisted of men transferred from the Reserve and recruits drawn from the New Army.⁴ Herbert was given command of No. 11 Platoon, C Company, a company of Tynesiders from the mining area of Durham Valley. He served with the Hawke Battalion in Gallipoli and France until wounded in April 1917, when he was invalided home and later assigned aboard ship.⁵

Both during and after the war Herbert suffered from nightmares. Stumbling from bed, he would wander around in

³Pound, Herbert, 37-41, 46.

⁴The Royal Naval Division remained under naval command until late 1916 when it was integrated into the army as the 63rd (RN) Division.

⁵Ibid., 41-44; Douglas Jerrold, The Hawke Battalion: Some Personal Records of Four Years, 1914-1918 (London: Ernest Benn, 1925), 15-30.

the dark shouting commands. After he nearly walked out of an upper-story hotel window, his wife began tying her wrist to his as a safety precaution. In later years Herbert shied from writing about the war, perhaps even from remembering his experiences. In his autobiography he recounts his enlistment and training but, except for one anecdote, skips over his active service. He does mention re-reading a chapter of his novel about the war and finding it a truthful picture of daily life in the front-line in Gallipoli, but then "the book moves to France, and the Somme, but I did not read any more."⁶ Instead he dwelt with lengthy enthusiasm on his service during World War II--"that long exciting slice of my life"⁷--when he joined the River Emergency Services, later the Naval Auxiliary Patrol, and in his repainted craft Water Gipsy patrolled the Thames River. For Herbert, these were exciting days of adventure and patriotism when he served his country well. Perhaps they fit better his idea of what war should be. Nonetheless, he continued to attend the division's annual dinner, giving it a pleasurable mention in his autobiography.⁸

The novel is different. Written in 1917 while events were still emotionally fresh, it is an outpouring of his experiences. Herbert was home on medical leave after being

⁶Herbert, APH, 150.

⁷Ibid., 335.

⁸Pound, Herbert, 59-61, 305.

wounded in France. His closest friend in the Hawke Battalion had been killed a few months before, and the news he was receiving about his friends from Oxford indicated that a number of them were also dead. Several months before he left the front, Sub-Lieutenant Dyett in the Nelson Battalion of the Royal Naval Division had been executed for cowardice. Already suffering from the "most horrible and extraordinary" nightmares which would plague him after the war, he believed that the novel was "compulsively written" in a rapid outpouring of a few weeks, "almost writing itself." The actual process of writing may well have served as a catharsis for the experiences he had so recently endured and a reflection of his anger and indignation at the Dyett court-martial proceedings.⁹

One might even argue that Herbert was suffering from shell-shock. He had already experienced a nervous breakdown in his youth; perhaps now the stress of the war was overtaking him. Reginald Pound, Herbert's biographer, believes that the writing of the novel was "an attempt to exorcise the haunting effect on his mind and heart of the fate of his central character, whose identity as a comrade-in-arms was all too real to him." Perhaps writing the novel was his therapy--he certainly made no attempt to publish it until early 1919.¹⁰

⁹Ibid., 52-55; Herbert, APH, 42.

¹⁰Pound, Herbert, 28, 55-56.

The Secret Battle is the story of Henry Penrose who joined the battalion shortly before it sailed for Gallipoli, a soldier who looked forward to "the sensations of adventure and romance."¹¹ His fatal character flaws were too much imagination and a lack of confidence. Events at Gallipoli killed the romance--the strain of constant active trench warfare, the belief that he caused a man's death on patrol, the sight of bloated bodies that could not be buried until nightfall, the stress of burial parties. When he became ill with dysentery, he refused to go on sick call. Though others marveled at his courage, Penrose had begun to doubt it. In Gallipoli antagonism developed between Penrose and Burnett, the enemy who would later report him for cowardice. Burnett was bogus, his lack of courage being shown up by Penrose in several incidents.

After being invalided home with dysentery, Penrose returned to the battalion in the summer of 1916 to the Souchez sector in France. In this quiet sector, Penrose again became scout officer, going out each night on patrol for three months. After being pinned down on a slope by

¹¹A. P. Herbert, The Secret Battle, with an Introduction by Winston Churchill (New York: Knopf, 1929; reprint, New York: Antheneum, 1981). All page references are to this edition.

machine gun fire during one patrol, he again lost confidence, becoming anxious and nervous. His commanding officer, a humane individual, gave him other duties. The battalion then moved to the Somme, and in one battle, most of the battalion was wiped out. But Penrose did well--he still had the stuff. With the arrival of a new commanding officer, however, things changed. Colonel Philpott was old army and took an instant dislike to Penrose, detailing him for the more dangerous working parties and sending him out more frequently than was his turn, often four or five times a week. Philpott broke his nerve. The old dysentery returned, as did the old doubts. He stopped caring.

Wounded in the spring of 1917, he was sent home but returned to the front after several months, turning down a safe job in England with the War Office because he was determined to do his duty. Philpott sent him out on a carrying party his first night at the front, rather than allowing him a few days to acclimate. Because of heavy fire, the detail could not get through. After a number had been killed and others had faded away, Penrose and the remainder of the party ran away from the lines towards a dugout to wait out the shelling. His old enemy Burnett, sent to investigate why they had not yet arrived at the front line, was standing in the door of the dug-out and saw them. Burnett ordered Penrose to take his party up at once. When Penrose refused, Burnett reported to Philpott. After

six weeks under arrest, Penrose was court-martialed and executed. And that is how "my friend Harry was shot for cowardice--and he was one of the bravest men I ever knew."¹²

Herbert vividly portrays the horrors and strains of war--a day in the trenches in Gallipoli under the hot sun with the bloated, rank-smelling bodies of dead Turks and Englishmen on the parapet waiting for burial at nightfall, the sensation of placing a hand in a dead man's face while crawling through no-man's-land at night. An awareness of these factors is necessary to understand why a courageous man might finally break. But pictures of everyday life and the schoolboy escapades which relieved the tension are also recorded. He describes placing a dummy in a forward trench to attract German fire or looking down on the plains of Troy after bathing in the sea.¹³ For Herbert, this also was part of his war.

A comparison of Herbert's active war service and of the events recorded in the novel indicate the autobiographical nature of this work. Although not every event recounted in the novel can be verified from other sources, the greater number can, indicating that Herbert combined his indignation at the court-martial system with an

¹²Ibid., 216.

¹³Ibid., 16-17, 103-106, 120-21.

outpouring of his own experiences within the structured form of the novel. Because the work so closely follows Herbert's life during the war, the possibility increases that Herbert identified with his central character, Penrose, and also with Sub-Lieutenant Dyett of the neighboring Nelson Battalion, who was court-martialed and executed for cowardice.

The Secret Battle is written in first person with the author as observer, a concerned friend of the main character, Harry Penrose. The narrator's service record, with slight variations, is similar to Herbert's own. But it is Penrose's military experiences which most accurately reflect Herbert's in the first part of the novel up to the point of being wounded and invalided home. The last part of the novel, Penrose's return to France, is fictional rather than autobiographical and is loosely based on Dyett's court-martial and the events immediately preceding it. The following analysis is a comparison of Herbert's actual war experience and that of the fictional Penrose, showing how they reflect each other in areas which can be verified. Deviations from the narrator's service will also be indicated.

In May 1915, the Hawke Battalion embarked to take part in the ill-fated Gallipoli expedition. This was Herbert's first experience of trench warfare, but unlike in France, where there were unofficial truces along some parts of the

trenches, trench warfare in Gallipoli was constant. Although night was the time for working parties, the Turks sporadically burst into rapid fire, making work difficult and dangerous. Misery was compounded by the problems of heat, flies, and disease, especially dysentery. On 30 July 1915, Herbert was sent to the hospital with a high temperature and invalided home with virulent enteritis.¹⁴

Penrose also embarks in May 1915 for Gallipoli. The novel's description of the beach landing, digging in, the Turks' use of rapid fire, all agree in detail with Douglas Jerrold's history of the battalion. When Penrose's company is first sent to the front lines, they get lost--the same thing happened to Herbert's company. Herbert with his classical education was impressed with the nearness of the plains of Troy and had them pointed out to his men during a bathing party. So does Penrose. The descriptions of trench warfare in Turkey, the heat, the flies and the disease which are vividly described in the novel, are also referred to in Jerrold's history and the letters of William Ker, Herbert's close friend. Because of severe dysentery, Penrose is invalided home, as was Herbert.¹⁵

After light duty with Admiralty Intelligence in Whitehall, Herbert rejoined the battalion as assistant-

¹⁴Jerrold, Hawke, 42, 62-63, 74-82.

¹⁵Ibid., 55; Herbert, Secret, 11-25, 31, 110; Pound, Herbert, 40-41.

adjutant in July 1916. The battalion had taken over a sector of the line near Vimy Ridge, Souchez II, a quiet sector. Penrose returns to the battalion at the same time, same place. Again, Jerrold's description of duty at Souchez supports Herbert's fictional depiction. Much time had to be spent repairing the derelict trenches. To prevent the approach of enemy patrols through the old trenches, Herbert organized the creation of a life-sized figure of an infantryman which was placed in one of the forward trenches. The trick worked too well. The dummy, already damaged by a shower of enemy rocket grenades, could not be retrieved because of concentrated enemy fire and was destroyed. A similar incident occurs in the novel with Penrose as the instigator.¹⁶

In the fall the battalion moved to take part in the continuing Somme offensive attacking Beaucourt on 13 November. Despite the fighting in Gallipoli, the battalion had not yet been truly blooded. On this day the Hawke Battalion went into action with 20 officers and 415 men; official casualties were 23 officers and 396 men.¹⁷ By the end of the day, the battalion had virtually ceased to exist --less than twenty men answered roll call. Herbert was one

¹⁶Herbert, Secret, 114, 120; Jerrold, Hawke, 117-119, 120; Pound, Herbert, 47, 51, 52.

¹⁷Additional reserve officers were later moved up to the front which accounts for the discrepancy in numbers.

of two officers who had survived. Ker, a classical scholar and his closest friend since Gallipoli, was killed. It was also during the attack at Beaucourt that the incident occurred in the Nelson Battalion which resulted in Dyett's court-martial. Penrose, thrown into a similar battle, is also one of two officers who survives; the other is the author of the novel.¹⁸

During the reorganization of the battalion, the Division was integrated into the Army as the 63rd (RN) Division. Herbert disliked the change to army status and especially the change in regimental commander to Major-General D. C. Shute, who wanted to replace many senior officers with army officers. Shute also attempted to ban beards, a naval prerogative. Herbert responded with a bit of verse, "The Ballad of Codson's Beard," upholding naval rights and traditions.¹⁹

The battalion was next in action at Pozieres in February 1917. Herbert, however, was on leave until the end of the month. On his return, he was made adjutant. On April 23, during an attack on Gaverelle, west of Arras, he was wounded by shrapnel in the left buttock. At the field-dressing station, bits of his hip flask were also found in

¹⁸Herbert, Secret, 130-31; Jerrold, Hawke, 131-38; Pound, Herbert, 52-53.

¹⁹Jerrold, Hawke, 129-131; Pound, Herbert, 53.

the wound. With typical Herbert humor, he joked about his ignominious wound and the sterilizing qualities of good brandy.²⁰

It is at this point that the service records of Herbert and Penrose diverge slightly. Penrose remains with the battalion with no leave until wounded in the chest at Arras in April. During the month of February, Penrose also locks horns with a new commanding officer from the old army and is assigned excessive and dangerous working parties, including those which required passing through an area known as the Valley of Death because it was enfiladed from both ends and shelled from three directions. Penrose's nerve is already beginning to go when the author is wounded and sent home in February; the narrator hears of Penrose's wound in a letter from the front.²¹

Here the service records of Herbert, the author, and Penrose, the fictional character, diverge even further. This is the point in his life when Herbert was writing The Secret Battle, therefore he could not have known what his next assignment would be. Instead of returning to the front in France, Herbert was reassigned on board ship and sailed from Liverpool on 2 October 1918 in a convoy for Alexandria. He was on a train from Oran to Tlemcen in northern Algeria

²⁰Jerrold, Hawke, 147-160; Pound, Herbert, 53.

²¹Herbert, Secret, 138-142, 149-159.

when he heard the news of the armistice and was released from service when the ship returned home.²²

Penrose, the fictional character, suffered a different fate, perhaps one which Herbert feared for himself--that of returning to France. Although his nerve is obviously going, Penrose turns down an offer of home service because he believes he has a duty to return. The remainder of the novel is loosely based on events leading up to and including Dyett's court-martial.²³

The British army prior to World War I had been a small professional one. The Manual of Military Law under which the army operated had been compiled in 1884 and updated periodically. Strict discipline and control of the lower ranks was stressed. Although flogging had been outlawed in 1881, twenty-five offenses were still punishable by the death penalty.²⁴ World War I changed the make-up of the British army from a small professional organization to a massive army comprised largely of civilian-soldiers, many of them volunteers for the duration. The professional prewar

²²Pound, Herbert, 57-60.

²³Herbert, Secret, 164-77.

²⁴Herbert remembered the ceremony in which Commander Rupert Guinness read the Articles of War to the assembled volunteers and novices with its long list of offenses for which death was the penalty. "There were so many of these that the sense of solemnity gradually dwindled." Eventually, no one was even listening. Herbert, APH, 36.

core was virtually destroyed by the end of 1914 and the army was reformed with the territorials and Kitchener's New Army. Yet military law remained unchanged and was rigorously applied, more so than in the past, to the largely civilian soldiers.²⁵

Despite the variety of offenses in which it could be applied, the death penalty had rarely been used in the last hundred years. A study of army discipline by Charles M. Clode, published in 1869 and based on a study of War Office records, placed the last death sentence in 1803. No death sentences were imposed during the Crimean War; during the Boer War, only four--one for desertion, one for murder, and two for reprisal killings of Boer prisoners. But it was resurrected and imposed in more than 300 cases during World War I, mainly on the Western front.²⁶

In the Army Routine Orders for 14 September 1914, Sir John French, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, emphasized that strictest disciplinary standards were to be upheld. The first execution had already been carried out on 6 September, the day after the retreat from Mons, for desertion. Before the war ended, 3,076 men were condemned to death for various offenses; 343 were executed. Three of the executed were officers--two were executed for desertion, one

²⁵William Moore, Yellow Line, 48-51.

²⁶Anthony Babington, Courts-Martial, 2-3.

for murder. One of the officers, Sub-Lieutenant Dyett, served in the Royal Naval Division, Nelson Battalion. He was executed 5 January 1917.²⁷

The Field General Courts-Martial (FGCM) which imposed the sentences operated in imperfect circumstances and under the restraints of military law, which differed greatly from civil law. Both the conditions of the battle areas in which they were held and the general procedure which was followed greatly hampered the defense and circumvented many legal protections guaranteed civilians. FGCM were usually composed of three or four officers. The senior officer was normally a major or lieutenant-colonel, although occasionally a captain would act as president. The prosecution was usually conducted by the accused soldier's adjutant; the defense, called the prisoner's friend, was often a junior regimental officer who had little knowledge of law or procedure. Although procedure stated that the defense was to be given the opportunity to prepare its case and to communicate with witnesses, Anthony Babington concludes, after a study of courts-martial records, that "there was no real defense to the charge and the evidence or

²⁷Ibid., 5-6, 95; Moore, Yellow Line, 81. During World War I, executions were carried out for the following offenses: desertion, cowardice, quitting post, disobedience, striking a superior officer, casting away arms, mutiny, and murder. The most common offense was desertion. Cowardice was second in number executed. For a statistical break-down by year, front, and offense, see Babington, Courts-Martial, 228-231.

statement of the accused amounted to little more than a plea of extenuating circumstances."²⁸ Extenuating circumstances, including the possibility of shell-shock, were generally ignored by the court.²⁹

In the early stages of the war, it was unusual for a soldier sentenced to death to be seen by a doctor. Later, when physical and mental examinations were instituted, they were often cursorily performed and not conducted until after the court's verdict. The results were therefore not subject to cross-examination or even made known to the defense. Time after time in his study, Babington recounts or alludes to cases in which those executed were obviously suffering from some sort of traumatic neurosis, i.e., shell-shock.³⁰

After both the prosecution and defense had presented their case, the court closed to consider its findings, reopening to announce its verdict. If the finding was not guilty, it was immediately announced. If the defendant was found guilty, no findings were announced and the court heard evidence of the prisoner's character. Court closed again while the sentence was deliberated. In the case of a death sentence, the court usually recommended mercy. The case then passed to the defendant's commanding officer and to the brigade, division, corps, and army commanders for their

²⁸Babington, Courts-Martial, 13.

²⁹Ibid., xi-xii, 12-13.

³⁰Ibid., 25, 28, 60-61, 82, 91, 124, 141-143.

views concerning confirmation or commutation of the sentence and then to the Commander-in-Chief for his decision. After 1915, the commanding officer was required to provide information on the soldier's character in terms of his conduct in action, i.e., his value as a soldier, and on the state of discipline in his unit. If the Commander-in-Chief confirmed the death sentence, the prisoner was informed the evening before execution, usually before a special parade of his unit. The next morning, sentence would be carried out. There was virtually no chance of appeal.³¹

The case of Sub-Lieutenant Dyett evidenced many of the flaws of the system. Dyett was a volunteer who had joined the Royal Naval Division in June 1915 after being commissioned. In October 1916, aware that his nerve was going, he requested as a Royal Naval Reserve Officer to be returned to sea duty. On 13 November 1916, the day he was alleged to have deserted, his unit took part in a renewed offensive against the Ancre Heights. The British units involved were decimated, Dyett's unit being reduced to one officer and a dozen men. Dyett was in reserve and had been sent forward to the battalion. He met a staff officer from the brigade, his "one and only enemy," who had collected about two hundred stragglers. He ordered Dyett to follow behind, making sure no one dropped out. Dyett refused,

³¹Ibid., 14-19.

arguing that because of the chaotic situation he should return to brigade headquarters for fresh orders. The staff officer reported him for refusing to obey a lawful order. Dyett was next seen two days later at a village behind the lines. He contended at the court-martial that he had lost his way after leaving the staff officer but had reported to brigade headquarters the next morning where he was told to wait until his battalion was relieved from the line.³²

Although the offense was committed on 13 November, the decision to court-martial was not taken until the next month under a new commanding officer. His defending officer was inept and unskilled in cross-examination, eliciting additional damaging testimony from prosecution witnesses. But what convicted Dyett was the testimony of his enemy, the staff officer who had ordered him to help with the stragglers. His testimony was allowed to stand unchallenged and with no hint of prejudice. The defense did not call any witnesses, but simply argued that Dyett was unfit for service in the field due to nerves and that he had lost his way and not deserted. The court found him guilty and sentenced him to death, but recommended mercy because of his youth and inexperience in active operations. Despite the fact that his commanding officer, as well as his brigade, divisional, and corps commanders, favored commutation, the

³²For a description and analysis of the Dyett case see *Ibid.*, 95-105. See also Moore, Yellow Line, 92-95.

recommendation for mercy was ignored. Haig wrote in his diary before the verdict had even been rendered that he wanted to make an example of him, to show that officers were subject to the same law as the ranks. Dyett was informed of the sentence on the afternoon of 4 January 1914 and shot at 7:30 A.M. on 5 January. Until sentence was pronounced, Dyett had not even been aware of his danger, believing that even if found guilty, he would merely lose his commission.³³

Herbert's novel, The Secret Battle is based rather loosely on the Dyett case. Herbert had served in courts-martial, both as prosecutor and defender, and with his legal training, he had to be aware of the flaws in the system. According to Brigadier Basil Rackham, Herbert was invited to be Dyett's defending officer, but declined. Rackham reports also that Herbert often spoke of writing a book about courts-martial. He wanted to emphasize the inadequacy of the defense, the bias of the court in favor of the prosecution, and the court's insensitivity toward men whose nerves had gone.³⁴

³³Moore, Yellow Line, 92-95, 135-139; Babington, Courts-Martial, 101-103. Many soldiers passing through the courts-martial were unaware that the death penalty could be imposed for their particular offense until sentence was pronounced. Because sentence was usually carried out within twenty-four hours, an appeal was impossible.

³⁴Basil Rackham was Herbert's assistant while he was adjutant from November 1916 to April 1917, the period during which Dyett's offense and court-martial occurred. Babington, Courts-Martial, 14, 101.

In addition to his prior experience in court-martial proceedings, Herbert would have been well-informed about the Dyett case in particular. In July 1916 when he returned to the battalion, Herbert was made assistant adjutant which meant he was the chief correspondent with the brigade concerning controversial matters. He continued in this position until February 1917 when he was made adjutant.³⁵ Might he not have seen the papers on the Dyett court-martial? He would certainly have heard the speculations and comments on the case from the men in the Nelson Battalion and probably have known that the man responsible for the charges was shunned.

The Nelson and Hawke Battalions had served together both in Gallipoli and France, either relieving each other in the line or serving in adjacent sectors. Both had been involved in the Beaucourt action where Dyett's offense had occurred and both battalions had suffered heavy losses. In the period immediately following, the entire division had been withdrawn and upon their return to the front in mid-January, the Hawke Battalion supplied working parties for the Nelson Battalion for three days. In preparation for the attack on Arras in April, the Hawke Battalion helped the

³⁵There is some discrepancy about the date Herbert became adjutant for the battalion. Babington states that he became adjutant in November 1916 (see above) while Jerrold places the promotion in February 1917. But whether he was assistant adjutant or adjutant for the period in question, Herbert would have been in a position to be well informed about the Dyett court-martial.

Nelson in digging and pushing the lines forward.³⁶ These are documented instances of relations with the Nelson battalion; there were probably more. Thus, in addition to the possibility that Herbert saw the official papers on the court-martial, he certainly heard what was being said in the Nelson Battalion after Dyett's execution.

There are certain similarities between the novel and the Dyett case. The incident for which Penrose is court-martialed is his refusal to obey an order from another officer who happens to be his enemy. His report, combined with the commanding officer's animosity toward him, results in Penrose's arrest, court-martial, and execution. The officer who is to defend Penrose does not get the papers until shortly before the case is to be tried. The same is true for Dyett, including the fact that his defending officer had only four hours, on Christmas Eve, to prepare his case and did not receive the summary of evidence until thirty minutes before court was to convene, hardly time to prepare a defense and question or even find witnesses. When the court-martial papers moved up the chain of command, Herbert speculates that one of the officers penciled in a notation that Penrose be made an example. In Dyett's case, not only did Haig believe he should serve as an example that the law applied to officers as well as privates, so also did

³⁶Jerrold, Hawke, 58, 60-61, 118, 128, 133, 137, 141, 144, 152-53.

his army commander, General Gough.³⁷ Possibly Herbert heard rumors or even saw such a notation on the papers.

In his description of the court-martial itself, Herbert notes the excellent grooming of the men on the court, a sign that they know little of this war and have not been in the active fighting. The members of the court believe implicitly in the superiority of the court-martial system in discovering the truth. They are also biased in favor of the prosecution, believing the defense to be superfluous. Any attempt by the prisoner's friend to cross-examine witnesses is prejudicial to the defendant. The defense may even be required to place his questions to witnesses through the court, giving the witness more than adequate time to construct an acceptable answer. The defending officer is often unqualified, having a limited knowledge of law. He may have been given the case at the last minute and had little time to study it or prepare a defense. But most importantly of all, within this system the real facts of a case are not brought out--earlier instances of a soldier's courage in battle; the facts of his earlier service, especially if he has been involved in battles with high casualties; any prejudices on the part of witnesses toward the defendant. Instead the court concentrates solely on the one incident on which the court-

³⁷Babington, Courts-Martial, 97, 103; Moore, Yellow Line, 92, 94, 138; Herbert, Secret, 213-214.

martial is being brought. All else is ignored. After the verdict, the decision goes through the chain of command and perhaps somebody thinks he must be made an example and makes a notation for no mercy. And the decision comes back down. Such is Herbert's description of the court-martial system. A comparison of his observations with scholarly treatments of the subject indicates their accuracy.³⁸

Shell-shock is another element in The Secret Battle. The novel is structured to show a slow building of pressures and a slow loss of nerve as Penrose loses his romantic notion of war. By the time he leaves Gallipoli, he has lost his illusions and his confidence and has begun to doubt his bravery, although he continues to behave with fortitude. On his return to France, his confidence and courage are further eroded by frequent night patrols for three months, by being pinned by German fire in an exposed position on a slope, and by being only one of two officers to survive a battle on the Somme. Additional stresses occur with the arrival of Colonel Philpott who dislikes Penrose immediately and sends him out more frequently and on more dangerous work parties than other men until his nerve is gone. The dysentery

³⁸Herbert, Secret, 192-204, 213-214. Babington accepts the accuracy of Herbert's depiction of courts-martial, using excerpts from the novel in his own treatment of the subject. Babington, Courts-Martial, 14.

returns, as do the old doubts, combined now with a sense of injustice. Penrose ceases to care what happens, the second stage in the development of shell-shock. Refusing a safe job in England, Penrose, from a sense of duty and fear of being a coward, returns to France after recuperating from his wound and is immediately sent to the front on a carrying party. Not surprisingly, his nerve fails.

Case studies of shell-shock published after the war detail histories similar to Penrose's. The individual approaches active duty with confidence, often having a romanticized ideal of war. After the first shock of the reality of war, he continues to serve conscientiously, often courageously. In the next stage there is a loss of confidence and a growing fearfulness, but motivated by a sense of duty, of not wanting to let his men down, or of appearing a coward, the individual continues to perform. As the fear becomes greater the individual ceases to care what happens.³⁹

Aside from the strain of actual battle, Penrose experiences additional stresses of the type noted in studies of shell-shock. He suffers from an illness--dysentery--which weakens him physically and serves under an unfair officer which causes resentment. Both create additional

³⁹Eric J. Leed, No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 108; John T. MacCurdy, War Neuroses, with a Preface by W.H.R. Rivers (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1918), 9, 15, 35.

stresses and compound his problem of adapting to front-line conditions. By the time Penrose recuperates from his chest wound and returns to the front, he is suffering nightmares, another symptom of mental anxiety. Physically, he is unfit and probably could not pass a proper medical examination. These additional stresses would make it even more difficult for a soldier to deal with the stress of battle. Herbert's depiction of Penrose is based on his own non-medical observations, but it reads like a case-study in the medical literature published after the war.⁴⁰

The literature on courts-martial makes it clear that a number of those charged and later sentenced to death were suffering from shell-shock. While among those court-martialed were some who were obviously malingerers and soldiers deliberately trying to escape front-line duty, others exhibited the symptoms of shell-shock before their offense. Some of those charged had been returned directly to the front-line after leaving the hospital for treatment of wounds or shell-shock. However, no inquiry was made into their past medical history, nor was there any real attempt to discern their medical or mental condition at the time of their offense.⁴¹ The court-martial limited itself only to

⁴⁰MacCurdy, War Neuroses, 15, 20; Babington, Courts-Martial, 205-206.

⁴¹Babington, Courts-Martial, xi, 25-28, 61, 82, 91, 123, 143; Richard Holmes, Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle (New York: Free Press, 1986), 256.

evidence concerning the offense itself. Again Herbert's novel is accurate.

One can speculate about Herbert's own condition at the time the novel was written and whether its accuracy in depicting shell-shock reflects the author's own near shell-shock. He had to be suffering from the strain of the war and from the deaths of comrades and friends, especially Ker's, plus the additional stress of continued service on the front lines and a wound received in action. Now, after massive carnage, he learns of the legal death--execution for cowardice--of an individual in a neighboring battalion. In this situation, he may well have identified with the condemned soldier whether he knew him or not, understanding why he reacted as he did, perhaps even fearing that he might react in a similar fashion if returned to the front after his leave. Having already experienced a nervous breakdown in his youth, perhaps he feared he would break again.⁴²

Nor must one overlook the element of chance. Penrose is court-martialed and executed for an action which is not unusual on the front lines. In other cases the individual might be delegated to other jobs, as happened with Penrose under his old commanding officer or he might be transferred to a job in England or aboard ship, as was Herbert. Nor should the case ever have gotten as far as court-martial.

⁴²Pound, Herbert, 30.

The medical literature again supports Herbert's conclusions. Similar cases of shell-shock are described, but the man is withdrawn from the field before he breaks. In the studies of courts-martial, there are also similar cases, but these individuals, like Penrose, are left in the field until they give way. Many of them were also executed. It was all a matter of chance, of the right commanding officer or an alert medical officer, whether an individual was treated or court-martialed for weakening under stress.⁴³

The Secret Battle, the earliest of the war novels to be treated in this study, was written during the war. When published in 1919, the novel received excellent critical reviews, but it was not a commercial success, possibly because the British public was tired of the war. It did, however, achieve a measure of popularity, sold steadily during the twenties, and was re-issued in 1929 during the war-book controversy with an introduction by Winston Churchill. In his introduction, Churchill called it "one of the most moving of the novels produced by the war" and compared it to a Greek tragedy. Penrose was a "gallant soldier born down by stress," a hero victimized by the cruelty of chance. Indirectly joining the war-book fray, Churchill argues that the novel cannot harm the new

⁴³See Babington, Courts-Martial for court-martial cases; MacCurdy, War Neuroses for shell-shock cases.

generation nor would it prevent them from doing their duty if necessary.⁴⁴

But what of the reception when the novel first appeared in 1919? The novel by an unknown author received limited and brief, although complimentary, notice. All the reviewers note that this is a novel about the effect of the stress of war on the soldier and that it is a very uncomfortable book to read. In a very brief review, the Spectator calls it a "very painful novel," stressing the fact that an officer unfit for continued service was allowed to return to the front, his failing nerve being a partial result of his unfit condition. The reviewer carefully notes that no one was to blame; that the tragedy resulted from a shortage of combat and medical personnel. The Athenaeum printed an equally short review. The novel is praised for presenting a true picture of the war rather than one of handsome young men suffering "wounds pathetic without being painful" and "death always beautiful." Instead Herbert presents a dull and sober picture of war and of its effects on the minds of the participants. Cowardice, the reviewer asserts, is a disease Penrose got from the war.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Winston Churchill, introduction to Herbert, Secret, v-vii.

⁴⁵Review of The Secret Battle, by A. P. Herbert, in Spectator, 21 June 1919, 800; review of The Secret Battle, by A. P. Herbert, in Athenaeum, 4 July 1919, 572.

The reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement however zeroes in more accurately on the novel's essentials. Labeling it more precisely as a novel about fear as an element in the fighting soldier's daily life, he also notes Herbert's portrayal of the court-martial system, comparing the work to similar attacks on social institutions by Thomas Hardy and John Galsworthy. Although it is obvious from the reviews that the public was not aware that the novel was based on an actual case, the reviewer is acute enough to suggest that "something very like . . . must have happened over and over again."⁴⁶

The strains of soldiering in World War I were obviously no secret to the reviewers. Although the novel does not dwell on the gruesome in the war nor attempt to dramatize the horrors, they are, nonetheless, described as part of the war in Herbert's book. But in 1919 there were no outcries of indignation about the image of the war which emerges from the novel. Nor were there protests at the idea that a soldier executed for cowardice was really brave, that he was destroyed by the stresses of war combined with an unjust court-martial system. In fact, the public and Parliament were at this time grappling with the issues of shell-shock and courts-martial. The Darling Committee, headed by Mr. Justice Darling of the High Court, was

⁴⁶Review of The Secret Battle, by A. P. Herbert, In TLS, 3 July 1919, 356.

inquiring into the laws and procedures regulating courts-martial in the spring of 1919. In the spring of 1920, yet another committee, this time under the leadership of Lord Southborough, began an inquiry into the nature of shell-shock with special attention to inflicting the death penalty for cowardice.⁴⁷ Herbert's novel is apparently an accurate reflection of the concerns of the immediate postwar period.

Herbert's war novel is based on an actual event. He combines the court-martial and execution of Lt. Dyett with his own autobiographical account of the war to protest the inequities of a field court-martial system which condemned men suffering from shell-shock to death. His own legal training before the war lends authenticity. But of even greater importance to a portrayal the World War I experience is his revelation of the secret battle each soldier fought within himself--that of overcoming his own fears and horror. A new definition of courage emerges--that of a man who struggles to overcome his terrors and meet his duties as a soldier. Nor does a momentary lapse in valor indicate cowardice. Unlike the dauntless hero in the prewar sentimental novels, the World War I hero is well acquainted with fear, but continues to act with fortitude and bravery.

⁴⁷Babington, Courts-Martial, 193-203.

CHAPTER 3

THE CLERK AS CITIZEN-SOLDIER: R. H. MOTTRAM

In 1914 Ralph Hale Mottram, age thirty-one, was safely ensconced as a bank clerk at Barclays Bank in the provincial town of Norwich, Norfolk, the town of his birth. Although following in the career footsteps of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather at the bank, he longed to become a writer. Even with the encouragement and help of John Galsworthy, whom he met in 1904, his efforts remained largely unsuccessful. The acquaintance did, however, enable him to move in literary and artistic circles during his trips to London.¹

Reflecting the class consciousness of his age, Mottram considered himself and his family members of the lower

¹For general biographical information see Thomas F. Staley, ed., Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 36, British Novelists, 1890-1929: Modernists (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1985), s.v. "R. H. Mottram," by Clark Thayer and Hal May, ed., Contemporary Authors, vol. 108 (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1983), s.v. "R(alph) H(ale) Mottram," by J. Marjoram. See also Mottram's autobiographical writings: Autobiography with a Difference (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1939); The Twentieth Century: A Personal Record (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1969); "A Personal Record," in R. H. Mottram, John Easton, and Eric Partridge, Three Personal Records of the War (London: Scholartis Press, 1929), 3-142. Mottram met Galsworthy through Ada, Galsworthy's wife, who had been his father's ward. For the initial meeting with Galsworthy, see R. H. Mottram, For Some We Loved: An Intimate Portrait of Ada and John Galsworthy (London: Hutchinson, 1956), 21. Among those he met through Galsworthy was Ford Madox Ford, then Ford Hueffer. *Ibid.*, 77.

middle class of chief clerks, tradesmen, and small property owners. Dissenters or Nonconformists verging on Quakerism, the Mottram family was anti-military and held the common prejudice toward the army as a home for misfits, criminals, and the unemployed. Although Mottram's father was a member of the volunteers, he explained away any contradiction by pronouncing the volunteers' existence a guarantee against both invasion and conscription. Despite family attitudes, Mottram himself remembers growing up in a generation which was imbued with a romanticized military history, idealizing battle while ignoring the realities of horse dung and wounded men.²

Unlike many others, Mottram did not rush out to enlist at the first news of war. He was one of the second crop of volunteers, "people who . . . just couldn't walk out of our lifetime's 'job', as it was then envisaged, without asking what was to happen when, in a few months, we thought, it would all be over and we should be no longer required."³ With a clerk's cautiousness, he first investigated enlistment and admits that he was depressed at the prospect. He knew about old-fashioned soldiering and hated the idea of being incarcerated in the barracks. He finally joined a Territorial Battalion which was not required to serve

²Mottram, Autobiography, 135-40, 162.

³Mottram, Twentieth Century, 28.

abroad--the 2/4th Territorial Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment.⁴

Because of his civilian employment, he was first given the job of paying for billets. He also helped with drill and spoke at recruiting meetings. In April 1915 he applied for and received a commission, becoming a temporary gentleman for the duration. After Officer Training, he became an assistant adjutant and was attached to the Norfolk Regiment, 3rd Battalion.⁵

Mottram's autobiographical writings allow one to construct a partial account of his actual war service. Although he joined in fall 1914, his battalion was not ordered to France until September 1915. It was slated to take part in the first offensive of the New Army but was withdrawn because of its lack of experienced officers. Mottram was finally assigned to a company billeted at Poperinghe near Ypres in October.⁶ His military service divides into two parts. For the first part of the war he was involved in active fighting in the front trenches in the area around Ypres and was briefly engaged on the Somme; from

⁴Ibid., 32-35; Mottram, Some We Loved, 181. The Territorial Battalions were not liable to overseas service, but as of 19 August 1914, complete units were invited to volunteer. Ian Beckett, "The Territorial Force," in Beckett, A Nation in Arms, 131-33.

⁵Mottram, Twentieth Century, 35-36, 40-41.

⁶Ibid., 43-44.

the fall of 1916 until the end of the war he was behind the lines, although always within the range of shells, investigating damage claims and performing other clerical assignments.⁷

His arrival at Poperinghe, one of the divisional rest areas, occurred immediately after the battle of Loos. He was put in charge of D Company which had just come out of the battle badly battered and with heavy losses. From October 1915 until the spring of 1916, his life consisted of the normal rotation of front line, support, reserve.⁸ The front line area they were assigned was in the Salient, northeast of Ypres in the section from Boesinghe on the Furnes Canal and running northeast through Hooge, a sector of almost constant fighting. At this time, according to Mottram, the Germans had complete fire superiority, firing continuously and with great map accuracy. Casualties were a constant hazard of the daily routine. Shortly after his

⁷The following summary is based mainly on Mottram's "Personal Record" and Twentieth Century. Although essentially chronological, Mottram is often vague about dates and places. This is true of many of the war memoirs, since the soldier in the infantry generally knew little about where he was or the importance of actions in which he was involved; he knew only what was happening in his small section of the line.

⁸The men rotated between three lines in the trenches for a week or so and then were relieved and marched back to a brigade rest area which was out of bullet, but not necessarily artillery, range. Every month or so the division was withdrawn even further from the front line for divisional rest which included entertainment and recreation. Ibid., 46.

arrival, he found himself in the front trenches commanding a company, alone and isolated, without the guidance of older, experienced soldiers as he had expected--instead headquarters "seemed as distant as England."⁹

Later in the year, probably late November or early December, he was with a working party digging "the Great Drain" when a shell-blast trapped him under an A-frame. Not only was he later hospitalized, but he had his first experience with the army bureaucracy. He had to undergo a Court of Inquiry concerning the company pay which had been in his tunic and had been shredded and destroyed along with his clothing. After finally convincing the Court that he did not have the money, he was hospitalized in mid-December. Except for the mention of swollen wrists, he does not describe his injuries. Back in the line in January 1916, he took part in the constant minor offensives and trench raids which occurred in that sector.¹⁰

Because of his knowledge of French, Mottram was assigned in the spring of 1916, probably around April, to the Claims Commission at Divisional Headquarters in Poperinghe to handle civilian damage claims. Given a week's leave in May he returned to England where, after the first

⁹Ibid., 44-46; Mottram, "Personal Record," 6-10, 26-28.

¹⁰Mottram, "Personal Record," 65-76. On 15 December 1915, Mottram was writing Galsworthy from the convalescent ward; in January 1916 he was writing from a hole in a Belgium beet field. Mottram, Some We Loved, 184-85.

happiness at seeing his family, he felt out of place. Returning to France, he settled into a more normal mode of existence with regular hours and decent food and sleeping quarters. Much of his time was spent traveling in the area assessing civilian claims and paying damages.¹¹

The respite from active fighting ended in early September 1916 when he was sent back to his battalion to take part one of the last pushes in the battle of the Somme. By now, because of casualties, most members of the battalion were strangers. Of the fighting Mottram retains only vague impressions, having experienced a three-week memory loss during the period of the fighting, a fact which he assures us was not unusual. The last place name he retains is Acheux. After that he remembers

bare downs, great heat by day, cold at night, shell-holes, an enormous landscape of tents stretching across soil as brown and barren as a desert, an intensified clamor of guns, one single prisoner, a very fine-looking big man, covered with red stripes, his hands tied behind him (why, I wonder) and a mounted policeman holding the rope; then files and files of ordinary meek, battered, bewildered prisoners, without arms or equipment, replacing their helmets by pickelhaube; then a start of glad surprise as the real nature of the tanks . . . manifested itself; then the horrid whiff of gas and unburied dead; and after this I lose touch completely.¹²

His memory picks up again with the jolting of an ambulance and his head hanging over the end of a stretcher. He was labeled as suffering a disorder of the digestive organs,

¹¹Mottram, "Personal Record," 63, 81, 104-07; Mottram, Twentieth Century, 55-61.

¹²Mottram, "Personal Record," 114-15.

immediately made a fuss, and "had that stigma, as I felt it to be, removed." He was bruised and singed, but not wounded.¹³

That offensive was one of the last in the Somme before the autumn rains ended the battle. All available troops had been drawn to the Somme for a major push which began in the mist at dawn on 15 September. The objective was a breakthrough between Morval and Le Sars. For the first time the British used tanks, although not in large enough numbers to be effective. The Germans were pushed back to their last line of defenses in front of Bapaume by the first week in October, but despite British successes, hopes of a breakthrough faded. Although Haig wanted to continue with fresh attacks, the Corps commanders protested at his sacrifice of the British army. Improved weather did make possible the attack and capture of Beaumont-Hamel and Beaucourt-sur-Ancre in mid-November before the offensive had to be suspended.¹⁴ If Mottram arrived in early September, he would have been involved in the heavy fighting which took place through the first of October when the Germans were pushed back to Bapaume.

After a short stay in the hospital, Mottram was discharged as medically fit and sent to Base Depot at

¹³Ibid., 113-17.

¹⁴B. H. Liddell Hart, The Real War, 1914-1918 (n.p.: 1930; reprint, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964), 244-47.

Etaples to rejoin his old battalion, probably in late October or early November. Shortly before he entrained he was shifted to another job involving renting grounds and buildings from civilians in the areas of Dunkirk, Hazebrouck, and Lille.¹⁵ From that date, although he was always within range of the shells, he was not in the mud of the trenches. For the rest of the war, he was involved in various administrative duties--claims, billeting, renting practice grounds. His job involved brief journeys in his assigned district which meant he often saw more of the war and understood more of what was happening than the soldier in the trenches.¹⁶

He served first at Doullens in the Somme district from January 1917 until spring 1918 and then was ordered to back to Hazebrouck. Involved in the preparations for the Messines offensive in June, he was able to watch the battle from a near-by hill. Still based in Hazebrouck, which was near the front lines, he endured heavy bombing which increased after the battle of Cambrai to as many as a hundred twelve-inch shells a day; he was still there on

¹⁵On 8 November 1916, Mottram met the Galsworthys in Paris during a few days leave before he reported back to his new unit. Mottram, Some We Loved, 187.

¹⁶Mottram, "Personal Record," 4-5. 116-120.

December 17 when the town endured the heaviest bombardment of the war.¹⁷

After receiving Christmas leave, during which he returned to England to marry, he returned to Hazebrouck and was based there during the break-through of the German spring offensive. By 11 April, the noise was too deafening to work and he observed the dual flow of civilians fleeing the fighting and British troops marching toward it. When Hazebrouck was finally evacuated, Mottram was pulled back to Boeseghem and after a few days was assigned administrative duties in the area of Dunkirk. From this vantage point, he saw the end of the war--the enemy simply faded away. Still in Dunkirk after the armistice, he observed the soldiers' discontent over the government's demobilization program and at Morbecque in January saw soldiers setting out their grievances in peaceful meetings. Finally released from the army in July 1919, Mottram had come full circle, returning to his old position at Barclays.¹⁸

Adjusting to both civilian and married life, he continued to write while earning a living as a bank clerk. In 1923 Mottram completed The Spanish Farm, his third novel and the first to be published. It was his "view of the

¹⁷Ibid., 121-24; Mottram, Twentieth Century, 66; Mottram, Some We Loved, 188; R. H. Mottram, Journey to the Western Front: Twenty Years After (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1936), 30.

¹⁸Mottram, "Personal Record," 130-39; Mottram, Twentieth Century, 67-69; Mottram, Some We Loved, 193-210.

'battle' as something happening in the normal civilized life of Western Europe¹⁹ Galsworthy helped him place it with a publisher, a difficult task at that time because of the lack of interest in war books, and in 1924, The Spanish Farm was published. The novel launched Mottram's career as a novelist, receiving critical praise, garnering the Hawthornden Prize, and selling well.²⁰ Two more war novels quickly followed: Sixty-Four, Ninety-four! (1925), based on the war diaries which he kept sporadically following his hospitalization in 1915,²¹ and The Crime at Vanderlynden's (1926), a satire based on his work in civilian damage claims. In 1927, the three novels were published together as The Spanish Farm Trilogy.²² Because of the success of these novels, he was able to resign his bank job and devote his time to writing. In the years that followed he produced novels, short stories, a volume of poems, reminiscences, an

¹⁹Mottram, Twentieth Century, 84.

²⁰The Hawthornden Prize was first awarded in 1914 and was established to encourage originality and free the writer from material cares. The recipient had to be under the age of 40. Athenaeum, 18 July 1919, 622.

²¹Mottram tried to publish his diary in 1922, but even with Galsworthy's help, was unable to find a publisher. Mottram, Some We Loved, 213-25; Greicus, Prose Writers, 26.

²²R. H. Mottram, The Spanish Farm, with a Preface by John Galsworthy (London: Chatto & Windus, 1924); R. H. Mottram, Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four! (New York: Dial Press, 1925); R. H. Mottram, The Crime at Vanderlynden's (New York: Dial Press, 1926). All subsequent references are to these editions.

autobiography, and several works of non-fiction. He died in 1971 at the age of eighty-eight.

The Spanish Farm trilogy consists of three novels which intersect in time and place. The first novel, The Spanish Farm, recounts the war from the viewpoint of Madeleine, a French civilian; the second, Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four!, from that of Lieutenant Geoffrey Skene, a British soldier; and the third, The Crime at Vanderlynden's from that of Stephen Doughty Dormer, a soldier-clerk. The three are tied together by locale with each character passing through the Spanish farm. The character Madeleine appears in all three. Mottram's reaction to the war and the development of his themes is revealed more fully in each succeeding novel.

The Spanish Farm is unique. Accepted at a time when publishers avoided war novels because the public did not want to read about the war, the novel achieved both literary and popular success. The reason obviously lies in its subject matter--a presentation of the war from the civilian's viewpoint rather than the soldier's; a sympathy with the sufferings of civilians; an acceptance of war as part of human folly which mankind continually commits, yet manages to survive. It is a war novel in which the war is relegated to a minor role. The sounds of artillery, the dropping of shells in inhabited areas, the movement of

troops to the front, and the return of bleary-eyed survivors are secondary to Mottram's examination of the question of war and its effects on individual lives.

The Spanish farm is one of a number of farm-fortresses constructed around 1600 by Spain along the southern, Flemish border of the Spanish Netherlands. As it had been for centuries, the area became a major battleground in Europe during World War I, proving once more the "endless adaptability" of this "mixed border race" which continues its daily routine amid the chaos.²³ The farm belonged to the same peasant family for generations. Madeleine, a girl of twenty who runs it with her father, is representative of the Flemish-French people, shrewd and stoic, a survivor who endures the hardships and pain of the war and emerges essentially unchanged. With peasant craftiness, Madeleine makes money from billeting British soldiers and selling special foods and the comforts of home while she and her family continue to farm and husband the land. At war's end, she actively resents the demobilization of the British. It means an end to her money-making as well as the loss of free military labor to repair the damage on the farm.²⁴

During the war Madeleine runs the farm and oversees the billeting of the British soldiers. Later, forced out of the farm by the temporary return of her elder sister,

²³R. H. Mottram, Spanish Farm, 52.

²⁴Ibid., 222.

Madeleine opens a restaurant, *The Lion of Flanders*. When the British troops withdraw from the area, she closes the restaurant and leaves to work in an office, first in Amiens, then in Paris. She is searching for news of her lover, Georges, son of the local baron. She also has a brief affair with Lieutenant Skene. After Georges' death at the battle of Campagne, she returns to the farm, arriving during the heavy shelling of December 1917. Because of the war she loses her brothers--one dies in battle, the other in a German prison camp--and her lover Georges. In the last days of the war, her father wanders behind German lines, is captured, and does not return until after the armistice. He no longer speaks; his experiences have rendered him a mute ghost. But, as with a later fictional character Scarlett O'Hara, Madeleine is a survivor. The land remains, despite the damage. The true end of the war is signaled, not by the armistice, but by harnessing the mules and beginning the task of removing the barbed wire from the fields.²⁵

For Madeleine, the war is a foolish game played by men such as Georges. It is a thing men do, a great stupidity, but not one she can stop. Georges is the epitome of the male pursuit of honor and glory. Home, the love of his mistress--nothing weakens his enthusiasm for the war. He even steals a name tag during sick leave so he can get to the front and fight in the impending battle of Champagne

²⁵Ibid., 215-17.

where he is killed. Madeleine cannot understand this childish enthusiasm; she must simply watch helplessly and live with the results.²⁶

Several minor themes are suggested which Mottram develops more fully in the succeeding novels. The most striking is the difference between the French and the English--their inability to understand each other and lack of any common ground. Just as the short-lived affair between Madeleine and Skene evolves from a chance meeting, the two countries become allies by accident. Disunity between the two continues throughout the war. The old misunderstandings and misconceptions return at war's end.²⁷

Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four! is a more traditional war book.²⁸ Intended as a "real Cenotaph" to his dead comrades,

²⁶Ibid., 25-29; 167-174.

²⁷Even during their week together in Paris, Madeleine and Skene are drawn together yet misjudge each other. After Skene leaves, Madeleine "rubbed off the contact with him by the passage of her hands over herself. She rubbed him off her soul no less easily." Just as at the farm, the English are there to be used. Ibid., 150-55. For observations on discord between the allies, see *ibid.*, 92, 220.

²⁸The title comes from the bugle call for infantry sick parade. Mottram, Some We Loved, 234.

Sixty-four, ninety-four!
He'll never to sick no more:
The poor bugger's dead.

John Brophy and Eric Patridge, The Long Trail: What the British Soldier Sang and Said in the Great War of 1914-1918, rev. ed., (London: Andre Deutsch, 1965), 234.

Mottram's aim is to set down what can be remembered with as little bias as possible before it becomes too dim. Based on his war diaries, the novel presents a full picture of the war from two perspectives: the individual reactions of a single soldier and an overall sociological analysis of the British Expeditionary Force.

The central character is Lieutenant Geoffrey Skene whose brief affair with Madeleine was described in The Spanish Farm. The novel recounts Skene's war from his arrival in France just after the battle of Loos through his transfer to the position of clearance officer²⁹ in the fall of 1916 until the armistice. His military career and Mottram's are similar. The duality of service in the novel--active fighting and clerical work--which allows Mottram to present a fleshed-out picture of the British army in France, both in battle and behind the lines, grows out of his own experience with the British Expeditionary Force. After serving as a front-line soldier, Mottram was removed from the line in the fall of 1916 and put to work on civilian damage claims. This position enabled him to move about the area assigned to the BEF and allowed him to observe the war from a distance and achieve a better overview of the entire affair than a soldier serving on one particular sector of the front. As Mottram says, he was able to view the war

²⁹The title of clearance officer is a fictitious one, but descriptive of the job many were performing. Mottram, Sixty-Four, vii.

from just above trench level.³⁰ His observations concerning war, the nature of this war, and, most importantly, the changes in the British army during World War I, all of which are hinted at in The Spanish Farm, are the focal point of this novel.

In the novel Mottram traces the changes in the BEF from the regular army of 1914 to the army of the territorials and Kitchener's volunteers after the battle of Loos to the conscript army at the end of the war. In 1915 there were few of the regular army in the New Army and by the end of that year, most of the regulars had been shifted to staff positions. The loss did not alter the effectiveness of the New Army since this type of war was just as new and strange to the professionals as it was to the new civilian-soldiers. Most of the officers in the line were of the middle class, coming from either the professional or business sectors. The ranks were a social mix. At this time in the war, everyone, whatever his qualifications, was shuttled into the infantry. It was an amateur army, hastily thrown together with make-shift arrangements and limited or non-existent equipment. By the Battle of the Somme there were some improvements, especially in heavy artillery.³¹

³⁰Mottram, "Personal Record", 4.

³¹Mottram, Sixty-Four, 5-9, 15, 60-61, 145. For the shift of the regular army to staff positions see Beckett, "The British Army," 115-16.

Reorganization began after the heavy losses of the Somme with the demand for better staff work and a heavier reliance on specialists. By January 1917 the unit of importance was the corps rather than the battalion, the regiment, or division. For Mottram this was the end of individuality. What had originally been a volunteer army built on regimental pride with men from the same geographic area serving together had now become a conscript army with men from throughout the kingdom assigned haphazardly. The traditions and histories of the regiments were no longer of consequence.³²

There were other changes after the Somme. The base camps, which had originally been small, hastily erected affairs, had increased in size and permanence and often included hospitals and theaters. With the emphasis on specialization the number of men serving behind the lines had increased. For these men war had become a regular business with regular hours.³³

There were also changes in morals as the war coarsened the individual. Especially among the middle class, restraints were destroyed. Skene's affair with Madeleine is a good example. An affair rather than marriage would have

³²Mottram, Sixty-Four, 187-89, 229-30, 264. See also Beckett, "The British Army," 108-09.

³³Mottram, Sixty-Four, 175-77, 189-90, 257. For the growth of non-combatants see Beckett, "The British Army," 114.

been unthinkable for the upright Skene before the war. But by 1917, the ideas of middle-class morality and self-sacrifice had been replaced by the decision to take care of oneself. The law-abiding middle class was reduced to wangling, scrounging, and stealing.³⁴

Skene, representative of the eager middle-class volunteer, typifies the effect of the war on the educated individual. His original enthusiasm is damped by the reality of combat. In battle he is isolated from those around him as the plan falls apart in the execution and degenerates into chaos. After a day of fighting and the loss of half his men, Skene has seen no Germans and is back where he started. He continues to serve, but becomes more aware of the "cosmic stupidity" of the war and doubts that man has learned enough from this war to prevent its recurrence. Death has become so commonplace that the deaths of friends and comrades are merely mentioned in passing. But despite what he learns, despite his doubts concerning the war by 1917, he knows that if he had not gone to war, he would have felt only self-contempt.³⁵

Mottram stresses, as he does in all three novels, that war is a natural part of the human condition, a part of nature's cycle. But despite the disruption of nature by

³⁴Mottram, Sixty-Four, 173, 213-14, 232-36.

³⁵Ibid., 29-33, 73-84, 115-17, 127, 166, 196, 214, 230, 261, 364, 365.

man, the land remains fertile and continues to be tilled by the peasant; the cycle of the seasons continues. Whatever destruction man causes, nature covers it up and produces more than was destroyed.³⁶ Thus while condemning war, he accepts its inevitability and remains optimistic about its aftermath.

The Crime at Vanderlynden's which completes the trilogy is a satire of the army bureaucracy. The crime is the destruction of a small shrine to the Virgin on Madeleine's farm where the survivors of the 469 Trench Mortar Battery, just out of battle where they experienced heavy losses, were billeted. A soldier used the shrine to shelter his mules. In addition, the soldiers made fun of the mayor in his top hat and ceremonial scarf by singing songs about Hindenburg and calling him a Bosche and a spy. The case is assigned to a clerk, Stephen Doughty Dormer, another persona of Mottram. Throughout the war, his pursuit of the perpetrator interrupts his duties and work.

The original claim is a farce of misunderstanding, being reported as "ruined a Virgin in my house." An additional charge is that the mayor has been insulted. Investigation by Dormer reveals both the real crime and the soldiers' exhausted condition when they ridiculed the mayor. The remainder of the novel, an account of Dormer's war, centers on his search for the soldier who committed the

³⁶Ibid., 58, 135, 154, 163.

outrage. Despite the war, the losses in battle, and all the other more important aspects of fighting a major war, the destruction of the chapel continually resurfaces as an issue between the French and British. Orders periodically filter down demanding that Dormer discover the criminal so he can be punished. At various times, both French and British headquarters as well as all levels of the British army are involved. A French politician even raises the question of the crime during a session of the Chamber of Deputies.

In the search for the criminal, Dormer receives evidence of the soldier's name--OATS printed in large letters on the burlap bag for animal fodder. He is also told that the man's service number, 6494, was printed on the soldier's valise.³⁷ During the course of the war, Dormer tracks down various soldiers who were with the battery at the time of the incident, but no one can help--too many soldiers have either been shifted to other battalions or have died. The war ends, the armistice is signed, and Dormer goes home. The case remains unresolved.

Using satire, Mottram lampoons the army bureaucracy which developed during the war, while showing the uneasy relationship between the British and the French. He also develops themes introduced in the earlier novels, such as

³⁷Mottram, *Crime*, 20, 50. The song sung out in sick parade is 6494 and represents the soldier who no longer answers sick call because he is dead. See above. the changes in the army as it shifts to conscripts by 1917.

Dormer concludes that the war will be won by the side with the most men and the most "stuff" left at the end. He also finds war a foolish business which, rather than ending dramatically and definitely, just dwindles out. That war is a part of the human condition is emphasized by the use of songs from the Napoleonic wars sung by one of the soldiers, Kavanagh. He asks Dormer to compare the mentality of 1815 and 1914 as soldiers, tired of marching, prepare to die. Then, as now, the soldier's "duty 'tis to die!"³⁸

A new theme is also introduced in this novel--the Headless Man. The original image occurs early in the novel when Dormer sees a soldier beheaded by a shell outside division headquarters. The body remains leaning against a bank leaving the impression that the man has turned his head in laughter, except there is no head. The image haunts Dormer and becomes a symbol of the forces let loose by war. The Russian revolution is an example of what happens when the Headless Man emerges. Dormer fears that a premature peace might lead to revolution in France and Britain, but as the war comes to an end, the Headless Man fades.³⁹

³⁸Ibid., 64-65, 181, 218, 226.

³⁹Ibid., 13-14, 198-99, 259.

The Spanish Farm, the first novel of the trilogy, established Mottram as a popular author and paved the way for the success of his later fiction. Possibly it was his disinterested tone--that of the detached observer--or his subject matter--the impact of the war on a civilian--which appealed to the public. The reviewers treated the novel favorably, identifying it as a character study of Madeleine rather than a war novel. L. P. Hartley emphasizes the use of Madeleine as a symbol of French attitudes, especially towards the peace, while Gerald Gould stresses the bitterness which was her legacy from the war. The Times Literary Supplement reviewer describes the novel as a socio-historical study in which the war provides a "shadowy background" for the characters.⁴⁰ Although the novel takes place during the war and the conflict obviously affects Madeleine's life, the reviewers give it little more than passing mention.

Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four! also received excellent reviews. This novel is obviously about the war as seen

⁴⁰Everyman's Dictionary of Literary Biography: English and American (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1958), 491; David Daiches, The Penguin Companion to English Literature (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1971), 380; L. P. Hartley, review of The Spanish Farm, by R. H. Mottram, in Spectator, 31 May 1924, 886; Gerald Gould, review of The Spanish Farm, by R. H. Mottram, in Saturday Review, 5 July 1924, 18; review of The Spanish Farm, by R. H. Mottram, in TLIS, 29 May 1924, 338.

through the eyes of an infantry officer and the reviewers accept it as such, stressing above all its realism and its lack of sensationalism. They find appealing his quiet acceptance and description of the war. Gerald Gould, who reviewed the novel for both the Saturday Review and the London Daily News, calls the novel "the most convincing record which has been published of the war as it appeared to the typical civilian-turned-soldier." It is the heroic record, not just of weariness and suffering, but more importantly, of that "ironic and indomitable quality which endures."⁴¹ Comparing it to Barbusse's novel of protest, Le Feu, which emphasizes the horror of the war, Gould labels Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four! a novel of acquiescence. Writing in a quiet tone, Mottram has, "sympathetically and remorselessly, noticed everything." And in his acquiescence, not even the war appears intolerable to Mottram's hero. His picture of the war, according to Gould, "could scarcely . . . be bettered."⁴²

Although both reviewers praise Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four!, the writer for the Times Literary Supplement does not consider the novel as good as The Spanish Farm, although the reviewer for the Spectator considers it better. Noting the novel's realism and its composition from memory, the

⁴¹Gerald Gould, review of Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four, by R. H. Mottram, in Saturday Review, 28 February 1925, 219.

⁴²Gerald Gould, review of Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four, by R. H. Mottram, in Daily News (London), 25 February 1925, 8.

Spectator's reviewer accepts the novel as a true picture of the war, one which unveils the psychology of the infantry officer by depicting the conditions in which he must survive, the deaths of his friends, and the changes in morals with the acceptance of wangling, scrounging, and stealing as acceptable modes of behavior. The Times Literary Supplement reviewer, after noting Mottram's realism, observes that he writes "in a spirit of disillusionment but not of bitterness."⁴³

The Crime at Vanderlynden's completes the trilogy which the Times Literary Supplement reviewer calls "the most significant work of its kind in English that the war has yet occasioned." With unquestionable accuracy, Mottram presents one soldier's experience of officialdom, a soldier who considers the war a distasteful task, but one which must not be shirked.⁴⁴ The Spectator calls the novel a survivor's narrative which documents a civilian soldier's swings between bewilderment and boredom, while L. P. Hartley of the Saturday Review notes that Dormer, while possessing tenacity, lacks war spirit and remains unchanged by the war. Hartley is critical of the novel for attempting to impose order on the chaos of war but praises Mottram for making "no

⁴³Review of Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four, by R. H. Mottram, in TLS, 26 February 1925, 136; "The Tedium of War," review of Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four, by R. H. Mottram, in Spectator, 28 March 1925, 509-10.

⁴⁴Review of The Crime at Vanderlynden's, by R. H. Mottram, in TLS, 11 February 1926, 96.

attempt to reconcile war with civilization." Although considering The Crime at Vanderlynden's inferior to the first two novels, A. J. Cummings of the Daily News praises Mottram's war novels as "the best that an Englishman has written yet." He especially lauds its accuracy.⁴⁵

The reviewers are unified in their approval of the trilogy, its low-key approach and its accuracy; this praise is echoed in J. A. T. Lloyd's review of the one-volume edition. Comparing it to other works such as Le Feu and M. Benjamin's Gaspard, Lloyd finds Mottram's work "a noteworthy contribution not only to the history of the Great War but to literature," a work which will continue to be read after the "flamboyant school of war literature" has faded, a realistic work "all the more terrible because of the quietude of its tones and the sombre disillusion of its ultimate message."⁴⁶ But none of the reviewers responds to what is perhaps Mottram's most frightening message--that war is a natural part of the human cycle. Inherent in this idea is the inevitability of another war at some future time, a

⁴⁵Review of The Crime at Vanderlynden's, by R. H. Mottram, in Spectator, 13 February 1926, 286; L. P. Hartley, review of The Crime at Vanderlynden's, by R. H. Mottram, in Saturday Review, 13 February 1926, 200-201; A. J. Cummings, review of The Crime at Vanderlynden's, by R. H. Mottram, Daily News (London), 4 February 1925, 4.

⁴⁶J. A. T. Lloyd, review of The Crime at Vanderlynden's, by R. H. Mottram, in Fortnightly Review, n.s. 730 (1 October 1927): 574-75.

possibility which the reviewers of the twenties preferred to ignore.

Mottram's three novels impart an excellent sense of the war, presenting, as they do, the same events from three different viewpoints--civilian, soldier, clerk. The changes in the army, the mass movements of men and materiel, the difficulties between the French and the British--all are delineated against the backdrop of the effects of the war on these three different individuals. In all three novels, Mottram's tone is the detached analytical voice of the middle-class bank clerk, the observer who dislikes war but has concluded that wars cannot be stopped. Instead the best he can do is present as true and accurate a picture as possible of the effects of the war on individuals and classes. He describes what it was like to live through the war, both at the front and behind the lines, picturing the chaos of battle as well as the joys of a bath or a game of football. Mottram's novels are, in a sense, reports and as such, they encompass the full range of experiences, both good and bad. They are not antiwar; they are merely descriptive.

CHAPTER 4

THE FAILED HERO: FORD MADOX FORD

In 1914 Ford Madox Ford was forty-one years old and had just finished writing The Good Soldier, a novel considered his best by critics.¹ Already the author of various works of fiction, poetry, and several biographies, he was best known in the literary world for his collaboration with Joseph Conrad and his editorship of the influential literary magazine the English Review from 1908-1910, in which he introduced writers such as D. H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis to the British public. His writing career, however, was faltering and he intended The Good Soldier to be his last and best novel.²

Born Ford Hermann Hueffer, he grew up in a middle-class Victorian household in which art and literature were of prime importance. His German father was a devotee of

¹Published in 1915 after Ford had enlisted, the title was metaphorically rather than literally meant. The good soldier was the protagonist Edward Ashburnham, the embodiment of the English country gentleman.

²The most complete and well-researched biography of Ford is Arthur Mizener, The Saddest Story: A Biography of Ford Madox Ford (New York: World Publishing Co., 1971). See also Frank MacShane, The Life and Work of Ford Madox Ford (New York: Horizon Press, 1965), although he relies heavily and uncritically on Ford's own reminiscences; Douglas Goldring, Trained for Genius: The Life and Writings of Ford Madox Ford (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1949); and Sondra J. Strang, Ford Madox Ford (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1977).

Schopenhauer and founded a philosophic quarterly to spread his ideas. Later he became the music critic for the Times in whose columns he defended Wagner. In addition, he was the author and editor of several books, including one on the troubadors. He died, however, when Ford was fifteen. His mother, the daughter of Ford Madox Brown, a well-known Pre-Raphaelite painter, was also a painter. She moved her family back to live with her father after she was widowed. Brown, greatly admired by his grandson, was a strong influence in his life.³

Of German parentage, he traveled, studied, and lived in Germany for short periods, frequently visiting his Westphalian relatives. With the outbreak of World War I, Ford was concerned about his German descent, especially after being ordered to leave West Sussex by the Chief Constable. Although the order was later canceled, Ford remained bitter about the incident. When he enlisted in 1915, he legally changed his name, dropping his middle name Hermann and substituting Madox, after his maternal grandfather, Ford Madox Brown. In 1919 he legally changed his last name to Ford.⁴

Early in the war, Ford wrote two pieces for the secret propaganda ministry at Wellington House even though he was

³MacShane, Life and Work, 1-6. Many of Ford's early works were published under the name Ford Madox Hueffer.

⁴Ibid., 14-15; Mizener, Saddest, 251, 282.

told they would appear without official sanction and he would receive no credit from the government. In When Blood Is Their Argument: An Analysis of Prussian Culture he attacked Prussia's passion for war and the growth of her influence over German education, literature, and society--a viewpoint with which his South German relatives would surely have agreed. The better known Between St. Dennis and St. George, which was later translated into French, dealt with the menace of German military dominance and attempted to define French culture and its importance to Western civilization. During the war, the French honored Ford by "offering me ribbons & so on--from the Academie Internationale Historique . . . up to the Institut de France. . . !"⁵

Despite his propaganda efforts and later enlistment, Ford had doubts about the war. According to Wyndham Lewis,

'When this War's over,' he (Ford) said, 'nobody is going to worry, six months afterwards, what you did or didn't do in the course of it Within a year disbanded 'heroes' will be selling matches in the gutter. No one likes the ex-soldier--if you've lost a leg, more fool you!'⁶

⁵FMF to C. F. G. Masterman, 29 November 1916 in Letters of Ford Madox Ford, ed. Richard M. Ludwig (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 78, [ellipses in original]; MacShane, Life and Works, 125-27; Mizener, Saddest, 251-52. Richard Aldington was Ford's secretary during part of this period.

⁶Wyndham Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, 185; quoted in Mizener, Saddest, 279.

Politically Ford was a conservative, preferring to think of himself as a Tory, one of the ruling gentry class--this despite the fact that he did not have a public school education nor did he come from a class identified with service to the country. But just as Ford would later exaggerate his literary prominence, in his megalomania he considered himself an English country gentleman and was prepared to assume the duties and responsibilities of that class--including army enlistment. In reality his reasons for joining were more complex. By 1915, his literary career was faltering and his personal life, especially his relations with his mistress Violet Hunt, was becoming unmanageable. By enlisting he could escape his problems while at the same time becoming a first-rate soldier and a hero.⁷ Thus a year into the war, when the notion of a quick victory had faded into trench warfare and high casualty rates, Ford deluded himself into believing that at forty-two, overweight, and having already suffered one nervous breakdown and a bout of agoraphobia, he could become a front-line soldier and live up to his Tory obligation.

Ford enlisted and received a commission as a second lieutenant in late July 1915. He was promoted to lieutenant in July 1917, to captain in January 1918, and to the rank of brevet major on 14 March 1918. In January 1919 he resigned

⁷Mizener, *Saddest*, 280, 294. In a letter to his mother dated 18 September 1915 Ford refers to "doing one's duty." Quoted in *ibid.*, 279.

his commission due to ill-health. Attached to the 3rd Battalion of the Welch Regiment after enlistment, Ford reported first to Tenby for training in August 1915 and by the end of the year was transferred to Cardiff Castle. Not until July 1916 did the battalion leave for France where they were to be scattered.⁸

On arrival in France Ford was attached to the 9th Welch Battalion, part of the 58th Infantry Brigade of the 19th Division which fought in the Battle of the Somme, then underway, as part of the III Corps. Assigned to the first line transport of the battalion, Ford took no active part in the fighting and was never wounded or gassed, despite his later claims. He was, however, under constant fire. When he arrived at the Somme on 21 July, his battalion, involved in the attack on High Wood near the Longueval Ridge, was in reserve in Mametz Wood where they endured continuous and severe shelling, the heaviest bombardment being on 22 July,

⁸Ibid., 281-84, 574; Goldring, Genius, 186; FMF to Lucy Masterman, 28 July 1916, Letters, 66. The following summary of Ford's service in World War I is based largely on Mizener's The Saddest Story. In writing his biography Mizener had access to various collections of unpublished papers, including those owned by Janice Biala, Ford's literary executor. MacShane's account of Ford's war service varies in a number of particulars from Mizener's. MacShane, however, did not have access to the unpublished correspondence and many of the papers Mizener used. In addition his documentation is limited, citing sources only for quoted material. He appears to rely heavily on Ford's own reminiscences of his war years, a source which must be viewed with scepticism because of Ford's tendency to exaggeration and self-promotion.

the day after Ford's arrival. Ford was stationed behind Becourt Wood until 29 July when the 9th Welch was sent back to train new drafts.⁹

Although Ford's period on the Somme lasted little more than a week, it put a tremendous strain on his nervous system. After being knocked down by the concussion of an exploding shell, Ford went to pieces. He lost his memory and for thirty-six hours did not even know his name. For a month he could recall very little. After the hospital and a week of draft conducting, he returned around 7 August to the 9th Welch which was now stationed in the quieter Ypres salient in front of Kemmel Hill in Belgium. He now lived in terror of going mad and began to hope for a transfer to a staff job, fearing "that I shall not be able to 'stick it'-- the conditions of life are too hard and the endless waitings too enervating."¹⁰

⁹Thomas O. Marden, "Part II: 1914-1918," in The History of the Welch Regiment (Cardiff: Western Mail and Echo, 1932), 394; Mizener, Saddest, 282-285. MacShane accepts Ford's later assertions about being gassed and wounded. Mizener however presents evidence to the effect that Ford's commanding officer refused to let him on the front line because he was too old and other testimony that Ford was neither gassed nor wounded. MacShane, Life and Works, 131-34; Mizener, Saddest, 570.

¹⁰Mizener, Saddest, 286-88; FMF to Lucy Masterman, August? 1916 and 23 August 1916, Letters, 68-69. His commanding officer thought he was too old and inefficient for the job and Ford blamed him for blocking any staff appointment. FMF to Lucy Masterman, 25 August 1916, Letters, 70; see also FMF to C. F. G. Masterman, n.d., quoted in Mizener, Saddest, 289-90. In later years Ford continued to refer to his complete failure of memory after the Somme and contended that the memory of events for twelve months

In September 1916 he obtained leave for a weekend in Paris. The St. Denis book had been translated into French and was about to be published. He collapsed again. According to Ford, a medical officer told him that he was suffering from shell-shock and should go to the hospital. He bravely refused. However, thanks to Masterman to whom he reported the incident, he was sent back to the 3rd Battalion's home base at Kinmel Park in North Wales in October.¹¹

By the end of November, he was ordered back to France to the base camp at Rouen where he wrote proclamations in French about the theft of rations and other problems. Falling ill with lung problems, he was hospitalized in the No. II Red Cross Hospital at Rouen, from which he dramatically wrote Conrad that he was finished--his lungs were "charred and gone". To Masterman he indicated that the problem was due to a combination of being gassed in the summer and the severe weather. He seems to have been delirious and may have had another breakdown.¹²

after remained uncertain. Ford Madox Ford, It Was the Nightingale (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1933), 80.

¹¹Mizener, Saddest, 290-91. Ford's service book indicates that he was wounded on 16 October 1916 and omits this assignment. Ford's correspondence supports Mizener's account which follows that of Ford's earlier biographers. MacShane has him wounded but in 1917. MacShane, Life and Works, 133.

¹²Mizener, Saddest, 291-92; FMF to C. F. G. Masterman, 5 January 1917, Letters, 81-82; FMF to Joseph Conrad, 19 December 1916, Ibid., 79.

When Ford objected to the medical board's recommendation that he return to England after his release from the hospital, he was assigned to limited service in France. After a serious relapse on Christmas eve, he was sent to Lady Michelham's convalescent hospital at Menton. In early February 1917, he returned to Rouen and received command of a Canadian casual battalion; a month later he was put in charge of prisoners of war at Abbéville. Invalided home on 15 March 1917 because of continued lung trouble, he did not return to France, despite his repeated attempts. His war service was completed in England.¹³

His personal myth, along with his perception of the war which appeared later in the war novels, was already being formed in his letters home. References to the bombardments were frequent. In an early letter to Lucy Masterman, he bravely announces that, although the noise of

¹³Mizener, Saddest, 291-96. MacShane's account again differs. According to him, Ford was reassigned in July 1917 to the King's Liverpool Regiment, promoted to lieutenant, and returned to France where he was wounded. Afterwards he was moved to the rear to interrogate prisoners and later was in charge of training French-Canadian soldiers. In January 1918 he was promoted to captain and sent home to England where he served as a lecturer. Promoted to acting brevet major in March 1918, he resigned his commission in January 1919. MacShane, Life and Works, 133-34. Although the dates of Ford's promotions and his assignment to the King's Liverpool Regiment are accurate, outside of Ford's reminiscences, there is nothing to support his return to France and service there. Even the Ford correspondence, which originates in England rather than France during this period, supports Mizener's account, which is the generally accepted one.

bombardment is continuous, one gets used to it. In fact, being shelled becomes dull after the first two or three days.¹⁴

Despite his attempt to be off-hand, his letters are filled with descriptions of bombardments, indicating a fascination with the noise. In one letter he recounts an hour long artillery strafe during which he and another frightened man crouched under a table. Eventually the sound of shelling merged into and was drowned out by thunder. The noise, according to Ford, sounded loudest in woody country and longest in the air in marshland, while on dry land it was a sharper noise which shook you. It was not as bad in wet weather, but in dry would give you a headache. The sound was like a continual "e" or, if it fell on a church, a "corump" sound. Despite periodic protestations that one learned to ignore it, the bombardments remained a frequent theme in Ford's letters¹⁵ and may have helped bring about his nervous breakdowns.

Ford's letters home also describe the rain and mud and emotional numbness. After seeing his first casualties--two men and a mule killed by one shell--he wrote, "These things gave me no emotion at all." Describing the death of a man in the hospital who died in pain crying "Faith" over and

¹⁴FMF to Lucy Masterman, 28 July 1916, Letters, 66-67.

¹⁵See Ford's letters to Joseph Conrad of September 1916 and 6 September 1916, Letters, 71-74.

over, Ford announces "but one lost all interest." His concerns were fear and worries from home, but "except for worries, I am really very happy."¹⁶

For Ford, it had not been the war he envisioned when he enlisted. He had not returned the conquering hero, but instead as an overaged soldier whose nerves continually betrayed him. Although he wanted to stay on active duty, he was also seeking a staff assignment. His health was bad, although it is questionable whether his lung problems were caused by gas. His service in France had lasted less than nine months; during that period, he had been near the front for approximately one month, and never on the front line. In later years, his war service would be recounted in more adventurous and heroic terms than reality warranted. But he also returned home with the material about the war which he would present in Parade's End, his tetralogy about English society and the effect of the war.¹⁷

After the war, Ford moved into a small cottage in the English countryside with Stella Bowen, an Australian painter. There he played the role of a small farmer,

¹⁶FMF to Joseph Conrad, 6 August 1916 and 7 September 1916. Ibid., 73-76.

¹⁷He had envisioned himself a romantic hero, but Colonel Cooke of the 9th Welch, his commanding officer, refused to let him serve on the front line because of his age. Mizener, Saddest, 288, 294. Letter from Thomas Sugrue, a fellow officer and Ford's closest friend during his service in France, to Arthur Mizener, 19 April 1966, quoted in Ibid., 570. See also FMF to Lucy Masterman, 25 August 1916, Letters, 70.

growing vegetables and raising pigs. In early 1922, they moved to Paris where he assumed editorship of the transatlantic review during the year of its existence. Again serving as mentor for experimental writers, he published fragments of James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake. He also began his war tetralogy Parade's End (1924-1928). Throughout the twenties and thirties, he continued to write, publishing novels, reminiscences, travel guides, and his last work, a literary history entitled The March of Literature. During this period, he spent much of his time in France and the United States, where he felt his work was appreciated. He died in southern France in June 1939.

In 1924 Ford began the first of his four novels later known as Parade's End. Intended originally as a trilogy about the war and British society, the first volume, Some Do Not. . . appeared in 1924, followed by No More Parades in 1925, and A Man Could Stand Up-- in 1926. The fourth volume which concluded the tetralogy in 1928 was The Last Post. Not a war novel, it was written as an afterthought to tell what happened to the main characters in the postwar period. There is some question about its inclusion with the

trilogy.¹⁸ This study will, therefore, focus on the first three volumes.

While labeled war books by Ford, the novels are equally about the domestic strife of the protagonist, Christian Tietjens, and the social changes in England which occur during the war. For Ford, World War I meant the end of the Edwardian world of his childhood and youth and the end of a governing system in which the English country gentleman, representative of the Tory class and upholder of virtue, met his twin obligations to society and government. Committed to a type of chivalric feudalism, Ford disapproved of liberal democratic ideas, of democratic government with "its shady capitalists, venal politicians, and an electorate

¹⁸Ford Madox Ford, Some Do Not . . . (N.p.: Thomas Seltzer, 1924; reprint in Ford Madox Ford, Parade's End, with an Introduction by Robie Macauley (New York: Knopf, 1961; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1979)); Ford Madox Ford, No More Parades (N.p.: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925; reprint in Ford Madox Ford, Parade's End, with an Introduction by Robie Macauley (New York: Knopf, 1961; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1979)); Ford Madox Ford, A Man Could Stand Up-- (N.p.: Albert and Charles Boni, 1926; reprint in Ford Madox Ford, Parade's End, with an Introduction by Robie Macauley (New York: Knopf, 1961; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1979)); Ford Madox Ford, The Last Post (N.p.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928; reprint in Ford Madox Ford, Parade's End, with an Introduction by Robie Macauley (New York: Knopf, 1961; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1979)). The four volumes were first published as one in 1950. Ford's correspondence indicates that he intended the work as a trilogy entitled Parade's End, subtitled Tietjens' Saga. The Last Post was to be omitted. Strang, Ford, 95. FMF to Eric Pinker, 17 August 1930, Letters, 196-97. An earlier attempt to publish a fictional memoir of the war, No Enemy, was rejected by English publishers and did not appear until 1929 with an American publisher. Throughout the postwar period, American publishers and the American public were more receptive to Ford's writings.

stuffed with fatuous ideas of its own wisdom by a shoddy system of universal education."¹⁹ Even before the war a new world was evolving and after the war, the Edwardian generation, the generation of the war, was out of step and consigned to be outsiders.²⁰

The novels pivot around Christian Tietjens and his wife Sylvia, who is determined to discredit her husband. Sylvia represents the new England which emerges in the postwar era while Tietjens is the eighteenth century gentleman trying to live in the modern world. His adherence to the old virtues, for example the belief that a man does not divorce his wife nor explain his actions, allows Sylvia, a hate-driven, unscrupulous woman, to succeed in her campaign against him. Tietjens, however, does finally leave his wife and in The Last Post establishes himself with his mistress on a plot of land which he farms. This aspect of the novel is heavily autobiographical, mirroring Ford's own domestic turmoil and his life after the war.

¹⁹Paraphrase in Mizener, Saddest, 249. See also quoted excerpts from Ford's weekly article in The Outlook, 8 August 1914 quoted in *ibid.*

²⁰The downfall or decline of the Edwardian world was an old theme for Ford. Before World War I he dated its decline from the Boer War "which appears to me like a chasm separating the new world from the old." From that time, principles had died out of politics and the whole tone of England appeared to change. Ford Madox Ford, Memories and Impressions: A Study in Atmospheric (New York: Harper, 1911), 171.

Much of the novel, then, is social commentary.

England had begun to change in the prewar period, and for Ford, the war completed the destruction of an idealized Tory England of honor, duty, and service. Identifying himself as one of the Old Guard, he mourned the passing of his England.

Some Do Not . . . is divided into two parts. Part one begins a few years before the war and concentrates on Tietjens's domestic strife. His wife has run off with another man. He not only refuses to divorce her but is preparing to take her back to avoid scandal. Unable to understand Tietjens's values, Sylvia continues the attack, trying to destroy him through lies and rumors. The encroachment of the modern world is evidenced in a demonstration by the suffragettes at the golf course and the presence of ill-mannered town-types at his club. The second part takes place in 1917. Tietjens is home on leave recuperating from shell-shock and memory loss caused by a nearby explosion at the front and ends with his preparation to return to France. The memory loss impedes the workings of his encyclopedic mind.²¹ There are no actual scenes from the war; the entire novel takes place in England with the war providing the background for Ford's analysis of the social changes then taking place.

²¹Ford's own fear of shell-shock and memory loss is mirrored in Tietjens's. Compare above with Ford, Some, 168.

The war itself is analyzed from the perspective of social and institutional criticism. His targets are the government, the hierarchy of the army, and the stay-at-home civilians. Just as Sylvia makes life difficult for Tietjens, these entities make life difficult for the ordinary soldier, of whom Ford is one. Introduced in Some Do Not . . ., these themes reappear in the later novels.

Tietjens's distrust of the government develops after he falls into disfavor because of his refusal to fake statistics. He considers the first gang, i.e. those in power at the start of the war, stupid but disinterested. Those in power during the war are "boodlers" who will manipulate figures for political reasons, not caring that they prolong the war and cause infinite deaths.²²

The army is criticized for its treatment of the soldiers. The Command Depots should be places where men can rest. Instead their freedom is limited and they are treated like convicts. Each attempt to ameliorate their lot, such as providing a theater, is stopped by interfering civilians, in this instance the parsons and non-conforming magistrates. There is a deep split between civilians and soldiers, with the civilians resenting the soldiers while the men in the army hate those who are not.²³

²²Ibid., 238.

²³Ibid., 224-26, 161.

No More Parades, appearing the next year (1926), is set in 1917 in France near the front. Although Tietjens's domestic problems and his wife's campaign against him remain central to the novel, the war is a more integral part of the work, providing the actual environment rather than mere background. The feel of battle conditions, especially the impact of the noise of the shelling which so intrigued and affected Ford, are portrayed, even though the front lines are never depicted. Here Ford presents his most complete view of the war, picking up themes from the earlier novel and developing new ones.

The bungling and inefficiency of the government comes under heavy attack. The soldiers are betrayed by a Whitehall which treats them as mere playthings. In its political maneuverings against the French, the cabinet threatens to abandon the Western front and begins withholding troops. As a consequence of the government's vanity, there are fewer men to hold the positions at the front, the soldiers in the line are sacrificed, and the lands annihilated. One example, which is woven throughout this work and the next, is of a general who is disliked by a member of the government. As a result, he is starved of men with the idea of calling him home after the inevitable disaster on the front. There is no concern for the men under the general's command, who will feel the strain and possibly die as a result of this policy. Ford may be

referring to Lloyd George's decision to withhold troops from Haig after the disastrous and severe losses of Passchendaele. There is also the charge that the government is prolonging the war indefinitely and that the blood of millions is on their heads.²⁴

Civilian interference weakens the army and makes it more difficult for the common soldier to do his job. Because of newspaper publishers and public opinion, changes have been forced in training. Instead of emphasizing rifle training and training in communications which might be of practical use at the front, civilians forced the War Office to emphasize drills and lectures and to stress bombthrowing and machine guns. The reason is that civilians want the soldiers to look like fools--to be humiliated, dead, or both. Civilians resent the soldiers and are ruining the effectiveness of the army with their interference.²⁵

Nor does the army escape criticism, coming under fire because of its constant and ridiculous paperwork and its niggardly use of supplies. Preparing a draft requires nine sets of paper for each soldier. In addition Tietjens must write unnecessary reports on topics such as the desirability of lecturing on the causes of the war. And he must keep

²⁴Ford, No More, 296-97, 327, 358, 469-70. In It Was the Nightingale, Ford reiterates the charge that mismanagement of the war is due to "imbecile orders percolating from Whitehall itself." Ford, Nightengale, 217-18.

²⁵Ford, No More, 367, 371-72, 495.

current with momentous orders from above--helmets are to be worn back to front; Mills bombs must be carried in the left breast pocket. The Quartermaster obstructs requests for supplies and resents Tietjens's drawing on the supply depot. The Paymaster-General and the Quartermaster hold onto money that is due the ranks--robbing them to save the taxpayer's money while the soldiers' children starve.²⁶

While the army bureaucracy is castigated, the front-line soldiers are not. Although used as cannon fodder, forced to endure the painful, noisy artillery barrages, and overwhelmed by fear and dread, they do not desert. Their greatest concerns, however, are not about their own survival at the front, but are their worries about home, their families, and the domestic problems and disasters about which they can do nothing. For Ford, this is the soldier's biggest worry--much worse than his fears of the front or his life in the mud and slime.²⁷

The reactions of Ford's characters to the war vary. Sylvia views it as a schoolboy game, a make-believe of hypocrisy which causes men's deaths in pain and terror and creates an infinity of spreading pain. Because of the great loss of men, General Campion compares it to the Boer War.

²⁶Ibid., 295, 301, 306, 340-41.

²⁷Ibid., 292-93, 299, 303, 362, 436, 453-54. In later years Ford returns to the theme that home worries plague the soldier most. Ford, Nightingale, 216-17.

The war is described by Tietjens as humanity's one decent effort.²⁸ It is almost as if the reality of the war calls forth a truthful appraisal, while the stress of surviving that reality necessitates the war's idealization.

In the third volume, A Man Could Stand Up--, Ford takes the reader to the front lines. The first and third parts of the novel describe the celebrations and the reunion of Tietjens with Valentine, soon to be his mistress, in England on Armistice Day. The novel's second part chronicles events on the front line in France in spring 1918, revealing the nightmarish quality of the war.

The themes of No More Parades, government bungling and civilian interference, are briefly mentioned. The paperwork required by the army bureaucracy is illustrated. A sudden inquiry into funds from a January 1915 training camp literally drives the commanding officer mad and Tietjens, as second in command, has to assume control. Soldiers' worries about home are again noted, with Ford emphasizing that the most dreadful thing about the war is mental rather than physical suffering.²⁹

But the main theme concerning the war is the soldier and life at the front. Since Ford was never on the front line himself, his descriptions are very restricted, consisting mainly of depicting the shelling and artillery

²⁸Ford, No More, 437-38, 453-54, 473.

²⁹Ford, A Man, 594-95, 612-13, 659.

barrages. The Germans have pushed them back to new trenches and now attempt, unsuccessfully, to take these.³⁰ There are, however, no raids, no movements across no-man's-land toward the enemy trenches, and no repulsion of any major enemy attack. Wartime action in Ford's novel is limited and restrained, reflecting his own experience and creating a stronger impact than the later, more graphic, novels.

Conditions at the front are described with much attention to the artillery barrages. Because of their methodical timing--daily at 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.--dread builds each morning waiting for the first strafe of the day. The first chapters of Part II consist of Tietjens's ruminations about the war while waiting for the first barrage of the day. But waiting is part of the war--waiting for the barrage, for the bombs, for everything.³¹

Ford's obsession with the noise of artillery and shelling which appeared in his letters to Conrad surfaces in this novel. He describes the noise as so loud that the shrieking of a shell-shocked soldier can no longer be heard; so loud that even the silences are painful; so loud that the noise sweeps the brain off its feet. The sounds of an artillery barrage are like an orchestra, building to a

³⁰Ibid., 550-52, 559-60.

³¹Ibid., 545ff, 569.

crescendo, but instead of the hero arriving, it is the Hun.³²
The noise and the fear go together.

The noise combines with and feeds the fear, another dreadful aspect of the front line--fear of the barrage and fear of being wounded. But for Tietjens, the greatest terror is that he will go mad, that he will lose his reason or his memory as he has before--a fear which also obsessed Ford.³³

And there is the mud, the always present slime which can cover and smother a soldier. In one incident, a man is totally buried by the mud flung up by an exploding shell and suffocates. Tietjens is covered to his waist and another man to his neck--all by the "viscous mud." After being dug from the mud and helping save another man, Tietjens is then castigated by an inspecting general for being dirty, a ironic comment on the higher-ranking officers and their incomprehension of front line conditions.³⁴

Ford imparts a nightmarish quality to his description of the front line. A series of impressions is filtered through Tietjens' mind--not just of physical discomforts and fears, but of confusion and the constant presence of death. It is perhaps in this section that Ford reveals his own state of mind, the fears and the turmoil which resulted in

³²Ibid., 545, 550, 557, 559, 561-2, 569.

³³Ibid., 554, 564, 575.

³⁴Ibid., 558, 637, 642-43.

his own breakdowns. Little is seen clearly; much remains in shadows which haunt Tietjens, as they did Ford.³⁵

Ford's titles admit to a variety of explications indicating his interpretation of both society and the war. For our purposes, we will examine the titles for what they tell us about his view of the war. In the first novel, Some Do Not. . ., the phrase "some do, some do not" appears, i.e. some serve in the army and some do not. Of those in the army, some serve at the front, some do not, preferring safer jobs in England. Both Tietjens and Ford chose to serve at the front. No More Parades alludes to the continual parades in the army--for inspection, for sick call, for duty assignments. An end to the parades could mean an end to the war and the formal structure which plagued the common soldier. A Man Could Stand Up. . . is based on an image Ford uses to convey an end to the war. When the war is over, a man can stand up, rather than crouching in a trench; he can even stand safely on a hill.

Ford's three novels represent a progression in his treatment of the war. The first novel is essentially one of social commentary which takes place during the war. Although the war affects the lives of the characters and

³⁵The impressionistic nightmare quality is similar to that created in the film, Apocalypse Now which was based on Joseph Conrad's The Heart of Darkness, especially the scene depicting the front lines in Vietnam. It should be remembered that Ford collaborated with Conrad during the prewar period.

provides a partial background, there are no actual scenes of war. The second novel is set in France, but all the action is behind the lines where Ford served. Although there are descriptions of barrages along with discussions of the war and the conditions of this particular war, again there are no scenes of battle. Ford's analysis centers mainly on the government, civilian attitudes, and the army bureaucracy. In the third novel, the war section is confined to the middle of the work with descriptions of conditions on the lines and praise for the common soldier. Although the action on the front line is limited, this is the war as it was for most of the soldiers most of the time. Actual time in battle was limited in comparison to the time spent on the line itself.

Some Do Not. . . received little notice from the reviewers when it appeared, partially because it was not known to be part of a projected series. Those who did review the novel treated it as a work of social commentary. The reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement compares it to the work of Richardson and praises it for presenting "a complete view of English society just before and during the war," although noting an "occasional coarseness of language." The Spectator reviewer finds the work "bewildering" and "baffling" while Gerald Gould, writing for the Saturday Review, compares it to a nightmare, although

one "brilliant in its passion." The reviewers ignore what Ford has to say about the war, although Gould does note, in a transitional passage leading to another review, that Ford "deals with the physical and emotional reactions of the war [sic] upon both combatants and non-combatants."³⁶

No More Parades is recognized as a war novel by most reviewers, although Gould, this time writing for the Daily News, does not mention the war in his review. While still referring to Ford's mastery in creating a nightmare, he concentrates on criticizing the novel for its confusion, its impenetrability, and "those damned dots." The reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement praises Ford for his "amazing impression of war," his depictions of its worries and difficulties, and the "kaleidoscope of human character" revealed under stress. The writer for the Saturday Review praises the first hundred pages of the novel, calling it the best written in English about the "physical circumstances and moral atmosphere of the war."³⁷

³⁶Frank MacShane, ed., Ford Madox Ford: The Critical Heritage, The Critical Heritage Series (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 89; review of Some Do Not. . ., by Ford Madox Ford, in TLS, 24 April 1924, 252; L. P. Hartley, review of Some Do Not. . ., by Ford Madox Ford, in Spectator, May 3 1924, 720; Gerald Gould, review of Some Do Not. . ., by Ford Madox Ford, in Saturday Review, 17 May 1924, 512.

³⁷Gould's reference to "those damned dots" is to Ford's frequent use of ellipses. Gerald Gould, review of No More Parades, by Ford Madox Ford, in Daily News (London), 28 September 1925, 4; review of No More Parades, by Ford Madox

The reviews of A Man Could Stand Up-- are mixed and stress Ford's focus on Tietjens's largely mental, rather than factual, observations about the war. The reviewer for the Spectator notes Ford's subjective treatment of the war. For him the scenes at the front are the kernel of the novel, which is "a marvelous piece of analysis of the mind, and is almost as painful to the reader as a night in the trenches." The reviewer for the Times also stresses the mental picture drawn by Ford, but notes that the book has probably been written in vain--"nobody who does not know will understand." L.P. Hartley however finds that Ford lacks the sense of proportion about the war which is evident in Mottram's novels. Ford presents it as simply a "blind catastrophe" unrelated to any concept of life. However, his "pointillism" creates the right atmosphere when applied to the war, though not to ordinary life.³⁸

The three novels did not sell well in England, each selling only about a thousand copies each. In the United States, however, they were a success. Both No More Parades and A Man Could Stand Up-- sold in excess of forty thousand copies. There are two possible reasons for this disparity.

Ford, in TLS, 1 October 1925, 636; review of No More Parades, by Ford Madox Ford, in Saturday Review, 10 October 1925, 410.

³⁸Review of A Man Could Stand Up--, by Ford Madox Ford, in Spectator, 16 October 1926, 652; review of A Man Could Stand Up--, by Ford Madox Ford, in TLS, 14 October 1926, 694; L.P. Hartley, review of A Man Could Stand Up--, by Ford Madox Ford, in Saturday Review, 13 November 1926, 592.

One is that England remained war-weary and that there was little market for war novels.³⁹ However, Mottram's successful Spanish Trilogy would give lie to that argument. The second, and more likely, reason may lie in the type of novels which Ford wrote--impressionistic novels in which time sequences are mixed. The American public may have been more prepared to accept experimentation in literature than the British. Whatever the reason for the difference, it left Ford bitter toward his British public.

Ford held many of the views presented in the novels at the beginning of the war, e.g., his analysis of the government. Other attitudes developed from real or imagined slights, such as being kept out of the front lines because of his age. Much is based on his limited war experience; some parts of the novels, such as life on the front lines, are imaginary and could only be developed from what he heard from others.

The trilogy, as it moved from a dissection of British society to a greater concentration on the war and what it was like, consisted largely of Ford's observations and

³⁹Mizener, Saddest, 360, 586; MacShane, Life and Works, 195-202. R. A. Scott James in his preface to the 1948 Penguin edition of the Tietjens novels argues that Ford's novels came too early--before the 1928 revival in war books--and thus did not have as much success in Britain as in America. Reprinted in MacShane, The Critical Heritage, 240.

criticisms about the way the war had been run. But the last novel of the trilogy reflects Ford's own inner torment during the war as that overaged soldier who did his best to do his duty and to bear up in the nightmare situation in which he found himself.

CHAPTER 5

THE WAR HERO PROTESTS: SIEGFRIED SASSOON

Siegfried Sassoon was born in 1886. Alfred Sassoon, his father, was a member of the Sassoon family who acquired wealth in trade and banking from their bases in Bagdad and later Bombay--the "Rothschilds of the East." Descended from Sephardic Jews, members of the family began settling in England by mid-nineteenth century. Alfred was the first Sassoon to be born in England and the first to marry a Gentile. After Alfred's marriage, his mother ended his allowance, demanded that members of the family sever relationships with him, and even had prayers for the dead said for her wayward son.¹

Siegfried Sassoon's mother was Theresa Thornycroft who was descended from generations of country gentry whose wealth was in land. The family was also one of sculptors, painters, and architects. Theresa's mother painted portraits of the royal family and she herself was a minor painter. Theresa's grandfather, father, mother, and brother

¹The best history of the Sassoon family is Stanley Jackson, The Sassoons (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1968). Several of his great-uncles enjoyed a close friendship with Edward VII, both before and after his assumption of the crown. Alfred's sister Rachael continued to see him and his family, despite her mother's prohibition. At her death, Siegfried received a legacy of £30,000. Ibid., 240.

Hamo were sculptors; another brother was an architect for the British navy.²

The Sassoons lived at Weirleigh in the Kent countryside where Siegfried, the second of three sons, grew up. When he was five his parents separated, although his father continued to visit the children regularly until prevented by illness. He died of tuberculosis in March 1895 when Sassoon was eight. Although he had been cut off from the family's immense wealth, Alfred did leave an estate large enough to provide for his children's education and for a yearly income of £600 a year each after they reached twenty-one.³

Although his two brothers were sent away to preparatory schools, the more delicate Siegfried was tutored at home until he was fourteen. He then studied law at Marlborough College and history at Clare College, Cambridge. He began writing poetry and soon left Cambridge without taking a degree. Returning to Weirleigh he enjoyed the life of a country gentleman, engaging in the arduous pursuits of fox-hunting, point-to-point racing, cricket, occasional golf, and poetry writing. An introduction to his mother's

²Ibid., 75-76. Hamo Thornycroft was a member of the Royal Academy and sculpted the Gordon statue in Trafalgar Square, the Cromwell statue at Westminster, and the Gladstone Memorial.

³Ibid., 76-78, 93; Siegfried Sassoon, The Old Century and Seven More Years (New York: Viking Press, 1939), 14-17, 31, 36-37.

friend, Sir Edmund Gosse, led to other literary acquaintances, including the poet Rupert Brooke, and a stay in London while he concentrated on poetry. His earliest poetic efforts, privately printed at his own expense, were heavily influenced by Georgian poetry and his love of nature.⁴

Sassoon was already in uniform on 4 August when Britain declared war on Germany. Becoming increasingly aware of the seriousness of the European situation during the summer of 1914, he considered war a definite possibility. Convinced of his "patriotic responsibilities," he bicycled 30 miles to Rye on 31 July and then on to Winchelsea where he enlisted the next day, passed his army physical, and was accepted as a trooper by the Sussex Yeomanry on 3 August, the day before the declaration of war. Although motivated partially by patriotism, he was bored with his life of leisure and frustrated by his failure to attract an audience for his poetry. Enlistment relieved him of responsibility for his life and the need to worry about money and the future.⁵

⁴For Sassoon's life before World War I, see his autobiographical writings, Sassoon, Old Century and Siegfried Sassoon, The Weald of Youth (New York: Viking Press, 1942).

⁵Sassoon, Weald, 250-54. He concluded the story of his enlistment with the following sentence: "And after all, dying for one's native land was believed to be the most glorious thing one could possibly do," a sentiment which is reflected in his war diary until after he had spent some time at the front. Ibid., 256.

Despite his early enlistment, active duty was delayed. During training, Sassoon broke his arm in a fall from his horse while taking a hedge. In May 1915, while still on sick leave, he received a commission in the prestigious Royal Welch Fusiliers, a change in regiment which probably owed something to his family background and social position. It was not until the fall of 1915 that Sassoon was finally shipped out to France for his first look at the war.⁶

Sassoon served in three different battalions of the the Fusiliers. From November 1915 until July 1916 when he was invalided home with trench fever, he was with the First Battalion in France. Nicknamed "Mad Jack" because of his recklessness, he was awarded the Military Cross and recommended for the Victoria Cross. After several months' sick leave he returned to France to the Second Battalion, joining it on 12 March 1917. Wounded in the shoulder on 16 April, he was sent back to England. At the end of his sick leave, he refused to report back to duty, responding instead with a public letter of protest against the war. Rather than court-martialing a decorated hero, a Medical Board

⁶The Royal Welch Fusiliers had a long and honorable history. The regiment participated in every major British land engagement and colonial war since its founding in 1689. During World War I the First and Second Battalions were considered top fighting battalions. Keith Simpson, "Introduction," in The War the Infantry Knew: 1914-1919: A Chronicle of Service in France and Belgium, J. C. Dunn, ed. (London: P. S. King, 1938; reprint, London: Jane's, 1987), xxxvi-xxxvii. Coming from the country gentry Sassoon would have been an acceptable addition to the officer class.

ruled that Sassoon was suffering from shell-shock and placed him in Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh. After requesting a return to duty, he was reassigned to the 25th (Territorial) Battalion which he joined on 4 March 1918 in Egypt. Following service in Palestine, the battalion was reassigned to France in May. Sassoon was invalided home after being shot in the head on 13 July. He remained on sick leave until placed on the retired list on 12 March 1919.

During the first few months of Sassoon's service in France, he was barely involved in the war. Having just been withdrawn from the Cuinchy sector, the First Battalion was resting when Sassoon arrived on 23 November 1915 and was in camp at LeHamel near Bethune. For the next week, Sassoon was assigned to the inevitable working parties until the battalion began the move to Montagne on 5 December. From their arrival in mid-December until the end of January, the battalion was in training. His diary indicates a peaceful period during which he enjoyed the peace and beauties of the French countryside, visited Amiens, and just generally enjoyed himself. The regiment returned to the trenches at Merlancourt on 2 February, but Sassoon, who had been made transport officer in mid-January, was kept behind the lines, although he went up frequently with ration parties. On 23 February he went to England on leave, returning on 6 March. Up until this point the war had not been too arduous for

Sassoon. He had seen and occasionally been in the front lines, but not for any continuous period.⁷

Despite any real involvement in the fighting, or perhaps because of it, Sassoon posed as the would-be military hero in his diary. During his first week when he was going up to the front with working parties, he dramatically prayed for death. Pondering his younger brother Hamo's death after being wounded at Gallipoli in August 1915, he indicated that he himself was ready to pay the price of death. He chafed at being made transport officer because it was a safe position and he longed to court death. His poetry echoes the romantic militarism of a Rupert Brooke.⁸

But in March Sassoon's war changed. On 19 March, his closest friend, Lieutenant David Thomas, was killed. Shaken from his adolescent posing, now he just wanted to kill Germans. Finally sent to the front with his company on 26 March, his recklessness earned him the nickname "Mad

⁷C. H. Dudley Ward, ed., Regimental Records of the Royal Welch Fusiliers (23rd Foot), vol. 3, 1914-1918: France and Flanders (London: Forster Groom and Co., 1928), 159, 185-86; Siegfried Sassoon, Siegfried Sassoon Diaries 1915-1918, ed. and with an Introduction by Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 20-40.

⁸Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 22, 26, 35. In November 1949, a more mature Sassoon, after re-reading his war diaries, would shake his head at his inexperience and self-dramatization. Siegfried Sassoon, Siegfried Sassoon Diaries 1920-1922, ed. and with an Introduction by Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 15-16.

Jack." From that date until the battalion was withdrawn from Merlancourt at the end of June, Sassoon served at the front, rotating in and out of the front lines on a fairly regular weekly basis. Except for a month in May and ten days in June,⁹ he was in and out of the line, leading patrols, creeping up to the enemy line, taking part in raids against the enemy, and enjoying his own heroism and daring. On 25 May he helped bring in the dead and wounded from a raiding party--an action for which he was later awarded the Military Cross. He was finally experiencing active trench warfare--the shellings, the bombing raids, the discomforts of life in the trenches--and the high attrition rate. But while he was living the role of heroic soldier, his view of the war was being colored by the deaths of his friends.¹⁰

At the end of June the battalion was withdrawn and reassembled in the Fricourt area preparatory to the opening attacks of the Battle of the Somme. The assault on Fricourt village and woods began on 1 July with the First Battalion in support. After a harrowing wire-cutting detail under

⁹Sassoon was out of the line from 23 April to 22 May while attending an army school and from 9-19 June while on leave in England.

¹⁰Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 44-56, 66-67, 70-77. According to one friend, Sassoon turned fierce after Thomas's death, became convinced it was the fault of the Germans, and set out to avenge his friend. Paul Fussell, ed., Siegfried Sassoon's Long Journey. Selections from the Sherston Memoirs (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), xi. Sassoon was also cited in the Regimental history for his bravery in bringing in the wounded. Ward, Regimental, 186.

German shelling the day before, Sassoon was one of the officers held in reserve. From a dugout, he watched the battle in which his C Company suffered heavy losses. Withdrawn on 3 July the battalion camped in a valley near Mametz Woods. Ordered to attack the woods on the night of 4/5 July, they had to march past mangled corpses from earlier fighting, including some of the regiment's own dead. Again Sassoon was held in reserve, but he later (6 July) went into the woods and on his own cleared a German trench with Mills bombs. Withdrawn on 6 July for a week's rest, the battalion was next put in the line at the Citadel for the next day's (14 July) attack on the woods and cemetery. Again Sassoon was in reserve. Once more friends were killed or wounded, although the battalion escaped the massive slaughter which wiped out battalions and regiments in the early days of the Somme battle.¹¹

On 23 July while the battalion was out of the line, Sassoon was hospitalized with a 105 degree temperature. Suffering from trench fever he was shipped home and remained on sick leave until 27 January 1917. After his release from the hospital, he returned to Weirleigh where he spent his time riding, hunting, and writing poetry.¹² Shaken by the

¹¹Ward, Regimental, 190-202, 215-229; Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 82-90.

¹²Siegfried Sassoon, Siegfried's Journey 1916-1920 (New York: Viking Press, 1946), 23; Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 99, 102.

reality of war, his poetry changed from romanticized verses in the style of Rupert Brooke to an ironic style which portrayed the war more realistically.

While on leave, Sassoon was exposed to pacifist views for the first time. Having been introduced during his hospital stay to Ottoline Morrell who, along with her husband, a Liberal M.P., opposed the war, he spent a week at their home Garsington. At night, the extreme pacifists who had accepted war work on Morrell's land gathered for conversation. Sassoon, already shaken by the reality of the war, listened to their opposition, which questioned the morality of waging any war. For the first time he heard about German peace overtures. It was the beginning of a growing disenchantment with the war which would later erupt into an open protest. Nonetheless, when passed by the Medical Board to return to active duty, the heroic Sassoon convinced himself that he had received another chance to die a decent death.¹³

Sassoon returned to France on 16 February 1917 and, after a stay in the hospital with German measles, was posted on 12 March to the Second Royal Welch Fusiliers, again a prestigious regular army battalion which was then in camp in the Clery sector. The battalion moved to the Arras area and, on 12 April, took over the St Martin Cojeul sector

¹³Sassoon, Journey, 10-17, 29-36; Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 127.

which consisted of old German trenches. Once more Sassoon took part in fatigue parties and again continually stumbled over dead bodies in the trenches. Assigned to take part in the Battle of Arras, the Second Battalion was ordered to advance to the line of the Sensée River in the area of the Hindenburg line. Placed in command of a bombing party, Sassoon led his men in a successful attack on the German trenches but was ordered to withdraw because the attack had failed everywhere else. Sassoon's recklessness and élan are apparent from his account. Wounded in the shoulder, he is again mentioned in the regimental history as distinguishing himself.¹⁴

Invalided home, Sassoon escaped the worst of battle once more. Just as he had missed most of the Battle of the Somme because of trench fever, he now escaped the worst fighting of the battle of Arras. After hospitalization, he was sent to a private convalescent home in Sussex. Released on 2 June, he spent his sick leave at Weirleigh and his London club. By now it is almost as if there are two Sassoon personalities--the military hero persona assumed on the battlefield who courts death and the peace-longing personality assumed at home who fears that the war will

¹⁴Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 133, 143-55; Ward, Regimental, 278-85; Frank Richards, Old Soldiers Never Die (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), 221-28. Sassoon wrote the account detailing this particular action for the regimental history as well as for Dunn's The War the Infantry Knew, 306-323.

continue indefinitely--the happy warrior and bitter pacifist described by Robert Graves.¹⁵ During this leave he became ever more disillusioned about the war and increasingly involved with the pacifist Morrells and their friends, including Bertrand Russell, who was staying with them.¹⁶

Sassoon prepared to revolt, hoping to make an impact because of his growing reputation as a war poet. When ordered to report for duty he responded with a letter to his commanding officer protesting, on behalf of the soldiers, the continuation of the war. He argued that the war, which had begun as one of defense and liberation, had been changed by the politicians into one of aggression and conquest. He concluded with a refusal to take part in prolonging the sufferings of the troops. The letter was printed in the London Times and read out in the House of Commons. Prepared for a court-martial which could carry the death sentence, Sassoon finally reported to the Regimental Depot at Litherland. Martyrdom was denied when a Medical Board

¹⁵Robert Graves, Good-Bye to All That, rev. ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1957), 275.

¹⁶Sassoon, Journey, 72-77; Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 173. Sassoon apparently assumed the coloration of his surroundings in chameleon-like fashion. This is not, however, to say that his views were not sincerely meant at the time he expressed them. They may well have been a defense mechanism to help him cope with situations and to gain the approval of those around him.

pronounced him shell-shocked and ordered him to Craiglockhart War Hospital for treatment.¹⁷

At Craiglockhart he was treated by W.H.R. Rivers who noted in his report on Sassoon: "He recognizes that his view of warfare is tinged by his feelings about the death of friends and of the men who were under his command in France." He noted that Sassoon differed from the pacifists in that it was the hopelessness of the war which concerned him and that he would be prepared to continue fighting if he saw any prospect of a rapid decision. By October, Sassoon felt guilty about deserting his men and announced that he was prepared to return to France. Passing his Medical Boards on 26 November, he was finally attached to the 25th Battalion, a territorial battalion which had been formed in Egypt rather than to the more elite First or Second Battalion.¹⁸

He joined the battalion in Egypt on 4 March 1918. It was transferred to France in May after a period of service in Palestine. Following several weeks training in trench

¹⁷Sassoon, Journey, 77-85; Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 173-77. Sassoon's letter of protest is quoted in Diaries 1915, 173-74. In Dunn, The War the Infantry Knew, a history of the Second Battalion, Sassoon's outburst is termed a "quixotic" action which has been "quenched in a 'shell-shock' retreat" as a means of denying martyrdom. According to the writer of this section of the history, Sassoon's concern that the war was being prolonged was shared by the troops at the front. Dunn, The War, 372.

¹⁸Rivers's report is quoted in Fussell, Long Journey, 135. Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 190, 192, 196.

warfare, the 25th went into the line near Besseuz on 8 June. For several days before going up to the trenches, Sassoon fought a case of nerves and experienced nightmares. An eerie description of Sassoon spending his nights crawling around no-man's-land with a few bombs in his pocket is provided by a subaltern who was posted to Sassoon's company at the front in mid-June. Was it bravery or shell-shock? He did acquit himself well at the front before the war abruptly ended for him on 13 July. Shot in the head by one of his own men while returning from patrol, he was put on sick leave for the remainder of the war and placed on the retired list on 12 March 1919.¹⁹

Following the war, Sassoon toyed with various projects. He campaigned for the antiwar Labour candidate Phillip Snowden and served a brief stint with a newspaper. He continued to write poetry and in 1920 toured the United States reading his war poetry. In the mid-twenties he began a three-volume fictional autobiography of his youth and war years. In the 1930s he began another three-volume treatment of the same period of his life as non-fictional

¹⁹Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 219, 261-62; Ward, Regimental, 445; Vivian de Sola Pinto, "My First War: Memoirs of a Spectacled Subaltern," in Promise of Greatness: The War of 1914-1918, George A. Panichas, ed., with an Introduction by Herbert Read (New York: John Day Co., 1968), 81.

autobiography, a project which occupied him through World War II.²⁰

An active pacifist during the 1930s, he spoke occasionally at peace rallies. But he accepted the necessity of war in 1939 and even wrote two short, conventionally patriotic poems to "the youth that once more could not choose but fight."²¹ Converting to Roman Catholicism in 1957, he died at the age of eighty in 1967.

In 1926 Sassoon decided to write a fictionalized autobiography. In 1928 the first volume was published anonymously, although the author quickly became known. Sassoon's name appeared on the second printing. Memoirs of

²⁰For an account of the postwar period see Sassoon, Diaries, 1920 and Siegfried Sassoon, Siegfried Sassoon Diaries 1923-1925, ed. and with an Introduction by Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1986). See also Sassoon, Journey, 164-305.

²¹Michael Thorpe, Siegfried Sassoon: A Critical Study (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 37-38. In July 1935 Sassoon was one of the featured speakers at an Albert Hall meeting. University of Texas at Austin. Humanities Research Center, Siegfried Sassoon: A Memorial Exhibition, catalogue compiled by David Farmer, with an Introduction by Edmund Blunden, Academic Center Library (September-December 1969), 50. See also Siegfried Sassoon Letters to Max Beerbohm with a Few Answers, Rupert Hart-Davis, ed., (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 30-31 in which Sassoon describes his appearance on the Peace Pledge Platform in London in November 1936 and refers to additional meetings at Albert Hall and at Birmingham. For additional information on Sassoon's involvement in the peace movement see Martin sporting-days and his enlistment in the infantry up to the Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 56-59.

a Fox-Hunting Man chronicles Sassoon's life in the guise of the fictional George Sherston from his childhood through his eve of the Battle of the Somme. The next volume, Memoirs of an Infantry-Officer, which was published in 1930, treats Sassoon's/Sherston's life in the infantry from May 1916 through his protest against the war and the Medical Board's pronouncement of shell-shock. The concluding volume Sherston's Progress (1936) describes the period from his treatment in the hospital through the conclusion of the war.²² This study will concentrate on the first two novels published in 1928 and 1930.

The Sherston trilogy is thinly veiled fiction. Sherston is an orphan raised by a maiden aunt rather than one of three brothers raised by a mother who is first estranged from her husband and later widowed. Sherston has a propensity for the sporting life, but lacks Sassoon's inclination to poetry. Many of Sherston's friends are Sassoon's but with fictitious names--a convention observed in many of the war memoirs.

²²Siegfried Sassoon, Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1928; reprint, Siegfried Sassoon, The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston (London: Faber and Faber, 1937)); Siegfried Sassoon, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer (London: Faber and Faber, 1930; reprint, Siegfried Sassoon, The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston (London: Faber and Faber, 1937)), and Siegfried Sassoon, Sherston's Progress (London: Faber and Faber, 1936; reprint, in Siegfried Sassoon, The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston (London: Faber and Faber, 1937)). All page references are to this edition.

Sassoon relied on his diaries in writing both his fictional and non-fictional autobiographies. A comparison between his diaries and the Sherston trilogy indicates the decreasing fictional element in each succeeding novel as fiction blends into autobiography. Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man exhibits the greatest element of fiction although in the section on the war the fictitious element begins to fade. In the second volume, his public letter of protest against the war as well as portions of his diary are included; by the last volume of the trilogy, Sherston's Progress, Sassoon is copying whole sections from his diary directly into the manuscript.

Why then treat them as fiction? First, in the novels Sassoon is only recreating one part of his life--his sporting and military career, not the career of a writer who achieved fame as a war-poet. The fictional Sherston represents only a part rather than the whole of Sassoon's personality. Secondly, Sassoon originally created or intended the novels as fiction. The first volume was published anonymously with the fictitious approach supposedly allowing him to hide his identity. That he later allowed himself to be listed as the author does not invalidate his original intent while writing. Thirdly, hiding behind the loose veil of fiction enabled Sassoon to reveal his emotional struggles and dichotomous reactions toward the war.

Sassoon's fictional memoirs were soon followed by more traditional autobiographies--The Old Century and Seven More Years (1938) which relates his life through his school years, The Weald of Youth (1942) which traces his life from the end of his schooling through his enlistment in the army, and Siegfried's Journey, 1916-1920 (1945) which chronicles his growing disgust with the war and eventual protest against it. The experience of World War I obsessed him to the point that he even recopied his war diaries, editing and footnoting the deaths of individuals who were killed during the war. Unlike Herbert, he was never able to ignore it; unlike Mottram and Ford, he was never able to move beyond it.

In Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man, Sassoon describes the life of George Sherston from his youth through his early service in the infantry. The greater part of the novel is devoted to his early years on a country estate and his life as a sportsman--fox-hunting, country horse-racing, village cricket, even an occasional game of golf. By recreating English society before the war--the annual flower show, the social gatherings for hunts, the contests of the village cricket team--the serenity and ease of Sherston's prewar life is contrasted to his life after he answers the joint calls of adventure and duty and volunteers for service two days before the outbreak of World War I. Sherston recalls one veteran of the Boer War, the village hero, who, despite

the admiration bestowed on him, rarely talks about the war except to tell Sherston that he never saw a Boer the entire time.²³

The last two chapters describe Sherston's life after he joins the army. The events described parallel Sassoon's own early service. Sherston joins the yeomanry two days before the declaration of war, injures his arm in a jump, and receives a Special Reserve commission in a prestigious regiment, the Flintshire Fusiliers. Assigned to the First Battalion he is sent to France. The battalion moves out of the line for training, then returns to the line; Sherston is appointed transport officer; his best friend is killed; Sherston is relieved as transport officer and goes to the front lines. The narrative ends before the Battle of the Somme.

The purpose of this section is to show Sherston's transformation from civilian to soldier. In the process Sassoon describes for the reader the life of the average soldier through training camp and service in France. The cross-section of society who joined as privates in the early days, the training routines, the types of individuals who serve as officers, daily life in billets, a meal in Amiens, a treat of salmon from England, the murky dugouts hidden behind gas blankets on the front lines--all are part of the well-rounded picture drawn by Sassoon. And along the way we

²³Sassoon, Fox-Hunting Man, 59-62.

see Sherston changing as his past and his old life disappear. Thoughts of dying are now intermingled with thoughts of home. With the death of his friend he must finally face both death and the war. The entire section is low-key and matter-of-fact. His friends are wounded or die but the tone remains unemotional. The disillusioned soldier who asks questions will not appear until the next volume. In this volume Sherston's cry is for the past: "I wanted the past to survive and to begin again."²⁴

But the process of becoming a soldier and leaving the civilian behind is slow. When Sherston first reports to his regiment, he displays a snobbish pride in his Special Reserve Commission.²⁵ His early acceptance among the regimental officers is aided by his having visited a good tailor for his uniform; in France, his fame as a fox-hunter and country horse-racer eases his way. But soon the physical discomforts of the trenches loom large in his life and his isolation from home increases. Home on leave he wants only to get back--the war is now the reality. Unlike

²⁴Ibid., 256-57, 265, 273-76, 280.

²⁵Before the outbreak of World War I, officers were commissioned either by attending Sandhurst, through the Officer Training Corps in the schools or universities or through the militia, which was more socially exclusive. Candidates came from the public schools and were required to be gentlemen. See Douglas Gill and Gloden Dallas, The Unknown Army (London: Verso, 1985), 15-20; Edward M. Spiers, "The Regular Army in 1914," in Beckett, A Nation in Arms, 41-43; Keith Simpson, "The Officers," in ibid., 67-69.

on the hunting field, he can now only retain his courage through a conscious effort, although he enjoys feeling secretly heroic. With his friend's death, he finally realizes that a soldier's job is to kill. In his anger, the sportsman has now become the soldier. At this point, the greatest crime of the war, in fact a "crime against humanity," is the exploitation of human courage.²⁶

In Memoirs of an Infantry Officer Sassoon details his/Sherston's war experience from shortly before the Battle of the Somme through his war protest and the Medical Board's diagnosis of shell-shock. While the first novel stresses the contrast between life in prewar England and life in the infantry in France, this volume analyzes the actions and events which convert a conscientious brave soldier into a war protester who refuses to return to his regiment. In the novel Sassoon emphasizes that the story is about one individual and not a universal tale.²⁷ Using the guise of fiction, Sassoon can tell his own story and at the same time examine events as an outsider by distancing himself from his own actions.

In this volume Sassoon, through his alter ego Sherston, confronts the difficulties of continuing to play the role society and his class have assigned to him. Born

²⁶Sassoon, Fox-Hunting Man, 230, 234, 246, 257, 268-69, 273-75.

²⁷Sassoon, Infantry Officer, 291.

into Britain's country gentry, an alumnus of the public schools, and a member of the sporting classes, the younger Sassoon had the ideals of patriotism, duty, honor, and courage ingrained. Adherence to the code was expected of the officer class and was the basis of regimental honor. The conditions of fighting in France caused Sassoon to question whether he could live up to these ideals and eventually to question their validity. The reality of trench warfare and the deaths of friends and subordinates created fears, emotions and beliefs which warred with his vision of what he should be and how he should act. Perhaps this is the reason for the obsession with his life from youth through war; perhaps the novels are an attempt to explain the split in his personality between the happy warrior and the concerned pacifist which becomes so apparent in both the novels and the diaries; perhaps the popularity of his novels indicates that he was not the only soldier of courage torn between the ideal and the reality. At any rate, in Memoirs of an Infantry Officer, Sassoon/Sherston struggles to live up to the ideals of the past, but decides a different mode of conduct is necessary.

Before the Battle of the Somme it had been easy for Sherston to slip into the persona of the happy warrior. Despite his fear of death, he could still view the trenches as an adventure with occasional raids to relieve the boredom and monotony. But in the back of his mind, there is the

concern that he might break--everyone does eventually. Going home on leave, he continues to play the role of happy warrior. Returning to France, he must work harder to keep up his courage. More and more of his companions are killed. The growing numbers of dead Germans now appear as humans rather than as the enemy. Although the soldiers are victims of a war which will not end, to become bitter is unpatriotic.²⁸

He is relieved to be invalided home by fever--he is safe. Once home, he again dons the role of returning hero. But thoughts of the soldier-victims continue to oppress him. Antiwar thoughts float through his mind--he is losing his belief in the war. Returning to France, he is struck anew by the boredom and the repetitiveness. Despite his overstrained nerves, he builds up his courage once more, assumes the happy warrior persona, and valiantly leads a successful bombing raid during which he is wounded. At the hospital, he is brought down from the euphoric high of his pumped-up bravery by the agony surrounding him. This time he does not want to return to England because then he would have to face the anguish of coming back and would again have to work up his courage and his acceptance of this life once again.²⁹

²⁸Ibid., 294-97, 301, 307, 310, 314, 319-20, 337, 364.

²⁹Ibid., 367-68, 373-77, 381-94, 401-03, 407, 443-49.

Recuperating in England, his fears return, although he continues to play the heroic role for visitors. Letters from the front bring news of more dead. Increasingly critical of the war, he finally decides to protest. When ordered to report to his regiment he refuses and publically states his reason. People should know what the war is like. Despite his decision, he is still drawn to the war, lured by the adventure it offers. At the front, the war does not seem so bad--he has even been happy in the trenches. But back in England, reality sinks in. Both drawn to and repulsed by the war, Sherston continues to waffle even after sending his letter of protest. Although seeking martyrdom, he is ultimately relieved when instead of being court-martialed, he is ordered to a hospital for treatment of shell-shock.³⁰

For Sassoon, his letter of protest was an act of courage. The label of shell-shock, which he considered a synonym for cowardice, was one to be denied. The Memoirs of an Infantry-Officer is at once a justification, an apologia, and, along with the rest of the trilogy, a psychological study of himself. Through the fictional Sherston, Sassoon can explain his actions and present his own interpretation

³⁰Ibid., 450-62, 469, 471-89, 495-96, 502-13. Unlike many later antiwar novelists, Sassoon took his stand during the war. Sassoon/Sherston may also have been suffering the guilt of the survivor. Letters from the front kept him current with the fighting and the heavy losses his battalion suffered after he had been invalided home. See *ibid.*, 376-77, 457, 469, 494.

of the deed as courageous despite its seeming contradiction of British ideals.

Is Sassoon's self-portrait in the guise of Sherston that of a man suffering from shell-shock? The diagnosis was convenient, both for Sassoon and for the protection of regimental honor. That he was under severe emotional strain is undeniable; that he himself flinched from the label which he associated with cowardice is apparent from his writings;³¹ that the Medical Board's determination may have been correct is suggested by a look at the literature on shell-shock.

Anxiety states were more numerous among officers, possibly because they were responsible for their men as well as themselves and were required to inspire their men with their own enthusiasm and courage, a responsibility and duty Sassoon certainly felt. The personality type most prone to shell-shock is the high-strung, sensitive individual with high ideals who tries to hide his fears. With the growing fear of danger, courage is forced and the desire for escape grows stronger; the only acceptable means of escape for the

³¹Sassoon told Robert Graves the "we must 'keep up the good reputation of the poets--as men of courage." Graves, Good-Bye, 233. His urge to prove his courage and his fear of being labeled a coward so as not to be considered a traitor to his class may also have been intensified by his homosexuality. For allusions to the latter, see Sassoon, Diaries 1915, 236, 262 in which the sexual attractiveness of a soldier is recorded and Sassoon, Diaries 1920, 33 where he refers to his affair with Gabriel Atkins which began in December 1918.

individual with high ideals is death. Sassoon's writings are filled with his longings for and acceptance of his own death. Those most obsessed with fear may perform reckless acts, as did Sassoon, a sign that a breakdown is near. An order to return to the front from leave may cause a sudden development of fear and the individual is gripped by a serious mental conflict between his ideals and the instinct of self-preservation. Duty requires that he return; feelings of incompetence argue against; feelings of cowardice flood him with shame. A frequent complication is depression which may be accompanied by thoughts about the horrors seen and the horrors of war in general.³²

Sassoon found a way out of his dilemma which allowed him to keep his self respect while avoiding a return to the front--a public protest against the war which could not be ignored. That he later felt guilt about deserting his men and decided to return to active duty indicates the depth of his ideals. That he experienced a case of nerves after he returned to France is evidenced by his tendency to roam no-man's-land alone and supports the possibility of shell-

³²MacCurdy, War Neuroses, 9, 15, 21-24, 31; Eric Wittkower and J.P. Spillane, "A Survey of the Literature of Neuroses in War," in The Neuroses in War (New York: Macmillan Co., 1942), Emanuel Miller, ed., 3-5, 15-17; Millais Culpin, "Mode of Onset of the Neuroses in War," in ibid., 35, 53; G. Ronald Hargreaves, "The Differential Diagnosis of the Psychoneuroses of War," in ibid., 87; Emanuel Miller, "Psychopathological Theories of Neuroses in Wartime," in ibid., 112.
shock.

Whether Sassoon was shell-shocked or not, the novels are obviously one man's story--that of the author, as Sassoon carefully stresses in the second volume. In the process, life at the front and behind the lines is described without the shrill emphasis on the horrors of war found in other war novels. A restaurant meal in Amiens and a gentle amble through the countryside on horseback are as much a part of the novel as a raid on enemy trenches. The war, both good and bad, enjoyable and horrible, provides the background for the personal drama of Sassoon's/Sherston's life.

In his only attempt at fiction, Sassoon proved successful. The reading public was eager to buy his books. The first printing of Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man, fifteen hundred copies, sold within the first month of publication. A total of 35,500 copies were sold in Britain during the next two years. Sassoon received the Hawthornden Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. Memoirs of an Infantry Officer was serialized in the Daily Telegraph and had a first printing of twenty thousand. In the next four years eight different editions appeared, including a cheap edition

which was reprinted five times.³³ Both novels obviously had strong public appeal.

The reviewers of Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man touch on the question of authorship and the extent of autobiography in the work. The reviews emphasize the sportsman appeal of the novel. Some mention the war section; others do not. The Spectator reviewer notes Sherston's exchange of fox-hunting conventions for those of soldiering and remarks briefly on his exposure of the wickedness of war. Robert Graves, on the other hand, tries to impress the reader with his knowledge of the author's identity and his own acquaintance with him during the war. He observes the accuracy of the war section and assumes that the early parts are equally autobiographical. The Times Literary Supplement reviewer hints at knowledge of the author's identity, stresses the sporting aspects of the novel, and makes no mention of the war. Edward Shanks reveals that Sassoon's authorship has been confirmed and asks whether the work is truth or fiction. Opting for truth he hypothesizes that Sassoon began the work as a novel but, being overcome by recollections in the process of writing, shifted to memoir-- a definite possibility. He alludes briefly to the final

³³Geoffrey Keynes. A Bibliography of Siegfried Sassoon (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962), 71-72, 80-84; Thorpe, Sassoon, 69, 266.

section on the war.³⁴ Sassoon's depiction of prewar England and the sporting life are the central themes of the reviews; Sherston's war service is either ignored or mentioned with little elaboration.

The war is undeniably the subject of Memoirs of the Infantry Officer. Briefly reviewed in the Spectator, the work is compared favorably to the "hysterical diatribes of Mr. Aldington" with the suggestion that future historians will turn to this novel to study war neuroses. The reviewer totally disagrees with Sassoon's refusal to fight but observes that his motives are clarified in the novel and that his case against war is strengthened by avoiding "wild denunciations." The review in the Times Literary Supplement consists mainly of a summary of what the writer treats as Sassoon's autobiography. Accepting the novel as representative of the experiences of infantry subalterns, it is both "an implicit and an explicit condemnation of the War."³⁵ The reviews do little more than delineate the subject matter of the novel.

³⁴Review of Memoirs of a Foxhunting (sic) Man, by Siegfried Sassoon, in Spectator Literary Supplement, 6 October 1928, 449-51; Robert Graves, review of Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man, by Siegfried Sassoon, in Daily News and Westminster Gazette, 9 October 1928, 4; review of Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man, by Siegfried Sassoon, in TLS, 11 October, 1928, 727; Edward Shanks, "A Little Classic," Saturday Review, 13 October 1928, 473.

³⁵Review of Memoirs of an Infantry Officer, by Siegfried Sassoon, in Spectator Literary Supplement, 4 October 1930, 461-63; review of Memoirs of an Infantry Officer, Siegfried Sassoon, in TLS, 18 September 1930, 731-32.

In 1926, J. C. Dunn wrote Sassoon asking for a contribution to the regimental history he was editing. Sassoon refused, responding instead with a poem, "A Footnote on the War" in which he explained that he had erected

A barrier, that my soul might be protected
Against the invading ghosts of what I saw
In years when Murder wore the mask of Law.³⁶

Relenting almost immediately, he next sent Dunn a twelve-page account taken from his diary. By the time the regimental history was published in 1938, the account had already been incorporated into the Memoirs of an Infantry Officer.

For twenty years of his life, Sassoon opened his soul to the ghosts of the war which continued to haunt him. But the ghost that plagued him most was that of his war protest, which could be interpreted as a momentary lapse of courage. Although his major writings on his life and the war were completed in the 1940s, Sassoon probably never exorcised that spirit, but in the attempt, he left a legacy of very personalized fiction and memoirs about the effects of the war on one individual.

His novels are fictionalized autobiography, a psychological study of himself. Despite his public

³⁶Simpson, "Introduction," in The War the Infantry Knew, xxvii-xxix.

opposition to the war in 1917 and his later involvement with the pacifist movement, ideology is absent. Nor is he concerned with an extended critique of the British government and its conduct of the war. The novels may be seen instead as a purging of guilt for betraying his ideals and a rationalization of what could be viewed by some as a momentary cowardice.

In the novels Sassoon insists on the courage of his protest--perhaps he protests overly much. But whatever his reasons for writing the Sherston memoirs, the legacy for the historian and the psychologist is a close look at a man who wanted to be brave, who tried to be brave, and who was brave; a man imbued by class and upbringing with a high sense of duty and responsibility who suddenly found he could no longer face the war as it was being fought in France; a man torn between his ideals and reality.

CHAPTER 6

ANGRY YOUNG MAN: RICHARD ALDINGTON

In his obituary in the Times, Richard Aldington was described as "an angry young man of the generation before they became fashionable."¹ Angry and resentful for most of his life, he nevertheless carved out for himself a successful career as poet, novelist, translator, literary critic, and biographer. Among his friends were Ezra Pound, D. H. Lawrence, and T. S. Eliot. But despite his earlier success, in the last years before his death in 1962, his books were out of print except in the Soviet Union, his articles were rejected by magazines and journals, and he was dependent for economic survival on Russian royalties and on the financial aid of his friends.²

¹Times (London), 30 July 1962.

²Although there are no good biographies of Aldington, Thomas McGreevy, Richard Aldington: An Englishman (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1974) and Richard Eugene Smith, Richard Aldington (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977) do provide some biographical information. See also Aldington's autobiography Life for Life's Sake: A Book of Reminiscences (New York: Viking Press, 1941); the excellent introduction by Christopher Ridgway in Richard Aldington, Death of a Hero (Paris: Babou and Kahane, 1930; reprint, London: Hogarth Press, 1984), n.p.; and entries for Richard Aldington in the following: Daiches, Penguin Companion; Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, ed., Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1942); Frances Carol Locker, ed., Contemporary Authors (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1980); Wolfgang Bernard Fleischmann, ed., Encyclopedia of World Literature in the Twentieth Century, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1967); James Vinson, ed., Great Writers of the English

Born on 8 July 1892 in Portsmouth, Richard Aldington was the eldest son of a solicitor's clerk. The middle-class household in Dover where he grew up was dominated by his strong-willed mother, creating a resentment against women and motherhood which would burst forth in his war novel Death of a Hero. As a youth, he came under the tutelage of a family friend who stimulated his interests in literature and languages. After attending a private school, he entered University College, London, in 1910 but withdrew the next year because of family financial problems, another cause of resentment.³

Until his enlistment in 1916 his career next consisted of a series of jobs designed to pay the bills while he developed his poetry. He was one of the founders of the imagist movement, along with Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell. His work appeared in Poetry (Chicago) in 1912 and in the movement's anthologies which were published yearly from 1914 to 1917.⁴ In 1914 he became editor of the Egoist, a review which served as a vehicle for the imagist movement.

Language: Novelists and Prose Writers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979); and Thomas F. Staley, ed., British Novelists, 1890-1929: Modernists in Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol 36, (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1985).

³Smith, Richard, 17; Norman Timmins Gates, A Checklist of the Letters of Richard Aldington (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 1; Staley, British, 6.

⁴The 1914 anthology was edited by Pound. The 1915, 1916, and 1917 anthologies were edited by Amy Lowell.

To support himself, he accepted a series of part-time jobs, the first in 1911 as a sports writer. By 1912 he held a part-time position with the Garton Peace Foundation, an organization which investigated issues concerning war and peace. He was assigned to analyze Alfred Thayer Mahan's view of naval strategy. The realities of war had already been impressed upon him during his university period when he read Walt Whitman's Specimen Days, which includes Whitman's description of the wounded on the battlefield and in the hospitals during the American Civil War.⁵

By 1914 Aldington was working as Ford Madox Ford's secretary, taking down in longhand the first draft of his novel, The Good Soldier. He also aided Ford with When Blood Is Their Argument for the propaganda ministry and helped with the research for the second book, Between St. Dennis and St. George. However he became disgusted, whether with Ford or the work is uncertain, and quit.⁶ He also supplemented his income during the prewar period with translations.

Immediately after the invasion of Belgium, Aldington tried to register as a volunteer but was turned down because of a hernia operation in 1910. Although rejected by the army, Aldington considered the beginning of the war the end of his carefree days. Despite his view that war was

⁵Aldington, Life, 120-21.

⁶Ibid., 154-55.

insanity and his suspicions about the combatants' motives, he believed it his duty to be in the army, therefore cowardly not to be. Aldington finally entered service in June 1916. Aldington contends that he again volunteered, but according to John Cournos, a friend who was sharing the same house, Aldington was conscripted, having received a notice to report for military service. Cournos's account is more believable because of the time element--under the Military Service Act passed in January 1916, men were being required to join. That he went involuntarily would also help account for Aldington's extreme bitterness.⁷

After a three-month training period, Aldington's infantry battalion was sent to France. He, however, did not go to the front with it, but was given the rank of lance corporal and held back to train NCOs. He finally arrived in Calais several months later and from December 1916 to June 1917 served at the front in Belgium and northern France. He was assigned to a battalion of pioneers and describes the period as one of perpetual working parties. The pioneers were in effect a labor battalion, digging trenches and ditches, stringing wire, clearing or building roads--in effect performing manual labor. He was relieved to be made a runner, even though the job was more dangerous.⁸

⁷Aldington, Life, 162, 170, 177; Gates, Checklist, 6; John Cournos, Autobiography (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935), 289.

⁸Aldington, Life, 180-86.

He was eventually sent to officer's training camp, probably in June 1917, and received a commission in the Royal Sussex Regiment. Although details concerning his military service are sketchy, he was somewhere in the British lines between the Scarpe and Oise Rivers during the German advance in March 1918. On 4 November his battalion was among those leading the advance into Belgium, probably in the push across the Sambre-Oise canal. His assignment was to keep his battalion in communication with the brigade and with the flanking battalions. On 12 November he was given leave and was required to return to France after the armistice for an additional twelve weeks service before being demobilized.⁹

Aldington considered himself to have been a poor soldier--he did not get killed nor did he kill anybody else. He believed his survival was the result of a series of lucky escapes--moving his head so that a bullet merely grazed his helmet, missing a working party the night several were killed by a shell, moving his leg so that a bullet destroyed the heel of his boot rather than his ankle. But he evidently lived in constant fear--he believed each leave to be his last.¹⁰

⁹Ibid., 191-93.

¹⁰Ibid., 186-89.

By war's end he was suffering from the effects of being gassed and from shell-shock. He had been buried under the debris of an exploding grenade. He was sleeping badly and suffering from nightmares and insomnia. He was depressed and had difficulty concentrating. After his release from the army he returned home penniless to a marriage that was ending.¹¹ He found a London hostile to returning soldiers and discovered his personal library for sale in a used book store. A friend, deciding that Aldington would not survive the war, had stolen the books out of storage and sold them. After the war he suffered from nervous maladies and ill-health; in later years he would be bothered by bronchial trouble. It would be eight years before Aldington considered himself recovered from the effects of the war.¹²

His immediate problem was money. He found a job reviewing French books for the Times Literary Supplement, but only remained a few months. Because of his nerves, a doctor ordered him to the country to recuperate and in 1919 he moved to a workman's cottage in Berkshire where he lived

¹¹In 1913 Aldington had married H.D. Doolittle, a poet involved in the imagist movement. See H.D. Doolittle, Bid Me to Live (New York: Grove Press, 1960), a fictional account of their marriage.

¹²Aldington, Life, 195-96, 203-210; Gates, Checklist, 7.

for the next seven years with periodic trips to London and the continent. In 1928 he left England to live in France and Italy; in 1935 he moved to the United States where he remained until 1946 when he returned to France, his home until his death in 1962.

Aldington's first novel Death of a Hero was published in 1929. He continued to write poetry and criticism, as well as editing critical editions and translating. His novels continued to appear through World War II. During that war he turned to biography, winning the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in the 1940s for his work on the Duke of Wellington. In his biography of T. E. Lawrence in 1955, he refuted the myth created by Lowell Thomas. He was first attacked and then ignored by British critics. His books were allowed to go out of print and magazines refused his articles.¹³ Discarded in Britain, he continued to be revered in France, as well as in the Soviet Union, where his novels were regularly reissued. The Soviets even paid royalties into his bank account. Shortly before his death, he was honored in Moscow by the Soviet Writers' Union.

Aldington spent much of his life in anger and bitterness. Before World War I he was disgusted with middle-class England and the cant of its politics, religion,

¹³Richard Aldington, Literary Lifelines: The Richard Aldington-Lawrence Durrell Correspondence, eds., Ian S. MacNiven and Harry T. Moore (New York: Viking Press, 1981), viii.

and social reform. On a personal level, he had been denied university training because of his father's investment incompetence. After the war he continued to be enraged by the mores and hypocrisy of middle-class England, an England which refused to acknowledge the soldiers' sacrifices in the Great War or to aid them in their postwar plight. He escaped as a voluntary exile in 1928. Most of his novels were biting satires of the England he had left behind. And of course he ended his life in bitterness at his treatment by the British public in the furor over the Lawrence book. His earlier anger is apparent in his war novel, Death of a Hero.

Aldington first attempted to write about his war experiences in 1919, then in 1925, then in 1927. Each time he destroyed the results. In 1928, he began again; the result was his first novel, Death of a Hero, which achieved instant fame for its author. He attributed his earlier failures to his need to assimilate and mentally arrange his experiences. The novel was to be a satire constructed along the lines of a Greek tragedy with the catastrophe--the hero's death--revealed at the beginning. After writing the first fourth of the novel, he showed it to his American publisher who encouraged him to finish it, which he did in record speed. Writing the novel, according to Aldington,

"purged my bosom of perilous stuff which has been poisoning me for a decade."¹⁴

Death of a Hero was published in 1929 and was followed the next year by Roads to Glory, a collection of short stories. Each short story recounts the destruction of an individual by the war, a theme already developed in the war novel. With the publication of these two books Aldington said everything he had to say about the war; he had "worked them out of my system."¹⁵ He would not return to the theme of the war again.

The novel is the story of George Winterbourne. Aldington traces his life from his upbringing in a middle-class household through his brief career as a painter, his involvement in London's artistic circles, his enlistment and training in the army, and his service in France to his death in Belgium a few hours before the armistice. Although categorized with the war novels, only a third of the novel depicts the war; the remainder is a vituperative assault on British society. The news of Winterbourne's death acts as a sexual aphrodisiac on his mother, who immediately demands her lover's presence, and feeds his father's religious mania. George's wife is in bed with her lover when she receives the news. His mother enjoys her brief moment of glory as the grieving mother of a fallen soldier; his father

¹⁴Aldington, Life, 331-39.

¹⁵Ibid., 178.

is run over by a car during religious meditations. There is a brief skirmish between mother and wife over George's meager possessions. None of them really cared about George.¹⁶

Aldington's attack is not limited to Victorian attitudes. The mores and beliefs of prewar artistic and intellectual circles with their advocacy of Freud and free love are just as reprehensible to Aldington and their hypocrisies are just as great. Brutal caricatures of Ford, Pound, and Eliot reinforce the assault. Despite a long discussion of free love, George is pressured into marrying when his mistress, Elizabeth, believes herself pregnant. Elizabeth insists on an open marriage in which she has lovers but is upset when she finally learns that George has a mistress. During the war, life does not change in George's social set, which remains blindly ignorant about the nature of the fighting. When George is home on leave he is asked if he is still writing and painting during his free time at front.¹⁷

Aldington considers the war the direct consequence of Victorian smugness, of nations being governed by "Bunk," of false ideals and optimism. The men of his generation have

¹⁶Aldington, Hero, 12-21, 30. All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁷Ibid., 24-26, 110-30, 164-66, 171, 193, 202-04, 221, 342-44. See also 110-186 for Winterbourne's prewar life in London.

been bred especially for the slaughter--it is the reason for their existence. The soldier's true enemies are the fools who sent them to France.¹⁸

Many of the themes common to the war novel appear in Aldington's work--the boredom and monotony, the horrors, and the high attrition rate. Aldington considers comradeship among the soldiers a vital and unique element of the war. But Aldington's emphasis on the physical conditions which degrade and coarsen the individual by forcing him to lead a bestial existence are his contribution to the interpretation of the war. Beginning with the sheer physical stress of training through the physical conditions in the trenches--sleeping in one's clothes, washing in water already used by others, suffering from loss of control with diarrhea, waiting in line at the brothels for a few minutes of the prostitute's time--a man was constantly humiliated and pushed closer to an animal existence. Although other writers portray similar conditions, none does so with the intensity of Aldington. During much of his service, however, Aldington was a private and is perhaps reflecting his own sufferings and degradation.¹⁹

The main theme of the novel is the destruction of the individual--a destruction begun by society in the prewar

¹⁸Ibid., 190-200, 223, 227, 258-59.

¹⁹Ibid., 30-31, 241, 259, 262, 269, 279, 280-81, 289, 293, 298.

years and now completed by the impact of the war when Winterbourne, thrust into an animal existence and suffering from shell-shock, commits suicide by standing during a machine gun barrage. When Winterbourne enlists, his personal life is already unraveling. Home worries plague him while at the front, increasing the stress caused by the war itself. Arriving in Calais during the winter of 1916, he is immediately depressed by the cold, the drills, and the boredom. He first serves in the line with a pioneer battalion, trying to dig in the frozen ground; then he is made a runner. He begins to degenerate physically and mentally, responding with animal gratitude to rum and hot tea. Several times a day he must pass through a town which is being constantly shelled; gas attacks increase in frequency; the number of dead multiplies; he is alternately shelled and gassed. In the absolute confusion which passes for battle, his fears and anxieties grow and he begins to shake uncontrollably. By the time he is withdrawn to attend officer training, his nerve is gone. Winterbourne is suffering from shell-shock. On leave in London, he no longer fits in, although his wife and mistress admire his uniform. Returned to the front as an officer, he faces increasing difficulties. Harassed by his commanding officer, inundated with paperwork and unnecessary orders, commanding raw recruits who desert their posts, Winterbourne experiences additional symptoms of shell-shock--

sleeplessness, exhaustion, fear. Surrounded by death and decay, uncovering decomposing bodies when new trenches are dug, Winterbourne is at the end of his endurance. Even though the Germans are retreating and the war is ending, he cannot face another barrage--he must have peace. When his company comes under machine gun fire and he sees his men being killed, he goes mad, springs to his feet, and is killed instantly by a line of bullets across his chest. The narrator contends that he committed suicide; the war and British society and mores are responsible. The destruction of the naive, sensitive Winterbourne, begun in his childhood by an uncaring, self-centered society, has been completed.²⁰

Elements of autobiography are apparent in the construction of George's prewar life. George's father was reared in a middle-class household dominated by the mother. He became a solicitor--Aldington's father was a solicitor's clerk--and, after promising to support George while he established himself as an artist, lost all his money and withdrew that support. Aldington was forced to leave London University when his father lost his money. Despite George's aid in facing the creditors, George's father threw him out of the house, leaving him to survive on his own. Aldington's own story is similar. The autobiographical element carries over into George's war experience. George

²⁰Ibid., 225-26, 260-62, 267, 279, 288, 296-316, 325-28, 355, 359-68, 370-72.

enters the army as a private, refuses a commission, is sent to a pioneer battalion, after several months is appointed battalion runner, is sent to officer training, returns to the front in 1918 as an officer, is on the Belgian frontier in November 1918 as the British army pushes the Germans back. The difference is, of course, that George is killed and Aldington is not.

When Aldington was demobilized he was suffering from shell-shock and the effects of gas, just as Winterbourne was before his death. The novel may well be autobiographical in depicting the effects of the strains of war and its attendant physical conditions on a member of the middle class unused to such conditions.²¹ The description of Winterbourne's deterioration may be a description of Aldington's own. Winterbourne's ultimate fate could easily be one Aldington imagined for himself during his service at the front when the desire to escape became overwhelming. This is all obviously speculation, but speculation bolstered by enough facts to raise it to the level of possibility,

²¹See Eric J. Leed, No Man's Land, who argues that the lower classes were already familiar with regimentation and physical labor from the factories and mines while the upper and middle classes were not and were therefore more apt to experience disillusionment. Aldington additionally emphasizes the physical conditions of life which would obviously be more of a shock to a member of the middle classes. The weakness in Leed's argument is, of course, that not even work in the mines could prepare an individual for trench living conditions and laboring under artillery barrages.

especially when considered along side the novel's expression of Aldington's own intense prejudices against British society, a prejudice which ultimately became so strong he exiled himself.

Although the book was accepted for publication, the publishers insisted on certain deletions. Aldington had rendered the soldier's language realistically. Now, certain words were changed and others were deleted. Also rejected as unacceptable were passages with sexual connotations. But the omissions which upset Aldington most were those made for fear of giving offense. The words "Queen Victoria" were deleted in a passage which read "Prehistoric beasts, like the ichthyosaurus and ***** *****, have laired and copulated and brought forth" and "John Bull" in "The authorities . . . forbade them [the soldiers] to read the pacific Nation while allowing them to read the infamies of "***** ****." The irony is that, in requiring the deletions, the publishers proved the merit of Aldington's attacks, exemplifying the very attitudes he was satirizing. Although allowing the omissions, Aldington insisted on the substitution of asterisks for each letter of each word. As a result he was inundated with letters written by people who had been unsuccessful in filling in the blanks. An

unexpurgated version of the novel, limited to three hundred copies, was printed in 1930 in Paris.²²

The reviews of Death of a Hero were harsh. Much of the reaction to the novel was based, not on what he had to say about the war, but his sledgehammer bludgeoning of middle-class, Victorian society. Some of the reviewers completely ignored the sections on the Western front. For Aldington, also, one of the important aspects of the novel was its "plain, unvarnished and scrupulously accurate picture of English middle-class life," a depiction which he believed would have been immediately suppressed had it not appeared in a war book. That some of the reviewers are part of that middle class is apparent from the reviews.²³

The reviewer in the Spectator announces that he is "tired of this plague of War books" and calls Death of a Hero "a long-winded book, full of outbursts, sermons, and denunciations" by an embittered writer. Although praising the account of Winterbourne's service in France, he attacks

²²Aldington, Life, 346-47; Ridgway, "Introduction," n.p. The 1984 Hogarth edition used in this study contains the unexpurgated text and was compared to the 1929 censored version published in London by Chatto and Windus. The deletions in the American edition were fewer and shorter. Richard Aldington, "Note," Death of a Hero (New York: Corvici Friede, 1929), n.p.

²³Richard Aldington, "Notes on the War Novel," This quarter 2 (January-March 1930): 539.

Aldington's venomous denunciation of the prewar generations. L. P. Hartley considers the novel "satire run mad" written by a writer whose judgement is unbalanced. The attack on the middle classes is unfair and exaggerated with most of the characters turned into caricatures by the author's prejudices. No mention is made of the war section.²⁴

A. J. Cummings labels the novel "a brilliant book, but a sour one" written by an author who is as disturbed over sexual problems as he is about the war. Although not questioning his sincerity, Cummings argues that Aldington's work helps neither the dead nor the living, but excoriates everyone. Aldington

is furious about everything that happened in it [the war]. He is furious with everybody who took part in it; with those who took as little part in it as possible; with everybody, in fact, who had to live through it; even with those who unhappily survived or had the indecency to be born when it was all over."

While accurately gauging Aldington's anger, Cummings also ignores the war segment in his reviews.²⁵

The reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement is more moderate, although he notes the novelist's indignation and desire for revenge. Aldington indicts the Victorian middle class, going beyond satire, but he is a man appalled by the

²⁴Review of Death of a Hero, by Richard Aldington, in Spectator, 28 September 1929, 418; L. P. Hartley, review of Death of a Hero, by Richard Aldington, in Saturday Review, 5 October 1929, 396.

²⁵A. J. Cummings, review of Death of a Hero, by Richard Aldington, in Daily News and Westminster Gazette, 8 October 1929, 4.

inhumanities of the last war assailing those who seem responsible. The reviewer has high praise for the account of the Western front, calling it "some of the closest and strongest narration . . . that has been produced" and believing that it is "in such documents . . . that the hope of future conscience largely dwells."²⁶

Despite the reviews, or perhaps because of them, the novel was highly successful. Although only sixteen hundred copies were printed in the first printing, a second run of five thousand followed shortly after publication. By 1930 a cheap edition was being published in addition to reprintings of the original edition and the publication of the novel as No. 58 in the "Phoenix Library" printed in Edinburgh. By 1930 translations were appearing in German, Swedish, and French. Eventually the novel would appear in eight languages besides English.²⁷

Writing Death of a Hero served a dual function for Aldington: he was able to vent his anger and resentment against the British middle class and at the same time achieve the catharsis of reliving his war experiences. The novel is an angry, uncontrolled attack on the British middle

²⁶Review of Death of a Hero, by Richard Aldington, TLS, 19 September 1929, 713.

²⁷Alister Kershaw, A Bibliography of the Works of Richard Aldington from 1915 to 1948, with an Introduction by Richard Aldington (London: Quadrant Press, 1950), 12-15.

class--an attack often descending to melodrama, even to bathos. His personal resentment had already developed by the time war was declared; his own sufferings and humiliations during the war merely increased his bitterness toward the middle class which had caused it and then expected him and others to sacrifice themselves. The war, although the greatest, is just one in a long list of grievances against the middle class.

Through the character of George Winterbourne, Aldington is able to write his own fictitious autobiography in which he presents his personal grievances against society as well as describing his own sufferings as a soldier. To the traditional description of the front, Aldington adds his reaction to the physical conditions of life which dehumanized the individual. Himself a victim of shell-shock, the development of which he describes so accurately in the novel, the brutalization of the soldier is merely a continuation of society's brutalization of the individual. In war, as in peace, the sensitive individual will be destroyed.

CHAPTER 7

THE PACIFIST AS OBSERVER: H. M. TOMLINSON

When England declared war on Germany in 1914, H. M. Tomlinson was on assignment in Belfast. His job was to cover the imminent Irish civil war for the Daily News. Forty-one years old, born the same year as Ford Madox Ford, he experienced no desire to enlist. His pacifist tendencies had been nurtured in the prewar period when there was "always a war, or the threat of it."¹ Later as a war correspondent, he recorded events which only increased his abhorrence of combat.

By 1914 Tomlinson was an established journalist and had already published his first book, The Sea and the Jungle, a description of his voyage to Brazil and up the Amazon River. His later writings included travel books, essays, literary criticism, and novels. Born in 1873 in the London shipping district of Poplar, he came from a family of seafarers and could remember the clipper ships on which his father sailed. The eldest child, he left school at thirteen after his father's death to work as a clerk in a shipping office, remaining there for the next twenty years. His

¹Henry M. Tomlinson, A Mingled Yarn: Autobiographical Sketches (N.p.: 1953; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 143; Fred D. Crawford, H. M. Tomlinson (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 19; Helen and Richard Altick, "Square-Rigger on a Modern Mission," College English 5 (October 1943-May 1944): 76.

journalistic career did not begin until he was 31 when he was hired by the Morning Leader, which later merged with the Daily News.²

With the declaration of war, Tomlinson quickly obtained passage to Belgium. An unofficial correspondent for the Daily News, he had to dodge both British and French authorities. Kitchener had ordered any journalist found in the field of war expelled and his passport cancelled; the French simply arrested journalists. But by dressing as a refugee and merging with the flow of people, Tomlinson, along with Philip Gibbs and W. M. Massey, covered the first months of the war, falling back from Belgium and northern France just ahead of the British army to Paris. They witnessed the retreat of the French army from Amiens and the British through Creil. They saw the disastrous withdrawal of the British from Mons. In Paris, Tomlinson only realized that the Germans had been turned back when the sounds of battle began to move away from rather than toward them. He followed the German retirement after the Battle of the Marne, viewed the piles of dead bodies in the aftermath of the fighting, and then moved north to Dunkirk, which was then being bombed daily by a German airplane. By the end of the year, he had been caught by the authorities and was no longer able to report. By early 1915, it had become

²Crawford, Tomlinson, 16-19.

impossible for anyone to travel in the war zone without being arrested.³

In May 1915 the British military authorities agreed to allow six official war correspondents in France. They were issued special uniforms with green armbands, given the temporary rank of captain, and assigned to General Headquarters (GHQ) in France. During the course of the war, Tomlinson, one of the six, moved with GHQ from St. Omer to Tilques to Rollencourt where the Battle of the Somme was planned. During the battle he moved to an advanced base in Amiens.⁴

In their official capacity the correspondents were allowed freedom of movement over the entire front and given access to a wide variety of information including corps and battalion intelligence and operation reports, daily army reports, and detailed information about any action on the front. Each correspondent was assigned a car. Tomlinson used his for daily visits to the front lines. During a major battle, the correspondents would draw lots so that

³Philip Gibbs, Adventures in Journalism (New York: Harper and Bros., 1923), 236-38, 243-45; H.M. Tomlinson, "We Correspondents Saw War But Were Forbidden to Tell the Truth," in The Great War . . . 'I Was There!', ed. John Hammerton, 1987 (London: Amalgamated Press, n.d.); [George Allardice Riddell], Lord Riddell's War Diary, 1914-1918 (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1933), 17.

⁴Tomlinson, "Correspondents," 1987-88; Riddell, War Diary, 23; Trevor Royle, War Report: The War Correspondent's View of Battle from the Crimea to the Falklands (n.p.: Mainstream Publishing, 1987.), 108.

each covered a different area of the battle zone. Their dispatches were shared by the British papers. Among those using Tomlinson's were the Daily News and the London Times.⁵

The censor, of course, was ever present, one being assigned to each correspondent. Tomlinson notes that, although at first the correspondents could mention the dead on both sides, later they could mention only the German dead, and finally could not mention the dead at all. The irony of reporting on a war with no dead did not escape Tomlinson.⁶

During his daily visits to the front, Tomlinson saw some of the war from the trenches and may even have gone over the top. He became deaf in both ears from the heavy guns.⁷ But he saw the war as an observer, not a soldier. He shared the physical discomforts of the trenches only briefly, not for days. The dead and wounded were not comrades. The dangers, while present, were less than those faced by the subalterns and the other ranks. Each night he returned to GHQ, away from the brutal noise of artillery where decent food and a clean bed awaited him. The war did

⁵Gibbs, Adventures, 247-62; Tomlinson, "Correspondents," 1989.

⁶Gibbs, Adventures, 251; Tomlinson, "Correspondents," 1988.

⁷Tomlinson, "Correspondents," 1989; Crawford, Tomlinson, 20.

not affect him less, but it did affect him differently. He was the observer rather than the participant.

Tomlinson viewed the war as a whole. He saw not only the individuals in one part of the line, but the growing numbers in countless trenches, as well as the increasing count of the dead. He noted the passing hospital trains and heard the cries of the wounded at aid stations. He saw the pain caused by the war, not just the suffering of the soldiers, but of civilians as well. He was in London during a Zeppelin attack; he knew the long hours of work, the food shortages, and the grief of England's civilian population at the deaths of sons, husbands, and friends. On the front lines he observed the unfolding of battles in which no one, including GHQ, knew what was happening. He knew of staff mistakes and the unnecessary deaths they caused. As a trained journalist with considerable information available to him, he was able to assess the war and its impact on a variety of levels.⁸ For an individual already opposed to war, the knowledge can only have been painful. He would unveil what he had learned in his war novel.

A. C. Gardiner, editor of the Daily News, said that

⁸See Tomlinson's essays written during the war, especially "In Ypres," "A Raid Night," "The Nobodies," and "Joy" in H. M. Tomlinson, Waiting for Daylight (London: Cassell and Co., 1922). See also H. M. Tomlinson, "A War Note for Democrats," English Review 19 (December 1914): 70-77; H. M. Tomlinson, "Pictures of War (France, Oct. ---)," English Review 18 (November 1914): 513-22); and Tomlinson, Mingled Yarn, 90, 144-46.

Tomlinson was the only one who told the truth about the war but that his dispatches were "too depressing for the readers," too filled with the writer's own horror.⁹ Unlike Gibbs and the other official correspondents, Tomlinson did not remain for the duration. In spring 1917 he was recalled at the insistence of Lord Northcliffe, press baron and owner of the Daily Mail, who considered him too humanitarian. He returned to England and accepted a position with the Nation.¹⁰

During the postwar period Tomlinson authored a series of travel works for various magazines, published his first novels, and toured the eastern United States lecturing on his theory of literature. He also wrote numerous articles against war and argued as early as 1919 that the Treaty of Versailles would lead to another conflict. In 1935 he published a long antiwar tract Mars His Idiot in which he exposed the follies and myths of war. His pacifism was not that of disillusionment--he had no illusions about war in 1914. What he saw during his period as a correspondent only strengthened previously-held beliefs. But shortly before World War II, when he realized that Germany was bent on conquest, his tone altered. Some wars, apparently, were necessary. With the outbreak of war in 1939, he joined the

⁹Quoted in Frank Swinnerton, Figures in the Foreground: Literary Reminiscences, 1917-1940 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1964), 125.

¹⁰Crawford, Tomlinson, 21-22.

ranks of British propagandists. In a series of regularly published articles in the Atlantic Monthly from 1939 to 1941, he described England's heroic resistance and encouraged American entrance into the war. After America's declaration of war in December 1941, his articles shifted to a justification of the war effort and the need to build a lasting peace.¹¹ After the war, Tomlinson continued to publish essays, travel works, and another novel before his death in 1958 at the age of eighty-four.

All Our Yesterdays, published in 1930 as Tomlinson's second novel, was part exposition, part novel. Tomlinson attempted to place World War I in a broader context, just as Ford Madox Ford had done. But while Ford's main concern was British society, Tomlinson's was imperialism, militarism, and statism. Unlike the other novelists treated in this study, he was concerned as much with the causes of the war as with describing the war itself.

Loosely plotted with large sections of exposition, the novel is told in the first person with characters who embody the British experience. Jones the bookseller has his store

¹¹Crawford, Tomlinson, 25-28, 151; see also H. M. Tomlinson, Mars His Idiot (New York: Harper and Bros., 1935) and Crawford's analysis, *ibid.*, 128-46. Some of Tomlinson's Atlantic Monthly articles are reprinted in H. M. Tomlinson, The Wind Is Rising (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1942) which includes articles from the period 1939-41 and H. M. Tomlinson, The Turn of the Tide (New York: Macmillan Co., 1947).

burned out because he is mistakenly considered pro-Boer, a foreshadowing of attacks on British citizens with German names and descent during World War I. Talbot the vicar realizes by the end of the novel that the church is being replaced by the state. Langham, a Radical member of Parliament, spouts typical political slogans which ignore the sufferings of the soldiers in the field during World War I. Maynard the reporter endures and survives the war. The Bolt family is composed of the father, a shipbuilder who reflects patriotic support of the Boer war and later the European war, his wife, their two sons who will be killed in World War I, and a daughter.¹²

The novel is divided into five parts. Only the fourth and fifth part concern the war. Part one begins with the launching of a battleship and moves to the Boer War. All the influences which bring about World War I are already present in England in 1900--Victorian confidence in business and science and the public worship of progress and the machine.¹³

From the beginning of the novel, Tomlinson's belief in the inevitability of World War I is apparent. The Boer War is almost a rehearsal for the Great War--soldiers die of fevers and military errors rather than from battle; a

¹²H. M. Tomlinson, All Our Yesterdays (London: William Heinemann, 1930), 138-39, 444-50, 521-28.

¹³Ibid., 1-8. 53.

newspaper reporter loses his job for printing the truth about a British general being ambushed, thus encouraging the enemy and undermining public confidence; an old bookseller's shop is destroyed because people believe him to be pro-Boer. And through it all the cycle expands--the need for more ships which means more money; the church's blessing of business's pursuit of more money; the ignorance of the statesmen and the generals as they prepare for a different war than the one they are fighting. The only concern about the Boer War shown by a member of the upper classes is when one shipyard owner expresses his fear that the war will reduce the surplus population and result in a shortage of labor.¹⁴

Shifting to part two, the novel's focus expands from England to Empire. The year is 1908 and the place is Africa where the European countries are playing secret, colonial games. Civilization, allied with science, has come to destroy the area; the goal is profit and gold. Imperialism will both destroy the native culture and increase the tensions and competition between the European powers. Part three describes the year 1914 as the crisis year--possible civil war in Ireland, the violence of the suffragettes, and the crisis in the Balkans. Out of the fast moving events

¹⁴ibid., 20, 54-57, 110, 129-30, 138-39,

comes what man has predestined through his past folly--a war.¹⁵

The first three parts establish the attitudes and desires which made war inevitable. Progress, which Tomlinson views as destructive rather than beneficial, results in business expansion and its inevitable consequences: the demand for colonies as markets, the need for an ever larger navy to protect the colonies, the demands on science for improved machines of conquest. All explode in a war which is fought with the aid of the new efficient machines of war created by science. It is a war rooted in the protection of business interests, as was the Boer War. It is a war which was inevitable.

The last two parts of the novel describe events of the war in France and England. Tomlinson not only dissects the war in the battle zone, he portrays the effects of the war on British civilians. He differs from the other war novelists in this study--he emphasizes the suffering of the entire British population, not just the citizen-soldiers.

Tomlinson's criticisms of the war are wide-ranging. Reports in newspapers are lies and half-truths. The generals and the politicians stay out of danger's way while sacrificing their men. Langham, the politician, announces that the men are having the time of their lives--a great

¹⁵Ibid., 212, 149, 165, 194.

adventure away from the factories and coal mines. They have no obligations--everything is provided for them including their funerals. The breakdown in morals is understandable as men snatch at life before their own lives end.¹⁶

In England, after the first enthusiasm, the public waits for victories; they do not understand the war of attrition in which the attackers and defenders suffer heavy casualties. On the home front, people are working long hours of overtime, yet workers are castigated for being lazy. The public suffers from poor food and Zeppelin attacks. Eventually they begin to suspect treachery. Left at home are the families broken by the war. A new mother dies of grief after hearing of her husband's death. The new-born infant is now an orphan. In the Bolt family, the two sons have been killed. Each parent knows about the death of one and keeps it secret from the other, fearing the pain that the knowledge will cause. Only the daughter knows that both are dead and she must deal with the situation alone.¹⁷

In describing the war, Tomlinson concentrates on its horrors and devastation. A Turk carrying a severed head, the dead thrown from their graves, the discovery that the firm foothold in the trench is a corpse's chest, a boy's

¹⁶Ibid., 321, 330, 337, 348-49, 447-48, 456.

¹⁷Ibid., 351-53, 357, 410-11, 463-64, 513-18.

face hanging out of a heap of trash--Tomlinson's examples are many, although they are buried in passages of exposition which lessens the effect. The catalogue of horrors is cumulative rather than immediately shocking. Additionally, he pictures the devastation of the land, the destruction and abandonment of villages, the corroding waste of machine parts, and of course the dead.¹⁸

This inventory of distress is the cumulation of prewar trends enumerated by Tomlinson in the first three parts. Science makes the war possible with its hideous weapons and its new and more deadly gases. In this age of machines, Tomlinson believes that the machines have taken over and enslaved men. These events are possible because of the increasingly powerful state. The war is fought for national honor and for the honor of God, but in the process, the church has been replaced by the state which has no morality but power.¹⁹

While Tomlinson's novel is about the war and the conditions which caused it, on a broader scale, it is a critique of the modern world of the twentieth century which developed out of the Victorian emphasis on business and science. It is an attack on Tomlinson's villain--progress. The Bolt family, a working-class family which abides by Victorian morality and accepts the prevailing beliefs in

¹⁸Ibid., 297, 336-7, 373, 400-402, 474, 489-96.

¹⁹Ibid., 296-97, 394, 446-47, 521-28.

Empire and patriotism, is destroyed by the war which is the logical result of its earlier beliefs. With a brush dipped heavily in melodrama, Tomlinson paints his portrait of the world which created the war and which is now being destroyed by the war.

When Tomlinson's novel appeared, it received mixed reviews. It is a long work with flat characters and endless exposition which lacks subtlety in its depiction of the evils of war. The reviewers praise Tomlinson's prose and mastery of the English language but consider it a failure as a novel.

L. P. Hartley in the Saturday Review compares All Our Yesterdays to War and Peace--Tomlinson's novel comes off badly. Hartley argues that Tolstoy's characters not only survive the collision with war but are enhanced by the experience. In present war novels such as Tomlinson's, however, "the war mutilates and nullifies personality." Tomlinson considers war the "negation of ordinary existence" and creates characters who, although they may show courage, are merely resigned to their fates. Hartley also points out that, although there are some excellent war scenes, some are designed mainly to make the flesh creep.²⁰

²⁰L. P. Hartley, review of All Our Yesterdays, by H. M. Tomlinson, in Saturday Review, 25 January 1930, 114-15.

The reviewer for the Spectator categorizes Tomlinson's war novel as part of "the present blast of war books." He argues that every war book, whatever its object, is really peace propaganda. Tomlinson attempts to deal with the crime which is war in a work which comes off as an essay rather than a novel. Unfortunately, although Tomlinson is a master of prose with some pages "worthy of Conrad," he fails both in his objective and in the creation of a novel.²¹

The reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement praises Tomlinson's novel as a "portentous" work written by a master of English prose with war scenes which rival in horror those of the German war writers. He also successfully depicts the machinery of war running away with those who set it in motion.²² This is definitely a review written by one who approves of the author's message.

Sylvia Lynd also praises Tomlinson's novel both for its description of the causes of war and for its expression of the tragedy of war. The strength of Tomlinson's work is his depiction of the heroism and "ironic resignation" with which its victims faced the war. While the realists overwhelm the public with the ugliness of war and the "petty and ferocious side of human nature," Tomlinson rights the

²¹Review of All Our Yesterdays, by H. M. Tomlinson, in Spectator, 25 January 1930, 136.

²²Review of All Our Yesterdays, by H. M. Tomlinson, in TLS, 23 January 1930, 59.

balance by depicting the pity and the terror of the war for those involved.²³

While the reviewers have mixed reactions to Tomlinson's depiction of the war, they have little to say about his analysis of the causes of the war--an analysis which occupies two-thirds of the novel. One can only speculate on the reasons. Perhaps they became so mired down in Tomlinson's style and great length, they lost sight of the early sections. Perhaps they considered that the experiences of the last war and the existence of the League of Nations would render a future war impossible. Or perhaps, during the flood of war books, attention naturally turned to the author's recounting of the war and the horror stories which were unveiled.

All Our Yesterdays is a novel written by a man who was in his forties when the war began and in his fifties when he wrote the novel; a man who was a close observer, a war correspondent, rather than a participant; a man born into a working-class family, thus escaping the inherent upper-class responsibilities which so troubled Sassoon. By the beginning of World War I he was already opposed to war. What he saw and experienced during the war did not destroy any youthful enthusiasms nor did it conflict with inherent

²³Sylvia Lynd, review of All Our Yesterdays, by H. M. Tomlinson, in Daily News and Westminster Gazette, 20 January 1930, 4.

beliefs. Instead the war confirmed and intensified the antiwar attitudes he already held.

In All Our Yesterdays, Tomlinson used the vehicle of fiction, although not very good fiction, to describe the horrors of the war he had seen and, even more importantly, to expose its causes with the hope of preventing future wars. In numerous articles and later in Mars His Idiot he pursued the same themes using his skills as an essayist. That his antiwar stand was sincere is not questioned; that it was intensified by rather than originated in his war experiences is indicated by the biographical data. The irony is that despite his sincerity, the escapades of Nazi Germany, and more especially of Hitler, on the European continent were enough to convince him that some wars were necessary and even to turn his pen to support the British war effort.

CHAPTER 8

THE OTHER RANKS: FREDERIC MANNING

Frederic Manning was born in Sydney, Australia in 1882 to parents of Irish Catholic descent. His father Sir William Patrick Manning, originally an accountant, had successfully carved out a career in finance and public service. Knighted in 1894, the elder Manning served four terms as Mayor of Sydney and several as a representative of South Sydney in the Legislative Assembly. His father's wealth allowed the adult Frederic to live the life of a gentleman of intellect supported as he was by an allowance and later a part-interest in a Queensland sheep-station run by a brother.¹

One of eight children, Frederic was the only one to suffer from asthma. Because of his delicate health, he was educated privately at home, except for six months attendance at the Sydney Grammar School. In 1898 at the age of fifteen

¹L. T. Hergenhan, "Frederic Manning: A Neglected Australian Writer," Quadrant 6, (Spring 1962): 5; Kaiser Haq, "Forgotten Fred: A Portrait of Frederic Manning," London Magazine ns 23 (December 1983/January 1984): 59. Additional biographical information may be found in L. T. Hergenhan, "Novelist at War: Frederic Manning's 'Her Privates We,'" Quadrant 14 (August 1970): 19-29; Percival Serle, ed., Dictionary of Australian Biography, vol. 2 (Sidney: Angus and Robertson, 1949), s.v. "Manning, Frederick;" and Christopher Cunneen, ed., Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 10 (Netley, South Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1986), s.v. "Manning, Frederick," by L. T. Hergenhan.

he went to England with his tutor Arthur Galton.² England would be his home for the remainder of his life, although he did return to Australia for two visits in 1924-25 and 1933-34 and traveled extensively on the European continent, especially in the postwar years.³

Manning lived in Edenham near the town of Bourne in Lincolnshire with his mentor Galton until Galton's death in 1921. Galton was probably responsible for Manning's classical education as well as for his acquaintance with Oxford. Through him Manning first entered literary circles. He later numbered among his friends and acquaintances Ezra Pound, William Butler Yeats, Max Beerbohm, the Sassoons, Richard Aldington, T. S. Eliot, and eventually T. E. Lawrence, an ardent admirer of Manning's prose⁴.

Manning's reputation as a writer largely rests on his two prose works: Scenes and Portraits, a collection of short stories published before the war (1909), and Her Privates We (1930), a war novel published first in a private unexpurgated edition in 1929 under the title The Middle Parts of Fortune. His other works include several volumes of poetry--The Vigil of Brunhilde (1907), Poems (1910), and

²Galton had come to Sydney in 1893 as private secretary to the Governor of New South Wales. A scholar and a man of letters, he converted briefly to Catholicism before returning to the Anglican fold and becoming a vicar.

³Haq, "Fred," 59, 74, 77.

⁴Hergenhan, "Novelist at War," 22; Hergenhan, "Neglected," 5; Haq, "Fred," 59-60.

Eidola (1917), which includes his war poetry some of which was written at the front--and an edition of Walter Charleton's Epicurus Morals (1926). From 1909 to 1914, he was the principal reviewer for the Spectator.⁵

A lifelong bachelor, Manning lived in the country with occasional trips to London during the prewar years. Politically well to the right, his Tory political views combined an anti-Royalist streak with a hatred of European democracies.⁶ Believing a war with Germany inevitable, he wrote in a 1912 letter that it was proper that the European democracies be "incited to despise and slaughter each other." He was prepared to spill his own blood in such a war as long as allowed the supreme satisfaction of "sticking a knife into the guts of a gor bellied German until the fat closed round the haft."⁷ It is ironic that the writer of such a blood-thirsty and anti-democratic statement before the Great War should write a war book described by his publisher and friend Peter Davies as a "profoundly democratic book."⁸

⁵Haq, "Fred," 5-7.

⁶Ibid., 58.

⁷Quoted in *ibid.*, 69.

⁸Peter Davies, Introduction to the 1943 edition, reprinted in Frederic Manning, Her Privates We, with an Introduction by Edmund Blunden, unexpurgated edition (n.p.: Piazza Press, 1929; reprint, London: Peter Davies, 1965), n.p.

Manning continued to suffer from ill health after the war, mainly from asthma.⁹ A restlessness seized him during the postwar years and he traveled frequently to Europe, moving back and forth between the continent and England, and living in Italy for a period. Reaction to the war, the death of Galton in 1921, and the search for a healthy climate contributed to his restlessness.

In February 1935 he died following a sudden attack of pneumonia. In an obituary for the Criterion, T. S. Eliot, the only writer present at the interment, described Manning's poor health and his fastidiousness as a writer. He had a "passion for perfection," spending much energy in rewriting and destroying what he had written. His publisher Peter Davies described Manning as an intellectual, poet, and classical scholar "delicate in health and fastidious almost to the point of foppishness."¹⁰ Yet this fastidious, asthmatic individual joined the infantry in 1915 and, despite his health, served a stint in the trenches in France.

⁹Richard Aldington contends that Manning suffered from tuberculosis contracted either before or during the war, although there is no additional evidence to support his contention. Richard Aldington, "Australian Revaluations: An Introduction to Frederic Manning." Australian Letters 2 (June 1959): 26.

¹⁰Hergenhan, "Neglected," 7; T. S. Eliot, Criterion 14 (April 1935): 436; Peter Davies, quoted in Hergenhan, "Novelist at War," 19.

In October 1915, the thirty-three-year-old Frederic Manning joined the King's Shropshire Light Infantry as a private.¹¹ In April 1916 he was sent to Oxford for officer training, but by June he was back in the regiment, still a private. Why remains an unanswered question. Manning contended he had not had sufficient experience of men to lead them, possibly alluding to his lack of school experience. He served in the ranks until the end of 1916 when he was wounded and returned to England. In the spring 1917 he was commissioned in the Royal Irish Regiment. Once commissioned, he was unable to get along with his fellow officers, although he had had no apparent problems with his fellow soldiers while serving in the ranks.¹² Already sensitive to the hardships of the common soldiers in training, he developed a sense of identity with them as a result of the shared hardships of trench life and found a comradeship among them which would serve as a focal point of his novel. His failure to develop a similar relationship

¹¹When Manning joined, the Derby scheme of recruitment was in effect. In a final effort to stave off conscription, Lord Derby, Director of Recruitment, requested all males of fighting age to register and certify their willingness to serve. Bachelors, such as Manning, would be called first-- as a result, a million bachelors did not register. Whether Manning did and was called up in October or whether he simply volunteered is unknown.

¹²Haq, "Fred," 69-70.

with his fellow officers may have resulted from his childhood: his health had prevented him from attending educational institutions where he would have learned the give-and-take of a schoolboy existence.

In the second week of August 1916 he was posted to France with the 7th Battalion of the King's Shropshire Light. He soon found himself in the midst of the ongoing Battle of the Somme. For the next few months, he was in and out of the trenches, at one point acting as a relay runner between the trenches and brigade and toward the end of the year serving in the Signals section of HQ company. At Christmas he received a blighty, i.e., a wound severe enough to get him sent to England.¹³ The nature of the wound not indicated.

Manning states that he was in the line from the second week in August in the area of Guillemont until some unspecified date, possibly 13 November, at Ancre. The 7th Battalion, having taken part in the Battle of Basentin Ridge on 14 July, had suffered heavy casualties--nine officers killed, seven wounded; 163 other ranks killed, 294 wounded. The survivors consisted of six officers and about 135 other ranks. After being relieved on 26 July, the battalion had been withdrawn into billets at Meaulte, a small village near Albert. It is probably at this point that Manning joined

¹³Ibid., 70; William Rothenstein, Men and Memories, vol. 2 (New York: Coward-McCann, 1931), 296.

the battalion. On 18 August it was ordered in support for an attack near Maltzhorn Farm, southeast of Montauban, and on the following day was detailed to take Lonely Trench. There were thirty-eight casualties. The battalion was withdrawn on 22 August.¹⁴

By 21 September, the battalion had moved to Reclinghem, fourteen miles south of St. Omer for two weeks rest and training. By 8 October it was at Maily in the vicinity of Albert where preparations were underway for the Battle of the Ancre, the concluding stage of the Battle of the Somme. Except for a week in the trenches, the battalion was not in combat until the opening of the Battle of the Ancre on 13 November.¹⁵

On the day of the battle, the 7th battalion was in support of the 1st Royal Scots Fusiliers whose objective was the capture of Serre, one of a chain of heavily fortified villages. After a heavy bombardment, the attack, scheduled to begin at 5:45, opened in heavy fog, total darkness, and deep mud. Not only was movement difficult, but by eleven, when the fog lifted, it was discovered that all units had gotten lost and were hopelessly mixed. The attack on Serre failed; casualties for the 7th battalion among the other

¹⁴Hergenhan, "Novelist at War," 23; Haq, "Fred," 70; W[alter] de B[urley] Wood, The History of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry in the Great War (London: Medici Society, 1925), 226-30.

¹⁵Wood, King's Shropshire, 230-31.

ranks were 214 men. Relieved on the 14th, the battalion marched back into the trenches for the night of 15/16 November, was withdrawn, and was back in the trenches on the 21st, alternating tours of duty with the Royal Scots in the Serre section until the end of December. Manning's novel ends with the assault on Serre and is told with the vividness of a participant.¹⁶

After convalescence Manning was commissioned and posted to the Royal Irish Regiment as a subaltern in May 1917. Sent to a reserve battalion at Tipperary, Ireland, which combined training drafts with policing duties, he was soon under arrest for insubordination to his CO. Shortly afterwards, he was placed on sick leave with a diagnosis of delayed shell-shock--a fear of loss of balance in open places. By the end of February 1918 he had resigned his commission.¹⁷

Although Manning had been knocked over by the concussion of a shell in late November, he attributed his problems to the stress of the last two years,¹⁸ stress probably exacerbated by his age and his health. The effects of fighting on the Somme and survival in the trenches affected adversely many a young healthy soldier; the effects

¹⁶Ibid., 231-33.

¹⁷Hergenhan, "Novelist at War," 24; Haq, "Fred," 70-71.

¹⁸Haq, "Fred," 70-71.

on a thirty-four year old asthmatic soldier who had lived a sheltered existence cushioned by wealth must have been overwhelming.

During his service as a private Manning was ever the observer, noting in a letter to William Rothenstein that the training "develops the brute in us but at the same time there is a curious inner reaction from the brute." In another letter to Rothenstein from France, he notes the animal patience in the weary faces of men coming down from the line. Although, during training, he often refers to his comrades as "they," making his observations as would an anthropologist analyzing primitive man, in his letters from the front the pronouns change as his plight merges with that of his fellow soldiers. Now he describes the misery of "our life . . . one to which no man should be condemned." Even out of the line they are condemned to sleep on barn floors, suffer from lice, and go weeks without baths, to say nothing of the dangers of the front when in the line.¹⁹ By now Manning had discovered that, although remaining separate from the other ranks by nature of his class and education, he was not only accepted by them, but had become a part of the group, a new experience for him.

The fastidious and once blood-thirsty Manning remarks in a letter to Rothenstein that he is "horribly dirty . . . but these are merely the inherent incidents of our life."

¹⁹Frederic Manning, quoted in Rothenstein, Men, 294-298.

He also notes, "We become more or less indifferent to what is going on about us, and to consider it all as tho' we were, in a sense, only spectators of an incredible madness: this, even while the same madness infects one's own blood." He concludes that "dirt, misery, and madness are the realities of war"--a change from the desire to spill his own blood after sinking his shaft into a fat German. Manning also acknowledges his acquaintance with fear "walking beside him like a living thing" as he makes several long walks nightly along a road which is continually shelled.²⁰

When finally convinced by his publisher Peter Davies to write a war novel, Manning chose to recount his period of service on the Somme and his experiences as one of the other ranks. A major theme of the novel is comradeship and the acceptance of the protagonist, like Manning of a higher social class, by those who were lower in the social strata and more ignorant of the world and learning. The bonds which develop between the protagonist and his fellow sufferers mirror Manning's own experiences.

In a letter written to William Rothenstein from the front, Manning announced that "I can't sort out and analyse my experiences yet--they're too immediate--tedium, and terror, then a kind of intoxication . . . we really deal not

²⁰Ibid., 296-97.

with the experience itself but with the traces of the experience." It would be a decade before Manning put his experiences on paper, despite the urgings of Peter Davies, his friend and publisher. Although Manning was a perfectionist who worked at a leisurely and unhurried pace when writing, Her Privates We was completed within six months. Davies insists that he lured Manning to London, shut him up in his flat, and refused to allow him out even to see his friends until the book was finished.²¹ Even if the story is true, such actions could only have been taken with Manning's concurrence.

The novel first appeared in a limited edition of 520 under the title The Middle Parts of Fortune which was printed privately by Davies in 1929. In January 1930 an anonymous one-volume expurgated version was published as Her Privates We by Private 19022, Manning's service number.²² In the first year the book went into six impressions. T.E. Lawrence, an admirer of Manning's earlier works, quickly penetrated his anonymity. Although it was not until 1943

²¹Frederic Manning, quoted in *ibid.*, 295; Hergenhan, "Neglected," 7, 12; Haq, "Fred," 75.

²²Frederic Manning, The Middle Parts of Fortune: Somme & Ancre, 1916, (Paris: Piazza Press, 1929; reprint, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977). In the text, the work will be referred to as Her Privates We, the title of the first popular edition. In the latter, some of the swearing was deleted, while some was altered. All page references are to this edition.

that the novel was published under Manning's name, his authorship soon became known.²³

The novel's epigraph, from which both titles derive, is a quotation from Shakespeare:

On fortune's cap we are not the very button. . . . Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors? . . . Faith, her privates we.²⁴

Each chapter is also introduced with a quotation from Shakespeare, usually something pertaining to war or the human condition. With a learned bawdiness, Manning places the soldier, the captive of fortune, as dwelling in fortune's private parts. With no control over their destinies, the "other ranks" are Fortune's privates, to live and die at her pleasure. The title underscores the fatalism which pervades Manning's novel, i.e., the knowledge that there is no escape, each man being the captive of fortune's decisions.

In Her Privates We Manning describes the fighting on the Somme from the viewpoint of the other ranks. Revolving around the character of Private Bourne, the novel is a study of the lower ranks, neglected in most war fiction which tends to concentrate on the subalterns, as well as a psychological study of the impact of war on individuals. Manning examines the experience of war as a part of the

²³Haq, "Fred," 75; Hergenhan, "Neglected," 6.

²⁴William Shakespeare, Hamlet, II.2.

fabric of human existence and of the thread of individual lives.

As Manning indicates in his preface, the novel depicts actual events on the Somme and Ancre fronts with periods behind the lines in the latter part of 1916.²⁵ Events in the novel parallel Manning's own experiences at the front. The movements of Bourne's company both at the front and behind the lines correspond to the movements of the 7th battalion. Bourne's assignments as a private, training in Signals and serving as a relay runner, parallel Manning's.

The protagonist Bourne is in some ways a mirror of Manning. Although his personal background is not indicated, Bourne is obviously better educated and of a higher social class than the other members of the ranks. Despite these differences, Bourne identifies with the other men, is accepted by them, and carves out a niche for himself among them. He prefers to remain in the ranks but is finally convinced to apply for a commission and is given the rank of lance-corporal without salary increase. Bourne is killed shortly after the Battle of Ancre before he can be sent to officer training. Manning was withdrawn after the battle because of injury and received a commission.

Despite the similarities, Bourne is not Manning. He lacks Manning's shyness, attaining his popularity with both the ranks and officers partially through his abilities as a

²⁵Manning, "Preface," in Privates, n.p.

scrounger. Although Manning attributes to his fictional character many of his own reactions and emotions, he remains detached. While based on Manning's war experiences, Her Privates We is not fictional autobiography. Even though the autobiographical element is clearly present, the novel is an analytical and structured, rather than a personalized, account of men at war.

Opening with the withdrawal of Bourne's company from battle, the novel accurately describes the apathy and stupor of men coming out of the line. Tracing the movements of the company from August to November 1916, Manning frames his narrative with two battles: the fight for Lonely Trench and the Battle of Ancre. In the remainder of the novel he describes the life of the ranks behind the lines: the frequent movement from camp to camp, the visits of the ranks to the bars and brothels, the unnecessary loss of life when men left standing on parade are killed by an artillery shell, the working parties and carrying parties which comprise the life of men behind the lines, the practices for the attack at Ancre, the preparations for battle, and finally the battle itself.²⁶ Although one of his comrades is killed and the other wounded during the battle, Bourne

²⁶Manning, Middle, 3-4, 54-55, 164-66. Manning would have joined the battalion in time to participate in the fight for Lonely Trench. The opening scene describes the aftermath.

himself survives only to be killed shortly after in a raiding party.

For Manning as for Bourne, war, one of the forces of nature, is "a peculiarly human activity"--a blind irrational movement of the collective will. In battle "only the instincts of the beast" survive amid the confusion and fear, while behind the line soldiers remain little more than savages--mere brutes sitting together hunting lice, covered with mud and dirt, unable to bathe for weeks at a time, finding animal pleasures in women and drink. War dissolves the veneer of civilization. Only the nocturnal beasts of prey hunting in packs remain. Primitive man surfaces. But despite the emergence of the brute, there is "a spiritual thing in them [the soldiers] which lived and seemed even to grow stronger, in the midst of beastliness." That human core, that gentle unselfish nature, is apparent as the members of the company try to help each other to recover their nerve after battle, to deal with the sorrow of a friend's death, to hide the dread and fear before going into battle, to refuse to pass by the wounded on the battlefield.²⁷ Despite the brutalization of soldiers in war, the men of the other ranks continue to succor each other.

On a more intimate level, a special bonding--comradeship--develops among Bourne, Shem, and Martlow. They

²⁷Ibid., "Preface," n.p., 8, 12-15, 39-40, 79, 108-09, 141, 146, 154, 205, 212-13.

all "muck in" together, sharing rations, duties, and quarters, brewing their own tea and sharing the booty of packages from home, defending each other's property, and drinking and feasting together. Comradeship takes the place of friendship, a bond of more stable conditions. Comrades may have nothing in common, as do friends, but are bound together by necessity for the duration of the war. If the war had ended, they would have parted with only vague memories. But in the unsettled conditions of war, the three men are bonded together by the past they share, a past often composed of trivial incidents, such as when Bourne stole food and used it to make stew for them.²⁸ But the comradeship which Manning so eloquently describes is itself shattered by the war. In the fighting on the Ancre, Martlow is killed and Shem is wounded. Only Bourne remains with the company and although he retains friends in the company, he has lost that more personal tie which both lends emotional support and physical succor.

In the final analysis, despite the spirit of community and support within the company, despite the close bond of comradeship, each man is alone, especially before and during battle when they prepare to face death. As Shem, Martlow, and Bourne prepare for battle, Shem wants them to stay together, but they realize that each must go alone, that

²⁸Ibid., 79-80, 196-97, 209, 232. For an elaboration of "Mucking-in" see Brophy, Long Trail, 151.

each is already alone with himself. And however important or well liked an individual, when he dies, the space he filled simply closes over.²⁹

Manning's novel is structured around opposites: the emergence of the brute opposed to the spiritual quality of caring; the support of comradeship in facing the miseries of war opposed to the realization on the eve of battle that each is alone. He poignantly describes both the human aspect of war and his own unique experience of the Great War. While other novelists attempt to place World War I in the context of human history, Manning places the war in the context of the human condition.

Although most of the reviews of Her Privates We are brief, they are also laudatory, praising the work for presenting a realistic and honest picture of the war and of the other ranks. The reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement commends the novel as "the best and honestest [sic] description of life in the ranks" and as a realistic view of both the atmosphere and the mode of life at the front and behind the lines. A. J. Cummings calls the novel a "tragically beautiful book, a real 'war book'" which, with its simple realism "burns its way deep into the mind and

²⁹Manning, Middle, 76, 149, 183-84, 209, 247.

memory." It is a moving epic of the lower ranks in which Bourne, although he curses things felt and seen, does not rail at his own fate.³⁰

Wearied by the deluge of war novels, L. P. Hartley condemns the genre for having added nothing to our knowledge of war. They have shown that war is not a rewarding subject. Her Privates We, however, is an exception. Unlike other war novels, the characters "remain in the memory." Although the life described is one of anguish it is nevertheless, unlike those portrayed by the German novelists, a life. This war novel rises above the others as "an illustration of man's general existence on earth, not just a diagram of one of his diseases."³¹

In the Spectator review, the novel is described as the "best portrayal of the English private" which has been written. Although the public is now satiated with war novels, he predicts that the work will become a classic. Unlike All Quiet on the Western Front which was written by an hysteric, this novel was written by a sane man.³²

³⁰Review of Her Privates We, by Frederic Manning, in TLS, 16 January 1930, 40; A. J. Cummings, review of Her Privates We, by Frederic Manning, in Daily News and Westminster Gazette, 17 January 1930, 4.

³¹L. P. Hartley, review of Her Privates We, by Frederic Manning, in Saturday Review, 8 February 1930, 172.

³²Review of Her Privates We, by Frederic Manning, in Spectator, 25 January 1930, 136.

In a long review for the London Mercury, Clennell Wilkinson decides that Her Privates We fills all the requirements for a book that will tell the truth about the war. It is fiction. It is written by a private. It is autobiographical. It is written with intellectual detachment. It is "the best thing of its kind up to date," giving us, for the first time, the viewpoint of the men in their own language. It is the "authentic voice of the Army" and more truthful than many war diaries.³³

It is paradoxical that Frederic Manning--a shy man, frail in health and scholarly in nature, an individual who was unable to enjoy the company of his peers while growing up because of his inability to attend school, a member of the upper classes--should be the writer who presents such a complete picture of the lower ranks. Although his letters reveal that he remained aware of his separateness, he nevertheless identified with the plight of those with whom he served. And why not? He also served as one of them.

Manning's portrait of the war and the ranks is a balanced, detailed picture presenting both the confusion and terror of battle along side everyday life behind the lines. The final image is not pretty or heroic, but neither is it strewn with unnecessary horrors. His depiction of the brute

³³Clennell Wilkinson, "The Real Thing", London Mercury 21 (February 1930): 338-42.

who emerges is balanced by showing the human core of caring which remains; his portrayal of comradeship is balanced by the aloneness with which each individual faces his fate. Nor is the war an evil trick played on the ranks by higher authorities; it is merely part of the natural order. Manning does not curse his fate or try to assess blame; instead he attempts to understand and describe.

CHAPTER 9

A COMMERCIAL VENTURE: HENRY WILLIAMSON

Born on 1 December 1895 in the borough of Lewisham, Henry Williamson grew up in London where he attended Colfi's Grammar School. A member of the lower middle class, he found work as a bank clerk, his father's occupation. Only eighteen years old when war was declared in August 1914, by November Williamson was a private serving in France with the 1st London Rifle Brigade (LRB).¹

The London Rifle Brigade, part of the territorial army, was at its annual training camp at Eastbourne on 3 August 1914; two days later it was mobilized. On 28 August the Brigade volunteered for foreign service, and recruitment began to bring its numbers to between eight hundred and a thousand.² By 5 November, the Brigade landed in France

¹Vinson, Great Writers, 1302; Kunitz, Authors, 1527-28; E.W. Martin, "Henry Williamson: The Power of the Dead," in Henry Williamson: The Man, the Writings: A Symposium, ed. Brocard Sewell, 85 (Padstow, Cornwall: Tabb House, 1980). Biographical materials on Henry Williamson are limited. There are no full length biographies, only entries in biographical dictionaries. For additional information see Henry Williamson's autobiography, The Sun in the Sands (London: Faber and Faber, 1945) which describes his life after the war with a few references to his service during World War I and Herbert Faulkner West, The Dreamer of Devon (London: Ulysses Press, 1932), a personal account of West's visit with Williamson.

²Members of the territorial forces were limited to service in England. On 19 August 1914, units were requested to volunteer for overseas service. See Ian Beckett, "The Territorial Force," in A Nation in Arms, ed. Beckett,

where it was attached to the 11th Infantry Brigade of the 4th Division. At first the territorials were put to work digging trenches, but by 20 November, they were manning the trenches along the line south of Messines and north of Armentières. The line was in the area of Ploegsteert Wood which was not cleared of Germans until 19 December. At first the LRB served as reserve troops for the Regulars, but soon it was defending its own portion of the line. By the end of November, its companies were moving regularly in and out of the front line. There were few casualties, but as the temperatures dropped, the rain changed to snow and the mud froze. Losses from frostbite, chills, and sickness increased.³

Williamson recalled the winter of 1914 in his autobiography--standing all day and two nights in water up to the tops of his thighs; lying on the frozen mud for two hours just forty yards from the German wire on his first listening patrol; nearly losing both feet to frostbite a few weeks later. But the event which made a lasting impression

131-33. In the LRB, eighty percent volunteered for foreign service. [Douglas Herbert Bell], A Soldier's Diary of the Great War, with an Introduction by Henry Williamson (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1929), 14-15. Williamson was either already a member of the LRB or an early volunteer. The second brigade was already being formed on 9 September 1914. J. B. M. Frederick. Lineage Book of the British Army: Mounted Corps and Infantry: 1660-1968 (Cornwallville, NY: Hope Farm Press, 1969), 130.

³Bell, Diary, 3-18, 51, 56, 61-64; [Aubrey Smith], Four Years on the Western Front (London: Odhams Press, 1922), 25.

on Williamson during his first months in France was the unofficial Christmas truce on the front lines. On Christmas Day along different parts of the line, the fighting simply stopped and the British and Germans, privates and officers, met in no-man's-land, talking, swapping souvenirs and tobacco, exchanging their dead, and helping each other with burials. The Germans across from the LRB were Saxons, some of whom had worked in England before the war. After that Christmas fraternization, which lasted for days, Williamson could never again view the Germans as the barbaric Huns of propaganda, but simply as men who called for their mothers as they lay dying. He dates his realization that the war was based on lies from the Christmas truce.⁴

Williamson served with the LRB until sometime in the spring of 1915. He was commissioned as a subaltern with the 10th Bedfordshire Regiment, serving in Flanders for the remainder of the war. He probably took some part in the Somme offensive of 1916, although when and in what actions are unknown, and was also involved in the April 1917 Battle of Arras which occurred shortly after the German withdrawal to the Hindenberg Line. Other battles in which he might have been involved are uncertain. In his writings Williamson alludes to the assaults on Bullecourt in April

⁴Williamson, Sun, 34-35, 246; Williamson, Introduction, in Bell, Diary, xii, xviii-xix; Bell, Diary, 79-81; E. W. Martin, "Henry Williamson: The Power of the Dead," in Symposium, ed. Sewell, 83.

and May 1917--fifteen assaults in three weeks--and to Passchendaele, but whether he was actually involved or merely read about them is unclear. Despite his intense interest in the war during the remainder of his life, Williamson was very reticent about describing his own service. He mentioned only a few occurrences in his non-fiction writings--an interesting omission from a man who was already collecting books on the war in the twenties and who would write several fictitious works on the war.⁵

When he returned from the war, Williamson was twenty-three years old, already grey-haired, and in bad health. During the war he had been temporarily blinded by mustard gas, but his sight had returned. For the first few postwar years he lived in London, working first for the Weekly Dispatch and later for the Daily Express, trying to live on his war pension plus the amount he received for a weekly article. Thrown out of the family home by his father, he began drinking heavily, spending the nights on the Thames embankment or on haystacks in nearby Kent. He collapsed and was taken unconscious to a hospital. Examination indicated irregular heartbeats attributed by the doctor to nervous strain following the war. Williamson, who had already begun

⁵Williamson, Sun, 20; Henry Williamson, The Wet Flanders Plain (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1929), 104; West, Dreamer, 11. When Williamson was dying, he talked mainly of the Somme. Ronald Duncan, Introduction, in Symposium, ed. Sewell, xiii.

work on a novel, left London in 1921 and settled in a cottage in Devon to write.⁶ He remained in the countryside for the rest of his life.

During the twenties, Williamson became a moderately successful author known for his nature studies, especially Tarka the Otter for which he received the Hawthornden Prize in 1928. He also published the novels of The Flax of Dreams (1921-1928), a four-volume autobiographical chronicle of life before and after the war. Although the protagonist serves in the infantry during World War I, the novels omit the actual war--the first two volumes lead up to the war; the final two treat the period immediately after the war. In 1929 he published The Wet Flanders Plain, the fictional diary of a soldier returning to visit the battlefields, and in 1930 his war novel The Patriot's Progress appeared.

Despite his reluctance to treat the war in The Flax of Dreams, Williamson himself was intensely interested in anything written about the war and collected a library of war books. Hanging over his fireplace was a helmet, riddled with holes with bits of hair and brown stains inside, which Williamson had picked up on a battlefield. He wrote short pieces about the war and war books but, even after the publication of The Patriot's Progress which was commissioned

⁶Williamson, Sun, 9-19; Kunitz, Authors, 1527-28; Kerstin Hegarty, "Henry," in Symposium, ed. Sewell, 12.

by a publisher, felt that he had not yet written his book about the war.⁷

During the thirties Williamson became enamoured of Adolf Hitler. Identifying with Hitler as a fellow soldier who, having experienced war, would try to prevent it in the future, he saw "someone who has perceived the root-causes of the war in the unfulfilled human ego, and is striving to create a new human-fulfilled world."⁸ He even persuaded himself that Hitler had been one of the soldiers with whom he had talked during the Christmas truce of 1914. A trip to Germany in 1935 further convinced Williamson that Hitler was the man of the future. Not only did Williamson join the British Union of Fascists, he dedicated a one volume edition of The Flax of Dreams to Hitler: "I salute the great man across the Rhine, whose life-symbol is the happy child." Because of his association with British fascism, Williamson was arrested in 1940 and briefly imprisoned.⁹

In the 1950s Williamson returned to the theme of World War I. His earlier reticence may be explained by his statement in 1929 that it was unnatural to try to recreate

⁷West, Dreamer, 8-9.

⁸Henry Williamson, quoted in J. Middleton Murray, Katherine Mansfield and Other Literary Studies, with a Foreward by T. S. Eliot (London: Constable, 1959), 126.

⁹Ibid., 124-29; Holger Klein, "Projections of Everyman: The Common Soldier in Franconi, Wiechert and Williamson," in First World War, ed. Klein, 89; Martin, "Power of the Dead," 100; Ruth Tomalin, "Patriot's Progress," in Symposium, ed. Sewell, 6-7.

periods of great distress.¹⁰ Now, from the distance of time, he described his own war experiences. In The Chronicles of Ancient Sunlight (1951-1969), Williamson wrote a twelve-volume series which treated life before, during, and after the war. Five of the novels are devoted to World War I.

Williamson had suffered both during and after World War I. It was an experience which preoccupied him throughout his life. But despite the horrors of the war, despite the effects on his health, he announced in a television interview a few years before his death in 1977 that he had enjoyed the war.¹¹ For better or for worse, World War I had been his greatest adventure.

In 1921 William Kermode, an Australian who had served on the Western front and had been with the tanks at Third Ypres, created a series of lino-cuts about the war. In 1928, J. C. Squire, then editor of the London Mercury, suggested that Williamson write a story around the lino-cuts. Williamson considered the pictures realistic in detail, though caricatures. After several meetings with Kermode, who agreed to omit some pictures and create some new ones, Williamson agreed to the project. After writing about one-third of The Patriot's Progress, he abandoned it

¹⁰Williamson, "Preface," in Bell, Diary, x.

¹¹Hugh Cecil, "Henry Williamson: Witness of the Great War," in Symposium, ed. Sewell, 76.

for a year and did not complete it until the end of 1929. In the interim he read some of the proofs of All Quiet on the Western Front, a book he found unrealistic. He also read the unexpurgated version of Manning's novel, a work which so impressed him that he gave the serial number after Bourne's, 19023, to his own protagonist.¹²

Williamson's novel was published in April 1930. The text was altered without Williamson's knowledge. Again the problem was language which had to be deleted or changed. The first edition of three thousand copies sold out and two reprintings occurred in the first year. The novel might have sold more copies, but by 1930 war books had glutted the market. The Patriot's Progress did, however, receive favorable reviews and was serialized in The Evening Standard.¹³

A number of factors determined the novel which emerged. Although Williamson was able to draw on his own experiences in France, he was constrained by having to write around Kermodé's lino-cuts. In later years, he even blamed

¹²I. Waveney Girvan, A Bibliography and a Critical Survey of the Works of Henry Williamson (Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire: Alcuin Press, 1931) 15, 46; Henry Williamson, Preface, in Henry Williamson, The Patriot's Progress (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1930; reprint, London: MacDonald, 1968), n.p.; Cecil, "Witness," 73-76. Williamson must have read the privately published unexpurgated edition which was published in 1929. The censored edition did not appear until 1930 after Williamson had completed his novel.

¹³Williamson, Preface, n.p.; Girvan, Bibliography, 15.

the project for having delayed his own war books which did not appear until the 1950s.¹⁴ Williamson was also influenced by Manning's novel and probably by some of the other war books in his personal library. The Patriot's Progress is, then, more artificial and consciously structured and less autobiographical than the other novels in this study.

The protagonist of The Patriot's Progress is John Bullock, a nineteen-year-old London bank clerk who, under the influence of atrocity stories, enlists after the German invasion of Belgium. Just as John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is the story of true Christian suffering and endurance, so The Patriot's Progress is the story of a true English patriot's suffering and endurance; just as Bunyan's protagonist is named Christian, so Williamson's is named John Bullock, deriving from the personification of England, John Bull. John Bullock is representative of the common soldier who out of patriotism served England during the war. To be certain that the reader does not miss the obvious, Williamson concludes the novel by having the now one-legged Bullock announce on the day the armistice is signed that "We [the soldiers] are England."¹⁵

¹⁴Cecil, "Witness," 73.

¹⁵Henry Williamson, The Patriot's Progress (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1930), 194. All subsequent references are to this edition.

The characters in the novel are as flat and two-dimensional as the lino-cuts. Bullock moves through the war, not as a person, but as the focus around which Williamson develops his chronicle of events. Other characters are little more than names or stock characters who appear and disappear after having served their purpose--the friend who is killed, the priest who comforts the wounded and dying. The character Bullock simply moves through the landscape of the training camps and the war, unchanging, displaying almost no emotion, increasingly miserable, but continuing doggedly to serve.

Although both Williamson and his character Bullock are bank clerks of similar age and were both early volunteers, Williamson was in France by fall 1914 while Bullock is not sent to France until fall 1916. The novel is structured, not around Williamson's war service, but around the dual requirements of the lino-cuts and the theme of true patriotism. In developing the novel, Williamson moves through the following sequence: civilian life, training camp, front-line duty, life behind the lines, attack, wound, return to civilian life. Using this framework, Williamson presents a slowly escalating picture of the increasing misery endured by the soldier because of both the military and the war. Each segment allows Williamson to describe some aspect of the soldier's war in greater detail--his

everyday life, the injustices, the indignities, the physical discomforts, and the horrors, dangers, and fears.

Bullock remains in training camp from the fall of 1914 until fall 1916. While in camp Bullock learns to hate the drill instructors and to drink and swear. He loses his privacy, is quartered in overcrowded tents, and has to build huts for the winter. With great excitement the draft leaves for France in September 1916 for the "Great Adventure." Bullock's first sights on landing in France are German prisoners, prostitutes, and the military police. After several weeks at the front in Flanders where Bullock adjusts to the routine and learns about wiring parties, rats, physical discomfort, and fear, his battalion moves to the Somme where conditions are worse. Bullock now sees the massive destruction of the earth, of villages, and of men and is plunged into the waste and chaos of modern warfare. In one incident a British company is shelled by its own artillery.¹⁶

In the fall 1917, Bullock has been sent to a battalion near Ypres where conditions make the Somme appear "cushy." The destruction is much greater and more devastating; the number of dead so numerous that they are not yet buried but lie scattered amid the litter of battle and carcasses of mules. Arriving just after Bullecourt, his fear grows when he learns of the heavy casualties while waiting in reserve

¹⁶Ibid., 14-20, 23-24, 28, 30, 40, 43-44, 98, 109.

during Messines. A victim of trench fever, he spends a month recuperating at Etaples, when a mutiny occurs. His miseries increase when, having drunk too much, he is late for parade and receives Field Punishment No. 1. He goes out with every working and carrying party, receives extra duty and, when not on duty, is tied to a guard-tent pole with his arms over his head. Punishment ends when the battalion moves to take up position for an attack (probably during Passchendaele). The battle scene which follows is a nightmare of darkness, mud, shelling, and unreality. Bullock, despite his fears, goes over the top, is wounded and lies in a shell crater for three days before he is found. His leg has to be amputated. After treatment at the aid station and the field hospital in France, Bullock is returned to a hospital in England.¹⁷

As his wound heals Bullock loses all interest in the war. Although he does not want to hear about it, he decides that it had not been so bad and knows he would not have wanted to miss it. The epilogue consists of a final linocut in which a one-legged man is working at his desk while his boss stands over him.¹⁸ Bullock, our guide, has come full circle and is back in civilian life at his old job.

¹⁷Ibid., 123-27, 147-53, 173, 179, 187. Williamson's description of the mutiny at Etaples, which occurred in September 1917, is exaggerated. Compare with the more accurate account of Gill, Unknown Army, 66-72.

¹⁸Williamson, Patriot's, 191-92, 195.

But by his war service, he has shown true patriotism through his quiet suffering while performing the task required of him.

One of the purposes of the novel is to show the daily life of the soldier in the ranks. In this Williamson succeeds, although, in providing the prose for Kermode's images of the soldier's existence, the result is somewhat disjointed, despite Bullock's presence as a unifying element. The question must also be raised of how much of the subject matter was Williamson's and how much Kermode's.

Williamson's more personal depiction of the increasing hopelessness of the average soldier is illustrated by the repeated use of the phrase "Roll on Duration," a reminder that the volunteers have committed themselves for three years service or the duration. By the Battle of the Somme, Bullock and others begin to fear that duration may mean seven years instead of three. By the attack on Passchendaele, hopes for the end of the war are gone and the slogan has become "Roll on, the attack."¹⁹

Williamson also reflects the soldier's attitude toward the Germans. From the time Bullock arrives in France his reaction toward them begins to change. He is impressed because the German prisoners are treated like other soldiers. They are no longer the dreadful Huns of the atrocity stories, but simply men who call for their mother

¹⁹Ibid., 28, 81, 94. 119, 153.

while lying wounded or who, as German prisoners, are glad to be out of the war. When he is wounded, German prisoners carry his stretcher from the field hospital to the ambulance and wish him luck as he leaves. The villainous enemy develops a human face in the course of the novel.²⁰

The soldier at the front knows little about the actual progress of the war--his information must come from newspapers, just as it does for civilians. Bullock's first letter to his parents from France is based on what he reads in the papers rather than first-hand knowledge. But Williamson also stresses the difference between the realities of the war and the printed journalistic reports. He juxtaposes the battle scene in which Bullock is wounded with a scene in which an Englishman, sitting comfortably in his home, is reading a newspaper article about a battle. Bullock, having endured the noise, confusion, and terrors of battle, is discovered alive after lying wounded in a shell crater for three days. The comfortable Englishman reads a stirring account of the battle in which the gallant English soldiers attack with cries of "No surrender!" and return from battle, wounded, dirty, and tired, but with confidence in their fighting ability; a wounded German prisoner,

²⁰Ibid., 49, 93, 180. That the German soldiers were not the evil Huns of the atrocity stories, but merely ordinary people like the British soldiers was an important point for Williamson. It was an argument over this issue which caused his father to throw him out of the house after the war. See Williamson, Sun, 9-10.

realizing that all is lost, admits that the English are too good.²¹

By the time The Patriot's Progress was published in 1930, public interest in war books was diminishing. The reviews of the novel were complimentary, but brief. In the Saturday Review, the novel is praised, in a one-paragraph review, for presenting a true picture of what the war meant to the individual. While squeamish individuals may find some portions disgusting, disgusting things did happen. In another one-paragraph review, the writer for the Spectator praises the novel as "one of the best of the British war books", one which avoids both sentiment and propaganda in describing the gradual demoralization of John Bullock in "well-balanced, detached passages." The novel should do more to delay the revival of the romantic view of war than the semi-hysterical volumes of the All Quiet school.²²

A slightly longer (two paragraphs) and more critical review appeared in the Times Literary Supplement. Reflecting on the public satiation with war books, the reviewer notes that no longer will anyone be shocked or excited by this type of novel. The public has shown signs

²¹Williamson, Patriot's, 46, 182-83.

²²Review of The Patriot's Progress, by Henry Williamson, in Saturday Review, 19 July 1930, 92; review of The Patriot's Progress, by Henry Williamson, in Spectator, 14 July 1930, 981.

of having had enough, although Williamson's reputation may carry the work. Williamson's sincerity and passionate conviction in showing where patriotism leads its followers is not questioned. However, "he has gone over ground already traversed a hundred times" even though he has done as well as any man could with the subject.²³

The Patriot's Progress was conceived as a commercial package--a novel to be written around William Kermodé's lino-cuts of the war. As such, it is not Williamson's personal account of the war, but rather a work conceived in terms of allegory. Based on Pilgrim's Progress, Williamson argues that the price of patriotism is suffering. The true patriots in England during World War I, those who simply endured, were the common soldiers. Although structured around Kermodé's illustrations, the novel does reveal the nightmarish qualities Williamson saw in the war, reflecting his own experiences. His personal novels about the war would come later. In this work his concern is to present the agonies of this war in the hopes of preventing another.

²³Review of The Patriot's Progress, by Henry Williamson, in TLS, 5 June 1930, 472.

CHAPTER 10

THE WAR NOVELS: IMPACT AND INTERPRETATION

Seen from the perspective of the nineteen-eighties with the images of two world wars, the Holocaust, nuclear bombs, Vietnam, and race riots imprinted in brain and memory by film footage and television broadcasts, the picture of war presented in the war novels appears neither shocking nor grotesque. But for the generation which survived World War I and decided to write about the experience of war, these more recent events were not only far outside their daily experience, but beyond their mental imaginings. They groped for words, images, and metaphors to explain. Using the structure of fiction to give some coherent form to their memories, the war novelists selected those aspects of their experience which seemed to be the most important--and at the same time the most compelling and illustrative--in their attempts to tell the truth about the war. Their critics were right in one respect--the novels are expressions of individual experience. By publishing their personal retellings of the war, their accounts fed into the public consciousness, helping mold the image of the war which was forming in its aftermath.

A multiplicity of factors determined the novels which resulted. Each author's social and economic class, inherited value systems, age at the time of the conflict,

reasons for joining the army, battle experience--all impacted the type of novel each wrote and the elements of warfare each chose to stress.

The authors of the novels are predominantly middle class. Tomlinson, originally of working class origin, was an established journalist by the beginning of the war. Aldington, Williamson, and Mottram came from families of the lower middle class while Ford, an established writer moving in artistic and literary circles, falls in the mid-range. Herbert came from an upper-middle-class family. Sassoon and Manning had family associations which extended to the country gentry and nobility, and they were situated closer to the upper classes.

Sassoon identifies with the value structure of the country gentleman, an attachment which may have been intensified by his non-English paternal heritage. Even when the ingrained ideals of patriotism, service to his country, courage, and duty collided with the reality of a war he could no longer endure, Sassoon sought a course of action which would not conflict with his inherited value structure. He considered his public protest against the war along with his refusal to return to the fighting in France a courageous and heroic act. Herbert vented his outrage against the war by attacking a specific injustice--the field court-martial system--and in the process, gave a new meaning to the definition of bravery. But it is evident in his

reminiscences about his World War II service that for him the old value system survived intact--war remained a glorious adventure. Among those in the upper middle class, only Manning escaped the bondage of class values, an escape which may be attributable to his Australian birth and upbringing.

The writers in the mid-level of the middle class rebelled against that class and its values. Ford and Aldington use their war experiences to attack middle-class British society while Tomlinson examines Victorian society for the flaws which led to the war. In this group, only Mottram analyzed the war without an anti-middle-class bias.

The novels are highly autobiographical, closely reflecting each writer's actual war service. Sassoon's is the most obviously autobiographical; it is, in effect, memoir thinly disguised as fiction. In Herbert's novel, his protagonist's military career mirrors his own war service. Mottram's also contains a large element of autobiography, although he combines personal experience with detached observations about the war. Ford's trilogy mixes autobiography and fiction to portray an idealized self-image. Aldington, Williamson, Manning, and Tomlinson also apparently include autobiographical information, although the extent is difficult to gauge because of the scarcity of documented evidence of their personal war activities and their own reluctance to discuss it. The war novels are

based on individual war experience and reflect the individual reaction to that experience.

All but two of the novelists began the war in the lower ranks. The exceptions are Tomlinson, who remained a civilian, and Ford, who was commissioned a second lieutenant when he joined. Sassoon, Herbert, and Mottram were promoted to officer rank before becoming involved in the fighting. Manning, Aldington, and Williamson saw their first service at the front as privates. All eventually received commissions. Most of the novels reflect the biographical facts of individual rank and promotion. Only Manning, Aldington, and Williamson present the war from a private's viewpoint, although Aldington's protagonist eventually receives officer rank. Manning's and Williamson's heroes remain privates throughout their novels. The other works interpret the war from a subaltern's outlook, again reflecting an essentially middle-class view of the war.

Age at the time of the war is also a factor. Generally, the older the soldier, the more capable he was of putting his experience into a larger perspective. In their novels, Ford and Tomlinson, both in their forties during the war, place their experience in an historic context. Manning and Mottram, both in their thirties, viewed the war from a philosophic perspective. The younger novelists, Aldington, Herbert, and Sassoon, all in their mid-twenties, wrote about the war in more emotional and personal terms. For

Sassoon, the war became an obsession to which he returned repeatedly throughout his life. The same is true for Williamson, at eighteen the youngest of the writers when shipped to France. It is as if the latter two writers remained unable to incorporate their war experience into their lives and were continually doomed to return to it.

The novelists, with the exception of the civilian Tomlinson, had different motivations in joining the military. Herbert and Sassoon volunteered at the beginning of the war, being partially moved by patriotism. So was Ford who, however, waited a year before enlisting. But Herbert also joined because he believed that England was fighting for a just cause. Sassoon, on the other hand, was bored with his present life and frustrated at his failure to receive recognition as a poet. Ford sought escape from personal problems and a faltering writing career. Williamson does not reveal his reasons for enlistment, although he was either already a member of the territorials or joined as soon as war was declared. Mottram, despite his depression at the regimentation which would follow, enlisted only after some investigation. Possibly he was moved by a sense of duty or perhaps by a feeling of inevitability. Manning and Aldington did not become part of the army until later--Manning in October 1915, a few months after Ford, and Aldington not until June 1916. Whether Manning volunteered or was "deemed to have volunteered"

under Lord Derby's scheme is unclear. Aldington was almost certainly conscripted. Except then for Herbert and Sassoon, and possibly Williamson, the war novelists did not enlist immediately in a burst of patriotic fervor, but either after some consideration or because it was inevitable. If their writings indicated disenchantment, it was with the actuality of the war rather than any false sense of patriotism or enthusiasm for warfare.

Although the length of service and the battles in which the novelists were involved varied, the war was harsh and psychologically grueling for each. All took part in the Somme offensive except Aldington, who arrived in France later. The war was especially agonizing and intense for Williamson, Herbert, and Sassoon. Williamson fought the longest, serving in the trenches in northern France and Flanders from November 1914 until the end of the war. Herbert embarked for Gallipoli in May 1915 and fought in the trenches both there and in France until wounded in April 1917. The fighting in Gallipoli was intense and made worse by the climate, the flies, the constant dysentery, and the fevers. In France, Herbert's battalion was almost completely wiped out in fighting near Beaucourt during the Somme offensive. Sassoon, despite his early enlistment, did not arrive in France until November 1915. He served with two elite fighting battalions--the First and Second Battalions of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. They allowed no

quiet sectors where they served; instead patrols and later raiding and bombing parties were the rule. Sassoon, despite his war protest and periods in the hospital, remained actively in and out of the war until wounded in the head in July 1918. That these three men wrote war novels which stressed the fighting in the trenches and the effect on the individual soldier is not surprising.

Although the war was shorter for the others, each also underwent periods of extreme psychological stress. Mottram's trauma in the Somme was so great that he lost all memory of his involvement in that engagement. Manning was initiated into trench warfare during the Battle of the Somme and was involved in the fighting at Ancre. An asthmatic, the effects of living in the trenches must have increased his suffering. Ford, not allowed to serve in the front lines because of his age, remained with the support units, yet he suffered one nervous collapse after another during his period of active service from July 1916 to February 1917. In his forties and having already suffered one nervous breakdown, Ford was unable to deal with the reality of the war for which he had volunteered. Aldington did not arrive in France until December 1916 but served until after the armistice. An unwilling soldier, he was certain that he would be killed, telling his wife during each leave that it would be his last. Tomlinson was not actively involved in the fighting, but reported on the active sectors of the war.

Military life did not consist of constant fighting. Active duty was interrupted by leave, additional training, and often convalescence. Additionally, battalions rotated on a regular basis between the front lines, support, and rest, although rest is a misnomer since it normally meant working and carrying parties to the front lines. Periodically the battalions were withdrawn with the division for rest and recreation. However, even when an individual was away from the front, the knowledge that he must return to the trenches remained. Sassoon talks about the increasing difficulty of returning to France after each leave. Psychological stress did not end simply because one was away from the front.

All of the writers, with the exception of the civilian Tomlinson, suffered from the symptoms of shell-shock either during or after the war. Sassoon and Manning were officially diagnosed. Aldington and Williamson were suffering from shell-shock when they were discharged. Ford continually collapsed from nerves during his service in France. Mottram discovered himself in the hospital with no memory of the previous few weeks on the Somme. Herbert showed all the symptoms of shell-shock during and after his service in France. In a war which played havoc on men's nerves, all the novelists suffered disproportionately--or perhaps it was the intensity of their war and its affect on them which precipitated their novels.

Their middle-class upbringing intensified their immediate reactions to the physical deprivations of trench warfare. The change from comfortable surroundings to a life in the mud of the trenches which were populated by rats and lice, a life in which baths were rare and the diet uncertain, was unlike anything in their experience. Adapting to the physical conditions of life in the trenches was the first adjustment. Reconciling themselves to the noise and stress of shelling, the scenes of death and destruction, and the fears of their own death was the next.

The war novelists were not shirkers or cowards, but simply transplanted civilians trying to deal with a situation outside their normal experience, one for which they had no preparation. They were not men who joined in a burst of patriotic enthusiasm or idealism only to be disillusioned later. Even Ford, who collapsed periodically, tried to do his part and continue serving; even Aldington, who went unwillingly, did not desert. That they did not enjoy the experience or continue to find it a great adventure is no reason to question their integrity. They were simply men, quite ordinary middle-class individuals, who, in the aftermath of war, were trying to analyze and come to terms with their war experience and who were sufficiently articulate to write about it.

Although each writer's war was different, common elements of interpretation and selection emerge. Despite being castigated by their critics in 1930 for only presenting the dark side of the war, they also pictured daily life in the trenches, behind the lines, and on leave. Mottram describes divisional rest with its games and entertainments. Herbert enjoys recounting the use of a dummy in a front trench to trick the Germans. Sassoon pictures horseback rides through the French countryside and restaurant meals in French towns. Manning stresses the benefits of comradeship and looks at life in billets in French villages. The language of the soldier and the food he ate, the military routine, moments of relaxation--all are part of the experience of war and duly appear in most of the works. The baser aspects of the war are not ignored--Aldington, Tomlinson, and, to some extent, Williamson concentrated on the war's brutal aspects, but the accounts are more balanced than the 1930 critics wanted to admit.

The war's effect on the individual soldier is a constant theme. Middle-class morality did not survive the transition to France and the strains of warfare. Mottram depicts the swearing, drinking, visits to prostitutes, and stealing and scrounging which replace middle-class virtues. Similar portrayals appear in Manning, Williamson, Aldington,

and Tomlinson. Aldington and Manning both depict the transformation of the individual into an animal or primitive brute. Aldington stresses the impact of physical conditions in the process; Manning balances his image of the brute by showing the soldier's caring concern toward his comrades.

The disintegration, or even the destruction, of the individual appears in most of the novels. Herbert's Penrose, Sassoon's Sherston, Aldington's Winterbourne, Tomlinson's Charlie Bolt, Williamson's Bullock, Manning's Bourne--all reflect the disintegration of their personalities under the stress of war. Some suffer from shell-shock--Penrose, Sherston, and Winterbourne. Many die--Penrose is sentenced to death; Winterbourne commits suicide by standing during machine gun fire; Bolt and Bourne are killed in battle. The fate of their protagonists reflects what was happening all around the novelists during the war. Death surrounded them and many schoolmates, friends, and comrades died. It is part of their war experience.

Balancing the image of disintegration is the redefinition of courage and heroism. The romantic hero, willing to sacrifice his life for his men and his country, acting with bravery and courage whatever the circumstances, never allowing a sliver of fear or doubt to invade his mind--this man does not exist in the war novels. True courage is fighting against one's own fears--Herbert's secret battle--while continuing to serve. The hero of World War I is

bombarded by fears. He may question the war and why it is necessary. He is often suffering from shell-shock, yet continues to meet his responsibilities and does what is required, whether it is joining a carrying party during heavy artillery bombardment, going over the top, or just returning to the trenches. Even if he fails, as does Penrose, it is only momentary--his courage has already been proven. Herbert is the first to redefine bravery in this manner, but similar portrayals are found in the novels of Sassoon, Ford, Manning, and even in Aldington and Williamson.

Many of the novelists sought a scapegoat for their miseries and found it in the government and in the higher echelons of the army command. They, the soldiers, were doing their duty; that the war continued endlessly and their friends and comrades continued to die, could not then be their fault. Blame must lie with self-serving politicians who, in alliance with the industrial magnates, wanted to expand British control of foreign markets and increase industrial profits. Blame must be shared by the Army High Command and its staff who, while remaining safely behind the lines and in total ignorance of front line conditions, order men to their deaths. The stay-at-home civilians are resented for supporting the continuation of the war so they can continue to earn high wages and profiteer from the war

industries. Only Tomlinson and Mottram develop a sympathetic picture of their suffering.

Some of the novelists combine their search for a scapegoat with an attack on British society. Ford and Aldington, while blaming prewar society and the government for both causing the war and for its continuation, attack every aspect of the British class structure and moral code. Tomlinson investigates Victorian society in a search for causes of the war. Herbert, however, focuses on a single injustice--the court-martial and death sentence of an officer for cowardice. Sassoon, on the other hand, looks back on prewar society with nostalgia.

Automatically labeling all the war novels as antiwar propaganda is misleading and simplistic. Many obviously were--those by Williamson and Tomlinson, for example. The writings of Aldington and Sassoon also fall into that category, although other motivations were involved. But where to place Manning, Ford, Mottram, and Herbert? Herbert would have argued that he was writing about a particular injustice, not the war itself. Manning and Mottram, with their belief in war as natural phenomena, would have considered such an exercise futile. Ford, although stating his antiwar bias, concentrated too much on other aspects of British society to be believable. Instead these individuals were attempting to describe the war realistically. That the images were not pretty, that death occurred frequently, that

courage did not remain constant, is part of the reality. That the critics labeled them antiwar is understandable since, despite their own knowledge of the war, they insisted on clinging to the exact romantic notions of heroism and sacrifice which the novelists were attacking. But to argue that merely because the novels were realistic, they were thus antiwar is nonsense.

Writing the war novel served as catharsis for some authors, especially Herbert and Sassoon. Written in a short period in 1917 while at home on medical leave, Herbert's novel is an outpouring of his experiences in Gallipoli and France. Written by a man who knows he must return to the war, his definition of bravery and his awareness that each man may break reveals a common mental state described in the shell-shock literature which appeared after the war. For Sassoon, writing the Sherston trilogy was a means not only of dealing with his war experience, but also of structuring his actions in a manner acceptable to his personal code. It is as if he were reliving his experiences in order to find meaning. Aldington also experienced some cathartic value and, after writing the novel, could turn to other subjects for his prose. Williamson, on the other hand, who wrote his war novel as part of a commercial package, blamed the endeavor for delaying his own war novels until the 1950s.

Manning and Mottram concentrated on trying to make sense of the war and found their answer in the structure of

the universe and in human nature. From their viewpoint, wars were an inevitable part of the human condition. Both tie their war to those of the past--Manning through quotations from Shakespeare and Mottram through quotations of old military songs.

The war novels are as varied as their writers, written for different reasons to provide descriptions of individual experiences. While the novels of Sassoon, Aldington, and Williamson may be portrayals of disillusionment growing out of the difference between the expectation and the reality, that is not the primary theme. As is so often the case, generalizations applied to an entire category do not hold up under scrutiny.

Despite the extremely vocal critics of the war books in 1930, book reviews of the novels tended to be favorable. When criticism was leveled, the reason usually lay outside the depiction of the war. Aldington was castigated for his vitriolic attack on the British middle class, while Ford was taken to task for his literary style. But the realistic portrayal of the war, even in the cases of Ford and Aldington, was praised.

Sales of the books were uneven. Herbert's sold poorly in 1919 when it first appeared, although a reprint in 1929 sold well. Perhaps sales were few because the book was not well advertised, but perhaps the British public was not yet

interested in a realistic and critical assessment of the war. Although Ford's trilogy sold poorly in Britain, Mottram's, published in the same years, sold well enough to allow him to quit his job and support himself as a professional writer. Sassoon's two novels also had high sales. The first novel, however, was reviewed as a sporting book rather than a war book. The last sections which dealt with World War I were generally ignored in the book reviews. Sassoon's second volume, published in 1930 was even serialized in the Daily Telegraph. Publication figures for the other novels of the 1928-30 period--those of Aldington, Tomlinson, Williamson, and Manning--also indicate public interest.

Chronologically, the war novels of the twenties appear to be a slow unveiling of the realities of World War I. In 1919, the public was not yet interested in Herbert's realistic picture of the war which included occasional vivid descriptions of the horrors of trench warfare. Nor did they buy Ford's literary trilogy. But Mottram's works, which also reveal the ugliness of the war, achieved some success. His novels, however, were not as graphic as those of the 1928-30 period and were written with greater detachment. He may also have gained an early following because of the successful first volume which sympathetically portrayed the civilian side of the war.

The novels of the 1928-30 period, with the exception of Manning's, are more emotional than the earlier ones. The first volume of Sassoon's trilogy introduces the public to a realistic view of the war. In the second volume, he describes the agony of the serving soldier. Aldington and Williamson stress the terrors of service at the front and the way in which the war destroys the individual. Even Manning depicts the emergence of the beast in man during war and ends his novel with the death of the protagonist. Tomlinson includes vivid descriptions of the grotesque and expands the subject matter to include the sufferings of civilians as well as soldiers. The novels of Aldington and Tomlinson are out of control and descend to the level of melodrama, occasionally even bathos.

It is obvious that as the decade progressed, culminating in the war book years of 1928-30, the novels become more graphic and emotional and shift from realism to a super-realism of emotion and sometimes antiwar propaganda. The bitterness which appears in some of the later ones is aimed, not just at the war, but at British society and the government. The highly graphic depiction of warfare on the Western front which appears in the later novels was not, however, totally new. Realistic descriptions of the fighting, of the grotesque manners of dying, and of the terrifying aspects of the war had already appeared in some

of the reminiscences and regimental histories which had been published by the mid-decade.

Based on individual experience, the war novels mirror the shock of the middle-class soldier at the war he was expected to fight in France--not because he had enlisted under the influence of patriotic idealism, but because he was unprepared for the type of conflict which evolved in World War I. Most of the civilian-soldier authors endured periods of active and highly stressful fighting; most were involved in the Battle of the Somme; most suffered at some point from shell-shock. Reflections of their individual wars emerge in the novels. Public acceptance of their personal memories of the war is indicated by the reviews and sales of their novels.

The civilian-soldier of World War I found himself plunged into the abyss of war--a war beyond his prewar imaginings. A small number, mainly from the middle class, drew upon their personal memories and presented their remembrances to the public in fictional form. Their images of the war--developed in an attempt to put into words what they had experienced--fed into the public consciousness. Public interest in the war, never dormant in the twenties, intensified in the 1928-30 period. Despite the attacks of the war book critics, general public reaction to the novels indicated a willingness to consider what the novelists had

to say. A study of the novels elucidates the impact of the war experience on the individual, illustrates public acceptance, or at least public consideration, of what each had to say, and grounds the imagery of the lost generation in the experience itself.

CHAPTER 11

WAR NOVELS AND CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

The British war novels provide excellent documentary material for classroom instruction. As this study demonstrates, the novels all contain elements of autobiography and are based on the war experiences of the writers. They provide the reader with both descriptions of the war which emphasize the human element and demonstrations of the effects of the war on individuals. The authors of a recently-published readings book for Western civilization include excerpts from World War I novels, stating that literature is "a valuable source for the student of history in understanding the past." But assessment of the novel requires an awareness of the political and social background of the author and a knowledge of whether the work is based on actual experience¹--the same requirements for assessing any historic document or even scholarly work. This study provides one model for assessing the war novels and establishes a base of information to aid the classroom instructor in using the novel as instructional material.

¹Wiesner, Merry E., Julius R. Ruff, and William Bruce Wheeler, Discovering the Western Past: A Look at the Evidence, Vol. 2: Since 1650 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1989), 246..

In the spring semester of 1987 the students in my American history survey course were required to read an American war novel--Thomas Boyd's Through the Wheat. Boyd served with the American Marines in France and participated in the battles of Belleau Wood, Soissons, and St. Mihiel before being put out of action by a gas shell at Blanc Mont. He received the Croix de Guerre and was discharged from the Marines in July 1919. His first published work, the war novel Through the Wheat, appeared in 1923. Autobiographical in nature, the novel recounts the experiences of Private William Hicks, a Marine with the American Expeditionary Forces in France. Boyd describes the daily routine of the American soldier and includes some graphic battle scenes. In the course of the novel, Hicks is destroyed by the war, a victim of shell-shock, but one who remains untreated and stays in the line. The novel ends melodramatically with the shell-shocked Hicks walking upright across the open field in range of the German guns to retrieve his rifle. Boyd concludes the novel with the statement, "The soul of Hicks was numb."²

²Thomas Boyd, Through the Wheat (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923; reprint, Lost American Fiction, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, n.d.). The work was labeled an antiwar novel when it appeared, an impression Boyd attempted to correct two years later in his introduction to a collection of short stories about the war. Having noted that the

Students were required to write a critical book review of the novel from an historic rather than literary perspective. They were given a brief biography of Boyd and also referred to published book reviews as an introduction to reactions to the novel. A three-hundred-word summary of one review was required. Their own review of the novel was to include a summary; an analysis of the depiction of the war, the war's effect on the individual, and the influence of Boyd's own war experiences; and an assessment of the work's strengths and weaknesses.

Most of the students who read the novel were enthusiastic about the work, but surprised at what the war had been like for the soldier at the front. Several noted that Hicks was neither a hero nor a superhero, according to the Sylvester Stallone or Chuck Norris model, but simply an average individual. Most discussed the effect of the war on Hicks, who originally dreamed of performing heroic deeds, but who ultimately simply struggled to survive. Some noted the repetitious nature of the work but wondered if that might not illustrate the monotony of war. Several pointed

material for Through the Wheat was selected from his experiences in France, he indicated that this work, based on the "mass of human happenings [which] remained unused," was intended to "correct the impression that I, as an author, hate war." Thomas Boyd, Points of Honor (N.p: 1925; reprint, Short Story Index Reprint Series, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), viii.

out that the novel presented the war from the viewpoint of only one individual.

Having read the novel and been required to analyze it critically, students obtained several insights: (1) an awareness of the daily life of the soldier combined with a first-hand personal description of what the war was like for the individual rather than a formal recitation of battles and weaponry; (2) an example of the psychological stresses of trench warfare and a case study in the development of shell-shock; (3) an awareness of the past as different; (4) a sampling of reactions to the war in the past based on the novel and the book review. The student also gained limited experience in the evaluation of sources. And perhaps most important, the assignment was designed to stimulate critical analysis based on background knowledge and class discussion of the war.

Boyd's novel was selected for the United States history course because its depiction of a soldier's daily life, its descriptions of battle conditions, and its illustration of shell-shock were deemed both important and suitable to the educational aims of a survey history course. The British war novels can be used with similar effectiveness in Western civilization or an upper division European or military history course. Although most of the British novels are suitable for classroom use, the course

level must be considered in the selection process. Depending on the instructional goals, any of the novels could be effectively used in upper division or graduate courses, but only a few--those by Manning, Herbert, Sassoon, and Mottram--in a survey course. The first consideration in novel selection, then, must be the level of the course. Next the instructor must determine the purpose within the instructional module and the informational guides necessary to enhance student understanding.

Purpose will be determined by the novel's function within the unit structure. Each war novel delineates the impact of the war on the individual soldier, a major consideration for use in courses of all levels. But what other aspects of the war will the novel illustrate? Are the students to read and analyze the novel as a depiction of the experience of war from the soldier's viewpoint and if so, from the outlook of an officer or a private? Is an overview of the war desired or a more intense concentration on one aspect of the war? Perhaps the novel is to serve as an example of antiwar propaganda or more broadly as an exemplification of anti-bourgeois literature which appeared in the postwar period.

In survey courses, novels which emphasize the soldier's everyday life both in battle and during rest periods are most suitable. Manning's novel is an excellent choice to detail the daily life of the ordinary soldier in

the ranks, as well as the hazards and confusions of battle for the infantryman. Additional themes to be considered are those of comradeship and the recurring nature of warfare as part of human history. A brief description, perhaps a selection from a military memoir of the Napoleonic era, might be useful for comparative purposes. The student might be asked to compare the soldier's attitude toward war during that period and World War I and to compare the impact on the soldiers of those two massive struggles.

Mottram's novels, especially Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four!, are also suitable for use in a survey course. In addition to examining life from the officer's purvey, the novel presents an overview of the war and its changing nature as the BEF evolves from regular army to volunteer army to conscript army. Organizational developments and changes within the British army are themes which should be stressed; background should be provided in class lecture or assigned articles. Also a believer in war as part of the natural cycle, Mottram ties the present war to those of the past through citations of soldier's songs from earlier wars. A selection of army songs from past wars could be used to develop a class discussion on the war as seen by the soldiers of the lower ranks. Do the attitudes of the soldiers change from war to war? What do the songs reveal

about the impact of conflict on the infantryman during the preceding centuries?

Other suitable choices for a survey course because of their descriptions of daily life are the novels of Herbert and Sassoon, both of whom describe the war from the upper ranks. Herbert chronicles trench warfare in two theaters--Gallipoli and the Western front. He also outlines the development of shell-shock in the British soldier and describes the British court-martial system. Students might be asked to compare fighting on the two fronts; to discuss the stress of World War I in terms of shell-shock, perhaps listing those aspects of the war which caused the greatest mental stress; and to analyze the court-martial system against the background of battle conditions, inquiring whether such stringent measures were necessary.

In Memoirs of an Infantry Officer, Sassoon presents the daily life of the officer, both at rest and at the front, and the effects of shell-shock, as well as his own antiwar protest. A brief description, possibly in class lecture, of the British antiwar movement during the conflict will enhance the use of Sassoon's novel. In addition to a discussion of both the entertainments and dangers of the soldier in France and the issue of shell-shock, the students should consider why the antiwar movement developed, why a decorated soldier supported it, and why he was declared shell-shocked.

The novels by Mottram, Manning, Herbert, and Sassoon can also be used at the upper-division level. Additional information, articles, or analysis should be required of the students. For example, selections from Sassoon's war diary or from the regimental histories of the Royal Welch Fusiliers could be contrasted to his fictional account. In a military history course, a more detailed and intensive comparison between the Napoleonic wars and World War I can be developed for either Mottram's or Manning's novels.

The other novels are also useful at this level of instruction. Williamson's work is an excellent example of antiwar propaganda. His use of Bullock to exemplify *Every Soldier* should be explored as well as his development of the various stages of a soldier's life--training, battle, wound, home--and the war's impact on the individual.

Tomlinson's novel is an attempt to uncover the causes of the war in Britain's Victorian past. What were the causes of the war according to Tomlinson and how valid are his conclusions? How do they compare to the historic revisionists of the twenties and thirties? Tomlinson also explores the impact of the war on the civilian as well as the soldier. How does his assessment of civilian suffering compare to traditional historic accounts?

Aldington's novel is representative of attacks on middle-class society, indicative of the literary and artistic contempt for the bourgeois during the early

twentieth century, a theme which should be explored against the context of intellectual history. An analysis of his reactions to the war and his resentments toward the authorities whom he blames are illustrative of the antiwar books. Who does he blame and why? Is his attitude unique or is it shared by other opponents of the war? Obviously the student would need to investigate the peace movement for some of the answers. Ford's novels are similar to Aldington's in their attack on the British middle class. His attacks on the government, on the military command structure, and on the stay-at-home civilians are similar to Aldington's and other antiwar writers. Because of their length and difficulty, his works are not the best choice for classroom use. However, selected chapters from Ford's novels, used in conjunction with Aldington's book, or perhaps Sassoon's, would be beneficial.

At all class levels, at least one book review written when the work was published should be read. If the instructor wants to stress public reaction, he can direct the student to the exchange of letters in the London Times in April 1930 or to Falls's introduction to War Books or provide excerpts from Jerrold's diatribe against the war novels. Possible points of discussion are to identify the opponents of the war novelists, to explain their objections, and to examine the validity of their objections.

Having selected the novel and decided its purpose, guides to enhance its use must be developed. One of the student criticisms of Boyd's novel was his use of unfamiliar jargon. Although specialized words and terms can be found in unabridged dictionaries, a glossary prepared by the instructor will provide more accessible and detailed information. For example, a description or drawing of the trench system which includes the communication and support trenches, fire bays, and observation posts will aid student comprehension.³ French words, corruptions of French, and military slang need to be defined--estaminet (a French establishment which served alcohol and some meals), a blighty (a wound severe enough to require the sufferer to be sent to England), van blank or blonk (white wine).⁴ Other possible aids which the instructor might provide are a chart of the command structure, a chart of the military divisions and the approximate size of each, a chart of British military ranks, a general chronology of the war, a chronology of the specific battles or military events

³Ashworth, Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System, (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980), n.p. provides an excellent diagram of the typical British trench system. Diagrams of front line trenches can be found in John Ellis, Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 13, 15.

⁴Brophy and Patridge, The Long Trail includes an excellent dictionary of British military slang. For American usage see Jonathan Lighter, "The Slang of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, 1917-1919: An Historical Glossary," American Speech 47, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1972), 5-142.

described in the novel, a map of the trench system which stretched across France, maps of specific areas or battles described in the novel, and British casualty statistics. In an upper-division course, the student might be required to supplement the information--e.g., comparing the description of a particular battle in the novel to those found in a military history.

Biographical information about the author could either be provided by the instructor or developed by the student. In most instances, detailed information about the author's life and especially his war service would be too time-consuming for the student to gather and should be furnished by the instructor. If the student is to research the author's life, some guidance--an indication of sources--should be given.

Herbert's The Secret Battle is suitable for use both in a survey course and an upper-division course and will be used to illustrate the novel's incorporation into classroom instruction. The general purpose is to develop student understanding of the nature of World War I and of the impact of the experience on the individual. In addition to portraying the soldier's daily life, the novel describes warfare both at Gallipoli and in France, the development of shell-shock in an individual soldier, and the flaws in the British field court-martial system.

In the survey course, general information about World War I would obviously be presented in lecture or through assigned readings. The instructor would specifically prepare a biography of Herbert which includes his military service, his own shell-shock symptoms, and an account of the writing and publication history of the novel; maps of Gallipoli and the Western front; a brief description of shell-shock; a brief glossary of terms and words; and illustrations of the British trenches. Written presentations or classroom discussion would be structured around the following topics: the daily life of the individual soldier, trench warfare, the court-martial system, and shell-shock. In discussing trench warfare, the student would analyze the differences and the similarities between conditions in Gallipoli and France. A discussion of the court-martial system would include concepts of both philosophic and legal justice, inequalities in the system, and the circumstances in which field courts-martial were conducted. The issue of shell-shock would be explored by tracing the development of its symptoms in Penrose and the presence of shell-shock symptoms in Herbert. By proceeding in this fashion, working from a combination of example and fact, the student will be guided through the material by the instructor and should achieve a better understanding of the impact of the war on the individual soldier and of the

nature of World War I than if the material had merely been presented in a lecture.

In an upper division or survey course, the same general methods and topics would be pursued, however the student would be given or directed to more specific and detailed information; emphasis on analysis and assessment of sources would be greater. Rather than a brief summary of shell-shock, an article or book chapter describing its development and symptoms would be made available. Selected chapters from a book on the court-martial system would also be included. Graduate students would be required to write a report comparing Herbert's treatment of the war and court-martial system with a scholarly treatment. The strategic purpose of the Gallipoli expedition, its history, and the nature of warfare against the Turks would be explored either in lecture or through directed reading. The result should be an increased knowledge and a greater understanding of specific aspects of the war combined with a better sense of how these aspects impacted the individual soldier.

Textbook editors understand that information can often be simply and more effectively imparted through illustration rather than exposition. For that reason, history textbooks are enhanced by color photographs, maps, and charts. In much the same way, when properly used, the war novels enhance student understanding of World War I. Literary

documents which reveal individual responses to the actualities of war, the novels are valuable supplementary texts for instructional purposes. Used with proper guidance from the instructor, these accounts of the daily lives of the soldiers, personal statements of battle involvement, and reflections of the emerging image of war in the interwar period exemplify the human element and provide a sense of the past. Used with proper guidance, the novels expand student understanding of warfare and of World War I.

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